the weekly Standard

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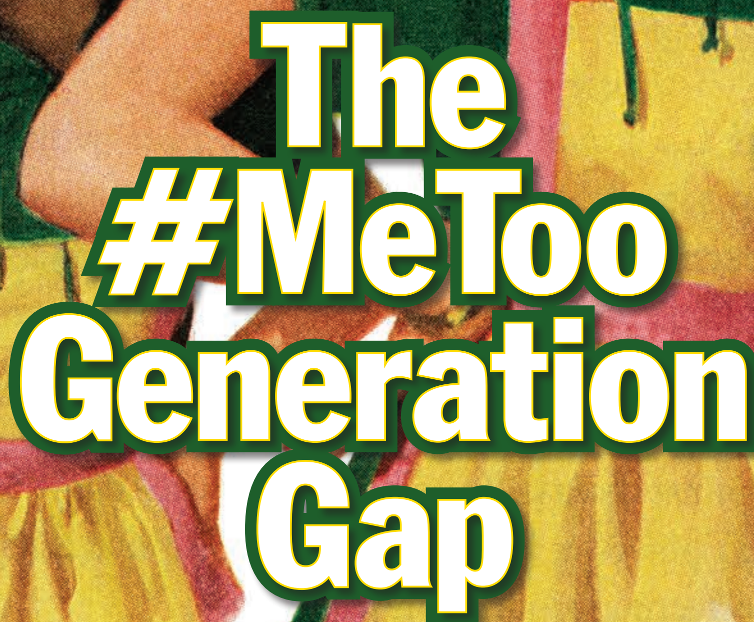
THE HYPOCRISY OF THE NCAA
RACHAEL LARIMORE



The #MeToo Generation Gap

BY ALICE B. LLOYD

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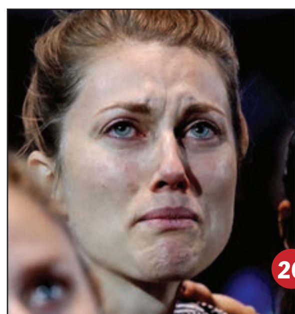

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COVER: GRAPHICAARTIS / GETTY

The Era of Woke Publishing

Publishers have long supported specialty imprints that feature particular kinds of books: There are imprints that promote conservative books, such as Sentinel at Penguin Random House and Threshold at Simon & Schuster, and imprints that promote genres like romance (Flirt at Random House) and cooking (Anthony Bourdain Books at HarperCollins).

But we have now officially entered the era of the "woke" imprint, with news that Jill Soloway, LGBTQ activist and creator of the Amazon series *Transparent*, about the adventures of a transgender man and his family, has struck a deal with Amazon Publishing. *Bookforum*'s website announced the venture, complete with politically correct, grammatically hideous pronoun use: "Jill Soloway is starting their own imprint."

The imprint, Topple Books, borrows its name from Soloway's television production company and likely shares its worldview. First among the "principles" listed on the production company's website: "Our revolution must be intersectional." (Other principles include: "Be Chill," "Promote good vibes," and "Gather Often" for something called "heart-connection.") The Topple company has also published several "manifestos" that advise readers to do things such as "identify unused real estate in your area or neighborhood" and use it to "dig mass graves" for guns, and go to Jerusalem and "stand there, at the borders forever, holding hands to protect that space. We declare a new inevitable of peace [sic] in which the Female Face of God will show."

Revolution appears to be the guiding force behind the imprint. "We live in a complicated, messy world where every day we have to proactively re-center our own experiences by challenging privilege," Soloway said in a statement described by the *Hollywood Reporter*. "With Topple Books, we're looking for those undeniably compelling essential voices so often not heard. I can't think of a more perfect collaborator than Amazon Publishing to make our dream of a revolutionary publishing imprint come true."

At left, Jill Soloway at the 2017 Outfest Los Angeles LGBT Film Festival. Below, on the same day, Soloway greeting then-collaborator Jeffrey Tambor.

The life of the activist-TV-creator-publisher is busy, however (the Topple production company says both a store of Topple merchandise and a virtual reality component are Coming Soon!), so Soloway will serve as "editor-at-large," which, according to *BusinessWire*, means helping existing Amazon Publishing editors "select books for publication and pen introductions."

But Soloway might want to take a more hands-on (or rather, detail-oriented) approach to her publishing work than she has to her television productions. The home page of the Topple production company's website features a lengthy statement that reads, in part: "We live in a country and world where the systems of power have operated in favor of men, and this is especially true in Hollywood. The egregious and heinous behavior of those who perform, perpetuate, or passively condone acts of harassment or assault is one of the worst manifestations of this patriarchal system."

If this sounds a wee bit defensive, it's because one of the recently accused perpetrators of this "egregious and heinous" behavior is Emmy-award-winning *Transparent* star Jeffrey Tambor, who was officially fired from the show after some women accused him of harassing them on-set.

Unlike many men caught up in the #MeToo moment, however, Tambor did not go quietly; instead, he protested the lack of transparency about the accusations made against him and the witchhunt-like atmosphere of Amazon's response. "I am profoundly disappointed in Amazon's handling of these false accusations against me," he told *Deadline Hollywood*. "I am even more disappointed in Jill Soloway's unfair characterization of me as someone who would ever cause harm to any of my fellow cast mates." He also called out the "toxic politicized atmosphere" on the set of *Transparent*, which doesn't seem like hyperbole. As one of Soloway's writers and fellow producers, Our Lady J, posted on Instagram after Tambor was let go from the show, "We cannot let trans content be taken down by a single cis man."

Which gives us an idea for Soloway's first Topple Books product: a reissue of Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, with an introduction by Jeffrey Tambor. ♦

TOP: RODIN ECKENROTH / FILMMAGIC / GETTY. BOTTOM: ARAYA DIAZ / WIREIMAGE / GETTY

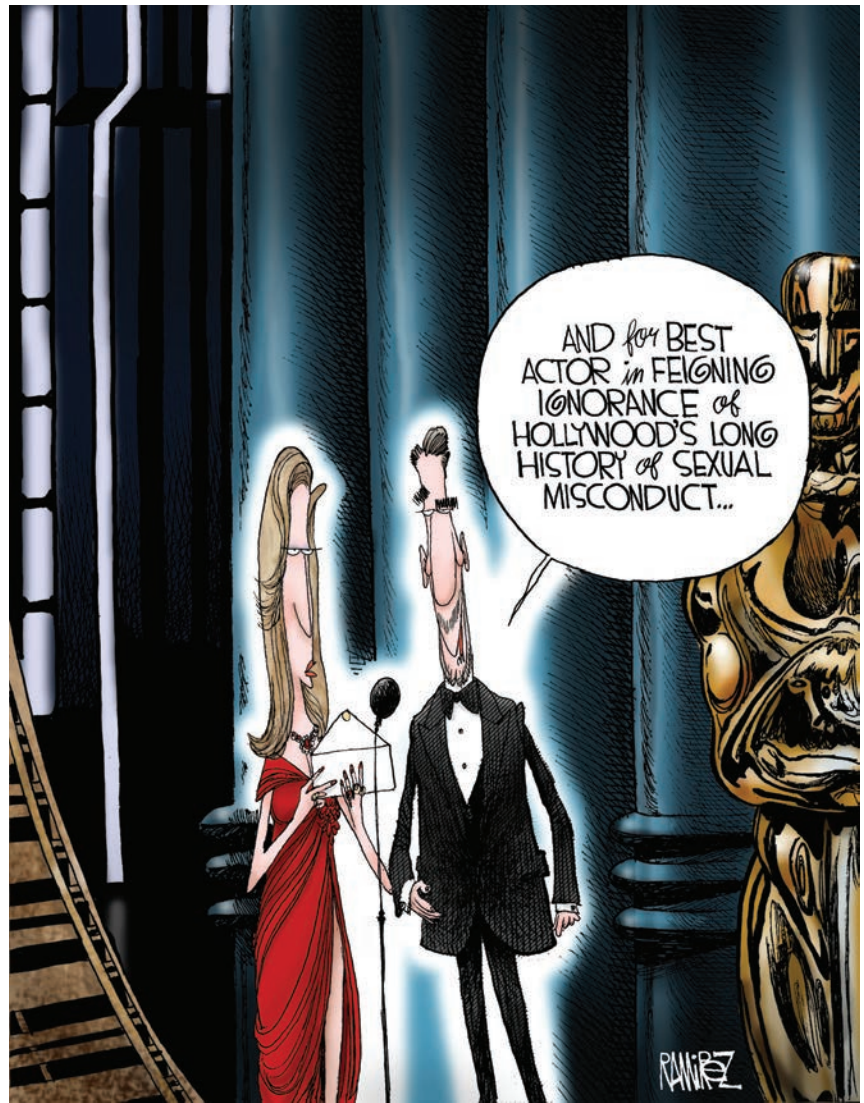
Curricular Diversity

It shouldn't be either newsworthy or controversial to discover that college students are learning about the work of Aristophanes, studying the Peloponnesian War, or analyzing Aristotelian notions of happiness. But this is 2018, when college administrators often seem more focused on the subtle colonialism of the cafeteria's Taco Tuesday than on the necessity of a well-rounded curriculum.

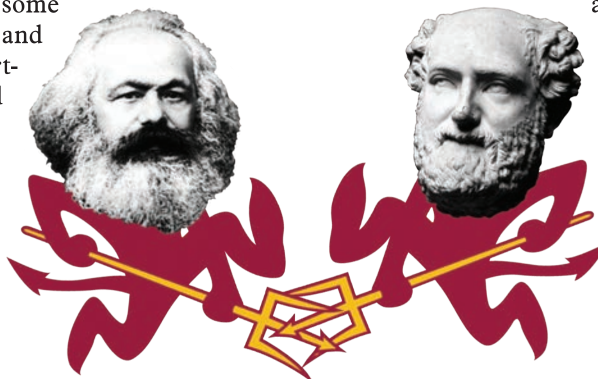
So perhaps it's no surprise that the *New York Times* reports (or rather, tries to incite) controversy over some new course offerings in Arizona, where the state legislature recently approved $7 million for a School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University. The ostensible goal of the school is to offer classes that encourage undergraduates to engage with original texts "from the ancient Greeks to the Founding Fathers," as the *Times* described.

The initial course offerings appear innocuous enough and are hardly lacking in diversity: A course on capitalism explores the work of John Locke, Montesquieu, and Adam Smith, for example, but also Marx and Keynes. A class called "Women in Political Thought and Leadership" includes Catherine the Great and Golda Meir as well as Hillary Clinton. As Paul Carrese, the director of the school, told the *Times*, "The program is not pursuing a party line or dogma. . . . It's making space for debate."

Such efforts at curricular heterogeneity have not fooled some people, however. As the *Times* notes, "Many liberal professors view these efforts as reviving an antiquated Eurocentric view of history," and some people derisively refer to ASU and another recently funded department of political economy and moral science at the University of Arizona as "Freedom Schools" (freedom being a suspect thing on college campuses these days). Worse, evidently, is the fact that some of the money approved by the state legislature pays for "six new professors with intellectually conservative pedigrees."



The portrait drawn by the *Times* suggests that ASU is at risk of becoming a hotbed of right-wing indoctrination. But like most college campuses, ASU has long been replete with classes guaranteed to satisfy even the most avidly liberal activist-in-training. It has a School of Social Transformation that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in social justice and in women's and gender studies, for example, and which lists dozens of courses such as "Mapping Intersections of Gender," described as teaching "theoretical concepts, metaphors, and frameworks employed by feminist scholars to understand the way gender articulates with other categories of difference," as well as a class on "Transgender



ARISTOPHANES: LEEMAGE / UIG / GETTY

and Intersex Literature and Film," among others. Undergraduates in these programs complete internships with a wide range of liberal activist organizations and unions such as Arizona's AFL-CIO. Are a handful of classes that study the work of dead white men really such a threat?

As many colleges eviscerate Great Books and Western Civ courses, it's reassuring to witness Arizona's attempt to offer classes where students can engage with and debate classical texts rather than be spoon-fed fashionable academic theories about those texts. But it should be unnerving to liberal readers of the *Times* to learn that on today's college campuses, you don't need to wear a MAGA hat to be denounced as a reprobate right-winger. You just have to read Aristophanes. ♦

The D.C. Trolley Folly

Washington, D.C., should have listened to Marion Barry. The late four-time mayor of the nation's capital may have made problematic lifestyle choices—even if the you-know-what did set him up—but give him this: He was 100 percent correct about the city's streetcar boondoggle.

If you build it, they won't come.

For the last two years, Washington has operated a 2.2 mile, slower-than-walking mode of "transportation" along a busy nightlife corridor not far from Capitol Hill. The cost of this bauble? A scant $200 million. As Barry pointed out back in 2012, when the streetcar was still under construction, it had "not been well-thought out and [was] too expensive for the number of riders it [would] serve." He was right: The system is ridden by, at most, a couple of thousand people a day. And they don't pay even a nominal fare, so the system is simply a money-sink. Meanwhile, buses already traverse the route frequently.

Now comes news that a mere two years into service, D.C. is looking to replace the trolley cars. Two years is a bit short of their expected 31-year lifespan, yes, but local news outlet WTOP reports that it's increasingly difficult to obtain repair parts, because the original manufacturer went out of business. Come to think of it, shouldn't that have sent a message about the viability of the streetcar scam? ♦

STREETCAR: MARIO ROBERTO DURAN ORTIZ

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End of the Road

Tomorrow some people from Catholic Charities are coming to tow away the beautiful BMW 740iL that my father bought in Germany at the turn of the century. Like the vast majority of American males he was until then a car enthusiast who had never owned a nice car. He didn't suffer from that—fancy automobiles were, to his mind, a waste of money. But he seemed to suffer greatly from a surprise that hits most men when they retire—the sudden curtailment of occasions for asserting control over situations, standing out as a man of distinction, showing oneself a person to be reckoned with.

Buying the fastest, grandest, most handsome car on the road did the trick. My father drove it for a decade and a half and kept it shipshape for most of that time. But by the time he died in 2015 it was aging—dribbling oil everywhere it went, flashing airbag lights, losing power steering at odd moments and costing him a ton of money. It fell to me to dispose of the jalopy after his funeral. But I was in no shape to. It was full of his compact discs (mostly female country singers), the golf pencils he had taken notes with, his notes, his compact umbrellas neatly held down with bungee cords in the trunk, boxes of Good & Plenty.

What a wreck I was in those weeks, passing days in his house, tidying up his affairs, visiting friends, driving his car slowly around my hometown, loading it up with the most stoical and heartbreaking used CDs I could find at the Mystery Train record shop. Out went Iris DeMent singing "Mama's Opry." In came Harry Nilsson's "Turn on Your Radio" and Dave Davies's "Strangers."

I thought a lot about my father as I drove. He had taught me to drive in our ancient Oldsmobile Vista Cruiser, starting about two years before I was eligible to get my license—not because I was that slow a learner but because he wanted to impress on my 14-year-old mind that parental law trumps government law. (It's a philosophy I have inherited from him and tried to impart to my children, and it is probably fortunate none of us has ever seen it put to the test.) He hollered at me for driving too far to the right. As a beginning driver, of course, I did: Driving a yard too far to the right might cost you a mirror, but driving a yard too far to the left might cost you your life. I was right.

JORI BOLTON

But I wasn't always. One spring night about five years later I totaled the Vista Cruiser returning to town along a stretch of road called Dead Man's Curve. (Probably every town has one.) I would have been fine had the road not been covered in sand from the preceding winter. The wheels found no purchase as I turned. The car just continued laterally, the wheels spinning as if they were on ball-bearings, until a telephone pole sheared off the whole right rear quarter-panel. A close call. My father was too relieved to be angry.

When, decades later, after my father's death, the time came to return to Washington, I drove his grand BMW cautiously down the Eastern seaboard—and, instead of taking it to the scrapyard, took it to a bunch of mechanics in Maryland I had chosen for their probity. They replaced the belts. They went deep into the engine and dammed the leak. They found a passenger door to replace the one that was rusting off its hinges. What it cost I won't repeat. It is a disgrace to a man trying to raise a family on a writer's salary. It not only got the car back on the road—for the past 30 months or so, it has mostly driven like a new car.

But when I brought it into the shop for an oil change before Christmas, I got bad news. The 740iL was in the state that the dissolute jazz cornetist Bix Beiderbecke was said to have been in at the time of his death in 1931—it was "dying of everything." The oil leaks and the belt problems were back. My mechanic friend explained that, ideally, cars cost 8 cents a mile in repairs. If it cost 10 cents a mile, that was a worry, but it was up to the owner. If a person really loved his car, he might want to keep driving it when it started costing 12 or 14 cents a mile. My BMW, he explained—and here he pulled out the papers—was costing me $1.74. It was time to put an end to my crazy attempts to summon the past. That can wait until I retire.

Christopher Caldwell

the weekly Standard

The Steel Follies Redux

On March 1, President Donald Trump was widely expected to announce a new round of trade restrictions on steel and aluminum. But that morning word leaked out that the announcement had been postponed—maybe permanently canceled. Then we heard the president had called industry leaders to the White House for a "listening session" with Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross. By midday, the president was telling reporters invited into that roomful of business executives that he'd decided to introduce a 25 percent tariff on all steel imports and a 10 percent tariff on aluminum imports. "We'll be signing it next week," he promised. "And you'll have protection for a long time."

The president has a way of misstating his own administration's intentions, so take these numbers as approximations, but it seemed clear late last week that steep tariffs were on the way.

Though it was a logistical debacle (it often is with this White House), the reason for this chaos is not unique to the Trump era: Top administration officials disagree strongly over trade issues and were vying hard to persuade the president. We're told that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and chief economic adviser Gary Cohn were sharply opposed to the tariffs on the impeccable grounds that they sour international relationships even as they harm our economy in both the short- and long-term. Ross and trade representative Robert Lighthizer were for protections. Their support is unsurprising: The former used to own steel mills and the latter represented them as an attorney and lobbyist.

The arguments for tariffs are almost exclusively political rather than economic. Tariffs are popular with certain demographics and with the specific companies and industries they protect, but they harm the wider economy. When the George W. Bush administration imposed tariffs on imported steel in 2002, American steelmakers took the opportunity of diminished competition to raise prices. U.S. manufacturers who bought steel for their products had to adjust to higher prices, and as a result 50,000 workers lost their jobs, according to a study by the economists Joseph Francois and Laura Baughman. Overall, when combined with other economic headwinds, the 2002 tariffs cost the American economy 200,000 jobs and $4 billion in lost wages in just one year. And the Bush tariffs, which were repealed after just 21 months, were far smaller and more targeted duties than the ones announced by Trump.

