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## The Scientific Delusion

Lots of terrible political ideas  
come cloaked in a white lab coat

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

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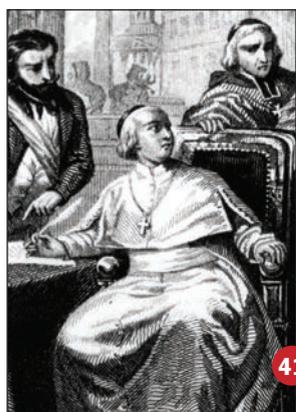
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COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

# 'If You Want to Stay Out of Trouble'

On April 26, Sadiq Khan, the mayor of London, threatened to organize protests against President Trump on Twitter: "If he comes to London, President Trump will experience an open and diverse city that has always chosen unity over division and hope over fear." He'll also see, the mayor boasted, that they "hold their liberal values of freedom of speech very dear." We understand the mayor's angst about a Trump visit, but he might bear in mind that the Donald is from New York, a place where openness and diversity are not unknown.

We wonder, though, just how dearly the mayor's countrymen hold those "liberal values of freedom of speech." Three days before Khan posted his tweet-boast, the North Yorkshire Police tweeted out a grainy photo of an older gentleman making a rude gesture at a traffic camera. The police attached this warning: "Top tip: If you want to stay out of trouble, don't do what this driver did and swear at our mobile safety cameras while driving past in a car fitted with a laser jammer. Today he's beginning 8 months in jail for perverting the course of justice."

Even for an illegal laser jammer, eight months in jail plus shaming on social media sounds like a headline out of Singapore. As one might expect in



*He fought the law, and the law won.*

the age of Twitter, the North Yorkshire Police force brought enormous and condign invective on itself for its draconian conception of justice, but that's of little comfort to Timothy Hill, the now world-famous gesturer languishing behind bars.

That same day, April 23, British courts also decided that a Scottish comedian who goes by the *nom de Internet* "Count Dankula" was guilty of a hate crime and fined him £800 (\$1,100)

for uploading a YouTube video of his girlfriend's pug doing a Nazi salute. Count Dankula has already raised over £162,000 to bankroll his appeal.

Far more consequential was an English judge's decision, in consultation with doctors at a hospital in Liverpool, to deny a plea by the parents of terminally ill 23-month-old Alfie Evans to take him to Rome for treatment. The little boy's treatment was stopped, and he died a few days later. The case drew international outcry and moved locals to protest at the Alder Hey Children's Hospital in Liverpool. Again, though, the local cops were on the case. The Merseyside Police issued a statement on April 25 that "social media posts which are being posted in relation to Alder Hey and the Alfie Evans situation are being monitored and may be acted upon."

Jailed and shamed, punished with a stiff fine for a YouTube video, threatened for posting complaints about a grave injustice . . . Great Britain is a marvelous place with an ancient and honorable history, but it was perhaps not the best week to boast of its liberal values. ♦

## The Right, Reduced

The above-named Alfie Evans was the subject of a curious work of analysis in the *Washington Post* on April 28. The headline: "How Alfie Evans Became the Latest Weapon in the Conservative Attack on Universal Health Care." The piece, by Ben Zdencanovic, purports to explain that conservatives have long misrepresented data in an effort to discredit nationalized health care and in particular Britain's National Health Service. Leave the writer's argument aside, though. What was remarkable about the piece was the lede: "This week, U.S. conservatives seized on the case of Alfie Evans, a 2-year-old British child who died Saturday from a progressive neurodegenerative disease

that had destroyed most of his brain."

Who are these "U.S. conservatives," we wondered? In the 1,100-word piece, we counted exactly two: Ted Cruz and Donald Trump.

We're happy to grant Zdencanovic the license journalists traditionally afford themselves, summed up in the old maxim *One is an example, two is a coincidence, three is a trend*. But he only offers two "U.S. conservatives," not even a trend. Actually only one, since Trump—assuming he's a conservative—didn't say anything about Alfie Evans but only tweeted about the ills of nationalized health care back in February. So "U.S. conservatives" are just Ted Cruz.

Another piece caught our attention for the same reason, this one in the *New York Times* by culture reporter

Joe Coscarelli. The headline: "On the Right, Kanye West Is Embraced as a Pop Ally."

Really? THE SCRAPBOOK read several reactions by conservatives to Kanye West's newfound appreciation for Donald Trump—one of them appeared in last week's issue of this magazine—but none could be described as an "embrace" of rapper West. Never mind. Coscarelli assures his readers that West's opinions "have been hailed by those who have long seen the entertainment world as oppressively liberal"; this was "the right latching on to Mr. West's statements."

So who were the people making up "the right"? We counted five: former Fox News host Bill O'Reilly; current Fox News commentator Jesse Watters; Donald Trump himself; the

NORTH YORKSHIRE POLICE

president's son, Donald Trump Jr.; and "Charlie Kirk, the founder of Turning Point USA, a conservative student movement." It seems like cheating to count the elder Trump, since he could hardly be expected to express ambivalence when someone tweets nice things about him, and Trump Jr.'s opinion is similarly skewed. But we'll let it slide.

So "the right," in the opinion of the *Times's* culture reporter, is fairly represented by Donald Trump and his eldest son, a pair of Fox News personalities, and someone we've never heard of. If we thought that was the American right, we'd hate us too. ♦

## 'Minus the Physical Exertion'

Kids used to goof off by playing video games instead of doing their homework. Today, Junior might want to hone those gaming skills—some colleges are now trying to recruit "athletes" in what are euphemistically called "e-sports."

More than 60 colleges have joined something called the National Association of Collegiate Esports. It seems video games have become so collaborative and creative that they, along with every other human endeavor, are now worthy of university nurturing. The director of e-sports at Robert Morris University in Chicago told *Fortune* last year: "Video games have evolved into nuanced, technical activities. That's no different than if you have a basketball team of super-skilled point guards. It's relatable in any way—minus the physical exertion."

Last month, Ashland University in Oregon became the first college in the country to offer scholarships—up to \$4,000—to students who excel at the popular interactive teen video game *Fortnite*. The point of the game is to amass weapons such as assault rifles, shotguns, and rocket launchers, then shoot and kill opponents until you're the last one standing.

Of course, these institutions aren't stupid enough to think video-gaming is a sport. Why are they doing it then? Our guess: to snag tuition-paying students. A year at



Ashland University will cost you around \$30,000. If the school can entice a few gamers to fork over \$26,000, even if it's for just a year, that works out nicely for everybody but the gamers' parents.

Whatever else comes of e-athletics, please, let's not create any new sports. That debate belongs with ping-pong, NASCAR, and bowling. ♦

## On the Cutting Edge, as Always

Big news from the publishing world. As print journals search for ways to adapt to evolving attitudes and new technologies, the *New*

*York Times Magazine* has taken a bold step. The *Times Magazine* has been edited since 2014 by Jake Silverstein, formerly editor of the *Texas Monthly*, who upon joining the *Times* promised "the kind of long-form impactful [sic] journalism that has made the magazine one of the most influential publications throughout its history."

His latest bold and impactful move isn't about long-form journalism, though. He's made the poet Rita Dove the magazine's poetry editor. Why? Because what readers in 2018 want more than anything is *more poetry*.

