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HOMELESS IN SEATTLE

Why are wealthy cities with booming economies seeing a surge of the down and out?

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

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Contents

April 16, 2018 • Volume 23, Number 30

2 The Scrapbook — *Vegetarians v. carnivores, Democrats fighting dirty, & more*

5 Casual — *David Skinner, sans nickname*

6 Editorials — *The Crown Prince Goes to Washington • Trump vs. the Economy*

10 Comment

The Legitimacy of Israel's Borders — by Christopher Caldwell

The Once and Future Vladimir Putin — by Priscilla M. Jensen

The Conscience of Ann Coulter — by Charles J. Sykes

The Councilman's Snowstorm — by Philip Terzian

Dimestore Leader-Worship — by William Kristol

Articles

16 Johnny One-Note — by Michael Warren
The monomaniacal White House talking points

17 Trump and Syria — by Thomas Joscelyn
Another premature declaration of victory?

19 The Politicization of the MCAT — by Devorah Goldman
Why should we care about the opinions of aspiring doctors?

21 Worship Thy Ancestor — by Dave Shiflett
. . . from a distance

Features

23 Homeless in Seattle — by Ethan Epstein
Why are wealthy cities with booming economies seeing a surge of the down and out?

30 Campus Disrupter — by Naomi Schaefer Riley
Michael Crow's quest to change higher education

Books & Arts

35 Speak, Goddess — by Susan Kristol
Musings on two new translations of the Odyssey

38 Aaron Burr, Conspirator — by James M. Banner Jr.
The hard-to-untangle tale of how he became the villain in our history

40 Truly Grand Strategy — by Aaron MacLean
Drawing on the wisdom of history, philosophy, and literature to inform foreign policy

43 Witty Women — by B.D. McClay
Controversy-courting creators, critics, and cultural commentators

45 *Ready* (Or Not) — by John Podhoretz
Steven Spielberg's messy, mostly animated virtual-reality spectacle

46 Obituary — by Matt Labash
Lefty Kreh, 1925-2018

48 Parody — *Politics at the egg roll*

COVER: GEORGE ROSE / GETTY

The Winning Gesture

In the era of gesture politics, when political discourse consists of an endless sequence of symbolic protests and counterprotests, there are few winners. The shouting and sign-waving protesters look bitter and sanctimonious, the objects of their disgust are obliged to defend themselves against frequently outrageous accusations, and no one comes away more enlightened.

In a recent exchange of gestures involving a protest and counterprotest, however, we're pretty sure one of the participants won.

A group of animal rights activists assembled outside Antler Kitchen & Bar, a fashionable restaurant in downtown Toronto catering to carnivores, in order to protest the establishment's policy of serving meat. The protesters held a large banner emblazoned with the word MURDER in front of the restaurant's street window. Potential customers were availed of the protesters' opinions on veganism and animal rights; the restaurant's paying customers were made to see the banner's accusation while they ate.

Leg of venison, Antler Kitchen-style. Oh, the humanity!

The protest, which was legal, went on for weeks. More protesters came; some brought megaphones. "I hoped it would fizzle out and go away," Michael Hunter, the owner of Antler, told the *Globe and Mail*. But it didn't.

So Hunter took a creative approach. He went to the front window of his restaurant with three items: a knife, a cutting board, and a large leg of raw venison. He sliced up the leg, separating meat from fat, and prepared the meat for roasting. Video of the exchange shows Hunter slowly and calmly exhibiting his talent, and the protesters shouting, "That deer did not want to die!" and "He's mocking us!"

As of this writing, protests outside Antler Restaurant & Bar have noticeably diminished, and the Facebook page created by the protesters has been inundated with taunts from carnivorous commenters. It doesn't seem to have occurred to the protesters that harassing and bullying law-abiding citizens isn't the most effective way to persuade them. ♦

Books We Didn't Finish

A new book recently caught our attention: *It's Time to Fight Dirty: How Democrats Can Build a Lasting Majority in American Politics* by David Faris, an associate professor of political science at Roosevelt University in Chicago. We weren't aware that Democrats needed the advice of the title, having long taken an admittedly perverse pleasure in cataloguing Democratic dirtiness.

Some of our favorite moments: supporters of Democratic gubernatorial candidate Kathleen Kennedy Townsend passing out Oreo cookies to mock black Republican candidate Michael Steele; Vermont governor Howard Dean suggesting it was an "interesting theory" that George W. Bush knew about the September 11 attacks before they happened; a pro-Obama television ad holding Mitt Romney responsible for the death of a man's wife by cancer because the man lost his job after Bain Capital (which Romney didn't work for at the time)

restructured the man's company.

Nonetheless we wondered if Faris might offer his fellow Dems some useful counsel. We got as far as page xix. What the author wants, he writes, "is not to institute single-party rule for the Democrats in perpetuity." Golly, we're glad to hear that! So what is the point? "It is to control the levers of power long enough to permanently alter the political trajectory of the country, to smash the current coalition of misfit Nazi toys, misogynist creeps, and rich nihilists and replace it with a sensible, center-right opposition capable of telling the difference between fake news produced by Macedonian troll farmers and actual facts about the world that we inhabit together."

We never got to the part where Faris explains how Democrats can win more elections, but we wonder

TOP: BIGSTOCK; BELOW: GARY LOCKE

if he advises them to avoid sounding like arrogant jackasses.

It's Time to Fight Dirty is published by Melville House and may be purchased for $24.99. ♦

Cause of Death: Living

On March 29, California superior court judge Elihu Berle ruled that most coffee sold in the Golden State will have to bear a warning label stating that it may increase the likelihood of cancer. Roasted coffee contains traces of the carcinogen acrylamide, and so Californians, if the ruling stands, must be warned every time they buy a cup of coffee or a bag of beans that they're risking their lives.

The plaintiff in the case, a busybody nonprofit called the Council for Education and Research on Toxics, argued that roasted coffee beans should be a regulated substance on the basis of Proposition 65, a 1986 state law otherwise known as the Safe Drinking Water and Toxic Enforcement Act. The law mandates that businesses with 10 or more employees must disclose the presence of carcinogens and other harmful toxins. Each year the state updates its list of toxic chemicals; the list now boasts more than 800 items and includes many chemicals that have little or no statistical link with cancer.

Some of the chemicals, like bisphenol A (BPA), show up in just about everything. Hence a vast array of products sold in California now comes with some version of the words, "Warning: This product contains chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer and birth defects or other reproductive harm." So if you're buying bottled water, canned food, potato chips, salmon, cleaning products, or furniture, you're likely to be met with some version of this fearsome notice. Many businesses—drugstores, hospitals, hotels, banks, parking garages—take the "CYA" approach and post the warning even when they're not required to.

TWS ART / BIGSTOCK (CUP)

The result? California's warning means nothing. Taxpayers have to pay for the labeling regime, but no one's any safer or better informed.

Of course, the whole idiotic case, now in its sixth year, isn't about public safety at all. It's about money. The "council" demanded that coffee makers remove traces of acrylamide from the roasting process, almost certainly knowing that to be unfeasible, then asked the court for fines of up to $2,500 for every person "exposed" to the deadly poison coffee since 2002. In other words, someone had the bright idea to shake down the coffee companies for multimillion-dollar settlement payouts. The firm handling the plaintiff's suit also managed to shake down potato chip makers several years ago, a similarly regulated toxin having been found in cooked potatoes in trace amounts.

As manifestly preposterous as California's Proposition 65 is, we think the law doesn't go far enough. We conferred with a biomedical researcher, an old friend of The Scrapbook, who reminded us that the very act of ingesting food—virtually any food—contributes to human death. The

natural process called glycolysis, the body's way of breaking down glucose, produces a byproduct called methylglyoxal, or MG, and MG is closely associated with a host of deleterious bodily processes—including aging. This produces the counterintuitive outcome that mild malnourishment often leads to longevity.

In other words: Eating and drinking eventually kill you. It follows that every drinkable or edible item sold in California should come with a warning label. And why stop there? The activity of living eventually kills everybody. Be warned!

California court-watchers tell us Judge Berle's ruling is unlikely to stand. If it's struck down in the court of appeals, we'll send him a note of sympathy and a Starbucks gift card. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'Long before *Fun Home* (2006)—perhaps the greatest, most consequential graphic memoir since Art Spiegelman's *Maus*—Alison Bechdel published a comic strip following the entanglements of a group of queer women living in the Midwest. The comics were funny, sexy and very frank—"half op-ed column and half serialized Victorian novel," Bechdel said. It was also a . . . ' (*New York Times Book Review*, March 25). ♦

Correspondence

To the editor:

Philip Terzian seems to take umbrage at the use of the words "Wolkoff's insolence" in Judge Block's opinion in the graffiti case, and somehow equates it with an opinion I wrote decades ago ("Whose Building Is It Anyway?" March 12). First (although I am totally unfamiliar with the case), I would suggest that the use of the word "insolence" by Judge Block was most likely fact-finding based upon hearing the evidence for three weeks, rather than an "op-ed piece," as Mr. Terzian claims.

As to my decision in the Morristown library case (one out of 2,500), by now I should have ignored its relentless mischaracterization, but false pride does not permit me to do so. Terzian writes:

> 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.

My opinion (which I would bet a steak dinner that Mr. Terzian has never read):

> One cannot dispute the right and obligation of the library trustees to assure that the library is used for the general purposes for which it is intended. Libraries cannot and should not be transformed into hotels or kitchens, even for the needy. The public has the right to designate which of its institutions shall be utilized for particular purposes.

However, what I actually ruled (contrary to the author's claim) was that the library policy was unconstitutional under both federal and state constitutions, because it was vague, overbroad, violated the First Amendment right to access information, and gave unfettered authority to the librarian to determine who could or could not be admitted.

The Court of Appeals disagreed and reversed. I made no ruling regarding the plaintiff or his behavior, but rather on the validity of the policy. I would have made the same ruling if the plaintiff were a businessman in a three-piece suit. I do admit that I thought caring for the homeless was more important than "revoking their library cards" and said so. Finally, I obviously do not agree with Terzian's assessment that the homeless (which includes tens of thousands of veterans) wishing to use the library are "obnoxious vagrants pretending to be readers."

Judge H. Lee Sarokin,
La Jolla, Calif.

Philip Terzian responds:

In the wisdom of retirement, of course, Judge Sarokin is entitled to remember his reversal by the Court of Appeals in his own way. But I stand by my account of *Kreimer* v. *Morristown*. ♦

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What's in a Nickname?

I always wanted a nickname, a moniker to set me apart and give voice to the familiar fondness that everyone who knows me feels towards my special character—you know, that way I have, that unmistakable something about me.

Oh *him*, they would say, everyone knows him. But instead of *him*, they would say Patch or Babe or TJ. And what they would mean is *our* Patch or *our* Babe or *our* TJ.

A nickname, it has always seemed to me, is a way of embracing, by word, another person's character. Nicknames are bestowed on people who are like mascots to their friends, individuals whom others rely on to be just the way they are.

Only this, I have learned, is not how others see me.

In the fifth grade, I took a silver marker to a new brick-colored bookbag and, with stars and wavy lines, announced the nickname I deserved by merit of the color of my hair: "Rusty." In quotation marks no less.

The choice was inspired by my admiration for the late Rusty Staub, the ginger-haired player-coach of the New York Mets and a memorable designated hitter in the 1980s. But we don't get to choose our own nicknames, a fact my older brother taunted me with when he noticed that I had turned my bookbag into a press release for my new handle.

"Rusty, good old Rusty," he kept saying in a voice that made him sound like a dimwitted cartoon character, though any dimwittedness was being imputed to me. After a few days, I grew tired of his abuse and covered up the "Rusty" on my bookbag with more silvery magic-marker ink, which only led him to tease me more, saying now, "Oh my, where's Rusty?" "Whatever happened to good old Rusty?"

Many times in my life a nickname would have been useful because, in my generation, Davids are as common as male-pattern baldness. When I joined the staff of The Weekly Standard years ago, I became the fourth David working there. About 20 people in all worked there at the time, and a fifth of them were named David. So the inevitable happened, and I was referred to by my last name.

BRITT SPENCER

Something similar happened when I joined an Irish football team. The team was recruiting heavily and, the first night I showed up, four new guys had come, and three of us were named David. I was again referred to by my last name.

I don't mind being called Skinner, and sometimes I offer it up when more than one David is present, but it reminds me that I simply don't have the kind of jocular personality that lends itself to being nicknamed. Just the opposite: Most people decide on their own that I should be called David instead of Dave. I should probably be grateful that no one (other than children and grocery clerks) calls me Mister.

Recently, however, I was reminded of the one time when some acquaintances gave me a nickname, which they used only in secret and never to my face.

Having just moved to Washington, I was trying to get out and meet people as often as possible. I began hanging out with a crowd to which I was connected by a single new friend, a fellow journalist. This crew was mostly Southern, as was my friend, and on the whole they struck me as good looking and cool and some of them just a little standoffish.

Being around them made me feel a little more neurotic and clueless than I usually feel, but because I had few other options I ended up going to most of their parties and hanging out with them whenever the group was getting together.

After many months, I learned that some of them referred to me as OT.

"Like overtime?" I asked my journalist friend, who couldn't quite explain why or how this had happened.

"No," he said, "OT as in Oliver Twist."

Was it my shabby clothing? My freckled face, which sometimes gives me the look of a Little Rascal all grown up? Was there something forlorn or poverty-stricken about me?

I was more puzzled than hurt by this nickname. It seemed to be some kind of English department putdown from a couple of not-so-literary people who had never really hidden their opinion that I did not belong, but it amused me that someone had bothered to give a name to whatever it was about me that they enjoyed mocking.

It still amuses me, and when a sock of mine has developed holes or a shirt has lost its shine, my wife will say, "That's kind of OT. Don't you think you should throw it out?"

But for some reason, I always struggle to throw such things away.

David Skinner

the weekly Standard

The Crown Prince Goes to Washington

DJT and MbS: President Trump confers with Mohammed bin Salman at the White House, March 20

MANDEL NGAN / AFP / GETTY

There were many decades when the visit of a crown prince of Saudi Arabia to the United States didn't cause much stir in world affairs. But these are different days for the Middle East and for the globe. The three-week visit of Mohammed bin Salman, in which he met with the president and an array of congressional leaders, journalists, and CEOs, may well prove one of the crucial events of this era.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been a U.S. ally since its founding in 1932. Its rulers relied on American arms and commerce, and the United States relied on Saudi oil. That this alliance hasn't been more useful to American interests in the region stems from two problems. First, the kingdom didn't have much of an economy outside of its oil wells. Iran and Iraq, both intermittent enemies of the United States, were the dominant economic powers. Second, Saudi rulers understood that radical Islamic forces wanted badly to overthrow them—from the Muslim Brotherhood to al Qaeda to ISIS—and they chose to buy off their enemies, funding radical madrassas from North Africa to India and Pakistan. For decades, international Islamic terrorism was to a large extent a Saudi-sponsored enterprise.

With the collapse of Iraq and an emboldened and expansionist Iran, these arrangements no longer worked. The hopelessly naïve Obama administration turned a blind eye to Iranian imperialism and knowingly strengthened a rogue regime. As the price of oil continued its long descent, the Saudis were forced to think creatively about their country's future.

When the 79-year-old Salman bin Abdulaziz al-Saud became king in 2015, his 29-year-old son Mohammed bin Salman became defense minister. MbS, as he's widely known, showed himself to be a ruthlessly efficient administrator. He had no illusions about Iranian meddling. He launched a military campaign to save the Yemeni government from Tehran-funded Houthi rebels (an effort that has so far not been successful) and strengthened the Saudi military against the threat from across the Persian Gulf.

In June of last year, King Salman shocked his country and the world by removing the crown prince, Mohammed bin Nayef, and replacing him with the much younger MbS. The new crown prince is charming, highly intelligent, ferociously determined, and—unlike many of his Western-educated siblings and cousins—deeply attached to Saudi Arabia. The kingdom is under the nominal rule of the ailing King Salman, but his son makes the decisions. On his U.S. visit, MbS outlined a complex and ambitious plan for Saudi Arabia—he calls it "Vision 2030"—but it's not unfair to characterize his aims as a cultural and economic revolution.

MbS realizes, first and most importantly, that if the House of Saud is to survive in power, it must develop a robust economy that has more to offer the world than oil. Saudi Arabia provides its citizens with a welfare state that's impressive even by European standards: free education,

free health care, subsidized prices in food and energy. The decline of oil revenue makes reform all the more pressing.

To develop a domestic economy, MbS will have to liberalize Saudi culture without provoking the nation's traditionalists to reaction. So far he has done so with skill and success. Already this year, the kingdom has allowed women to attend soccer matches, to drive automobiles, and to apply for positions in the military. He's also moving toward the abrogation of Saudi Arabia's "guardianship" laws that forbid women to travel without male chaperones.

American journalists have been pressing MbS on Saudi Arabia's repressive policies—its many remaining restrictions on women, its denial of religious freedom, and of course its absolute monarchy and vast internal security apparatus. These are fair questions, but they overlook the fact that what MbS has already done is astounding. And effective. As Elliott Abrams noted in these pages in January, while both Saudi Arabia and Iran are repressive regimes in many respects, Saudi citizens are relatively content with their government and Iranians are ready to topple theirs. Western commentators interpreted MbS's anti-corruption moves as mainly a power-grab—11 princes, 4 government ministers, and a number of tycoons were arrested. But it is also true that the crown prince's economic reforms are doomed if the kingdom's culture of corruption is allowed to continue undisturbed.

We applaud MbS's program. Yet any sober assessment would not give him a high chance of success. Developing a functional economy would be a colossal task on its own, but the young prince has enemies inside and outside Saudi Arabia. There are scores of Ibn Saud's grandsons who may feel equally entitled to the throne, and reactionaries and traditionalists are deeply opposed to the crown prince's liberalizing policies. So are adherents of the Middle East's Islamist parties, especially the Muslim Brotherhood. MbS's predecessor as crown prince, Mohammed bin Nayef, lived through four assassination attempts.

Further inflaming Islamists against MbS—and making his success all the more necessary to U.S. hopes for the region—he has gone beyond his predecessors in acknowledging Israel's existence. "I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land," he said in an interview published on April 2. Here, at last, is an Arab leader willing to locate the Middle East's most intransigent problems where they originate: not in the existence of the state of Israel but in what MbS calls, with refreshing candor, the "triangle of evil": Iran and its Shia terrorist proxies, including Syria; the Muslim Brotherhood; and Sunni terrorist groups.

What's as yet unclear is whether the Saudi regime under Mohammed bin Salman's leadership can afford to stop buying off the Islamists and otherwise funding radicalism abroad. When questioned on the extent to which the House of Saud is prepared to move away from the radical Wahhabist ideology it has quietly promoted around the world for decades, MbS is sometimes evasive and sometimes direct. At an event in Riyadh last year, he made the savvy argument that he wasn't liberalizing anything, but going back—back to an interpretation of Islam that (in his telling) prevailed before the late 1970s when radicals overthrew Iran and nearly did the same in Saudi Arabia. "All we are doing is going back to what we were," he said: "moderate Islam that is open to all religions and open to the world. . . . We will not waste 30 years of our lives in dealing with extremist ideas. We will destroy them today."

If MbS means what he says, and if he manages to stay alive and in power long enough to test his ambitions, he'll need both luck and unwavering American support—not just military aid but our taking steps to contain Iran's regional ambitions. If MbS succeeds, both the United States and the Middle East's only democracy, Israel, will finally have a partner at the center of Islam.

Our hopes and prayers go with him back to Riyadh. ♦

Trump vs. the Economy

Republicans are just over six months away from the 2018 midterm elections, and there's plenty to worry about. Midterms almost always favor the party out of power, and Democratic voters are far more enthused about the coming elections than their Republican correlatives. And although one should never underestimate the present-day Democratic party's ability to wreck an easy win, the likelihood is that Republicans will lose the House, and they may lose the Senate, too. Such an outcome could well mean Donald Trump's being impeached.

The one thing going decisively in Republicans' favor is the economy. The jobless rate has dropped to 4.1 percent and may drop further, GDP growth seems certain to remain at around 3 percent, and wages are rising across the board.