Proponents of steel tariffs like to point out that conservative's conservative Ronald Reagan imposed similar tariffs. But numerous studies have concluded that those restrictions cost the American economy as much as $2.3 million for every job in the domestic steel industry they protected.

Tariffs also tend to sabotage our international objectives. Earlier this year when the Trump administration announced new levies on washing machines, the United States in essence picked a fight with a nation—South Korea—whose friendship we need to manage the problem of North Korea.

The hard truth is that protecting domestic industries from foreign competition only encourages those industries to relax, which quickly turns into lethargy. While the protected companies settle into an easier mode of profitmaking, their foreign competitors improve, and soon enough Americans are stuck with higher prices and lower quality.

All this brings to mind the late Ken Iverson, who remade the nearly bankrupt Nucor Steel into one of the great steelmakers of the world. Iverson stridently opposed

ALEXANDER KRAVCHENKO / TASS / GETTY

protective tariffs, believing they harmed the companies and industries they're meant to help. In a 1986 interview, he was asked why temporary steel protections couldn't be used by the industry to regroup and modernize. "We've had this 'temporary' relief for a long time," Iverson answered.

> We had a voluntary quota system in the early 1970s. We had trigger prices in the late 1970s. And what happened during these periods? As soon as prices began to rise so that the steel companies began to be profitable, they stopped modernizing. It's only under intense competitive pressure . . . that the big steel companies have been forced to modernize. . . . Unless you're under intense competitive pressure and it becomes a question of the survival of the business to do it, you're just going to lapse back into your old ways. There's no other answer.

Iverson was a brave and capable man. We wish there were more men of his kind advising the president.

But protective tariffs are not only a disaster for each specific industry, they are also harmful to the wider economy. That is the point beautifully and simply made in Henry Hazlitt's classic *Economics in One Lesson* (1946). Hazlitt asked his readers to consider what would happen if Congress imposed a $5 duty on British sweaters. "The cost of British sweaters to the American consumer might thereby be forced so high that American manufacturers would find it profitable to enter the sweater business," Hazlitt wrote. Sounds like a fine idea, right? By protecting the American sweater companies from cutthroat competition, the government fosters a domestic industry or even enables the creation of a new industry that didn't already exist. Hazlitt goes on:

> But American consumers would be forced to subsidize this industry. On every American sweater they bought they would be forced in effect to pay a tax of $5 which would be collected from them in a higher price by the new sweater industry.
>
> Americans would be employed in a sweater industry who had not previously been employed in a sweater industry. That much is true. But there would be no net addition to the country's industry or the country's employment. Because the American consumer had to pay $5 more for the same quality of sweater he would have just that much less left over to buy anything else. He would have to reduce his expenditures by $5 somewhere else. In order that one industry might grow or come into existence, a hundred other industries would have to shrink. In order that 20,000 persons might be employed in a sweater industry, 20,000 fewer persons would be employed elsewhere.

In economic terms, a sweater is no different from a ton of aluminum or plate steel. All are created and sold for money. Assuming the Trump administration imposes the duties announced by the president, America's steel companies will relax—and others will suffer the consequences. ♦

Collaborating to Combat the Opioid Epidemic

THOMAS J. DONOHUE
PRESIDENT AND CEO
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Our country remains embroiled in one of the most deadly and costly public health epidemics in recent history. Over the last several years, the opioid crisis has taken tens of thousands of lives and forever changed communities and the lives of those left behind. While its costs are steepest for those struggling with the disease of addiction and their families, the problem cuts across our entire society.

It's impossible to quantify the pain caused by addiction, but there are numbers that can give us a sense of the economic cost of the crisis. Research shows that the economic burden of the opioid epidemic hit $95 billion in 2016, with the vast majority coming from losses in the workforce due to overdose deaths. Another $12.4 billion of the cost stemmed from lost productivity. A separate study found that the opioid epidemic is responsible for 20% of the drop in men's labor force participation.

The business community has been affected by these trends and has a role to play in helping our communities rebuild. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is in a unique position to help because of our ability to convene key voices from across the public and private sectors. We did exactly that last week when we hosted an event that brought together a diverse group of leaders in an attempt to forge greater consensus and collaboration.

We heard personal stories from those who lost loved ones and are now working to end the stigma of addiction. And we heard how businesses in several areas of the country are partnering with the public sector and community initiatives to combat the epidemic. Senior officials from key federal agencies, education entrepreneurs, health sector leaders, along with state officials and local business representatives, discussed opportunities to prevent addiction and stem the crisis. They covered legislative changes to increase treatment options and address drug tampering, state-based prevention initiatives, and private sector advances in treatment and education.

It is clear that solving this challenge will require a comprehensive approach, with the help of local leaders in businesses. True to the can-do, take-charge spirit of American enterprise, businesses are already voluntarily taking on opioid abuse. Many are offering help and treatment—instead of an automatic pink slip—to employees struggling with addiction.

Any business can play a role in combating the opioid crisis, and the business community as a whole *must* play a role. The Chamber is committed to marshalling the business response and promoting greater collaboration between the public and private sectors.

Learn more at uschamber.com/abovethefold.

Louisville players celebrate after winning the 2013 national basketball title, which has now been 'vacated.'

TREETER / LECKA / GETTY

RACHAEL LARIMORE

Time to Pay the Players

The numbers are staggering: CBS and Time Warner together pay close to $1 billion a year for the broadcast rights to March Madness. ESPN pays $470 million a year to air the College Football Playoffs and related bowls. Nick Saban will make $11 million to coach the Alabama football team next year—and he has several assistants making in the $1 million range. Schools make tens of millions of dollars when their teams wear shoes and uniforms from Nike, Under Armour, and Adidas. They keep teams of attorneys on retainer to shut down any attempt to use their copyrighted logos.

College sports is big business. There's plenty of money to go around for everyone—except the athletes.

The NCAA has operated for decades on the pretense that "student-athletes" are wholesome amateurs, trading their athletic prowess for an education and seeking only healthy competition and the joy of the game. This is mendacious cant, and everybody knows it. For decades, players at top programs have been paid via cash-stuffed envelopes slipped under their dorm-room doors and endless other in-kind payments. In many cases, these athletes are brought to campus solely in order to play, their grades and class attendance faked in a widely known sham.

An ongoing fraud investigation by the FBI is slowly exposing the corrupt system of illicit professionalism. NCAA scandals come to light regularly, but this one is sufficiently egregious to demand reforms. The NCAA is allergic to negative publicity and will surely propose weak or irrelevant remedies to make the whole thing go away and protect the key programs that generate so much attention and money. But if its leaders care at all about the integrity of the sports they regulate, they will consider major changes. Let us make one modest proposal: Abolish the strictures against paying athletes. We hesitate to suggest adding more money to the river that is flooding college athletics. And lifting the payment rules will create problems of its own, but it will improve a system in which everyone profits *but* the athletes and in which athletes are constantly tempted by illegal offers from boosters and agents.

Last fall, the FBI filed federal charges against four assistant basketball coaches and six other men, some with ties to Adidas, after an investigation revealed that representatives of the shoe company were, with the complicity of coaches, bribing or attempting to bribe high-school athletes to commit to college programs that had contracts with Adidas. Coaching legend Rick Pitino of the University of Louisville

was the first to fall. An appalling point: Of the $39 million Adidas paid Louisville for its sponsorship deal, Pitino received 98 percent. Louisville is a public university and Pitino a servant of the people of Kentucky. But his greed raised few eyebrows until one of his assistants was discovered trying to arrange a $100,000 payment from Adidas to a recruit.

Pitino won't be the last to fall. New reports are emerging that the FBI investigation will implicate two dozen more schools—almost enough to fill one side of the NCAA tournament bracket. Given that perennial favorites Duke, North Carolina, Michigan State, and Arizona are among them, the odds are not long that the NCAA could have to resort to its favorite—and least effective—punishment once the dust settles: "vacating" victories. Louisville just vacated its 2013 basketball national title, though not because of the current scandal but because an athletic department employee had spent thousands of dollars on escorts for players and recruits.

That the NCAA thinks forcing guilty teams to vacate victories is an effective means of dealing with rampant corruption is risible. These games aren't forfeited—the opposing team doesn't get a victory or hang a banner. The NCAA merely pretends the game never happened.

Corruption runs rampant. Institutions rake in ungodly sums for hosting games played by "amateurs." The punishments for violations are a joke. Refusal to pay players directly feels more and more like rank hypocrisy.

It's true, of course, that NCAA athletes receive payment in the form of scholarships, which are worth anywhere from $20,000 to $60,000 and more a year in tuition and room and board. But scholarship amounts reflect the absurd costs of higher education, not the actual value. Does anyone really think a year's education at the University of North Carolina, say, is worth $25,407? And the money generated by football and basketball players for their institutions dwarfs even these inflated amounts. Credible estimates suggest that the average Division I basketball player is worth nearly $300,000 per year to his school.

Student athletes face significant restrictions against earning money with part-time jobs—they're actually forbidden to earn an income from doing what they do best. No school we're aware of tells students on music scholarships that they're not permitted to get summer jobs with orchestras or play in local bars on the weekends. Nor are student athletes living like royalty: A 2011 study shows that, even with scholarships, 86 percent of student athletes live below the federal poverty line.

Corruption runs rampant. Institutions rake in ungodly sums for hosting games played by 'amateurs.' The punishments for violations are a joke.

In fact, the NCAA's very use of the term "student-athlete" was always an exercise in cynicism; the term originated not as some philosophical ideal but as a formulation enabling the NCAA to block worker's compensation claims. As Taylor Branch pointed out in his landmark 2011 *Atlantic* article, "The Shame of College Sports":

> The term came into play in the 1950s, when the widow of Ray Dennison, who had died from a head injury received while playing football in Colorado for the Fort Lewis A&M Aggies, filed for workmen's-compensation death benefits. Did his football scholarship make the fatal collision a "work-related" accident? Was he a school employee, like his peers who worked part-time as teaching assistants and bookstore cashiers? Or was he a fluke victim of extracurricular pursuits? Given the hundreds of incapacitating injuries to college athletes each year, the answers to these questions had enormous consequences. The Colorado Supreme Court ultimately agreed with the school's contention that he was not eligible for benefits, since the college was "not in the football business."

Whatever was true in the 1950s, many NCAA colleges are now very much in the football and basketball businesses.

There is no easy or cost-free solution to this problem. Even if the association lifted the ban on payment for athletes, thorny questions remain. Once you decide *who* gets paid (what about softball players? swimmers? wrestlers?), how would payments work? There's a reasonable case for creating trust funds that the athletes can access after they have graduated, or at least after their eligibility has ended. It's tempting to look at what is going on now and decide that the simplest solution is to let athletes accept endorsements directly.

Whatever the appropriately nuanced compromise, we can all acknowledge that the status quo is wrong and corrosive. What we've already learned from the FBI investigation is ugly. What's uglier still is that the NCAA and its members have long made billions of dollars on the backs of athletes who are disproportionately minority and low-income while forcing them to operate as "amateurs."

Other reforms deserve debate, too—for instance, tying rankings to graduation rates, reducing the number of games to make academic life more central for scholar-athletes, denying freshmen eligibility to play for the same reason. But there is little hope of returning college sports to any genuine amateurism. The system simply will not reform itself as long as it remains a de facto professional racket in which hosts of administrators and coaches compete for massive salaries and universities compete for television and sponsorship contracts.

In an ideal world, student athletes wouldn't be paid for performing. But in such a world, no one would get rich off them, either. ♦

COMMENT ♦ ANDREW FERGUSON

All the news that's fit for our readers' sensitivities

Quinn Norton is an engaging, funny, and stylish writer on technology and the odd communities that inhabit our digital world and make it so scary. She is also, to quote her own description, "a bisexual anarchist pacifist, prison abolitionist, & vegetarian. Currently I'm fretting about fair trade standards and ethical food." What's not to like?

Obviously that's the question editors at the *New York Times* asked themselves not long ago, and they arrived at the same answer Edwin Starr reached when he wondered what war was good for: absolutely nothing. Earlier this month they decided to offer her a job with the paper's op-ed page—the page where columnists and opinion pieces appear, opposite the page that carries the institutional editorials. She decided to accept the job, thereby touching off a revolt from *Times* readers that resulted in her firing. It was six hours between the moment the *Times* announced her new job and the moment the *Times* let her go—in Internet time, roughly the equivalent of the Hundred Years' War, except with more acrimony. The ejection of a slightly unconventional leftist from the opinion pages is the latest in a series of incidents that might give pause to the *Times*'s less excitable readers.

You would think Norton's bisexuality, anarchism, pacifism, vegetarianism, and anti-prison activism would place her only slightly to the left of most people who take the *Times* as their daily meat. Indeed, her anxiety over ethical food should have been enough to seal the deal all by itself. But there were blemishes on her leftism, and *Times* readers quickly discovered them. A proctological probe of her Twitter feed showed that in years past she had used racial and sexual slurs and had once referred to a neo-Nazi as a "friend." With protests spouting from various social media, the *Times* editors quietly backed Norton toward an open window and gave her a gentle push.

The *New York Times* op-ed page was invented precisely to expose readers to differing views—'providing a platform for responsible conservative opinion,' as one early manifesto put it.

A few brave souls came to her defense. In the dimly remembered past—two years ago, let's say—their explanations would have struck nearly all *Times* readers as exculpatory, and Quinn Norton, appropriately chastened, would have kept her job. *Wired* magazine, for instance, decreed that Norton's ironic use of anti-gay language was covered by something called "in-group privilege," a kind of Get Out of Jail Free card that she'd earned as a member in good standing of the "queer community." The ugly racial talk and the Nazi friend were part of her larger evangelization efforts to racist louts. She was just code-switching, slipping into their lingo during her many attempts at online conversion.

Readers were having none of it; the disparaging tweets rained down upon the *Times* editors, especially the opinion editor James Bennet. Most of the outraged critics (all critics of the *Times* are outraged) cited other editorial decisions made by Bennet that ran contrary to their own vision of the *Times*. The preeminent offense was last year's hiring of the occasionally conservative Bret Stephens, late of the *Wall Street Journal*'s opinion pages, to serve as a regular columnist. His debut column expressed agnosticism about the long-term effects of global warming. *Times* readers were scandalized, the cancellations poured in, and the publisher, was compelled to send an obsequious letter to his unhappy customers begging their return, with a promise to be more careful in the future.

But he hasn't been careful enough. Since then, the opinion pages have published articles by the mercenary and paramilitary entrepreneur Erik Prince, the controversial gun control scholar John Lott, and other right-wingers whose views many *Times* readers have ruled out of court. Another recent hire from the *Journal*, a gifted and evidently armor-plated woman named Bari Weiss, has already become a dark figure in the fevered dreams of Twitter and Facebook. Right there in the *New York Times* she questioned some excesses of the #MeToo movement. And during the Olympics she praised the contributions immigrants

Worth Repeating from ***WeeklyStandard.com:***

'To be clear: Harvard is disciplining a Christian student group for the group's expectation that its student leadership follow basic Christian ethical teaching on sexuality in accordance with Christianity's 2,000-year-old doctrine on such matters. This should not be controversial, at all.'
—Andrew T. Walker, 'Harvard Punishes Christian Student Group'

have made to American life—but she did so improperly, in unapproved language. Readers and even her fellow *Times* employees accused her of "othering" the "marginalized."

You've probably noticed that the great bulk of our culture—educational institutions, news and entertainment media, foundations, most corporations—is run by the kind of people who have been taught to misuse "other" as a verb, always transitively, never ironically. As a rule they are impressively credentialed and well-to-do, not terribly familiar with history or with non-popular culture, safely and lucratively employed as "knowledge workers." They also have an unrealistically high degree of confidence in the opinions they share with their fellow readers. It is hard to overestimate the importance of the *New York Times* to the world they inhabit. Exposure to dissenting views is often difficult for them. *Times* critics used to describe unpopular op-eds as "offensive." Now the term is more often "insulting." The first implies a lack of taste. The second implies a lack of deference—to the reader, by the editors.

As it happens, the *Times* opinion page was invented in 1970 precisely to expose readers to views that could balance the undisputed leftward tilt of the paper's unsigned editorials—"providing a platform for responsible conservative opinion," as one early manifesto put it. Today, the unsigned editorials are more apocalyptically anti-Republican than they've ever been, but they're not sufficiently hysterical to satisfy an incorrigible and extremely sensitive readership. If there truly are stirrings of rebellion against the paper that these readers rely on every day—for self-affirmation as much as for news—the consequences could be large. For nowadays, in this rough patch in journalism's history, the paper relies on its readers, too; the duty of the hack is not only to inform but to ingratiate. Soon there may come a time when the editors of the world's greatest newspaper will have to choose between their belief in unconstrained debate and the undisturbed comfort of their readers. ♦

COMMENT ♦ BARTON SWAIM

Georgia's gesture politics

We live in an era of gesture politics: walkouts, die-ins, marches, boycotts, hashtags, retweets. Our most strident political debates often aren't debates at all but volleys of symbolic or metaphorical gestures. The point of these national pantomimes is not to make a rational case but to proclaim one's affiliations and antipathies. They're at their most repellent after emotionally harrowing events like race riots and mass shootings. Suddenly everybody—authors and intellectuals, politicians at all levels, your aunt Phyllis—sets about transmitting little signs of their crotchets and convictions.

After news of the school shooting on February 14 in Parkland, Florida, we went at it again. A few multinational corporations got in on the action, too, mainly for the purpose of distancing themselves from the National Rifle Association, the organization that, in the eyes of many progressives and gun-control proponents, was all but directly responsible for the murder of 17 people. On Twitter, Delta Airlines announced that it was "reaching out to the NRA to let them know we will be ending their contract for discounted rates through our group travel program. We will be requesting that the NRA remove our information from their website."

Now you might wonder what Delta's executives knew about the NRA on February 14 that they didn't know on February 13. If they credit the argument that the NRA shares responsibility for mass murders simply because it opposes most regulations on gun ownership, why were they in a relationship with the gun-rights group at all? Of course, Delta executives believe no such thing. They severed relations with the NRA to exempt themselves and their company from the ire of gun-control groups demanding a "boycott." Fair enough. Delta is a private corporation and free to withdraw its support from any organization it wishes, even as I am free to call Delta a bloated mess of a company that treats its customers about as roughly as it treats their luggage. But in this case gesture politics spilled over into the equally ugly world of crony capitalism.

Delta is free to withdraw its support from any organization it wishes, even as I am free to call it a bloated mess that treats its customers about the same as it treats their luggage.