In Silverstein's defense, Dove is the recipient of almost every literary approbation known to man—she's won a Pulitzer, she's been the poet



## One Happy Family

When it comes to restaurants, my wife Kate and I have much in common. We love a classic steakhouse, elegant French, our neighborhood Thai spot, spicy Indian, sushi, and Vietnamese. But over the years, one thing has become apparent: She is not the biggest fan of Chinese food. And I am, although “fan” might not go far enough in describing my devotion to the cuisine.

Growing up in Jersey, I’d go with my family about once a month to a place called New Peking. Their pork spareribs had that wonderful red glaze, the dumplings in the wonton soup were meaty, and the egg rolls were large and thoroughly deep fried (the kind with tiny bubbles on the skin). We’d also make frequent trips to New York City and inevitably have lunch in Chinatown. These were often dingy basement joints on Mott or Canal Street. Sometimes you’d hear a hacking cough coming from an unseen cook in the kitchen. And yet I have only fond memories of these places and the food—like sampling tiny snails in their shells, covered in a savory brown sauce. (The brown sauce is essential.)

Whenever we’d go on vacation, my family always searched out Chinese food. It became a quest. In Mazatlán, Mexico, we discovered a hole in the wall where the owner walked around swatting flies. At least two people became ill after that dinner. But thank goodness we found that Chinese restaurant!

In college, I fell in love with a place called Blue Diamond (the original name was Good Ho). To this day I have yet to find a General Tso’s chicken as perfect as theirs—they only used chicken breast pounded flat.

During my sophomore year, I gave up Blue Diamond for Lent. It was one of the toughest Lenten sacrifices I’ve ever made. During my year studying abroad in Vienna, a friend and I would make weekly trips to a Chinese restaurant down the street (the fare was mild, in deference to the Austrian palate). But I also went to a separate Chinese establishment once a week—by myself.



My wife, on the other hand, was raised in Connecticut and recalls only one time going out for Chinese. Early in our marriage, we went to Oriental Gourmet, located in a nearby strip mall. Kate opened the menu and was immediately overwhelmed. I, on the other hand, knew the routine: Order a vegetable, a main dish with beef, pork, or chicken (or all three in a Happy Family), and a starch—either noodles or fried rice.

Kate’s main complaint is that the cuisine is too greasy and, obviously, unhealthy. It’s a valid point. The Center for Science in the Public Interest warns that “Chinese restaurant food is loaded with salt and—if you’re not careful—delivers a load of calories,

thanks to its oils, noodles, and deep-fried batter or breading.” Orange beef supposedly contains two days’ worth of sodium. As for fried rice, CSPI asks, “Why blow three-quarters of a day’s calories on four or five cups of salted white rice, oil, and meat sprinkled with vegetable bits?” My answer: because it’s delicious.

Americans have always had a craving for Chinese. The earliest Chinese restaurants popped up in California with the arrival of thousands of immigrants from China following the 1849 Gold Rush and during the building of the Transcontinental Railroad in the 1860s. By 1896 there was a “chop suey craze.” In *Ten Restaurants That Changed America*, Paul Freedman devotes a chapter to the Mandarin, which opened in 1961 in San Francisco. The restaurant elevated Chinese food with offerings like Smoked Tea Duck, Beef à la Szechwan, Mu Shui Pork, and Chiao-Tzu, which came to be known as pot stickers. The menu also came with a lengthy explanation on how to order: “Chinese food is served ‘family style,’ with something for everyone, rather than a main entrée for each individual.”

In that spirit of family, I recently brought my two children to a local Chinese eatery. (My wife happened to be out with old friends.) We had jasmine tea, wonton soup, spareribs, roast pork fried rice, and sweet and sour chicken—all the classics. It was indeed oily, greasy, salty, and amazing. I explained to my kids how to take their tea and approach the dishes. I told them not to be afraid of using their hands to eat the ribs. They loved it.

When we returned home, they raved about dinner. “What did you like best?” asked their mother. “Fortune cookies!” they yelled. But we were also served orange slices. So you see, I explained to Kate, it wasn’t entirely unhealthy. She remains skeptical.

VICTORINO MATUS

# Trump's Bargaining Chip

So much of any week's White House news falls under the category of palace intrigue that it's easy to overlook the crucial revelations. This week's report by NBC News that White House chief of staff John Kelly regularly calls Donald Trump an "idiot" and has cast himself as the country's "savior" seems dubious or at least markedly exaggerated. One detail, though, caught our attention. The president, two White House officials told NBC, wanted to pull U.S. troops out of South Korea before the Winter Olympics and was only persuaded not to do it, "in one heated exchange," by Kelly.

It is tempting to dismiss this as the sort of fevered, anonymously sourced reporting we've seen too often from the mainstream media over the last year and a half. But consider Defense Secretary James Mattis's answer on April 27 to a reporter's question about a potential withdrawal from South Korea: "That's part of the issues that we'll be discussing in negotiations with our allies first, and of course with North Korea."

We don't know what the president thinks about our military presence on the Korean peninsula, but we know that U.S. authorities are moving ahead with a proposed meeting between Trump and North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un later this month. If Richard Nixon was unsuccessful at portraying himself as an unpredictable "madman" in 1969, his present successor is doing a rather better job of it. This is the first time in 30 years that North Korea's leadership seems puzzled by American intentions and feels obliged to react to U.S. moves rather than vice versa. There are advantages to be gained from unpredictability.

Yet if the North Koreans don't know what Trump has in mind, neither do the rest of us. The unsettling fact is that nobody knows if he's really inclined to pull our troops out of South Korea. He has expressed stridently isolationist views in the past, and so the idea is hardly unthinkable.

The North Koreans have long demanded the withdrawal of America's nearly 30,000 soldiers from South Korea as a criterion for their cooperation. Never before has the United States hinted that such a withdrawal is negotiable. Ahead of last weekend's summit between the two Korean leaders, Kim pretended to drop his regime's demand for an American pullout, and South Korean president Moon Jae-in predictably seized on the statement as a diplomatic win. It was

a strange moment, its significance hard to divine. We can only fall back on what we know. To repeat: It is Pyongyang's chief foreign policy aim to preside over a united Korean peninsula, and there is no room in that vision for American troops. Whatever it may say from one moment to the next, the North wants the Americans gone.

So why shouldn't the president use America's presence in South Korea as a bargaining chip with Kim Jong-un? The first and most obvious answer: Pyongyang has no intention of shedding its nuclear arsenal. North Korean leaders have fashioned an entire national identity around the possession of nuclear weapons. Kim may "denuclearize" North Korea if by that term we mean temporarily halting nuclear test launches and the like—and we wish the U.S. administration would stop using that ambiguous term—but he will not



*A U.S. training exercise in South Korea*

willingly abandon the only thing that gives his otherwise insignificant country any leverage.

With the United States out of the way, furthermore, Kim is sure to find a reason to "defend" his country by making war on the South, either with conventional or nuclear weapons. To fail to acknowledge that reality is, again, to misunderstand the nature of the Kim regime: Its leaders fully anticipate a time when the North subsumes the South under one totalitarian government.