Republicans can legitimately take credit for some of this success. The dramatic drop in the corporate tax rate, denounced by Democrats as though it meant the end of the republic, has encouraged investment and infused the whole economy with a sense of optimism not seen since well before the 2008 recession. The Trump administration's methodical unmaking of Barack Obama's regulatory state has enabled small and large firms to expand in ways they couldn't 18 months ago.

The president can take ownership of this success if he wants to, but he'll have to keep from ruining it. First, the tariffs—the administration has imposed a 25 percent levy on imported steel and a 10 percent levy on imported aluminum. The question is not whether the tariffs will raise domestic

prices, slow growth, and prompt layoffs: Tariffs always do that. The question is how much immediate damage the tariffs will do.

Second, the tweets. Although it would be a wild exaggeration to say the president's torpedoing the U.S. economy with his Twitter account, he's doing his best. Trump has long been in the practice of berating private companies for making decisions he in his wisdom would not have taken: "garbage," "terrible," "really stupid," and "STUPID" are epithets Trump has hurled at companies as varied and successful as Coca-Cola, H&R Block, and Sony.

The practice continued, even intensified, when Trump was elected president. On December 6, 2016, before even taking office, he attacked Boeing, sending the airplane manufacturer's shares downwards. His antics have hurt pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer and Merck. When Merck's CEO Ken Frazier resigned from Trump's manufacturing council, for instance, the president retorted with an insult: "Now that Ken Frazier of Merck Pharma has resigned from President's Manufacturing Council, he will have more time to LOWER RIPOFF DRUG PRICES!" Merck's stock price took a tumble, and although it recovered quickly, the idea that a U.S. president would seek to injure a major corporation in a moment of irritation is, even at this late stage, mind-boggling.

The president did far more damage this week, when he trained his scope on Amazon, at least in part because Amazon's founder Jeff Bezos owns the *Washington Post*. He tweeted a series of hostile remarks about the company—partly sensible if exaggerated criticisms, partly wild misinformation—and thus reduced the company's market capitalization nearly $60 billion.

Amazon will recover quickly. We're far from feeling sorry for the online retailing behemoth. Amazon, like many large corporations, seeks and gets favorable treatment from government—and thus unfair market advantage—all over the country.

But the president's regular practice of lashing out at private-sector firms is both harmful to the economy and ugly. One consultant for large tech companies tells the *New York Times* the great majority of his firm's clients "now have a presidential Twitter strategy in place." In other words, the people running corporate America feel the president of the United States could lash out at their company at any moment, and they've planned for ways to contain the damage.

It's hard to see how congressional Republicans can make the case for pro-growth economic policies when the leader of their party is famous for fulminating at private businesses: Those fulminations regularly pummel voters' stock portfolios and 401(k) accounts. Should we expect affected shareholders—people who've lost money because the president was annoyed one morning—to go on supporting that president's party? The GOP can't be the party of free markets and the party of anti-corporate hectoring at the same time. ♦

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

The Legitimacy of Israel's Borders

The borders around the 140-square-mile Gaza strip are guarded heavily by both its neighbors, Israel and Egypt, and the sea lanes are blockaded. Israel has lately managed to stop the rockets that the Palestinian radical group Hamas, which runs Gaza, has been firing into its southern cities. Israel claims, too, to have come up with a system that by next year will allow it to close the tunnels through which terrorists have long smuggled arms and goods. On the last day of March, though, 30,000 Gazan protesters massed at five sites near the border. Gazan organizers billed this as the first episode in a mounting series of protests to climax in a Great March of Return on May 15, the 70th anniversary of the state of Israel. When people moved across the 300-yard buffer zone towards the Israeli border, soldiers of the Israel Defense Forces shot 18 of them dead.

The IDF argue they were defending their country's border. Palestinians (and much of the elite press in Israel and abroad) counter that there was no real threat from a dirt-poor entity that lacks even clean drinking water. Is this an act of legitimate defense or an atrocity? It is the wrong question—or, rather, it is an emotional way of asking the question of whether the border (and the country it protects) is legitimate or not.

Much of the argument has concerned *intentions*—as measured by the role Hamas took in the clash. Palestinians say that the demonstration was a civilian one, run by a march committee, that there were no major breaches of the border on March 31, and that the IDF fired tear gas at a disabled man approaching them in a mobility scooter. Israelis, by contrast, say the men they shot had made five attempts to break through the border and had laid booby traps in at least three places. Several men had breached Israeli barriers the day before. Most of them were fighters for Hamas. Hamas acknowledges that at least half a dozen of the dead were its fighters, and it provided buses that took the protesters to the border.

The division between a peaceful protest and a forceful uprising can never be taken for granted. Any large group of people with a cause should be understood, potentially, as a weapon.

But the role of Hamas in the demonstration does not necessarily matter to the case for self-defense. The division between a peaceful protest and a forceful uprising can never be taken for granted. Satyagraha—the concept behind the massive nonviolent demonstrations that Gandhi introduced to the world—is an ambiguous principle. Human nature being what it is, any large group of people with a cause should be understood, potentially, as a weapon. That is how Hamas understands it. "A peaceful protest is a new form of resistance," one of its members wrote in the online magazine *Filastin*, "but we have not forgotten other forms of resistance, primarily the military one." A "demonstration" such as the one that took place on March 31 is always the demonstration of a weapon.

Demonstrating a weapon is not the same as firing it. But everyone who marches is carrying it. No matter how "innocent" or powerless these thousands are, they are marching to renegotiate the border. No matter who manages to breach the border, whether it be a 7-year-old girl or a crippled man in an electric buggy, Hamas will be the beneficiary of the principle of breachability thereby established. The very best reporting on the Palestinian marches has been that of Gil Yaron in the German daily *Die Welt*. Yaron quoted Issam Hammad, 52, founder of the march committee, who envisions a political pilgrimage that will grow until millions of Palestinians from neighboring countries somehow gravitate towards the Gaza strip. "We'll give the order, and everyone will rush them at the same time," Hammad said. Part of what Israelis and Palestinians were fighting over on March 31 was whether this weapon would prove effective—and whether it would prove risk-free—before Hammad's promised millions showed up.

Al Jazeera, Human Rights Watch, and the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* treated the encounter as if it were a matter of two individuals meeting on a street, insisting that the "protesters posed no threat to Israeli soldiers positioned across the border." But the issue is not whether soldiers are threatened. It is whether the border is threatened, whether it is legitimate, and therefore whether the country it defines is legitimate.

This is not a question that can be opened up to an "independent investigation." It is not a question that can be decided on considerations of "proportionality," as if it were a joust. The *New York Times*, in an editorial highly critical of the IDF, admitted that the Palestinians at times have been "feckless at pursuing peace." Perhaps, rather, they're effective at pursuing

hostility. The Palestinians are not out protesting because they're incompetent peacemakers or bad people. They are protesting because they believe the land behind the border they are facing has been stolen. They are making that case the only way they can. The IDF is rebutting it the only way it can. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PRISCILLA M. JENSEN

The Once and Future Vladimir Putin

Keeping up with the news out of Russia has been like trying to drink from a firehose for at least the last month, though that would be seriously inadvisable considering what might have been added to the water.

Just a partial recap:

■ At the beginning of March a former British agent, Russian Sergei Skripal, now living in Britain after a spy exchange, and his visiting daughter Yulia were hospitalized after being poisoned by one of the *Novichok* nerve agents developed by the Soviets beginning in the 1970s. A British policeman who went to their aid when they were found dying on a Salisbury park bench was also poisoned; he's been released from hospital but the Skripals remain under treatment. At this point more than two dozen Western countries have declared more than 100 Russian diplomats *persona non grata* and sent them packing. The Kremlin quickly responded in kind, expelling diplomats and—taking a page from the old *provokatsiya* manual—charging the U.K. with having poisoned the Skripals themselves to distract from problems with Brexit.

■ What the *New York Times* calls "a pair of self-described sex instructors" imprisoned in Thailand say they are offering the United States evidence of Russian election meddling and other skullduggery in return for a guarantee of safety. There's likely to be some sort of real information; one of them appears in a video in which a Russian oligarch widely considered corrupt meets on a yacht with a deputy prime minister.

■ On March 31 there came the arrest of Dagestani billionaire businessman Ziyavudin Magomedov on the now-go-to charge of embezzling state funds. The fact that he appears to be close to people who are close to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev adds a frisson to suspicions that the move is rather a matter of Putin's consolidating power at the beginning of his new term. Magomedov, a construction magnate involved in building venues for this summer's World Cup soccer competition, is estimated by *Forbes* to be worth about $1.4 billion. He denies the charges.

'It's not ridiculous to think of and plan for a post-Putin Russia,' says Vladimir Kara-Murza, director of the documentary *Nemtsov*. 'In fact, it is ridiculous and shortsighted and irresponsible not to.'

■ There's even a group of freshly hacked emails, says *Business Insider*, apparently from Kremlin-linked figures, with price lists showing what Russia would pay for rent-a-mobs in Ukraine around the time of its invasion. Prices varied, depending on whether one wished to arrange email hacking or demonstrations.

Every one of these events implicates the government of newly reelected Russian president Vladimir Putin, and it's very unlikely that he isn't personally connected in some way, if only by implicit approval.

So earlier in March, with the reelection a foregone conclusion and the inevitable prospect of Putin, who sees the dissolution of the Soviet Union as the "greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century," continuing in power, chess champion Garry Kasparov, chair of the Human Rights Foundation, was inspired to convene a day-long conference to look at Putin in the round. "PutinCon," Kasparov said, was to be "a true 360 of Putin, his KGB, his nature, his past, his accomplices, his policies." Hoping that "this year's program may be the last one where we have to talk about the future of Vladimir Putin," Kasparov added to the list "his unraveling."

The conversation, held in New York on March 16, commenced with descriptions of the diminution of democracy in Russia in the late '90s, as Boris Yeltsin and his coterie looked for a successor. That this disappearance unrolled in tandem with multiple murderous attacks on ordinary Russians is no longer a revelation. The 2004 attack on Beslan's school, which ended in more than 300 deaths, half of them children; the 1999 apartment bombings that killed almost the same number—these were arranged to look like terrorist attacks, implicitly by Chechens but, as speaker David Satter recalled, were almost certainly planned and carried out with the participation of the FSB, the KGB's successor, at the time headed by Yeltsin's anointed heir . . . Vladimir Putin.

Other participants spoke about the worldwide effects of Putin's exercise of power: about the eradication of a free press, attacks on IT integrity around the world, the involvement of Russia in wars from Ukraine to Syria.

Former U.S. attorney for the southern district of New York Preet Bharara spoke about the enormous kleptocracy that has made Putin the "richest man in history." Talking with Bharara, Bill Browder, founder of the stolen and eviscerated Hermitage investment fund, continued his call for more countries to pass versions of the "Magnitsky Act"—legislation that makes possible economic sanctions and visa denials for individuals implicated in human rights violations. It is named for his late associate, the accountant Sergei Magnitsky, who traced the government fraud that gutted Hermitage and died when he was refused medical care while falsely imprisoned.

There was even a lively, if admittedly speculative, psychological consideration originally billed as "Inside Putin's Brain: At Lunch," which may have indicated a lack of data associated with breakfast and teatime.

And far from least: Alexei Navalny, the opposition politician who was prevented from being on the presidential ballot, spoke to PutinCon via remote link. Navalny called his listeners' attention to ongoing frauds perpetrated within and by the Russian government, reminding them that there are laws already in place in Western countries that could help identify and penalize them.

"We are here today not to dream," said Kasparov, introducing the final panel, on "the end of Putin's tyranny." But he encouraged positive takes on the subject by his interlocutors—Vladimir Kara-Murza, director of *Nemtsov*, a documentary on his murdered friend and political associate Boris Nemtsov and a two-time survivor of Russia-originated poisoning; Miriam Lanskoy of the National Endowment for Democracy; and David J. Kramer, a former diplomat and a scholar in the field of human rights.

Kara-Murza spoke about the unpredictability of political change in Russia, in August 1991 as well as in 1917, noting that Russians cannot afford to be as unprepared for Putin's eventual exit as for the earlier two episodes. Noting the tens of thousands of Russian young people who have participated in protests against the government in the last year or so, he suggested "training and educating and helping to prepare" the people who will be involved in political change, including by encouraging them to run even in today's "fake, truncated, manipulated" elections as a training ground. Along with serious work on the substance of law and policy that will need to be available if change comes quickly, such preparation is invaluable. "It's not ridiculous to think of and plan for a post-Putin Russia," said Kara-Murza. "In fact, it is ridiculous and shortsighted and irresponsible not to."

With its serious and thorough assessment of the current state of affairs, PutinCon thoughtfully raised and began to address one of the most venerable of Russian questions: *Chto delat?* What is to be done? ♦

COMMENT ♦ CHARLES J. SYKES

The Conscience of Ann Coulter

Give her credit: Ann Coulter is a woman of strong convictions. Those convictions may be wrongheaded, bizarre, and even bigoted, but she knows what she believes and is willing to hold Donald Trump accountable. Unless he builds the wall (and not just some candy-ass fence) she's done with him—ready to turn on him with the white-hot bitterness of the true believer who suddenly awakes to betrayal.

It's easy to mock Coulter, who wrote a book titled *In Trump We Trust*, for ever thinking she could trust Trump (and I will probably go on doing so), but at least *something* mattered to her. Unlike the cultists for whom Trump can do no wrong, and who will not hold him to any of his promises as long as he fights the right enemies, Coulter has a very clear political standard. "We have been betrayed over and over and over with presidents promising to do something about immigration," she explained to the *New York Times*'s Frank Bruni. "If he played us for suckers, oh, you will not see rage like you have seen."

Trump does seem worried. After a few days pretending that he hadn't really been rolled on the border wall (Congress allocated only $1.6 billion of the $25 billion he had requested in the budget passed last month), Trump has ramped up his anti-immigrant rhetoric, killed the deal to regularize the status of so-called "dreamers," lashed out at Mexico, and called for sending the National Guard to patrol the border.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Long gone are the days when he mused aloud about a "bill of love." Now he's reportedly listening intently to advice from a menagerie of misfit toys, including cable talking heads like Sean Hannity and immigration hardliner Lou Dobbs. And Ann is . . . unhappy. (By her account, they engaged in an "obscenity laced" shouting match in the Oval Office over his "betrayals.")

The message of the hardliners is simple: If he goes all squishy on immigration, he will lose his base. Back in 2015, he launched his presidential campaign by adopting Coulter's image of "Mexican rapists" coming across the border, and he never looked

back. This was the secret sauce of his improbable rise to power: He proposed banning all Muslims, deporting millions of illegal aliens and their children, insulting Mexicans, and building a big beautiful wall. And it all worked. The message now: He can't go soft without dispiriting and disillusioning those voters who propelled him to the GOP nomination and the presidency.

This has been the one constant in his erratic, shambolic presidency: Whenever he feels this kind of heat, he retreats to his base, fanning the flames that keep them angry, aroused, and loyal.

Trump once joked that his voters were so devoted to his personal awesomeness that they wouldn't care if he stood in the middle of 5th Avenue and shot someone. But Coulter is different. In an era in which "nothing matters," this matters to her. She's done things, said things, made sacrifices for this man, even though she says she knew he was "a shallow, lazy ignoramus."

She did all that because she was a *believer*. She was one of the "ones who would die for Trump, who would defend him from anything, who *did* defend him and blew off the 'Access Hollywood' tape—blew off everything," she explained to Bruni. "We kept coming back. He could sell Ivanka Trump merchandise from the Oval Office if he would just *build the wall*." Her phrasing about selling merchandise is interesting here, because some of us are old enough to remember when she declared that Trump could actually "perform abortions in the White House," as long as he took a hard line on Mexicans. This is what really set Ann's heart aflutter.

After Trump lashed out at Gonzalo Curiel, the Indiana-born Mexican-American judge who was presiding over the Trump University lawsuit, a profile in *Washingtonian* described her reaction. Attacking Mexicans was good racial politics, she explained. "Blacks *hate* Mexicans," she said. "Mexicans move in and shoot black people, the jobs have been taken. Anything he says about Mexicans, his vote goes up with the brothers." (During the campaign, she bet me $100 that Trump would get the highest percentage of the African-American vote of any GOP candidate since Nixon. He didn't.)

But the point is that she has a conscience, and it would be deeply offended if it turned out that Trump had scammed her. This may strike some folks as cynical transactionalism, but Coulter is at least upfront about what she wants in return for her ardent puffery and her willingness to turn a blind eye to all of the lies, nepotism, and incompetence she admits she sees in Trump's presidency.

Coulter is hardly the only conservative who has made tradeoffs with Trumpism. House Republicans turned themselves into human shields to protect Trump from investigations into his Russian ties; evangelical Christian leaders have given him a mulligan for his alleged dalliance with and hush money payments to a porn star. As Trump stokes a trade war and uses his bully pulpit to vindictively attack American businesses, many "free-market conservatives" bite their tongues.

Presumably, many also have a red line of principle tucked away somewhere. But so far, it's only Coulter who has been willing to break with Trump at full volume. In Trump World today, this is what passes for conscience. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

The Councilman's Snowstorm

There was a snowstorm in Washington, D.C., a few days before the arrival of spring, and while it deposited a handful of inches on the ground and closed area schools for the day, the evidence was gone nearly as soon as it had arrived—and largely forgotten. Not, however, by a 33-year-old first-term Democratic member of the District of Columbia's city council. He posted a video of the falling snow on his Facebook page and admonished friends in these memorable words:

> Y'all better pay attention to this climate control, man, this climate manipulation. . . . That's a model based off the Rothschilds controlling the climate to create natural disasters they can pay for to own the cities, man. Be careful.

This was not the first time that Councilman Trayon White Sr. had interpreted events in this singular way. One month earlier, at a public gathering attended by fellow council members and the District's mayor, Muriel Bowser, he explained that the Rothschilds control the World Bank—which, of course, is headquartered in Washington—and "pretty much . . . the federal government" as well.

Mayor Bowser and other members of the council later claimed that they had either paid no attention to the comments or failed to comprehend them. In any case, they said nothing publicly in response and certainly offered no criticism. Social media, however, are less forgiving, and when the snowfall post appeared on Facebook, it elicited a global—and distinctly unfavorable—reaction.

The councilman initially dug in, and then backtracked. Two Jewish colleagues on the council, and a host of local rabbis and Jewish community leaders, organized a bagels-and-lox breakfast where the councilman, in due course, offered up an apology: "Growing up as a young man [in Washington]," he said, "I had no idea what anti-Semitism was." And as he later explained in a written statement, "I did not intend to be anti-Semitic, and I see I should not have said that after learning from my colleagues. . . . I want to apologize to the Jewish Community and anyone I have offended."

His council colleagues declared themselves satisfied.

Of course, this is not the first time that a public figure has been found to harbor anti-Semitic opinions, and

when that happens—in the nation's capital, at any rate—a certain protocol tends to be followed. The miscreant is encouraged to dine and converse with local Jewish leaders—Mr. White was showered with seder invitations—and often invited for an educational visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall.

A public figure has been found to harbor anti-Semitic opinions, and when that happens–in the nation's capital, at any rate–a certain protocol tends to be followed.

Sometimes, unfortunately, things don't work out so well. Some years ago, for example, a leader of the New Black Panther party named Khalid Abdul Muhammad emerged from his 90-minute tour of the Holocaust museum to declare on the sidewalk that the sufferings of "so-called Jews" were trivial in comparison to the "holocaust" inflicted on black people in American history.

Still, it is entirely possible that Councilman White, as he says, "had no idea what anti-Semitism was," and I am prepared to believe that his repentance is sincere. What intrigued me about this episode, however, was his reference to the Rothschilds.

What little I have learned about the councilman's background suggests he is unlikely to have known much of anything about the famous Anglo-German-Jewish banking family, which first came to prominence in the late 18th century, unless prompted by an obvious source of misinformation: Louis Farrakhan, longtime leader of the Nation of Islam.

Farrakhan is an unapologetic Jew-hater and, like most of his brethren, obsessed with conspiracy theories involving the Rothschilds (among others). Farrakhan has a substantial following in Washington's black community and is the likeliest source for Councilman White's theorizing—about the World Bank, the federal government, and that late-March snowstorm.