The lieutenant governor of Georgia, Casey Cagle, responded to Delta by tweeting: "I will kill any tax legislation that benefits @Delta unless the company changes its position and fully reinstates its relationship with @NRA. Corporations cannot attack conservatives and expect us not to fight back." Cagle presides over the state senate in Georgia, and the capital of Georgia is Atlanta, and Atlanta is home to Delta's headquarters and international hub. As a major corporation headquartered in a state capital, Delta is the recipient of a dizzying array of local and state tax favors. Cagle was referring to a sales-tax exemption on jet fuel worth $40 million to Delta. The legislature can strip the tax code of that exemption and inflict pretty severe pain on the airline.

Delta's opportunistic sanctimony may irritate some of us on the right, but Cagle's bluster is similarly off-putting: Using the power of the law to threaten a private company is the sort of behavior one expects from a ragtag dictatorship. It's rare to see crony capitalism expressed so menacingly.

Yet if we accept the propriety of the relationship to which Cagle referred in his tweet—the relationship between governments and the companies public officials happen to like—we can expect much more of this sort of thing to happen.

And the public does, for the most part, consider these relationships proper. State commerce agencies devote nearly all their attention to attracting specific companies to "invest" in their states; they offer companies tax exemptions and credits, free or cheap land, and sometimes outright cash in attempts to persuade the companies to uproot from one location and settle in another. Many local and state politicians base their entire political reputations on their talent for "attracting" or "luring" industry, i.e., for bribing them to make decisions that sound like great economic news to voters. All those groundbreaking and ribbon-cutting ceremonies we see on local news channels—governors wearing hard hats and wielding giant scissors—are the result of just this sort of secret but perfectly legal bribery between corporate attorneys and politicians.

There's precious little evidence that the states that spend more on economic "incentives" targeted to specific companies actually experience faster growth than states that spend less. But the lack of evidence doesn't matter because the public likes hearing big jobs announcements, and politicians like having their pictures taken with golden shovels and sending out press releases about the thousands of jobs supposedly coming with all these announcements. When President-elect Donald Trump boasted of having pressured the air conditioner company Carrier not to leave Indiana for Mexico, the media went to work factchecking his claims, but very few registered any strong objection to the use of governmental power to single out one company for special benefits.

The question is whether this ganglion of mutually profitable relationships can survive the era of gesture politics. Private companies want to please the public as much as any politician does, and when they try to please their constituencies by flaunting their cultural allegiances—praising same-sex marriage, say, or censuring a Second Amendment advocacy group—they can expect the politicians to please *their* constituencies by counterpunching. Casey Cagle has a point: When corporations involve themselves in gesture politics, they can expect politicians to fight back.

And we can expect things to get a lot uglier. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

Whose building is it anyway?

Judge Frederic Block, meet Judge H. Lee Sarokin.

Block, a federal district court judge in New York, recently fined a local developer who had whitewashed graffiti painted on a derelict warehouse in Queens. The developer, one Jerry Wolkoff, has owned the warehouse for years and intends to demolish it and build condominiums on the site.

A dozen years ago, however, Wolkoff committed an act of generosity which he now must regret: He came to an agreement with some 21 local graffiti artists and granted them permission to spray-paint his building's exterior walls. When he whitewashed the walls of his property, in preparation for razing it, the artists sued Wolkoff under the 1990 federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA).

The statute, which was largely designed to protect the rights of artists in copyright disputes, has since been expanded to protect art from misattribution or alteration or (as in this case) destruction. A jury agreed with the artists, and Judge Block fined Wolkoff $6.7 million—roughly $150,000 each for some 45 separate graffiti murals.

To be sure, in assessing damages, Block was merely affirming the jury's verdict. But because the walls remained standing for nearly a year after they had been whitewashed, the 21 artists concluded (in the words of the *New York Times*) that the delay "seemed . . . to be a deliberate insult to the thousands of hours of work put into the murals. Judge Block thought so as well." That, at any rate, would be the charitable explanation for the curiously personal—indeed, injudicious—tone of Block's ruling:

> If not for Wolkoff's insolence, these damages would not have been assessed. If he did not destroy [the graffiti] until he received his permits and demolished [the building] 10 months later, the court would not have found that he had acted willfully.

My attitude toward Judge Block's pique is informed by my own view that graffiti barely qualifies as art—as well as a lingering concern that property rights are being eroded by court decisions.

Or put another way, no good deed goes unpunished. For if Wolkoff had simply forbidden the artists to disfigure his building's walls with graffiti, he would be $6.7 million richer today. VARA, which was designed to protect

Landlords, beware: Jerry Wolkoff's building, before he whitewashed it

HOHLFELD / ULLSTEIN BILD / GETTY

the reputations of artists, has now become a weapon to impoverish property owners defending their property against vandalism.

I concede, of course, that my attitude toward Judge Block's judicial pique is informed by my own view that graffiti barely qualifies as art—as well as a lingering concern that property rights have successfully been eroded by recent court decisions. Even the graffiti artists, in this case, acknowledged that they knew the Wolkoff building was destined to be torn down. Indeed, some explained to the *Times* that one quality of their medium is its ephemeral nature: "I wouldn't mind seeing my artwork go down with the building," said William Tamontozzi.

As it happens, the *Times* story ("Graffiti Artists Find Validation in Judge's Ruling") not only suggested that the owner-developer got what he deserved but that Block's anger at Wolkoff's "insolence" will lead to an expansion of the rights and prerogatives of graffiti artists. The *Times* may be right about that—or it might be wrong. For as one attorney specializing in "art law" warned, with Block's $6.7 million judgment in mind, "building owners are going to be reluctant to give permission" to graffiti artists to spray-paint their property.

I would offer a further argument. As Mayor Bill de Blasio settles into his second term, Judge Block's ruling may also be seen as part of a continuing repudiation of the "broken-windows" doctrine of the Giuliani era, when the squalor and municipal disorder of late-20th-century New York were supplanted by a sense of security and civic decorum—civilization, if you will. The heyday of graffiti—when the subway trains were literally camouflaged by spray paint and the *Times* perceived romance where most saw vandalism—may be making a comeback.

Which brings us to Judge H. Lee Sarokin. In 1991 Sarokin, a federal district judge appointed to the bench by Jimmy Carter and later raised to the Third Circuit Court of Appeals by Bill Clinton, earned some measure of notoriety when he ruled against the public library in Morristown, New Jersey, which had sought the occasional right to ban a disorderly, malodorous, and famously litigious homeless man named Richard Kreimer from its premises.

Judge Sarokin ruled that the library had no intrinsic right to bar patrons for their offensive conduct or poor hygiene or because their presence caused discomfort to readers. In his opinion, the real offense was not Kreimer's behavior but the presumption of the library and the taxpayers who supported it: "If we wish to shield our eyes and noses from the homeless," he declared, "we should revoke their condition, not their library cards."

Of course, this was the height of the Reagan-Bush era, when the phenomenon of homelessness was laid exclusively at the doorstep of incumbent (Republican) administrations in Washington. Striking an attitude from the bench, instead of enforcing the law, is a constant temptation; and in those days, jurists were no less inclined to substitute op-ed columns for legal findings than they are now. H. Lee Sarokin's judgment (which was ultimately reversed) was symbolic of the same kind of legal transmutation that informs Frederic Block.

The tendency to idealize property vandals posing as artists, or obnoxious vagrants pretending to be readers, is irresistible to a certain sensibility. Judges are not just creatures of their time and circumstances; they read newspapers and watch TV as well. Justice can be blind in more ways than one. ♦

COMMENT ♦ WILLIAM KRISTOL

An ever-widening gyre

Next year will be the centenary of one of the most famous poems of the 20th century, W.B. Yeats's "The Second Coming." I presume there'll be suitable acknowledgment of this in literary circles, and even an occasional nod from those of us who labor in less rarefied intellectual climes. But if poetry has the ability to bring home to us certain truths with a focus and immediacy that mere prose has difficulty replicating, and if these truths are important, why wait for 2019? After all, by next year some academic somewhere will have launched an attack on "centennialism" or "decimalism" (some professor probably already has), explaining that it's intersectionally illegitimate to privilege multiples of 10. So why not jump the gun and call to mind now, 99 years later, his great poem?

Here's the first stanza:

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

This remains an extraordinarily evocative foreshadowing of what was to transpire in the quarter-century after Yeats wrote. But after that, for the following seven decades or so, the center was more or less put back together. For all of the trials and tribulations of the Cold War and the '60s and 9/11, the center once again held.

Does it still? One can't help but feel that we are slipping back into a widening gyre. One can blame the intemperate falcons or the out-of-touch falconers. But apportioning blame is at this point less important than recognizing reality. Abroad, the horrors of Syria in particular—but not only Syria—do resemble a blood-dimmed tide about which no authority in the civilized world has done or proposes to do anything. At home, it has become clear that passionate intensity tends to correlate inversely with good sense and good character.

So Yeats's first stanza describes our situation. But his second suggests a different outcome from what we glimpse on the horizon. There seems, for better or worse, to be no Second Coming at hand. If some beast were slouching towards Bethlehem to be born, one could at least analyze it and try to figure out how to combat it. But all we seem to have ahead of us is an ever-widening gyre, with birds of prey circling undisturbed and unconstrained, pouncing as they wish and as they are increasingly able.

The poets capture our plight with poignancy. But we who live in the prosaic world of politics can do more than lament. As Gladstone put it: 'The resources of civilization against its enemies are not yet exhausted.'

Yeats died in January 1939, just before the "blood-dimmed tide" was truly loosed upon the world. Another formidable poet, W.H. Auden, commemorated him in verse weeks later. Auden had hopes that Yeats's "unconstraining voice" could "still persuade us to rejoice," thus his invocation:

In the deserts of the heart
Let the healing fountain start,
In the prison of his days
Teach the free man how to praise.

But Auden was under no illusions in the spring of 1939. He saw with clarity the world around him and what was soon to come:

In the nightmare of the dark
All the dogs of Europe bark,
And the living nations wait,
Each sequestered in its hate;

Intellectual disgrace
Stares from every human face,
And the seas of pity lie
Locked and frozen in each eye.

Yeats and Auden were, I suppose, pessimistic that political and social action could avert a coming nightmare or could repair the broken bonds of society. Who am I to quarrel with them? But I would point out that we are not yet in 1939. Nor are the horrors of our time remotely comparable to those of 1914-1918.

The poets capture our plight with unparalleled poignancy. But we who live in the prosaic world of politics and deeds can do more than lament. William Gladstone, a figure from an earlier and more confident generation, put it well: "The resources of civilization against its enemies are not yet exhausted."

But this means appreciating that there are enemies that must be confronted. And it means understanding there is such a thing as civilization that is worth defending. ♦

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The Seasoned Vet and the Young Lamb

A special election in Pennsylvania draws national attention. BY HALEY BYRD

Bethel Park, Pa.

If a congressional campaign won't tell you the candidate's schedule two weeks out from a tight special election, it's a safe bet to go to an American Legion post (it doesn't matter which one, any post will do) and simply wait. This is how I found myself at a Friday night fish fry at American Legion Post 760 in rural western Pennsylvania.

Republican congressional hopeful Rick Saccone showed up right on cue, about an hour after I arrived. As the mustachioed state legislator made the rounds that night, shaking hands and, presumably, kissing babies, some Trump supporters told me they were excited to vote for him. But others whispered that they were planning to support the other guy, because they had met him in person a few weeks back and he seemed nice. Underneath Saccone's carefree exterior, there had to be some unease: A Monmouth University poll places him just three points ahead of Democrat Conor Lamb, in an area that has been a Republican stronghold for nearly two decades. And the *Cook Political Report* switched its assessment of the election from "lean Republican" to "toss-up" on February 27.

Lamb, a 33-year-old retired Marine and former prosecutor, is running as a conservative Democrat in the 18th District, which went for Trump by 20 points in 2016. The election's winner will serve only a seven-month term before its victor will have to face voters again in November, so the race is more significant for the lessons it could hold for the Democratic playbook than it is for the immediate makeup of Congress. For Republicans, it represents the first electoral opportunity to gauge whether their tax cuts are enough to defend against a rising blue wave.

Rick Saccone in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, February 2

PETE MAROVICH / GETTY

But as the oft-quoted saying goes, all politics is local. A Republican campaign aide involved in this race acknowledged as much about the 18th District, where Saccone is contending with a positive image Lamb has built up in the community. Lamb comes from a political family—his grandfather was majority leader of the Pennsylvania state senate in the 1970s. He attended a Catholic high school in Pittsburgh and went on to study at the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated with his political science degree in 2006, followed by a law degree in 2009. After serving in the Marine Corps, Lamb came back to the area to work as a prosecutor.

Saccone, 60, also has an impressive résumé: He served as a counterintelligence special agent in the Air Force for over a decade before becoming a television news anchor in South Korea. After that, he helped negotiate the terms of nuclear power plant construction in North Korea as the only American living in the totalitarian country at the time, according to his website. He returned to the United States and got his Ph.D. at the University of Pittsburgh before serving as a senior counterintelligence agent during the Iraq war, in which he was tasked with "identifying, capturing and interrogating insurgents." He has visited 75 countries and has written nine books.

His legislative career as a state representative has been lackluster by comparison. He is best known for introducing a bill in 2013 to require public schools to post the words "In God We Trust" inside their buildings. That bill failed. During his campaign, Saccone has embraced Trump enthusiastically, going so far as to describe himself as "Trump before Trump was Trump." He has split with his Republican predecessors by unapologetically alienating labor unions, claiming he will receive support from their members regardless. Lamb has relentlessly sought union support.

"We will fight back, and I actually think it's time for us to pick a few fights of our own," Lamb said at a downtown Pittsburgh rally in support of unions on February 26, the day the U.S. Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Janus* v. *AFSCME*, a case that could cost public sector unions millions if nonmembers can no longer be required to pay them fees. "I have been happy and thankful to have your support throughout this campaign. If you send me to Congress, we will start picking those fights right away," Lamb pledged.

Haley Byrd is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Lamb is walking a tightrope. He religiously avoids attacking the president, and he has taken meticulous steps to distance himself from the national Democratic party. He refuses outside Democratic help and is turning down donations from super-PACs. He's hoping his comparatively conservative stances on issues like gun rights (he doesn't support gun control proposals such as raising the minimum age to purchase rifles from 18 to 21) and abortion (he tells me he's personally opposed to abortion as a religious principle, but says he would make no effort to legislate his views) will be enough for Republican voters to overlook the D next to his name on the ballot. Although there are about 70,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans in the 18th District, voters here consistently side with Republican candidates.

Before Trump won the district overwhelmingly in 2016, Mitt Romney carried it by 17 points in 2012. Former GOP congressman Tim Murphy easily won here in 2002, breezing through seven subsequent races with at least 58 percent of the vote each time until he resigned in October after the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* reported he had an extramarital affair in which he encouraged the woman—who thought she was pregnant with his child—to have an abortion. (Shannon Edwards, the woman from the affair, is now challenging longtime congressman Mike Doyle to represent the Pittsburgh area's 14th Congressional District.)

Saccone does have some firm support among staunch Republicans in the area. John Sarkis, a vocalist who sings with a Pittsburgh-based national act called The Skyliners, tells me after meeting Saccone at the fish fry that he will vote for him. "The people who are really in touch with what's happening are easily with Rick," he claims. But this race is closer than usual, compelling Republicans to pull out all the stops to keep the seat. Trump is expected to hold a rally to shore up support for Saccone before Election Day, and GOP money is flowing into the race.

"We're going to spend what we think we need to spend," one Republican campaign aide tells me. The *Washington Post* estimated GOP groups such as the National Republican Congressional Committee and several super-PACs had already spent $4.7 million on airtime by early February. (Democratic outside groups, for their part, had only spent around $300,000.) The NRCC alone has spent "upwards of $2.5 million to $3 million" in advertisements, according to another GOP campaign aide. Republicans have tried to energize the GOP base by invoking consistently unpopular House minority leader Nancy Pelosi, warning that a victory for Lamb would be one step closer to the return of *Speaker* Pelosi.

Conor Lamb accepting the Democratic nomination in Washington, Pennsylvania, November 19, 2017

JEFF SWENSEN / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY

Lamb has countered the attack by saying he does not support Pelosi's continuing in a leadership role for House Democrats. "My opponent wants you to believe that the biggest issue in this campaign is Nancy Pelosi. It's all a big lie," Lamb said in a campaign ad released two weeks before the election. "I've already said on the front page of the newspaper that I don't support Nancy Pelosi."

Asked about the effectiveness of their Pelosi talking points, a GOP campaign aide argued, "You don't go out defending yourself on TV if it's not working."

But for Jeri, a lifelong resident of the district I met at the Friday night fish fry, the Pelosi line of attack is unconvincing. Jeri is in her sixties, and she joined the American Legion "for the bingo" a few years back. She voted for Trump in 2016, and she supported Republican Tim Murphy when he represented the area. I ask her who she'll be voting for on March 13, and she tells me she was initially leaning towards Saccone, but she is "dead set against him" now. She blames his "mudslinging" campaign in part for her decision.

"When they do those ads, the one that they're running now has Lamb, and when they talk about Nancy Pelosi and she goes, 'crumbs.' What was the rest of that?" Jeri asks. She's talking about a GOP advertisement that attacks Pelosi for comparing the raises and bonuses middle-class workers were given by their employers after the passage of the GOP tax bill to crumbs in light of the billions of dollars that corporations received. Lamb has made similar comments. "Was she thinking maybe we need something better for the little people? I don't know. That's the way I see it. You never get to see the rest of the ad," Jeri laments, shaking her head. Asked how she feels about Pelosi, Jeri says she doesn't know much about the California Democrat. "I know she doesn't get talked about very good," she says. "I just don't believe that's what she said."

Jeri tells me she is altogether frustrated with government, and it is clear she is inherently suspicious of Saccone on account of his seven years spent in the Pennsylvania statehouse.

"The other one, he's never been in office, has he?" she asks, referring to Lamb. "Let's see what he can do. Because we can always get rid of him later." ♦

When to Turn the Cameras Away

Yes, media self-restraint is possible.

BY CHRIS DEATON

Hours after the Parkland, Fla., school shooting, Zeynep Tufekci spent part of her evening calling out major media that aired video of students trembling while the noise of gunshots ruptured the air. "This is a snuff film," she said of one such clip, which was embedded atop a *New York Times* story. The video's headline: "Filming a Rampage: Students Capture Florida School Attack."