China, Russia, and Japan have all coveted the peninsula for different reasons at different times; the American presence there has ably kept the peace for well over half a century. Even the South's most doe-eyed liberal politicians grasp that reality. A full-on American pullout has no real purchase in South Korean politics—partly, it's true, because the little nation is addicted to American defense aid, but mainly because Seoul understands that an American withdrawal would invite Northern aggression. Moon, however, is a vocal proponent of détente with Pyongyang, the so-called Sunshine Policy of his liberal predecessors Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-hyun, and like them he believes that only the South can interpret and deal effectively with the North. The Sunshiners are impatient with U.S. warnings against dealing directly with Pyongyang even as they rely on the U.S. defense umbrella.

And so America finds itself in a dangerous position vis-à-vis North Korea. Our interests are represented by a man who governs by instinct rather than principle

or understanding. Most of what the United States is hearing from North Korea, moreover, comes through a South Korean government burdened by a Sunshine ideology that naïvely places too much trust in the word of dictators. We're in effect at the mercy of enthusiastic multilateralists who, although they would not deliberately rid their country of American protection, may push an intermittently isolationist president to make a foolish decision.

We trust that sane minds in the administration will impress on the president the danger of even hinting that withdrawal from South Korea is a possibility. The United States has very little to gain from these negotiations—and northeast Asia has a lot to lose. ♦

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## Picking Up the Teacher Tab

In Kentucky, Oklahoma, West Virginia, Arizona, and Colorado, teachers have refused to teach until lawmakers agree to raise their pay. Some have stormed statehouses; others have closed their schools and walked out. The mainstream press affords them lavish and highly sympathetic coverage, and Americans are naturally disposed to admire teachers. But is the striking teachers' plight really so dire?

Consider Arizona, where the teachers walked out on April 26. Average teacher salary in the Grand Canyon State ranks near the bottom nationally: 45th out of 50 states and the District of Columbia, according to the National Education Association (NEA). Arizona teachers had wanted an immediate 20 percent pay increase. The statewide protest caused the closure of some 60 school districts in the state, which left no fewer than 750,000 students without schooling.

Governor Doug Ducey, a Republican, agreed to meet the teachers' demand weeks ago, but his plan wouldn't take full effect until 2020. That wasn't good enough for the teachers—they wanted the full 20 percent immediately—and they walked out. On May 3, the state senate passed a bill that closely resembled what Ducey proposed: Teachers are expected to receive a 9 percent raise next year and 5 percent raises in each of the following two years. (The raises can't, according to state estimates, take full effect until 2020 or after, without overburdening the state's budget.) Schools were still closed as we went to press, but the teachers were planning to return to their classrooms on May 4.

In West Virginia, teacher protests in March generated a 5 percent pay increase for state employees across the board. Protesters—with the media's help—made much of the fact that West Virginia's average teacher salary stands at \$45,555, or 51st in the country.

The trouble with pointing to a state's rank in teacher pay as a justification for protests is that it would justify perpetual protests and perpetual pay increases. It is an incapable matter of logic that some state has to be ranked last, second to last, third to last, and so on. Must the bottom 5, or the bottom 10, engage in strikes and protests for that reason?

Of course, a simple national ranking in teacher pay doesn't tell you much about a host of important factors: cost of living, health benefits, pensions, average class size, money allocated per student, and so on. Take cost of living. In 2016, West Virginia's average teacher salary was \$45,977, but \$51,199 when adjusted for cost of living (moving from 46th place to 43rd nationally). New York had the nation's highest average teacher salary, at \$77,957, but when adjusted for cost of living it ranked only 17th.

Colorado teachers, who are demanding raises, earned an unadjusted average salary of \$51,808 in 2017—31st in the country. Does the same "close to last" justification hold in the case of Colorado?

Take-home pay—how the NEA calculates salary—doesn't include the outsized benefits packages most teachers receive. According to a study by Bellwether Education Partners, while the average American worker earns \$1.78 in retirement benefits per hour of work, public school teachers earn \$6.22.

This is not to say that teachers in some places shouldn't be making more than they are, but simplistic arguments about rankings, though endlessly repeated by gullible news media, tell us next to nothing about true teacher costs. And funding for pay increases must come from somewhere. West Virginia governor Jim Justice, another Republican, has spoken of "budget cuts" and reallocations of state funds to make the 5 percent raise work. In Arizona, the plan passed by the legislature on May 3 is estimated to cost \$300 million over the next year alone.

Whether or not teachers deserve more pay is a question for the taxpayers to whom they are beholden. They are the ones who will have to foot the bill for the increases in one way or another. We only hope they won't fall prey to bad arguments. ♦

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## If Not Haspel, Who?

If Democrats love the United States and loathe Donald Trump as much as they claim—and we have no reason to doubt their sincerity in these regards—they ought to express delight and gratitude when the president appoints

someone with none of his own odious qualities to a high-level position. Instead, as White House legislative affairs director Marc Short rightly complained in March, they have “weaponized” the nomination process. Led by Chuck Schumer, Senate Democrats now stand four-square against any Trump nominee, no matter how qualified or moderate or acclaimed that nominee might be.

Nowhere is this more frighteningly true than with Gina Haspel, who has been named to be the first woman to lead the Central Intelligence Agency. Despite his proclivity for nominating wild-card outsiders rather than “deep state” insiders to lead cabinet agencies, despite his extremely prickly relationship with the intelligence community, the president chose an accomplished and well-liked intelligence professional to head the CIA. The choice was made at the behest of former CIA director Mike Pompeo. Michael Hayden, former head of both the CIA and the National Security Agency under George W. Bush, applauds the choice. So does James Clapper, former director of national intelligence under Barack Obama. So does John Brennan, CIA director under Obama and a fierce critic of the current president.

On March 16, we wrote in support of Haspel’s nomination in the face of the media’s frenzied attack on her credibility. Haspel, we noted,

is a career intelligence officer and has served as CIA station chief in locations around the globe, including the crucial London station. Her integrity and skill are unchallenged. She has, moreover, a reputation for impartiality. The capacity to separate one’s political views from one’s duties is crucial in most high-level government work, but particularly in the clandestine services.



Gina Haspel

Her nomination should not be controversial. Yet Democrats, who can be counted on to praise any female nominee as a female nominee when the nomination is made by a Democratic president, objected to Haspel the moment her name was announced. Rand Paul, to whom we suspect no CIA director would be acceptable who didn’t oppose the CIA’s existence, also pounced. It would be hard to take their harrumphing seriously even if it hadn’t been based on false reports that Haspel had ordered the destruction of videotapes of CIA interrogations and gloated over an al Qaeda detainee.

As we asked when Democrats objected to Pompeo: Who would they rather have? Does CIA director Matt Gaetz sound better to them? How about CIA director Erik Prince? If Democrats have real objections to Haspel, they have an obligation to suggest an alternative likely to be nominated by the president. We’ll stand by while they think about it. ♦

## Solving the Crisis of the Vanishing IPO

**THOMAS J. DONOHUE**

PRESIDENT AND CEO  
U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

It seems like a common occurrence—a company goes public, makes a big splash in the news, and raises billions of dollars through its IPO. But the truth is that this used to happen far more often than it does today. Over the past 20 years, the number of public companies traded on the stock market has been cut in half.

This trend hurts the entire economy. When a company goes public, it receives an infusion of capital that helps propel it to the next level of growth, which means lots of new jobs. In fact, 92% of a public company’s job growth occurs after it completes its IPO. Going public also provides more opportunities for Main Street investors and American families to share in the success of companies of all sizes and sectors.

