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JONAH GOLDBERG'S DEFENSE OF CAPITALISM
ADAM KEIPER

Bernstein at 100

The Promise and Failure of American Classical Music

BY JOSEPH HOROWITZ

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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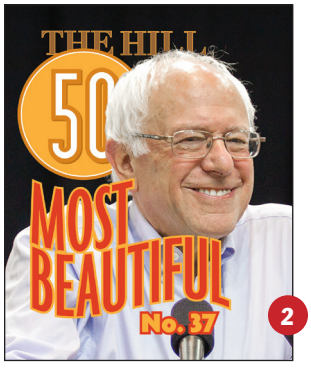

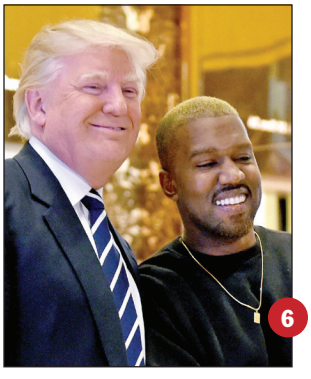

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Fake News About Fake News

Journalists in the mainstream media often sound as though they have no idea why anybody would entertain skepticism about the news media. The term "media bias" is, to them, a ruse. Complaints about "fake news" are evidence of stupidity or delusion.

That attitude is, of course, the surest way to give those complaints credibility.


"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

Late Edition

VOL. CLXI . . No. 55,891 NEW YORK, TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, 2012 $2.50

Conservatives Caught Lying! Oh, Wait—One Sec. Maybe Not.

New York Is Lagging as Seas And Risks Rise, Critics Warn

520-Mile Coast and Subways Seen as Vulnerable

By MIREYA NAVARRO

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NO SCHOOL FOR 350,000

Complaints Over Pay, Benefits, Class Size and Respect

By MONICA DAVEY

It used to be that journalists would tell you the news, not make it, and certainly not demonstrate it for you. This week we entered the exhibition phase of the *New York Times*'s fake news division. Consider an item in the technology section of the paper's Sunday, April 22 edition.

The piece, by tech reporter Nellie Bowles and headlined "Emergent Force at Facebook," profiles Facebook's director of news partnerships, the sometime news anchor Campbell Brown. It's Brown's chief responsibility, we learn, to identify and suppress deliberately misleading stories—what used to be termed "fake news" until Donald Trump applied the term to mainstream news outlets generally.

Brown, we learn from the *Times*, wants to start Facebook-specific news shows featuring mainstream news anchors. "Once those shows get started," Bowles explains, "Ms. Brown wants to use Facebook's existing Watch product—a service introduced in 2017 as a premium product with more curation that has nonetheless been flooded with far-right conspiracy programming like 'Palestinians Pay $400 Million Pensions for Terrorist Families'—to be a breaking news destination."

One small problem: The pensions-for-families-of-terrorists story is 100 percent true.

It took real talent to write a story about fake news in which easily verifiable facts are termed "far-right conspiracy programming," but the *Times* managed to do it. To its credit, the newspaper issued a straightforward correction: "An earlier version of this article erroneously included a reference to Palestinian actions as an example of the sort of far-right conspiracy stories that have plagued Facebook. In fact, Palestinian officials have acknowledged providing payments to the families of Palestinians killed while carrying out attacks on Israelis or convicted of terrorist acts and imprisoned in Israel; that is not a conspiracy theory."

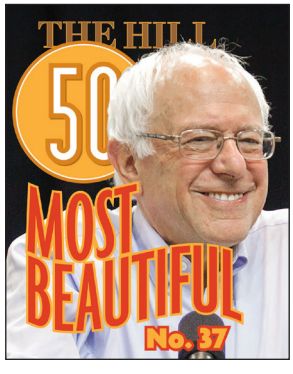
We seem to remember the *Times* running a full-page ad heralding its own commitment to truth. "The truth," announced the ad, "is more important now than ever." Indeed. ♦

A Beautiful Bye-Bye

It wasn't with shock but with relief that The Scrapbook greeted the news that a Washington tradition is coming to an end: "After nearly 15 years, *The Hill* is bidding a beautiful bye-bye to its annual 50 Most Beautiful list."

Described by its creators as "an extraordinarily popular summertime tradition in Washington" (really?), the list was a yearly effort to highlight the handsome and bewitching faces of a town commonly known as "Hollywood for ugly people." But with rich and powerful men across the nation being revealed as wanton sexual aggressors, it was no longer thought appropriate to celebrate the Swamp's lovelier creatures. "We felt the list had run its course," one list editor explained.

According to the *Washingtonian*, each year staffers at the *The Hill* chose from among "hundreds upon hundreds of D.C. hopefuls," including appealing Capitol Hill staffers, comely K Street lobbyists, and photogenic members of the press corps and White House staff. Most years featured a few courtesy wins: President Obama made the list in 2005 when he was a senator, and both Melania and Ivanka Trump earned spots on the list last year.



Nah, not really.

The capital's version of the beauty pageant was about as stupid and vacuous as one might imagine when disclosing its winners' nonphysical attributes. Unlike the more rigorous Miss America or Miss Universe pageants, there was no talent component to the competition, which is why the winners rarely came across as introspective. Hunter King, a Capitol Hill staffer who made the list in 2017, made sure to mention that he "doesn't rely on hair gels or sprays" for his unique look and said, "My co-workers say I'm one of a kind. . . . Like a fountain, not a drain."

Charming.

Such preening is perhaps why the death of the list, which the *Washington City Paper* once called D.C.'s best "hate read," sparked a few impromptu

IMAGES: TWS ART. BERNIE: NICK SOLARI

Twitter obituaries by journalists. *Politico* reporter Elana Schor tweeted, "Genuinely sad about this. The comedic opportunities were always gold." But the most poignant response to the news came from Sen. Orrin Hatch, who no doubt spoke for many Washington wallflowers when he tweeted: "You wake up every day to comb your hair and pick out the brightest shirt/tie combo with your strongest pinstripe suit thinking this is going to be the year . . . then this happens." ♦

Take the Girl, Leave the Bull

Readers may remember *Fearless Girl*, the 50-inch-tall bronze statue of an intrepid young girl, placed in front of the famous *Charging Bull* sculpture in Lower Manhattan. The girl, New York City mayor Bill de Blasio recently announced, will be moved to a new location nearby—in front of the New York Stock Exchange.

The reason cited for the move is safety. Too many pedestrians are skipping across busy Broadway to have pictures taken with the girl. The bull may in time be removed to the Stock Exchange location as well, which is incidentally where its sculptor, Arturo Di Modica, originally deposited his work under cover of night in 1989.

Di Modica has never been happy with the girl bravely facing his bull. He points out, with some justification in our view, that what is supposed to be a symbol of optimism has been turned into a savage beast on the verge of mauling a child. His attorney is demanding that the city leave the bull where it is: "The message to Mayor de Blasio is that you have no right to unilaterally move the bull," he said. "They don't own the statue."

DON EMMERT / AFP / GETTY

'Fearless Girl'—yawn.

De Blasio's office, however, wants the girl to continue facing the beast. "The mayor felt it was important that the 'Fearless Girl' be in a position to stand up to the bull and what it stands for," the mayor's press secretary told the *New York Times*. "That's why we're aiming to keep them together. The bull has also always been a traffic and safety issue the city's hemmed and hawed over. The moves achieve a few goals."

So we want the girl to "stand up to the bull and what it stands for"? Remind us—what sort of things does the bull stand for that must be stood up to? And by forcing the girl to "be in a position to stand up to the bull," are we not guilty of some form of retrograde patriarchalism? Has she no meaning apart from the bull?

What happy times these must be, when the political leaders of our greatest city have the time and resources to quarrel over such abstruse questions, and fancy themselves postmodern art critics. ♦

The Barry Legacy Lives On

Most Americans can name only one local politician from Washington, D.C., and that happens to be the city's "mayor for life" Marion Barry, famously busted in 1990 for

smoking crack in an FBI sting operation ("bitch set me up!"). In March, the city unveiled a bronze statue to Barry on Pennsylvania Avenue, and in many respects the city is still being shaped by Barry, who died in 2014.

Councilman White

Barry's old council seat in Ward 8 is currently occupied by Trayon White, a Barry protégé who narrowly won an election against a Democratic opponent who outspent him 16 to 1. Last month White posted a video on Facebook blaming a late-season snow on the fact that the Rothschild family was manipulating the weather "to create natural disasters they can pay for to own the cities." We had been happily unaware that young anti-Semites (White is 33) still use the name Rothschild as synecdoche for wealthy Jews, but the Barry circle retains its capacity to surprise.

White was justly ridiculed and denounced. So in an effort to rehabilitate his image, he began spending time with local Jewish leaders, including a visit to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum with Rabbi Batya Glazer of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington.

The visit didn't go well.

White was shown a photo of a German girl wearing a sign around her neck that read "I am a German girl and allowed myself to be defiled by a Jew." The girl is surrounded by stormtroopers and being marched down the street. White, according to the *Washington Post*, asked a nearby docent: "Are they protecting her?" When the guide explained, "No. They're marching her through," White argued, "Marching through is protecting."

White left the museum about 45 minutes into the scheduled 90-minute tour and spent the rest of the time out on the sidewalk on his cell phone. His aides did finish the tour, though. When they were shown an exhibit on the Warsaw Ghetto, one of them asked if it was similar to "a gated community."

It turns out Trayon White is perfectly suited to continue the late mayor for life's legacy. He's been in office for just over a year—and already he's disgraced his city and himself. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'When the audience of more than 300 began to clap and howl, Madeleine K. Albright entered the Georgetown University auditorium. She waved. She winked. The clapping grew louder, especially from young women in the room. They smiled giddily, checked to make sure their phones were on silent and opened their notebooks. Theirs was the generation of 'The Future Is Female' T-shirts and Ruth Bader Ginsburg tote bags, who grew up being told that women can be anything, and then, just as they were getting their starts in the working world, watched Hillary Clinton's defeat. Now, they had come to see a woman . . . " ("How a veteran diplomat got turned into a girl-power icon," *Washington Post*, April 20). ♦

JAHI CHIKWENDIU / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY

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BPA WORLDWIDE

So Long at the Fair

Mr. B. E. wasn't widely known as warm, much less amiable. Fierce would be, I think, the general apprehension of children who crossed his path, which may just have been his style of school superintending.

That morning, though, he seemed positively tickled as he saw us all off on our great trip to Atlanta, to the state fair to represent the county at Dr. Collins's Annual Spelling Bee. I was there, and my mother, and Joe, the alternate, and his mother, and his grandfather, who was driving us. And he gave us each—the competitors—a 10-dollar bill. In the fall of 1965, this was a princely sum. I expect he suggested we not spend it all in one place.

I wasn't worried about the spelling part. I think I'd already realized what I still believe—you can spell, or you can't, and it says next to nothing about your smarts. I knew it was just how my eyes worked, that I remembered a word if I'd ever seen it, and since I read in those days more than I breathed or ate, I had a pretty good edge in the spelling department.

The bee part itself wasn't actually a bee. A man stood on a stage in one of the state fair's permanent buildings, the sort that has jams and quilts down the hall, and called out a long list of words and we wrote them down. My main struggle was with penmanship; I don't remember being stumped until the word was "casco." I wrote "casquo," on the "conquistador" model—we were told it was a metal helmet, part of a suit of armor. Whatever the rules behind the test, though, they didn't allow variant spellings, and that was that for me.

I must have missed another one or two that I don't remember, because when the man called out the winners I was the youngest third-place state ribbon winner, at 10, that he could remember. We all thanked him and met up to go get corn dogs.

Afterwards Joe and his folks had plans, and my mother and I walked along to see what we could see. We looked at the cakes and the sewing, and part of a 4-H calf parade, and

The famous third-place ribbon

headed down through the rides and the sideshows and the games of chance. People were winning enormous vulgar prizes, or more likely not winning them. They shot at the ducks and threw balls at targets and tried to get a ring around the neck of a Coke bottle. And that is where we stopped, when I saw the prize.

She was sitting forlornly off to the side, leashed to a high stool and sneezing more and more frequently. Her eyes were running. She was a rhesus monkey, and if you could ring five Coke bottles in six throws she was yours.

I was filled with a pure resolve—she had distemper and she must be rescued. I had a purseful of change from breaking my 10 for the corn dogs. My mother reminded me of what I already knew—that such games are rigged. You could spend your money till the cows come home and never beat the house. I quickly learned something else: I couldn't throw at a target for beans. I was myopic, and I hadn't ever thrown anything in my life. I threw and threw though, and my mother agreed past the point where she might ordinarily have called a halt. Eventually we decided that I would spend two more quarters on throws and that would be it. Which it was, interrupted only by the astonishing moment in which I got one ring around a bottle. Even the carny seemed to be rooting for me by then.

We walked gravely through the rest of the fair—cotton candy is remarkably pleasing even in grief—until it was time to catch the Greyhound home.

I don't remember getting to the bus, but I do remember the 90 minutes home, because I was wearing my ribbon still pinned to my sweater, and the other passengers asked about it. One man in particular was persistent indeed. "Spell 'Mississippi,'" he began, and he didn't let up. I spelled, I demurred, I spelled some things for other people who got in the spirit of the occasion. I spelled until the bus pulled up. We'd gathered our things and were saying goodbye to the driver when he launched his final challenge. "Little girl! Spell 'Constantinople!'" I looked at him and said loudly, "I-S-T-A-N-B-U-L." I talked back to a grownup, and I got off the bus.

At the end of that remarkable day, my mother wasn't even a little bit cross. We got out at the red light in Crawford and walked on home.

Priscilla M. Jensen

the weekly Standard

A War to Be Won

A member of the U.S.-supported Syrian Democratic Forces lowers the Islamic State's flag after retaking the city of Tabqa, Syria, last year.

DELIL SOULEIMAN / AFP / GETTY

"The military mission to eradicate ISIS in Syria is coming to a rapid end, with ISIS being almost completely destroyed," White House press secretary Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced on April 4. "The United States and our partners remain committed to eliminating the small ISIS presence in Syria that our forces have not already eradicated. … We expect countries in the region and beyond, plus the United Nations, to work toward peace and ensure that ISIS never re-emerges."

Donald Trump sounded only slightly less cocksure in his State of the Union address in January. On assuming office, the president said, he had pledged to "work with our allies to extinguish ISIS from the face of the earth. One year later, I am proud to report that the coalition to defeat ISIS has liberated almost 100 percent of the territory once held by these killers. … But there is much more work to be done."

The U.S. military has done superb work in punishing ISIS in Syria and Iraq, but the truest sentence in either of these assessments is that last one: There is much more work to be done. If the administration backs out of the region—as the president repeatedly stated was his intention before Syrian president Bashar al-Assad launched a chemical-weapons attack in Douma on April 7—it will revert to the hellish chaos the Obama administration allowed to flourish in 2013-14 and that the U.S. military, freed to do its job by Trump's arrival in office, has begun to roll back.

The problem is that the president, his rhetoric about "extinguish[ing] ISIS from the face of the earth" aside, seems to think the challenge consists exclusively in regaining territory taken by the terrorist network. But that's only part of the challenge. Islamic State fighters are mounting guerrilla operations nearly every day in Iraq and Syria. Those attacks don't make the evening news, but they are ongoing. In eastern Syria—in the towns of Busayrah, Markada, and al-Suwar—ISIS is still engaged in bloody fighting. The same is true in the southern suburbs of Damascus and in numerous other trouble spots in Syria and Iraq.

ISIS may not hold this territory, but it is still able to fight as it rebuilds its forces. In an April 22 broadcast, ISIS spokesman Abu al-Hasan al-Muhajir promised the group would mount a new offensive as soon as the Americans were gone. There is no reason to doubt his claim.

ISIS maintains a global network of terror cells—in Syria and Iraq, in northwest Africa, in Afghanistan and Pakistan, in Southeast Asia, in Europe and North America. It has taken responsibility for gruesome attacks in Barcelona, London, Marseille, Copenhagen, Brussels, Ottawa, Orlando, and New York City, among many other places. The United States and its allies are very far from ridding the earth of this danger.

Even if we confine our attention to Syria and Iraq,

however, a narrow focus on ISIS fails to acknowledge the presence of a reinvigorated al Qaeda. The two networks are engaged in a contest for dominance of what their adherents believe is a nascent caliphate, and it's important to understand that, in both Syria and the wider Middle East, al Qaeda is the stronger of the two.

ISIS has the greater global infamy at present, but that's likely because al Qaeda's leader, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has called a temporary halt to attacks in the West while the Sunni militant group regains its position in the Middle East. Al Qaeda has thousands of fighters in Syria and is almost certainly stronger there than ISIS. Indeed some experts believe that, both inside and outside Syria, al Qaeda boasts greater influence and numbers than it has in a generation.

So while Western governments boast of having vanquished ISIS, al Qaeda bides its time with the example of Afghanistan ever in its mind.

In the West, the temptation is to believe the war on terror has already been won or that it's mainly a law-enforcement problem or that it's just an expensive mopping-up operation wherever there's trouble in the Middle East. It is none of those things. It is a war—and in a war, you must go where the enemy is before he comes to you. ♦

Kanye West, Freedom Fighter

Feel the 'dragon energy.'

Kanye West is a gifted showman, a provocateur of the first order, and an irrepressible jackass. And yet the elites of our age can learn something from him. The Chicago-raised rap artist made news on April 25 when he tweeted a curt defense of his support for an unpopular president and insisted on the value of "independent thought."

West has long been known to offer impulsive and, if we may say so, idiotic political commentary. In a 2013 interview he suggested that President Barack Obama wasn't succeeding because "black people don't have the same level of connections as Jewish people." More memorable is his remark made at a hurricane relief concert in 2005: "George Bush doesn't care about black people."

Since 2015, West has hinted at his sympathies for Donald Trump, but on Wednesday he made it plain on Twitter: "You don't have to agree with trump but the mob can't make me not love him. We are both dragon energy. He is my brother. I love everyone. I don't agree with everything anyone does. That's what makes us individuals. And we have the right to independent thought."

He followed that tweet up with this: "my wife just called me and she wanted me to make this clear to everyone. I don't agree with everything Trump does. I don't agree 100% with anyone but myself." And another: "I love when people have their own ideas. You don't have to be allowed anymore. Just be. Love who you want to love. That's free thought. I'm not even political. I'm not a democrat or a republican."

These three tweets—together with Chance the Rapper's "black people don't have to be democrats"—were enough to send the nation's political commentariat into a faint. The immediate reaction among left-of-center observers was one of disbelief and outrage. Some questioned Kanye's mental health; others called his statements a betrayal; still others accused him of perpetrating a vile publicity stunt.

We find the reactions amusing. As conservatives, we are long accustomed to admiring the work of artists whose views we dislike. Most musicians, novelists, poets, playwrights, and painters—certainly most great ones—are on the left. Some radically so. We hardly think about it anymore. Yet when a popular rapper veers from the de rigueur politics of the day, liberal and progressive commentators find themselves at a loss to explain what's happened.

We are no fans of Kanye West. Indeed we thought his comment about Bush in 2005 was slanderous—though, to his credit, he walked it back in 2010. Still, Americans can surely find something to admire in a musician who openly voices opinions that people of his description are not supposed to voice. West is an African-American celebrity entertainer from Chicago—he's got to be a progressive Democrat, right? And yet racial and social and demographic categories, it turns out, don't dictate political views.

It's remarkable, too, that Kanye West—not a man history will remember for nuanced expressions of thought—is a more articulate proponent of free speech and open inquiry than such strongholds of high-minded liberalism as the *New York Times* and the *Atlantic*. At the *Times*, the mere presence of conservatives on the hallowed pages of New York's newspaper of record—we're thinking of our friends Bari Weiss and Bret Stephens—is cause for wrath and resentment on the part of the paper's staffers and readers. The *Atlantic*, meanwhile, hires fiery conservative Kevin Williamson because he's a fiery conservative then fires him because progressive agitators accuse him of being a fiery conservative. Ours is an age of formulaic thinking and thoughtless slander, and each day brings statements far dumber than those of Kanye West. We love when people have their own ideas. You don't have to be allowed anymore. Just be. ♦

TIMOTHY A. CLARY / AFP / GETTY

STEPHEN F. HAYES

First the Victory, Then the Celebration

On Thursday, May 4, 2017, President Donald Trump stepped up to the podium in the White House Rose Garden to declare victory. Vice President Mike Pence, who had introduced the president, stood to his left and Republican members of the House of Representatives were arrayed behind them, most wearing self-satisfied smiles of accomplishment. A small jazz band had played for guests as they awaited the ceremony. Trump had been scheduled to see Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull in New York, but the meeting was delayed, so important was the triumph Trump had insisted on celebrating.

"We suffered with Obamacare," Trump said. "Make no mistake. This is a repeal and replace of Obamacare. Make no mistake about it," he declared before pausing for a personal boast. "I predicted it a long time ago. I said it's failing and now it's obvious that it's failing. It's dead—it's essentially dead."

Earlier that day, the House had passed the American Health Care Act. The legislation would go on to fail in the Senate. It did not repeal and replace Obamacare. There would be no signing ceremony. It was a premature victory lap.

Trump does this a lot. He famously promised that Americans would grow tired of winning if they elected him president, and he seems to think we won't notice if he celebrates before there's an actual victory. After the failed effort to repeal and replace Obamacare, Republicans did eliminate the individual mandate as part of the tax reform they passed late last year. The individual mandate was a noxious part of Obamacare, to be sure. But it was only a part. You wouldn't have known this from the president's celebration at a December cabinet meeting: "When the individual mandate is being repealed, that means Obamacare is being repealed. . . . We have essentially repealed Obamacare."

There is nothing remotely honorable about Kim Jong-un. His dictatorship brainwashes and starves its people en masse. Those who resist are sent to inhumane labor camps or killed.