News consumers are accustomed to seeing such harrowing footage. Tufekci, a sociology professor at the University of North Carolina who researches technology and society, maintains they shouldn't be. Backed by a growing body of scholarship that mass killers inspire imitators, she wants the media to restrain themselves in how much visceral evidence they broadcast of a shooter's deeds. "This doesn't mean censoring the news or not reporting important events of obvious news value," she wrote in the *Times* in 2015. "It means not providing the killers with the infamy they seek."

Tufekci's argument concerns a "contagion" effect. As researchers at Arizona State University wrote in 2015, "mass killings involving firearms are incented by similar events in the immediate past." They found that school shootings become more likely in the 13 days following a previous one. The fear is that media exposure helps fuel such "copycat" acts. While the ASU researchers' conclusion didn't go that far—it determined only that contagion exists—physicist Sherry Towers, who led the study, admitted, "it appears that yes, national media coverage does end up increasing the frequency of these tragedies."

Advocates have used similar findings to lobby the press for years. One such campaign, "Don't Name Them," began in 2010 with the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training Center at Texas State University. It is a joint effort with the FBI and the "I Love U Guys" Foundation, created by John-Michael and Ellen Keyes, parents of Emily Keyes, who was killed in a 2006 Colorado school shooting. "Our efforts are in acknowledging that notoriety is often one of the desired goals of some of these perpetrators," John-Michael says. "And if we can reduce that, it's just one small piece that makes them pause before they go."

Don't pay attention; it just encourages them.

TOM SZCZERBOWSKI / GETTY

The campaign's recommendations aim for the balance in coverage that Tufekci encourages: "Sociologists and criminologists should study the criminal—but let's not glorify the shooter by giving him valuable airtime," its website reads.

The good sense of this suggestion aside, is it practicable? A cynical reading of modern media implies that it isn't: These days, if it bleeds it not only leads but must be aired around the clock with an excruciating level of detail—the pressure of competition and the morbid curiosity of viewers demand it.

Given both the horror and newsiness of school shootings, it may be a fool's errand to expect restraint from news executives, a deliberate decision to downplay the sensational and dwell less on the personalities and profiles of the killers. But media execs, especially in TV, are regularly confronted with decisions of how to cover other attention-seeking individuals, even in real time. And in at least one type of case, they've demonstrated a willingness to systematically focus the cameras elsewhere.

Late in game four of the 2016 NBA Finals, a shirtless male streaker jogged to center court from the baseline opposite to where the ball was in play. He was tackled from behind by security. Jon Healy, a reporter for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, distributed footage of the incident. But no one from the other ABC did, the ABC that was televising the game to millions of American viewers.

"A fan just ran on the floor," narrated Mike Breen, the play-by-play man. Viewers wouldn't have known, otherwise: The camera was focused on LeBron James. Then it switched to Stephen Curry. Then to a replay. All the while, Breen explained the reason for the delay in the action. "Security is right on top of him," he said of the invader, who later was identified as a YouTube personality infamous for pulling such stunts at sporting events worldwide.

The choice not to televise the antics was intentional for ESPN, ABC's broadcast partner. "We have a policy against it," ESPN communications director Dave Nagle tells me. "We do not want to glorify bad behavior."

There is no convention or set agreement among networks not to air such

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court-storming. But many of them have adopted an informal code. A spokesman for CBS Sports told The Weekly Standard that while CBS doesn't have a set policy, it doesn't show field-rushers as a matter of practice. Fred Gaudelli, the executive producer of NBC's *Sunday Night Football*, said it's an "unwritten policy everywhere," in a 2016 interview with *Slate*.

This perspective is shared widely by sports media. But there have been exceptions. During the 2009 men's French Open final, NBC zoomed in on a streaker charging Roger Federer and attempting to place a hat on his head. The 30-second incident was ominous: Tennis had been rocked in 1993 when the number-one women's player, Monica Seles, was stabbed in the back during a match break.

ESPN itself aired one court-storming incident, though it was after the fact. In a 2013 NBA game between the Cavaliers and the LeBron James-led Miami Heat, a young Cavs fan came onto the court during the game to plead with the departed star to return to Cleveland. (James complied two seasons later.) The network turned the saga into a lighthearted segment about the man. "We use content in our storytelling that we typically wouldn't use other places, if we think it is a compelling story for our fans," says a spokesman for ESPN's features unit.

But these exceptions stand out. It's evident that multiple network staffers, from producers up to corporate brass, have made a good-faith, often successful, effort to deny airtime to people who invade the field of play during televised sporting events. The logic is self-evident: If the attention-seeking interlopers don't get their 15 seconds of fame, there will be fewer such incidents.

So the media can and do exercise self-control in denying notoriety to people who crave it. But so far only in a realm where the stakes are low. Perhaps they can learn to do the same when the stakes are life and death.

The perspective of too much of the media is, "'This is today's news,'" says John-Michael Keyes. "And mine is, 'No, you're writing this into history forever.'" ♦

The Ultimate Crowded Field

Democrats may have an exceedingly difficult time choosing a candidate in 2020. BY JAY COST

No president has been so consistently unpopular so early in his term as Donald Trump. Though there are three years left to improve them, these weak numbers are a bad sign for his reelection prospects. The political betting marketplace PredictIt gives him just 1-in-3 odds of winning in 2020.

Little wonder that many Democrats are weighing a challenge. The Democratic caucus in the Senate is full to bursting with potential contenders. There has been chatter about senators Cory Booker of New Jersey, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Kamala Harris of California, Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota, Bernie Sanders of Vermont, and Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. Former Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe has hinted he might run. There is buzz about Governor Tom Hickenlooper of Colorado and Montana governor Steve Bullock. Ditto Los Angeles mayor Eric Garcetti and former secretary of Housing and Urban Development Julián Castro. Former attorney general Eric Holder might run, as well. And then, of course, there is Oprah Winfrey, who says she will run if God gives her a sign.

This is a very long list. Several of these people will undoubtedly decide not to run, but there will surely be some surprise candidacies that nobody has thought of yet. In sum, we should expect a very large field.

That raises the question: Can Democrats select a quality candidate from among this multitude? A lot will depend on how the party rules perform.

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We like to think of party nominees as the choice of the voters, but that is only half true. Individual preferences among the millions of primary voters have to be aggregated into a collective decision, using some set of rules that serve as a social-choice mechanism. Those rules can easily sway the outcome.

Consider, for instance, the 2016 Republican nomination. Donald Trump won 60 percent of available delegates but only about 45 percent of the primary vote. The difference was due to the fact that Republican rules award bonuses, sometimes substantial ones, to the candidate who finishes first in a contest, even if he does not win a majority.

Democrats do not have anything like that. Their system is proportional, which is to say that delegates are allocated, more or less, based on the portion of the vote a candidate receives in a given caucus or primary.

Donald Trump's glidepath to the GOP nomination after the Indiana primary in May 2016 would not have happened if Republicans had the same rules as Democrats. Instead, there probably would have been a four-way battle between Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and John Kasich all the way to the GOP convention in Cleveland. No candidate would have won a majority of delegates, so there would have been some kind of brokered convention, with multiple ballots cast and delegates having to hammer out a deal.

There is an inherent trade-off the two parties make with their respective rules. Republicans prefer a quick and tidy end to their process, even if the chosen nominee is not the consensus

of the party electorate. This has happened in the last three cycles, as both Mitt Romney and John McCain also wrapped up the nomination at a point when they had won fewer than half the votes.

Democrats, on the other hand, have rules that stretch out the presidential nomination contest unless and until somebody has won a clear majority of the party, even if that means the process gets a little messy. And it certainly has. Democrats have had knock-down, drag-out fights many times since the current rules were set in place. George McGovern in 1972, Jimmy Carter in 1980, Walter Mondale in 1984, Barack Obama in 2008, and Hillary Clinton in 2016 all had to battle through to the end. Carter had to fight Ted Kennedy at the convention itself, even if the eventual outcome was clear.

The composition of the Democratic party lends itself to such infighting, too. The party has long been an accumulation of factions with relatively few overlapping qualities, except a commitment to the expansion of government.

This is as true now as it ever was. The party as a whole is close to being minority-majority, meaning that Latinos, African Americans, and Asians outnumber whites. These ethnic and racial groups do not always agree among themselves, however. For instance, Latinos supported Clinton in 2008, while African Americans supported Obama. Among white voters, a declining share of the Democratic coalition is to be counted as working class, although they still play an outsized role in certain primaries, like West Virginia's and Kentucky's. Upscale white moderates have migrated to the Democratic party over the last 30 years, but they coexist with an aggressively leftist, activist base that often has disparate priorities among its own ranks—with environmentalism, gay rights, abortion, gun control, and other issues vying for supremacy.

Given this diversity, Democrats could use some sort of mechanism that nudges their factions to come to a consensus choice in a timely fashion. But their rules lack such a unifying force. Indeed, the Democratic Unity Commission—the group impaneled by the Democratic National Committee to evaluate the party rules after the 2016 nomination—has recently recommended doing away with most of the "superdelegates." These are party officials who are able to vote as they please at the convention, unbound to any candidate. DNC chair Tom Perez has endorsed this idea, and it is likely to be enacted at the party's next meeting this month.

What might this mean for 2020? As Niels Bohr once said, "It is very hard to predict, especially the future." It is undoubtedly possible that some Democrat could emerge as the clear frontrunner, unite a sufficiently broad swath of the party, and secure the nomination in an expeditious manner. John Kerry managed this feat in 2004, catching fire at just the right moment to defeat Howard Dean in Iowa and New Hampshire. But given the multiplicity of factions within the party, the abundance of serious candidates who might run, and the lack of a mechanism to force a tidy conclusion to the process, the chances for a protracted battle are substantial.

It is not hard to envision three, maybe four candidates contesting the nomination all the way to the convention, each dominating some factions within the party while still falling short of a majority. Meanwhile, the elimination of the superdelegates would decrease the ability of the party leaders to preempt an ugly battle on the convention floor. And who is to say the eventual winner of such a knock-down, drag-out contest would reflect the values and interests of the whole party or serve as a winning alternative to Trump?

This is a general problem with the current nomination process, one that Republicans share as well: Primaries and caucuses essentially import the general election approach to settling political questions into the nomination—namely, campaigns, conflict, one candidate running against another. Is that really what parties should be doing? Partisans are all *mostly* on the same page, right? So why is spending more than a year fighting amongst themselves—compared to six months fighting against the political opposition—the smart move? Partisans, in theory, agree on enough points that a more consensus-driven approach could determine nominations in a more efficient manner. The only clear winners in the current system are the consultants and strategists who make a living working for campaigns.

For all the calumny they've been subjected to, the "smoke-filled rooms" of the old parties made a lot of sense in that regard. Like-minded leaders of the party came together, hashed out some deal over an extended weekend, and chose a candidate that the whole party, more or less, could live with. It wasn't perfect, but these days it looks a lot more reasonable than the apocalyptic battle the Democrats might wage amongst themselves just for the privilege of challenging Trump. ♦

GARY LOCKE

Obliged to Kill

The assault on medical conscience.

BY WESLEY J. SMITH

A court in Ontario, Canada, has ruled that a patient's desire to be euthanized trumps a doctor's conscientious objection. Doctors there now face the cruel choice between complicity in what they consider a grievous wrong—killing a sick or disabled patient—and the very real prospect of legal or professional sanction.

A little background: In 2015, the Supreme Court of Canada conjured a right to lethal-injection euthanasia for anyone with a medically diagnosable condition that causes irremediable suffering—as defined by the patient. No matter if palliative interventions could significantly reduce painful symptoms, if the patient would rather die, it's the patient's right to be killed. Parliament then kowtowed to the court and legalized euthanasia across Canada. Since each province administers the country's socialized single-payer health-care system within its bounds, each provincial parliament also passed laws to accommodate euthanasia's legalization.

Not surprisingly, that raised the thorny question of what is often called "medical conscience," most acutely for Christian doctors as well as those who take seriously the Hippocratic oath, which prohibits doctors from participating in a patient's suicide. These conscientious objectors demanded the right not to kill patients or to be obliged to "refer" patients to a doctor who will. Most provinces accommodated dissenting doctors by creating lists of practitioners willing to participate in what is euphemistically termed MAID (medical assistance in dying).

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An anti-euthanasia protest in Vancouver, Canada, October 10, 2013

But Ontario refused that accommodation. Instead, its euthanasia law requires physicians asked by a legally qualified patient either to do the deed personally or make an "effective referral" to a "non-objecting available and accessible physician, nurse practitioner, or agency . . . in a timely manner."

A group of physicians sued to be exempted from the requirement, arguing rightly that the euthanize-or-refer requirement is a violation of their Charter-protected right (akin to a constitutional right) to "freedom of conscience and religion."

Unfortunately, the reviewing court acknowledged that while forced referral does indeed "infringe the rights of religious freedom . . . guaranteed under the Charter," this enumerated right must nonetheless take a back seat to the court-invented right of "equitable access to such medical services as are legally available in Ontario," which the court deemed a "natural corollary of the right of each individual to life, liberty, and the security of the person." Penumbras, meet emanations.

And if physicians don't want to commit what they consider a cardinal sin, being complicit in a homicide? The court bluntly ruled: "It would appear that, for these [objecting] physicians, the principal, if not the only, means of addressing their concerns would be a change in the nature of their practice if they intend to continue practicing medicine in Ontario." In other words, a Catholic oncologist with years of advanced training and experience should stop treating cancer patients and become a podiatrist. (An appeal is expected.)

This isn't just about Canada. Powerful political and professional forces are pushing to impose the same policy here. The ACLU has repeatedly sued Catholic hospitals for refusing to violate the church's moral teaching around issues such as abortion and sterilization. Prominent bioethicists have argued in the world's most prestigious medical and bioethical professional journals that doctors have no right to refuse to provide lawful but morally contentious medical procedures unless they procure another doctor willing to do as requested. Indeed, the eminent doctor and ethicist Ezekiel Emanuel argued in a coauthored piece published by the *New England Journal of Medicine* that every physician is ethically required to participate in a patient's legal medical request if the service is not controversial among the professional establishment—explicitly including abortion. If doctors don't like it? Ezekiel was as blunt as the Canadian court:

> Health care professionals who are unwilling to accept these limits have two choices: select an area of medicine, such as radiology, that will not put them in situations that conflict with their personal morality or, if there is no such area, leave the profession.

For now, federal law generally supports medical conscience by prohibiting medical employers from discriminating against professionals who refuse to participate in abortion and other controversial medical services. But the law requires administrative enforcement in disputes rather than permitting an individual cause of action in civil court. That has been a problem in recent years. The Obama administration, clearly hostile to the free exercise of religion in the context of health care, was not viewed by pro-life and

CANADIAN PRESS / DARRYL DYCK / AP

orthodox Christian doctors as a reliable or enthusiastic upholder of medical conscience.

The Trump administration has been changing course to actively support medical conscience. The Department of Health and Human Services recently announced the formation of a new Conscience and Religious Freedom Division in the HHS Office for Civil Rights, which would shift emphasis toward rigorous defense of medical conscience rights.

Critics have objected belligerently. The *New York Times* editorialized that the new emphasis could lead to "grim consequences" for patients—including, ludicrously, the denial by religious doctors of "breast exams or pap smears."

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists joined the Physicians for Reproductive Health to decry the creation of the new office—which, remember, is merely dedicated to improving the enforcement of *existing law*—warning darkly that the proposal "could embolden some providers and institutions to discriminate against patients based on the patient's health care decisions."

The Massachusetts Medical Society joined the fearmongering chorus, opining that the new office could allow doctors to shirk their "responsibility to heal the sick." Not to be outdone in the paranoia department, People for the American Way worried the new office might mean that "other staff like translators also refuse to serve patients, which could heighten disparities in health care for non-English-speaking patients."

The Ontario court ruling is a harbinger of our public policy future. Judging by the apocalyptic reaction against the formation of the Conscience and Religious Freedom Division, powerful domestic social and political forces want to do here what the Ontario court ruling—if it sticks on appeal—could do in that province: drive pro-life, orthodox Christian, and other conscience-driven doctors, nurses, and medical professionals from their current positions in our health-care system. ♦

When Liberation Parties Govern

Judging the new leaders in South Africa and Ethiopia. BY JAMES H. BARNETT

On February 14, South Africa's president Jacob Zuma resigned amid widespread corruption allegations, ceding power to his newly elected deputy, the business tycoon and onetime anti-apartheid activist Cyril Ramaphosa. Less than 24 hours later, Ethiopian prime minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned, succumbing to the protests by the ethnic Oromo and Amhara communities that have rocked the country for nearly three years.

Cyril Ramaphosa

These are two of the continent's most strategically significant countries, and Western commentators quickly perked up to hope that the "winds of change" were once again sweeping Africa. These two resignations, unlinked and distinct as they are, hardly presage the dawn of liberal democracy across the continent. But in a region where we often reduce politics either to caricatures of inscrutable tribal hostility or to unnuanced questions of alleviating poverty, they can help us understand the evolution of Africa's liberation parties and the complex interplay between identity politics and economic development in nations that are still struggling to define themselves.

Both the African National Congress (ANC) of South Africa and the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) are liberation parties that came to power in the 1990s with great international fanfare. Each has failed to live up to its promise—although in very different ways.

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South Africa has suffered from a gradual erosion of its state institutions and subsequent economic stagnation under both of Nelson Mandela's successors at the head of the ANC, Thabo Mbeki and Zuma. The country was hit much harder by the 2008 recession than most emerging markets, but it is corruption that has had the most adverse effect. In 2016, a former government ombudsman's report stated that corruption was so rampant in South Africa as to amount to "state capture"—when corrupt parties are powerful enough to shape national policy for their own benefit. Zuma's frequent squabbles with the finance ministry produced a toxic investment climate that saw the retreat of foreign capital. And while ANC rule has encouraged the rise of a coterie of empowered and well-connected black businessmen—including Ramaphosa—the average black South African has seen far less material improvement. Unemployment is at nearly 30 percent, and staggering economic inequality contributes to high rates of crime, exacerbated race relations, and xenophobic attacks by blacks against African migrants accused of taking jobs.

The ANC's continued dominance of South African politics is only puzzling if you ignore the fact that while race is not the only issue in South Africa, it still frames the country's discourse. It has barely been a full generation since apartheid ended, which is not very long to scrub such a violent and oppressive legacy from the nation's psyche. Pervasive support for the party

BRENTON GEACH / GALLO IMAGES / GETTY

that liberated more than 80 percent of the country is understandable, especially when the majority of blacks are still impoverished compared to their white compatriots.