One of the discouraging trends across the Atlantic has been the recent reemergence, two generations after the downfall of Nazi Germany, of anti-Semitism in European public life, including such unlikely venues as Britain's newly radicalized Labour party. To be sure, the ancient contagion never really went away and, as in America, remains largely confined to society's fringes. And while social media has breathed new life into innumerable forms of bigotry, the casual anti-Semitism of a Councilman White will be quickly identified and called to account.

Yet Farrakhan, for whatever reason, enjoys limited immunity. This was first dramatized some three decades ago when Walter Mondale ran for president against Ronald Reagan. It's largely forgotten now, but anti-Semitism was a tangential issue in the

1984 campaign. Jesse Jackson, one of Mondale's rivals for the Democratic nomination, had been quoted in the *Washington Post* referring to Jews as "hymies" and characterizing New York City as "hymietown," and Farrakhan—who was largely unknown at the time to the general public—castigated Mondale for criticizing Jackson.

Indeed, Mondale was critical of Jackson—and not only for "hymietown" but for Jackson's reluctance to disavow Farrakhan as well. Yet I have never forgotten Mondale's obvious discomfort when discussing the topic, as well as his punctilious references to "Minister Farrakhan." It was a political calculation, of course: Mondale could hardly ignore the sudden eruption of Jew-hatred, but he couldn't afford to alienate Farrakhan's admirers, either.

No wonder Mayor Bowser and her colleagues in the District government kept their counsel on the subject of the Rothschilds.

When a few hundred white supremacists and anti-Semites descended on Charlottesville last year, horror and vilification were swift and universal—and blame for their audacity was largely assigned to President Trump. Who, then, to blame for the awkward silences around Minister Farrakhan? ♦

COMMENT ♦ WILLIAM KRISTOL

Dimestore Leader-Worship

With our politics in 2018 transformed into a cartoonish version of Caesarism, one wonders: Could this experience lead to a revival of a healthy and robust republicanism in America? Given certain aspects of the Obama presidency as well, we're now closing in on a decade of vaguely authoritarian, celebrity-focused, cult-of-personality politics. Will Americans finally decide enough is enough? Is it too much to hope for a rethinking of the tendencies that have propelled us in this direction?

Consider our post offices. They, along with other government buildings, have tended for quite a while to display photos of our president and vice president. They haven't been giant photos, and we're not obliged to bow to them or take off our hats in their presence—but why are they there in the first place? And haven't they been something of an entering wedge into a kind of obsequiousness toward our leaders that has become too prevalent on all sides of our politics?

Perhaps legislation that Rep. Dan Donovan (R-N.Y.) is planning to introduce could spur a healthy reaction against this kind of dimestore leader-worship. Rep. Donovan is talking about a bill mandating that U.S. Post Offices display official photos of the president and the vice president. He came up with this idea after a constituent complained that a local post office still displayed photos of former President Barack Obama and former Vice President Joe Biden, but was not displaying photos of President Donald Trump or Vice President Mike Pence.

One sees how a Republican could be annoyed by the asymmetric treatment of the former and current occupants of the Oval Office. But why are such photos there in the first place?

One sees how a Republican using the U.S. mails could be annoyed by the asymmetric treatment of the former and current occupants of the Oval Office. Surely the obvious response to this isn't a law requiring equal display of silly photos, but an inquiry: Why are such photos there in the first place? Do we need this style of decoration in our public spaces?

If something has to be featured on the walls of our post offices, why not facsimiles of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? Or rotating portraits of different Founders? Or perhaps each post office could put up photos of local men and women who have acted with valor, contributed to the community, or lived exemplary lives?

In any case, perhaps this little incident will prompt renewed appreciation for the proper republican attitude toward our president, nicely captured by Abraham Lincoln addressing the 166th Ohio Regiment on August 22, 1864: "I happen temporarily to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has."

This republican modesty far more befits a self-governing people than the faux-grandiosity of our current politics. And such republican modesty is in no way incompatible with a high view of the meaning of our republican experiment. As Lincoln said in the same brief speech, explaining what the soldiers were fighting for:

> It is in order that each of you may have through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations. . . . The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.

Is it possible that a rejection of the costume jewelry adorning today's political scene might be the predicate for restoring a true appreciation of the real and inestimable jewel of free government? ♦

The 'big Caravan of People,' stuck in southern Mexico, April 3

Johnny One-Note

The monomaniacal White House talking points.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

They are emails designed to grab you by the lapels. "CRISIS AT OUR SOUTHERN BORDER," announced one. "MS-13 Is 'Taking Over the School' One Teen Warned Before She Was Killed," read another. The subject lines are always over the top:

"CRIMINAL ALIENS SET FREE BY SANCTUARY CITIES"

"National Security Threats—Chain Migration and the Visa Lottery System"

"'I wish I had killed more of the mother-------,' says illegal immigrant accused of killing two cops"

"U.S. PERMANENTLY RESETTLED NEARLY 142K BANGLADESHI NATIONALS ON BASIS OF FAMILIAL TIES"

"Previously Deported Mexican National Convicted of Raping 9-Year-Old Girl in Sanctuary City"

These aren't news blasts from some anti-immigration group or a right-wing news site like *Breitbart*. They come direct from the White House, sent from an official government email address. They are the work of Kelly Sadler, the "Director of Surrogate & Coalitions Outreach" in the White House communications office.

Kelly Sadler

Sadler's job is to disseminate the White House's thoughts, views, and talking points to friendly journalists, cable-news pundits, radio and TV hosts and producers, and anyone else who might be willing to put out the administration's preferred line.

For most of 2017, Sadler and the White House communications staff used its general surrogate list to organize conference calls and blast out emails on every topic from tax reform to national security. But last fall, something changed. Sadler's emails began to focus almost exclusively on immigration issues, with the recurring theme that America is facing a "crisis." Since November, she has sent more than 50 emails to the general-surrogate list about immigration, including one nearly every weekday since late January.

An email on March 20 offered an "Immigration Crime News Round Up" for the previous several days. Several emails have focused on the brutal MS-13 Latino gang, and in recent weeks there's been an emphasis on the proliferation of thousands of unaccompanied alien children in the country.

The result of Sadler's efforts can best be described as a feedback loop. Her sensationalist headlines make it into conservative media, which the president himself digests and responds to, leading to more sensationalist headlines. On February 21, for instance, she sent out a *Washington Examiner* story, "MS-13 spreads, fed by 300,000 illegals, DACA recipients, tied to 207 murders," which promoted a study from the Center for Immigration Studies, a restrictionist organization. That *Examiner* story was then linked on the *Drudge Report* and spread through conservative online media. The producers at *Fox & Friends* seem to have read it, too, because the president's favorite morning show featured a segment on the issue of MS-13 and an interview with the author of the relevant study, Jessica Vaughan. Minutes after the *Fox & Friends* segment ran, Trump tweeted about it. "MS-13 gang members are being removed by our Great ICE and Border Patrol Agents by the thousands, but these killers come back in from El Salvador, and through Mexico, like water. El Salvador just takes our money, and Mexico must help MORE with this problem. We need The Wall!"

Sadler's emails feature the same sort of language that Trump-friendly media, from Fox News to the depths of the alt-right blogosphere, are using to describe the most recent flashpoint in the immigration debate: a caravan of 1,200 or so Central Americans moving its way into Mexico and, possibly, to the southwest border of the United States. On April 3, the president himself tweeted about the march.

"The big Caravan of People from Honduras, now coming across Mexico and heading to our 'Weak Laws' Border, had better be stopped before it gets there. Cash cow NAFTA is in play, as is foreign aid to Honduras and the countries that allow this

TOP: VICTORIA RAZO / AFP / GETTY; BOTTOM: RON SACHS / SIPA / NEWSCOM

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to happen. Congress MUST ACT NOW!" he wrote.

One day later, the administration announced a presidential memorandum authorizing the deployment of the National Guard to assist border agents along the border with Mexico and a renewed push for border-enforcement legislation.

It's unclear who at the White House is behind the communications strategy. Sadler herself says she is not authorized to speak to reporters, and press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders did not answer questions about the email blasts. Republicans on Capitol Hill say the subjects are reminiscent of the interests of Stephen Miller, the former aide to Alabama senator Jeff Sessions who helped marshal opposition to comprehensive immigration reform efforts in 2013 and who is now one of the most powerful aides in the West Wing.

Miller is the most conversant—and combative—White House adviser on immigration issues. He conducted a press briefing last August in which he battled reporters over immigration statistics and accused CNN's Jim Acosta of advocating a policy of "unfettered, uncontrolled migration" and open borders. After an abortive interview with CNN's Jake Tapper in January, Miller went to a friendlier host, Tucker Carlson of Fox News, and joked that if he "was a member of MS-13 here illegally, [CNN] would be clamoring to get me into the voting booth."

Sadler's emails routinely sex-up federal agency press releases. An April 2 email read, "CRISIS AT OUR SOUTHERN BORDER | ICE: 99 MS-13 Gang Members Arrested in Latest Enforcement Operation Entered Country As Unaccompanied Alien Minors." This was a far from accurate representation of the accompanying Department of Homeland Security press release. What DHS announced was the arrest of 24 gang members in New York as part of an ongoing interagency program to tamp down on transnational gangs that draw their membership from immigrants. Those 99 unaccompanied minors arrested? That was over the program's 10-month existence, which was part of a nationwide enforcement operation against gang activity that claims to have made more than 3,200 immigration arrests since 2012. A robust law enforcement effort combining federal and state and local resources to deal with a serious problem, yes, but is it part of a crisis?

Immigration has crowded out all other concerns for Sadler's office. After the February 14 school shooting in Parkland, Florida, for instance, Sadler provided no talking points on the president's message on gun violence. As Congress and the country debated measures over the next several days, Trump surrogates were sent news articles that "prove why we need immigration reform NOW." On February 23, the day after an emotional and well-received meeting in the White House between Parkland families and the president, Sadler sent out a poll showing "overwhelming support for President Trump's immigration priorities."

On March 1, the administration announced steel and aluminum tariffs, but conservative surrogates got little direction from the White House about the presidential thinking. A March 5 email from Sadler highlighted a story out of San Diego: "Mexican man assumes American's identity for 37 years, steals $361,000 in government benefits." And a couple of weeks later, as Congress pushed through a giant spending bill that President Trump would end up reluctantly signing, Sadler was blasting out stories like this one, from March 21: "Illegals who escaped after Oakland mayor's alert already committed new crimes, ICE chief says."

A White House led by a mercurial and unpredictable president was always going to be a communications challenge. West Wing officials have the near impossible task of crafting a coherent message with Trump's itchy Twitter finger always just over their shoulder. Immigration enforcement may simply be the only area where the White House can push out a consistent message. That's another sort of crisis. ♦

Trump and Syria

Another premature declaration of victory?

BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

The White House declared on April 4 that the "military mission to eradicate ISIS in Syria is coming to a rapid end, with ISIS being almost completely destroyed." While the United States is "committed to eliminating the small ISIS presence in Syria that our forces have not already eradicated," the Trump administration already has an eye on "future plans," which will rely heavily on other countries "to work toward peace and ensure that ISIS never re-emerges." Indeed, President Trump has vowed to withdraw the 2,000 or so American troops in Syria "very soon."

If the Trump administration's latest rhetoric sounds familiar, that's because it is. President Obama and his advisers drastically underestimated ISIS and its predecessor organization, referring to the group as the "jayvee" team of terrorism and acting as if it were a purely "local" concern. During the 2012 presidential campaign, Obama claimed to have brought the Iraq war to a "responsible end" by withdrawing the last of America's forces in December 2011. Obama desperately wanted others to take the lead in fighting the jihadists in Iraq. But the hasty U.S. withdrawal, driven in

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part by political concerns, paved the way for ISIS's surge. By mid-2014, ISIS had seized large amounts of territory across Iraq and Syria, declared itself to be a caliphate, and mushroomed into an international menace.

Trump risks falling into the same trap as his predecessor. The president is clearly itching to declare victory over ISIS in Syria. But a retreat from Syria right now would only give ISIS room to survive and possibly grow once again. ISIS isn't finished in Syria—or Iraq. The latter country wasn't even mentioned in the White House's statement. And Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's zealots still maintain a cohesive global network outside of those two countries.

As ISIS began to lose its grip on its capital city of Raqqa and the surrounding areas of northern Syria, some of its most senior figures were relocated to a string of towns nestled along the Euphrates River in Syria's eastern Deir Ezzor Province. The U.S.-led coalition adjusted accordingly. Since early 2017, the United States and its allies have conducted a series of special forces raids and drone strikes against high-ranking ISIS commanders in Al Mayadin and the surrounding river towns. These operations successfully eliminated jihadists who were responsible for planning terror attacks around the world, as well as commanding guerrilla forces in Iraq and Syria. Simultaneously, the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) pushed into Deir Ezzor, pinning down many ISIS fighters.

The noose was tightening on ISIS in eastern Syria until Turkey launched "Operation Olive Branch" in northern Syria in January. The Turkish offensive was intended to roll back Kurdish militiamen belonging to the People's Protection Units (YPG), which is affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), a U.S.-designated terrorist group. SDF fighters, many of whom are also members of the YPG/PKK, left the frontlines against ISIS in eastern Syria to help their Kurdish brethren in Afrin. This forced the Pentagon to concede in early March that the anti-ISIS campaign had entered an "operational pause"—a phrase that does not speak to an impending victory.

This sequence of events demonstrates the perils of relying on others to direct the war against ISIS. The rival anti-ISIS parties operating in Syria have competing agendas, and it is only the U.S. presence that keeps them focused on the caliphate's loyalists. And ISIS has demonstrated a significant war-fighting capacity in Deir Ezzor since the unintended "pause" in the American-led campaign earlier this year. The group's Wilayat Furat (or "Euphrates Province") regularly releases propaganda that glorifies the jihadists' targeting of fighters loyal to Bashar al-Assad's regime. The scenes often feature ISIS members firing Soviet-style SPG-9s (recoilless guns mounted on tripods) or antiaircraft artillery, killing Syrian soldiers, or detonating explosives. ISIS's Wilayat Furat still has the time to advertise its nascent governance and proselytization efforts as well.

A U.S. military base near Aleppo, Syria, April 2

DELIL SOULEIMAN / AFP / GETTY

ISIS operates elsewhere in Syria, too. The Khalid ibn al-Walid Army, which is openly loyal to Baghdadi, fights both the Assad regime and rival insurgents in the area surrounding Damascus. Other ISIS units conduct attacks in northern Syria.

Although the White House statement didn't mention Iraq, ISIS hasn't been completely defeated in that country either. The so-called caliphate straddled both countries at the peak of its power, so the omission is odd—to say the least. Several areas of Iraq are still infested with ISIS members, including the disputed Kirkuk Province, which the Iraqi government and Kurdish forces fought over last year. Unnamed Iraqi officials recently told the Associated Press that ISIS has killed "between 150 and 200 members of the [Iraqi] security forces . . . across the country in the past few months." Indeed, ISIS claims to have killed or wounded dozens of Iraqi security officials in Kirkuk alone since last December. In recent weeks, ISIS has set up fake security checkpoints, burned the houses of its rivals, detonated suicide car bombs, and assassinated officials in Kirkuk Province. Late last month, nine federal policemen were captured along a road from Kirkuk to Baghdad and then executed. In other areas of Iraq, such as in Diyala and Anbar provinces, there are indications ISIS has increased its operational tempo.

Outside of Iraq and Syria, ISIS branches conduct regular attacks in several jihadist hotspots, including Afghanistan, Somalia, the Sinai, West Africa, and Yemen. There are strong indications that ISIS retains a significant presence in Libya and the Philippines, despite setbacks in both countries.

There is no question that ISIS has suffered great losses since the zenith of its power in 2014. But the White House is exaggerating the group's weakness. The White House also said nothing in its statement about al Qaeda or the group known as Hayat Tahrir al-Sham. But chances are that these jihadists in northwestern Syria, who are opposed to ISIS and have been targeted by the U.S. in the past, will require America's attention in the future. We've already seen what happens when a president wants to declare a mission accomplished before it is. ISIS and al Qaeda have bounced back before. It would be a mistake to give them room to expand their operations once again. ◆

The Politicization of the MCAT

Why should we care about the opinions of aspiring doctors? BY DEVORAH GOLDMAN

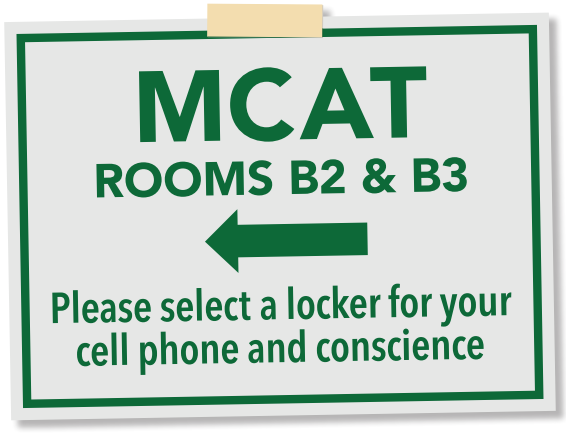
In 2015, the Association of American Medical Colleges revised the Medical College Admissions Test (MCAT) for the first time in nearly 25 years, stretching the full exam-day experience from around five hours to eight or more. The test drew attention at the time for its sheer length; less widely noted was the explicitly ideological bent of the new exam.

The AAMC occupies a curious place in the world of medicine. It forms one-half of the only government-approved accrediting entity for U.S. medical schools, and it is solely in charge of administering both the MCAT and the national standardized medical school application. Unlike the American Medical Association, which represents physician groups without exercising much direct control over doctors, the AAMC has immediate and significant authority over its constituent medical schools and academic health centers. And in recent years, it has used this leverage to fundamentally alter the way medical schools assess applicants.

Dr. Darrell Kirch, president and CEO of the AAMC, expressed his vision in a candid 2011 speech at the University of California, Davis: "I am a man on a mission. I believe it is critical to our future to transform health care. I'm not talking about tweaking it. I'm not talking about some nuanced improvements here and there. I'm talking about true transformation."

Devorah Goldman is assistant editor at National Affairs.

In that address and others, he described the AAMC's "Holistic Review Project," which the organization launched in 2007 with the goal of "redefining what makes a good doctor." The project's objectives included revising the MCAT and a wide range of other reforms. A series of new guidelines (some of which have yet to be implemented) called on medical school admissions teams to place less emphasis on applicants' grades, changed the requirements for letters of recommendation, and altered the standardized application by requesting a great deal more information about students' upbringing and life experiences. The AAMC is also planning to add "situational judgment tests"—carefully crafted interviews in which applicants will be presented with a variety of hypothetical scenarios involving ethical conflicts—to the current admissions requirements. Along with the new MCAT, these changes are part of Kirch's plan to shift the focus of medical-school admissions toward a "new excellence," a standard based less on test scores and more on "the attitudes, values, and experiences" of applicants.



The AAMC has also successfully advocated for changes in medical curricula. A philosophy major, Kirch likes to tell the story of his unconventional journey to becoming a psychiatrist, stressing the importance of integrating perspectives from non-medical fields into medical training. He has repeatedly expressed his desire to move medical studies "away from the accumulation of facts" and toward "a new paradigm." Whether this is scientifically sound or not, it has become the norm in many pre-med programs, which now offer "interdisciplinary" majors such as Columbia University's "Medicine, Literature and Society" track or Cornell's "Biology and Society." A number of medical schools have also revised their mission statements to better align with the AAMC's principles.

These changes might not seem worrisome at first glance. But when combined with Kirch's political statements, the reforms raise questions about what the AAMC's "new paradigm" will entail. Kirch often insists that social justice is the neglected core tenet of medical ethics; in a 2015 essay, he praised the White Coats for Black Lives movement, a medical-student organization inspired by Black Lives Matter, for "sparking dialogue rather than division" by "staging on-campus die-ins." White Coats for Black Lives lobbies, among other things, for the creation of "national medical school curricular standards" that would mandate the teaching of "structural racism" and "unconscious racial bias" in medical schools.

Kirch has also praised the AAMC's political advocacy efforts, which lean left on most issues. Anyone who registers to take the MCAT automatically receives frequent "action alerts" issued by the AAMC's Government Affairs and Advocacy division, which serves as the organization's lobbying arm. In recent months, the AAMC has weighed in on immigration reform

TWS ART

and the Trump administration's travel ban. Kirch once boasted, half-jokingly, that "the AAMC was the author of some of the most vague language [in the Affordable Care Act]."