Trump has done the same kind of boasting about ISIS. "As you know, we've won in Syria, we've won in Iraq," he declared in December. He acknowledged that ISIS had "spread to other areas" but claimed, "we're getting them as fast as they spread."

There's little question that the United States and its allies have retaken territory from ISIS in Iraq and Syria and significantly degraded the group. President Trump deserves credit for the decisions that produced this progress. But ISIS is far from defeated—in Syria, in Iraq, or elsewhere. (See our editorial "A War to Be Won" elsewhere in these pages.)

It's tempting to dismiss all this as the braggadocio typical of politicians, as yet another case in which we are not meant to take the president literally. But ultimately a president's words matter, and they matter a lot. Nowhere is this more true than in the delicate diplomatic dance underway between the United States and North Korea.

President Trump's words shape the way Kim Jong-un sees the United States and its resolve. They shape the way our allies in the region see U.S. leadership. They shape the way Americans see the threat from the North Korean dictator. They shape the way our enemies elsewhere size up the president and his national security team.

And Trump's comments last week suggest he's a sucker waiting to be played. The president volunteered that Kim Jong-un "has really been very open and I think very honorable based on what we are seeing."

There is nothing remotely honorable about Kim Jong-un. His repressive dictatorship brainwashes and starves its people en masse. Those who resist are—along with their families and friends—sent to inhumane labor camps or killed. He assassinates government officials he suspects of disloyalty. He routinely violates international arms treaties and regularly threatens attacks on his neighbors and the United States. He's a brutal dictator. If the president thinks Kim is "very honorable" based on what he's seeing, then he's not seeing clearly.

Equally worrisome was Trump's Twitter declaration that the North Koreans have agreed to do what they've refused to do for decades. "We haven't given up anything & they have agreed to denuclearization (so great for World), site closure, & no more testing!" What Kim Jong-un actually said was different. He declared that his country would suspend tests on its weapons during talks and, crucially, that there was no need for such tests because North Korea had achieved its objective of nuclear weapons capability.

Even if Kim had agreed to denuclearization, there would be no reason to believe him. For three decades North Korean dictators have made commitments they never intended to keep in exchange for concessions from the United States and its allies. The fact that North Korea has nuclear weapons capability today is the result of the regime's duplicity and the gullibility of Western leaders, including presidents from both parties. Those weapons prop up an evil regime and are the only reason the United States is willing to negotiate with an otherwise weak and backward rogue state.

The president's rhetoric this past week betrays overeagerness for a deal. The strength of the president's national security team, in particular the good judgment of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, is wasted if he doesn't take seriously their advice. And having signaled his desire to boast of a diplomatic win, he's more likely to ignore a note card that warns DO NOT CAPITULATE—just as he brushed aside the one that reminded him DO NOT CONGRATULATE Vladimir Putin on his "election" win.

The danger of a Trump-Kim summit is that the president will trumpet whatever Kim offers as a historic triumph. But promises are not victories. And the moment Trump announces a victory, he creates a bad set of incentives for policing whatever deal is struck. If the meeting itself is portrayed as a win, and flimsy North Korean commitments are hailed as successes, any recognition of subsequent problems will threaten to diminish the president's accomplishment.

President Trump deserves credit for abandoning the failed approach to North Korea favored by his predecessors. But his hasty acceptance of a high-risk, face-to-face meeting was a mistake, and his naïvely exuberant rhetoric since then has turned it into a high-stakes gamble. If the Trump-Kim summit actually happens, and if the president once again declares victory prematurely, it'll be, as he might say, not so great for World. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

Of the making of political memoirs there is no end

By happy coincidence, on the very day that ex-FBI director James Comey published his self-serving memoir, my wife and I happened to be rummaging around in the George C. Marshall research library on the campus of Marshall's alma mater, Virginia Military Institute, in Lexington. It was entirely coincidental, as I say, but not without significance.

Let me begin by confessing that I haven't read Comey's memoir and have no plans to do so. Its title—*A Higher Loyalty: Truth, Lies, and Leadership*—tells me all that I really need to know about it and, combined with reviews, televised interviews, and a surplus of news stories, conveys its essential substance and tone. For that matter, Comey's outlook on his sudden dismissal from office has been public knowledge for some time, and funny observations about his encounters with President Trump are of interest to readers other than me. I'm sure his publisher is fully satisfied.

George Marshall resolutely kept no personal journal and refused to write his memoirs or otherwise benefit from his experience, insisting that service to country was its own reward.

Yet the contrast with an earlier public servant is worth noting. "I hate to think," Franklin D. Roosevelt remarked at the height of World War II, "that 50 years from now practically nobody will know who George Marshall was." Well, considerably more than 50 years have passed since then, and Roosevelt's rueful prediction has largely come true. The irony is that Marshall probably would have wanted it that way.

Marshall was a career officer who, on the very day that Nazi Germany invaded Poland in 1939, was promoted over a number of senior generals to be Army chief of staff. It was Marshall who transformed the Romanian-sized U.S. Army into the fighting force of the Second World War and, as de facto chief of all American armed services, commanded 12 million men and women. He was the "organizer of victory," in Winston Churchill's memorable phrase. Marshall had been Roosevelt's choice to lead the Allied invasion of Europe on D-Day, but in due course, FDR changed his mind and decided that he "couldn't sleep at night" if Marshall were not at his side in Washington.

General Marshall was a reticent, surely formal, and slightly distant individual whose judgment and integrity were largely unquestioned. In his customary manner, Roosevelt liked to address subordinates by their first names, sometimes nicknames; but Marshall, with exquisite politeness, let the president know that such a practice (in his case at least) would suggest a personal intimacy and familiarity both misleading and inappropriate. FDR got the message. So great was Marshall's stature that Harry Truman brought him out of retirement on three separate occasions, including for stints as secretary of state and, in the opening weeks of the Korean War, as secretary of defense to rescue the Pentagon from its inept officeholder.

When, in 1947, Harvard awarded

him an honorary degree, its president described Marshall as "a soldier and statesman whose ability and character brook only one comparison in the history of this nation"—by which he meant George Washington. (In his commencement speech, by the way, Marshall introduced the Marshall Plan for postwar European recovery.)

Yet Marshall resolutely and characteristically kept no diary or personal journal and refused to write his memoirs or otherwise benefit from his experience, insisting that service to country was its own reward. To be sure, he allowed himself to be interviewed at length by an authorized biographer. But Marshall's views on the subject were echoed by his successor at the State Department, Dean Acheson, who in a charming memoir of his youth and early adulthood, *Morning and Noon* (1965), explained that he had stopped short of writing about the years in power because "detachment and objectivity [become] suspect [and] the element of self-justification could not be excluded."

If all of this now sounds unbearably quaint and inhibited, that is because it is—and in the course of the tumultuous late sixties, even Acheson altered his attitude. In one sense, this was a good thing: Acheson's subsequent memoir, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Present at the Creation* (1969), is a graceful, incisive, and rewarding account of his role in building the Cold War consensus in foreign policy. In the midst of the Vietnam war, he understood that

> The experiences of the years since I wrote have brought the country, and particularly its young people, to a mood of depression, disillusion, and withdrawal from the effort to affect the world around us. Today detachment and objectivity seem to me less important than to tell a tale of large conceptions, great achievements, and some failures, the product of enormous will and effort.

Here, if I may, an autobiographical note. I was an undergraduate when *Present at the Creation* was published and not entirely immune to the mood of "depression, disillusion, and withdrawal" described by Acheson. And so I wrote him a letter to explain how useful, and pleasurable, I had found his memoir—and grateful that he had decided to write it. A waggish friend taunted me that I must have been the only college student in America to write a fan letter to Dean Acheson—then seen as a Cold War dinosaur and unrepentant apologist. My reward was a flattering note of thanks from Acheson saying that "nothing cheers an author—and particularly this one—more than messages such as your delightful note brought me. You encourage me to believe that a purpose of *Present at the Creation* was fulfilled."

However, in another, and not so good, sense the floodgates were now opened—and as might be expected, the volume of volumes in the decades since has been mixed not only in terms of literary quality but, more important, in historical significance. Acheson's "elements of self-justification" now reign supreme, along with the usual commercial excess.

It is worth noting that until the mid-20th century only one American president (James Buchanan) had written a presidential memoir—Ulysses S. Grant's ends at Appomattox—and only three (John Quincy Adams, James Knox Polk, Rutherford B. Hayes) left extended diaries worth reading. The autobiographies of Theodore Roosevelt and Calvin Coolidge, while admirable and interesting, are largely personal.

Today, of course, James Comey's *A Higher Loyalty* is more symptomatic of our politicized culture than historically pertinent. And the memoir of public service as personal pleading—settling scores, earning money, lobbying posterity, even defending the indefensible—is an industrial process with a wide purview and, from presidents on down, a dubious cast of characters. John W. Dean of Watergate fame, for example, has published no fewer than three memoirs as well as an updated edition of his first version (*Blind Ambition*, 1976). So has Hillary Rodham Clinton: *Living History* (2003), *Hard Choices* (2014), and *What Happened* (2017). American library shelves sag beneath the accumulated weight of such publishing events as *The Truth of the Matter* (1991) by Bert Lance, Valerie Plame's *Fair Game* (2010), *All Too Human* (1999) by George Stephanopoulos, Robert Reich's *Locked in the Cabinet* (1997), and *The Clinton Wars* (2003) by Sidney Blumenthal.

As Max Beerbohm once said, for people who like that sort of thing that is the sort of thing they like. But for readers of serious intent, the old Latin maxim—*caveat emptor*—was never more relevant: Let the [book] buyer beware. ♦

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

'I can imagine a situation where the wrongdoing was so serious within the Trump administration or campaign that the anti-Trump leaks would be justified as an act of civil disobedience, akin to the leaks by FBI Associate Director Mark Felt (aka Deep Throat) during Watergate. We don't yet have evidence of such serious wrongdoing, however, and the justification for the leaking is diminished even further by the fact that there was a full government investigation of the Russia matter at the time that had full access to the leaked information. Moreover, even assuming the worst about Trump, we must acknowledge that the leaks pose serious dangers that transcend the Trump administration.'

—Jack Goldsmith, 'Leaks, Trump, Norm-Breaking, & False Choices'

COMMENT ♦ KELLY JANE TORRANCE

Our self-obsessed, parochial press corps

There's nothing the media love more than a story about themselves. And if it isn't about them, they'll make it so.

A particularly shameless example of this never-ending navel-gazing was a briefing the State Department held last week upon the release of its 2017 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. The latest edition of this document, issued annually by congressional mandate since 1977, describes the condition of freedom in almost 200 countries and territories. Its publication is an important event, and not just because it highlights, in sometimes excruciating detail, abuses that many regimes around the world would prefer be kept quiet. These reports are some of the most-read on any U.S. government website and, as the department explains, "are used by a variety of actors, including the U.S. Congress, the Executive branch, and the Judicial branch as a factual resource for decision making in matters ranging from assistance to asylum."

The media weren't interested in hearing about the horrors faced by men, women, and children raped, tortured, and murdered by governments around the world.

But most members of the media who questioned Michael Kozak, a senior official in the State Department's bureau of democracy, human rights, and labor, weren't interested in hearing about the horrors faced by men, women, and children raped, tortured, and murdered by governments around the world. Neither were they curious about what effect the reports might have on those governments or on the policymakers and diplomats in our own. No, they wanted to talk about themselves.

The first question came from the Associated Press's Matt Lee, whose reporting is distributed to outlets across the country and beyond. "I realize that this report doesn't cover the United States," he said as he began his query—which focused almost entirely on the United States. "I'm just wondering how effective you think that you can be in leading by example when you accuse numerous countries of, say, assaults on press freedom when here in this country we have a president who routinely excoriates the press, calling individual media outlets—and individual reporters sometimes—fake news," he asked. "How do you not open yourself up to charges of hypocrisy?"

Kozak gave a clear answer, free of bureaucratese: "[T]he countries that we criticize for limiting press freedom, it's for things like having criminal libel laws where you can be put in jail for what you say. It's for things like yanking the licenses of media outlets you don't like or, in many cases, killing the journalists," he said. "So I think we make quite a distinction between political leaders being able to speak out and say that that story was not accurate or using even stronger words sometimes, and using state power to prevent the journalists from continuing to do their work."

That wasn't enough for the reporters in the room. They remained indignant. Perhaps they were still stinging from President Donald Trump's latest attack on the practitioners of their profession, with their tears of rage blinding them to the obvious difference between being mocked in a tweet and being disappeared—permanently.

The second question wasn't any different from the first. "I'd like to know if you think that such statements in the United States weaken the impact of this report, because the American president has called the press an enemy of the people. And I think at one point he called for a closer look at libel laws or something like that," a CNN reporter said. "Do you think in the eyes of people that are looking at this report, as an example and as a resource, do statements like that currently weaken its impact?"

Kozak, who has served as an ambassador to Belarus and chief of mission in Cuba, where diplomats were sickened by sonic attacks, used his own experiences in reply. "I don't think we'd have a hard time explaining that in a lot of places. When you talk to some of my friends in Cuba, for example, who try to be independent journalists there and are routinely slapped around—they also get called names. But I think if it were limited to that, they'd be pretty happy as compared to the situation now."

There were a few reporters in the room—mostly from foreign outlets—who asked questions about the subject at hand. But most did not. Perhaps members of the American media don't know how different life can be for those—the vast majority of the world's population—not fortunate enough to live in a country like the United States. Such provincialism is the only reasonable explanation for another part of the AP reporter's question: "I'm wondering how you can criticize countries for discrimination against LGBT people when this administration's stated policy is to exclude transgender people from serving in the military." It's astonishing for a reporter to wonder how the State Department can rebuke nations that make same-sex relations illegal or worse. It's a capital offense in some

countries. Can he really be unaware of the number of people murdered each year for their sexual orientation by the actions—or with the approval—of their own governments?

Reporters can't claim total ignorance, however. In his remarks that began the briefing, acting secretary of state John Sullivan spoke, with some specificity, about the country reports. "Creating them is an enormous undertaking and not for the fainthearted," he noted. Sullivan mentioned the "forced labor" and "child labor" Kim Jong-un's regime uses in North Korea. He cited "the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in Burma" and "widespread reports of rape and abuse by Syrian government personnel." He also gave plenty of examples of places in which the press and protesters face far worse threats than a Twitter tantrum. "The Russian government continues to quash dissent and civil society" and "China continues to spread the worst features of its authoritarian system, including restrictions on activists, civil society, freedom of expression, and the use of arbitrary surveillance." Turkey has seen "the detention of tens of thousands of individuals, including journalists and academics." And the "right of peaceful assembly and freedoms of association and expression" in Iran "are under attack almost daily."

Asking the sort of questions reporters put to Sullivan's colleague afterward will get you imprisoned or murdered in many countries. But self-absorbed American journalists are remarkably selective in their combativeness. I couldn't find a single one, for example, who'd had the gumption to ask Iranian foreign minister Javad Zarif about his regime's harsh treatment of protesters during the many interviews he granted while in New York last week. Since late December, the Iranian government has arrested 8,000 and murdered 50 protesters. Reporters, though, were more interested in his view on the other thing that obsesses them, besides themselves. A not atypical question: "Do you see President Trump as a crafty adversary, a bumbling fool, or someone who is simply ignorant of international relations?" ♦

COMMENT ♦ ETHAN EPSTEIN

Radio Free America

Cumulus Media, the third largest terrestrial radio chain in the country, is bankrupt, and it's making some drastic moves. Earlier this spring, it dropped Don Imus, the legendary—if now fossilized—morning host. And now there are rumors that Cumulus is looking to cut Michael Savage, one of talk radio's marquee names.

Cumulus is not alone in its travails, of course: The market does not heart iHeartMedia, the nation's largest radio chain and the syndicator of Rush Limbaugh and Sean Hannity. iHeart (née Clear Channel) is bankrupt as well, and its stock trades at about 30 cents a share.

Terrestrial radio's woes are well known: Podcasts, streaming services like Pandora and Spotify, and satellite radio have all cut into its market share. Talk radio in particular is a tough commercial sell, even at the best of times: Skittish national advertisers—think Home Depot, which still makes huge buys on music stations—shy away from the format for fear of political controversy. That's why even shows with high ratings, like Limbaugh's and Savage's, feature advertisements for "male enhancement" and other products so obscure I have to Google them. ("Try Qunol, the better cocuten.") WMAL, a Cumulus-owned talk station in Washington, runs ads for something called "pellet therapy"—which I refuse to Google for fear of the ads that will then stalk my web browsing.

But there's another problem dogging commercial radio—a competitor with a distinctly unfair advantage. That's National Public Radio. NPR is a nonprofit, a 501(c)(3) that is exempt from paying taxes. And while the majority of NPR's funding comes from grants, donations, and payments from local stations, it also receives taxpayer money from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting, established in 1967, has an annual budget of about $450 million.

CPB not only makes direct grants to NPR but also indirectly funds it by giving money to local stations, which then turn around and pay NPR for programming. A similar arrangement covers PBS and local television stations. NPR likes to claim that only 2 percent of its funding comes from the government, but those local fees—which make up about 40 percent of its revenues—also come from Uncle Sam. There's a reason NPR squeals like a stuck pig every time Congress threatens to slash funding for CPB.

It might seem logical that NPR, dependent on the kindness of Congress, would go out of its way to play things straight—to cultivate supporters on both sides of the aisle.

Advertising is the lifeblood of terrestrial radio. It's also—not to put too fine a point on it—annoying as hell. Who knows how many frustrated listeners tune out of their favorite news, talk, or radio stations each time they switch to commercials. NPR, through both its nonprofit and taxpayer-funded status, gets around having to broadcast these annoyances, which drive away listeners. It's little wonder that *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered* are among the highest-rated radio shows in America.

In other words, through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, the federal government is subsidizing a direct competitor to a for-profit American industry. It's as if SiriusXM were state-funded. This is a highly unusual arrangement: Indeed, during the health care debates of 2009 and 2010, it was for precisely this reason that plans to introduce a "public option"—a government-funded health insurer—were dropped. Senators feared that such an option would invariably undermine the private insurance market. Radio is no different.

NPR produces a lot of truly great stuff. The breadth and depth of its coverage is certainly unmatched by any commercial radio service (Cumulus does not have a correspondent in Kabul.) Its loss would be a serious blow to the country.

But it's easy to see how NPR's reliance on government ends up affecting its operation in unfortunate ways. Take NPR's well-known liberal bent, which even its most stalwart defenders would concede. At first, it might seem logical that an entity dependent on the kindness of Congress would go out of its way to play things straight—to cultivate supporters on both sides of the aisle.

But the honchos at NPR appear to have made a shrewder choice. They probably figured that Republicans, ideologically unlikely to support even the most impartial state-funded media, would never be their strongest backers. So they decided go all-in on liberalism and build ardent support among Democrats. (Not to mention, NPR's in-your-face liberal politics probably help it fundraise from the elite listenership it appeals to.) It was smart, strategically, but ultimately deleterious to NPR's mission of providing fair news coverage. Liberate NPR from CPB and it can instead focus purely on its news mission and less on flattering the political party that is buttering its bread.

President Trump's budget, dead on arrival in Congress, proposed ending CPB funding. It's not likely to happen, but it was a good idea. NPR's listeners are highly educated and affluent—far more likely than the average American to have college or postgraduate degrees and to earn more than $100,000. Advertisers would covet such a demographic. Freed from CPB funding, NPR could thrive and not be reduced to selling Qunol. Though from what I understand, it's the better cocuten. ♦

COMMENT ♦ CHARLES J. SYKES

Patrick Buchanan's strange new respect for the ayatollah

It's springtime for Pat Buchanan.

Once a respected voice on the right, erstwhile presidential candidate, and omnipresent talking head, Pat Buchanan has in recent years languished in obscurity, so it would be easy to dismiss him as a bitter, disappointed figure skulking at the fringes since being effectively and appropriately cast out of the conservative movement for his chronic flirtation with anti-Semitism. But it is difficult to deny his influence on a strain of right-wing politics that, until recently, has lain dormant.

Indeed, Buchanan was pushing his nationalist, nativist, anti-globalist politics while Donald Trump was still trolling the New York tabloids, stalking *Playboy* models, and donating to Democrats. But with Trump's rise, Buchananism is getting a second wind, and with a bizarre twist: Pat Buchanan has grown disgusted with democracy itself.

This isn't entirely new. Buchanan's animus toward the "democracy worshippers of the West" is something he has been nursing for years, but in a recent column, he made his position explicit, along with his admiration for authoritarian strong men like Hungary's Viktor Orbán. "The title the Ayatollah bestowed upon us, 'The Great Satan,' *is not altogether undeserved*," he wrote (emphasis added).

As columnist Anne Applebaum asked, "Who else on the American Right now openly hates America?"

Buchanan's column is not a dispassionate work of analysis; it is a panegyric to the new class of autocrats like Orbán who are in the process of snuffing out their countries' democratic institutions. Like other authoritarians, Orbán is impatient with impediments like the rule of law and an independent judiciary; he vilifies and harasses what is left of the independent media and is suffocating those aspects of civil society he finds uncongenial to his vision of a shining one-party future. Under Orbán, even grade-school textbooks have been recruited to advance his agenda. Eighth-grade students in Hungary read, for example, "It can be problematic for different cultures to coexist."

For Buchanan, this, rather than democracy, follows the new arc of history. "Why are autocrats like Orbán rising and liberal democrats failing in Europe?" Buchanan asks. "The autocrats have plugged into the most powerful currents running in this new century: tribalism and nationalism."

By contrast, he argues, "The democracy worshippers of the West cannot compete with the authoritarians in meeting the crisis of our time because they do not see what is happening to the West as a crisis." This echoes something Buchanan wrote earlier this year: "Recall. Donald Trump was not elected because he promised to make America more democratic, but to 'make America great again'." In his passion for "greatness," Buchanan shares Trump's affinity for strong men, matched with his disdain for democratic norms, especially as they have played out in this country.