Whereas Mandela's ANC came to power peacefully, eschewing the radicalism of its early years, the EPRDF entered Addis Ababa on the back of tanks in 1991, ousting the genocidal Marxist Mengistu Haile Mariam. And whereas the ANC has struggled to overcome the legacy of the old regime, the EPRDF, under first Meles Zenawi and then Desalegn, has eliminated almost all vestiges of Mengistu's dictatorship with years of amazing economic performance. By scrapping central planning, modernizing agriculture, and attracting foreign investment, Ethiopia has boomed. In Addis Ababa, a modern light rail glides past the abandoned parade grounds where residents once listened to Mengistu lecture on scientific socialism. Ethiopia was the world's third-fastest growing economy from 2000 to 2016—outpacing India. Economic development has been uneven across Ethiopia's 100 million people, of course, but the macroeconomic outlook for the country is bright.

The EPRDF's problems lie not in economics, but in a state model based on the contradictory ideas of development autocracy and ethnic federalism. The EPRDF is dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the most effective fighting force of the Ethiopian civil war. The TPLF represents the interests of the Tigrayan people, who constitute a mere 6 percent of Ethiopia's population. The Oromo and Amhara, who together constitute 61 percent of Ethiopians, are nominally represented in the EPRDF's governing coalition, but most Ethiopians nevertheless see the EPRDF as a Tigrayan puppet and ethnic federalism as a vacuous expression.

Ethiopia's protests began in 2015 with Oromo anger over expansion plans for Addis Ababa that would have seen unchecked urbanization and massive non-Oromo migration into the traditional Oromo breadbasket. The Amhara joined not out of any particular affinity for the Oromo (the two groups are historically antagonistic) but out of shared animosity towards the Tigrayan-dominated regime.

Despite the intensity of the protests (which have been met with a bloody crackdown and the declaration of a state of emergency), Desalegn's resignation appears to be little more than window dressing. He was already slated to step down this year and had never been the preferred candidate of the hardline TPLF faction (he is himself not Tigrayan, but a member of the small Wolayta tribe). His departure does not change the TPLF's domination of the government—or the security apparatus, where real power lies. Immediately after Desalegn's resignation, the government implemented yet another state of emergency, squashing any hopes this would be a democratic transition.

If Desalegn's departure was about ethnic politics, Zuma's was about corruption. Many are portraying Zuma's resignation as a victory of the technocratic, centrist wing of the ANC over the party's more disgraceful elements. But Ramaphosa was only narrowly elected ANC head by party delegates (rather than ordinary voters), and his opponent, Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma (Jacob Zuma's ex-wife), is a populist who enjoys large support among the party base. His immediate challenge is building a sustainable coalition within a party whose elites benefited greatly during the Zuma years—and his cabinet reshuffle made it clear he doesn't yet have the power to sideline some of the former president's key allies. If he can manage this, he can then turn his attention to tackling government corruption, which if cleaned up could lead to a return of foreign capital and an upgrading of South African debt (which reached junk status last fall). Ramaphosa faces other challenges, too. Land reform, education, urban decay, and growing skepticism of previous reconciliation efforts are but a few of the issues he cannot long ignore.

Ethiopia's prospects are even dimmer. No successor to Desalegn has yet been named, and the succession is complicated by the fact that most Oromo and Amhara officials within the EPRDF are viewed with suspicion by their own communities. Even appointing a respected Oromo could trigger backlash from the Amhara, and vice versa. Any new prime minister faces the test of reconciling the demands of over 80 distinct ethnic groups while keeping the country's development on track.

Throughout its modern history, Ethiopian governments have attempted to hold the nation's disparate communities together through a combination of strong security forces, ill-fated development schemes, and some powerful national idea (the Solomonic dynasty stretching back to the 13th century under emperors like Haile Selassie or an Ethiopian vanguard to spread Marxism-Leninism across Africa under Mengistu). The EPRDF has eschewed ideology in favor of maximizing economic growth, offering little more than a thinly veiled neoliberalism administered by security officials who publicly extol the virtues of ethnic pluralism while brutally suppressing the grievances of all but a slim minority. If Ethiopia's rising tide has lifted all boats, it hasn't negated the importance of identity in politics—just as the industrial revolution didn't temper nationalist fervor in Europe (quite the contrary).

Complex and messy questions of history, culture, religion, and language are as integral to politics in Africa as they are everywhere else. It isn't unreasonable that the ANC should remain popular despite its poor leadership, while the EPRDF, despite the impressive development it's shepherded along, suffers a crisis of legitimacy. We should be hesitant then to put too much faith in market-centric approaches championed by international economists as one-size-fits-all solutions to Africa's problems. Sound economic policy matters, but even in the ostensibly posthistorical West, competing visions of identity and nationhood pose a challenge to the technocratic consensus. These dynamics are global, and we will have to look beyond GDP figures as we judge new leaders in Pretoria and Addis Ababa. ♦

A Woman's World—If She Can Keep It

Minding the #MeToo generation gap

By Alice B. Lloyd

For anyone counting #MeToo casualties with a wary eye, one of 2018's first will have stood out. On January 13, in a lengthy exposé published on a website for college-age women, a 23-year-old photographer charged comic Aziz Ansari with the crime of being a bad date. The pseudonymous "Grace" described yielding to his awkward sexual advances and, even though she felt uncomfortable, declining to protest or get up and leave. While women may rightly see a semblance of injustice in his arrogance and her all-too-familiar acquiescence, Grace's assessment that their date amounted to sexual assault sent the movement into crisis. Had #MeToo, cautious optimists worried, gone too far?

Just as notable, though, was the ensuing intergenerational feminist-journalist feud. When the television anchor Ashleigh Banfield criticized Grace on the air, the reporter who had written her story, Katie Way, hit back by calling Banfield a "second-wave-feminist has-been." What Way meant was that Banfield was 50 and held the moderate feminist views typical of professional women her age. These qualities put her out of touch with the dominant discourse, which equates male selfishness and insensitivity with sexual assault.

The "first wave" of feminism arose in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, when women claimed the rights of full citizenship: property ownership, the right to vote. Organizationally, it was indebted to the literal frontier, where women were indispensable workers, and to the widely popular temperance movement, which hard-headed ladies led.

Betty Friedan birthed the "second wave" in 1963 when she named the American housewife's nameless malaise. And the feminists who under the second-wave banner rode the rising tide of civil rights, birth control, and elite coeducation into a renewed, liberationist demand for equal status in work and life tended to be practical revolutionaries. They were women who worked and who asked to advance at work according to their abilities.

It was only in October of last year that the Harvey Weinstein stories started to hit, yet it already has the unmistakable feeling of epoch-making history. Predatory men, perched on the ruling rungs of highly visible professions, fell one after the next. They continue to drop. In droves, women they'd harassed, raped, abused, flashed, pinched, and embarrassed—often over decades in power—confessed these long-hidden workplace nightmares and dream-killing disappointments. *There's no stopping it*, per the dizzy refrain.

You can call it a "warlock hunt" (as essayist Claire Berlinski did in an incisive critique of #MeToo—an article half a dozen journals turned down); a righteous excision of perverts, power-abusers, and predators; or an unwinnable war for women's freedom from worrying about sex at work. Whatever you call it, there's no denying its purpose. What #MeToo's critics all seem to miss is that the movement now underway represents a practical reorientation of the struggle for women's equality. At its core is not a partisan argument, but an exceptionally American one: that we're past due our equal freedom.

An amnesia afflicts the current feminist revival if its proponents think "second wave" is a slur. Hard as it is to see from where Katie Way writes, the career women of the 1960s and '70s had the same inviolate goals as those of the #MeToo era. Understanding the historical reality of women's evidently still-unequal status requires we listen to the past to perceive what, after more than a century of struggle, still stands in our way.

OUT ON THE FRONTIER

Not too long ago there were, for one thing, far more blatant barriers to entry, Shirley Tilghman reminds me. A microbiologist and former president of Princeton, Tilghman is a frank and thoughtful feminist. In 1993, she argued in a *New York Times* op-ed

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A suffragette protest in Greenwich Village in 1912: Western states led the way in granting full voting rights to women.

BETTMANN / GETTY

for the abolition of tenured professorships, believing that the vaunted tenure track, focused as it is on hard work during a woman's most viable child-bearing and -rearing years, is fundamentally discriminatory. In 2001, she became Princeton's first female president—and only the second in the Ivy League. By then she'd already been out on the frontier for years.

In the 1970s, Tilghman was a groundbreaking research scientist. She'd earned her Ph.D. at Temple University, and as a postdoc at the National Institutes of Health, she worked on the team that cloned the first mammalian gene. By the 1980s, she was a researcher at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia and a professor of biochemistry at Penn. She was also a single mother to her son and daughter.

Her female colleagues at Fox Chase, several of whom were mothers too, drew strength from each other's borderline-delusional assurances, she recalls: "We just kind of lived in this slightly made-up environment where we said, 'There's no problem here.'" Her decision to leave Philadelphia for Princeton in 1986 came down, she says, to the needs of her two young children—the new job meant she could afford a house mere minutes from the elementary school, the pediatrician, and her office.

Tilghman said a mantra-like secular prayer for guilt-free endurance to keep from drowning in the demands of her double life: "There is only one of me, I can only be in one place at one time. I love my work. I love my children," she'd remind herself. "I'm not going to feel guilty when I'm in one place or the other." Knowing they were someplace women hadn't been before, working mothers of her generation had to trick each other into thinking it could actually be done, Tilghman tells me—only half-joking. In so doing, they proved that it could.

Kenyon College political philosopher Pam Jensen recalls endemic self-doubt among her female peers in graduate school at the University of Chicago in the 1960s. *Can women be philosophers?* They debated in earnest a problem few women today would entertain even under extreme protest. The draft was on then, Jensen reminds me, and men's lives depended on academic success sufficient to defer their service. Doubts about the morality of a controversial war and its soldiers' sacrifice created a state of perpetual unrest in which women were not full citizens. On the wartime campus, context was king.

And so it is today, she says. "It's natural that women students have a great deal more confidence: They will find open doors and support for what they want to achieve." But to Jensen, the conventional route of postgraduate marriage and motherhood, the sort of life Friedan painted as a prison, relieved the pressure to be brilliant, "to be Plato." "I had something to go home to, and that

was delightful. I think I felt the need to prove my usefulness," and a second life at home provided purpose to fall back on. Men in the field, presumably, worried less about whether they were "useful."

"The principle of equality is deeply, deeply embedded in our American souls," Jensen reminds me, moving to the subject of #MeToo's civic usefulness. Making the most of it requires we remember: "Rather than being driven by our culture, we should allow our political principles—the ones that argue for the equality of men and women, and the equal education of men and women—to come forth."

But as Tilghman notes, the question of whether women can succeed in their careers often has a simple, practical set of answers. As president of Princeton, she didn't move against tenure, but instead started a backup child-care benefit for students and employees, which sent a clear message to working mothers. And she made it a point to hire women—"Not because I had a quota and not because I set out to say, 'No matter what, this is going to be a woman,'"—which sparked a minor scandal. Her unofficial affirmative action policy, critics said, was born from an unfair, politically biased pro-woman agenda. Tilghman sees it differently. Many of the women she promoted have gone on to wider success, including Amy Gutmann, the president of the University of Pennsylvania, and Anne-Marie Slaughter, who served as director of policy planning at the State Department and now leads the think tank New America. In reality, the difference in Tilghman's hiring practice was simpler than some feminist conspiracy: "I could see women leaders more clearly than some of my male colleagues," she says.

They didn't have lists back in the day. But there were lunches. The earlier version of women in media watching out for each other was subtler and non-newsmaking. 'I can remember the first day I went to work in the Washington bureau, two women reporters took me out to lunch to tell me everything: who to watch out for, who was a real asshole,' says Jill Abramson.

BANDING TOGETHER

Women witness each other's trials and receive their lessons together. Anita Hill's testimony in the early 1990s told American women "a very familiar story" according to psychologist Leonore Tiefer. Now, with the Weinstein scandal and its unending aftermath, "There's a sense we're not going to do it the same way again." The old story is being revised, and "the consequences are going to be different."

There's danger, though, in distraction from collective concerns. Feminist gains come from women's real experiences and real opportunities. The impractical inventions of activists and theoretical feminists, the stuff of the "third wave," do not typically touch the lives of working women. Any social movement with individual self-knowledge and self-fulfillment as its collective aims has probably missed the point, says Tiefer, a professor at Columbia who studies human sexuality within its always-complex social context. "Younger women seem to be concerned about themselves as individuals and their lives in ways that I don't think—and my mother didn't think," she observes.

In 1969, Tiefer was a Phi Beta Kappa with a newly minted Ph.D. from Berkeley. Her adviser was Frank Beach, head of the American Psychological Association. "Frank wrote letters hither and thither," recommending her to top research institutions around the country. But Beach believed, she recalls, "women were not suited to science jobs because they're going to get married and have babies. He did not want to throw the whole weight of his reputation behind somebody's application when they were only going to stay in the job two or three years before bailing out."

But he did strongly recommend Tiefer for a professorship in psychology at Johns Hopkins and, she remembers, "got a letter back, which I have in my filing cabinet, saying, 'It looks like a great person, but we don't hire women'—black and white. I remember Frank giving me that letter and both of us saying, 'That's really too bad.' And we kept looking. It's not like you fall down dead and say, 'Discrimination!' I'm not sure I even knew the word." Colorado State came courting, and "They thought getting a Phi Beta Kappa to a second-rate school was a coup, which it was."

At CSU, she awoke to the women's movement. And as an overqualified professor—one every day more acutely aware of what might have been had she been born a man—Tiefer took to revolutionary leadership. "When I read that stuff in 1972, it wasn't just that I sat up and said, 'Oh my God, this is true. Why didn't I know this?'" she recalls. It was the new sense of togetherness: "It was all validated by other people's stories."

In the living rooms of her female colleagues and friends, she formed the Fort Collins chapter of the National Organization for Women. In one campaign, they petitioned the local paper to desegregate men's and

The 1970 press conference at which the women of Newsweek *announced their discrimination lawsuit*

BETTMANN / GETTY

women's job listings. Changing the old stories about what women could and couldn't do, "It became my struggle. I had to do something about this. It was my job."

For Lynn Povich it actually was her job. She led a 1970 sex-discrimination lawsuit against *Newsweek*—recounted in her 2012 book, *Good Girls Revolt*, which became an Amazon-produced TV series in 2016. Forty-six women fact-checkers were wasting their educations and talents in the all-female research pool beyond which there were no opportunities for them at the magazine. Women with their journalistic ambition hardwired—Nora Ephron, for example, and Ellen Goodman and Jane Bryant Quinn—quickly left for publications where they would be promoted. But Povich stayed and plotted. She was determined not just to write the story but to be part of it. They announced their lawsuit the day the magazine ran a cover on the women's movement under the headline "Women in Revolt."

"I wouldn't say we were braver," Povich counters my comparison to today's fighters for workplace equality, "No." But "I do believe you need to know your history to understand where you are and where you're going. Things are not being invented for the first time. They're progressing from these foundations. And so many young women have said to me that until they saw the series on TV or bought the book they had no idea women of my generation were treated this way or this was what men said or did."

For Povich, #MeToo manifests the same strength-in-numbers strategy of the complainants from the *Newsweek* research pool: "If you do it as a group, it's so much more powerful—and nobody is retaliated against," she says. "Younger women have said to me they didn't have, until very recently, a sense of sisterhood or protesting together as a group beyond the web."

#MeToo has touched her own work in a way, too. *Good Girls Revolt* was canceled after a single season. But the Amazon Studios executive producer who decided its fate, Roy Price, had to resign in October after being accused of sexual harassment.

GOING IT ALONE

By now, everyone who cares to has read a cached copy of the "S—ty Media Men" list—a Google spreadsheet deleted within days of its creation but still working its way around the web. For a few days, it circulated among the inboxes of women in media, mostly in New York, collecting the names of men whose misdeeds

The Hillary Clinton campaign's election night party at the Javits Center, as exultation collapsed into sobbing

range from the possession of an abrasive personality to multiple alleged rapes. Deserved firings and awkward exposés swiftly followed fevered coverage of the list.

The list's originator outed herself early in January when a rumor that she'd be named in an essay by feminist skeptic Katie Roiphe whipped around Twitter. The resulting controversy, in which an online activist offered to pay writers to pull their pieces from *Harper's*, where Roiphe's was set to be published, only proved what turned out to be her actual point. "Social media has enabled a more elaborate intolerance of feminist dissenters," she argued in the piece. Indeed, they have enabled a more elaborate intolerance of everything.

Contrary to her subjects' suspicions, Roiphe's piece is far more occupied with the Twitterati than with the creation of a list that bore a sometimes unthinking revenge. "The need to differentiate between smaller offenses and assault is not interesting to a certain breed of Twitter feminist," Roiphe charged, citing several anonymous interviewees who agree with her line of thinking but wouldn't say so on the record for fear of the feminist lynch mob. "One of them," Roiphe tells me, "did say, 'You're taking a bullet for the team.'"

These anonymous critics of the movement were, quite understandably, afraid of the response their comments would incur. "I'm not on Twitter, so I don't live in that world, thankfully," Roiphe adds. "But I do think people are afraid—of the anger, but also of professional repercussions." The list and its keepers served up a uniquely digital-age destruction.

They didn't have lists like that back in the day, former *New York Times* executive editor Jill Abramson tells me. But, she says, there were lunches. The earlier version of women in media watching out for each other was subtler and non-newsmaking. "I can remember the first day I went to work in the Washington bureau, two women reporters took me out to lunch to tell me everything: who to watch out for, who was a real asshole."

She knew her place in the chain of women's history too, she recalls. At a New Year's Eve party at some point early in the Clinton years—at Sally Quinn and Ben Bradlee's Georgetown townhouse, no less, "very glitterati"—Abramson caught three glamazons of mid-20th-century feminism putting their heads together: Lauren Bacall, Betty Friedan, and Madeleine Albright. These were women whose power and success no man dared constrain.

"They were engaged in what was obviously a fun and lively conversation," Abramson recalls. "I was thinking

WIN MCNAMEE / GETTY

they were like a chain, one necessary for the other. Lauren Bacall being this cool, glamorous movie star who wore pants back in the Hollywood golden age. She begat, even though their age difference wasn't that big, Betty Friedan. And Friedan begat Madeleine Albright"—who was secretary of state at the time. The willful women Bacall played on the big screen suggested a sharp discrepancy between women's intelligence and personal power and our domestic erasure during the baby boom, Abramson says. And the feminism Friedan spun from the housewives' empty lives certainly helped precipitate Albright's appointment. Every president since Gerald Ford has made certain to appoint at least one woman to his cabinet.