But it is Kirch's reform of the MCAT that raises the most concern. The AAMC began redesigning the test in 2009, but only received approval for the revisions in 2012. In an announcement reported by the *New York Times* that year, Kirch explained, "The goal is to improve the medical admissions process to find the people who you and I would want as our doctors. Being a good doctor isn't just about understanding science, it's about understanding people." One new section of the exam, entitled "Psychological, Social, and Biological Foundations of Behavior," requires test-takers to respond to multiple-choice questions in which both the question's premise and the available answers are, at best, often distantly related to medicine.

One MCAT practice question (from a collaboration between the AAMC and online-education nonprofit Khan Academy), for example, asks whether the wage gap between men and women is the result of bigotry, sexism, racism, or biological differences (no other options are provided, and the "correct" answer is sexism). Another asks whether the "lack of minorities such as African Americans or Latinos/Latinas among university faculty members" is due to symbolic racism, institutional racism, hidden racism, or personal bias (the correct answer is institutional racism). Yet another asks test-takers to select from a list of debatable definitions for "the terms 'sex' and 'gender.'"

Taken on their own, these questions may not seem particularly invidious. And it would be easy enough for a good test-taker to select answers that would be marked as correct, whether he or she agreed with them or not. But the changes nonetheless reflect Kirch's greater goal: to test "not just what students know," as he said in a 2015 interview about the test, "but how they think."

In response to questions about these developments and their effects, the AAMC's executive vice president, Dr. Atul Grover, referred to a set of core principles guiding the organization's recent work. An AAMC report outlining those principles describes the organization as "a powerful voice for compassion, equity, and justice" on behalf of the nation's academic medical institutions, and stresses the importance of "advancing a well-trained, culturally competent, and diverse health and biomedical workforce." Grover further explained that the revised MCAT "tests students on the knowledge and skills that future physicians need to practice in a changing health care system and serve a changing patient population" and establishes a foundation for learning "about the socio-cultural and behavioral determinants of health."

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According to Grover, the periodic review and updating of standardized tests "are considered a best practice," and the changes to the MCAT were called for "in part because the health system of tomorrow requires a different kind of physician." He explained that the impact of these changes on applicants and medical schools is currently being evaluated by a group of 18 medical schools.

If the AAMC's objective were merely to improve the bedside manner and general sensitivity of physicians, or even to increase diversity in the medical field through conventional affirmative-action policies, few people would likely object. Unfortunately, what Kirch in particular seems to want to create is a medical community that aligns as closely as possible with his particular political views—and to insist that future doctors accept those views as settled fact. This leaves students who don't share Kirch's (and the AAMC's) transformative vision with a difficult choice: Will they violate their own integrity in order to succeed?

The AAMC is not alone among accrediting institutions seeking to steer professions leftward. The American Psychological Association, which accredits a variety of graduate-level psychology programs, has taken strong positions on topics such as pay equality and gun control. The Council on Social Work Education, which accredits college-level and graduate social work programs, has also been outspoken on a range of issues, particularly regarding "social and economic justice." Yet this shift among medical educators is particularly alarming. One would expect the leaders of a scientific discipline to carefully distinguish between verifiable fact and opinion; the new MCAT blurs that line.

In his address at the AAMC's most recent annual meeting, Kirch said he "refuse[s] to live in a post-truth world" and insisted that doctors cannot "let bias influence patient care." But the AAMC's policy of imposing political litmus tests on future physicians is contributing to this trend. Integrity is among the most important qualities a doctor can possess—it entails doing the right thing when no one else is watching. With its politically loaded MCAT questions and "holistic" admissions recommendations, the AAMC is teaching aspiring physicians to compromise their integrity and adherence to the truth before their careers even begin. ♦

Worship Thy Ancestor

. . . from a distance.

BY DAVE SHIFLETT

You can get arrested for spanking an unruly tot these days, but flogging the immortal bejesus out of once-revered ancestors can pay significant dividends. Pounding the Founders and other historic villains not only affirms one's purity and moral superiority but can help achieve social dominance over those who fail to recognize your excellence of spirit. On top of that it can make you feel really good and distract attention from your own shortcomings. What more could you ask for? If I knew the tricks of the app trade I'd create FounderPound on the double and start shopping for a nice island getaway.

Yet there's an overlooked aspect to this phenomenon. We assume our ancestors would be hurt by modern-day criticisms. We assume they would want their names to grace our rubber chicken dinners and dormitories. We are certain they would want their monuments to forever grace our town squares. But perhaps, as we shall see, a little humility is in order. Perhaps our forebears would no more want our praise than they would covet a bite from a rattlesnake.

In the spirit of context, it's worth remembering that flailing the dead finds enthusiasts in every generation, though the purge seems to have picked up steam lately. Last week came word that a statue of President William McKinley, the unrepentant colonialist, is being targeted for removal from the city square of Arcata, Calif. In New Orleans, mayor Mitch Landrieu heroically removed a host of Confederate monuments and lived to write a book about it (*In The Shadow of Statues*). His critics, to no surprise, insist he was primarily interested in cleansing his own spotty reputation. Meanwhile, in Virginia, the state's Democratic party changed the name of its annual Jefferson-Jackson Dinner to the somewhat clunkier Blue Commonwealth Gala because both men owned slaves. (Jackson is also notorious for his Indian policies.) The lashing of Jefferson and Jackson was something of an expansion of the Old Dominion's version of the purification ritual, in which most fury is directed at Robert E. Lee and his co-conspirators. In the fullness of time it's likely Captain John Smith and Pocahontas spouse John Rolfe will be arraigned and prosecuted, along with almost everyone else in a position of authority prior to 1964 or so.

Maybe they knew something we've forgotten.

THE CARTOON COLLECTOR / PRINT COLLECTOR / GETTY

Traditionalists are of course horrified and defend their heroes along familiar lines. America was born into a world brimming with slavery. Belief in black inferiority was nigh on universal. "Vices the most notorious seem to be the portion of this unhappy race," said one appraisal of African Americans: "idleness, treachery, revenge, cruelty, impudence, stealing, lying, profanity, debauchery, nastiness and intemperance, are said to have extinguished the principles of natural law, and to have silenced the reproofs of conscience." That passage was lifted not from the pages of a Richmond newspaper but from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1797). The finest minds agreed, including philosopher David Hume, who likened a black Jamaican who had gained a reputation for intelligence to a parrot, "who speaks a few words plainly." Even John Locke, Mr. "Inalienable Rights of Man," defended slavery and invested in the Royal Africa Company, Great Britain's pre-eminent slaving enterprise. And here in Dixie, defenders of the Cause never tire of quoting Abraham Lincoln, whose views would be very much at home in the skull of a Grand Kleagle:

> I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been, in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will forever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality.

Yet traditionalists should recognize that the conventional wisdom defense isn't going to get anyone off the hook.

Dave Shiflett posts his writing and original music at www.Daveshiflett.com

And they really should consider the possibility that our forebears wouldn't want the praise of modern Americans. While we often invoke them, the reverence wouldn't likely be mutual. In fact, if a time-traveling group of them suddenly appeared and seized power, most of us might end up with slit nostrils or seriously stretched necks. They'd be way harder on us than some of us are on them.

Consider, for example, the likely response to the modern phenomenon of ubiquitous swearing. Not all that long ago (as the time flies) swearing earned a public whipping, while children who cursed their parents could be executed. Scolds, nags, slanderers, and gossips faced a multiplicity of corrective devices, among them the brank (or "gossip's bridle"), a cage that covered the head and deployed an iron spike into the mouth to suppress the wayward tongue.

While it is pleasant enough for some to imagine Bill Maher and his entertainment industry colleagues being branked, a huge percentage of Facebook and other social media slaves (no shortage of traditionalists in those ranks) could expect the same treatment. Other idle-minded chatterbugs would be rewarded with a trip to the dunking stool or pillory, a stand-up version of the stocks that offered the option of nailing the visitor's ears to the headpiece. The attending official might further enhance the experience by slitting the offender's nostrils.

There's no doubting that it would be nice if our compatriots didn't cuss so much. But who wants their F-bombing, deity-damning children cured of their affliction by having their heads nailed to the pillory with a railroad spike?

The tongue wouldn't be the only organ to attract scrutiny. As in the good old days, fornicators could expect a whipping while single mothers would face fines and banishment; those who couldn't pay might be sold into servitude. Gays, meantime, should head for the border—at a gallop. According to scholar Louis Crompton, "it appears that in 1776 male homosexuals in the original 13 colonies were universally subject to the death penalty." Youthful sexual adventuring would be similarly risky, at least if the experience of Thomas Granger, of the Plymouth Grangers, is any guide. The lusty teenager was detected having sex "with a mare, a cow, two goats, divers sheep, two calves, and a turkey," according to expert testimony. For his efforts—which were clearly considerable he was hanged. The animals were also executed.

This isn't to suggest our American forebears were uniquely cruel. Consider the sentence meted out in 1725 to one Charles Hayon, as reported by Paul Tabori in his immortal work, *The Natural Science of Stupidity*. Hayon was "sentenced to be laid with his face down, nude, upon a wooden grille and be dragged in such a state through the streets of the commune of Chaussée." His crime? He had killed himself.

These days, of course, we cross the oceans to fight people with similar policies. And on the bright side, we can reasonably assume our visiting forebears would quickly conclude that we are beyond saving. Simply whipping the people who skip church would take every available hand. What would they make of our abortion rate? (Abortion prior to the fourth month or so of pregnancy was legal in early colonial times, though outlawed starting early in the 19th century.) Ditto for the national debt, man buns, warnings on stepladders, and a million other facts of modern life. After a few days they'd vamoose, no doubt leaving behind an indictment of a somewhat tendentious nature:

> You are all the most worthless of generations. You have everything humanity has dreamed of and prayed for. You have all the food and drink imaginable; your doctors can outfit you with new hearts, hips, and wedding tackle; you have mosquito-free bedrooms, parasite-free intestines, a short workweek, and marvels you call air conditioning, smartphones, and automobiles. Yet how do you spend your time? Watching *The View*. Eating until you are fat as pigs. Telling people thousands of miles away about your hemorrhoids. Making entertainments in which the Indians are the good guys! Your men marry men, your women marry women, and parents often don't marry each other. Your bartenders charge seven dollars for a beer but won't let you smoke. You pay five dollars for a cup of coffee but expect music to be free (they wouldn't actually say this, but one can dream). You kill more children in the womb than the death toll in your latest world war, and those you don't snuff are saddled with a staggering debt. So where do you get off looking down on us? Goodbye, good riddance, and while you're at it—go to Hell!

And off they'd go.

It's also worth considering the possibility that our descendants might fully embrace our forebears' indictment, adding whatever other shortcomings offend their sensibilities and standards. In fact, we should probably count on it. Which is why the wisest among us will try to live in the moment while keeping in mind the advice of the pleasantly acerbic James Anthony Froude: "Each age would do better if it studied its own faults and endeavored to mend them instead of comparing itself with others to its own advantage." ♦

Homeless in Seattle

Why are wealthy cities with booming economies seeing a surge of the down and out?

By Ethan Epstein

Seattle

The northern wall at the office of the Licton Springs Village on North Seattle's gritty Aurora Avenue features a poster containing a stark notice: "BOTULISM WARNING."

"A suspected WOUND BOTULISM case has been reported in King County. Health officials believe the case may be related injecting [sic] black tar heroin," it reads. "Injecting heroin that contains the bacteria that causes botulism can cause serious infection and even death."

Of course, one might think that the flyer could simply warn that black tar heroin contains . . . black tar heroin. Heroin is an unusually dangerous drug—wickedly addictive and far more lethal to its abusers than cocaine or alcohol. But Licton Springs Village, a microcommunity of 30 tiny houses and a couple of large dormitory tents—one that is officially sanctioned by the City of Seattle—takes a permissive view of drug abuse. It's a "low-barrier" community, meaning that people can use drugs freely here. Most homeless shelters and encampments demand residents live drug and alcohol free. But here, clean needles are distributed to the residents to prevent the spread of disease, and Narcan is available to resuscitate people who overdose.

Open since April 2017, on a formerly vacant lot squeezed between fast-food joints and low-budget motels, Licton Springs Village is home to nearly 70 homeless people who were "sleeping rough" until they moved in. The residents include several married couples who live together in simple, tiny homes—basically, wooden boxes 12 feet by 8 feet—donated by local groups. Children aren't allowed because of the open drug use. The village is operated by local nonprofit SHARE/WHEEL, and the on-the-ground support staff are all formerly homeless themselves. Conditions are makeshift: There's a shower, but the toilets are all of the port-a-potty variety; there are no individual kitchens, but residents are eligible to eat once each day in the communal dining area.

Licton Springs Village, unique in many ways, exists to address a common and once again growing problem: American homelessness. The problem is particularly acute on the West Coast. Here in Seattle, the homeless population skyrocketed by 44 percent between 2015 and the end of 2017, mirroring the experience of other Pacific coast cities, notably those in the Bay Area, which is also experiencing a homelessness crisis of mammoth proportions. King County, home of Seattle, now boasts the third-largest homeless population in the country.

"We're in kind of a perverse competition with San Francisco," says Daniel Malone, the executive director of

A 'low-barrier' community: two of the tiny houses of Seattle's Licton Springs Village

Ethan Epstein is associate editor of The Weekly Standard.

Downtown Emergency Service Center, an advocacy group in downtown Seattle, noting the extraordinary surge in visible homelessness throughout his city. Tents abound, even downtown. It's hard to find a bridge that doesn't have people sleeping under it. Because of the growing number of people sleeping in cars, city leaders are moving to scuttle long-established parking restrictions.

The growth in the homeless population comes from all kinds of people experiencing homelessness; not just the chronically homeless, who are usually severely mentally ill, but also people who not that long ago were gainfully employed and had fixed accommodations.

Nationwide, the homeless population is ticking up at about 1 percent a year. According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's most recent point-in-time count, 554,000 Americans were homeless, and the vast majority were sleeping outside. (The HUD census tries to assess how many Americans are homeless on one given day.) The American homeless population is larger than the populations of Miami, Pittsburgh, or Atlanta.

The American homeless population is larger than the populations of Miami, Pittsburgh, or Atlanta, but its growth is driven by a surge in just a few areas, chiefly Seattle, Portland, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.

But growth is being driven by a surge in just a few areas, chiefly Seattle, Portland, the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. Dennis Culhane, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania and a leading authority on homelessness, points out that because those areas are experiencing such rapid gains and the total population has increased by only 1 percent, other areas of the country are actually *reducing* their homeless populations. Culhane says further that certain populations have been dealt with effectively: Veteran homelessness has declined by about half in recent years, he tells me, as HUD and Veterans Affairs have made addressing that particular population a priority.

But the broader numbers—and the simple experience of visiting San Francisco or Seattle these days—raise a couple of questions. Why are some of the country's most prominent cities seeing such a surge in homelessness? And why now, when the economy is *booming*, nowhere more so than in the Emerald City, which is drowning in Amazonian riches? The answer may provide a cautionary tale about the perverse impacts of a hypercharged tech economy.

TENT CITIES IN SEATTLE

There wasn't a job Bebe wouldn't do. Throughout the 1990s, the Seattleite worked as a bartender and a house cleaner. She worked in retail and in delis. But in 2001, she was struck with a degenerative bone disease in her leg and slowly lost her ability to work. The pain became unbearable and, after years of taking painkillers, she turned to heroin. With her sole source of income her disability check, not nearly generous enough to cover Seattle's sky-high rents, Bebe eventually became homeless.

Today, she tells me, sitting in the tiny home in Licton Springs Village that she shares with her husband Mike, she's a "heroin addict." She's not a happy person—she wishes she could work, she says, and she hates being an addict—but the tiny house is a marked improvement. Before the Village opened she and Mike "were sleeping under the freeway," she says. Now, at least, she has shelter.

Duane, a middle-aged Native American man originally from Arizona, agrees. "Being homeless sucks," he says. "It's not a fun life." Licton Springs Village is a huge improvement. A gregarious man who worked on horse farms in Louisiana, Duane invited me into his small, extremely messy, tiny home, which Duane's large frame dominates. I find a seat on the edge of the cluttered bed. Before moving in here, he spent four months on the streets.

What went wrong? "I've been a drunk all my life," he tells me. "And I can't read or write." Duane is clear-eyed about the effect that homelessness could have on Seattle. "It's destroying the tourism industry," he tells me. "You think tourists want to visit downtown Seattle and see a bunch of homeless people?"

While tourism numbers have yet to fall in this picturesque city nestled on Puget Sound, it indeed was partially due to concerns like Duane's that Licton Springs Village came to exist in the first place. For years, as Seattle's homeless population grew, unsanctioned tent cities began to pop up. In a way, they demonstrated man's impressive capacity to impose order. They were self-governing, and many did not allow drug or alcohol users. The local governments often assigned residents important tasks, like working security.

Charlie Johnson, who lived in a tent city shortly after becoming homeless a few years back, said the tent city's governance model was a plus for him. Within a few weeks of moving in he was "in leadership, which was super helpful for me, because [when I became homeless] I was despondent. . . . Just the fact that I had to be social, that there were people around" was beneficial. Johnson, a well-spoken middle-aged man, speaks to the diversity of Seattle's homeless: A graduate of the University of

Washington who has lived abroad, he says simply that his own dysfunctions led him to "blow up his life."

Greg Nickels, Seattle's mayor from 2002 to 2010, regularly cleared the unsanctioned encampments. (In a cheeky protest, one roving tent community dubbed itself "Nickelsville.") But Nickels lost reelection in a primary, and as the homeless population continued to grow, the city began to rethink its approach to the problem.

In 2015, the city council voted to create Seattle's first three legally sanctioned encampments. The logic, according to a city press release, was that "authorized encampments offer a safer alternative that can help stabilize the person before transitioning indoors." They could be on either city or privately owned land. Three more were legalized in 2016. Each encampment is allowed to stay for 12 months, with the option to re-up for another 12. After two years, however, they must be dismantled or moved. People found by the city of Seattle's "Navigation Team," which actively searches for homeless people to offer them services, would be funneled into one of the encampments so long as there was room.

Licton Springs resident Anita Spann, who has been at the village for some 10 months

Barbara Poppe, who served as executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness under Barack Obama from 2009 to 2014, initially opposed the move to legalize the encampments. They "were not providing basic human needs," she tells me, like electricity and plumbing. In other words, they were barely superior to sleeping rough. Poppe also feared that the setup of the encampments—the chain-link fences that surround them, in particular—was inherently "stigmatizing." Today, the fears over utilities have been allayed at least, as the tent cities all have electricity hookups. But the chain-link fences remain.

Particularly controversial was the notion of legalizing a "low-barrier" community like Licton Springs Village. After all, homeless shelters and encampments are almost always contentious among their neighbors. One of the selling points shelters make to the broader community is that they will insist that their residents be clean and sober. But Licton Springs Village turned this model on its head: "Our main goal is to be nonjudgmental and just be cool as we can," says Charlie Johnson, the former tent city resident who now helps manage Licton Springs. "We just want to let people accept themselves, accept us. That's our main goal: to provide a safe, stable, relatively harmonious place." To that end, only violence or theft can get somebody evicted. The leadership does not attempt to push residents into treatment or, for that matter, encourage them to enter the labor force. Originally billed as a way station before people could transition into real housing, Licton Springs Village looks increasingly like a final destination.

Speak Out Seattle! (SOS), which bills itself as a "grassroots coalition of residents, business owners and neighborhood groups with members living and working in every district of Seattle," led the charge against the controversial settlement. Last year, the group sent a fiery letter to then-mayor Ed Murray, who had backed Licton Springs Village's establishment. SOS said it had "hoped to hear that the city would be extending extra services to the area to protect it from any adverse consequences of moving 50-70 people with active addiction, mental illness, behavior problems and criminal histories into an approximately 5,000-square-foot lot adjacent to a family neighborhood." This was not the case, however: "This 'make it up as we go' approach is a recipe for disaster and a significantly modified proposal is required," the group charged.