Paradoxically, Buchanan represents

a strain of rightist politics that claims the mantle of patriotism while nursing a deep-seated dislike for America itself—both its ideals and its reality. Buchanan's view of American culture has long been critical, of course, but now it veers toward the starkly dystopian. "Consider what else the 'world's oldest democracy' has lately had on offer," he writes, before presenting a parade of horribles. Why, he asks, should other countries embrace "a system that produced so poisoned a politics and so polluted a culture?"

> Our democracy boasts of a First Amendment freedom of speech and press that protects blasphemy, pornography, filthy language and the burning of the American flag. We stand for a guaranteed right of women to abort their children and of homosexuals to marry. We offer the world a freedom of religion that prohibits the teaching of our cradle faith and its moral code in our public schools.

And it doesn't stop there. Buchanan argues that we're witnessing the failure of liberal democracy itself. As a result, there are things such as "the preservation of a unique people and nation that are too important to be left to temporary majorities to decide."

He also resurrects older tropes. "Democracy lacks content," he writes. "As a political system, it does not engage the heart." This is an odd thing to say given the number of Americans who have been willing to die to uphold democratic values, but it underlies the alienation of nationalists or populists who yearn for "men of action." Democracy bores and disappoints Buchanan; autocrats like Orbán make his heart beat faster.

This, of course, is a threat liberal democracy has faced in the past: It can seem dull and anodyne when compared to the more romantic and manly ideologies of nationalist or totalitarian blood-and-soil. To its critics, values like modesty, prudence, tolerance, pluralism, and a concern for constitutionalism seem weak and etiolated excuses for failure to grasp the bright shining future offered by the strong and determined. In this view, winning is what matters, not the norms that have long governed American democracy.

A word of caution: Contra much of the rhetoric on the political left, there is no reason to believe that America faces a threat of incipient fascism or that Buchanan speaks for anything other than a minority of conservatives, but attention must be paid. It turns out that respect for constitutional norms and liberal democracy may be more fragile than many of us imagined.

A new study by the Democracy Fund Voter Study Group found that nearly half of the Obama voters who switched their allegiance to Trump in 2016 "favored a strong, unencumbered leader and declined to endorse democracy as the best form of government." (Full disclosure: I am a member of the Democracy Fund's advisory committee.) The poll also found that the highest levels of support for authoritarian leadership "come from those who are disaffected, disengaged from politics, deeply distrustful of experts, culturally conservative, and have negative views toward racial minorities." In particular, the study found that fully 31 percent of cultural conservatives now favor a "strong leader" who "does not have to bother with Congress or elections," and 22 percent believe that "democracy is not always preferable."

Pat Buchanan can work with this. And unfortunately, he's ready for another close-up. ♦

McConnell Looks on the Bright Side

The Senate majority leader is not depressed.

BY FRED BARNES

Republicans are better off than they look. The midterm election is six months away, and their chances of preserving a good-sized chunk of their power in Washington are good.

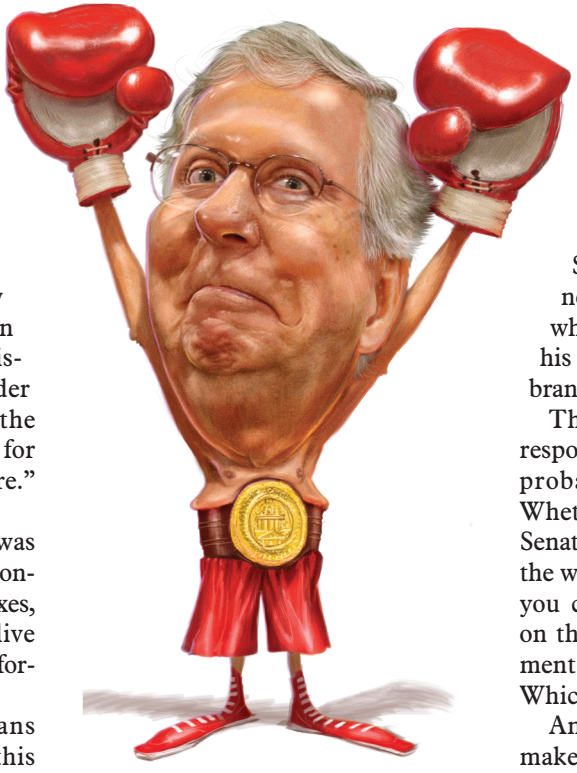
Forget the House. History, an unprecedented number of GOP retirees, and a president who is not terribly popular—all this means Democrats should easily capture the 23 seats needed to take control of the House, the downscale chamber.

The snooty Senate is another story. It's the key to Republican strength in the next two years of President Trump's term. Keeping control won't allow Republicans to boss Washington around and enact the sort of legislation that Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell says made "the last year and a half the best . . . for conservatives since I've been here." McConnell was elected in 1984.

"The stuff we did last year was clearly a Republican agenda," McConnell told me. "You know, judges, taxes, and regulations—that's what we live to do, and virtually all of those are forever done on a party-line basis."

McConnell says Republicans won't "have that kind of year this year—not with a 50-49 Senate." (Sen. John McCain, the 51st Republican, is at home in Arizona, suffering from brain cancer.) But the majority leader expects to confirm more federal appeals court judges before the midterm elections on November 6.

Last week, the Senate confirmed Trump's 15th appellate nominee, Kyle Duncan of Louisiana, who's 46 and seen as a future Supreme Court pick. And McConnell filed cloture to bring six more appeals court nominees to the Senate floor. The 11 regional appeals courts are one rung below the Supreme Court.



GARY LOCKE

"I'm not planning on leaving any behind at the end of the year," he says. "And if we're fortunate enough to hold the Senate for two more years, we can have an even more consequential impact."

That is why preserving Republican control of the Senate is more important than keeping the House. "If we hold the Senate," McConnell insists, "we can continue to confirm nominations to lifetime appointments for a full four years and finish the job of transforming the American judiciary, which is my number-one goal."

The idea is not transformation for its own sake. McConnell and his wise ally, Chairman Chuck Grassley of the Senate Judiciary Committee, want to flip the appeals courts from tilting liberal to leaning conservative, perhaps heavily. In this ambitious effort, it takes two—a leader and a chairman—to tango.

McConnell believes confirming conservatives to the federal bench outranks tax cuts in impact. "A tax bill can and will be revisited just as soon as the political winds shift. . . . But there's not much any future administration can do to revisit a 48-year-old strict constructionist put on the circuit court for a lifetime."

If a president could choose between his party holding the House or Senate, the pick would be easy. "It's because of the personnel issue" that the Senate matters more, McConnell says. "Because the president, whoever that person is, can still get his people in, not only the executive branch but also the courts."

That gives the Senate an extra responsibility. "Legislatively, you're probably finished either way." Whether you lose the House or the Senate, "You can't do anything exactly the way you want it" any longer. "But you could still have a huge impact on the country through the appointment process if you held the Senate." Which means you'd have more power.

And what if a Democratic House makes impeaching President Trump its first order of business in 2019? A vote of two-thirds of the Senate would be required to convict. That's a very high hill to climb. In Bill Clinton's case, not even a majority voted to convict. Unless the case for impeaching Trump were considerably stronger than it is now, the Senate would be unlikely to convict.

Broadly protecting the president is a job that would drop in the Senate's

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lap. There are lots of ways it would work. The majority leader decides what is taken up on the Senate floor and what isn't. McConnell believes this is one of his greatest and most useful powers.

Refuse to schedule an impeachment trial? Would McConnell dare? That would depend on the circumstances. He was strong enough to keep President Obama's final nominee of a Supreme Court justice off the floor for most of 2016, as the clock ran out on Barack Obama's second term. That was his decision alone. Meanwhile, his partner Grassley declined to schedule Judiciary Committee hearings.

The majority leader has other powers at his disposal. "We could prevent bills from landing on his desk . . . things he wouldn't want to sign," McConnell says.

The point in all this is Trump wouldn't be helpless, assuming he hasn't totally alienated Senate Republicans. He'd have an imperial guard. His world wouldn't come to an end, nor would it for Republicans. That would occur only if Republicans lose both the House and the Senate this November, and lose badly.

That can't be ruled out, but the good news for Senate Republicans is they have a mere 10 seats to defend. Democrats have 26, more than two football teams' worth. At the moment, the only Republican seats regarded as vulnerable are those in Arizona, Nevada, and Tennessee.

As the saying goes, overnight can be a lifetime in politics. Who could have predicted a month ago Kanye West's embrace of Trump? Will it help Republicans? Who knows, though you'd rather have him on your side than an incoherent Robert De Niro.

McConnell says Trump deserves credit for turning the judge business over to Don McGahn, his White House counsel. "The president now fully understands how important this is. I think in the beginning he didn't fully grasp how significant this part of what he gets to do is. I think he understands it now."

"And I'm pro-Don for the full four years," McConnell adds. ♦

The Parallel Universe of the *New York Times*

Not the best use of a Sunday.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

"We have excellent theoretical
and philosophical reasons
to think we live in a multiverse."
—*Neil deGrasse Tyson*

Do parallel universes exist? I have proof that one does. I confirmed the hypothesis in a manner very like that of the young Isaac Newton, who was sitting in a garden when an apple dropped on his head. I was standing in a convenience store when a Sunday *New York Times* dropped on my foot. Newton, in a stroke of brilliant insight, comprehended gravity. I, in a throb of bruised toe, opened the April 22, 2018, Sunday Review section.

It had long been my opinion that the writers and editors of the *New York Times* and, by extension, their readers live on a different planet—the planet where a martini costs $20. But, upon perusal of the Sunday Review section, I see that I was wrong. They do not live on another planet. They live in another cosmos—a universe with different physics, different mathematics, different scientific constants, and different laws of nature.

The lead essay in the Sunday Review is by Amy Chozick, adapted from her new book *Chasing Hillary*. The headline is a quotation from Hillary Clinton: "They Were Never Going To Let Me Be President."

The Hillary Clinton of Universe New York Times (U_{NYT}) is similar to the Hillary Clinton of the known universe (U_1) except that in U_{NYT} she was the rightful winner of the 2016 election.

Chozick's subject is time travel—impossible in U_1 but commonplace in U_{NYT}. By means of technology unknown to the inhabitants of U_1, Chozick transports her U_{NYT} readers to an ancient period of fossilization that political paleontologists of U_1 have named "Who Cares?" There, she and her audience experience phenomena hardly imaginable to us. In U_1 we sometimes beat a dead horse, but in

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GRID: BIGSTOCK

U_{NYT} they feed it and groom it and ride it around.

Also on the Review's front page is "Adapting to American Decline" by Christopher A. Preble. In the formal logic of U_{NYT} there is no "question-begging epithet" or any other type of *petitio principii* where it is logically erroneous to assume that what is to be proven is already true.

Circular reasoning is valid proof in U_{NYT}. Says Preble, "Admitting that the United States is incapable of effectively adjudicating every territorial dispute . . . in every part of the world is . . . a wise admission of the limits of American power." Preble argues that there are limits to America's power by asserting that America's power is limited.

Preble is the author of *The Power Problem: Hows American Military Dominance Makes Us Less Safe, Less Prosperous, and Less Free*. The book title would indicate that in U_{NYT} the attack on Pearl Harbor was ignored.

Inside the Sunday Review we find "States Are Doing What Scott Pruitt Won't." They're quitting? A splendid idea for some states I could name. Although, skimming the piece, I find that what states are actually doing is making up their own rules and regulations about pollutants and such. Article I of the U.S. Constitution, Section 8, Clause 3—the commerce clause—doesn't exist in U_{NYT}. States can wreak whatever havoc they like upon interstate commerce. One wonders what other parts of the Constitution U_{NYT} is lacking.

I mentioned time travel. Thus we get "What America Looks Like in 10,000 Years" with detailed maps. U_{NYT} time tourists will find, perhaps to their consternation (but to my relief), that New York City, San Francisco, Portland, and Disney World are all under water.

A feature called "Exposures" goes "Inside Bangladesh's factories, where $2 shirts get made." Working conditions are poor and pay is paltry. But, as I said, this universe has a different mathematics. Personally, I am more indignant about $20 martinis than $2 shirts. (Switching the price of these two items is, I gather, not an option in U_{NYT}.)

However, to be fair, maybe U_{NYT} has a different geography and a different history as well as a different mathematics. I spent some time in Bangladesh a quarter of a century ago, before the shirt factories arrived. In those days people (child laborers included!) didn't have anywhere to work. Therefore the working conditions weren't poor. And the pay wasn't paltry because there wasn't any. Bangladeshis were starving.

Circular reasoning is valid proof in U_{NYT}. Says Preble, 'Admitting that the United States is incapable of effectively adjudicating every territorial dispute . . . in every part of the world is . . . a wise admission of the limits of American power.' Preble argues that there are limits to America's power by asserting that America's power is limited.

"What Hospitals Can Teach the Police" informs us that hospitals are better at "de-escalating" volatile situations with patients than police are at de-escalating volatile situations with criminals. This is doubtless true in every universe. Patients are usually sick and weakly while criminals are often in rude good health. But only in U_{NYT} does a hospital de-escalation training instructor give the advice, "Never point with your index finger: It's accusatory, even when indicating a direction. Instead . . . direct with the sweep of an open hand, like a maître d' saying, 'Right this way.'" To jail, Bud.

In "The Problem With Miracle Cancer Cures" a doctor claims the problem is that the cures usually don't work. The miraculous nature of miracles is, I gather, news to the U_{NYT} reading public.

I suppose naïveté is understandable among those who can do preternatural things such as voyage back to when Hillary was important or forward to when the Little Mermaid Ariel greets Disney guests in her natural element, full fathom five.

But U_{NYT} readers do seem to be easy prey to dreams and fancies and generally given to acting like Cortez and all his men looking at each other with a wild surmise—silent, upon a peak in Darien. (Darien, Connecticut, and never mind that it was Balboa who discovered the Pacific.)

How else to explain why the editors of the Sunday Review feel a need to print Frank Bruni's faint hope, "The Republicans' Big Senate Mess," and a fishing-in-the-wishing-well piece, "The Business Deals That Could Imperil Trump."

An advice column, "Ask Roxane," is headlined "Am I Terrible for Not Doing More?" The column addresses a problem unique to U_{NYT}. This is something called "outrage fatigue." It seems to involve the duly elected government of the United States, but it's hard to tell from the letter the advice-seeker wrote, which contains such phrases as "I have considered that I am coping with the allostatic load of living . . . "

Of course, in the universe where we really live, to claim "outrage fatigue" would be to talk nonsense, like saying "my quantum mechanics are getting pooped." In our world outrage is infinite and expanding at the speed of light—literally, via Twitter. Apparently this is not so in U_{NYT} and we can only envy them.

Or not. Because another piece is titled "My Smiling Boycott." It begins, "I decided to stop smiling because I was tired." It continues, "American smiles are more assertive, reflecting Americans' rating of themselves as more dominant." And it further continues, "to be commanded to smile takes away our right to our own feelings."

At which point . . . I smiled. And I quit reading the *New York Times* Sunday Review. ♦

Damn, Busted

Britain's military should be growing. It's not.

BY TED R. BROMUND

A new British F-35B in maneuvers with a U.S. Marine Corps F-35B, July 1, 2016

The Royal Air Force celebrated its 100th birthday last week with a gala program at the Smithsonian Institution's National Air and Space Museum in Washington. No one does pomp better than the British, but the presence of the Queen's Colour Squadron had a larger purpose: to solemnize the reformation of 617 Squadron, the famous Dambusters, now flying the stealthy F-35. Those 16 fighter jets are among the best in the world. Given how few planes the RAF has, they'd better be. As a nation, Brexit Britain is stepping out of the shadow of the EU. But as a military power, it's stepped into the shade.

The defense of a nation is about a lot of things. But ultimately, it takes money. One of Britain's proudest boasts is that it's one of the few members of NATO to meet the alliance's target of spending a minimum of 2 percent of GDP on defense. By NATO's figures, the U.K. spent 2.12 percent in 2017, more than any other member of NATO except Greece and the United States. But NATO's accounting includes military pensions as defense spending. An alternative estimate, by the respected International Institute for Strategic Studies, found that Britain missed NATO's minimum target in 2017 for the second year in a row—this time, by over $1 billion.

The rot set in years ago. As far back as 1998, in the second year of Tony Blair's Labour government, a review of Britain's defenses acknowledged that "the so-called 'peace dividend' from the ending of the Cold War has already been taken." Yet while he waged wars in the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, and Iraq, Blair continued to cut the defense budget, which fell from 3.5 percent of GDP in 1996 to 2.3 percent in 2007. That was lower than at any point in the 20th century except 1930, 1932, and 1933—the depths of the Great Depression.

Then, after 2007, Britain cut some more. Since 2010, the British armed forces have shrunk from 198,000 total personnel to 161,000—a 19 percent decrease and one that occurred under Conservative or Conservative-led governments. As of mid-April, the U.K.'s National Audit Office found that the British military was short 8,200 personnel—"the largest gap in a decade." The British defense procurement plan, too, according to the audit office, is "not affordable," and the efficiencies promised to close the gap suffer from "a lack of transparency." In other words, they don't exist.

All of this is drearily familiar. For two decades, British governments have promised to square the funding circle by achieving greater efficiencies, a promise first heard in that 1998 review. For two decades, the efficiencies achieved have failed to keep the declines in defense spending from gnawing into the size and strength of Britain's forces. For two decades, British defense secretaries have tried to fill "black holes" in the defense budget and to ride procurement "bow waves" caused by major defense programs that always cost more than shrinking budgets allow. This time around, the potential shortfall is 20 billion pounds.

What's even more disturbing are the lies the British tell themselves to make all this seem okay. There is the lie that today's equipment is so much better than yesterday's that it doesn't matter how little of it they have. Leaving aside the obvious fact that even the best plane can't be in two places at once, the problem with this lie is that buying one plane doesn't get you one plane on the front line: Given training and maintenance, it gets you about a third of a plane, which is much less useful. The same goes for ships: Last month it was reported that of the Royal Navy's 19 frigates and destroyers, only 5 were available for operations, and that cannibalization of vessels for spare parts is now "routine."

Worst of all, though, is the British lie about the nature of war. In the early 2000s, British military thinkers began to advance the comforting and ridiculous theory that the future of warfare was known, and that, by happy chance, what Britain needed to buy was precisely the lighter and cheaper equipment it had decided it could afford. As one influential report put it

MATT CARDY / GETTY

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as late as 2009, for Britain to focus on state-on-state war was to adopt "a vestigial Cold War mindset." Today, this narrow-minded, cost-driven vision has left Britain unprepared for great-power conflict and with a mere 227 battle tanks—just a shade fewer than Russia's 20,000.

The problem isn't that Britain lacks ambition. British forces lead NATO's multinational battlegroup in Estonia, and by late 2018 Britain will have three warships enforcing U.N. sanctions off the Korean Peninsula. Britain has committed to conducting a freedom of navigation operation in the South China Sea in 2018. Compared to Germany, which is both politically feckless and militarily incontinent, Britain is brilliant. But Britain's can-do military culture and its political willingness to deploy mean that Britain is taking on far more risk than it realizes, and on margins that are almost comically slender.

In the end, Britain's problem isn't money. It's the absence of leaders who are able to advance a vision for Britain's world role that would justify spending more money on it. Downing Street stepped forward in early 2018 to develop "a cross-government strategy on loneliness," of all things. But like every government since the departure of Margaret Thatcher's, it lacks a strategy for mattering in the world. The green shoots of strategic thought growing at British think tanks (like the increasingly influential Policy Exchange) are a hopeful sign, but it shouldn't be hard to recognize that when Britain exits the E.U., it will once again be an independent nation at the center of Winston Churchill's three circles—the United States, Europe, and the Commonwealth. Britain's role is to stand at the center of the West, connecting, uniting, and fortifying it.

That's a role worth taking—and worth defending. But as it is, we have a Britain that wittily promised, at the RAF's anniversary party, to throw a bash for the U.S. Air Force when the American centenary rolls around—in 2047. That's a good joke. Let's hope the RAF has enough personnel left by then to keep that pledge. ♦

TOLGA AKMEN / AFP / GETTY

Rotten Labour

Jeremy Corbyn's Jewish problem.

BY DOMINIC GREEN

London

Does Britain's Labour party have an anti-Semitism problem? Yes, its leader Jeremy Corbyn admitted in March, after Jewish community leaders had taken the unprecedented step of protesting outside Parliament, but it's only a problem in "pockets." Corbyn should know. A member of Parliament for the right-thinking and left-leaning London seat of Islington, Corbyn has moved between those pockets throughout his backbench career. As a hard-left urban Labour MP, Corbyn, along with ex-London mayor Ken Livingstone, was one of the architects of Labour's "red-green" alliance, in which the Marxist-Leninist-Trotskyite-Maoist fringe cultivated the vote of Britain's growing Muslim population.

Protesters against Labour party anti-Semitism, April 8

But Labour does not just have an anti-Semitism problem. It has two anti-Semitism problems, the red and the green. These have been brought to light in a slew of stories in the press examining Corbyn's long and shameful career as a fellow-traveler with Islamists and terrorists, and the not-unrelated popularity of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories among Labour members and local councilors. There is also what you might call a white problem: Labour's own 2016 inquiry into anti-Semitism in the party was a whitewash that sought to exculpate the party and convinced no one.

All of these have merged into one big, multicolored problem for Corbyn. Every time he deplores Labour's bad apples, a light shake of the tree produces a fresh batch of rotten fruit. And the rot runs from the roots to the top branches. In late March, it emerged that Christine Shawcroft, a close Corbyn ally and a member of Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC), had opposed the suspension of Alan Bull, a Labour council candidate in Peterborough, just north of Cambridge.