Abramson's public firing in 2014 fits in this historical chain, too. *Times* publisher Arthur Sulzberger Jr. replaced her after not quite three years atop the editorial food chain, saying he believed "new leadership will improve some aspects of the management of the newsroom." Abramson, it was reported, had recently discovered her salary and pension did not measure up to her male predecessors' and had complained. Her inquiries to the "top brass," Ken Auletta reported in the *New Yorker*, were said to have "set them off." "I had clashes with the men who were above me," she recalls, "but I don't think they were any more acute than those of any of the male [executive] editors." What she had, she recalls, was a reputation for being "pushy." Her successor, Dean Baquet, praised her in his inaugural remarks to the newsroom—for her *ambition*.

Katie Roiphe is far more occupied with the Twitterati than with the creation of a list that bore a sometimes unthinking revenge. 'The need to differentiate between smaller offenses and assault is not interesting to a certain breed of Twitter feminist,' she charges.

Abramson was the first woman to hold the executive editor spot—arguably the pinnacle of American journalism. Sulzberger had offered it to her over the phone in 2011, and she didn't think to ask at the time what her predecessors' compensation had been. "My advice to younger women now is don't do what I did," she tells me. "Just be very straightforward and ask those questions. I was stupid not to."

She's especially sensitive to the disappointments the next generation of women will inherit. And it's not just because of the last presidential election, although it's that too. Abramson was at the Javits Center on election night, planning to collect some color for a celebratory piece pre-written for the *Guardian*; instead, she saw exultation collapse into sobbing. "Seeing so many younger women literally prostrate with grief was gut-wrenching," she recalls, noting these are the same young women who marched the day after the inauguration and now tweet #MeToos.

"The climb is steeper and harder than you imagine," Abramson says she wants to tell them. #MeToo may have "put the fear of God into men in the workplace, but is it going to make them move over and promote more women into positions of power in society?" That, too, is women's work. "I'm the one," Abramson adds, describing her decision back in 2008 to move Jodi Kantor from editing Arts & Leisure to writing and reporting on political news. "I could tell she would be a totally kickass reporter." Not quite 10 years later, Kantor's reporting on Harvey Weinstein helped set another wave in motion.

BUILDING THE FUTURE

But before Jodi Kantor started reporting her first Harvey Weinstein story, there was Susan Fowler, a woman with a bad boss and a blog. And before there was #MeToo, there was #DeleteUber.

Fowler was just 25 and had been at her dream job as an engineer at Uber for barely a year when she wrote the 2,900-word post that would upend the swaggery startup sector. Her manager had propositioned her for sex and, when she complained, Uber's HR department protected him because, based on his productivity reviews, his value outweighed any unease on the part of the women forced to report to him. Those who complained were, further, punished with negative reviews. An external audit confirmed Fowler's account of Uber's practices. And just four months after Fowler reflected on "One Very, Very Strange Year at Uber," the ridesharing giant's founder and CEO Travis Kalanick had to step down amid a raging flurry of accusations.

In Silicon Valley, it's mostly men who are building the future: Women hold just a quarter of computing jobs and, as of 2016, only 15 percent of executive positions at the top tech companies. But it's this female minority which has triggered a workplace reformation. Fowler was far from the first to take her account of Silicon Valley sexism public. But her writing resonated—the post went viral—and her accounts of being sexually pursued by superiors, excluded from workplace camaraderie, and ignored when she complained through the appropriate channels got women talking to each other about their own experiences. Sometimes women talking to women is enough.

Take the case of Justin Caldbeck, the fallen head of Binary Capital, who hit on women when they pitched him for funding for their startups. Caldbeck's habits were whispered about but only came to light when a female founder who'd sought funding from Binary showed a reporter his late-night texts—instead of ignoring them and avoiding him as other women had done or acquiescing, as he'd hoped, in the interest of her career. Another founder told the same reporter Caldbeck had groped her at a work dinner. Significantly, the two women were friends who confided in each other before deciding to go public. Eventually, six women accused Caldbeck of unwanted advances, and he had to resign from Binary.

It doesn't surprise Telle Whitney that the culturally aggressive, gatekeeping venture-capital sector feels some of the valley's sharpest "growing pains." VCs' make-or-break power over startups feeds a Weinsteinish sense of entitlement. A veteran of the valley who led the Anita Borg Institute—which advocates for women in technology—until her retirement last year, Whitney describes an increasingly anxious sense of urgency to recruit and retain female technologists. Ideally, fear of firings, costly legal battles, and public shame wouldn't have been required. But it's an encouraging type of male anxiety, she thinks, compared to the conditions under which she worked in Silicon Valley a generation ago.

Not quite three years after Ellen Pao lost in court, it's hard to imagine any PR campaign, no matter how expensive, could convince us that she wasn't a victim of a discriminatory culture. Today, a public sympathy Pao could never have seen coming would easily overpower Kleiner Perkins's opposition.

"Most of the women I knew then—and quite candidly, it isn't that different today—were often the only woman on the team," Whitney recalls. "It was important to me to find other women who were doing some similar things." Whitney met Anita Borg while she was working on a doctorate at Caltech in the early 1980s. In those days, "I was so tired of not having any women around. I was consciously searching for other technical women." And so was Borg. "She became my closest friend."

Borg started an email list for women working in systems technology. Calling themselves "Systers," they hoped they could guide each other through the mostly male tech world. Yet in some respects, the outlook has worsened since then. While women's representation in law and medicine has risen to around parity in this last generation, in computer science it's plummeted. Women in tech quit at twice the rate of their male counterparts, despite lavish paid-leave benefits. Look to the middle-management level, Whitney says, to see what work really remains. Somewhere between the C-suite and the junior coders, the sum of many small decisions defines a company's "culture." While her comrades were the women who stayed, "Most of my mentors, throughout most of my career," Whitney admits, "were men. If I thought about what I wanted, the people who had done that were all men." Working closely with mostly men remains a prerequisite for success in Silicon Valley.

Seventy-four percent of women in computing jobs—software developers, data engineers—complained of gender discrimination in a recent Pew report, compared with roughly half of women who work in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields more broadly. Tech companies, Whitney explains, follow the same face-saving practices for harassment allegations as congressional offices and Hollywood studios. The nondisclosure agreements women sign in a settlement "really tie their hands" when it comes to condemning predatory behavior by powerful men in Silicon Valley. Plus, "It's really considered to be a career stopper to report any kind of harassment"—too often "people who chose to report it were sorry that they did."

Ellen Pao, in her 2017 memoir *Reset*, remembers discouraging a junior female colleague at the powerful venture capital firm Kleiner Perkins from reporting the inappropriate actions of a superior. At the time, Pao wrote, she was thinking of the retribution this woman might have in store. It was practical advice. But, she came to wonder, was it right?

The story of Ellen Pao stands today as the most telling of Silicon Valley's feminist fables. Fired from Kleiner Perkins in 2012, she sued for discrimination—and lost. They had declined to promote her from junior partner because she was a woman, she alleged, and then fired her for complaining. The firm followed the old script throughout a multiyear legal campaign against Pao. Kleiner's attorneys convinced the press that her discrimination complaint may have seemed like "the right issue" at the "right time" but was, on its merits, entirely wrong. They had a public affairs firm, the Brunswick Group, spread this line far and wide.

In the new context of #MeToo, Pao's experiences sting afresh. One of *Reset*'s more searing moments recalls a futile attempt to follow Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg's ubiquitous advice to "lean in." The pushiness and self-promotion Sandberg encourages play well at a place like Kleiner Perkins, where VCs are supposed to prove their worth by talking over each other in partner meetings. (Pao's bosses paid

for her to take professional coaching, so she could learn to take charge and "own the room.") With Sandberg's words in mind, Pao arrived early and took a seat at the conference table on her boss's private jet. But when the others, all men, arrived, they started talking about porn and prostitutes. How can women "lean in," she wondered, when it's so clear they're not wanted in the club?

Not quite three years after Pao lost in court, it's hard to imagine any PR campaign, no matter how expensive, could convince us this so-called "soft sexism" wasn't feeding a discriminatory culture. Today, a public sympathy Pao couldn't have seen coming would easily overpower Kleiner Perkins's opposition. Yes, something is very different now. Still, Whitney says, women need to remain wary—of retribution, of losing their colleagues' trust, of being branded disloyal or untalented and resentful. Fowler may have pushed into panicked soul-searching mode a class of men who had, not long before, successfully smeared Pao. There may be a world-changing movement afoot. But, Whitney reminds me, "Technical gurus are the future." The fastest-rising companies tend to depend on one or two brilliant men, she says, and "when a young engineer or intern reports that he's harassing her, management often doesn't want to hear it."

The cruel irony of the American female condition seems to be that despite all they learn of the world as it is, women can never transmit these lessons to their daughters. Everyone has to learn them for herself.

Counting the number of women in management at a company remains the telling test. If there's just one, she's a token. But find a C-suite at or near gender parity, and you'll see credible cultural evolution born from these women's cumulative experience of a form of discrimination that not so long ago had no name.

WHAT OUR MOTHERS KNEW

Our most insightful tourist may have seen it coming. Alexis de Tocqueville celebrated American women's worldliness as a youthful humor that evolves into a matronly reserve. In *Democracy in America*, he described the daughters of our young republic and predicted "that the social changes which bring nearer to the same level the father and son, the master and servant, and superiors and inferiors generally speaking, will raise woman and make her more and more the equal of man." Between cloistered superiority—for America owes its "singular prosperity and growing strength . . . to the superiority of their women"—and free lives lived fully in the world, American women will choose as Americans must.

The cruel irony of the American female condition seems to be that despite all they learn of the world as it is, women can never transmit these lessons to their daughters. Everyone has to learn them for herself. It was Leonore Tiefer who showed me this generational barrier when she told me about her mother: a music teacher and opera lover who might have been a composer or a famous critic. But, being a woman, she taught music and history at the local high school all her life—never even promoted to department head.

"I am my mother's daughter," Tiefer acknowledges, "and I think part of my availability to be affected by [the feminist movement] was a result of her lack of opportunities in the '30s and '40s." Tiefer waited years to give her straightforwardly sexist rejection from Johns Hopkins a second thought, but when she did—after what she refers to as her feminist awakening—she remembered her mother's professional disappointments. "When women say #MeToo," Tiefer tells me, "we're really talking about our mothers."

And it stands to reason that a natural motherly bias pervades the most honest intergenerational discussions of #MeToo. We don't ever really listen to our mothers. Second-wavers like Tiefer didn't see what their mothers' lives had been until they read about their disappointments in the feminist literature of the 1970s. "My mother had told me all of this, but I hadn't had the life experience to agree," she tells me. "Who believes their mother?"

When I think about my own mother, who's never not worked for long, she's less a jilted genius derailed by family than a fairly typical woman of her generation (born 1953). Her first career, in publishing in the late 1970s and '80s, was one of consistent meritorious promotion pockmarked by boorish behavior from bosses. Her second, in nonprofit fundraising from the 1990s onward, was weighed down in its early years by two demanding daughters.

It's the sort of story women of my generation know too well to listen to it. And it makes me wonder whether a #MeToo conscious of its inheritance will be about much more than women's equal opportunity, unimpeded by predatory perverts in the workplace. The freedom to call a creep a creep—and not just destroy him, but change the course of history—means more when we remember how hard women have worked, bit by bit, proving our equal measure while also bearing our extra biological burden, just to claim our natural freedoms in the first place. In the sweep of history, #MeToo is just another episode of liberal democracy setting right what stubborn inequalities remain. ♦

Scandal of the Self

The rise and fall (and rise again?) of televangelist Jim Bakker.

BY MARTYN WENDELL JONES

Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker were a husband-and-wife televangelist team who rose to prominence in the 1970s and '80s before their ministry was brought down by scandal, trickery, and bankruptcy. They lived extravagant lives in front of the camera, inviting viewers into their beautiful homes for holidays and vacations. While most children in this era grew up on television, the Bakkers' kids grew up *on television*.

In the early days, Jim and Tammy Faye carried on a centuries-old tradition of religious enthusiasm that placed them beyond the boundary lines of respectable mainstream culture. They began their career together as itinerant

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PTL
The Rise and Fall of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's Evangelical Empire
by John Wigger
Oxford, 407 pp., $34.95

Pentecostal healing evangelists, aspiring to their tradition's extravagant belief in a God who answers prayers in dramatic and miraculous fashion. They became television superstars, broadcasting in 40 countries around the world, and then turned to a new dream of a theme park, and even a whole community, where good Christian families could find fun and respite from the secular world. They grew rich as they grew famous.

Then they broke apart. Jim was sent to prison for fraud after losing his ministry to a group of shrewd fundamentalist Baptists in the wake of a sex scandal. Tammy Faye divorced him during his incarceration and withdrew from the public eye. With their downfall, the Bakkers became symbols, their names a cultural shorthand for corruption and venality. They had embodied a poor person's dream of wealth and were crushed by a public eager to see them made small again.

But in the Bakkers' heyday, their voices were carried up into the atmosphere and sent back down to hundreds of affiliate stations, which beamed them into the homes of millions of devoted viewers. Their network was one of the very first to invest in a satellite uplink, which enabled them to broadcast their programming 24 hours a day to a global audience. "God loves you. He really does," Jim Bakker would say at the close

JASON SEILER

of each episode of *The PTL Club*, their signature program. Modeled on Johnny Carson's *Tonight Show*, the Bakkers' show had dozens of guests from all corners of American culture in the '70s and '80s: Eldridge Cleaver, Pat Boone, Oral Roberts, Evelyn Carter Spencer, Ruth Carter Stapleton, Gary S. Paxton, Ronald Reagan, and Billy Graham, whose childhood home Bakker reconstructed, brick by brick, in his theme park. Their voices and the voices of their guests mingled in impromptu conversation in living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms all over America.

University of Missouri historian of religion John Wigger's *PTL: The Rise and Fall of Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker's Evangelical Empire* captures the thrill of the couple's ascent and the scale of their eventual collapse. The book also provides an opportunity for reflection on the meaning of their moment in American cultural history. The PTL phenomenon is almost wholly unknown to those who were too young to watch the story unfold in the '70s and '80s, but it remains an important episode in the recent past, a signpost along a path to the cultural crises of the present. Although it is easy to imagine televangelism as a fad that arrived suddenly and disappeared quickly, the Bakkers represent the upswell of a strong undercurrent in the American spirit—one that still pulls powerfully on our social imagination.

To appreciate fully the Bakkers' significance requires locating them in a spiritual lineage that extends back to early American history. A post-Reformation phenomenon in religious culture—referred to as "religious enthusiasm" in the combative literature of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe—came to have an enormous influence on American Christianity. For religious enthusiasts, the doctrines and traditions of Christianity are sometimes less important than individual intuition and personal experience. A grasp of the main themes of American religious enthusiasm as it developed historically will help to shed light on the particular appeal of the Bakkers—as well as the appeal of those who have come after them.

The American continent, wrote Monsignor Ronald Knox in 1950, "is the last refuge of the enthusiast." Knox, a Catholic writer and friend of Evelyn Waugh's, considered the 600-page study *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion* his life's work. The primary emphasis in religious enthusiasm, he wrote, "lies on a direct personal access to the Author of our salvation, with little of intellectual background or of liturgical expression."

In both Catholic and Protestant variations, enthusiasm knocked established Christianity off the rails. This personal spirituality was often accompanied, Knox wrote, by "a conviction that the Second Coming of our Lord is shortly to be expected" and "ecstasy, under which heading I include a mass of abnormal phenomena, the by-products, it would seem, of prophecy." Then, too, there were the tremors and shakes, the falling into trances, and the glossolalia—outbreaks of "unintelligible utterance" believed by the utterers to be a private means of direct communication with the Lord.

Before the mid-18th century, such wild disorders were not widespread phenomena in the New World. Here Jonathan Edwards becomes a pivotal figure. Born in 1703, he was a dour and serious-minded young man, endlessly resolving to commit himself to more rigorous spiritual disciplines—until one day, as he read the Bible, his soul was stirred with "a sense of the glory of the divine being." He later described this transformative moment: "I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was; and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be wrapt up to God in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him." Edwards's study of Scripture took on a charge of delight and his pious reveries grew more intense. The experience of joy in his adult devotions would ripen into a fixation on what Edwards took to be the bedrock of God's glory: his divine sovereignty over all things.

Edwards is remembered for his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," and high school history teachers paint him with the black, white, and dirty linen colors of the buttoned-up Puritans—terrified that "somewhere, someone might be happy," as Mencken put it. But Edwards had a rich emotional life, experiencing highs during his contemplations that seem nearly inhuman, and at other times weeping over his sins with such violence "that I have often been forced to shut myself up." Edwards's great achievement was not his famously terrifying sermon, one of many to have elicited cries of spiritual agony during the widespread 1730s revival movement that became known as the First Great Awakening. Rather, it was his magisterial treatise arguing against human free will, still excerpted in philosophy sourcebooks today.

"When we ask what it is that Edwards chiefly worshiped in God," the critic Gilbert Seldes wrote in *The Stammering Century* (1928),

> we find that it was neither Power nor Goodness. It was Will; and not strength of will, but freedom. God alone is infinitely free. The whole mystery of Edwards' denial of free will to man is in this: that he would not diminish, by the slightest degree, the glorious freedom of God.

What would become of Edwards's ideas if we were to remove God from them? There would still be left, Seldes writes, "a powerful impulse to self-development, to exercise of the Will." This is exactly the course that many of Edwards's innovative spiritual descendants would take.

Edwards also believed in the power of the individual Christian's personal connection with God. Too humble to credit this dynamic in his own experience, perhaps, he saw something trustworthy in the life and devotion of the woman he married when she was 17, Sarah Pierpont. "They say," he wrote—can you imagine him blushing?—that God "comes to her and fills her mind with exceeding sweet delight, and that she hardly cares for anything except to meditate on him." The raptures inspired by direct communion with the divine, the love-interest as a partner in seeking God—these, too, would become major themes in American religious life.

John Wesley, an Englishman just a few months older than Edwards, was walking alone in 1738 while

reading Edwards's accounts of conversions and revival in New England. "Surely," Wesley wrote in his journal, quoting the psalmist, "this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes." Greater things were still to come. Seldes writes: "Three months after Wesley had read Edwards' account of the work of God in Northampton, physical manifestations first occurred in his own revivals."

Wesley was the founder of Methodism, a believer in the free will that Edwards denied, and, furthermore, a believer in the prospect of moral perfection for the redeemed. He is the exemplary enthusiast in Knox's study, and the Catholic writer lays at Wesley's feet a large share of responsibility for wresting English religion away from doctrine and tradition and surrendering it instead to the experience, "real or supposed," of the individual.