Barbara Poppe, on the other hand, says there might be a use for such places. For one, if you insist on sobriety, "you keep out the neediest people," she says. Also, a lot of people: According to HUD data, a third of the homeless population are serious substances abusers. (When I asked experts whether the opioid epidemic was having an appreciable effect on homelessness, they said yes—but only anecdotally. Little academic research has been done on the topic.)

ALL IMAGES: ANDREW CONSTANTINO

Moreover, if you don't allow addicts, you "eject people back into the neighborhood," Poppe points out. In a way, places like Licton Springs Village, therefore, *reduce* neighborhood annoyances. Think of it as a form of containment. Charlie Johnson, for his part, says the success of the settlement has allayed many concerns that neighbors had beforehand.

THE PARADOX OF PROSPERITY

Marty Hartman, executive director of Mary's Place, a nonprofit that helps families and children facing homelessness, mostly by operating its own shelters, has been fighting homelessness for 18 years.

She says something has gone terribly wrong in Seattle. "For the first decade [at] Mary's Place, we never saw children. We were open to having children, but very rarely did we see a mom and a baby. Whereas in 2009, we saw a huge surge in the numbers of moms with children seeking services and a place to stay," she says. That, perhaps, is intuitive: The United States was hit by a nasty recession in 2009, and what ended up being the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression saw huge increases in unemployment. But Hartman has noticed a disturbing trend: Even as the economy has turned a corner, the number of homeless families has only grown. This has manifested itself in appalling ways: Barbara Poppe told me she has seen babies living in Seattle tent encampments.

Daniel Malone of the Downtown Emergency Service Center reports similar observations. His group helps the long-term homeless—single folks, rather than families—focusing on people with "mental health problems or serious addictions." The people served by Malone's group are, on average, in their 50s. (Nationwide, the average age of homeless people has been rising for decades. It's not entirely clear why; some experts believe it might just be a function of the demographic bump of the baby boom generation.) The homeless often die young, and those who live into their 50s are already contracting illnesses usually associated with the elderly. James O'Connell of the National Health Care for the Homeless Council examined the homeless population in several cities across the country and found that the homeless died most often between the ages of 42 and 52.

Malone says that the recession barely affected the size of the single adult homeless population that his group serves. Indeed, it was only over the past three or four years that the numbers have grown. "It used to be that the people who were sleeping outdoors, five years ago and prior to that, they were in one or two kinds of conditions," Malone says. "They were either in highly visible yet temporary places, like doorways downtown . . . that often was sort of a solitary group. Or they were in extremely remote locations where, to know they were there, you had to go looking for them. . . . Those people tended to be pretty solitary, but also very functional. They were very able to take care of themselves."

"We started to see this rise in 2013 of people in these areas where you never used to see people sleeping outside. Now you just can't miss them . . . it really is a rise." In other words, vast chunks of Seattle's previously unoccupied land have become home to the city's homeless.

As of February, the average monthly tab for a one-bedroom apartment within a 10-mile radius of central Seattle is above $2,100, according to Rent Jungle, which monitors real estate trends. The growth rate in rents has been among the nation's highest for years.

Inside this growing population are different kinds of homeless. "There are plenty of problems going on with the lives of people who are out there," says Malone. "They're not waiting to be called in for an interview with Boeing or something like that," he says. But, he adds, while many of Seattle's homeless struggle with addiction, "they by and large are *not* people with serious mental illness."

The inexorable rise in Seattle's homeless population has coincided, seemingly paradoxically, with an extraordinary economic boom in this city. Before this trip, it had been about five years since I'd been here. Today, much of Seattle—particularly the northern part of downtown, near the Space Needle—is unrecognizable, and not just because of the omnipresent marijuana smoke, since Washington state legalized pot a couple of years ago. Shining glass towers, many owned by Amazon, now dominate the area, which used to be characterized by low-slung, modest structures, like the famous Elephant Car Wash, which happily still stands. And then there are the absurd Amazon spheres: three glass bio-domes, housing tropical plants, conspicuously situated on a downtown plaza. (Known locally as "Bezos's Balls," the gauche structures have reinforced my fervent hope that the Internet giant does not select Washington, D.C., as the site of its second headquarters.) The numbers back up what is apparent on the ground: According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, a government agency, of the top 15 metro areas in the country, Seattle's GDP grew third-fastest in 2016, behind only Silicon Valley and Austin.

With great prosperity have come great rent increases,

however. As of February, the average monthly tab for a one-bedroom apartment within a 10-mile radius of central Seattle is above $2,100, according to Rent Jungle, which monitors real estate trends. The growth rate in rents has been among the nation's highest for years.

A fascinating study commissioned by Zillow Research adds further ballast to what might seem at first like simple-minded Marxian analysis: higher rents, more homelessness. "The relationship between rising rents and increased homelessness is particularly strong in four metros currently experiencing a crisis in homelessness—Los Angeles, New York, Washington, D.C., and Seattle," authors Chris Glynn and Melissa Allison found.

The scholars "investigated the relationship between increases in the Zillow Rent Index and increases in the homeless population" to come to their conclusion. They determined, among other findings, that "in Washington, D.C., . . . a 5 percent average rent increase in 2016 would have translated to 224 additional people experiencing homelessness, for a total of 8,722. In Seattle, that increase would add 258 people to the homeless population for a total of 12,498." Cities such as Washington and San Francisco have strict limits on building heights and, like Seattle, are home to energetic NIMBY movements and restrictive zoning codes—all of which make it difficult to add to the housing supply.

Elizabeth Bowen, a professor at the University of Buffalo School of Social Work and a leading authority on homelessness, agrees with Zillow's analysis and adds a second component: It's not just rising rents; it's also the question of wage growth. Bowen tells me that in cities like Seattle, "housing costs are far outpacing wage [rises]." Ben Carson, secretary of Housing and Urban Development, concurs. "With rents rising faster than incomes, we need to bring everybody to the table to produce more affordable housing and ease the pressure that is forcing too many of our neighbors into our shelters and onto our streets," he said in a press release last year.

The relationship between rising rents and homelessness plays out in myriad ways; it's not always as simple as a working person's losing his apartment to a rent increase. For one, many homeless people are disabled, and their only source of income is their Social Security disability check. The amount they receive is not place-specific—it's related to how much they earned during their working years—so people are receiving the same amount of money whether they're in low-rent Abilene or expensive Seattle. High costs also make it harder for the city and nonprofits to offer shelter beds or affordable housing units, simply because real estate is so expensive. Cities like Philadelphia and Houston, by contrast, have had a much easier time housing people, in part because property is so much more affordable there. Seattle has far fewer shelter beds than it needs to cope with its growing homeless population.

And then there's drug addiction, which dramatically affects individuals' ability to earn a living— and the open question of whether places like Licton Springs Village encourage addiction through their tolerant attitudes. The closing of state mental institutions also had the perverse effect of throwing many mentally incompetent people onto the streets—a benefit neither to them nor the communities they live in.

The interior of a Licton Springs Village house

Just about everybody who works on homelessness—from Secretary Carson to liberal advocates in Seattle—supports a policy known as "housing first." The idea is that you immediately move people off the streets into housing, *then* get to work on other issues, like drug addiction. But in a market as expensive as Seattle, that would be an immensely difficult and costly undertaking. There simply is not a lot of vacant property to house the homeless.

What does seem clear is that Seattle, a quintessential 21st-century boomtown, offers a stark warning about what our society could look like as it is increasingly dominated by the tech economy. It also shows what happens when social support organizations and local governments decide not to try to end homelessness, but rather attempt sympathetically to "contain" it. Ultimately, Daniel Malone says, we need to decide whether we're okay "living in this third-world society where there's a whole lot of affluence, and there's a lot of visible, Mumbai-like slums right in our midst." ♦

Campus Disrupter

Michael Crow's quest to change higher education

By Naomi Schaefer Riley

"How many of you drive for a living? How many of you *want* to?" That's the question Michael Crow, the president of Arizona State University, posed recently to an audience assembled in Washington, D.C., to learn about the future of driverless cars. Crow, who participated in a discussion called "Designing the Transition to Autonomous Mobility" with an executive from Waymo—Google's self-driving car company—reassured the audience that though there will be some disruption, "all this doom and gloom and fear" is silly. "These are not replacement technologies. These are *augmentations* of us." (Later, after news of the death of a pedestrian struck by an autonomous Uber vehicle in Arizona, Crow told me, "The tragedy in Tempe was a sober reminder that all advances in technology carry risk. My hope is that as autonomous vehicles get better and smarter, they will far surpass the safety of human-driven cars.")

Working the room: Michael Crow greets ASU prep student Jose Bataz.

For a 62-year-old, pale, stocky former Ivy League professor of political science, Crow sure does seem gung-ho about the future. The day before the panel, Crow and I sat down in a conference room in ASU's new building in Washington, tricked out with screens and Smart Boards. He told me about a recent trip to Greece he took with his wife.

With an extra day to kill in Athens, Crow went to visit the site of Plato's academy. Getting out of his Uber, Crow says he realized, "This neighborhood is really bad. All the guys had these dogs with these big spikes in their neck that control them so they didn't kill me." Two thousand four hundred years after the beginning of Western philosophy, Crow recalled thinking, "This is it. This is the epitome. This is the birthplace of the modern university, the Gymnasium. . . . Instantly I realize that everything changes, nothing is the same. And so, this notion that somehow the university is a static thing, that's a fatal error."

Since 2002, when Crow became the 16th president of the school, ASU has been anything but static. Enrollment has grown to over 100,000 with more than 30,000 students taking courses online. At the same time, ASU's four-year graduation rate has risen from 28.4 percent to 51.6 percent; for students who come in with an A-average in high school, the rate is 70.7 percent. And the student body has become more representative of Arizona's population. Minority enrollment more than doubled, from 17.2 percent in 2002 to 35.2 percent today. As well, ASU's budget has grown to over $3 billion, and it is doing half a billion in research expenditures. *U.S. News & World Report* has named it the most innovative school in America for three years in a row, placing it ahead of Stanford and MIT.

Crow credits much of this growth to technology—not only the online courses that make an ASU education more accessible but also the use of big data that has helped professors pinpoint what their students need to better understand their coursework. He says that technology is more important than ever at a university, not simply because students will need to understand how it works to get good jobs but because technology's share of economic growth has grown exponentially. In a recent TED-like talk he gave on the state of the university to its various constituencies, Crow explained that before 1900, 8 percent of economic growth could be attributed to technology. Since 1945, that number has grown to something more like 75 percent.

But Crow insists innovation is not an elite sport, and

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colleges that define themselves by who they keep out rather than who they let in are part of the problem. He says that there was a time when the University of California, Berkeley, and the University of Michigan, for instance, used to admit B-students, but that does not happen today. (Of course, given recent trends in grade inflation, this may not represent a change at all.) "Some public universities," he tells me, "should still maintain the ability to admit every qualified student." ASU does not have an open admissions policy, he emphasizes, but if you earn a B-average taking college preparatory classes in high school, you'll get in.

For that matter, if you attend community college for two years and get a B-average, ASU will automatically accept you as a transfer student. Even if you can't manage that, ASU offers classes online to help potential students reach ASU's admissions standards. "We're using technology to overcome the cultural system variables that may have defeated some of these kids," he says.

This populist approach to higher education has intrigued many of the sector's most traditional critics. Michael Poliakoff, president of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, tells me that Crow "understands it is not okay for a public institution to confine its efforts to the elite." Poliakoff has been particularly impressed with ASU's ability to move students through courses that "are typically bottlenecks." He mentions how ASU has used data and individually guided technologies to help students pass math prerequisites or other courses that might prevent them from majoring in rigorous subjects like engineering.

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For a school that has become well-known for technological innovation and an embrace of new ideas, it was perhaps a little surprising to read that ASU recently launched a new program devoted to some old ones. The School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State started offering classes as well as both minors and majors in the field in September 2017. A student studying classic works of Western civilization is preparing to become "a new kind of leader: trained in critical thought, humble about human imperfection, and ready for anything," according to the description on the school's website.

The school was not originally Crow's idea. It owes its origins largely to the Arizona state legislature, which, like many groups of Republicans and conservatives nationwide, has grown increasingly troubled by the lopsided intellectual outlook of universities. With the blessing of Arizona governor Doug Ducey, ASU was offered money —$7 million— and a mandate to pay for a half-dozen new professors as well as some funds for the acquisition of rare manuscripts and to fund student activities.

Needless to say, such an offer would have been summarily rejected by most university presidents. Who do these legislators think they are, telling an institution of higher education how it should operate? That was the theme of a recent *New York Times* article, "Arizona Republicans Inject Schools of Conservative Thought Into State Universities."

But Crow is no ordinary university administrator; he is much shrewder. Not only could embracing the idea improve his relationship with elected representatives in his state—something any public university president needs to think about in an era of shrinking budgets—but he could use it to attract more students and more attention for his university.

A couple of years ago, after the legislature put aside this money for the program, Harvard University's Harvey Mansfield got a call from Patrick Kenney, a dean at ASU who had been tasked by Crow with creating a plan for the new school. Truth be told, it would hardly be the first foray into "conservative" thought at ASU. The university has received money from the Koch family as well as the Jack Miller Center to provide intellectual balance in its curriculum. The university also has a thriving honors college where students take a two-semester sequence of classes on the classics, including the great books of Western civilization. But this was going to be something different.

As Mansfield recalls the conversation, he advised Kenney against offering tit-for-tat political balance: "I said, 'Forget conservative. Think Great Books.'" Mansfield, who subsequently crafted the new school's mission statement and counts himself a "founding father" of the program, says, "At a certain point people have forgotten about Great Books. A return to them looks like a new idea."

And Crow loves nothing more than a new idea. The new school has gone beyond its legislative mandate, hiring 15 faculty members, and Crow tells me excitedly that they plan to add at least 5 more. Led by Paul Carrese, who was lured away from the Air Force Academy, the school is offering courses like "Capitalism and Great Economic Debates," "Tocqueville on Liberty, Equality, and Democracy," and

"Ideological Origins of Anglo-American Liberty." There are nods to diversity—a course on "Women in Political Thought and Leadership" and one on "Political Thought in Islam, Hinduism, and Confucianism"—but there is a refreshing interest in the Western tradition.

As Crow explains, "The new school is an expansion of our intellectual engagement where we thought that we were not adequately getting enough learning—we had not created a sufficiently robust learning environment for some faculty and some students in what I would call classic political thought, classic political theory, classic economic thought, classic philosophy. In the spirit of our other 20 or

Some 200 attend a free-speech seminar at the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership, February 23.

so transdisciplinary schools [into which he has divided the university], we built another one."

Indeed, for Crow, the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership is simply "another one." "We have more than 200 majors," he boasts happily. "Are you allowed to major in journalism at Harvard?" he asks me pointedly. "Or tourism management?" (The answer in both cases is no). If variety is the spice of life, Crow sees ASU as a kind of educational jambalaya. (He has forced his own three children, who have attended traditional elite institutions, to double-major in college.) Whether you want to study health innovation or international trade or civil engineering, there is a degree for you at ASU.

Crow revels in ASU's quantity of offerings and its flexibility in letting students study disparate subjects. He recalls going to a Jewish religious service on campus recently and admiring the voice of the cantor, an ASU student. She was admitted to Juilliard, she told him, but decided to come to ASU so she could major in opera and biochemistry at the same time. "For the other 52,000 undergraduates who are on campus, we have these hundreds of pathways for them. Each of them are created for them to optimize their learning outcomes when we're trying to produce this master learner."

So what does the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership represent in Crow's mind? "What we were looking for was a particular learning environment. . . . It's not like the PPE [Philosophy, Politics, and Economics] programs at Oxford or Cambridge . . . although it's similar to those. It's got pieces of those. It's our sort of 21st-century version of a learning academy built around these powerful ideas on which much of our civilization is based. Now, that doesn't mean that there aren't lineages and connections and content."

But to be clear, this school is not the first among equals. Though Poliakoff tells me he is "very sanguine that we'll see coming out of ASU a stronger core curriculum," there are plenty of reasons to be skeptical. Crow likes the classics but he likes a lot of other things too.

If you ask Michael Crow about his political affiliation, he declines to provide one. Instead he explains his philosophical affinities. "I'm happy to be in an argument with anyone, and sometimes I'd be on this side of the table and sometimes I'd be on that side of the table. Maybe, to you, that might make me weak, but what it means is that I'm a pragmatist." He admires the pragmatic philosophers, whom he finds to be "very, very thoughtful and capable and intelligent." And he thinks that pragmatists would support "intellectual diversity" in the university. Indeed, Crow says the philosopher he "pays the most attention to" is John Dewey.

Carrese has also noticed Crow's interest in Dewey, suggesting that's where he derives his philosophy about the role of a university in a democracy. "Michael Crow is interested in moral principles about equality. That's a principle of justice for him." For Crow that means not only increasing the number of students he serves from low-income backgrounds—the school has enlarged its percentage of first-generation college students significantly—but also ensuring that the university (especially because it's a public one) serves the larger community. Its total research expenditures put it at 44 out of 876 institutions in the country. And among universities without a medical school, ASU ranks ninth in research expenditures. The school also prides itself on the economic contributions the university makes to the state, listing wages in 2015 for those who earned bachelor's degrees between 1990 and 2015 at $5.5 billion.

Crow's dedication to local communities isn't just talk. The Great Hearts charter schools, a large network of Great Books K-12 schools in Arizona, have been looking for teachers and approached ASU to see if it might be interested in helping out. Crow tasked Carrese with creating a master's degree in teaching for those who want to train to work at Great Hearts or similar schools. "This commitment to the fundamental principles of liberal democracy and to civic education," says Carrese, means "he would look at this new department and say we could be doing more."

But not everyone is pleased with Crow's leadership style, to say nothing of the new Great Books program. There are the obvious complaints from the "Hey Ho, Western civ has got to go" crowd. Karen Kuo, a professor of Asian Pacific American Studies, told the *New York Times*, "They don't seem to be interested in looking at diverse political theorists in this country, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Native scholars or Asian-American scholars."

But the complaints go much deeper. In a *cri de coeur* for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Peter Brooks, a professor emeritus of comparative literature at Yale University, wrote about how his own university narrowly averted the disastrous fate of ASU several years ago. "As I read the news of the [ASU School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership], memory came sweeping back. Something very similar almost happened at Yale when I was on the faculty there. It would have happened had not the faculty, myself included, said no. We might be less successful today."

In the case of Yale, it wasn't the state legislature offering money; it was the Texas oil billionaire Lee Bass, who gave the school $20 million for the creation of a Western civilization program. Brooks noted, "The announcement of a major new program before the faculty had been told of it—much less been given the chance to consider it—was unprecedented."

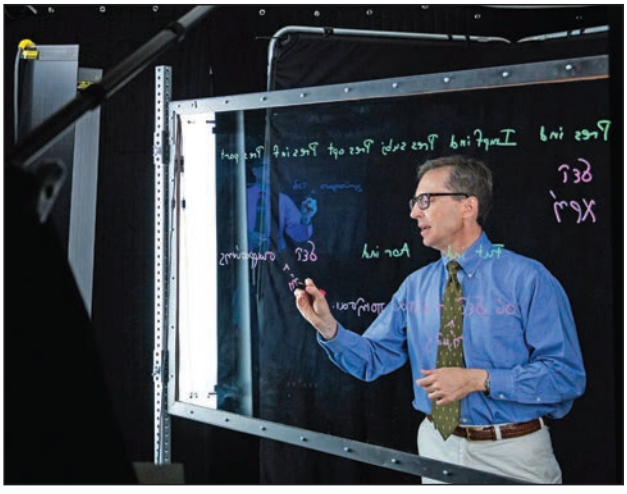
The faculty threw a fit and eventually succeeded in blocking the program. Yale lost its $20 million, but as Brooks explains, the news from Arizona is further proof that "the tradition of faculty governance in academic affairs . . . has suffered everywhere. The university has come to resemble a corporation, with a larger and less accountable bureaucracy, and greater attention to the bottom line and to public repute as measured by *U.S. News & World Report*." Brooks is particularly concerned about the deterioration of the institution of tenure. "As that system buckles under economic pressures, it means that administrators and donors gain relatively greater power to define the educational mission of the institution."