With these benefits, why are more

and more businesses deciding to stay private? Because they see the network of laws, regulations, legal hazards, and public relations pitfalls that await public companies and conclude that it’s simply not worth it.

In recent years, our broken and outdated financial regulatory system has shackled public companies with rules that restrict growth and limit options. Public companies have also been the target of short-term shareholder activists that coerce and even extort them into pursuing policies that advance special interests, rather than the interests of their employees and shareholders. Further, some plaintiffs’ lawyers hold the threat of ridiculous class action lawsuits over the heads of companies in order to get rich.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce is working to reverse these trends. We’re urging the Senate to pass the Corporate Governance and Transparency Act, which has already

passed the House twice. It would empower the SEC to oversee today’s increasingly rogue proxy advisory firms. We’re also calling for passage of a new JOBS Act to bring our system of 1930s-style securities regulation into the 21st century, and the Securities Fraud Act of 2018 in order to stop the Martin Act from leveling accusations of fraud that can neither be proven nor disproven. Finally, the U.S. Chamber Institute for Legal Reform is leading the fight for commonsense reforms to class action lawsuits.

It’s time to stand tall and punch back against the onslaught of abuse aimed at public companies. If we succeed in enacting these measures, we’ll likely see a resurgence in IPOs that will create millions of new jobs, plentiful opportunities for American families to buy shares of their favorite companies, and a stronger, more vibrant, and more innovative economy.



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

CHRISTINE ROSEN

# Do we want our DNA to be an open book?

Last week, law enforcement officers in California arrested former cop Joseph James DeAngelo and charged him with committing a series of rapes and murders in California in the 1970s and 1980s known as the work of the “Golden State Killer.” The case has generated enormous attention beyond the public’s typical fascination with serial killers because of the unusual way the police caught DeAngelo: through his great-great-grandparents’ DNA.

DeAngelo isn’t the first alleged serial killer caught by his own family’s genetic code: In 2010, after a man was arrested on a weapons charge, his DNA profile was submitted to California’s criminal DNA database (which contains profiles of more than 2 million felons) and yielded a match to a family member who turned out to be his father—as well as a serial killer known as the “Grim Sleeper.”

The landscape of DNA databases has changed dramatically since 2000, when Iceland shocked the world by selling its entire country’s genetic material to a private company, deCODE Genetics (which was later bought by Amgen), for scientific research. Today, according to *MIT Technology Review*, more than 12 million people have submitted DNA samples to genealogy sites such as Ancestry.com and health sites such as 23andMe, with approximately a million more added every month. Niche DNA companies market to parents, urging them to bank their children’s DNA in case a child is kidnapped or offering to help determine paternity. Still others will extract DNA from the recently deceased to provide a genetic profile to surviving family members.

In other words, genetic analysis and testing has become big business—and it’s a business that speaks to some of our deepest fears (death, disease, the loss of a child, a cheating spouse).

It’s also largely unregulated, which is why it was easy for California law enforcement officials to upload DNA from a crime scene to a private genetic genealogy website, GEDmatch, and



**DNA is a revealing source of information about individuals and thus highly valuable. But data is never entirely secure, as the experience of many data breaches has taught us.**

look for the Golden State Killer. They didn’t ask for consent or permission because they didn’t have to; the information was freely available, as GEDmatch acknowledged after the arrest. The familial match helped police narrow their list of suspects; after obtaining DeAngelo’s DNA from something he threw away, they made a definitive match.

The public is understandably dazzled by the power of DNA evidence when it leads to the solving of crimes or the convictions of murderers, even though in reality familial DNA searches are not especially accurate (one 2014 British study claimed a failure rate of 83 percent). If DNA databases help cops catch a horrible killer, the reasoning goes, what’s the problem?

But you might have a different reaction if a police officer wielding

a large Q-tip knocked on your door and insisted you allow him to take a sample of your DNA to help solve a case. This is what happened during the search for the Golden State Killer. Police swabbed the cheek of at least one person that we know of—an elderly resident of a nursing home in Oregon City—without his daughter’s permission, before ruling him out as a suspect, and misidentified another man as a possible suspect last year, according to the *Washington Post*. Would refusing to participate make you appear suspicious? Courts have upheld a convicted felon’s right to refuse to provide a DNA sample as part of the terms of his probation, accepting the argument that it was an unreasonable search and seizure under the Fourth Amendment, but haven’t ruled on familial search requests.

Even if you offered up your DNA willingly, what would the police do with your DNA profile after you were ruled out as a suspect? Store it in one of many state or federal DNA databases, just in case you or some close relative commits a crime in the future? Similar questions have been raised about DNA dragnets, when law enforcement gathers swabbed evidence from a wide range of people living or working near a crime scene to rule them out as suspects.

These questions matter because DNA is a particularly revealing source of information about individuals—bioethicist George Annas calls it your “future diary”—and thus highly valuable data. But data is never entirely secure, as the experience of many data breaches has taught us, and data gathered for one purpose is often used for another, as the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal recently revealed. Even if states or the federal government adopted sensible oversight policies for the growing number of DNA databases, they would never be

entirely secure. As well, it's not possible to give true consent with regard to your DNA, because every year brings new discoveries about what we can learn from it. You can't consent to what you don't know.

The reasons given for expanding the reach and power of DNA databases are usually compelling: cure diseases, catch criminals, find long-lost relatives. But we need to reckon with the equally compelling risks these databases pose to individual freedom. If we can't guarantee the privacy and integrity of the information stored in them, how can we prevent their mis-

use? And do we really want to live in a world where uploading one's DNA into a database is eventually viewed as a necessary public obligation (because, as the U.K.'s government surveillance program motto suggests, "If you've got nothing to hide, you've got nothing to fear")?

We should be grappling seriously with these questions now so that in our zeal to solve crimes we don't sacrifice liberty. Doing so could lead to a world where we all become unwitting genetic informants and where our "future diaries" have become open books. ◆

COMMENT ◆ BARTON SWAIM

## There's no easy cure for what ails higher education

Every week brings news of some fresh campus absurdity—toured professors saying and doing idiotic things, students cursing and attacking speakers while college authorities do nothing about it, schools proudly denying students due process. When news circulated recently that Penn State has forbidden a student outdoor club to go on student-led excursions because these are too "dangerous"—this despite no known mishaps in years—an ordinary person could be forgiven for concluding that modern universities are run by nincompoops.

The problems of American higher education go deeper than headline-making absurdities, of course—soaring tuition, empty degrees, incompetent instruction—but the high-profile outrages indicate a kind of warped mindset. It's one in which university campuses exist independently of the rules and norms governing other people. Not that college students, faculty, and administrators necessarily

think of themselves as superior beings. But increasingly they operate according to an esoteric set of rules that make no sense to people on the outside and perhaps even to themselves.



**Increasingly, institutions of higher education follow an esoteric set of rules that make no sense. The fundamental problem may be that they are selling a product that nobody wants.**

The fundamental problem may be that institutions of higher education are selling a product nobody wants. That's an abrasive way to put it, but what I mean is that the demand for the "product"—the instruction students receive in the classroom—is hopelessly distorted. Most young people don't go

to college, and their parents don't pay for it, for the curriculum or "content." They do so for a career path or because it's socially expected—it's just what one does. Some students may enjoy and even love the instruction, or parts of it, but that's not why they apply for scholarships and/or take out enormous student loans and/or work long hours on the weekend. They do these things for the status conferred on them for having attended college, which is not the same thing as an education.