Bull had posted on his Facebook page a link to an article titled "International Red Cross report confirms the Holocaust of 6m Jews is a hoax." When the NEC moved to suspend Bull's candidacy, Shawcroft lobbied her fellow committee members on Bull's behalf. Bull, she claimed, was being attacked by elements of the local Labour party for "political reasons," and his Facebook post had been taken "completely out of context."

Once the newspapers heard, though, Shawcroft claimed that she had defended Bull without looking at the post. "As soon as I saw it, I told the member that he should have anti-Semitism training," she said. Bull is a member of the hard-left Momentum group, which is taking over Labour at the grassroots

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and which now, through Corbyn and his allies, controls the party leadership too. Shawcroft was a director of Momentum, at least until the Bull episode hit the papers. When it did, she had to resign. She has been replaced on the NEC by the transvestite stand-up comic Eddie Izzard. No one can say that Labour doesn't take anti-Semitism seriously.

The Shawcroft-Bull business was knocked off the front pages in early April by the case of Roy Smart, a spectacularly dumb council candidate from Kent. In Facebook postings, Smart claimed that the "Rothschild Jewish mafia" commissioned the 9/11 attacks, and he advised readers to sign up for a "Holocaust deprogramming course." The link read: "Free yourself from a lifetime of Holo-brainwashing about 'Six Million' Jews 'gassed' in 'Gas Chambers Disguised as Shower Rooms.'"

Cleverly, Smart portrays himself as an anti-Zionist, rather than a half-witted conspiracist. He doesn't want people to confuse "ordinary peace-loving jews" with "the war-mongering, child-killing zionists in Israel." It may be theoretically possible to be an anti-Zionist without being an anti-Semite, but if you pursue either with any commitment, you end up as both. After he had made the newspapers for the first and last time, clever Mr. Smart was suspended, pending a dressing-down by Eddie Izzard and the NEC.

Jeremy Corbyn fancies himself a man of the people, so it is not surprising that he has been mingling in the online sewer with the crackpots. He has been exposed as a member of at least three Facebook groups, all ostensibly pro-Palestinian in purpose but all awash in anti-Semitic comments and links. The material includes cask-strength Holocaust denial and global Jewish conspiracy theories and, for those whose anti-Zionist palates are already jaded, links to the really nutty stuff, like ex-soccer goalkeeper David Icke's grand synthesis, which combines the Rothschilds, 9/11, the Illuminati, and a secret master race of lizard men in human form.

Yes, we are talking about Labour, the venerable social democratic party that gave Britain the National Health Service. The party, even, of Tony Blair. And the party, now, of hatemongers and sci-fi anti-Semites.

Corbyn was shocked, just shocked to discover that sites he had visited and posted links on contained such stuff. But of course he's the same man who in 2012 defended an anti-Semitic mural in East London by Kalen Ockerman (aka Mear One). Ockerman had depicted dark-skinned, naked people propping up a table at which were seated six caricature Caucasians, some with hooked noses.

Mobile billboards in front of Parliament

Ockerman subsequently identified two of the six villains in his mural as Jewish bankers (Mayer Rothschild and Paul Warburg) and a third as John D. Rockefeller Sr., who online conspiracists believe was such a cunning Jew that he contrived to have his mother raise him as a Baptist.

Corbyn had opposed the destruction of the mural on grounds of free speech. Under pressure from the Labour MP Luciana Berger, who is Jewish and has been threatened and vilified by the Labour left for years, Corbyn fell back on the same defense as Christine Shawcroft: He hadn't looked at the mural, but now that you ask, it does seem "deeply disturbing and anti-Semitic."

By the end of March, the Anglo-Jewish leadership finally acknowledged what almost every non-leadership British Jew has already gathered. Labour, quick to convict others of institutional racism, has become institutionally racist. Hundreds of London's most law-abiding residents then conducted the most polite protest ever made outside the Houses of Parliament.

Corbyn cannot bring himself to name Labour's problem, partly because he has played a major role in its creation, partly because he agrees with many of its premises and conclusions, and partly because he is a sanctimonious hypocrite who believes that ends justify means. He certainly sounds like a useful idiot. But what if he isn't? His most recent moves have been alarmingly deft.

To show he's not an anti-Semite, Corbyn spent the first night of Passover with some Jewish constituents. They are members of an anti-Zionist anarcho-syndicalist group called Jewdas, whose Twitter account describes the State of Israel as "a steaming pile of sewage that needs to be done away with." You could call them Jeremy's kind of Jews.

Of course, the Anglo-Jewish organizations, who are close to the Conservatives, walked into the trap. They protested that Jewdas is entirely unrepresentative of British Jews. They're right, of course, and yet these objections made the Jewish groups, not Labour, look intolerant. "I learned a lot," Jeremy said afterwards, though not, perhaps, when one of the celebrants, diverting from the traditional text, shouted, "F— capitalism!"

Next, Corbyn dodged an ambush by staying away when the House of Commons debated anti-Semitism in the Labour party. And then, he pulled off his master stroke. He left Facebook.

Corbyn thus logged three acts of political wisdom in a week. Unfortunately, that's three more than Prime Minister Theresa May has managed in the last two years. And he has a much firmer grip on his party than she has on hers. If Corbyn keeps it up, and May keeps fumbling, he might yet win the next election for Labour. But will the Zionazis, the Rothschilds, and the lizardmen let him? ♦

JOHN STILLWELL / PA IMAGES / GETTY

To Clap or Not to Clap

The politics of applause.

BY STEPHEN MILLER

When I was in my twenties, I knew a few adepts of Zen Buddhism who would mention the famous koan: "the sound of one hand clapping." When I asked what it meant, they would usually give me a disdainful look, as if I were too unenlightened to understand. In my view clapping requires two hands—duh!—but maybe I'm wrong because in China now you can "clap" with one finger. An app enables you to clap by tapping your mobile phone.

The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported that many Chinese citizens tapped their mobile phones to "clap" for snippets of wisdom expressed by Chinese leader Xi Jinping in his three-and-a-half-hour speech to the 19th Communist Party Congress. One person tapped out 1,489 claps in 19 seconds (he used five fingers), putting him in the 99th percentile of the tap-clappers.

A Chinese observer said that "they must have known it's so over-the-top silly." It's unclear if "they" meant the tappers or Chinese authorities, and in any case I'm not sure it's silly. Chinese authorities like to keep a close tab on their citizens—maybe even their responses to Xi Jinping's speeches. Evan Osnos, who lived in China for many years, reports, "In Beijing the government uses facial-recognition machines in public rest rooms to stop people from stealing toilet paper."

In Xinjiang, China's westernmost province, Uighurs are required to have government spy apps on their mobile phones. James A. Millward, a scholar who teaches at Georgetown University, says Uighurs are subject to extreme surveillance. "At multiple checkpoints, police officers scan your ID card, your irises and the contents of your phone." If a Uighur ridiculed virtual clapping he would be in big trouble.

Even Chairman Mao must keep clapping when Comrade Stalin's around.

Is there an inverse correlation between clapping and freedom? I think there is. The more people applaud their leaders, the more likely they are doing so out of fear, not enthusiasm. Russia expert Masha Gessen writes that in Soviet politics "applause was a central issue—sometimes, it seemed, the central issue." In Stalin's heyday, she says, "applause became largely panic-driven; contemporary accounts showed that people feared that the first person to stop clapping would be the first to be hauled off to jail. Failure to applaud could certainly be considered treason." Party members did not stop clapping until Stalin signaled them to do so. They also shouted "Long live Comrade Stalin" while they clapped.

Acclaiming a despot by clapping and shouting (or both) is an old story. According to historian Peter Heather, most major Roman imperial ceremonies "involved 245 shouts of approval from the assembled senators" when the emperor entered. Did they clap as well?

Clapping for a ruler goes back at least to the Hebrew Bible. Speaking of Joash, the Book of Kings says, "They proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king.'" Were they clapping out of approval or out of fear?

In the Bible clapping is also an expression of religious joy. Psalm 47 begins: "Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy." The same sentiment is expressed in Psalm 98: "Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy." There is a similar passage in Isaiah about the trees of the field clapping their hands.

In Job clapping has yet another meaning. Elihu criticizes Job: "He adds rebellion to his sin; he claps his hands among us, and multiplies his words against God." Raymond P. Scheindlin, a leading scholar of the Hebrew Bible, translates this passage "slaps his hands among us," and he adds in a footnote that this "is a gesture of mourning [on Job's part]. Elihu is criticizing Job for wailing and lamenting his own suffering." Is slapping one's hands—how does one do this?—different from clapping?

In Ezekiel the Lord chastises those who have clapped enthusiastically for false gods. He says to the Moabites: "Because you have clapped your hands and stamped your feet and rejoiced with all the malice within you against the land of Israel, therefore I have stretched out my hand against you." In another passage God says to the Israelites: "Clap your hands and stamp your foot and say, Alas for all the vile abominations of the house of Israel!" God wants the Israelites to clap and stamp their feet as an expression of

SOVFOTO / UIG / GETTY

Stephen Miller's latest book is Walking New York: Reflections of American Writers from Walt Whitman to Teju Cole.

remorse for their "vile abominations."

Reading about clapping and stamping one's feet, I think of flamenco dancers. Their clapping and stamping are rhythmic music—often in conjunction with guitarists and drummers who also clap. The dancer's expression as he or she claps and stamps is somber and intense—even arrogant. Flamenco dancers are proud—showing off their mastery of a difficult art.

Clapping, then, can express a wide variety of emotions. A writer on a Reddit anthropology page notes: "Clapping is the loudest sound we can make with our bodies without using our mouths, so perhaps it isn't surprising that it's used in many different ways." Can't we make louder sounds wearing boots and stamping? His main point, though, is right: To understand clapping you need a context. You need information about who is doing the clapping and where it is taking place.

Humans are not the only clappers. "Great apes like gorillas, chimps and orangutans sometimes clap their hands to draw attention," says a Smithsonian website. The Smithsonian further says that clapping to signify applause goes back to the Greeks or Romans, but I'm certain that clapping was around long before it meant applause or joy or derision or mourning. I can imagine humans sitting around a fire chanting, singing, and clapping—and maybe even dancing. Roma often sit around a fire and dance, sing, and clap. Anyone who has seen a performance of gypsy musicians knows how exhilarating it can be.

Which brings us back to virtual clapping as a way of expressing approval—real or fake—for a dictator's blather. Electronic huzzahs, one hopes, will never become popular in this country. No one, I think, was amused when President Trump suggested at a political rally that Democratic lawmakers who did not clap during his first State of the Union address were "treasonous." The next day a White House spokesman said the president's remark was "tongue-in-cheek."

Democracy and culture thrive when people do not feel obligated to clap at a political or cultural event. I attend many dance performances—classical and modern. I refuse to applaud if I think the choreography is wretched or the dancers are not up to snuff. (I won't boo.) I've gotten many glares from people who think not applauding is rude. It probably is rude not to applaud when someone gives a banal speech at a friend's wedding, graduation, or retirement, but why should I feel obligated to applaud when I dislike a performance by professionals?

Ritual applause is the stock-in-trade of dictatorships, especially Communist ones. Modern technology enables Chinese authorities to keep track of Chinese citizens' virtual clapping. Who can say authorities won't pay a visit to those who never "clap" their approval when Xi speaks? Uighur expert James Millward asks: "Will the big-data police state engulf the rest of China?" There is a good chance it will. ♦

A Wunderkind at 100

Leonard Bernstein prophesied an American classical music; his disillusionment and disappointments mirrored the nation's.

Rehearsing at Carnegie Hall, 1959

DAVID ATTIE / GETTY

By Joseph Horowitz

In 1980, at the age of 62, Leonard Bernstein undertook the composition of a formidable full-scale opera, commissioned jointly by La Scala, the Kennedy Center, and Houston Grand Opera. He called it *A Quiet Place*. It's the story of an unquiet family, the same one that Bernstein had depicted in *Trouble in Tahiti* in 1952, when he was just 34. *Trouble in Tahiti* is a romp, deftly dispatched. But Bernstein had not composed an opera since, and *A Quiet Place* did not come easily—so much so that he decided to incorporate *Trouble in Tahiti* as a flashback. As he worked on the score, he confided to an associate that *Trouble in Tahiti* was "a better piece." And so it is. The Bernstein trajectory of promises fulfilled and not is anything but simple.

This August will mark Leonard Bernstein's 100th birthday. The centenary celebrations started last August and are worldwide. The Bernstein estate counts more than 2,000 events on six continents. And there is plenty to celebrate. But if Bernstein remains a figure of limitless fascination, it is also because his story is archetypal. He embodied a tangled nexus of American challenges, aspirations, and contradictions. And if he in some ways unraveled, so did the America he once courted and extolled.

Like the United States, Bernstein came late to classical music. He was born in 1918 in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where his father, a Ukrainian immigrant, was a successful beauty-products supplier. Sam Bernstein initially discouraged his son's interest in music. Not until he was 14 did Bernstein hear an orchestral concert. At Harvard, he majored in music and met Aaron Copland, who he later called "my only real composition teacher." He studied composing and conducting at the Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, then moved to Greenwich Village, where he sometimes performed in clubs; his odd jobs included arranging popular songs and transcribing jazz improvisations. Beginning in 1940, he studied at Tanglewood with the Boston Symphony's visionary music director, Serge Koussevitzky.

Bernstein acquired instant fame in 1943 when he conducted the New York Philharmonic on short notice, replacing the indisposed Bruno Walter in a program of Schumann, Wagner, Richard Strauss, and Miklós Rózsa. A year later, he led the premiere of his Symphony No. 1 in Pittsburgh, his ballet *Fancy Free* was choreographed by Jerome Robbins for New York City Ballet, and his musical

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Joseph Horowitz's 10 books mainly deal with the history of classical music in America. He is executive director of D.C.'s PostClassical Ensemble and director of Music Unwound, an NEH-funded consortium of orchestras and universities dedicated to curating America's musical past. His book-in-progress is called Dvorak's Prophecy.

On the Town opened on Broadway. Just 26, Bernstein was the wunderkind of American music.

His career mounted with vertiginous speed. From 1954, he was television's go-to musical personality. *Candide* and *West Side Story*—his two best-known Broadway products—opened in 1956 and 1957. Bernstein's ambitions were recklessly explicit. He thrilled to the breathless possibility of a new species of American musical theater. "All we need is for our Mozart to come along," he told a 1956 TV audience while surveying the swift evolution of the Broadway musical ("What makes *South Pacific* different?" "Why can't Europe imitate *Pajama Game*?"). Concurrently, he expressed a charged ambivalence about the prospects for a "Great American Symphony." Splitting himself in half in an imaginary 1954 dialogue ("Symphony or Musical Comedy?"), he argued that there was "no historical necessity for symphonies in our time" and countered, "There has never in history, by statistical record, been so great an interest in the symphony and the symphony orchestra as is at this moment manifest in the United States."

Bernstein's brio, wit, and facility were irresistible. The music he was composing, whether high or low, already sounded like "Bernstein." Whether it was deep was another matter. Did *West Side Story* turn cheesy when it got serious? Why were the most earnest pages of the 1954 Serenade for Solo Violin, Strings, Harp and Percussion (arguably the finest of all his concert works) the least successful? Bernstein's progress—underlined or undercut by an insatiable drive to succeed—became a topic of incessant debate in America. Lenny needed to focus his talents was the frequent verdict. He was spread too thin. Bernstein more than shared this nagging anxiety.

Then in 1958 Bernstein, at the age of 40, became the youngest music director in the history of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra and—as every announcement stressed—the first Philharmonic music director to be American-born. It was his biggest, most glamorous, and most prestigious showcase. Ten years later, he would be gone, frustrated and fatigued.

If there is a single motif that unifies the Bernstein saga, it was his desire to resolve the oxymoron "American classical music." Beginning in the mid-19th century, Europe's musical traditions were vigorously appropriated by a profusion of American orchestras and opera troupes (the New York Philharmonic was founded in 1842). But classical music in America remained Eurocentric: a colonial outpost prodigious in scale. Bernstein's determination to change all that was never more explicit than during his momentous Philharmonic decade.

That the orchestra was a troubled institution was public knowledge. Howard Taubman, in the *New York Times*, was only one of many voices demanding a thorough housecleaning. The Boston Symphony, propelled by Koussevitzky's 25-year tenure (1924-49), had undertaken a sustained American mission: Bernstein's quest for the Great American Symphony had first been Koussevitzky's quest. And it was Koussevitzky who created the Tanglewood Festival as an incubator for American musical talent. In Philadelphia, Leopold Stokowski had spent 26 years ceaselessly exploring: building the orchestra into a laboratory for new repertoire, new sonic possibilities, and new educational strategies. Not only was New York's orchestra a less polished instrument than Boston's or Philadelphia's, it had enjoyed no such sustained artistic leadership. The Philharmonic's longtime manager, Arthur Judson, would not relinquish authority to a conductor of consequence. Between 1923 and 1936, the orchestra did not even have a "music director." Judson was finally pushed out in 1956, and the board turned to Bernstein for guidance.

Young, eclectic, and irreverent, Bernstein had a remedial agenda not merely for New York but also for the nation: to identify and promote an American canon and to carve a role for new music.

Young, eclectic, and irreverent, Bernstein had a remedial agenda not merely for New York but also for the nation. There were two critical objectives. The first was to identify and promote an American canon so that American orchestras would eventually emphasize American works; until that happened, the United States could only claim a second-rate musical high culture, however abundantly stocked with world-class imported goods. The second objective was to carve a role for new music: There needed to be a contemporary canon, American and not, that audiences could embrace. That Bernstein was himself a composer looking for the way forward and himself an American musician looking for a rooted identity were crucial factors. More than the Russian-born Koussevitzky, more than the English-born Stokowski, Leonard Bernstein tackled the oxymoron head-on. He was fired by personal urgency.

In a remarkable memo outlining his inaugural year, Bernstein wrote, "The season is divided into seven periods of four weeks each, except for the final period, which is six weeks. I will conduct periods 1, 3, 5, and 7. The over all point of my eighteen weeks is a general survey of American Music from the earliest generation of American composers to the present." And so it was. Bernstein's first subscription program as music director included William Schuman's

American Festival Overture, Charles Ives's Symphony No. 2, and Beethoven's Symphony No. 7. A rambunctious cornucopia of Germanic procedures and American tunes, Ives's Second was an overlooked American masterpiece that Bernstein, already curating the past, had premiered with the Philharmonic in 1951. Schuman's overture was a brash patriotic salute on the fringes of the repertoire. Bernstein's initial program embodied his supreme aspiration: that American orchestras would prioritize American works. They would belatedly clinch an American canon. And they would honor European progenitors.

What followed that first season were forgotten turn-of-the-century Americans: George Chadwick, Arthur Foote, Edward MacDowell. These—plus Ives, Carl Ruggles, and Wallingford Riegger, all of more recent vintage—comprised Bernstein's "Older Generation." Then came "The Twenties" (Copland, George Gershwin, Edgard Varèse), "From the Crash through the Second World War" (Samuel Barber, Randall Thompson, Roy Harris, Walter Piston, Roger Sessions, Virgil Thomson), and "The Young Generation" (Kenneth Gaburo, Lukas Foss, William Russo, Easley Blackwood Jr.). On top of all that, 16 of Bernstein's 29 soloists for the season were born in North America. The die was cast.

Bernstein in 1943, the year he conducted the New York Philharmonic on short notice

BETTMANN / GETTY

The comprehensive curatorial role Bernstein was pursuing was unprecedented in the history of American music. It more resembled the defining projects of a world-class museum: uncovering treasures past, reassessing received truths, gauging the contemporary trajectory with thematic initiatives. That American orchestras have never adopted a comparable template is one reason they are now in trouble. Bernstein more than saw it coming. Overnight, he became the Philharmonic's in-house scholar and educator, its resident conductor, pianist, and composer. He would (and could) do it all himself.

And yet, remarkably, Bernstein would never again show such allegiance to American music. His second season proclaimed a messianic transatlantic cause: six Mahler symphonies, plus two sets of Mahler songs with orchestra. For one stretch of two months, every Philharmonic program included at least one Mahler work. Bernstein's third season ended with six programs exploring the "Keys to the Twentieth Century"—mainly mainstream Europeans. In 1963-64, Bernstein devoted six programs to "The Avant-Garde"—nine composers, of whom only four were American.

Because these acts of advocacy were also ongoing exercises in self-discovery, their outcome proved confused. Bernstein the composer mistrusted contemporary fashions. And Bernstein the American classical musician—the oxymoron—was withdrawing from the eager New World narrative with which he had begun. He took a sabbatical in 1964-65 to compose. A planned Broadway musical proved abortive. "I made many experiments because I had the luxury of a whole year to do nothing but experiment," he later recalled. "And part of my experimentation was to try to write some pieces that, shall we say, were less old-fashioned. And I wrote a lot of music, 12-tone music and avant-garde music of various kinds, and a lot of it was very good, but I threw it all away. And what I came out with at the end of the year was a piece called *Chichester Psalms*." He called it "old-fashioned and sweet." In a "sabbatical report" he wrote for the *New York Times* in 1965, he pondered "the ancient cliché that the certainty of one's knowledge decreases in proportion to thought and experience." In 1966, he announced his resignation from the Philharmonic, effective in 1969.