For Crow, this is not exactly bad news. In the second half of the 20th century, he laments, "The university became too faculty-centric. It became unbalanced. . . . The university doesn't exist for the faculty, particularly a public university; it exists for the students and the community." "The faculty," he says pointedly, "are the *means*."

For Crow, this problem was especially obvious in the way that faculty at big universities were allowed to push teaching aside in favor of their own research agendas. "At UC Berkeley, in 1950, full professors taught at least 2-in-2 [that is, two courses each semester], if not 3-in-3 and now they teach 1-in-1, maybe, and sometimes not at all." They can buy out their whole teaching load with their research. But Crow also notes that in 1950, Berkeley was "already a world-class research university. Where did that go? Why can't you still work at that level" while also teaching?

For one thing, Crow notes, the high-powered, big-name faculty members are often happy to go to the highest bidder—the place that will offer them the largest salary for the smallest teaching load. It's fine if you're a private university and you want to play that game, but Crow says that's not appropriate for a public institution.

Though he insists that he has been able to recruit and retain high-level research faculty, he has also limited the faculty's power significantly. Crow hasn't gotten rid of tenure, but he has significantly restricted its use. "If you're on tenure or tenure-track, that means you're doing scholarship for which academic freedom is a necessary protection for you to do that work." But most of ASU's faculty do not fall into that category. "If you're on a lectureship, you are a teacher creating your own content . . . but you have no scholarship measurement for which you're being held accountable," Crow says, and so you are not eligible for tenure. "If you're an instructor, you're basically purveying someone else's content." No tenure.



Associate professor Mike Tueller records a lesson in ancient Greek; more than 30,000 ASU students now take courses online.

Even for tenured faculty, Crow says there are real limits he has imposed using "post-tenure review." Sounding more like the host of *The Apprentice* than a college president, Crow explains: "If you do not perform, you're fired. If you get lazy, you're fired. If you act inappropriately, you get fired. If you act [in a way] unbecoming of a faculty member, you get fired." Tenure is, in Crow's words, "an academic-freedom protection necessary to the advancement of knowledge, which has been misappropriated and abused by many, many institutions."

The original idea for tenure as necessary to guarantee freedom for thinkers and researchers of the highest order was promulgated by none other than Crow's hero, John Dewey. In 1915, Dewey coauthored with Arthur Lovejoy, a

philosophy professor, a "Declaration of Principles" for the newly formed American Association of University Professors (AAUP):

> To the degree that professional scholars, in the formation and promulgation of their opinions, are, or by the character of their tenure appear to be, subject to any motive other than their own scientific conscience and a desire for the respect of their fellow-experts, to that degree the university teaching profession is corrupted; its proper influence upon public opinion is diminished and vitiated; and society at large fails to get from its scholars, in an unadulterated form, the peculiar and necessary service which it is the office of the professional scholar to furnish.

The growth of the faculty's power in the wake of this statement and the establishment of the AAUP was intentional. Though its ultimate effects may not have been foreseen by Dewey, his ideas about the formation of the research university were partly to blame. Like his Progressive colleagues, Dewey supported the idea that university faculty were to be "experts" in their fields—and that their fields were so specialized and their expertise so deep and important that ordinary members of the public did not have standing to question them.

As the number of academic specialties in American universities continued to expand, it became increasingly difficult—nay, impossible—for one segment of the faculty to judge the worth of another. Even within departments, were experts on kitchenware in Chaucer really qualified to understand the scholarship of experts on the literature of former slaves during Reconstruction? Or, more reasonably, were microbiologists prepared to determine whether their zoology colleagues were worthy of promotion?

With no centralizing authority for such judgments, the university's centripetal force weakened and each department and discipline gained more and more power over its own turf. Which is precisely the problem that Michael Crow and others university leaders face. As Mansfield notes, "Professors today go about concerning themselves above all with protecting their turf."

Crow, says Mansfield, has developed a kind of "Machiavellian" solution to this problem. By reorganizing the entire university into different transdisciplinary fields, he has left faculty squabbling among themselves in this turf battle. "Reorganization has the primary function of increasing the power of the reorganizer," Mansfield chuckles.

Mark Yudof, who served as president of the University of California from 2008 to 2013, tells me, "Meshing disciplines is extremely difficult for public universities to do." He says Crow is "extremely creative and ingenious," which is how he has "survived in a difficult financial environment. . . . He is a genuine thinker in our field."

The road ahead may not be easy, though. Yudof thinks that many people are overestimating the power of technology to save money. The evidence right now suggests that blended learning models—combining classroom experience and technology—are the most effective, but still accrue significant labor costs. Moreover, there is a lot of competition for the space that ASU is trying to occupy. Not only are traditional for-profit schools offering some of the same vocational training ASU does, but new players like Purdue University (with its recent acquisition of Kaplan, a big player in the world of online learning) will give ASU a run for its money.

Crow has wisely learned to pick his battles. He has likely made the Arizona legislature happy with the establishment of the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership, but he still has a long way to go to get what he really wants from it—more money and more freedom. The state's investment in education has shrunk to $3,200 per student in inflation-adjusted dollars from a high of almost $8,000 per student in 2009. Crow wants to move away from a public-agency model—one in which the university is controlled by the state government and subject to various regulations—to a "charter" model, wherein the school receives a per-pupil dollar amount and operates independently but is held accountable by the state for its results.

The regulation of universities (and public education in general) by a centralized authority was a dream of Dewey and his cohort, as Larry Arnn, the president of Hillsdale College, notes. So Crow's idea of a "charter" public university might end up undoing another bit of harm his intellectual hero caused. "Charter schools are the best single idea of American education," says Arnn. "It locates authority where students and teachers and parents are gathered. They will come up with better solutions."

Arnn suggests that Crow's new model of a public university—and the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership in particular—has real potential. "It's very common for every kind of college or university to make enormous claims that they're good for society and that they prepare people to lead," he says. Arnn once heard the president of the University of Southern California claim he is "stealing fire from the gods and bringing it down to man." But "what Crow is doing is different and better. With this new school, he is giving some credence to the venerable understanding of our nation and where one would want to lead it."

Though Crow may not believe that the classics of Western civilization should be a foundation for every education, they were clearly a foundation for his own. And as Mansfield notes, "People who study these books become better public leaders." Which may be one reason Michael Crow has an edge over the competition. ♦

Otto Greiner's Odysseus und die Sirenen *(ca. 1902), showing the captain lashed to the mast as his crew rows past a group of physically alluring singers, typifies the modern iconography of the Sirens that Emily Wilson aptly criticizes: 'The Sirens in Homer aren't sexy.'*

Speak, Goddess

Musings on two new translations of the Odyssey.

BY SUSAN KRISTOL

Two new translations of Homer's *Odyssey* offer an opportunity to enjoy this famous epic, which is not only an adventure story but a reflection on the nature and limits of heroism. These editions also invite us to consider the art of the translator. Emily Wilson, whose book was released in November, was born in 1971. She studied at Oxford and Yale and is a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. She has also translated the tragedies of Seneca and has written about Socrates, tragedy, and other classical topics. Peter Green, whose translation came out in March, is a classicist and ancient historian. Born in 1924, he served in the Royal Air Force in Burma in World War II, worked as a literary journalist and novelist, lived with his family on the island of Lesbos, and eventually came to America to teach at the University of Texas, where he is now an emeritus professor.

Susan Kristol has a doctorate in classical philology.

The *Odyssey*, of course, tells the story of the Greek hero Odysseus' decade-long journey home to Ithaca after the Trojan War. Meanwhile, back at his palace, his wife Penelope and son Telemachus are beset by suitors demanding that Penelope, presumed a widow, marry one of them. After confronting dangerous enemies like the Cyclops, Circe, and Scylla and Charybdis, the hero finally returns to reclaim his household and his wife. A 12,000-line poem with many stylistic idiosyncrasies, composed in a mixture of Greek dialects, the *Odyssey* is amazingly readable and fresh in almost any translation, especially given that it is at least 2,500 years old.

Green, who published a translation of the *Iliad* in 2015, writes that turning from that poem of war to the *Odyssey* is like "the sudden emergence of sunlight after a long grey winter. … There is a sense, however evanescent, of freedom in the air." The men and women of the epic, he believes, "combine a wholly alien background and ethos with all-too-familiar habits that are endearing or alarming according to circumstance." Green has adopted a restrained approach to translating the poem: "I have made virtually no attempt to dictate the literary terms in which anyone new to the *Odyssey* should seek to appreciate it as a poem. … First-time readers of the *Odyssey* should be allowed to establish their own personal impression of it before listening to the competing chorus of professionals, who are all too ready to shape their opinions for them."

Wilson's description of her intent is almost the opposite: She wishes to understand the text of Homer deeply but then to create "a new and

CULTURE CLUB / GETTY

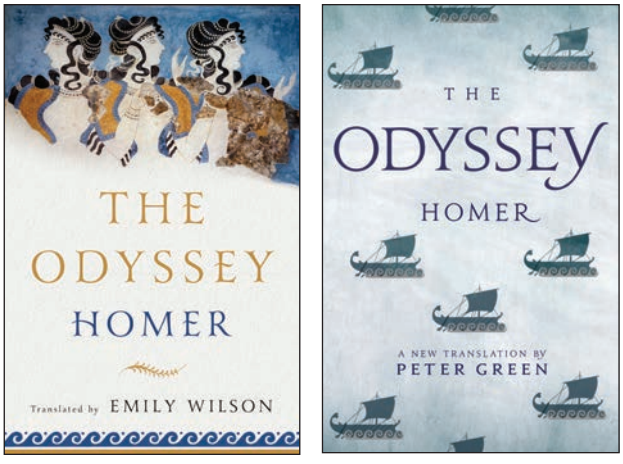
coherent English text" that "operates within an entirely different cultural context" from Homer's. Her translation will be informed by "fresh, curious, and critical eyes." She also sees herself as "shining a clear light on the particular forms of sexism and patriarchy that … exist in the text." And she doesn't seem to like the hero very much: The *Odyssey* "articulates some important questions about the moral qualities of this liar, pirate, colonizer, deceiver, and thief, who is so often in disguise, absent, or napping, while other people—those he owns, those he leads—suffer and die, and who directly kills so many people." Contrast that with Green, who speaks of the hero's "powerful, and praiseworthy, masculinity": "After very little time our sympathies are completely with Odysseus in his struggle to return to his island home."

There has been a flood of publicity about Wilson's translation, along with many deservedly positive reviews, mainly focused on one fact: She is the first woman to have published a translation of the *Odyssey* into English. (The discovery that other women beat Wilson to the punch with translations of the *Odyssey* into such languages as Turkish must have caused an annoying hiccup in her publisher's messaging strategy.) Of course other women have translated Greek and Latin epics into English: Sarah Ruden translated the *Aeneid* in 2008 and Caroline Alexander translated the *Iliad* in 2015. Their translations have not received a fraction of the attention that Wilson's has garnered. Perhaps they did not deploy current progressive jargon as deftly as Wilson, who, for instance, described herself in one interview as "a cis-gendered woman."

The attractive dust jacket of Wilson's hardcover suits the feminist marketing scheme. The cover features a well-known, heavily restored Minoan fresco of three women who look ready for a party. (Evelyn Waugh memorably commented about this and other frescoes from Knossos: "It is impossible to disregard the suspicion that their painters have tempered their zeal for accurate reconstruction with a somewhat inappropriate predilection for covers of *Vogue*.") Green's equally lovely dust jacket design is a bit more relevant to the contents of the book, consisting of drawings of ancient Greek sailing ships with oars and stylized waves. The voyages of a decidedly male hero are, after all, the subject of the epic, and the first word of the epic is *andra*, or "man."

Wilson's interest in gender issues informs her interpretation of the *Odyssey*. She asserts in an essay in the *New Yorker* that "the silencing of female voices, and the dangers of female agency, are central problems in the poem." Even seemingly admirable female characters, like crafty Penelope, come under her negative scrutiny. She criticizes the "sentimentalized" notion of male writers like Daniel Mendelsohn and the late Robert Fagles that Odysseus and his wife have a truly happy partnership, writing: "Whereas Odysseus has many choices, many identities, many places to go and people to be and to see, Penelope has only one choice, and it is defined exclusively by her marital status: she can wait for Odysseus, or marry someone else." Wilson's description of Penelope's role, like her overall assessment of the epic, seems unduly skewed by modern preoccupations.

The heretofore neglected voice of women and other marginalized characters in the epic is the dominant subject of Wilson's media interviews, her interesting and prolific tweets, and her introduction to the translation. She does not hesitate to criticize the work of her predecessors. For example, she writes: "I have avoided describing the Cyclops with words such as 'savage,' which carry with them the legacy of early modern and modern forms of colonialism." With somewhat more justification, she notes that earlier translators incorrectly depicted the Sirens as sexy seductresses by talking about their song issuing from their "lips" or "throats" as opposed to their "mouths," which is the actual word in the Greek. Likewise, she argues that all domestic servants in the poem are actually slaves, and should be consistently named as such. In raising these issues, Wilson heightens readers' awareness of archaic verbiage and lazy or blinkered thinking in many past translations, which is a valuable service—while also providing a peek into the world of current academic trends.



At left, Emily Wilson's translation (Norton, 582 pp., $39.95). At right, Peter Green's (California, 522 pp., $29.95).

Which of the two new translations is better? Each book comes well equipped with informative and thoughtful introductions, indexes, maps, glossaries, plot summaries, and notes. Both translators achieve the difficult feat of matching the number of lines in English to the number of lines in the original Greek. Wilson's lines are shorter, her diction more spare, more modern, and often more inventive and witty. Green conveys the feel of reading an ancient tale without the exaggeratedly archaic language in which some previous translators have indulged, and he is more faithful to the Greek text, word for word.

I use the word "faithful" about Green's translation with some trepidation, in light of this comment by Wilson: "The gendered metaphor of the 'faithful' translation, whose worth is always secondary to that of a male-authored original, acquires a particular edge in the context of a translation by

a woman of *The Odyssey*, a poem that is deeply invested in female fidelity and male dominance." Wilson here creates a kind of Catch-22 in which anyone who would disagree with her translation's accuracy could be accused of patriarchal insensitivity. One shudders to think what she would say if one called her translation "loose." And yet, in some respects, that would be a good way to describe her version of the epic.

There is more than one way to be faithful to the text. When the poem alludes to the meaning of the hero's name, deriving from the verb root *oduss-*, which denotes the infliction of anger and pain, Green does not attempt to replicate the wordplay. Instead he inserts footnotes, two of them annoyingly directing the reader to a substantive footnote in Book 19 in which he provides scholarly information about Greek verb tenses. Contrast this approach with Wilson's. In two passages, she makes use of the similar sounds of "dis-" and "Odysseus": "So why do you dismiss Odysseus?" "I am disliked by many. … So name the child 'Odysseus.'" In another passage, she writes, with amusingly self-referential wit, "Poor man! Why does enraged Poseidon / create an odyssey of pain for you?"

An Etruscan vase (ca. 530-520 B.C.) depicting the blinding of the Cyclops. Green calls the Cyclops a 'savage.' Wilson writes that the episode 'can be read as an attempt to justify Greek exploitation of non-Greek peoples.'

DAN DIFFENDALE VIA FLICKR (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

An important distinction between the two translators—one that in my view disqualifies Wilson from being the next champion—is their disparate treatment of the heart and soul of the poetic style of the epic, the epithets or formulaic adjectives that fill metrical slots and bond with specific nouns throughout the poem, such as "wine-dark sea" and "gray-eyed Athena." Green reproduces the epithets and longer formulaic phrases fairly accurately: "A reader or listener very soon acclimatizes to these and comes to appreciate the subtly ironic way in which they are often employed."

Wilson takes the opposite approach. She chooses to omit or vary these Homeric epithets according to her own poetic judgment, declaring the variation more appealing to modern readers. And so whereas Green consistently translates Homer's famous formulaic line about dawn quite literally—"When Dawn appeared, early risen and rosy-fingered"—Wilson avoids this repetition. Instead, she composes a set of variations: "When Dawn appeared, her fingers bright with flowers"; "Soon Dawn appeared and touched the sky with roses"; "Early the Dawn appeared, pink fingers blooming"; "When early Dawn revealed her rose-red hands"; "When newborn Dawn appeared with hands of flowers." These are attractive images and well-composed lines, but they are not what the Greek says. Wilson's conceit that she is a better poet than the Homeric tradition deprives readers of the opportunity to confront the oddities as well as the beauties of the text on their own and experience it as millennia of listeners and readers have done.

Epithets and formulas are a feature of Homeric epic, not a bug. The routine activities of a wealthy household, even one in distress, proceed rhythmically in Homer. Tables are brought out and cleaned, animals are slaughtered, hands are washed, bread is served, wine is poured—and the repeated language reflects that ritual. A formulaic verse describes the completion of a meal, a line that Green translates almost every time as: "But when they had satisfied their desire for food and drink …" Wilson, in contrast, translates the line at least 10 different ways, from "till they could eat no more" to the even more blunt "When they had had enough …" Green's decision to preserve the Homeric repetition helps to set in relief those many times in the epic where meals are decidedly not regular, such as the pitiful scenes in which men themselves are eaten.

In Homeric poetry, even humble kitchen utensils have epithets. While the suitors at the palace loll on oxhides in the opening scene, servants are swabbing the tables with *polutretoi spongoi*—"porous sponges" in Green's translation, each time they are mentioned. These sponges will have a sad new purpose at the climax of the epic when the fate of the formerly nonchalant suitors has been sealed. Little do the intruders know, as the dining tables are sponged in Book 20, that it will be their final meal. After the suitors' violent deaths in Book 22, the "porous sponges" come out again as the slave girls, themselves about to die, are forced to mop up the blood.

Wilson, on the other hand, omits the adjective *polutretoi* when it first appears, in Book 1. In Book 22, she translates the same phrase first as "sponges fine as honeycomb" and then as "wet absorbent sponges." From the high-flown to the aisles of Walmart in just a few lines, with no justification from the text. And in so doing, Wilson has made it a bit harder for the Greek-less reader to grasp the poetic architecture of the epic.

To Wilson the especially brutal execution of the slave girls following the killing of the suitors has not received enough attention, and she has roundly criticized previous translators who have not shown sufficient outrage or who seem to place

blame on the slave girls. Looking at the SparkNotes discussion of the scene, she has tweeted: "Rape culture is deeply intertwined with how this scene is read, and how it's taught to impressionable teenagers." Green, in this instance, perhaps proves Wilson's point by his apparent indifference to the scene's horrors. Instead, he makes the strange decision to annotate the execution of the slave girls with a scholarly footnote questioning the strength of the rope that would have been required to hang a dozen people at once.

Wilson's somewhat iconoclastic approach to translating does find justification from within the poem itself. The epic poet knows that old tales must be made new for each audience. And therefore Homer's narrator begins by beseeching the Muse as follows (my translation): "About these things, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak also to us." Wilson's imaginative alchemy transforms the words into these splendid lines: "Now, goddess, child of Zeus, / tell the old story for our modern times." On the other hand, Wilson's insistence on unsilencing the female voice has led her to slight the deeds of men. When at a banquet the Muse inspires the bard Demodocus to sing about the Trojan Horse, she translates: "The Muse / prompted the bard to sing of famous actions." But what the text really says is what Green writes: "The Muse stirred the minstrel to sing of the famous deeds of men." Men. *Andron*, the plural form of the word that begins the epic.

Despite Wilson's unrelenting political correctness, I like her translation. It has a bracing, dry feel with its short sentences and modern diction. It is already drawing a new crowd of readers to the text, a text that is strong enough to withstand any amount of interpretation or overinterpretation. Green's intelligent translation is also a superb choice. In the end, readers would do well to listen to his seasoned counsel: Read the poem more than once and establish your own view of it. "If the experience leads you to learn Greek and tackle the original, so much the better. You won't regret it." ♦

B&A

Aaron Burr, Conspirator

The hard-to-untangle tale of how he became the villain in our history. **BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.**

Lithograph based on an 1834 painting by James Van Dyck—the last for which Burr sat, which he considered the 'best Likeness ever Painted of me since 1809.'

The Burr Conspiracy
Uncovering the Story of an Early American Crisis
by James E. Lewis Jr.
Princeton, 715 pp., $35

Let it be said at the outset that this is a superb work of contemporary historical craftsmanship. The question for everyone interested in its subject is how to understand it.