It is impossible not to marvel at Wesley's vitality: His biographers all note that from the age of 36, he traveled some 225,000 miles and preached more than 40,000 sermons, some of them to crowds of tens of thousands of people. Knox depicts Wesley as an incessant "experimentalist" who was "forever taking the lid off to see how his gospel was working." Across the decades of his long life, Wesley formed societies intended to pass along "methods" for faithful Church of Englanders to grow in piety, and these societies were part of a larger scheme, Knox writes, to create "not merely a church within the Church but a nation within the nation; a sort of enclave, not only in piety but in daily life."

In America, Methodist preachers delivered their sermons and prayers extemporaneously. This practice not only helped preserve Wesley's "experimentalism" but also made for more lively and exciting worship services. Pastors and preachers of other denominations started to follow suit. And in the years after the revolution, as the young country expanded west into the forests and frontiers, the preachers went along. It was in back-country Kentucky in 1800 that the first American "camp meeting" commenced, inaugurating a form of worship responsible for embedding Wesleyan enthusiasm deep in the American psyche. Revivalism spread rapidly. Within two decades of that first camp meeting, most of New England would be "burnt over" by revivalism—so completely consumed by spiritual mania that a traveling preacher could hardly find a soul to save for hundreds of miles.

Camp-meeting preachers shouted and gesticulated; they preached with their fists. Internally, they measured the response of the crowd and adjusted. Their noteless orations gave confidence to their listeners that the words were true; they seemed authentic, and the message they offered was preciously consoling. When an itinerant preacher would speak about Christ to an audience, "he put an end to the terror of their loneliness," Seldes writes, "and promised them a communion, an intercession, a friend, in their friendless lives." In this way they "smashed for a moment the systematic impoverishment of the American spirit."

So: From Edwards and Wesley, we receive a fixation on the will, a desire to create enclaves of piety, and a belief in the possibility of the individual's direct experience of God. In the work of their successors, such as Charles Grandison Finney, we find latent belief in the sinlessness of the true self and an approach to revival characterized by the appearance of improvisation and spontaneity. These preachers cultivated the spirits of the multitude through results-focused experimentalism in the context of camp meetings around the country, sowing in the American character the seeds of enthusiasm that would yield strange harvests in every decade thereafter. The later 19th century saw the development of quasi- and post-Christian reform movements, fads, and pop-philosophies that would call individuals to embrace their higher selves—such as "New Thought," which centered the will in a larger project of spiritual self-advancement through the unleashing of "the creative power of constructive thinking."

The 20th century inherited from these enthusiastic forebears an epochal optimism. Even in times of anxiety and despair, there is a hopefulness in the American self, and this hopefulness is built upon that self's utter reality in a world of mere appearances; though circumstances change, the self remains a firm foundation. The literary critic Harold Bloom captured something of the strangeness of this in his provocative and infuriating book *The American Religion*. "The soul stands apart," he writes, "and something deeper than the soul, the Real Me or self or spark, thus is made free to be utterly alone with a God who is also quite separate and solitary, that is, a free God or God of freedom."

JASON SEILER

In essence, Bloom describes a post-Protestant Gnostic cult of the self: "The American finds God in herself or himself, but only after finding the freedom to know God by experiencing a total inward solitude."

Bloom's analysis hinges on a metaphysical intuition: that the self is uncreated, and it *knows*, rather than believes in, its own innocence and divinity. "*Awareness*, centered on the self, is *faith* for the American religion," Bloom wrote, and this religion of the self "consistently leads to a denial of communal concern." Christ is internalized to a point of blurred identity with the "real me." Such are the fruits of what Bloom calls the "doctrine of experience"—an outgrowth from the taproot of religious enthusiasm. Christianity, Bloom suggests, was too cramped for the young, unbounded nation. Abandoning doctrinal encumbrances such as belief in original sin (or sometimes, belief in sin at all), an intuitive and endlessly innovative spirituality grew to meet this need.

Wild spirits prepared the way for the coming of the Bakkers. Distinct from mainline, fundamentalist, and evangelical varieties of Protestantism—but eventually influential in all three—Pentecostalism grew out of late-19th-century Methodist holiness movements, dramatically emerging through a revival in San Francisco that began in 1906 and lasted for a decade. With a mandate to seek out the signs and wonders attributed to Christ's apostles in the book of Acts, Pentecostals trembled, shouted, spoke in tongues, and did much else to startle and shock the sensibilities of average Americans. Promises of dramatic spiritual and physical healing found great purchase among those in poverty, and the new enthusiasm became disreputable both for its excesses and its hard-up—and racially diverse—demographics.

The Bakkers both came up in Pentecostal churches. James Orsen Bakker and Tamara Faye LaValley grew up in the north—Jim, born in 1940, in a paper-mill town in Michigan; Tammy Faye, born in 1942, in a poor neighborhood in Minnesota. When young, both underwent the "baptism in the Holy Spirit," an experience of true intimacy with God made manifest in the "gift" of glossolalia. For several years leading up to high school, Jim was abused by an older man in his family's church.

Jim and Tammy Faye met at an Assemblies of God Bible school, from which they dropped out after their 1961 wedding. Not long into their marriage, John Wigger reports, the Bakkers were swindled by a traveling evangelist who spoke of plans to buy a yacht that Errol Flynn once owned in order to "cruise up and down the Amazon River preaching to the natives." Unable to join the jungle preacher on account of his having disappeared, the Bakkers became itinerant healing evangelists. They traveled a circuit across the Bible Belt, developing a puppet show for children who attended their events. They were once "paid with a live chicken, which Tammy turned into a pet."

The Bakkers were discovered in 1965 by Pat Robertson, who invited them to put their puppet show on the air on the Christian Broadcasting Network he was then creating in Virginia. "The show made the Bakkers local celebrities," Wigger writes. Jim Bakker soon also proved himself a very skilled fundraiser for the network, and he helped launch—and was the original host of—*The 700 Club*, CBN's long-running talk show. After breaking with Robertson and CBN, the Bakkers spent much of 1973 in California helping Jan and Paul Crouch start another TV project, the Trinity Broadcasting Network. But the Bakkers split with the Crouches, too. Jim and Tammy Faye began planning their own TV venture and expected to run it from California. But a January 1974 telethon Jim Bakker conducted in Charlotte, North Carolina, ignited into a full-blown revival, replete with signs, wonders, and healings. The Bakkers soon decamped to Charlotte for good. They moved into an old furniture store, set up a makeshift studio, and took to the air with zeal.

The forceful extemporaneity of early revival preachers found a new form in Jim Bakker's unscripted shows. From the beginning, he was a consummate improvisational performer and described his method as an ongoing response to the Spirit of God in each moment. American audiences—and soon, audiences in countries around the world—responded to the sense of authenticity that the Bakkers' ad-libbed programs conveyed.

The Bakkers came to call their TV network PTL, for Praise the Lord or People That Love, and their main program *The PTL Club*. They consistently refused to stick to prepared scripts for their shows, giving the operation a precarious, even slapstick, feel. Tammy Faye recorded an entire episode on a merry-go-round, which caused a cast member to vomit inside his dog costume. Jim was almost pathologically spontaneous in all parts of his life; even in the network's early days, he would often invent projects on the air without consulting anyone. "The various departments all had televisions so the staff could watch the show and find out what they were doing next," Wigger writes.

Early guests on the show gave the broadcasts a unique edge. Wild men like Little Richard and Larry Flynt could be featured one day and Colonel Sanders and Chuck Colson the next. Tammy Faye, ebullient and charming, would sing gospel ballads and her own music between conversations with guests; her struggles with addiction to prescription medication occasionally gave her an electric, unpredictable air, and her intense feelings were never far from being broadcast across her heavily made-up face. Jim's warm and disarming mien—he remained boy-faced well into his 50s—endeared him to visitors and viewers alike. Wigger writes that many of them came to feel as though they were part of Jim and Tammy Faye's extended family.

Jim and Tammy Faye embraced the charismatic culture that had kept Pentecostals on the far margins for most of the 20th century—and anyway, by the '70s, charismatic experiences were frequent enough to feel less unfamiliar even to worshipers in mainline denominations. (Writing in 1976, Tom Wolfe would describe "charismatic faith" as an important sign of a "Third Great Awakening"—the embrace of the self during the " 'me' decade.") The

Bakkers remained charismatics even as their organization bureaucratized the operations of the spirit: Phone counselors during telethons used pink "praise reports" to record healings and answers to prayer that occurred during broadcasts in response to needs that were catalogued using blue "prayer forms."

But God's math was a bit funny from the beginning. "Remember, facts don't count when you have God's word on the subject," Bakker said of his ministry's finances. Wigger writes that Jim Bakker copied fellow charismatic televangelist Oral Roberts's idea of "seed faith," which argues that those who give money in faith will be materially blessed in turn; those who don't give to the ministry may be holding back a greater material blessing for themselves by their lack of faith. Bakker combined this abundant life message with the self-help pop-philosophy of Norman Vincent Peale, the preacher whose self-improvement mega-seller *The Power of Positive Thinking* directly reprised the "constructive thinking" principles of New Thought. Jim Bakker was finely attuned to the desires of his audience and helped to bless—even to sacralize—those desires with his calm, affirming message of prosperity and well-being.

As the '70s bled into the '80s, Bakker became obsessed with the work of building out the grounds of his broadcast center into a Christian theme park. Heritage USA was meant to offer visiting families a camp meeting experience in community with other Christians. At a building nicknamed the Big Barn Auditorium, PTL launched a new evening variety program called *Camp Meeting USA*, and visitors to Heritage USA could join the studio audience during broadcasts. In 1986, Wigger writes, Heritage USA was the third-most-visited theme park in America after Disneyland and Disney World. There were plans to build an enormous church—the world's largest—as well as a fanciful lodging and ministry center called Old Jerusalem Village. Bakker hoped to eventually see the whole complex grow to house 30,000 permanent residents.

The ministry's light and heat attracted the attention of critics and the scrutiny of authorities. When news broke in 1979 that the Federal Communications Commission was investigating PTL for misusing money, Jim Bakker went on the offensive, denouncing the agency. "Much of Bakker's defiance toward the FCC and the press," Wigger writes, "was designed to motivate his supporters to give more, to convince them that nothing short of heroic action could save Christian television, maybe the nation itself." He even ordered a supposed "counter-investigation" that became the basis of a PTL documentary depicting the FCC as a wanton persecutor. When the *Charlotte Observer* followed up on the FCC investigation in 1986, PTL kicked off a full-dress PR campaign against the newspaper, complete with its own theme song ("Enough Is Enough!"). The government and the press could not dent Jim Bakker's belief in his own righteousness.

But then it all fell apart. In March 1987, the *Observer* reported that Jim Bakker was resigning from the leadership of PTL because of a sex-and-money scandal. A church secretary named Jessica Hahn claimed that Bakker had forced himself on her in 1980. (In her recent interviews with Wigger, Hahn shies away from describing the encounter as rape.) John Wesley Fletcher, a healing revivalist and frequent guest on Bakker's shows, had set up the encounter and may have drugged Hahn before he left her alone with Bakker; Fletcher himself then allegedly raped Hahn after returning to her hotel room later in the day. The day the story of the Hahn incident—and the $265,000 in hush money PTL paid her in 1985—came out, Bakker's fall made all the national evening news shows. For weeks thereafter, the scandal was splashed on newspaper front pages and nattered about on radio and TV talk shows.

The Hahn story is far from the only incident of infidelity and sexual impropriety in Wigger's account. Fletcher would later claim in a *Penthouse* interview that he also had three different homosexual experiences with Bakker. (Fletcher would later end his own life.) And he was apparently not the only man in Bakker's orbit or employ to be sexually intimate with him. Wigger relays a story told by Austin Miles—a professional clown who was a show regular at PTL—in his 1989 memoir: Miles opened the door to a sauna near the PTL studio one day in the late '70s to find Bakker and three male staffers "frolicking about in the nude … absorbed in playing with and massaging each other." Incredulous and shaken, Miles says he left, heard footsteps, and hid around a corner; Tammy Faye came "storming across the room. … She banged her fist on the steam room door," shouting for Jim to open it. An eyelash came free, triggering a meltdown; Miles writes that Tammy slumped against the locked sauna door, weeping—but Jim did not open it. Later, in his post-prison memoir, *I Was Wrong*, the defrocked Assemblies of God minister wondered whether his sexual proclivities might be linked to the abuse he experienced as a teen.

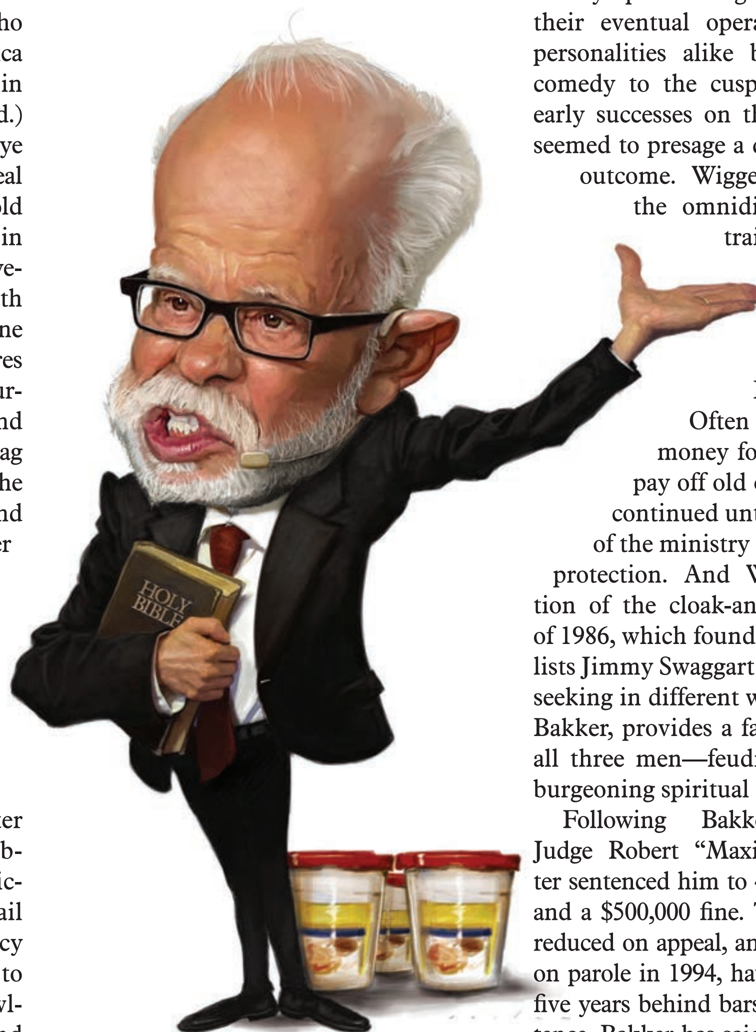
As Wigger describes, Tammy Faye had felt herself growing apart from Jim during the early '80s. The young enthusiasts who had joined the Bakkers on their great adventure in starting PTL had gradually been replaced with fixers and yes-men who created a hard, dark shell around Jim through which Tammy Faye couldn't see. PTL's massive building projects left her cold. She just wanted to be on television. Utterly guileless, she was frank with viewers about her problems with prescription drugs; afraid of flying, she had to take tranquilizers to board a plane. Nancy Isenberg writes in *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America* that Tammy Faye claimed to derive her signature style from Lucille Ball and Minnie Mouse, and Isenberg quotes Roger Ebert as judging Tammy to have spent more of her life on TV than any other living person. Isenberg identifies Tammy's persona as distant from both the understated dignity of aspiring upper-middle-class women and the earthy frankness of a true "rustic"; rather, she was the calculating-yet-spontaneous product of the medium she adored—her "authentic" persona curiously recalling that of the revival preachers of the 19th-century Kentucky backwoods.

"Why do you love the camera?" a

producer asks her in *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*, a 2000 documentary. Tammy Faye answers, "Because it's not a camera; it's people. It's someone to talk to." We see her make pitches for a comeback show that never happens and watch as she waits in the California desert with "dolls, dogs, and her faith" for the return from prison of her second husband, Roe Messner. (Messner was the builder behind Bakker's Heritage USA project and the man who put up the hush money for Jessica Hahn in 1985; he was imprisoned in the late '90s for bankruptcy fraud.) Irrepressibly "herself," Tammy Faye can't help but spontaneously reveal her feelings. "I like real. I'm an old farm girl; I like real," she says in the documentary—but her fake eyelashes are, like her relationship with Christ, "just who I am." She was one of the first Christian public figures to embrace the gay community during the AIDS crisis in the 1980s and gained a cult following. The drag queen RuPaul, who narrates the documentary, was a longtime friend of Tammy Faye's and described her in an interview as "an ascended master"—someone who "understood the complexities of life" and "made a conscious decision to focus on the light." Tammy Faye died of cancer in 2007, and to this day, she is regarded as an icon of camp.

As for Jim Bakker, even after the Hahn encounter became public, even after his trial and conviction in 1989 on 24 counts of mail fraud, wire fraud, and conspiracy to commit fraud, he continued to claim that he had no real knowledge of PTL's shadier dealings and ran his ministry with nothing but good intentions. Wigger reports that Bakker had refused to sign checks and that he had required his security detail to keep cash on hand for him at all times—without his knowing where the money came from. Bakker's sense of his own essential rightness seems unshaken.

A shocking passage in Bakker's post-prison autobiography recalls Harold Bloom's analysis. Bakker admits to an affair with Hahn, but claims it was consensual. He writes that two days after the 1980 encounter with Hahn, he visited a Christian psychologist. The doctor "knew that the only way I would find emotional health and spiritual freedom was by seeking forgiveness from God, forgiveness from Jessica Hahn, and forgiveness from myself." So Bakker lay down on the floor of the office, "prostrate before God," and his doctor pronounced him "forgiven of God." The psychologist then counseled Bakker not to tell Tammy Faye about the affair.



JASON SEILER

Bakker was restored to his sense of rightness, of "emotional health" rooted in the knowledge of his essential self's innocence, two days after he allegedly raped a 21-year-old fan of his ministry—and he went back to work. He would not tell Tammy Faye of the incident with Hahn for more than six years.