The remainder of Bernstein's directorship emphasized the resilience of the symphony in the 20th century. He discovered the Danish composer Carl Nielsen, who had fashioned a heroic idiom transcending cliché. He championed Sibelius—an unabashed romantic who had been precipitously trashed by the modernists. Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony became a Bernstein specialty. (He and the Philharmonic had used it to wow Soviet audiences, including the composer, during a 1959 tour of the USSR.) A 1966 Young People's Concert, "A Birthday Tribute to Shostakovich," produced a Bernstein encomium both prescient (Shostakovich was still a victim of Cold War putdowns) and self-referential (at 48, Bernstein was growing comfortable with feeling "old-fashioned"):

> In these days of musical experimentation, with new fads chasing each other in and out of the concert halls, a composer like Shostakovich can be easily put down. After all he's basically a traditional Russian composer, a true son of Tchaikovsky—and no matter how modern he ever gets, he never loses that tradition. So the music is always in some way old-fashioned—or at least what critics and musical intellectuals like to call old-fashioned. But they're forgetting the most important thing—he's a genius: a real authentic genius, and there aren't too many of those around any more.

Bernstein's disappointment upon leaving the Philharmonic was undisguised. He knew that he had failed to transform the orchestra into something dynamically American. He had endured steady complaints—basically valid—that it lacked the gold-standard polish of the orchestras in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Cleveland. But if his were not the accomplishments he had once envisioned, they were formidable and distinctive. He had not remotely succeeded in canonizing an American repertoire. But, starting from scratch, he had established the iconic importance of Charles Ives. He had singlehandedly canonized Nielsen and helped to restore Sibelius's luster. And he had left a central legacy honoring a composer and Philharmonic music director far bigger than himself: Gustav Mahler.

Bernstein conducting one of the New York Philharmonic's Young People's Concerts in 1960

In 1958, when Bernstein took over the Philharmonic, Mahler was not an unknown name, but his music was hardly popular. He had been the orchestra's conductor from 1909 to 1911. And five subsequent Philharmonic conductors had been (or would become) notable Mahlerians: Willem Mengelberg, Otto Klemperer, Bruno Walter, Dimitri Mitropoulos, and John Barbirolli. In such company, Bernstein was not the supreme Mahler interpreter. But he was without question Mahler's supreme advocate. No previous New York conductor possessed anything like Bernstein's educational panache.

Bernstein's Young People's Concerts were a signature innovation. The Philharmonic had a long history of concerts for young audiences. But never before were they regularly scripted and hosted by the orchestra's music director. Never before had they been nationally televised. And never before had they been so personal. Bernstein said he conceived the concerts with his own children in mind. But, as ever, he was also projecting his own shifting persona—its appetites and needs—and never more than on February 7, 1960, when he asked, "Who Was Gustav Mahler?" Mahler's singularity, Bernstein said, resided in his ability to "recapture the pure emotions of childhood," oscillating between extremes of happiness and gloom. Mahler was romantic and modern at the same time. He was both conductor and composer. He was rooted yet marginal. He was Jewish; he was Austrian. He absorbed Slavic and Chinese influences. Mahler was an exuberant and depressive man-child, a 20th-century American eclectic.

It was predictable that Bernstein's Philharmonic swan song would be a big Mahler symphony. He chose No. 3, a 100-minute existential narrative for orchestra, mezzo-soprano, and chorus, that in 1969 was still a concert rarity. Bernstein the New World oxymoron had gravitated toward the nostalgic longings and dire premonitions of fin-de-siècle Vienna. In retrospect, it was too late in the day to cultivate or perpetuate an American classical-music repertoire of sufficient scope and variety: The formative phase of American composition had already come and gone with relatively little to show for it. And there was an additional obstacle—one that implicated Bernstein himself.

In 1892, the Czech composer Antonin Dvorak arrived in Manhattan to head the seven-year-old National Conservatory of Music. He discovered a city stocked with singers and instrumentalists to rival any musical capital, but one with a paucity of original music: American composers remained preponderantly emulative. Dvorak saw a remedy: the black musical mother lode, which had taken him by surprise. "In the negro melodies of America, I discover all that is needed for a great and noble school of music," he predicted. "They are pathetic, tender, passionate, melancholy, solemn, religious, bold, merry, gay, or what you will. It is music that suits itself to any mood or purpose." Dvorak's prophecy was instantly influential. It was also controversial. But the general expectation that American orchestras and opera companies would acquire their own repertoire was ubiquitous.

Dvorak had adherents—most productively, his black assistant Harry Burleigh, who became the composer chiefly responsible for turning spirituals into concert songs. Largely, however, the prophecy was derided or forgotten. American classical music stayed white. The black mother lode instead wondrously fed ragtime and jazz. The obstacle to Dvorak's prophecy was modernism. It was Oedipal. It cherished what was new and mistrusted the past.

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At the beginning of the new century, Van Wyck Brooks, a critic and historian of genius, went looking for a "usable past" in American literature. At first he found none. Then, along with Lewis Mumford and F.O. Matthiessen, he looked harder and discovered Herman Melville and other forebears: a canon. In classical music, Aaron Copland, explicitly echoing Brooks, undertook a retrospective quest of his own. But Copland was a creative artist, not a scholar; he lacked the time and interest to assiduously investigate America's little-known musical history. He came up empty-handed. That American classical music lacked a usable past quickly turned into an article of faith, centrally propagated in the writings of Copland and his fellow composer Virgil Thomson. The result was a standard narrative maintaining that all American compositions before 1910 (Thomson's date) were stuck in infancy—in Thomson's words, "a pale copy of continental models."

The 1920s and 1930s therefore constituted an ostensible coming of age. Copland's A-list of American composers in his 1941 book *Our New Music* mainly comprised himself, Thomson, Roy Harris, Roger Sessions, Walter Piston, and Marc Blitzstein. Today, the standard narrative endures—and yet Copland's fellow composers do not. Even Harris, whose Third Symphony (1939) seemed to both Copland and Thomson a brave ignition point, is barely a footnote.

America's literary coming of age was powered by Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Melville. Its musical coming of age remained deaf to possible precursors. Thomson believed American folk music was essentially white—that even the sorrow songs of the plantation originated as "white spirituals." Copland believed that jazz was of limited use to concert composers. It had "only two expressions: the well-known 'blues' mood, and the wild, abandoned, almost hysterical and grotesque mood so dear to the youth of all ages. . . . Any serious composer who attempted to work within those two moods sooner or later became aware of their severe limitations." Copland inferred among African Americans "a conception of rhythm not as mental exercise but as something basic to the body's rhythmic impulse." He compared "interest in jazz" with interest "in the primitive arts and crafts of aboriginal peoples."

These opinions weren't bigoted. Rather, they were a product of culture and aesthetics. Copland and Thomson were wholly antipathetic to Dvorak's roots-in-the-soil prophecy. Copland, in particular, was never cozy with the vernacular. Composers "composed," they did not copy. The cost to the standard narrative is easily summarized: It penalized America's two greatest compositional talents, Charles Ives and George Gershwin. To Copland and Thomson, both were gifted dilettantes. Their music was unfinished. But, as we now appreciate, both dug deep roots. *Porgy and Bess* is a fulfillment of Dvorak's prophecy. As for Ives (whose music, though mainly composed before 1920, remained preponderantly undiscovered for decades), he fed on Stephen Foster, on ragtime, on a vernacular feast of church and patriotic hymns, on songs of the Civil War, the parlor, the college fraternity—tunes he rudely or innocently invoked without compromising their indigenous vigor. More than any subsequent American concert composer, he succeeded in evoking an "America" as ragged, democratic, and capacious as that of Whitman or Melville.

Enter Leonard Bernstein. His 20,000-word Harvard undergraduate thesis, "The Absorption of Race Elements

Copland and Bernstein in 1970. The conductor led a Young People's Concert celebrating his friend's 70th birthday in December.

into American Music" (1939), is the standard narrative swallowed whole. As he wrote to Copland: "The thesis tries to show how the stuff that the old boys turned out . . . failed utterly to develop an American style or school or music at all. . . . Now how to go about it? It means going through recent American things, finding those that sound, for some reason, American, and translate that American sound into musical terms." But, like Copland and Thomson, Bernstein little investigated the old "American things"; that they were worn and derivative remained a hunch or assumption. Of Gershwin, he wrote that he "did not try to reconcile a 'modern' idiom with the diatonic Negro scale. He simply remained steeped in nineteenth-century methods and made the most of them." Bernstein was aware of Ives, but suspicious: The *Concord Sonata* was truly "American," "worthy of respect"—but also "tiring," "overlong." It was only Copland, the schooled practitioner, who was able

to merge vernacular elements with an "advanced style."

Nineteen years later, in 1958, Bernstein's second New York Philharmonic Young People's Concert asked: "What Is American Music?" The implications of his concurrent chronological survey of American symphonic works became explicit: It was an evolutionary ladder. Sampling George Chadwick's *Melpomene Overture*, an 1887 gloss on Wagner's prelude to *Tristan und Isolde*, Bernstein found "straight European stuff" from "the kindergarten period"—leading to the "grade school" of Dvorak, Edward MacDowell, and others infected with "Indian and Negro melodies." After that came Gershwin and "high school"—

Jackie Kennedy joins Bernstein and his wife, Felicia, and their children, Alexander and Jamie, at the premiere of a revue of his songs in 1965.

composers "still being American *on purpose*." They had not yet absorbed and elevated the vernacular into a schooled idiom, one that came out sounding American "all by itself."

Did Bernstein realize that *Melpomene* was atypical Chadwick? That his truer métier was comedy? It is impossible to say. Personally, I would rank Chadwick above most of Copland's "mature" American composers. His symphonic sketch *Jubilee* (1897)—the closest thing in music to Winslow Homer's poetic boyhood romps—should be an American staple. "We're still a baby!" Bernstein told his young people in 1958. But he wasn't thinking of American music so much as about himself.

Of all the paradoxes infiltrating the Bernstein story, none is more startling than his sustained advocacy of George Gershwin and Charles Ives in contradiction to his sustained adherence to the standard narrative. Throughout his career, he both performed and derogated Gershwin: "I don't think there has been such an inspired melodist on this earth since Tchaikovsky . . . but if you want to speak of a *composer*, that's another matter." As for Ives: Bernstein thought him "an authentic primitive, a country boy at heart." Bernstein also derided Dvorak's *New World Symphony*; he maintained that the Largo, because pentatonic, was as Chinese as it was American.

The only possible basis for these bizarre opinions was residual ideology. Did Dvorak's Largo become the famous synthetic spiritual "Goin' Home" by coincidence? Did Shostakovich praise *Porgy and Bess* in the same breath as *Boris Godunov* by mistake? Did Ives, while still a Yale student in 1898, manage to write a consummate German lied, "Feldeinsamkeit," by accident? Such intoxicating music as the dissipating sonic aureole concluding Ives's *The Housatonic at Stockbridge* (completed around 1917) demonstrates an aesthetic sophistication as genuine as any to be found within the Copland list. In a 1987 tribute to Ives, Bernstein extolled "all the freshness of a naïve American wandering in the grand palaces of Europe like one of Henry James's Americans abroad." He could not possibly be referring to the Fourth Symphony or *Concord Sonata*; the usable past traversed by these pieces is far more of the New World than the Old.

As for the Ives work that Bernstein most consistently championed: The protean Second Symphony (completed by 1909 and hence predating the beginnings of American music as chronicled by Virgil Thomson) is first cousin not to Grandma Moses, but to *Huckleberry Finn*. In these seminal appropriations of the American vernacular, Ives and Mark Twain transformed hallowed Old World genres—the symphony and the novel—into something new. No less than Twain—or Melville or Whitman—Ives was self-created and improvisational. He echoed Whitman's "blending for all" and Melville's espousal of a rooted "democratic dignity." As for *Porgy and Bess*, its very template, rising prayerfully from tribulation to redemption, is the sorrow song; the long lineage of W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk* is also Gershwin's lineage. Copland's American musical modernists were crippled by a pastlessness of their own devising.

It bears mentioning that Bernstein's Ives repertoire remained surprisingly modest: the Second and Third Symphonies, *Washington's Birthday*, *Decoration Day*, *Central Park in the Dark*, and a few shorter works. In 1987, he announced he would conduct Ives's Fourth Symphony, then changed his mind. Perhaps he felt this sprawling New World invocation, whose spiritual and quotidian ingredients grandly uplift one another, was insufficiently finished. And yet he continued to conduct the tub-thumping Third Symphonies of Copland, Harris, and William Schuman—compared to Ives, ephemeral products of a sanguine, "come of age" America.

That the Bernstein-Copland relationship was also personal was a further complication. "I suppose if there's one

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person on earth who is at the center of my life, it's you; and day after day I recognize in my living your presence, your laugh, your peculiar mixture of intensity and calm," Bernstein wrote to Copland in a 1967 letter. "I hope you live forever. A long strong hug." Bernstein's 1979 Kennedy Center tribute to Copland extolled "the Copland grin, the Copland giggle, the Copland wit and warmth, and width of his embrace." And yet in retrospect Bernstein—who often felt off-center, who craved companionship and hated solitude—was never aesthetically kindred with this most necessary of friends. "Aaron is plain, plain, plain!" he once exclaimed. Bernstein was never plain. And Copland could not possibly have ecstatically identified with Mahler and Tchaikovsky, Sibelius and Shostakovich.

In short: The standard narrative endorsed by Aaron Copland proved a cul-de-sac for Leonard Bernstein. It is one reason that Bernstein never resolved his New World oxymoron. Instead, he escaped his dilemma by decamping to Vienna, where he was lionized more unanimously than he ever had been in New York.

During the Dark Ages of the New York Philharmonic—the music directorship of Zubin Mehta (1978-91)—I would sometimes find myself in the orchestra's offices. I dreaded seeing the photograph of Leonard Bernstein hanging over an elevator. It was an image whose ebullience provoked a piercing sadness and incredulity. Evidently, Bernstein no longer wanted to take charge of his leaderless orchestra. And the orchestra didn't want him. In 1984, Bernstein materialized to conduct part of a program celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Young People's Concerts. Though a film clip of his "Who Was Gustav Mahler?" was shown, Bernstein did not speak. A member of the Philharmonic staff confided to me the reason: Bernstein was "crazy." He could not be "controlled."

His personal turmoil was real enough. Back in 1973, during his televised Norton Lectures, Bernstein had struggled visibly to find his accustomed aplomb. His topic—"Whither music in our time?"—was left unanswered. Sampling Chomskian linguistics, he strained for intellectual credibility. Only the fifth lecture, on "The Twentieth Century Crisis," caught fire. Its message was that the emblematic 20th-century composer was not Schönberg or Stravinsky—the usual suspects—but Mahler, whose attempts to relinquish tonality were reluctant and incomplete and whose nostalgia for past practice was overt and tragic. Mahler's Ninth Symphony (1909), his "last will and testament," showed "that ours is the century of death." That is the "real reason" his music suffered posthumous neglect—it was "telling something too dreadful to hear." It is hard to imagine anyone else making this odd claim.

Having once oversold America, Bernstein abandoned the faith. American popular music, which he had adored for its vitality and inventiveness, had lost its way for him. The demise of the Kennedy White House, in which he had been a frequent guest, tarnished his American dreams. His 1970 fundraiser for the Black Panthers' defense fund was savagely and famously ridiculed by Tom Wolfe as "radical chic." And there was Vietnam. In 1973, Bernstein conducted Haydn's *Mass in Time of War* at the Washington National Cathedral to counter the Nixon inaugural concert a few miles away. The same year, he announced his intention to retire from conducting in order to compose. His letters document ecstasies of fulfillment in alternation with "big, soggy depressions." A dominant topic is his sexuality. His marriage to the actress Felicia Montealegre imploded in 1976 when he left to live with a male lover: She cursed him and predicted, "You're going to die a bitter and lonely old man." When she died of cancer in 1978, Bernstein blamed himself. A 1987 letter alludes to "those ever-decreasing moments when I like myself."

Bernstein leading the Boston Symphony Orchestra in a performance of Mahler's 'Resurrection Symphony' at Tanglewood in 1970

Meanwhile, beginning in the 1970s, Bernstein conducted a series of 77 live recordings with the Vienna Philharmonic. He introduced the orchestra to the symphonies of Mahler. He brought Ives's Second to Munich. And he doubtless absorbed centuries of tradition in return. In the complex transatlantic terrain of "late Bernstein," his composer's gift was a fading component. (The *New York Times* greeted the 1983 premiere of *A Quiet Place*—plainly envisioned as a magnum opus—as "a pretentious failure.") It was in the midst of this cycle of accelerating turmoil and

inconsistency that Bernstein ripened into one of the century's preeminent interpreters of symphonic music, serving the Old World canon he had once sought to supplement. Then his health plummeted. In 1990, he announced his retirement from conducting mere days before dying of a heart attack at the age of 72.

Once, in the 1990s, I had occasion to watch Lukas Foss, a gifted conductor-composer long associated with Bernstein, rehearsing Copland's *El Salón México* with the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Frustrated with the musicians, he finally instructed them to "de-Bernstein" their instincts. They did and produced a memorably lean, tight, and idiomatic performance. By this time, Bernstein's way with the standard narrative works—not to mention his own *West Side Story*, which he had recorded in 1988—was hopelessly out of place. The late Bernstein style combined intensity with massive weight—more slow than fast, more convoluted than straight. In Beethoven, Brahms, Schumann, and Mahler, it invariably produced readings so different from anyone else's that they should have been controversial. They were not.

My own experience of Bernstein the conductor began to peak in 1975 when I heard him lead the New York Philharmonic in Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4: confessional music mounting to maelstroms of pain. I was sitting in the first row, off to the side, and could see the conductor's face and hands in profile. Tchaikovsky's first movement ends wailing with sorrow, screaming with pain. Bernstein's hands were trembling so violently from the emotion that he could not steady them to begin movement two—an Andante launched by an oboe solo marked "semplice, ma grazioso" (*simple, but graceful*). Bernstein let his oboist—the inimitable Harold Gomberg—take over. Gomberg's playing was never "semplice"; he was a personality. Then there is a second theme, a march that mounts to fortissimo. "Più mosso," Tchaikovsky writes: *a little faster*. But Bernstein's march, when it peaked, got slower: A triumphant march. It became the linchpin of his interpretation. The remainder mounted ever higher plateaus of elation. The coda to the finale begins with a breathless quartet of horns—one of which flubbed the passage. I saw Bernstein's entire body wince.

Twelve years later, I attended a Mahler Second with the Philharmonic. Barbara Hendricks and Christa Ludwig were the vocal soloists. The first movement is a funeral march. It contains a seminal passage in which Mahler pounds the music to dust. He writes "very heavy," "slowing down," and "much louder." Bernstein maximized these instructions. The titanic impact would have disfigured any other performance. But the heat was unrelenting. Mahler's second movement, a gentle Ländler, barely survived the Bernstein treatment. After that, he scaled the heavens. There is a recording of this famous performance, but I will never listen it. It could only sound exaggerated; you had to have been there. I wish I could forget the denouement: Lauren Bacall stepping to a microphone to present Bernstein with the "Albert Schweitzer Music Award," a ceremony complete with popping flashbulbs: the artist upstaged by his celebrity.

But my most consummated Bernstein experience was with the Vienna Philharmonic: Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony* at Carnegie Hall in 1979. Beethoven marks the second movement "Scene by the Brook: Andante molto mosso"—*a very fast walk*. Bernstein's tempo was very slow, risking stasis. His reading was also very soft, sometimes on the cusp of silence. The effect was unforgettably hypnotic (no American orchestra plays as sweetly as Vienna's), a sublimation of Beethoven's intended nature picture. I would call it an interpretation belonging neither to the New World or the Old: a limbo of ecstasy.

My own participation in the Bernstein centenary will take the form of a tribute concert celebrating "Bernstein the Pedagogue" at this summer's Brevard Music Festival. My script reprises portions of Bernstein's most self-revealing Young People's Concert, 1958's "What Is American Music?" It began with an inimitable tour de force we will revisit on film: Bernstein talking, playing, and conducting his way through a brisk demonstration of the folk sources that make music "national." After that comes the evolutionary ladder: Chadwick to Gershwin to Harris to Copland. I am adding the finale of Ives's Second Symphony, which in Bernstein's exegesis had no place: Preceding World War I, it simply didn't fit.

The Brevard orchestra will be made up of talented high school students from all over the United States. I will have a full week to instruct and harangue them. The Bernstein story I will share with them is a story of America: its cultural possibilities and impossibilities, its legacies of democratic ardor and racial division, its New World freshness and inexperience, its very identity. What will they make of Dvorak's prophecy? Who are Ives and Gershwin, Copland and Bernstein to them? Unless they, and others like them, can look beyond their formative experiences of Beethoven and Brahms, unless they can embrace the oxymoron Bernstein tackled, the marginalization of classical music in American lives will continue unabated.

At 100, Bernstein remains larger than life, inescapable, archetypal. Partly it's because of the tenacity and creativity with which he challenged past practice in pursuit of an American classical music. Partly it's because his buoyant American energies suffered such public disappointments, such blows to the head and the heart. His iconic story—his charismatic impact, his unrequited quest and poignant fate—will surely galvanize our summer exercise in personal and American self-understanding. ♦

Budget Blunders

The problem is entitlement spending, not appropriations

By James C. Capretta

In March, six months into the fiscal year and after a contentious and prolonged negotiation that included a brief shutdown of the federal government, Republican and Democratic leaders in Congress finally passed a full-year appropriations bill for the federal government—a $1.3 trillion behemoth stuffed with all manner of provisions that ensured the votes to pass it. The legislation provides substantial new funding for just about everything the government does. In particular, Republicans had to agree to large increases in domestic appropriations in order to secure the needed funds for national defense.

After Congress passed the deal, President Trump had buyer's remorse when he heard conservatives condemn the profligate spending, and he briefly threatened to veto it. But the size and expense of this legislation was a foregone conclusion when the president agreed in February to a bipartisan budget bill that raised the caps on appropriated spending by $300 billion over two years. The final bill simply filled in the details of the added spending that the February deal allowed. Although the appropriations bill covers only 2018, and the budget deal that raised the caps is for two years, the bump up in appropriations over the next two years will permanently raise the level of government outlays, adding to the government's borrowing requirements for many years to come.