Ostensibly, that subject is the supposed conspiracy cooked up by Aaron Burr and some others to sever, so it was alleged, the southwestern part of the United States from the rest of the union in the first decade of the 19th century. The trouble is that, as Burr's biographers and historians of the era have long concluded, there's not enough evidence, and probably never will be, to know precisely what, if anything, took place in the Ohio and Mississippi valleys in 1805 and 1806. That in turn means that there is little justification for yet another book on the purported Burr "conspiracy," a term that has stuck despite Burr's defenders' efforts to prove him guiltless of anything more than bad judgment.

Accordingly, James Lewis wisely forgoes trying to give us a new book on the conspiracy. But then what's a gifted, deeply knowledgeable, evidence-digging historian like him to do instead? One option is simply to turn to an entirely different subject—but then we wouldn't have this book. So there's another option: He can stick with his subject by examining what contemporaries thought about the conspiracy that seemed to be unfolding in the southwest rather than by writing about the conspiracy itself. Perhaps this will tell us something new about the crisis. It does.

Lewis's approach—"focusing more on the crisis and on the efforts to make sense of the conspiracy rather than on the conspiracy itself"—is very much in keeping with current historiographical trends and all very postmodern: You keep events at arm's length and instead examine how contemporaries reacted to them. Your focus is not on what happened but on events, whether real or supposed, experienced as "texts" that

James M. Banner Jr.'s second edition of The Elements of Teaching, *coauthored with the late Harold C. Cannon, was recently published by Yale.*

people "read" in different ways. You use events as psychologists use a Rorschach test—to tease out an era's cultural and political realities.

For all the brickbats thrown at a method drawn from Continental theory and literary studies, in Lewis's hands this history of what he fittingly calls "sensemaking" is deeply illuminating. It reveals as much about the realities of the early republic as any account that's limited to the passage of events. In many respects, it reveals more. It does so with a bravura display of the newest kind of political history, the history of "political culture," of the general context in which politics takes place. It's a kind of history being practiced nowhere better than in the history of the early nation.

The main figure of the tale, Aaron Burr, was known to contemporaries as a brilliant politician. Historians consider him the first professional politician on the national scene. Grandson of the great theologian Jonathan Edwards, son of a president of the College of New Jersey (now Princeton), himself a graduate of that institution, and an attorney, Burr was a member of the early nation's elite. After a distinguished military career during the revolution, he entered politics and carried New York state for Thomas Jefferson in two presidential contests, those of 1796 and 1800. In 1801, already considered by many to be untrustworthy, a womanizer, and lacking the public virtue of a truly disinterested patriot, Burr squandered much of his residual appeal by failing to stand aside during that year's Electoral College tie in favor of Thomas Jefferson, who became president only after the House of Representatives broke the tie in a marathon series of votes. Then, while serving as Jefferson's vice president, Burr fatally shot Alexander Hamilton in their celebrated 1804 duel at Weehawken. It was after Burr left office in 1805 that the final notorious set of events of his public life unrolled.

Burr had leased land in the part of the Louisiana Territory that eventually became the state of Louisiana. Journeying through the Ohio Valley toward his holdings in 1805, he probably saw the wisdom of trying to protect them in the event that Spain warred against the United States to regain the Louisiana Territory, the great landmass that France, having earlier bought it from Spain, had ceded to Jefferson's administration in 1803. Gathering a group of armed men around him, he set out for the southwest—up to what we still don't know.

The trouble was that among those in on his plans was James Wilkinson, governor of the Louisiana Territory, commander of American forces at New Orleans, a man then in the pay of Spain, and by wide agreement one of the most notorious scoundrels in American history. Whatever Burr's scheme was or was said to be, Wilkinson, seeking as usual his own advantage, betrayed it to President Jefferson who, fearing the nation's breakup, ordered Burr's arrest. Hauled back east after trying to flee, Burr stood trial for treason in Richmond in 1807. Acquitted of the charge in a federal court presided over by none other than Chief Justice John Marshall, Burr—now "Catiline" to his detractors—fled to Europe, his career and reputation in tatters.

Burr's actions drew in most of the leading figures and opinion-makers of the day. None of them emerged unscathed. Even today, none of them is free from suspicion of having acted to hide the truth, gain political and ideological advantage, and protect his reputation.

Burr's actions drew in most of the leading figures and opinion-makers of the day. None of them emerged from the affair without political and personal wounds. Even today, none of them is free from suspicion of having acted to hide the truth, gain political and ideological advantage, and protect his reputation. The conspiracy had a happy outcome for none of them.

While Lewis weaves the necessary details of all this throughout his long book, his interest lies elsewhere. In a display of exhaustive research into every conceivable remaining written and published source, an effort that took him 20 years, he examines how contemporaries learned about, reported, and tried to understand a set of events that seemed dizzying to them all.

That takes him into the day's postal system and the spread of information, how Jefferson and others tried to spin the story to their benefit, and how people made sense of competing accounts, decided who could be believed, and distinguished honesty from skullduggery. He takes readers into how contemporaries struggled, as historians still do, to figure out the veracity of conflicting reports of events, to decide whether Marshall's acquittal of Burr was warranted, even the way in which people argued over how Burr should be treated socially during his trial in Richmond.

Little escapes Lewis's gaze—but he must leave readers to decide the most freighted question of all: whether, as so many then believed, the republic was in peril of disunion. Not even Lewis can figure that out.

In the end, the author joins every other historian who has tried to unravel the affair by throwing his hands in the air in the face of "a mass of incomplete, incompatible, and even incredible assertions and explanations" in the surviving sources. In this, he joins the great historian Henry Adams, who gave up on publishing a book about Burr and the conspiracy after losing confidence that he could understand either.

Yet even if warranted, giving up is not a conclusion that brings things satisfactorily to a close. It offends the canons and aesthetics of tale-telling. It leaves us hanging. We want a rounding out, not just a mystery. So what's a reader to do? Isn't there more to say,

even more to be learned from the book?

An era reveals itself most clearly in its fears and fractures, not in its areas of concord. We see through Lewis's book how early-19th-century Americans were deeply concerned about their nation's integrity and about what constituted honorable conduct in their public officials. The Burr conspiracy crisis brought their fears about both to the surface. Only 30 years after its birth, the United States, the world's first constitutional republic, seemed threatened by secession—and by secession at the hands of someone who had endangered Jefferson's election to the presidency, as vice president had killed Hamilton, and now stood accused of treason, the greatest civic dishonor.

Should we wonder that what was reported and debated throughout the union was a kind of screen on which the nation's anxieties were projected and amplified? Read from this vantage, the tale of what Burr and the strange company of his accomplices were said to be attempting is what makes the book so important. It unveils the complex social and cultural ecosystem of early American public life.

But what more is in it for the general reader of history? Not, I think, the luxuriant details of Lewis's book. After a while, the facts begin to feel precious and baroquely excessive—"too much," as we used to say. One can however imagine why Lewis piles the details on. His work, like much political history of the early republic, joins a growing number of others in its implied criticism of what the French dismissively call "events history"—the kind of history, especially biographies and tales of elections and military conflicts, that continues to pour from American presses. We surely don't much need many more of those histories. Lewis implicitly makes that point, even while overdoing it.

Yet we need more of the kind of history that Lewis so brilliantly gives us here, even without such an overabundance of detail. If that's a danger inherent in the new cultural history written in our purportedly postmodern era, perhaps it's the price we have to pay for it. It's surely a price this splendid book makes worthwhile. ♦

B&A

Truly Grand Strategy

Drawing on the wisdom of history, philosophy, and literature to inform foreign policy. **BY AARON MACLEAN**

HARRY BISHOP / COURTESY OF YALE UNIVERSITY

Historian John Lewis Gaddis (left), with Paul Kennedy and Charles Hill, with whom he teaches grand strategy at Yale

Until the late 1990s, John Lewis Gaddis enjoyed a reputation among his fellow historians for careful—even exquisitely careful—evenhandedness. His early books—1972's *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, which grew out of his doctoral dissertation, and 1982's *Strategies of Containment*—had struck what appeared to be a virtuous balance between the kind of boosterism that tended to absolve the United States of all responsibility for the onset of the Cold War and the rising New Left revisionism that pinned the whole regrettable affair on the capitalists. By 1997, the year he started teaching at Yale University, the *New York Times* called Gaddis "the respected dean of cold war historians."

Aaron MacLean is a writer and policy analyst in Washington.

On Grand Strategy
by John Lewis Gaddis
Penguin, 368 pp., $26

But around that same time, some of his fellow academics began to feel that Gaddis risked becoming an embarrassment. In his 1997 book *We Now Know*, which drew on materials released from Communist archives after the Soviet Union's fall, Gaddis argued that Stalin's ascendancy had made the Cold War inevitable—even at that late date a not entirely welcome view among his peers. Then, in 2005, he published a one-volume history of the Cold War in which he came across as, well, pleased that the United States and its allies had ultimately prevailed. This was going too far. Still more troublingly, Gaddis had become associated with a program at Yale devoted to educating future masters of the universe about

geopolitics. Surely the whole thing was ethically questionable at best—and at worst, somewhat neoconservative. This last suspicion was only aggravated when Gaddis wrote articles and a short book that were generally supportive of the Bush administration's response to 9/11 and when he became an occasional visitor in those days to the Oval Office.

It almost seems that for some of Gaddis's critics his apparent rightward drift was ipso facto evidence that his research was shoddy. An extreme version of the indictment was laid out by Tony Judt in the *New York Review of Books*, writing with respect to Gaddis's 2005 Cold War history:

> While it may seem tempting to dismiss John Lewis Gaddis's history of the cold war as a naively self-congratulatory account which leaves out much of what makes its subject interesting and of continuing relevance, that would be a mistake. Gaddis's version is perfectly adapted for contemporary America: an anxious country curiously detached from its own past as well as from the rest of the world and hungry for "a fireside fairytale with a happy ending."

Few of Gaddis's critics rose to quite the same altitude of dudgeon—but among the community of professional scholars of foreign policy, a sense of distaste persisted, generally expressed in terms of more-sorrow-than-anger, even as Gaddis produced a volume widely considered to be a masterpiece: a 2011 biography of George Kennan, some three decades in the making, that was deservedly awarded a Pulitzer Prize.

Gaddis's thought-provoking new book, *On Grand Strategy*, is lighter fare, albeit dealing with grave matters. Inspired in part by his experience coteaching in Yale's Program in Grand Strategy (for two decades as its ostensibly centrist instructor, flanked on the left by Paul Kennedy and on the right by Charles Hill, who has produced a comparable book), it is a series of essays organized along similar chronological and thematic lines as the course. The approach is highly idiosyncratic and the structure loose; it has something of the feel of a personal manifesto or intellectual memoir. Sometimes the chapters concern canonical authors who wrote explicitly on strategy, sometimes Gaddis's own 20th-century intellectual influences, sometimes the careers of pivotal statesmen. Thucydides, Sun Tzu, Machiavelli, Clausewitz, Tolstoy, and Isaiah Berlin jostle for space with Augustus Caesar, Elizabeth I, and John Quincy Adams, with mentions of people like Hermann Broch, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Virginia Woolf, and Milan Kundera dusted throughout.

This highly personal approach—in which general strategic principles are developed and honed dialectically through a method best described as literary anecdotalism—will do little to improve Gaddis's standing among those already inclined to dislike his work. Neither will the unironic mention of "timeless principles," the balanced treatment of topics like the American legacy of slavery, and the generally favorable view of the way in which the United States has acted to secure the geopolitical balance of the Old World.

Justifying his method of exploring grand strategy—which he defines as the activity of aligning "potentially unlimited aspirations with necessarily limited capabilities"—across "space, time, and scale," Gaddis writes:

> We need to see change happen, and we can do that only by reconstituting the past as histories, biographies, poems, plays, novels, or films. The best of these sharpen and shade simultaneously: they compress what's happening in order to clarify, even as they blur the line between instruction and entertainment.

This is why one encounters Gaddis exploring Lincoln's combination of moral principle and operational flexibility as much through Tony Kushner's 2012 screenplay for *Lincoln* as through the historical record itself, or looking at the struggle between Elizabethan England and Habsburg Spain with substantial reference to the 20th-century novels *Orlando* and *Pavane*. Both discussions advance Gaddis's admiration for leaders who have an apparently super-rational ability to remain flexible in situations wherein a host of moral and practical imperatives are in conflict with one another. On Elizabeth, Gaddis, relying on A. N. Wilson, who is in turn relying on Shakespeare, writes:

> [Hamlet and Elizabeth] hardly at first seem similar. Shakespeare's prince, dressed like Philip [II] always in black, lacks Elizabeth's lightness—except in his mad scenes, where he feigns irresponsibility, even lunacy, to smoke out his enemies. Elizabeth used dithering, which looks irresponsible, in something like the same way: to remind her advisers for whom they worked; to hold off her suitors, thus balancing their states; and, when the balance at last turned against her, to lure the Spanish Armada into the English Channel where, by trusting her admirals, she sprang a massive mousetrap. Precision and decisiveness, in each of these situations, could have entrapped her.

This sort of gnomic insight—that precision and decisiveness are of the utmost importance, except when they are not—is characteristic of the book. In Gaddis's account, Elizabeth's patience, ideological flexibility, and capacity for gaining leverage over powerful entities by playing them off one another contrast with Philip's prioritization of his religious calling (to unite Europe under the church) and an arrogance born of his empire's abundant resources; as a consequence, the future belonged to the British, not to Spain.

Absent from *On Grand Strategy* is the sort of specialized, "bottom-up" history that focuses on broad economic or social trends within highly circumscribed subject areas. The only absence more conspicuous is of the fruits of two disciplines that concern strategic issues: political science and its close relation international relations theory. Gaddis implicitly addresses such omissions early in the book, suggesting that his own discipline of historical research has grown too narrow, while the work of the theorists has suffered from a deleterious envy of the hard sciences. What is needed is a kind of healing synthesis:

> A gap has opened between the study of history and the construction of theory, both of which are needed if

ends are to be aligned with means. Historians, knowing that their field rewards specialized research, tend to avoid the generalizations upon which theories depend: they thereby deny complexity the simplicities that guide us through it. Theorists, keen to be seen as social "scientists," seek "reproducibility" in results: that replaces complexity with simplicity in the pursuit of predictability. Both communities neglect *relationships* between the general and the particular—between universal and local knowledge—that nurture strategic thinking. And both, as if to add opacity to this insufficiency, too often write badly.

Gaddis does not linger on the fact that the current state of play gives the theorists the upper hand, and that the kind of young person who wants to be relevant outside the academy will naturally gravitate in the direction of theory.

Moreover, young people interested in geopolitics are very likely to get their first meaningful exposure to the subject not from a history department or a classics-oriented course in grand strategy like the one at Yale, but from an introductory course in international relations. A yet-unpublished study by the Alexander Hamilton Society—an organization dedicated to promoting debate on the first principles and contemporary dilemmas of American foreign policy—reviews the syllabi of such courses at the 10 universities atop the 2017 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings and finds that of the most commonly assigned readings, only one author (Thucydides) was not born in the 20th century; the other nine are contemporary or near-contemporary political scientists of the likes of John Mearsheimer and Robert Jervis. Such a pedagogical approach implies that our knowledge of statecraft, like our knowledge of materials science or of how to treat cancer, is steadily accumulating. Each generation of theorists will know more, or at least will know better, than the last.

The inclusion of Thucydides on these syllabi is indeed the exception that proves the rule: In general, the students are only reading the same cherry-picked excerpt, the Melian dialogue. This passage has come to serve as a kind of ur-text for the predominant intellectual school among international relations theorists: "realism," which holds that states behave rationally and naturally seek to expand their power, regardless of the nature of their domestic political structures. The academic adherents of realism tend these days to be associated with calls for American "restraint." As a set of arguments, the realist theoretical approach deserves something like the robust attention that it receives; but as a primary basis for educating ambitious young people interested in foreign affairs, it has obvious shortcomings.

On the evidence of the results of the last 25 years of American foreign policy, it seems as though the question of how to educate strategists ought to be acute for us.

Far from rejecting any role for "theory" in strategic thinking, Gaddis insists it is essential. He holds up Clausewitz as an exemplar of a useful theoretician, one whose theory is deeply concerned with the "limitations of theory itself," who keeps the enterprise tied closely to experience, who sees it more as a way of training the mind than as a tool to be employed at moments of decision. These moments tend to involve factors so complex, with information so imperfect, that consistent success within them seems to require an uncanny ability to grasp intangibles: Clausewitz's famous "*coup d'oeil*." A theoretical education can help prepare one for such moments, but so, Gaddis holds, can the study of history and literature. The mediated experience to be gained from reading Tolstoy is of such value that a strategic education (we might add, a liberal education) ought not to ignore it.

Gaddis does not address the Cold War at any great length, noting that he has said plenty on the subject elsewhere; he also doesn't discuss recent American strategic dilemmas, presumably for the same reason. On the evidence of the results of the last 25 years of American foreign policy, it seems as though the question of how to educate strategists ought to be acute for us. In particular, Gaddis's general hostility toward dogmatism of any variety deserves attention: He gets a great deal of mileage out of one of F. Scott Fitzgerald's glittering and somewhat glib aphorisms, that "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." For Gaddis, the strategic value of such an observation is the suggestion that one might take "the best from contradictory approaches while rejecting the worst."

Fitzgerald's remark ultimately leads Gaddis to the observation that terrible strategic dilemmas can only be resolved by "stretching them over time. We seek certain things now, put off others until later, and regard still others as unattainable." The American project of self-government began with a compromise between the high moral principle of the Declaration of Independence and the barbarity of slavery, a dilemma that took a century to resolve; we redressed the balance of power in Eurasia three times in the last century, and on two of those occasions succeeded through cooperation with an ideologically hostile power (with Stalin to defeat fascism; with Mao and his successors to defeat the Soviet Union). Each resolved dilemma, each geopolitical success, vindicated the reputation of our bold project of self-rule. Acting creatively within such tensions—between the dreams of "idealism" and the demands of "realism"—is the very stuff of the American approach to strategy. Or as Gaddis puts it, quoting Isaiah Berlin, "Perhaps there are other worlds in which all principles are harmonized, but 'it is on earth that we live, and it is here that we must believe and act.'" ♦

B&A

Witty Women

Controversy-courting creators, critics, and cultural commentators. **BY B.D. MCCLAY**

Sharp
The Women Who Made an Art of Having an Opinion
by Michelle Dean
Grove, 362 pp., $26

Scene: New York City, sometime in the sixties. Mary McCarthy, former "dark lady" of American letters, walks up to the young Susan Sontag at a party and says, icily: *So I hear you're the new me.* (In some accounts: *the imitation me*.) This exchange will become famous, though no one—least of all Sontag herself—seems to recall it actually happening.

But we like the story. Literary gossip has all the pleasures of the normal sort and something a little extra. Knowing the quips and predilections of the smart, famous, and dead brings a special thrill; they were just like us, only somehow more so. They know their roles and, in stories like this one, seem to be aware of playing them. It's almost, Michelle Dean wryly comments in *Sharp*, as if "intellectual life were a kind of gothic novel."

In addition, a mystique can accrue to particular circles and places—but over time, as one encounters the same anecdotes over and over, they can become tiresome. "Bloomsbury is, just now, like one of those ponds on a private estate from which all of the trout have been scooped out for the season," wrote Elizabeth Hardwick in her 1973 essay "Bloomsbury and Virginia Woolf": "The period, the letters, the houses, the love affairs, the blood lines: these are private anecdotes one is happy enough to meet once or twice but not again and again."

Nowadays it's Hardwick's own circle—the so-called "New York intellectuals"—that plays this role for us, not Bloomsbury. Hence the appeal of the McCarthy-Sontag anecdote, fished out as many times as it has been. It's a story of one bitchy intellectual accosting another at a party, a sea of intellectuals drinking hard and arguing about ideas and shoving each other around with their big personalities. In which sea there is only ever one exceptional woman at a time. Witty, beautiful, drinks too much, acid-tongued—you know the type. One retires, another appears.