John Wigger's book straightforwardly traces the PTL ministry's wild arc; he gives the complicated story elegance, understated humor, and surprising emotional punch. Jim and Tammy Faye appear in its pages as deeply human and sympathetic figures. The scale of their eventual operations and their personalities alike bring their dark comedy to the cusp of tragedy; the early successes on the revival circuit seemed to presage a different ultimate outcome. Wigger expertly maps the omnidirectional money trails that perplexed investigators for years as the Bakker cohort pushed PTL into ruin. Often Bakker raised money for new projects to pay off old ones, a trend that continued until the dissolution of the ministry under Chapter 11 protection. And Wigger's description of the cloak-and-dagger dramas of 1986, which found fellow televangelists Jimmy Swaggart and Jerry Falwell seeking in different ways to take down Bakker, provides a fascinating look at all three men—feuding captains of a burgeoning spiritual industry.

Following Bakker's conviction, Judge Robert "Maximum Bob" Potter sentenced him to 45 years in prison and a $500,000 fine. The sentence was reduced on appeal, and he was released on parole in 1994, having served about five years behind bars. During his sentence, Bakker has said, he spent a great deal of time trying to find his "real" self.

He remarried after he was released and found his way back into television in 2003. Based in Blue Eye, Missouri, his current ministry is called Morningside. Bakker hosts a talk show in an indoor complex that resembles Heritage USA; recently, Trump supporter and charismatic televangelist Paula White was on the show with her husband, Jonathan Cain, the keyboardist from Journey.

Bakker repudiated his prosperity preaching after he got out of prison, where he claims to have read the Bible in full for the first time. In its thornier passages, he has found a new theme for his ministry: the imminent apocalypse. Wigger visited tapings of Bakker's new show and describes an episode in which the second half of the two-hour broadcast was dedicated to selling giant buckets of freeze-dried survival food. A journalist for the *Daily Mail* who also visited the ministry reported that a year's supply of pancake mix with a 30-year shelf life costs $550. As Ronald Knox wrote in 1950, "enthusiasm is not yet dead in countries where they understand salesmanship."

Old-school prophecies are delivered between sales pitches for apocalypse-prep, and Bakker's wife Lori will occasionally speak in tongues during their broadcasts. According to the *Daily Mail* reporter, Bakker is developing the 700-acre Morningside property into "a Christian community, complete with its own water tower."

Bakker still understands the nature of his country's collective desires. The "me"-focused '70s, the "greed is good" '80s—all of that is behind us. Our nation's new outlook is grim. The great tide of prosperity that came in after 1945 and lifted up every social class has receded; the millennial generation is projected to be the first that will earn less than their parents. In dark times, our nation's intuitive spirituality, its doctrineless faith, offers solace: Against the threats of an outer world, it offers an inward intimacy with a God of love. Against those who claim our society rests on unjust foundations, it calls its faithful to recollection of their own essential innocence.

What Bakker, prophet of that religion, now promises is a survivable cataclysm. Bunkering down with the Lord, we will emerge to find ourselves free again of the society that restricts our freedom. Prepare, prepare, Bakker says. Listen to me. Send checks. The apocalypse is coming and most of humankind will be destroyed, but you can make it. Try the macaroni, and remember: God loves you. He really does. ♦

B&A

Wilde Tamed?

A revisionist account of the great wit's post-prison life.

BY JOHN SIMON

Oscar Wilde
The Unrepentant Years
by Nicholas Frankel
Harvard, 374 pp., $29.95

'There are two ways of disliking my plays. One is to dislike them, the other is to like *Earnest*." If it were not for that "my," you might think this written by some philistine—after all, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is the wittiest comedy in the English language. To be sure, Oscar Wilde, who was right about a lot of things, could also be wrong about others, such as his involvement with "renters," young male prostitutes, some of whom testified against him at his fateful trial.

But Nicholas Frankel, author of *Oscar Wilde: The Unrepentant Years*, is only passingly concerned with Wilde's pre-trial life; his book is mostly about the three and a half years between Wilde's release from prison in 1897 and his pitiful, untimely death. Frankel, who previously edited the uncensored version of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, has done a thorough job of digging through the plethora of material about Wilde that has been committed to paper. His purpose is to refute the traditional view of Wilde ending as a broken martyr, a victim of hypocritical Victorian morality. As explained on the book's dust jacket, Frankel aims to give us a Wilde who pursues his "post-prison life with passion, enjoying new liberties while trying to resurrect his literary career." Wilde was not successful in the attempt. As Frankel shows, Wilde was unable to produce new work during these final years—with the exception of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, by far his best poem, about his and his fellow prisoners' reactions to the hanging of a wife-killer.

When you come right down to it, why shouldn't Wilde have been unrepentant? He had paid heavily for a crime not unpopular in Britain, albeit generally practiced more clandestinely. How it must have rankled that, for example, Lord Rosebery remained free.

A statue of Oscar Wilde unveiled in 1997 near his childhood home in Dublin

ELIZABETH W. KEARLEY / GETTY

Wilde, as he emerges from Frankel's book, was basically a kindly, warm-hearted chap. He himself, and everyone he encountered, attested to his talk being superior to his writings, delightful as they are. Many people live by their wits, but the exiled Wilde largely lived by his wit alone. No wonder he had several devoted friends, starting with his first gay lover and later literary executor, the Canadian Robbie Ross, who commissioned and is buried in a small compartment of Wilde's large, heroic funerary monument by Jacob Epstein.

Only at the very last did Wilde become anything less than a charming companion and exquisite conversationalist, when soliciting money from

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everyone he knew, however slightly. His estranged wife, Constance, provided him an allowance, which continued even after her 1898 death. Ross was another benefactor. So were the American journalist and author Frank Harris and Wilde's dedicated publisher, Leonard Smithers. Of course there was his one true love, the much younger Lord Alfred Douglas, with whom he unsuccessfully tried to set up housekeeping in Naples. Luxury-lovers both, they lived, chiefly in Paris, on what Oscar made from promises of unwritten work and what Douglas could lure from his loving mother.

Here are familiar anecdotes, such as the poet Ernest Dowson's enticing Wilde to a Dieppe brothel, which Oscar was to refer to as "like chewing cold mutton." Or his dying line about the hideous wallpaper: "One of us has to go." Or, less familiar, the dinners with Ferdinand Esterhazy, whom Wilde dubbed the Commandant—the man who had committed the spying for which Alfred Dreyfus was wrongfully sent to Devil's Island. During one of these dinners, Esterhazy and Wilde debated which of them had suffered most in life, with Wilde reportedly responding to Esterhazy's claim of innocence:

> The innocent … always suffer, *M. Le Commandant*, it is their *métier*. Besides, we are all innocent until we are found out; it is a poor, common part to play and within the compass of the meanest. The interesting thing is surely to be guilty and so wear as a halo the seduction of sin.

The "fact of a man being a traitor and a liar," writes Frankel, "was nothing against his conversation" as far as Wilde was concerned. As he remarked, "If Esterhazy had been innocent I should have had nothing to do with him."

The emotional leitmotif of Frankel's book is the Wilde-Douglas love story, one of vacillations and tergiversations, perhaps the most spectacular in the annals of literary history. There were various times when each of the lovers declared he would kill the other, only to rush back into his outstretched arms. After Wilde's death in 1900, Douglas jumped, Hamlet-like, into Wilde's open grave. It was only several years after Wilde's death that Douglas first read the long accusatory letter, known as *De Profundis*, that Wilde had written him from prison but that had remained unsent.

Very touching, too, is Wilde's relationship with Jean Dupoirier, his landlord at the inexpensive Hôtel d'Alsace, who did not charge him for his room, redeemed his confiscated clothes, and was one of the mourners at his funeral with a wreath reading simply "*A mon locataire*" (to my tenant).

While the pages in which Wilde tries to touch for a handout anyone he knew make for painful reading, the rest of Frankel's history is scintillating enough. The quotes from Wilde's sayings and writings sparkle, defiantly undimmed. Thus, during a boring visit to Switzerland, Wilde notes that the Swiss were "carved out of wood with a rough knife most of them, [or else] carved out of turnips. … Their cattle have more expression."

Even at the last, he could note that he was "dying above his means," and Douglas, much after Wilde's death, wrote that he "held his [café] audience spellbound as he discoursed in his exquisite voice of all things in heaven and earth, now making his hearers rock with laughter and now bringing tears into their eyes." On his last legs, Wilde still managed expensive clothes. He cadged gold-tipped cigarettes and, dying, requested fresh toiletries and cologne.

Frankel observes that many of Wilde's friends "later said that his works are but a distant echo of his speech." Wilde once wrote that "every civilized man and woman ought to feel it is their duty to say something, even when there is hardly anything to be said." He practiced what he preached. ♦

B&A

Heaven Painter, Hell Painter

Bryan Christie's bodies transformed and undone.

BY FRANKLIN EINSPRUCH

Bryan Christie
Every Angel Is Terror
Matter & Light Fine Art, Boston
through March 31

What would Leonardo have done with radiography? What might Michelangelo have accomplished had 3-D modeling been available? What heights of the mind would a neo-Platonist like Piero della Francesca have witnessed if he had lived long enough to see calculus?

Tools aren't everything, and those men were products of their time as much as we are of ours. Yet here we are, the beneficiaries of ingenious systems and electronic contraptions that make commonplace feats that were impossible within not-very-distant memory.

Franklin Einspruch is an artist and writer in Boston and the editor-in-chief of Delicious Line.

Meanwhile, the artistic achievements of the Renaissance have never ceased to evoke awe. Their craft and emotional effect seem somehow too mighty to emulate. When it comes to art, we are more powerful than ever before and as helpless as we've ever been.

Into this overlap between the centuries-old Western figurative tradition and the possibilities of technology steps Bryan Christie. Jazz musician by training, medical illustrator by vocation, and religious aspirant by temperament, as a visual artist Christie is taking part in an

ancient and ongoing effort to depict the human body in a manner that expresses a reality beyond mere flesh.

His method is to pose virtual 3-D models, the ones he uses in his work as an illustrator, in positions inspired by Renaissance art. (Michelangelo is an important touchstone for him.) He then renders these poses in multiple views, rotating a fixed distance around the figure until the model has been completely spun in virtual space. Each of these views is then printed digitally onto silk, the silk is coated with an application of wax, and the wax is fused to the supporting layers using a heat gun and a blowtorch.

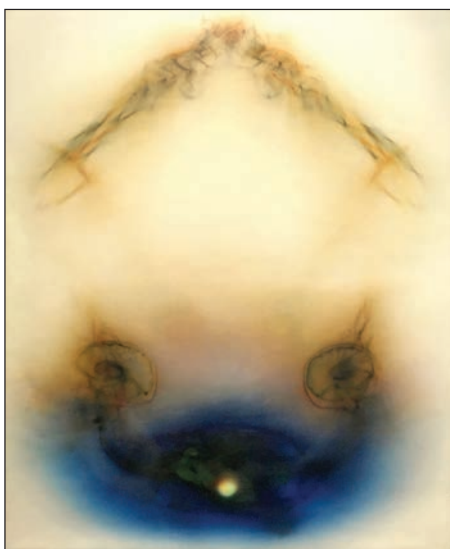
Visually, wax is magical stuff, its surface more greatly resembling skin than that of any other painting medium. Here, its effect is something like a hot fog. Out of that haze emerges a mostly symmetrical abstraction in which one can, with some effort, pick out a lung, a womb, or a tibia. This aspect of the project would have been recognizable to Leonardo. It's not hard to imagine the master trying something like it, had he the computing power.

But the effect is more akin to the paintings made by the anonymous Tantra practitioners in Rajasthan, in which a geometric shape is placed in the middle of a rectangle and imbued with such energy as to imply an open channel to the divine. "It is a mistake to think that spirituality is seen only through a mist," said Robert Henri, but as mists go these multilayer wax veils are effulgent.

In the series on display at Boston's Matter & Light gallery, the compositions have a satisfying bottom-weighted quality. They sit like vases. But prolonged inspection reveals the forms to be built from inverted bodies—that is, most of the figures are pictured with heads down and legs up—which conveys upset, disorientation, and flux. Are they dead? Submerged? Cast out of heaven?

This amalgam of stasis and flux is a source of intriguing tension. In the work from which the exhibition takes its title, *Every Angel Is Terror*, one can make out skulls and brains in the protrusions at the bottom of the composite figure. Stacks of organs form its walls, topped with wispy leg bones. They surround an interior space, a kind of heart, glowing crimson. As the human

Above: Bryan Christie's Every Angel Is Terror.
Below: Of Your Presence Just Passed.



MATTER & LIGHT FINE ART GALLERY

is reconstructed into something otherworldly, vestiges of organ and bone remain in evidence. The transformation seems to have a holy end, but its midpoint, captured here, remains full of reminders of death.

Bodies have come almost wholly undone in *Of Your Presence Just Passed.* Craniums rise atop vigorously arched spinal columns that meet at a point of light that glows in a heavenly field of ultramarine. The lines that one would know from the other works in the show to have described bones or ligaments have abstracted into calligraphy and curlicues. They form a floating rooftop over the basin of backbone that holds the luminous point. In this it's possible to see an element of H.R. Giger, who worked this sort of twisting of human anatomy with markedly different results from Christie's. It's equally plausible to see a kinship with Morris Graves in the line quality and the watercolor-like fields of digital color. Graves hated modern technology but was a similar type in certain ways, moved by a widely informed religious syncretism to try to depict the ineffable.

A remark made by Eric Fischl to *Art in America* in the mid-1990s is helpful here:

> Artists connected to the church were asked to imagine four things: what heaven was like, what hell was like and what the Garden was like before and after the Fall. … You still can find heaven painters, hell painters, and Garden painters, but you rarely find them in the same person.

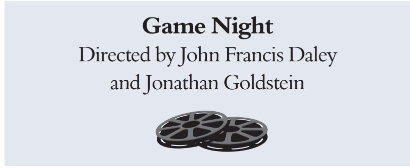
Christie is a heaven painter, with a bit of a taste for hell.

Beeswax aside, these are digitally printed images, and anything could have been done with the color. A new exhibition at the nearby Institute of Contemporary Art, *Art in the Age of the Internet, 1989 to Today*, is the centerpiece of a collaboration between 14 organizations in the area to show art that has embraced technology's inherent anti-naturalism. Such art is made on the RGB color model, and it heavily favors green. Consequently, Christie's push into orange is an interesting counterpoint to the tendencies of the media on display around Boston at the moment. He seems to have taken his color cues from Fra Angelico (coincidentally getting a thorough treatment at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum). Yet Christie's work shares with the Internet art much of the same genetic material, relying as it does on common platforms of computer graphics. Christie's work is in the time of the Internet, but not of it. ♦

Not All Fun & Games

In Game Night, *the writer rules—and we all win.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Game Night
Directed by John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein

It's rare—vanishingly rare—to get the feeling in a movie theater that the people who made the film you're seeing know exactly what they're doing, know exactly what they're trying to achieve scene by scene, know exactly what plot they're telling, know exactly the characters they're putting on display before you, and know how it's going to end from the very minute the movie starts. That's what you get from the terrific *Game Night*.

It's either a comedy disguised as an action thriller or an action thriller disguised as a comedy, and you don't really know which until the very end. A couple played by Jason Bateman and Rachel McAdams meet playing trivia, court playing charades, and marry playing *Dance Dance Revolution*. When we first encounter them, they are having trouble conceiving, and that problem seems to be connected to Bateman's competitive feelings about his far more successful older brother, played by Kyle Chandler. When Chandler comes into town and joins their weekly game night, farcical and violent hijinks ensue.

Jason Bateman, Rachel McAdams, and Kyle Chandler in Game Night

Game Night is mostly populated with new faces, like the incredibly fresh Lamorne Morris and Kylie Bunbury as a buppie couple who are nauseatingly lovey-dovey until he finds out she once slept with a celebrity. Even the requisite dumb guy, played by the Broadway actor Billy Magnussen, is surprisingly fresh in his stupidity. Bateman (who also co-produced) plays his usual teetering-on-the-edge-of-intolerably-obnoxious character, but even though we've seen it before, he's so good at it we don't mind. And McAdams makes spectacular use of her cute-as-a-button self—as a sort of running commentary on the way in which cute-as-a-button people know they're cute as a button and use it to their every advantage.

The real highlight here is the screenplay by Mark Perez. It crackles with lively dialogue and funny sketch comedy, but it's the faultless structure that propels *Game Night* forward from its first moment. And the able directing team of John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein clearly know they had a piece of gold handed to them and helmed the picture in service to the screenplay rather than looking for ways in which they could outshine it.

"Screenplays are structure," writes William Goldman in *Adventures in the Screen Trade* (first published in 1983 and still, 35 years later, the single best book ever written on the movies). That is in part why screenplays look more like instructions for assembling electronics than pieces of prose. They're not prose works; they are instructions or blueprints. And good ones are always in danger of being compromised by the exigencies of moviemaking itself.

Goldman points to the way in which stars will insist on stealing good bits of dialogue from minor characters so they can have the memorable lines even when they don't fit. Directors will misunderstand the plot and stress the wrong things. Or nervous studio execs will demand that a morally compromised lead character be given a speech to explain that he really didn't do the bad thing he just did so that the audiences won't dislike the character and hence the movie itself.

One of the great oddities of American popular culture is that while the writer is a relatively low-status person in Hollywood moviemaking, the writer is the central figure when it comes to the making of television shows. In a world where the director or the producer or the star is king, there's a natural drift away from storytelling coherence—because there's no one at the table arguing for it. For the past two decades on television, story and character have reigned because the showrunner is always a writer—and we have all reaped the benefits.

Game Night is the rare example of a movie that let its screenplay be. It was, after all, the reason everybody wanted to make *Game Night* in the first place. But the incentives of the mainstream movie business often tend toward the idea that everybody should get a crack at fixing the thing that probably wasn't broken in the first place—thereby breaking it in the process. It's worth celebrating those rare occasions when that doesn't happen. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"David Mamet Says He's Writing a Play About Harvey Weinstein"
—Hollywood Reporter, *February 23, 2018*

PARODY

Scene 4: A finely appointed hotel bedroom. New York. 3 a.m. Gwen Partridge sits on the bed. Weinberg enters, clad in a bathrobe.

WEINBERG
I'm going to take a shower. A shower. I'm—A man takes—

GWEN
A man takes—takes what?

WEINBERG
A shower. Sometimes. Takes one. I—You—

GWEN
Me—Yes? What?

WEINBERG
You—son of a—You. Don't—

GWEN
Don't—

WEINBERG
Embarrass me. I—Watch me. Shower, understand? Watch.

GWEN
Huh?

WEINBERG
A man will—A man—I—I've got a film. It's—I need a lead.

GWEN
A lead—How—Christ! How—how many?

WEINBERG
How many?

GWEN
Leads—How many?

WEINBERG
Which leads?

GWEN
The goddam LEADS!

WEINBERG
The Glengarry leads?