The deal to raise the caps on appropriated spending, like the bipartisan agreements of the Obama era in 2011, 2013, and 2015, was put together entirely outside of the formal budget process. The negotiation took place behind closed doors among a handful of congressional leaders and key committee chairmen and ranking members, with some input from administration officials. Neither the House nor the Senate had passed a single appropriations bill for fiscal year 2018 before the leadership negotiations began in earnest in January. There was no opportunity for House or Senate members to offer amendments to the negotiated deal or even really to debate what had been put together. Instead, they were presented with a 250-page package—take it or leave it—just hours before they were forced to vote on it. This kind of heavy-handed tactic breeds resentment and frustration, of course, but it also usually works. The budget passed easily with large numbers of votes from both parties because there was no real alternative to it.

ELWOOD H. SMITH

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The spectacle of Congress and the White House agreeing at the last possible minute on a mammoth budget package that received no public scrutiny has become so routine that it is now standard operating procedure. At this point, it would be startling if Congress reverted to anything resembling the formal budget process.

One reason that the "regular order" process has fallen into disuse is the intense polarization of the nation's politics, which has made both parties more and more responsive to the demands of activists and purists. The budget process under current law calls for decisions at regular intervals throughout the year—decisions that could require compromise between the parties to keep the process moving, not to mention a level of transparency on budget estimates that might be uncomfortable for those tasked with assembling the plans.

To avoid these kinds of controversies, leaders in Congress have chosen to set aside the norms of the formal process and postpone all serious decisions on budget matters until the eleventh hour, so that the political pain they encounter for "selling out" in an inevitable year-end compromise is concentrated into a period of days or weeks rather than spread out over months. House and Senate leaders also believe they can force their members to make the compromises needed to run the government only when the alternative is unacceptable (for instance, when a government shutdown is imminent or under way).

The other important reason the regular budget process is followed less and less is that it does not facilitate the kinds of decisions that need to be made to solve the nation's budgetary problems. Republicans, in particular, are frustrated in this regard. They know the primary reason the federal government is running large deficits today and will run even larger ones in the future is the unrelenting growth of entitlement spending. But the current budget process does not make it easy for them to address this fundamental problem.

In 1974, when Congress passed the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act and put in place the modern budget process, more than half of all federal spending (51 percent) still went to so-called discretionary spending, which requires annual funding from Congress. Just 41 percent of the budget was devoted to spending on the big entitlement programs, including Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. Spending on these programs occurs automatically and is not subject to annual decision-making. The remainder of the budget was spent on net interest payments owed on the national debt.

Today, spending on the major entitlement programs represents more than 60 percent of the federal budget, while discretionary spending accounts for just 27 percent of total federal spending.

The growth of entitlement spending will accelerate in the coming years, as the population ages. In 1970, spending on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid equaled 3.6 percent of gross domestic product. Today, spending on these programs has reached 9.8 percent of GDP, and the Congressional Budget Office projects it will grow to 13.7 percent in 2040. The CBO expects the growth in entitlement spending will push federal debt up from 77 percent of GDP today to 150 percent of GDP in three decades. Federal debt amounted to only 39 percent of GDP as recently as 2008.

The budget math is inescapable. It will not be possible to keep the federal government solvent in the future without either serious entitlement reform that lowers long-term spending commitments or a tax increase of a scale that would be unprecedented in the nation's history.

Citing entitlements as the primary source of our budget woes does not mean everything else the government does is necessary and not wasteful. There's plenty of waste in discretionary spending, but the amounts are much less consequential. Moreover, while Republicans have often proposed large cuts in appropriations in budget plans that were never going to be enacted into law, when they are forced to make real decisions on spending for these accounts, their zeal for cuts evaporates. Recent history is instructive in this regard.

In mid-2011, President Obama and then-House speaker John Boehner engaged in a protracted negotiation to seal a "grand bargain" on entitlements and taxes to cut long-term federal deficits. That deal fell apart under pressure from both parties' supporters. So instead of entitlement reforms, they agreed to stringent caps on appropriated spending. These kinds of caps, with unspecified and uncertain consequences for scores of line items in appropriations bills, have always been much easier for Congress to enact than reforms that lower benefits for entitlement program participants. The 2011 deal imposed 10-year spending limits on both defense and nondefense appropriations, producing, on paper, about $1.7 trillion in deficit reduction.

Soon after the caps were enacted into law, both Congress and the president began working to get around them. In bipartisan deals struck in 2013 and 2015, Congress raised the caps. In this year's deal, Congress and the president agreed to increase the caps on defense spending by $80 billion for 2018 and $85 billion for 2019 and for nondefense accounts by $63 billion in 2018 and $68 billion in 2019. Although the current deal is only for two years, it's clear the new spending has set a floor for appropriations in 2020 and beyond. The cumulative effect of these deals has been to wipe away entirely the presumed deficit reduction from the 2011 Obama-Boehner agreement.

The solution to the nation's budget problems will not

be found by searching for $100 million, or even $1 billion, in savings in scores of appropriated accounts. That search should occur, of course, to protect taxpayers from government waste, but rooting out this kind of unnecessary spending will not make even a dent in the combined unfunded liabilities of $49 trillion for Social Security and Medicare.

The current process is biased against a serious examination of entitlements, much less an effort at actual entitlement reform, in several ways.

First, institutionally, both the executive and legislative budget processes are built to provide detailed examinations of appropriated spending, not entitlement programs. The president's budget provides a line-item presentation of every account in the federal government for the coming fiscal year and is geared toward providing the granular account-by-account information needed to build appropriations bills in Congress. The budget process in Congress calls for approving 12 separate appropriations bills each year. This is an all-consuming endeavor that occupies the time and attention of much of the House and Senate for months on end. These are the bills that allow House and Senate members to directly influence the operations of the agencies and the programs they care most about, such as the Department of the Interior or the Environmental Protection Agency. These are important bills and often carry important policy adjustments, but in budgetary terms they are inconsequential in comparison to entitlement spending.

Second, the current budget process has a short-term focus, which only reinforces the disposition of politicians who tend to focus on their upcoming elections. Entitlement reform is necessarily a very long-term proposition. The Budget Act of 1974 requires Congress to consider budget plans covering at least five years. The common practice is for Congress to produce budget plans covering 10 years. These projections are often derided because of course it is not easy to predict what inflation, interest rates, or economic growth will be in 10 years, all of which are important to budget projections. Nonetheless, for Social Security and Medicare, especially, but also Medicaid to some degree, it is not possible to implement major programmatic changes in the short-term, and sometimes even 10 years is not a long enough transition for a new policy. Moreover, the savings from major adjustments to program rules will generally compound over time and grow, often well beyond a 10-year projection.

It is certainly important what the deficit and debt will be in 2018 and 2020, and Congress should work to reduce both. But it is also important what the deficit will be in 2030 and 2040. Indeed, the expectation of large and growing deficits over the medium- and long-term can have effects on economic performance now, by affecting the decisions and investment plans of businesses. While there are many uncertainties in long-term projections, there is little doubt that spending on Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will be much higher in 10 and 20 years if nothing is done to change the programs. Further, to slow spending growth on these programs in 2030 and 2040, it will be important to make changes soon, so that current retirees can be protected from the changes and younger workers have time to adapt to gradual and phased-in adjustments to their future benefits. Looking back, it's clear that if Congress had implemented reforms in the major entitlements in the mid-1990s, as was recommended by two bipartisan panels, including one focused on Medicare, the nation's budget outlook today would be much healthier than it is.

Looking back, it's clear that if Congress had implemented reforms in the major entitlements in the mid-1990s, as was recommended by two bipartisan panels, including one focused on Medicare, the nation's budget outlook today would be much healthier than it is.

A third impediment to serious entitlement reform in the current budget process is the explicit omission of Social Security from budget-cutting legislation. Social Security is officially "off budget," and a rule adopted in the Senate prohibits including any reductions in Social Security spending in what are called "budget reconciliation bills," which have been the primary vehicles for deficit-cutting efforts in recent decades. Social Security has this special status because it is self-financed through payroll taxes paid into the program's trust funds. Requiring program outlays to stay within the limits of program revenue is the presumed check against long-term deficits.

But Social Security's financial condition cannot really be separated from that of the rest of the federal government. Social Security is the government's largest spending program. When program spending exceeds revenue, it drives up the government's need to borrow funds from the private markets. Further, devoting payroll taxes to Social Security limits the ability of policymakers to impose additional taxes on those same taxpayers to pay for other priorities. Reforming Social Security is central to fixing the government's long-term fiscal problem.

It is obvious that the primary barrier to serious entitlement reform remains the political sensitivity of the programs. Political leaders who suggest changes are frequently

subjected to misleading and unfair attacks. But it is also hard to reform these programs because of the complexity of the changes needed to make them financially sustainable over the long-term. There are a few ideas that are simple and straightforward, such as raising the eligibility ages for Social Security and Medicare benefits, but even that idea raises questions about whether the reduction in benefits would be fair across income groups and thus should be partially offset with other changes in benefits. Slowing spending growth on entitlements, however it is done, will be a very complex legislative undertaking.

Could a revamped budget process facilitate serious reform? Given the political sensitivity of the programs, the odds will always be long for entitlement reform. Politicians seem incapable of restraining themselves when they have the opportunity to score cheap political points on this subject at the expense of their opponents. But some changes to the process might help improve the prospects for reform.

One approach would be to build into the budget process an explicit maximum debt level and the requirement of using projections covering a 25-year period. For instance, Congress could pass a law stating that it is the objective of the government to keep federal debt below 60 percent of GDP, as it had been, until recently, throughout the nation's history except during wartime (it is now at 77 percent of GDP). It would not be necessary to reach that goal immediately, but there would be a presumption against consideration of plans that did not put the government on a path toward complying with that goal. Presidents would then be required to make projections of federal debt going out 25 years as part of their annual budget submissions to Congress and to submit recommendations for bringing debt below that level on a gradual basis should the current forecast show debt exceeding the target. CBO would then independently evaluate the president's plan to determine whether it met this goal or not.

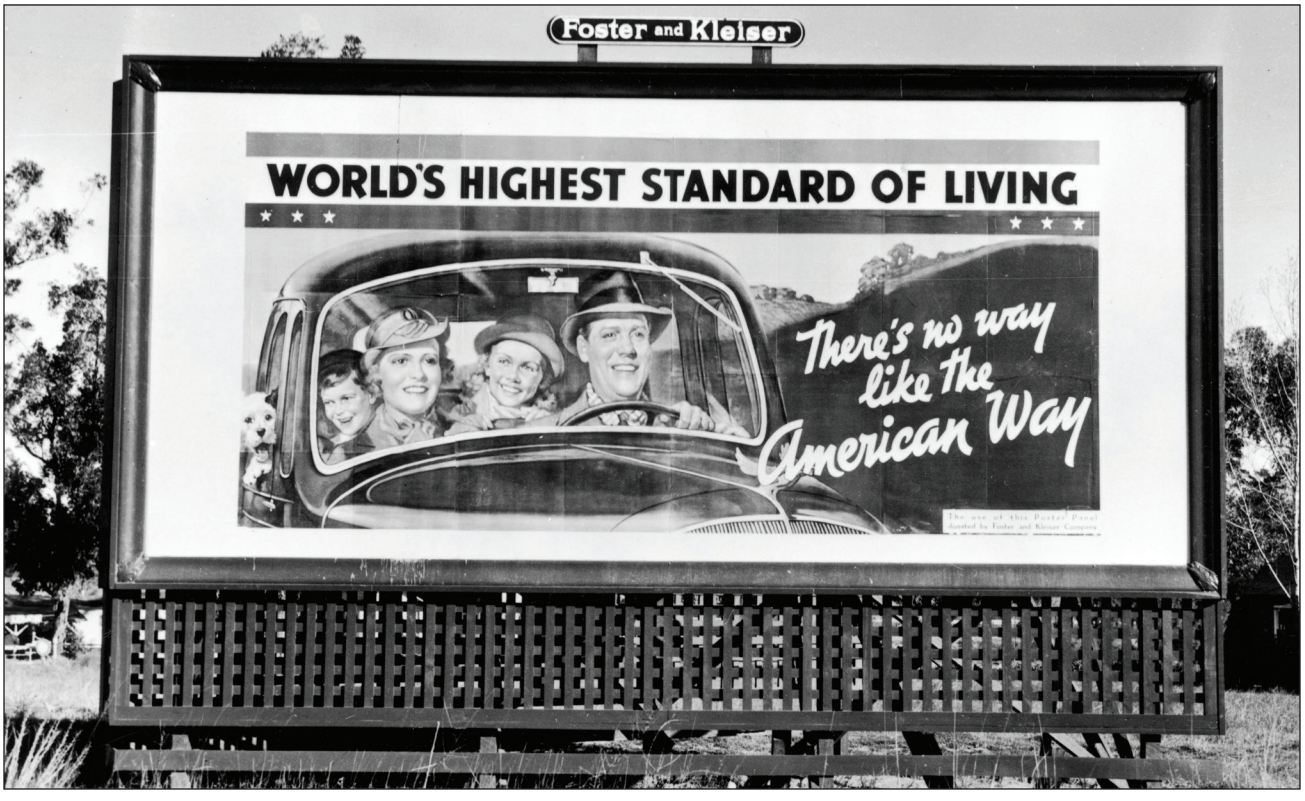
In Congress, the budget rules could establish procedural roadblocks against the consideration of plans that did not result in keeping federal debt below the targeted level, and there would be expedited consideration—meaning no filibuster in the Senate—of plans, including those changing Social Security, that would bring debt back below the targeted level, as estimated by CBO. Further, there could be hurdles placed in front of the consideration of any tax or entitlement legislation until CBO projections show federal debt remaining below the target over the coming 25-year period.

Within the entitlement programs themselves, the goal should be to implement reforms that allow for greater budget control through transparent and easily understood adjustments that could become more automatic over time. Reform plans presented by Republicans in Congress in recent years go very much in the right direction in this regard. Many in the GOP would like to see Social Security become more transparently personalized, so that individual workers could see and understand how much they have paid into the program and what rate of return they will get on their contributions. One could imagine building into Social Security automatic adjustments in the rate of return workers earn, based on what can be financed given demographic and productivity trends.

Departing House speaker Paul Ryan long championed moving Medicare toward a premium-support model, with beneficiaries receiving fixed levels of federal support to help them enroll in a health insurance plan. That model would make it far easier to control spending within Medicare than is the case today, because the government could make adjustments to the level of federal support payable to beneficiaries based on what can be accommodated within the constraints of the federal budget. Among other things, the premium-support payments could be adjusted based on the lifetime incomes of the beneficiaries, with lower payments made to beneficiaries who had relatively high wages when they were in the workforce. In Medicaid, most Republicans favor moving toward fixed per-capita payments to the states as a replacement for today's open-ended system of federal payments covering a percentage of state costs. Again, moving toward transparent, per-capita payments would allow for much easier budgetary control over time.

While dismaying, the latest bipartisan budget deal wasn't unexpected. Congress was never going to live for long within the stringent caps on appropriations set in 2011. For the military in particular, those caps were terribly counterproductive, and the only way to add money to defense was to agree to increase spending on domestic appropriations. What's discouraging is that neither Congress nor the Trump administration made a serious effort to pay for the added spending with any offsets in entitlement programs. The agreement simply added the new spending to the amounts the government must borrow over the coming years to pay its bills.

That needs to change. A fiscal crisis is going to arrive. Federal debt is rising at a rate unprecedented in the nation's history, and the situation will get worse in the coming years because of the growing expense of entitlement programs. The primary obstacle to reform remains the political risk associated with advocating for change. Still, the current budget process isn't making it any easier for Congress to find its way toward a solution. Before it's too late, Congress should rethink the budget process to draw more attention to the actual problem and to develop workable and realistic options for addressing it. ♦



Gratitude and Perpetuation

Jonah Goldberg's big, baggy defense of capitalism.

BY ADAM KEIPER

In his 1964 book *Suicide of the West*, political philosopher James Burnham argued that liberalism—the contemporary strain exemplified by Eleanor Roosevelt, Hubert Humphrey, Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., and Herblock—may not have been directly responsible for the contraction of Western civilization but certainly "motivates and justifies" that contraction, permitting the West "to be reconciled to dissolution."

Burnham's book is worth revisiting chiefly as a specimen of Cold War conservative thought. Although he offered a psychological account of liberalism, linking it to feelings of guilt, he largely eschewed examining its moral and spiritual dimensions, the aspects of political life that animated his fellow Communist-turned-conservative Whittaker Chambers. Many of the specific policies and precepts that Burnham offered as tests for determining whether a person is a liberal have aged badly. And his proclivity for using medical metaphors to describe liberalism—"syndrome," "infected," "encysted"—portends later, lazier polemicists' tendency to pathologize disagreeable views.

Suicide of the West
How the Rebirth of Tribalism, Populism, Nationalism, and Identity Politics Is Destroying American Democracy
by Jonah Goldberg
Crown, 453 pp., $28

Burnham was not hopeful about the outcome of the crisis he saw unfolding; aside from his book's last paragraph, a halfhearted admission that the "final collapse of the West is not yet inevitable," he left little room for optimism.

By contrast, Jonah Goldberg, in borrowing Burnham's title for his own latest book, wants to emphasize that the mortal injury, precisely because it is one we are inflicting on ourselves, can still be averted. "Decline is a choice," he writes. There is still time to unchoose it.

Adam Keiper is Books & Arts editor of The Weekly Standard.

FOTOSEARCH / GETTY

Goldberg's book is a big, baggy, sometimes frustrating, often brilliant combination of intellectual history and political essay. He says that the original manuscript was twice as long as the final product; it certainly should have been much further pruned. But at its best, the book makes a simple, vitally important argument about gratitude and perpetuation. And it synthesizes the research and theories of dozens of sociologists, historians, and economists in a new and helpful way. If *Suicide of the West*—like Goldberg's first book, the bestseller *Liberal Fascism*—comes to be so widely read and debated that it shapes the public understanding of its subject, we will be much better off for it.

We got it good these days, and we oughta appreciate it. This is where Goldberg's argument begins: with gratitude. Ours is an age of unprecedented material prosperity, with more wealth and health, less poverty and hunger, than ever before. The stats and graphs that Goldberg offers to prove this point, mostly collected in a 27-page appendix, are worth marveling over.

Why is it that infant mortality has fallen and crop yields have risen and cancer is more survivable? Ultimately, it's because of capitalism, "the best anti-poverty program ever conceived" and "the most liberating force in human history." The rise of capitalism—and the liberal democratic order that supports it and is supported by it—is such a happy aberration in the history of humankind that Goldberg refers to it throughout as "the Miracle."

The opening chapters of *Suicide of the West* are spent proving just how miraculous the Miracle is by way of describing the long, grim slog that preceded it. "The natural state of mankind is grinding poverty punctuated by horrific violence terminating with an early death," Goldberg writes. Which isn't the same thing as chaos: From the facts of our evolved nature—the differences between the sexes, the biology of human reproduction, our ability to think abstractly—emerge certain ordering tendencies. One of these is tribalism, the tendency to divide the world into "us" and "them." It was once essential to everyday survival; even today, we can work around it but cannot do away with it.

Goldberg takes us on a hundred-page trip from tribalism to aristocracy to nation-states to early capitalism, leaning heavily on the work of Deirdre McCloskey, Douglass North, and Francis Fukuyama—and, to a lesser extent, Steven Pinker, Jonathan Haidt, and *Game of Thrones*. Goldberg doesn't skimp on the tales of war and slavery and torture. (He *does* arguably skimp on the philosophical and artistic achievements of, say, ancient and medieval civilizations.)

The rise of capitalism—and the liberal democratic order that supports it and is supported by it—is such a happy aberration in the history of humankind that Goldberg refers to it throughout as 'the Miracle.'

And then the Miracle came. "It is impossible to authoritatively answer the question of *why*" capitalism arose. Maybe "Christianity was a necessary ingredient." Maybe the scientific revolution was. Maybe the most important factors arose from the "weirdness" of England in the 1700s. Ideas mattered, of course, and Goldberg sometimes refers to the Miracle as the "Lockean Revolution," but he is careful not to overstate the contribution of Locke or any other philosopher.

Goldberg is partial to McCloskey's thesis that shifts in rhetoric—in how people talked about innovation, entrepreneurship, and the economy—were crucial to the Miracle. "Capitalism, like democracy, is talk, talk, talk all the way down," McCloskey says. But if words giveth, words can taketh away. Arguments against liberal democratic capitalism can undo the Miracle. Worse yet, the absence of positive arguments for the Miracle can harm it; neutrality and silence work to capitalism's disadvantage. "Every generation takes the Miracle for granted," Goldberg writes. But liberal democratic capitalism is so unnatural that if it isn't regularly affirmed, it will crumble as human nature reasserts itself.

Here is where the second part of Goldberg's argument comes in. "Recognizing our good fortune is the first step in securing it for posterity"—but only the first step. Gratitude must be accompanied by efforts to protect the fragile, unnatural Miracle.

In the United States the task of defending liberal democratic capitalism is inseparable from the task of defending our political order. Although the Miracle originally emerged as "an unplanned and glorious accident," the American Founders "put it in writing," first in the Declaration of Independence and then in the Constitution. The principles described and embodied in those founding documents contributed to "the greatest run-up in material prosperity of any nation in human history." (Those principles also, "when carried to their moral and logical conclusion, commanded the end of slavery and Jim Crow.")