The problem of distorted demand isn't unique to higher education in our day. But in recent decades the relationship between buyer and product has been distorted beyond recognition, with the result that the product itself has too often become a joke.

It's a characteristically American tendency to think that if something's good, we need more of it. The GI Bill of 1944 led hundreds of thousands and eventually millions of servicemen, many of whom likely wouldn't have attended college otherwise, to get four-year degrees. The economic growth of the next three decades encouraged American policymakers at all levels to believe that the more people who attend college, the better; and so state and local governments began encouraging more and more kids to attend.

That belief and attendant policies had two effects. First, as predictably as night follows day, heavy government involvement enabled universities to increase tuition and fees and to spend their ever-increasing revenue to expand their operations far beyond mere classroom instruction. Today's university is a dizzying array of schools and departments and disciplines and subdisciplines and institutes and entities, many of which have no real function beyond self-perpetuation. Exorbitant prices encouraged a superabundance of well-meaning organizations to help kids with grants and scholarships, but that tended over time to drive the price up, as third-party payments always do (see: health care).

The second effect of the misbegotten belief in universal higher education

is that many college students, having been told to go to college just because, don't know why they're there. Ask the average high school senior what he wants to study—which is another way of asking why he wants to go at all—and you're likely to hear a mumbled non-response or a rambling disquisition on vague intentions. And yet he, his parents, an assemblage of scholarship-granting organizations, and probably the state and federal governments are prepared to hand the institution of his choice \$100,000 or more to turn his badly articulated non-goal into reality.

So it's not, I think, unfair to say that universities are selling a product for which there is little or no demand. The buyers may be purchasing the status or certification they will receive upon completing their studies, but they are not paying for what happens over the four or five years preceding that happy day.

The debate over higher education has tended to divide into two camps. One emphasizes the university's economic function—its capacity to train students for work in a “global economy,” to use the college website boilerplate. That's certainly appropriate for science and engineering departments in the business of professional training. The other emphasizes the university's moral or intellectual function—its capacity to teach students how to think about the great questions of life. The latter is associated with the “humanities”: art, literature, music, philosophy, and so on. Frequently proponents of the humanities complain that the modern university operates on a “market model” in which universities are thought to exist for the benefit of the market—to supply docile and agreeable workers to an expanding and pro-*tean* modern economy.

There's some justification for that complaint, though it would perhaps be more cogent if the humanities hadn't been so heinously corrupted by baby boomer radicals and their intellectual offspring. The complaint itself, though, is valid. The “market model” dominates the way our university and political elite speak and write

about universities. “Presidents and vice-chancellors adopt [the language of the market model] in their public speeches,” George Fallis writes in his book *Multiversities, Ideas, and Democracy* (2007). “It fills the websites and brochures of universities as they present themselves to the world. Many professors embrace it, as do many students.” But the “market model” of the university, it's crucial to understand, has nothing to do with any actual market. It's the way university officials justify their budgets and salaries to politicians and donors, as Fallis goes on to say, but it is not reality. It's a market model without a market.

Indeed, the modern university is largely averse to the market, if by “market” we mean the buying and selling of goods and services. Universities coax millions of intelligent and productive citizens into paying enormous

sums for a product they don't want and won't use, simply for the privilege of saying they bought it. That is some feat, but it's destructive to both university and citizen.

Hence the warped mindset of the modern university. There is almost no actual demand for the product it provides, however profitable it is to those at the highest levels. At the heart of the contemporary university is an essential purposelessness—not simply a lack of immediate practical functionality but an absence of any redeeming purpose at all. And just as any man or woman bereft of purpose will begin behaving stupidly or irrationally, so today's American university is slowly becoming a bane and a nuisance and a hugely expensive burden. It will recover something of its former glory only when its leaders recall that it doesn't exist, like God, for its own sake. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

## Talking to North Korea? Hope for the best, expect the worst.

Far be it from me to say whether Donald Trump's diplomacy on the Korean peninsula entitles him to join Al Gore, Jimmy Carter, and Barack Obama among our recent Nobel Peace Prize laureates. But Condoleezza Rice is surely correct to suggest that the Trump administration—including ex-secretary of state Rex Tillerson—deserves credit for the series of events currently playing out on that Cold War battlefield.

Since a 1953 armistice stopped the shooting in the Korean War, the two Koreas have been utterly (and very separately) transformed, but the diplomatic status quo has reigned supreme. If President Trump somehow manages to break that deadlock, perhaps Rigoberta Menchú, or the estate of the late Yasser Arafat, will donate their Nobel medallions to the White House. Still, while results have thus far been encouraging, it is quite possible that, as with most peace prize-worthy achievements,

there is less here than meets the eye.

For example, while the dramatic meeting of the two Korean leaders, Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, at the 38th parallel made for arresting optics, it was not exactly a Nixon-to-China/Sadat-to-Jerusalem moment. Within the past two decades, two of Moon's predecessors in Seoul traveled to Pyongyang for talks with Kim's tyrant-father, Kim Jong-il, and the results were comparatively minimal. There was movement toward the reuniting of some families separated a half-century earlier by conflict, but the so-called June 15 Joint Declaration (2007) was largely a series of nice ideas and good intentions that have gone nowhere. The important meeting will be the one between Kim Jong-un and Donald Trump.

The danger of summitry, however, is always the discrepancy between reality and make-believe. From the American standpoint, the animating

issue here is not North-South reconciliation but North Korea's accelerating nuclear-weapons program, which has stymied global diplomacy since the 1990s. The world is united in its horror at the prospect of Pyongyang wielding hydrogen bombs, but what to do about it remains a quandary. A nuclear-armed Kim Jong-un is, in its way, unthinkable, but so is an outbreak of conventional warfare on the peninsula.

Trump's principal achievement, thus far, is to have impressed Pyongyang's neighboring benefactor, China, thereby isolating North Korea—which is no small matter. But nations on the threshold of nuclear capacity (Iran, for example) are naturally loath to take backward steps. What's in it for Kim? On the Korean peninsula, at least, nuclear diplomacy has largely been a matter of buying time through ignoring facts, and summits notwithstanding, the North Koreans have no interest in broadening relations with their prosperous, democratic, above all Western-oriented cousins in nearby Seoul.

My suspicion, therefore, is that Kim-Trump diplomacy will yield less than we might hope for—that is, a denuclearized North Korea and “normalization” between Seoul and Pyongyang—but more than the current unsustainable impasse: a halt to testing and weapons production, if we're fortunate, and an inspection program. By summit standards, that would resemble success. For if any place dramatizes the virtue of patience, and the importance of the United States and its allies honoring global commitments, it's the Korean peninsula.

Indeed, when people complain about “endless war” in Afghanistan or Iraq, they might wish to recall the events of June 1950, when Kim Jong-un's grandfather, Kim Il-sung, invaded the South and sent American and South Korean armed forces into retreat.

As it happens, while Mao Zedong, less than a year in power in Beijing,

was Kim's stalwart cheerleader and comrade-in-arms, Joseph Stalin in Moscow was notably unenthusiastic about opening a new Asian front in the burgeoning Cold War. But Kim's invasion, along with the Berlin Airlift and the invention of NATO, was a pivotal moment in the creation of the new world order and an instructive event in American politics. For it was in Korea that the American resolve to resist Communist expansion met the Truman administration's postwar contraction of U.S.