Dorothy Parker, one of the 20th-century women writers profiled in Sharp

In *Sharp*, Dean, a journalist and literary critic, recenters the New York intellectual world around its women. As her guiding theme, she takes these women's reputations as "sharp," cruel, or ruthless, linking them together by how they were talked about. The women she focuses on—Dorothy Parker, Rebecca West, Zora Neale Hurston, Hannah Arendt, Mary McCarthy, Susan Sontag, Pauline Kael, Nora Ephron, Joan Didion, Renata Adler, and Janet Malcolm—fill the book easily, and there are enough other women popping up in the background that one could imagine an entire other book with a different cast.

Dean writes perceptively, if sometimes in a slightly detached way, about these women's achievements and failures, the sorts of things they wished they could have done, and their blind spots (notably, for West and Arendt, blind spots related to racism). Occasionally, Dean withholds her own judgment a little too much; it's hard to read about all these opinionated women and their controversies without wanting the author to come down on one side or another.

But for the most part, *Sharp* is an insightful book that works well to introduce its subjects to newcomers while containing enough of Dean's analysis to be interesting to readers already familiar with them. Dean highlights some of the obscure or even a little embarrassing works by these writers. (For instance: Susan Sontag once wrote a piece for *Vogue* that advised cultivating optimism by assuming, among other things, "that we suffer uselessly.") While Dean carefully frees these women from their reputations for cruelty, she documents the ways in which they are part of intellectual history, linked to and in conversation with each other, not one-offs in an endless series of Dark Ladies.

Dorothy Parker, long an inspiration to many a sardonic brunette, takes her place as the first in Dean's line of women—and her ghost lingers long after she's left the page. Parker made her name through a series of, well, *sharp* reviews, observational pieces, light verse, and, eventually, short stories.

But it wasn't very fun being Dorothy Parker, seeing through everything, including herself. She didn't find much to celebrate in her own success. The sort of work Parker admired was being done by men like Hemingway and Fitzgerald, to whom

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she could pen tributes (in the former case) or good-natured parodies (in the latter) but among whom she could not assume her place as an equal. (In Hemingway's case, not only was Parker's admiration not returned, he seems to have hated her.)

Being known for being *sharp* means being recognized and marketed as a personality rather than an intellect. Being sharp is not the same thing as being profound or even smart; it signals a talent for observation, rather than insight or originality, and moves the kind of work these women did into the realm of natural instinct.

To some extent, that's still the case. There's Dorothy Parker, and then there's "Dorothy Parker," and they aren't really the same. If it's the latter you want, you can buy a Dorothy Parker gin; you can buy a Dorothy Parker shot glass; you can drink the gin out of the shot glass and post a picture of them on Instagram to show you, too, are sharp, sad, brown-haired, and drink irresponsibly. (Let the record show I have done all these things.) That's the image—the screwball gal. The "good sport," as Parker characterized it in one of her stories.

What Parker put into her writing was something more than this, but her hatred of her image-self didn't come from nowhere. It made her name, but put her in a prison from which she could only try to escape by attacking herself. Of all the women in the book, she is the one who wrestled the most with the double-edged nature of her own reputation; she seems to have understood her situation more clearly than the other women portrayed in *Sharp* understood theirs. And when reading about Parker's career, it's hard not to reach for present-day analogues—the hip websites that use women's cultural knowledge to build audiences while reserving the actual power and prestige for men, or the women who rocket to fame by selling their personalities and then burn out.

Dorothy Parker eventually condemned her work and herself, writing for a Communist publication that "the only group I have ever been affiliated with is that not especially brave little band that hid its nakedness of heart and mind under the out-of-date garment of a sense of humor." But one irony of Parker's intense self-hatred, as teased out by Dean, is that of all the women in this book, she is probably the one most read and remembered today. Not because the other women are obscure—they aren't. But while Parker might not have written the work she wanted to write—and might not have had much feeling for what she wanted to write beyond self-reproach—she captured a way of seeing and understanding the world, a bruised romanticism. It's that quality—not the acid tongue or the good sport—that's kept us reading her.

Hannah Arendt, left, and Mary McCarthy

But the problem of being known as a personality as much as a writer remained for her successors. "Everything is copy," a young Nora Ephron's mother once told her, and she took it to heart, writing essays about humiliating experiences, a novel about her unfaithful husband. She struggled with the women's movement, wanting to express both solidarity and criticism when it came to magazines like *Cosmopolitan* or somewhat schlocky novels by prominent feminists, feeling trapped by the demands of feminism and resentful of the mockery of men. ("Like all things about liberation," she wrote, "sisterhood is difficult.") For Ephron, selling your personality and your story was a way of avoiding being trapped, rather than the trap it became for Parker.

If the women in Dean's book are incorrectly linked under the category of *sharp*, they might be better understood via a phrase coined by Hannah Arendt: "conscious pariah." The women in this book were many things—brilliant, difficult, successful, frequently wrong—but they were all outsiders. (Often literally: Arendt, Adler, and Malcolm were all immigrants.) "A conscious pariah knows she is different," Dean writes, "and knows she may never, at least in the eyes of others, properly escape it. But she is also aware of what her individuality gives her."

Fittingly, then, it's Hannah Arendt who succeeds most at climbing out of the shadow cast by the Dark Lady. Though Arendt would also be reproached for her lack of feeling—most sensationally, when she covered the trial of Adolf Eichmann for the *New Yorker*—she does not have the thwarted quality that most of the other women in the book have. She might have been snidely dismissed by some of her male peers, but she accomplished the work she set out to do and does not seem to have been troubled greatly by the opinions of others. And her warm friendship with Mary McCarthy belies the idea that these women could only be each other's rivals.

None of the women in this book had it easy. Some of them ended up in careers that were not the ones they really wanted: Susan Sontag tried to escape the essay-writing life to make films, which flopped. Before that, she'd tried her hand at novel-writing and failed there too. Mary McCarthy, much like Parker, tried to put her writing to the service of political causes, without much success. Janet Malcolm didn't really want to be a journalist at all but found herself working as one after the untimely death of her husband. Others ran up against hard walls: Renata Adler would end her journalism career by biting one hand too many. Pauline Kael—again rather like Dorothy Parker—would be driven by self-hatred as much as by ambition. Rebecca West had to watch herself age from young firebrand into irrelevance. Zora Neale Hurston would never in her lifetime, and arguably not even after, get the respect she deserved.

It wasn't easy being any of these women. But in refusing to let things be easier, what a gift they gave to all of us.♦

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B&A

Ready (Or Not)

Steven Spielberg's messy, mostly animated virtual-reality spectacle. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Ready Player One
Directed by Steven Spielberg

Why is Steven Spielberg devoting so much of his time to making cartoons? *Ready Player One*, his mammoth new movie, is the third film he's made since 2011 using motion-capture animation. The first two—*The Adventures of Tintin* and *The BFG*—were simultaneously hyperactive and dispirited. Spielberg is the most successful filmmaker who has ever lived and one of the most adventurous, so he's earned the right to do whatever he wants. Spielberg wanted to play with the technical advances conceived by his protégé and friend Bob Zemeckis in movies like *The Polar Express* and even more fully realized in James Cameron's *Avatar*.

Tintin and *The BFG* were designed to be popular, crowd-pleasing hits. They weren't; both flopped at the box office. Nor did they seem like passion projects for Spielberg. Yet here he is again, with a movie that's probably 75 percent animated. Set in a dystopian 2045 where everybody spends as much time as possible inside a virtual-reality universe called the Oasis, *Ready Player One* can't decide if it's a satirical portrait of a world in dangerous thrall to computer simulations or a sparkling celebration of gamers and gaming. When the movie goes inside the Oasis, it's a cartoon. When it's outside, it's live action. After about 20 minutes in the Oasis, how I longed for the real world—and so I didn't really pick up on how wonderfully seductive the Oasis is supposed to be.

Tye Sheridan as Wade and his avatar Parzival in Ready Player One

We're supposed to care about whether a poor kid named Wade living in an American favela will get to own the entire Oasis by solving a series of riddles in a game set up by its deceased proprietor based on his own life—or whether the Oasis will end up in the hands of an evil corporate rich person who cheats. (Guess who wins.) The storyline is largely borrowed from *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*—only here Willy Wonka is dead and Charlie Bucket is a 17-year-old played by an astonishingly dull young actor named Tye Sheridan whose chief quality seems to be that he resembles the teenaged Steven Spielberg.

Ready Player One has a lot of plot. Boy, is there plot. It needs to go on a plot diet, because there's so much of it that the plot becomes incomprehensible. I'm guessing there were a bunch of explanatory scenes about how people in 2045 assemble into "clans" while others find themselves indentured to an evil corporation that sticks a VR helmet on their heads and makes them walk perpetually on a treadmill—and that those scenes were cut to move the thing along. Probably wise from a marketing standpoint, but what's left makes little sense.

Instead, we have a series of set pieces, and while they're intended to dazzle, mostly they're just odd. We're told the dead Wonka is a techie named Halliday who was obsessed with 1980s pop culture and that the puzzle he leaves behind is all about the 1980s. That's an amusing idea, and when Spielberg remembers it, he has good fun with it (there's a hilarious bit involving Chucky, the murderous doll from *Child's Play*).

But the highlight of the puzzle is when our boy Wade and his friends have to enter and interact inside Halliday's favorite movie—Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*. Bzzzt. Game over. Yes, we know Spielberg loves Kubrick; he directed Kubrick's dream project, *AI: Artificial Intelligence*, after the master's death. But while *The Shining* was released in 1980, it has not a trace of the fizzy, exuberant 1980s pop that we're told Halliday loved so much—John Hughes movies, or *Back to the Future*, or even Spielberg's own pictures from those years. In the novel on which *Ready Player One* is based, the movie in question is *WarGames*. Spielberg decided to amuse himself here and mucked up the best part of the overall concept behind *Ready Player One*.

Because, really, what's happened here is that Steven Spielberg has made a movie for the kid in everyone who cares passionately about a postmortem transfer of stock and assets. What do I know? Maybe if you're worth a few billion nothing could be more interesting. But for the rest of us? On the other hand, this could explain why Spielberg, one of the richest of all moviemakers, is so satisfied making cartoons in his 70s. It might leave him more time for estate planning. ♦

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The Cast Master

Lefty Kreh, 1925-2018.

BY MATT LABASH

Whenever I need to check out of the world, I head to a place called Satan's Creek. I go there to catch-and-release—or maybe catch-and-ogle—God's most perfect creatures: wild brook trout. They come small in these mountain runs. An 11-incher would be considered trophy-size. Still, bringing one to hand, with its speckled reds and yellows and blues, is like holding an opal with gills.

Satan's Creek is not its real name, but I've so coined this riverine hideout because while fishing it, I often have to dodge the refuse left behind by Frederick County, Maryland, natives ("Frednecks" they're sometimes called—though never to their faces). They don't have the same reverence for the land as I do for their fish. I've circumnavigated cinch-sacked trash bags, animal ribcages (at least I think they were animals), a discarded toilet, and once even an abandoned suitcase with nothing in it but children's panties, perhaps left over from the human sacrifices. And yet while I can catch brookies in more unspoiled climes, I still feel as though I'm fishing hallowed water. For Frederick was the birthplace and longtime stomping grounds of Bernard "Lefty" Kreh. And if it was good enough for Lefty . . .

Lefty left us on March 14 at the age of 93. And for non-fisherpersons who never realized he'd been here in the first place, well, you missed out. For it can fairly be said that he was the sport's all-time premier ambassador, the Michael Jordan of fly fishing. Or, putting matters in proper historical context, Michael Jordan was the Lefty Kreh of the NBA.

Lefty Kreh in July 2015

He changed the game, as they say. Lefty caused us to think differently about how we fly fishers cast, abandoning the rigid 10-and-2 clockface instruction that tweedy trout priests drilled into novices since Izaak Walton was in short pants. Lefty favored instead an extended stroke with the body pivoting that allowed him to throw effortlessly tight loops previously unheard-of distances. He also expanded where we fish. Lefty was catching big bad saltwater fish with a fly rod when the rest of the fly-fishing universe still had on its trout training wheels. His Lefty's Deceiver fly, invented to entice Chesapeake Bay stripers, became such a staple that the Postal Service put it on a stamp.

Lefty caught 126 species on the fly on every continent but Antarctica. He'd have scored there, too, if it weren't for the fact, as he told *Angler's Journal*, that there "ain't nothing to catch on Antarctica but penguins." He set scores of world records, from tarpon to blackfin tuna. And yet, being a good Maryland boy, his favorite fish was the comparatively modest smallmouth bass—basically a largemouth with a couple of Red Bulls in him. Fish the world when you can was Lefty's credo, though the world right in front of you has plenty of fine fish, too. Be no discriminator. The greatest fish are the ones you can catch.

What Lefty did best of all, with his reverence for things that matter (fish, rivers, people) and irreverence for that which doesn't ("there is more BS in fly fishing than there is in a Kansas feedlot"), was make you want to fish just like he did: full-on, without pretense, doing what works, discarding what doesn't, grabbing all there is to be gotten, then returning it right back to where you found it. "You don't burn your golf balls at the end of the day, do you?" he once asked an interviewer. Lefty knew and lived what so many of us suspect: Our days, even when we get 93 years' worth of them, are finite, and a lousy day of fishing beats a good day of whatever else you had in mind.

I only met him once. When Lefty was a spry 86, a friend hauled me along to the annual Tie Fest on Maryland's Eastern Shore. I don't care much for tying flies myself. If I have time to tie, I have time to fish, which I'd rather be doing. But I wanted to pay my respects to the master before it was too late. Thronged by idolaters, there he was, an unlikely athletic specimen—a gap-toothed 5'7" octogenarian in a frumpy upper-downer hat, who on his knees and using half a rod could still throw a fly line 30 feet further than any of us.

Back in his stunt-casting days, he'd knock a cigarette out of a girl's mouth at 60 feet, a practice he abandoned, preferring to share knowledge rather

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than show off. He instructed everyone from Jimmy Carter to Ted Williams, but he was a man at ease in his own skin, in no need of lording his prowess over fishing partners.

Despite people tugging from every side that afternoon, Lefty sat down with me for a drink. I had a whiskey to calm my nerves, he had a Coke. He spoke with that mouthful of working-class Maryland—all elongated "O" sounds—and called the waitresses "hon." He looked at the book of his I was holding, immediately admitting, "I didn't write it," giving credit to the ghostwriter who took down his tales. And then he told more hilarious stories, none of which I can remember, but one of which ended with one of his fishing buddies, Tom Brokaw, calling another, the novelist Tom McGuane, a "c—sucker." Being politically correct was never Lefty's strong suit. Even as he lay dying last fall, an email made the rounds in which he bucked up saddened friends, assuring them that he was staying "busier than a Syrian bricklayer."

Being gracious was the constant refrain of his life. As fishing writer Dan Blanton put it, "He made you feel as though you were the celebrity, not him." Bill May, another angling author, has told how Lefty took over an hour out of a fishing exhibition to console May after his wife had died, waving off all other comers. (Lefty's wife had passed away a few years earlier, after over 60 years of marriage.) Angus Phillips, the longtime outdoors writer at the *Washington Post*, who, when he started in the late '70s, "didn't know a fish from a duck," tells me that Lefty, who was then his theoretical rival at the *Baltimore Sun*, had Phillips over to a pond near his house for casting lessons. Lefty taught him tricks that would've taken years to learn on his own, all while making him feel better about his thinning hair: "Tell 'em it's not a bald spot, it's a solar panel for a love machine." "Lefty had it all," says Phillips. "He was talented, generous, and funny, a friend to anyone he met."

The book in my hand that day at Tie Fest was Lefty's autobiography, *My Life Was This Big and Other True Fishing Tales*. There are better written fly-fishing books, yet this is perhaps the most treasured volume in my fishing library. Not just because Lefty signed it—"Keep showing me the way," he wrote, which I use to taunt rivals—but because it's a beautiful portrait of a life well-lived.

In it, we learn of a man whose dad died when he was six years old and whose family slid from the middle class into poverty and into a Frederick ghetto. His embittered mother warned him she couldn't afford the clothes and lunches it took to send him to public school, so Lefty'd have to earn his way. He did so, by hook or crook: bush-bobbing for catfish to sell and trapping muskrats for their hides, all the while learning his future trade as an outdoorsman. "Frederick was far from paradise," he wrote, "but you couldn't have told us that."

Back in his stunt-casting days, Lefty'd knock a cigarette out of a girl's mouth at 60 feet, a practice he abandoned, preferring to share knowledge rather than show off.

Lefty served in the artillery in World War II, fighting at the Battle of the Bulge, where a friend had his head literally blown off right in front of him. Back from the war, he worked at Fort Detrick, growing anthrax cultures for the Army. He and a couple coworkers were exposed. The coworkers died. Lefty survived. His casting arm turned black, but he recovered, and the U.S. government eventually named the strain after him.

He shook the shackles of government work, and the rest is history, as he fished his way across the world, teaching untold sums of people along the way, but always staying humble enough to absorb more knowledge himself. A true fisherman understands the importance of humility. For as Tom McGuane once put it: "The uncertainties of fishing undermine all forms of smugness."

Lefty's voice, even stilled, keeps rattling around in your head. I hear it when I'm trying to dupe stripers into eating my Deceiver from a Chesapeake jetty. I hear it when I'm stalking wild browns in Maryland's Gunpowder River, along what has been christened "The Lefty Kreh Fishing Trail." I heard it a few years back, when a friend dragged me along on a guided trip. I usually fish to get away from people trying to tell me what to do.

We were casting for snakeheads, the Asian invader that looks more like a reptile than a fish. My boatmates had already gone to spinning rods, since there was little hope of fly-fishing success. Snakeheads were laying up so far in the thick spatterdock that I'd have stood a better chance with a rake than a fly rod. But I kept casting my weedless popper, hoping for lightning to strike. The guide, watching my form, offered, "You're sidearming, you shouldn't do that."

I was casting a little more sidearmed than usual—so as not to hit him in the face with my backcast. Though he was now tempting me. Everyone who has watched Lefty videos or read Lefty books knows that such concerns don't matter. Just observe the laws of natural motion: Keep your thumb behind the cork. Keep your elbow on the shelf. Accelerate then stop hard on the long stroke, like you're flinging a potato off a fork.

When the guide started up the boat, I muttered to my friend under the motor's hum, "If I try to drown your guide, stop me." He smiled, knowing what I was thinking, without me having to say it. And what I was thinking was this: "What does the guide know? If it's good enough for Lefty . . ." ♦

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

REMARKS BY PRESIDENT TRUMP
AT THE 2018 WHITE HOUSE EASTER EGG ROLL
South Lawn

10:42 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. Welcome to the 2018 White House Easter Egg Roll. So many people. You know, it was supposed to be pouring, the weather. It was supposed to be very nasty and cold and windy. Speaking of nasty and cold and windy, how about that Crooked Hillary? Isn't she something, kids? She should be locked up along with Old Man Winter! (Applause.)

Thank you all for being here. I want to really thank the first lady, Melania, who has done an incredible job. She has hidden somewhere on the South Lawn a jewel-encrusted Fabergé egg, is that right? Good luck finding it!

Also, I want to thank the White House Historical Association and all of the people that work so hard with Melania to keep this place in tippy-top shape. Unlike our southern border, which is sadly not in tippy-top shape. It's a mess down there, kids. And caravans of banditos are now heading this way. And I don't mean the Frito Bandito, either! Although stealing someone's corn chips is not a nice thing to do. So don't steal chips, kids.

Anyway, it's an honor to have everybody—not counting of course the Fake News Media spinning their fake lies. But on behalf of the Trump family, I just want to thank you. Our country is doing great. Have you looked at the stock market today? It's doing pretty good. We have never had an economy like we have right now. And we're going to make it bigger and better and stronger, beginning with greater regulation and taxation of Amazon, terminating NAFTA, and ending DACA—the Democrats have really let them down. Okay, wait, I've just been informed—don't look at the stock market right now.

But as I was saying, this is a special day for the kids. And boy, have we planned a fun Easter egg hunt! As opposed to a witch hunt. Which is happening right now in this fake investigation about fake collusion. Never happened, folks. The attorney general should be ashamed of himself. The FBI should be ashamed of itself. Beware the Deep State!

So I want to thank you all for being here. And now, I'm going to come down, and we're going to watch this roll. Have a great time. And remember, kids, you can't trust porn stars. Happy Easter! (Applause.)

END 10:44 A.M. EDT