The challenge of justifying and sustaining American political principles is hardly new in our day. Abraham Lincoln recognized the problem when he was still in his 20s. Speaking to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, in 1838—not long after the last of the Founders had died—Lincoln noted that the direct memory of the revolutionary era and its feelings "*must fade*, *is fading*, *has faded*, with the circumstances that produced it." To perpetuate our political institutions, he argued, we must combine reason and reverence—relying on rational arguments and veneration for the Constitution and for the memory of George Washington. When, a quarter-century later, the philosopher-president alluded at Gettysburg to the Declaration of

Independence, he demonstrated how the work of perpetuation, while ostensibly about the past, gives meaning and direction to the future.

Goldberg examines several threats, historical and present-day, to the perpetuation of American political and economic institutions. In a chapter on the Progressives of a century ago, he explains how they believed, broadly speaking, that it was time to evolve beyond the Founders and their ideas. A chapter on the administrative state shows how the alphabet soup of regulatory agencies, insulated from politics in a way that distorts our constitutional order, contributes to a complexification of life that can especially harm the poor and poorly educated. A chapter on populism—including "Trumpian" populism—rightly links it to demagoguery and the erosion of norms. A chapter on the changing nature of the family is an opportunity to remember that that smallest of social institutions is civilization's first line of defense against the nonstop "barbarian invasion" we call "children." (Goldberg has for the last two decades attributed that gag to Hannah Arendt, although his formulation is, no surprise, much more charming and pithy than Arendt's original.)

The perpetuation of our political and economic order is also threatened by romanticism, Goldberg argues, although the picture here is more mixed. Romanticism never goes away; it is a "pre-rational passion written into the human heart," recurring in different guises as revolts against science, liberalism, capitalism, and other aspects of modernity. People susceptible to the romantic temptation may believe that there were better ways of living together before democratic capitalism or that there are better ways of living together now; they're wrong. Still, Goldberg calls romanticism "the wellspring of most of the great art of the last three hundred years" and discusses some of the ways it suffuses contemporary popular culture—from rock music to monster fiction, from *Dead Poets Society* to *Breaking Bad*. Goldberg's affection for much pop culture keeps him from making the curmudgeonly mistake some conservatives make of writing it off altogether.

Goldberg's discussion of today's neo-tribalism on the left—especially the rise of identity politics and the obsession in schools and corporations with "diversity"—hits familiar alarming notes, although some of the examples he offers are arresting. "I took a look at the course offerings at Yale" in 2015, he writes.

> By rough count, Yale offered at least twenty-six courses on African-American studies, sixty-four courses on "Ethnicity, Race and Migration," and forty-one courses under the heading "Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies." … Meanwhile, I found two courses on the Constitution. A single professor teaches all of the courses on the Founding era: three. As for safe spaces outside the classroom and the dorm, I tallied an Afro-American Cultural Center, a Native American Cultural Center, an Asian American Cultural Center, La Casa Latino Cultural Center, and the Office of LGBTQ Resources. Plus there were nearly eighty organizations dedicated to specific identity groups in one way or another.

The overreach of progressive tribalism, Goldberg warns, is provoking a backlash:

> The perceived reality for millions of white, Christian Americans is that their institutional shelters, personal and national, are being razed one by one. … The grave danger, already materializing, is that whites and Christians respond to this bigotry and create their own tribal identity politics. I don't think the average white American is nearly as obsessed with race, never mind invested in "white supremacy," as the left claims. But the more you demonize them, the more you say that "whiteness" defines white people, the more likely it is white people will start to defensively think of themselves in those terms.

The American melting pot is split open on the left and now cracking on the right.

For most conservative readers, there will be little new here—although putting the familiar subjects of regulation, family, romanticism, and identity politics in the context of the survival of our overall political and economic system may deepen appreciation of these matters' connectedness.

Among the ways that the 1964 *Suicide of the West* has become outdated, perhaps the least significant is the technological. But there are in James Burnham's book a few empirical claims that have been obviated by the march of material progress. For instance, in a brief discussion of population and food he argues along Malthusian lines, based on the facts of fertility and fertilizer, that much of the world's population will inevitably go hungry in the years ahead. He could not have known about the technological transformation of agriculture—the "Green Revolution"—that would make it possible for the world's population to more than double while the average global food supply per person rose considerably.

Jonah Goldberg

COURTESY OF CROWN FORUM

In his own *Suicide of the West*, Jonah Goldberg invites us to speculate about the ways the perpetuation of liberal democratic capitalism may be transformed if technology profoundly alters how we relate to one another, displaces humanity in some vital way, or fundamentally alters human nature itself.

Goldberg discusses the first possibility. "Despite the fact each of us has access to more information in our pockets than any scholar in the world had twenty years ago," he writes, "we don't use it. We drown in information but we starve for knowledge." If perpetuation depends on "talk, talk, talk," surely it matters that the Internet in general

and social media in particular seem to worsen tribalism, contribute to envy, and pollute the public discourse with falsehood. Future changes in the technologies of communication may exacerbate these trends.

Goldberg mentions, too, the second possibility. Advances in computing, robotics, and artificial intelligence may lead to economic displacement. "Creating new sources" of "meaningful, valued work," he writes, "may be one of the most important political and cultural tasks of the next century." (His quick take—that "this is a good problem to have compared to the historical alternatives"—is glib but not wrong.) Meanwhile, developments in pharmacology—think *Brave New World*—and immersive entertainment might challenge capitalism another way. Why should we bother to pursue happiness if we can find it in a pill or a simulation? "The promise of such a society is fool's gold," he writes.

As for the third possibility, of fundamentally transforming what it means to be human: Goldberg does not directly address this matter, but it is worth at least a moment's consideration. In practice, liberal democratic capitalism depends on real human capacities, relationships, and longings; in theory, our American political order arises from self-evident truths about our having been "created equal" and endowed with rights to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." But what if we can radically alter our capacities—our strength, intelligence, memory, lifespan? What if one generation can dictate the traits of the next? What if we can transform the moral constitution of human beings? These possibilities may seem too speculative to discuss meaningfully, but they are all among the ambitions of today's biotech researchers. In the course of posthuman events, we would have reason to worry about a very different kind of "suicide of the West."

Such a future is not inevitable. Nor is the nearer at hand kind of surrender Goldberg warns us away from. If the miracle of liberal democratic capitalism survives into the next generation, a share of the credit will be due to the talk, talk, talk of Jonah Goldberg. ♦

B&A

Evidence for Optimism

You've got to admit it's getting better.

BY PHILIP DELVES BROUGHTON

Compared with the bad old days—as in this 1979 photo of smoggy Los Angeles—air pollution in the United States is decreasing.

BETTMANN / GETTY

It's Better Than It Looks
Reasons for Optimism in an Age of Fear
by Gregg Easterbrook
PublicAffairs, 330 pp., $28

Former presidents aren't supposed to pass judgment on their successors. But after sitting in the rain listening to Donald Trump's inauguration speech, with its talk of "American carnage," George W. Bush spoke for a good chunk of Americans with his timeless aside: "That was some weird s—."

At the time, the weirdness seemed to come down to a breach of etiquette. The duty of presidents is to be solemn and uplifting at their inaugurations, not to channel the Revelation of St. John the Divine. But a year and a half on, we can see the weirdness as part of Trump's strange gift for blunderbussing his way toward uncomfortable truths. America's economy is thriving, but not for all Americans. Crime at a national level continues to fall. But gun violence in Chicago is higher than it has been in 20 years. Between 2000 and 2014, the rate of deaths from suicide in the United States rose from 1 in 9,500 to 1 in 7,700. And specifically among white Americans, over the same period the rate of deaths from suicide and drug and alcohol overdoses combined rose from 1 in 4,400 to 1 in 1,800.

Still, for all the genuine bad news—not to mention the nonstop miserabilism of cable news and social media—it's worth remembering that our air is cleaner than it used to be, our lifespans longer, our food cheaper and better, and our cars impossibly splendid. Yet all we can do is rend our garments and wail.

Gregg Easterbrook took a first hack

Philip Delves Broughton is the author, most recently, of The Art of the Sale: Learning from the Masters About the Business of Life.

at this conundrum in his 2003 book *The Progress Paradox* and takes another swing in his latest, *It's Better Than It Looks*. "As life gets better, people feel worse," he writes. "By 'life gets better' I surely do not mean all aspects of life are better, nor that life is better for every individual. By 'life gets better' I mean that in the contemporary world most people are better off in most ways when compared to any prior generation."

Easterbrook sets out to disabuse readers of any casual pessimism and equip them with enough facts and arguments to silence dinner parties from now till kingdom come. In successive chapters he sets out to show that "granaries are not empty," "resources are not exhausted," "there are no runaway plagues," "Western nations are not choking on pollution," "the economy drives everyone crazy but keeps functioning," "crime and war are not getting worse," and "the dictators aren't winning."

In the second part of the book, he ponders the rise of "declinism" and the dangers of inequality. He ends with a call for us to shake off the gloom and see change as opportunity, not impending calamity.

Every page overflows with facts, statistics, and summaries of academic research. A century ago, 80 percent of people around the globe were illiterate; today, it's around 15 percent. The United States has 21 percent less land under cultivation than it did in 1880, but that land produces six times as much food and fiber. On the first day of the 20th century, "the typical American household spent 59 percent of funds on food and clothing"; by the first day of this century, "that share had shrunk to 21 percent, mainly because the real-dollar price of food and clothes had declined, even as the quality of both increased." In 1929, before the Wall Street crash, the top 5 percent of Americans made 30 percent of the country's pretax income; in 2015, they made 35 percent. Levels of satisfaction vary between America's prosperous coasts and its rusting innards.

Easterbrook is evenhanded in apportioning blame for the dissonance in our public discourse. In his section on climate change, he reports that in 2015 President Obama said he became convinced of the need for global warming regulation because carbon dioxide emissions had caused his daughter Malia to suffer asthma in childhood. The problem is, Easterbrook reports, it's sulfur dioxide that's linked to asthma, not carbon dioxide. And airborne sulfur dioxide, in the years since Malia Obama's birth, has fallen by more than 60 percent. Using the example of his daughter, Obama was trying to nudge along Democratic plans to link carbon dioxide emissions to health issues, which would bring the entire fossil-fuel industry under the regulatory supervisors of the Clean Air Act. Malia's asthma was a canard.

Easterbrook sets out to disabuse readers of any casual pessimism and equip them with enough facts to silence dinner parties from now till kingdom come.

Both Democrats and Republicans are guilty of exaggeration and elisions of fact. In 2016, Easterbrook writes, Trump exploited voters' psychological biases. People base their feelings about their economic situations not on the present but on an anticipated future. "Trump's subliminal message about the economy was, *You can't be sure the future will be good, therefore the present is awful.* This is nonsense, but 63 million voters believed it."

Campaigning for Hillary Clinton, Eric Holder, the former attorney general, warned of a new "Jim Crow" in America. What was the looming threat that had Holder worried? North Carolina's reduction of the early voting period, used by a higher proportion of African Americans than of the general population, from 17 days to 10. "A generation ago, no one in North Carolina could vote early; now a partial reduction in preferential treatment is said to be as horrible as turning police dogs on demonstrators."

In a section on inequality, Easterbrook takes aim at corporations that use words like "sustainability" and "responsibility" but do nothing to live up to them. In 2017, Nike began a major advertising campaign centered on the word "equality." But, Easterbrook writes,

> Nike pays the Indonesian workers who sew the company's sneakers $3 a day, while in 2016 Nike CEO Mark Parker stuffed $48 million into his own pockets. … Hectoring others for what you refuse to do yourself is hypocrisy. Nike took its game up a notch by pretending to believe in social justice.

There is the occasional misfire, unsurprising in a book so rich in detail and observation. On the relationship between Trump's victory and the U.K. Brexit vote, Easterbrook writes that many of those who voted for each were also net recipients of government support. The "2016 instances of American and British areas voting against the sources of their subsidies reflected a desire to have it both ways—people sought to receive money from government while at the same time shaking their fists regarding handouts." It is also possible, however, that rather than simply being confused, these voters would prefer a system in which fewer people, themselves included, require government support. The fact that you receive subsidies doesn't mean you wouldn't prefer a society in which it were easier to stand on your own two feet.

While Easterbrook is unsparing with his tongue-lashings, he is generous with his optimism. If you are worried about the future of driverless cars, he refers us to chess champion Garry Kasparov's observation that people once refused to get into elevators that didn't have operators. Even as the earth warms and populations grow, we are innovating our way to solutions that will make life not just tolerable but better in measurable ways, as we derive energy from new sources and extract more from the resources at our disposal.

Pay attention to history and the reality of our present, Easterbrook writes, and you will see that the world, in its incredible and yet quite ordinary way, "keeps refusing to end." ♦

B&A

Sublime Math

Genius, discovery, and elegance. **BY DAVID GUASPARI**

David Stipp's short book aims to persuade the "math-averse" that "great mathematics is as provocative, beautiful, and deep as great art or literature." His exemplar is *Euler's identity*, which can be written as the gnomic formula $e^{i\pi} + 1 = 0$. Stipp offers to explain what it means, why it's true, and why it is significant as science and as art. The discussion, he says, will take pains to assume no mathematical prerequisites beyond checkbook arithmetic, and he isn't kidding. For example, every algebraic manipulation that crops up is accompanied by a verbal paraphrase (often lengthy). A 101-word footnote on page 15 is devoted to explaining why "x = −1" means the same thing as "x + 1 = 0."

"Euler" is Leonhard Euler, the master mathematician of the 18th century and one of the greatest of all time—also the most prolific. Publication of his collected works, begun in 1911 and ongoing, will total more than 80 large volumes. He is by all accounts an appealing character—a pious family man who, according to one contemporary, could work happily with "a child on his knees, a cat on his back." Euler was generous in his dealings with other scholars, a good teacher, and something of a polymath who, in addition to his native German, knew Latin, Russian, French, and English and published works on mathematics, science, philosophy, and music. He could recite the entire *Aeneid* from memory. Euler began to lose his sight at an early age but blindness seemed if anything to increase his productivity: He worked things out in his head and dictated the results.

The exotic ingredient in Euler's identity is $e^{i\pi}$: π is what you think, the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter; e and i need considerable explaining, as does the use of $i\pi$ as an exponent ("raising e to the power $i\pi$"). Without rehearsing those lengthy explanations it's possible to scan the terrain in which that intellectual adventure takes place.

To begin concretely, but not too helpfully, e is a number a bit greater than 2.7. Like π, it cannot be expressed as a decimal that stops or settles into a repetitive pattern, and it crops up everywhere in mathematics, physics, and engineering (among other places). To go further we must expand our minds to accept the idea of carrying out operations, such as addition, infinitely often. Here's a very simple example: Imagine a stool that stands on a single post that's one foot long. Chop off the post's bottom half (leaving 1/2 foot); chop off half of what's left (so you've now chopped off 1/2 + 1/4, leaving 1/4); chop off half of what's left (you've now chopped off 1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8, leaving 1/8); carry on as long as you like. Any point on the post can be chopped off by carrying on long enough. If one could somehow finish performing all of the infinitely many chops the entire post would be consumed; the seat of the stool would lie on the floor. So it's tempting to say that we can meaningfully add together *all* the infinitely many lengths that were chopped off and that the resulting sum must total the one-foot length that was consumed:

$$1/2 + 1/4 + 1/8 + 1/16 + \ldots = 1$$

(The "…" means "You get the idea; go on like this forever.") One *might* say that, if only to seem mysterious and clever, but why bother? Because deploying infinite operations and manipulating them by something like the ordinary rules of algebra is a powerful way to solve old problems and discover new truths—including truths, like Euler's identity, that don't explicitly refer to infinities. Euler displayed his virtuosity with these methods in *Introduction to the Analysis of the Infinite*, perhaps the most influential mathematics textbook since Euclid's. Another century of work was needed to put them on sound logical footing and avoid lurking fallacies and errors. Meanwhile, Euler's imagination (or chutzpah)—guided by a deep, if not quite infallible, intuition—expanded the boundaries of mathematics.

Coming to grips with i requires overcoming a regrettable piece of terminology too old to change: "imaginary number." i is called "imaginary" because it is assumed, by fiat, to satisfy the equation $i \times i = -1$, even though none of the numbers we're used to—now to be called, by contrast, "real" numbers—can possibly fill that bill: The result of multiplying a negative number by itself, or a positive number by itself, is always *positive*, so can't equal −1. Thus, i is neither positive nor negative, but is still somehow *something*. As early as the 16th century, procedures for solving equations gave

A Most Elegant Equation
Euler's Formula and the Beauty of Mathematics
by David Stipp
Basic, 221 pp., $27

Leonhard Euler, by J.F.A. Darbès

FINE ART IMAGES / HERITAGE IMAGES / GETTY

David Guaspari is a writer in Ithaca, New York.

rise to expressions that, if they meant anything at all, could only denote such "imaginary" entities. They were embarrassments but could not simply be shunned: Faith-based persistence, applying the usual algebraic rules (and replacing $i \times i$, when convenient, with -1), sometimes caused the unwanted expressions to drop out, leaving the "real" answers originally sought. Far from avoiding imaginaries, Euler exploited them with glee, opening up whole new mathematical vistas. Subsequent work has developed a logical foundation for the entire domain of complex numbers, those—such as 2, $3i$, $e+\pi i$—that result from applying the operations of arithmetic to real and imaginary numbers.

What about $e^{i\pi}$? Those who remember high school algebra will recall that e^2 means $e \times e$ (multiply two copies of e), that e^3 means $e \times e \times e$, etc. But this hardly helps make sense of $e^{i\pi}$. What could "$i\pi$ copies of e" possibly mean? Euler proceeds by first finding an infinite sum that gives a formula for computing e^x. That is, it computes e^2 if we replace the infinitely many xs in the formula by 2, e^3 if we replace them by 3, etc. He then *declares* that the meaning of $e^{i\pi}$ is the result of replacing them all with $i\pi$. Which is obvious if you're the sort who can pioneer "analysis of the infinite" and the theory of complex numbers—and can, along the way, extend infinite analysis to complex numbers. Stipp quotes the 20th-century mathematician Mark Kac: "An ordinary genius is a fellow you and I would be just as good as, if we were only many times better. … It is different with the magicians … the working of their minds is for all intents and purposes incomprehensible." Euler was a magician.

It unsettles ordinary mortals to follow rules without an account of what the rules are about, to accept without proof their internal consistency, and to trust that results about the real numbers reached by calculations that detour through the complex domain are true. Stipp's next-to-last chapter sketches a modern representation of complex numbers as points in a two-dimensional plane. The "real" numbers lie along one straight line in that plane; another, perpendicular to it, contains the purely "imaginary" numbers. Arithmetic operations have a simple geometric meaning, as does Euler's identity. Stipp's account of all this seems pitched just right, a few worked examples that give a satisfying sense of how everything hangs together.

The final chapter, called "The Meaning of It All," asks what makes it beautiful. Stipp begins by noting qualities that mathematicians have attributed to beautiful results. From G.H. Hardy, for example, he gets this famous list: seriousness, generality, depth, unexpectedness, inevitability, and economy. Such reflections will help those who already sense beauty in mathematics to articulate their experience; they won't persuade others that beauty is there to be found. But persuasion is not Stipp's aim. His book is not a work of philosophy. What he offers amounts not to an argument but to an experience, especially "the feeling of exaltation that we get from an encounter with an example of our species outdoing itself." He trusts that someone who manages to "get" a beautiful result will recognize a kinship between that experience and the rewards provided by works of other kinds of art. Stipp's prose can be overripe—in Euler's identity, he writes, e, i, and π "react together to carve out a wormhole that spirals through the infinite depths of number space to emerge smack dab in the heartland of integers"—but he gives his reader a good shot at getting hold of something beautiful. ♦

B&A

Feathers and Fancy

A charming Renaissance collection of birdlore and beauty. BY DANNY HEITMAN

On this side of the Atlantic, King George III will always be remembered as the English monarch who presided over the loss of the American colonies. But in smaller matters of state, George had a few successes. In 1762, 14 years before the Declaration of Independence, he acquired a large part of the Paper Museum—a stunning assortment of pictures, many about nature, assembled by the Italian scholar and arts patron Cassiano dal Pozzo. The art remains in England today, preserved in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle.

Cassiano's collection, which includes some of the Renaissance's finest visual studies of birds, is a crown jewel of Britain's cultural holdings, although few can see it. *Pasta for Nightingales*, which draws on ornithological writings and pictures commissioned by Cassiano, is an attempt to give his legacy a wider audience.

Pasta for Nightingales
A 17th-Century Handbook of Bird-Care and Folklore
by Giovanni Pietro Olina
translated by Kate Clayton et al.
Yale, 133 pp., $22.50

The book is essentially a clever rebranding of the *Uccelliera*, or *The Aviary*, a practical guide to birds ostensibly written by Giovanni Pietro Olina and first published in 1622. Cassiano, who supported the work, also commissioned artist Vincenzo Leonardi to create most of the book's illustrations, which became part of his collection.

"Modern scholars view Olina, who worked in Cassiano's household, more as the collator of the *Uccelliera* than its sole author," Helen Macdonald—of

Danny Heitman, a columnist for the Baton Rouge Advocate, *is the author of* A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House.

The hoopoe (above) 'has on its head a Tuft of feathers, which it constantly raises and lowers, unfurling and furling them as it pleases.' Many people keep kingfishers (opposite) 'dead and dried, affixed in their Chambers for their beauty, and some make of them a master of the storehouse, being of the opinion that they protect the stuff therein from becoming wormy or moth-eaten.'

H Is for Hawk fame—tells readers in a brief foreword. "Some of the book was based on an earlier work by Antonio Valli da Todi, but it is likely that much of it was written by Cassiano himself."

The new title of *Pasta for Nightingales*, inspired by a recipe within for a special dish intended to encourage nightingales to sing, is obviously more commercially appealing to modern readers than what, in full, it was first called: *The Aviary: Discourse on the Nature and Distinctive Characteristics of Diverse Birds, and in particular of those which sing, together with the way of catching them, recognizing them, raising them and maintaining them*.