**So long as the Kim family rules in Pyongyang—which is likely to be longer than anyone anticipates—reconciliation between the two Koreas will be symbolic, at best.**

military strength. That is to say, peace dividends are almost always illusory. To his credit, however, Harry Truman swiftly switched gears and, in a shrewd gesture, enlisted the United Nations Security Council in defending the integrity—and, ultimately, the freedom—of South Korea.

The Korean War, especially after Mao sent Chinese troops across the frontier in late 1950, was an unexpectedly tough and expensive conflict: 33,000-plus Americans were killed in three years of fighting, and one general's reputation was tarnished (Douglas MacArthur) while another's was burnished (Matthew Ridgway). And while the stalemate along the 38th parallel was finally broken by the new president Dwight D. Eisenhower's implicit threat to wield nuclear weapons, Ike's July 1953 armistice prevented Korea from becoming a domestic calamity like Vietnam.

It was, moreover, the successful

template for Cold War policy. For just as American troops remained in Western Europe decades longer than was expected in 1945—and of course still remain in lesser numbers—some 23,000 U.S. troops continue to guarantee the 65-year-old twilight peace on the Korean peninsula. This has been of singular benefit to the inhabitants of South Korea and to our allies in Asia, as well as American credibility and, in abstract terms, the cause of freedom and human dignity. The benefits have outweighed the cost.

Now the challenge is not failure but success. While North Korea is a cloistered Stalinist regime that has never de-Stalinized, its southern neighbor is an affluent, outward-looking, fully functioning democracy. And so long as the Kim family rules in Pyongyang—which is likely to be longer than anyone anticipates—reconciliation between the two Koreas will be symbolic, at best. It may well be that the regime will collapse next month or, like post-Stalinist Russia, devolve into long, slow, despotic decay.

Donald Trump's unconventional presidency has yielded unexpected results, and the prospect of meeting and talking with Kim Jong-un is an interesting one. It may transpire that there is both more and less to Kim, in which case the nuclear specter may be vanquished or diminished somehow—and full marks to Trump should that come to pass. Still, the greatest danger in statecraft is the triumph of hope over experience. ♦

## **Worth Repeating**

**from *WeeklyStandard.com*:**

‘This year alone, three pitchers have recorded “wins” after surrendering two or more earned runs in a relief appearance lasting an inning or less.’

—Chris Deaton, ‘Some Baseball Stats Are Overrated. Like “Wins” for Pitchers.’

# The Consummate Agency Head

Trump's FDA chief hasn't been much in the news—and that's a good thing. **BY MICHAEL WARREN**

There was a hint of frustration in a *New York Times* headline about Scott Gottlieb, the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration and an appointee of Donald Trump: “F.D.A. Chief Goes Against the Administration Stereotype.” The story’s conclusion that “Dr. Scott Gottlieb isn’t rolling back his agency’s mission” was a lament of sorts, an admission that the “millionaire with a libertarian bent” running the nation’s food and drug safety agency maybe wasn’t so bad. An April piece for *Vox*, the “explainer” site written by and for earnest, pointy-headed liberals, even conceded that Gottlieb had been “making real progress tackling the most serious health issues in America.”

“I think it is clear that he is someone who believes in the mission of the agency and believes in its functions,” Jeremy Sharp, a deputy commissioner at the FDA during the Obama administration, tells me. Another former deputy commissioner under Obama, Joshua Sharfstein, told *Vox*, “I think that he’s done a lot for FDA’s morale at a time like this.”

In normal times, it would be

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notable that Gottlieb, a 45-year-old physician and veteran of the medical venture capital world, is getting this much praise from his ideological opponents. And in Donald

Trump’s Washington, it’s just as remarkable the FDA commissioner isn’t among the president’s high-level political appointees embroiled in personal scandal. But none of that is a coincidence. Perhaps more than any other figure in the executive branch, Gottlieb came into his role at the FDA with a fully formed vision for one of the most powerful and influential agencies in the federal government. That vision involves achieving the FDA’s regulatory and public-health goals with a more friendly disposition toward market forces and the need to spur, not discourage, innovation.

Already, Gottlieb has made a serious push to change the FDA’s approach to generic drugs, streamlining the approval process and minimizing advantages for name-brand manufacturers that had been built into the regulatory regime. “The way that we’re going to help lower prices of drugs is . . . more competition,” he says in an interview. “I firmly believe that the best way to create proper incentives for innovation is through market-based pricing.” He’s also taken incremental steps toward



Scott Gottlieb

opening up the drug and medical device approval process, such as more transparency about clinical trials to help innovators and manufacturers understand the FDA procedures.

It may sound like smart government to conservatives and centrists, but it may also set off alarm bells among market-skeptical regulators like those who fill career positions at the FDA. Unlike other Trump appointees to powerful agencies, however, Gottlieb has approached his job with an eye toward collaboration, not confrontation. It helps that he has served in government before, including at the FDA during the George W. Bush administration. As John Taylor, a friend and former colleague of Gottlieb’s who was acting principal deputy commissioner during the Obama administration, puts it, Gottlieb’s approach is less “disruption” and more “transformation.”

“Anyone who thinks they can come into a regulatory agency and think that they’re going to hire five political people, put them in the front office, and start writing policy, and it’s going to be effective and it’s going to be enduring—that’s never going to happen,” Gottlieb says. “That’s not a way to run an agency.”

“He has effectuated change without hobbling the agency,” Taylor says. Yuval Levin, a top conservative policy thinker, agrees. “Scott’s approach to the role of the FDA has always combined an appreciation for the importance of public confidence in drug safety and in the agency’s judgment with an appreciation for the importance of innovation in medicine,” Levin says. “He sees that it’s on the latter front—the need to allow more innovation to happen—that the FDA has most needed to improve, but also that this can’t be allowed to undermine public confidence, especially at a time when confidence in so many of our institutions is plummeting.”

It doesn’t exactly sound like draining the swamp, but Trump is nonetheless a big fan of Gottlieb. The FDA commissioner was among those who accompanied the president

GARY LOCKE

to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this past January. “Scott Gottlieb, as you know, is a star,” Trump boasted at a reception there. The president has name-checked Gottlieb in other settings, including in March at a speech in New Hampshire on the opioid crisis.

Gottlieb’s conservative bona fides on public-health issues are well established. During the Obama administration, his byline was found everywhere from Yuval Levin’s policy journal *National Affairs* to the op-ed page of the *Wall Street Journal*. In hundreds of articles, written from his perch at the American Enterprise Institute (where he was a resident fellow from 2007 until his confirmation last spring), Gottlieb was highly critical of what he called “careless policymaking” at the FDA, particularly in generic drug regulations and the drug-approval process.

In a 2012 *National Affairs* article, “Changing the FDA’s Culture,” Gottlieb identified “an excessive desire for certainty” among the agency’s

drug reviewers. He described a view within the agency that saw the FDA’s role in ensuring drug safety as being in direct conflict with its other role in guiding innovation in medical treatments—and choosing the former. Gottlieb made what he now calls “provocative” recommendations for how to change the review process, siloing off the scientific evaluators of drugs from more senior officials who would make final approval decisions.

Gottlieb says he still believes in the need to accelerate drug approval in ways that increase competition and make drug development more responsive to market forces. “I think it’s the optimal way to send good signals to entrepreneurs and innovators to where they could and should allocate capital in order to underwrite new innovation,” he says, pointing to efforts he has made to improve the existing process. But he’s been less aggressive than his commentary suggested, in part as a recognition of the need to work with, not against, the agency.

Part of that balance means he’s continued to pursue and even expand on certain public-health goals that began under the previous administration, most notably in the area of restricting nicotine in tobacco products. “He has started the FDA down a path to make cigarettes minimally or non-addictive,” says Jeremy Sharp. “If that is implemented it could save millions of lives and have a profound public-health benefit.”

There’s no question Gottlieb is trying to ensure his work and changes at the FDA outlast his tenure there. “If you want to make policy change enduring, you have to do it through processes like developing regulation, developing guidance,” he says. “You have to get broad consensus. I can’t just unilaterally write a guidance document or a regulation. I need my senior career leaders on board and believ[ing] it’s the right direction. You have to build that consensus.”

His friend John Taylor puts it this way: “He wants to leave a positive legacy and he is hellbent on doing so.” ♦





From left: Josh Hawley, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, and Eric Greitens listen to Donald Trump during a rally in St. Charles, Missouri, November 29, 2017.

# Toxic Governor

Missouri's Eric Greitens puts his fellow Republicans in a terrible spot. **BY ANDREW EGGER**

Missouri governor Eric Greitens—charged with a sexual felony, accused of campaign finance crimes, approval rating underwater, impeachment a strong possibility—could be nearing the end of his political career. But the Republican appears to be set on taking as much of his own party with him as possible, beginning with his attorney general—and U.S. Senate contender—Josh Hawley.

Over the last few weeks, Greitens has pursued an aggressive campaign to discredit Hawley, whose office is among those investigating the governor's misconduct. Greitens launched his first attack on April 17, after Hawley announced he had uncovered evidence that Greitens had, in addition to his sexual misconduct, committed a campaign-finance-related crime.

"Fortunately for Josh, he's better at press conferences than the law,"

*Andrew Egger is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

Greitens said of Hawley, a former law professor with degrees from Stanford and Yale. He then smeared Hawley for turning that evidence over to the prosecutor of jurisdiction, St. Louis circuit attorney Kim Gardner, whom Greitens characterized as "a liberal prosecutor funded by George Soros who allegedly suborned perjury, falsified documents, and withheld evidence."

Greitens continued to press the attack April 18, filing a court complaint arguing that Hawley's candidacy for Senate should disqualify him from his current job pursuing criminal investigations. "Hawley must recuse himself and his entire office from any investigation or prosecution related to Gov. Greitens or the Governor's Office," attorney Michelle Nasser wrote in the filing. "If such investigation or prosecution is to be conducted, it must be conducted by a court-appointed special prosecutor independent of the AGO." Hawley waved off the motion as "frivolous." The judge apparently agreed

and rejected the governor's request.

This week, a Missouri house committee released a report explaining in detail the evidence that Hawley uncovered, including that Greitens reportedly used a charity's donor list for political fundraising and then lied about the incident to ethics investigators. In contrast to his earlier brashness, the governor is laying low since the report's release, but he hasn't rescinded his attacks on the attorney general.

Greitens's loose-cannon act isn't a political problem that's unique to Hawley, of course: The explosive scandals, which center around allegations of sexual misconduct, including that Greitens took a surreptitious nude photograph of a paramour to coerce her into silence about the affair, have created headaches for GOP contenders across the state. In the St. Louis suburbs that make up the comfortably red 2nd District, where incumbent Ann Wagner is defending a seat that has been Republican since 1993, Greitens's unfavorable rating has spiked to 65 percent. A dizzying 81 percent of self-described moderates in the district disapprove of the governor, according to the Wagner campaign's internal polling. (Wagner's campaign declined to comment on how Greitens's behavior would affect her electoral chances.)

But the governor's personal attacks on Hawley mean the attorney general has an even trickier road to navigate than do candidates like Wagner. He's not only in danger of suffering guilt-by-party-association with Greitens among independents and moderates. In a neck-and-neck race against incumbent Sen. Claire McCaskill, he also has to avoid hemorrhaging any support among the Republican base—and the 50-odd-percent of them who still support Greitens as governor.

For Greitens's staunch supporters, the actions alleged about the governor amount to a regrettable indiscretion at worst and at best simply demonstrate that he's managed to rattle the right establishment cages—much like another frequently embattled politician they're fond of. "I don't approve

WHITNEY CURTIS / GETTY

of what they're saying he did, but it's nothing the Democrats haven't done," one Vernon County Republican told the *Kansas City Star* this week. Said another, "Governor Greitens is on the same program as President Trump."

It's a connection Greitens himself has often tried to make. "The people of Missouri see through this, and they know far better than to trust one-sided tabloid trash gossip," he claimed on April 12, hours before the Missouri house committee released its initial report detailing the unsettling allegations against him. "This is exactly like what's happening with the witch hunts in Washington, D.C." Trump himself, who endorsed Greitens during his 2016 campaign and has endorsed Hawley's Senate run this year, has not commented on the scandal.

The result has been that Hawley's campaign, which has until now kept its messaging relentlessly focused on McCaskill, has been forced to play defense. The campaign pushed out an internal poll April 30 boasting of a statistical tie between the two candidates: "An incredibly vulnerable position for an incumbent six months out from an election." The press release also noted, "Although Governor Greitens has taken a hit, this has not impacted the Republican brand in the state as Josh Hawley and President Trump remain in an excellent position heading into the summer." Beyond that cheery "nothing-to-see-here" note, the campaign is loath to discuss Greitens at all. "What Josh has said is that he's doing the job he was elected to do as attorney general,"

Hawley's campaign manager Kyle Plotkin told *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. "He has to follow wherever the facts may lead, and he'll keep doing that." But will that hurt him among Republican voters? "That's for you and political pundits to determine."

If there's good news for Hawley in any of this, it's that Missouri Democrats' messaging strategy, which attempts to paint him as a Greitens

**In a year when Josh Hawley's candidacy may prove the difference between Republicans holding the Senate and losing both houses to the Democrats, how can Governor Greitens be willing to risk that kind of damage?**

stooge, looks more misguided than ever. Pro-McCaskill super-PAC ads released in March accused the attorney general of soft-balling the Greitens investigation, saying Hawley "came to the governor's rescue" and speculating that he was "bought and paid for" (a reference to a contribution Greitens's campaign made to Hawley's in 2016). The attacks were unconvincing then; now they just look silly.

"It gives Josh every opportunity to prove what he is proving now, which is that he is a no-nonsense, law-and-order, effective attorney general," Republican strategist Gregg Keller told *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. "A lot

of attorneys general toil in relative obscurity and do their jobs quietly. Josh does not have that luxury, which is both a challenge and an opportunity. . . . If you look at Missouri politicians who have been willing to take on malfeasance within their own party and take on members of their own party, Josh Hawley is walking the walk."

Nevertheless, Keller concedes that the Greitens fiasco has complicated Hawley's path to the Senate. Which leads to an obvious question: In a year when Hawley's candidacy may prove the difference between Republicans holding the Senate and losing both houses to the Democrats, how can Greitens be willing to risk that kind of damage?