That long subtitle, unfurling like the prologue to a stage play, underscores the Renaissance grasp of language as theater, a sensibility elaborated by the text. The team of translators is alert to the peculiar charms of its prose, which frequently uses capitalization and italics to dramatize key points in its ornithological descriptions.

The tone here suggests the breathless urgency of gossip—a hint that the vague authorship of the *Uccelliera* is perhaps ultimately beside the point. Whatever its origin, it seems not so much the product of a single mind than the collective voice of local lore—the bird banter of 17th-century Italy transcribed.

"It feeds upon WORMS, Ants and *caterpillars*, and upon GRAPES in their season, with which it sates itself in such wise, that sometimes it finds itself dazed and *half-drunk*," we learn of the hoopoe. "To remedy this, as some have written, it takes in its mouth a frond of the herb *Adiantum*. … Innumerable *falsehoods* have been written by the Arabs of this bird, such as saying, that by BATHING the TEMPLES with its blood, one sees in sleeping *marvellous* things; that the eye carried upon one's person cures from LEPROSY; that its skin attached to one's head takes away the pain from the same, and various other *incredible* things."

That remark about Arabs suggests a distinction between those regarded as superstitious and supposedly more enlightened Europeans. In its original form, notes Macdonald, the book was intended, among other things, as "a product of the scientific revolution: a book that rejects many previously unquestioned notions about birds, setting store instead on the 'exact knowledge of Nature that might be obtained by long observation and contemplation.'"

Whatever its pretensions as a scientific treatise, *Pasta for Nightingales* seems more memorable for its fancy than its facts.

We're told that the meat of the francolin is good for treating kidney stones, that robins suffer from epilepsy, that feeding nightingales pasta laced with pine nuts, along with saffron in their drinking troughs, will tease them to sing out of season.

The elusiveness of birds, their playful reluctance to surrender all of their secrets to the solemn speculations of man, informs not only the text of *Pasta for Nightingales* but its illustrations. Macdonald praises Leonardi's watercolors for their verisimilitude, the way "the astonishing vivacity of the real bird is miraculously recreated." The pictures in *Pasta for Nightingales* do suggest a kind of life, though one not entirely of this world. One cannot help but smile at the hoopoe's vivid headdress and smug expression, his crown grander than anything King George himself might have worn. A blackbird seems almost as stylized as a hieroglyph—its darkness, deep as space, achieved by layering watercolor over black chalk. A kingfisher, vivid blue and gold, stands in resolute profile, its long beak like a drawn sword.

But Leonardi's images lack the painstaking anatomical exactitude that would define John James Audubon's work some two centuries later. His pictures, such as those of the citril finch and Eurasian blackcap, have a spectral quality—strikingly present, yet just out of grasp.

The *Uccelliera* assumed an audience of Romans interested in capturing and cultivating wild birds for pleasure. Yet Leonardi's pictures—and, to a lesser degree, the accompanying text—convey a subtler, subversive message: Birds can be lured and fed, snared and studied, drawn and painted, but they can never, fully, be *ours*.

Even so, the prevailing pleasure of *Pasta for Nightingales* is its pursuit of a cheerful domestic intimacy with its subject, regardless of the obstacles. The approachable scale of this newly

conceived adaptation of the *Uccelliera* helps. Lavishly illustrated bird books tend to be coffee-table editions as wide, heavy, and solemn as tombstones. *Pasta for Nightingales*, by contrast, is hardly bigger than a best-selling novel, a format that forces a few compromises. The pictures aren't reproduced at their actual size, nor are the original dimensions indicated. Readers interested in that level of detail—or those who want to get some flavor of the book—can consult the Royal Collection's website.

To simulate the material's antiquarian origins, *Pasta for Nightingales* is printed on heavy paper the color of parchment. It's a beautiful touch, though the brownish tint makes the text harder to read. One occasionally squints a little at the passages, reminded that revisiting the distant past takes some effort.

They initially seem like quaint period oddities, these long-gone Italians feeding pasta to nightingales. But merchandise offered to today's backyard birders—peanut-butter treats for woodpeckers, designer fruit and nut mixes for songbirds, suet savory enough for humans to eat —is at least as extravagant, if not more so.

We are, centuries later, still pretty much searching for what Cassiano dal Pozzo was after—a little music, a bit of beauty, the chance to witness the ineffable before it takes flight. ♦

B&A

Sound, Sense, and Self

The challenges of teaching poetry.

BY CHRISTOPHER J. SCALIA

Teaching poets is no easy task. For one thing, it demands an especially keen awareness of a student's feelings—sensitivity was important in creative writing courses long before these days of microaggressions and snowflakes—as well as an air of authority. Even more than in other courses, the instructor must be both caring and critical, diplomatic and discriminating. And students often believe that because art is subjective, anything goes. (Good authors, too, who once knew better words now only use four-letter words writing poems.) The best teachers will delicately destroy that misconception.

A Primer for Poets and Readers of Poetry
by Gregory Orr
W.W. Norton, 325 pp., $15.95

Gregory Orr manages to transfer that balancing act to the page in *A Primer for Poets and Readers of Poetry*. Author of a dozen books of poetry, former poetry editor of the esteemed *Virginia Quarterly Review*, founder of the University of Virginia's MFA program in writing, and a professor for over 40 years, Orr achieves a tone that is simultaneously experienced and experimental, authoritative and welcoming, unpretentious and unpatronizing. (True, he may be trying too hard with three long quotations from Jay-Z, but readers should always be grateful when a baby boomer writes a book about poetry that mentions Bob Dylan only once.) And although the book presents itself as an introduction, experienced poets will also find in its pages ideas and pronouncements that provide a new perspective on their craft. Unfortunately, Orr's dominant interest in one type of poetry, the lyric, deprives aspiring poets of important lessons and skills.

Orr explains that poetry entails the gathering of fragmented ideas or experiences and crafting them into something coherent. We all have what he calls "an active ordering power—something in us that not only actively seeks coherence but has the power to produce it." Yet Orr also encourages poets to flirt with disorder, which he illustrates with the metaphor of a

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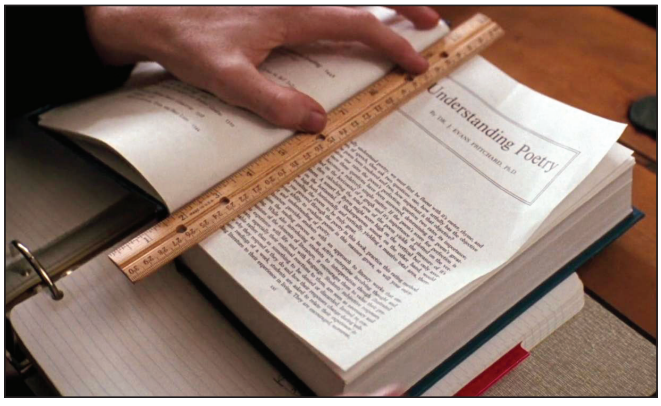
threshold: "that place in poetry where disorder and order meet" or "the place where order passes over into disorder." A poet's threshold is the result of individual temperament and experience, and "in order to write well, a poet must locate and write from this threshold." At the same time, testing and expanding the boundary between order and disorder is crucial to developing creatively.

Orr also presents helpful categories of language based on the different ways poets use words. He identifies naming (words to identify things), singing (words as sound), saying (words to make claims), and imagining (figurative language). These categories are poetry's basic ingredients, applied in different measures by different poets. Singing appropriately gets the most attention here, as it encompasses the techniques and effects of poetic sound and rhythm. Alas, Orr makes clear in the introduction that he doesn't have "a lot to say about meter and metrical scansion of poems." He writes elsewhere, "Scholars and professors sometimes focus a bit too much on meter when they discuss poetry." In my past life studying and teaching both literature and creative writing, I knew of precisely one professor who could be credibly accused of overemphasizing meter: me. And I am not convinced that meter is any more difficult to teach or comprehend than some of the other sonic elements Orr discusses, such as duration and vowel pitch. Still, despite the omission of meter, Orr's discussion of singing will encourage young writers to listen to their poems, and that's a good thing.

Orr is fond of using binaries to illustrate points and even occasionally invites readers to place individual poems on a scale of, for example, narrative and lyric, order and disorder. These oversimplifying scales may tempt readers to quote Robin Williams's character in *Dead Poets Society* when he encounters J. Evans Pritchard's graph of excellence: "Rip it out! Rip!" Nonetheless, the technique helps poets make sense of what they read and what they hope to write. In one particularly sharp chapter, Orr compares two distinct approaches to poetry he calls engagement and ecstasy. The poet of engagement seeks to connect with the world through language that names and a form that narrates. Poets who seek ecstasy wish to escape through lyric and the language of singing and saying. Robert Frost is a poet of engagement; Wallace Stevens is a poet of ecstasy.



'Rip it out! Rip!'

Less helpful is Orr's view of poetry as a way of dealing with "trauma" and "crisis." He once told NPR: "I believe in poetry as a way of surviving the emotional chaos, spiritual confusions and traumatic events that come with being alive." This emphasis on trauma is understandable. Orr has suffered terrible pain: As a 12-year-old, he killed his brother in a hunting accident; as a young man involved in the civil rights movement, he was arrested and brutally beaten by the police. Approaching poetry as a way of managing trauma has been productive for his own writing; knowing that is helpful for understanding his work.

I'm skeptical, though, that it would be as beneficial for the many aspiring writers who, thank God, have not experienced the trauma he has. Perhaps this is why Orr broadens the meaning of crisis to encompass even "something positive (romantic love, adventure, joy, wonder)"—that is, any powerful emotional moment or experience is a sort of crisis. The downside to this expanded definition is that it increases the possibility of unbearable melodrama from undergraduate poets. And strangely, toward the end of the book, Orr re-narrows his definition by distinguishing crisis from "wonder, love, loss."

This attention to personal trauma is consistent with Orr's focus on self-expression at the expense of exploring the beliefs and identities of other people. This is the first poetry guide I've read that uses Adam Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* to introduce the concept of empathy. Strangely, though, rather than using Smith's notion of "sympathetic identification" to encourage poets to expand their sympathies, Orr applies it to the reader's empathy for a poetic speaker. At one point, Orr recommends that poets "focus attention … on some thing *other* than ourselves—another person, a creature, even a tree"—but the goal of even that exercise is to help writers "become more conscious of our own feelings and attitudes."

A telling example of Orr's overemphasis on the poet's own consciousness comes when he discusses John Keats's famous description of "poetical Character." Orr explains that "Keats loved the ability to lose himself in other identities—he called the poet a chameleon." True enough. Yet whereas Keats used this metaphor to describe a type of poet (not, as Orr implies, all poets), Orr adapts it to encourage us to lose our identities as we read, "to identify with the poem." This subtle reorientation of Keats's letter puts the burden of sympathetic imagination on the reader, while the writer has only to attend to self-expression.

An exception to Orr's urge to look inward occurs toward the end of a chapter on lyric and narrative, when he proclaims that "story gives us an awareness of self and other" and encourages poets to perform a writing exercise in which they "speak from other characters' viewpoints," which he calls "a thrilling freedom." Precisely—which is a good reason young poets should be encouraged to do it more often. ♦

TOUCHSTONE PICTURES

Godard Exposed

Biopic bites French cinema darling. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

In 1941, Preston Sturges wrote and directed a movie called *Sullivan's Travels* about a successful director of cinematic fluff who longs to make a serious artistic statement called *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* "I want this picture to be a commentary on modern conditions!" he tells the head of his studio. "But with a little sex," the studio chief cautions. For complicated reasons, Sullivan ends up a falsely convicted felon working on a chain gang. One night he and his fellow convicts are allowed to see a Mickey Mouse short. He watches as they howl with joy and learns at that moment the great value of his supposedly trivial work. "There's a lot to be said for making people laugh," Sullivan concludes. "Did you know that's all some people have?"

The French writer-director Michel Hazanavicius, who won an Oscar for *The Artist* in 2011, has just come out with an astonishingly nervy update of Sturges's indelibly wonderful film. It's called *Godard Mon Amour*, and it is nothing less than a *Sullivan's Travels* in which nihilistic Maoism takes the place of Depression-era poverty. Its subject is the writer-director Jean-Luc Godard, who was arguably the most celebrated filmmaker in the world in the 1960s.

Unlike his rivals for international fame—Ingmar Bergman, Federico Fellini, and François Truffaut—Godard combined radical techniques in cinematic storytelling with the unutterably tiresome Gallic propensity for expressing deep existential dilemmas in endless multisyllabic chatter. Then he threw in *épater-les-bourgeois* critiques of capitalism and democracy. A heartthrob was born.

Hazanavicius has taken an autobiographical novel by Godard's second wife Anne Wiazemsky and turned it into a satirical disembowelment of Godard as a man and an artist—using Godard's own inventive style to mock him. We see Godard (played by Louis Garrel) get into a fistfight with an advertising man at a Paris cocktail party, but one of the movie's most devastating points is that every fresh trick Godard brought to the screen simply became another tool in the Madison Avenue TV-commercial arsenal.

STUDIOCANAL

Louis Garrel and Stacy Martin

Godard Mon Amour is the story of how Godard's restless and dissatisfied spirit could not find meaning in the fact that he was making movies people adored—or the fact that he had an adoring and adorable wife who was devoted to him. Instead, he turned to the violent revolutionary rhetoric of Maoism to find new purpose. In Hazanavicius's telling, this ended Godard's life as an artist and turned him into a person impossible to love or even like. Godard is a comic character here whose involvement in demonstrations inevitably ends with him getting his glasses broken—something that really happened repeatedly to Godard, according to his biographer Colin MacCabe.

Still an idol at 87, Godard is enraged by the movie, and fanboy film critics around the world have been clucking their tongues with Mrs. Grundy-like disapproval at Hazanavicius's biting reduction. "This version of Godard must choose between cinema and politics, a predicament that would be more credible if Mr. Hazanavicius had a credible conception of either term," writes a deeply disapproving A.O. Scott in the *New York Times*. In the *New Yorker*, Richard Brody tut-tuts that Hazanavicius "toys with their lives as if seeking to dominate them, to vampirize their experience, their talent, and even their status—all of which lies in stark contrast with the self-revealing, self-deprecating, confessional power of Godard's films."

Their pomposity exposes their folly. First, since when does anyone need a "credible conception" of the "cinema"? And contra Brody, Godard's films demonstrate nothing if not their maker's self-regard—an amour-propre that goes beyond anything else in the history of "cinema." (Oh, and by the way: Colin MacCabe is Godard's greatest admirer but notes nonetheless that Godard's standing as a thinker is compromised in part by the fact that his "reading often stopped at the table of contents.")

It is risible to see a man whose entire career was built on supposedly revolutionary impiety become a plaster saint. As one of the founders of the so-called New Wave, Godard rose to prominence declaring that the classically stately style of French cinema was an artistic mausoleum. But when it comes to impiety, it turns out that Godard has nothing on Michel Hazanavicius, whose movie playfully but systematically deflates the pretensions of a supposedly Great Man—and whose previous work offered no hint he possessed this kind of cold-eyed satirical bravery.

Perhaps Hazanavicius's disgust with Godard stems in part from Godard's stomach-churning anti-Semitism. He includes a scene in which Godard stands during the May 1968 student uprising and tries inarticulately to formulate a theory about how the Jews have become the Nazis. The kids in the room squint in disbelief (this is probably retroactive wish fulfillment on Hazanavicius's part) while his wife (the enchanting Stacy Martin) rolls her eyes in exasperation. *Godard Mon Amour* is an amazing piece of work that says a man who became world-famous by declaring that the emperor had no clothes … himself had no clothes. It's *Sullivan's Travels* in which Sullivan doesn't learn a damned thing. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

"The RealClearPolitics Fact Check Review is an initiative to explore how the flagship fact-checking organizations operate in practice (as opposed to their self-reported descriptions), from their claim and verification sourcing to their topical focus to just what constitutes a 'fact.'"

—Real Clear Politics, *April 9, 2018*

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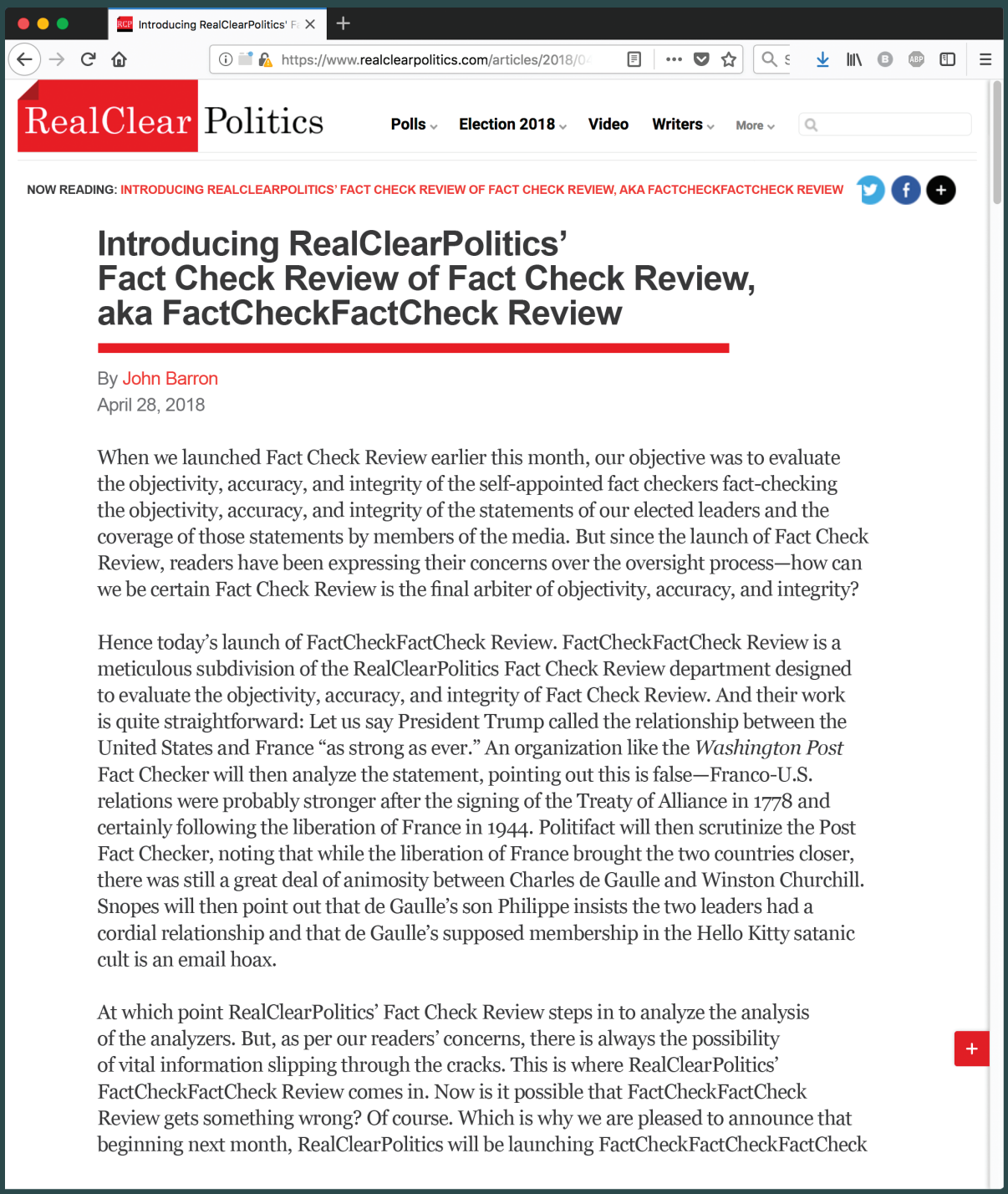

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NOW READING: INTRODUCING REALCLEARPOLITICS' FACT CHECK REVIEW OF FACT CHECK REVIEW, AKA FACTCHECKFACTCHECK REVIEW

Introducing RealClearPolitics' Fact Check Review of Fact Check Review, aka FactCheckFactCheck Review

By John Barron
April 28, 2018

When we launched Fact Check Review earlier this month, our objective was to evaluate the objectivity, accuracy, and integrity of the self-appointed fact checkers fact-checking the objectivity, accuracy, and integrity of the statements of our elected leaders and the coverage of those statements by members of the media. But since the launch of Fact Check Review, readers have been expressing their concerns over the oversight process—how can we be certain Fact Check Review is the final arbiter of objectivity, accuracy, and integrity?

Hence today's launch of FactCheckFactCheck Review. FactCheckFactCheck Review is a meticulous subdivision of the RealClearPolitics Fact Check Review department designed to evaluate the objectivity, accuracy, and integrity of Fact Check Review. And their work is quite straightforward: Let us say President Trump called the relationship between the United States and France "as strong as ever." An organization like the *Washington Post* Fact Checker will then analyze the statement, pointing out this is false—Franco-U.S. relations were probably stronger after the signing of the Treaty of Alliance in 1778 and certainly following the liberation of France in 1944. Politifact will then scrutinize the Post Fact Checker, noting that while the liberation of France brought the two countries closer, there was still a great deal of animosity between Charles de Gaulle and Winston Churchill. Snopes will then point out that de Gaulle's son Philippe insists the two leaders had a cordial relationship and that de Gaulle's supposed membership in the Hello Kitty satanic cult is an email hoax.

At which point RealClearPolitics' Fact Check Review steps in to analyze the analysis of the analyzers. But, as per our readers' concerns, there is always the possibility of vital information slipping through the cracks. This is where RealClearPolitics' FactCheckFactCheck Review comes in. Now is it possible that FactCheckFactCheck Review gets something wrong? Of course. Which is why we are pleased to announce that beginning next month, RealClearPolitics will be launching FactCheckFactCheckFactCheck

the weekly Standard
May 7, 2018