For Keller, who opposed Greitens's campaign in 2016, the answer is simple: "He doesn't care. He simply does not care. He's only been a Republican for a couple years now; he's a nominal Republican at best. . . . And he's never been a member in good standing of the conservative movement more broadly. So this is not someone who's going to retrace their steps or take the Republican party in mind, nor the conservative movement, nor what's best for that movement or party." This may be true, but it's apparently still the minority viewpoint as far as Missouri Republicans are concerned.

For all of his rhetoric, Eric Greitens is no Donald Trump: He's riding no particular zeitgeist, and scandals don't just bounce off of him. And the alleged campaign finance crime, though less salacious and disturbing than the sexual accusations, is backed by the kind of damning paper trail against which the defense of "Witch hunt!" is notoriously ineffective.

How long he can continue to hold on to the governorship through sheer willpower, as all around him his party withdraws its support, remains to be seen. But Greitens seems to have absorbed one crucial presidential lesson: It's amazing how well you can get along in politics these days if you don't care who you have to attack. ♦

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# Five Rules for a Royal Bride

A commoner speaks.

BY DOMINIC GREEN

Dear Princess Meg of California, Welcome to Britland! As one of your grandmother-in-law's pleb subjects, may I offer servile congratulations on bagging Prince Harry. Allow me also to offer some advice on this joyous and taxpayer-funded occasion. You will be surrounded by advisers at Buck House, but history and *The Crown* suggest that you should ignore them. They are posh halfwits. I, on the other hand, am common as muck. I may know nothing about protocol, but I am a living embodiment of the partiality and pettiness of the British public.

Some parts of your new job may resemble your old job. The royal family is a showbiz dynasty, as essential to our tourist industry as our Beefeaters and Beatles impersonators. But the head of The Firm is also God's anointed monarch. When it comes to the royals, we salute the uniform, not the man (or woman). We can take or leave most of the Windsors. Some might call them a bunch of German freeloaders. But Her Maj is the great exception. We love her because she is our last link to Churchill, the Empire, the Blitz spirit, and England's victory in the 1966 World Cup. First rule is: Be nice to Grandma.

Only two other royals have a place in the public's fickle heart, and one of them is dead. Princess Diana may have been daft and posh, but she had the common touch. She is a tough act to follow, and it's best not to try. Your

sister-in-law Kate has found her own way to be both formal and genuine. Your being an actress might be helpful. Or not. For the second rule is: Keep it real.

You can keep your accent. We like Americans; we were embarrassed for Madonna when she pretended to be English. We don't care about good teeth



or toned abs, either. We want you to respect the ancient compact between the royals and the ruled—and to have just enough of a sense of humor so that we know you're in on the joke. Be polite to us, but not patronizing. Laugh at your mistakes, for we are already laughing at you. Do not take cues from your new father-in-law. Prince Charles takes himself too seriously, and no one trusts him after the Diana business.

The other royal we love is your new husband. We suffered for Harry when his parents divorced, mourned for him when his mother died, and worried

about him when he fought in Afghanistan. We were not surprised that he went to a fancy dress party in a Nazi uniform; we assumed he'd found it in the attic. We were amused when he was caught smoking weed on the grounds of your father-in-law's palace. We were proud when he was photographed naked in a Las Vegas hotel room, covering the crown jewels with his hands after a game of strip billiards.

Harry is a 21st-century Henry VIII, the best of Olde England. He burns in the sun, likes a joke and a drink, and is not averse to a fight. We especially admire his bravery, because our appetite for royal gossip led to his mother's death and remains a cause of his vulnerability. Third rule is: Look after him, because we cannot.

The English male is a simple creature. Given a diet of fried starches, he breeds well in captivity. He does, though, like his privacy. Avoid all discussions about feelings unless he initiates. Encourage him to install a shed in your garden at Kensington Palace, so he and William can get some peace. Accept that every now and then, he will find it imperative to "go on the lash" and drink until he falls over.

Fourth rule is: Go native. We want you and Harry to succeed, just like our grandparents wanted Edward VIII to follow his heart and marry Wallis Simpson. All you have to do is show us that you value our ancient way of life. So, no complaints about the plumbing.

Fifth rule is: Go more native, and confirm our suspicion that the whole world wants to be just like us. It's good that you like dogs. Have some children to keep them company. Shout at the kids, shun the dentist, swear at the useless England soccer team, drink gin before lunch. And when our famously cruel media turn on you, as they do on everyone sooner or later, sunbathe naked near a photographer with a telephoto lens. We, your loyal subjects, will demand that the papers respect your privacy. Once, that is, we've all had a good look at the pictures.

Dominic Green is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

HAL MAYFORTH

# Verify but Don't Trust

The SPLC's haphazard reporting. BY JERYL BIER

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has become in recent years the go-to authority for major media outlets seeking to document hate crimes. But its reputation as a neutral source of expertise and authority is unwarranted. In an October 2017 op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal*, I pointed out that the lead anecdote in the SPLC's report on the aftermath of the 2016 election was a hoax. There had been a fire at the historically black Hopewell Missionary Baptist Church in Mississippi; it was indeed arson, but it wasn't a racist hate crime. A member of the church was subsequently arrested for the fire and for the spray-painted "Vote Trump" vandalism that accompanied it.

Revisiting that SPLC report, "Ten Days After: Harassment and Intimidation in the Aftermath of the Election," shows that the arson anecdote was not an outlier. The SPLC did subsequently footnote and correct the report of the church arson. But at least three other alleged "hate crimes" in the report turn out not to be what they seemed either.

First, at New York's Canisius College, according to the SPLC, "a black doll was found hanging from a noose in an elevator." In a November 10, 2016, story (19 days before the SPLC issued its report), Buffalo's WGRZ reported that the "students who found the doll put it in the elevator as a prank to scare people" and that upon "closer examination . . . two strings attached to the body of the doll's neck, as part of its construction, do not actually appear to be used as a noose."

Jeryl Bier is a frequent contributor to *weeklystandard.com*.

Not only did the noose story fall apart, someone then hung the doll from a curtain rod, took a photo, and created an anti-Trump meme, writing, "Trump Fans Hanging Babies Since 2016." The students involved in creating and sharing the meme were punished. All of this information was known more than two weeks before the SPLC's publication of its report.

The second incident may be somewhat less disturbing, but the fact that the real story was also known two weeks before "Ten Days After" was published is revealing, given how simple it would have been for the SPLC to verify the facts.

This story involved a banner on a house in California. The SPLC said:

One residence in Pittsburg, California, draped a banner proclaiming to neighbors: "You can hang a n— from a tree equal rights he'll never see."

But *RollingOut* reported on November 15, 2016, that the homeowner, a black man, readily owned up to having hung the banner:

Some may be shocked that sign is not considered hateful by the homeowner identified as Alonzo Parker. Parker, who is Black, stated that he posted the sign as a statement about how society treats Blacks in America. He told media that he put the sign up after being involved in a civil lawsuit and was protesting the outcome. In regards to the complaints by the community, Parker is quoted as saying, "I wasn't worried about people getting upset. Everybody uses the n-word."

The third incident, this one at an Indiana church, ostensibly involved hateful Nazi, anti-gay, and pro-Trump vandalism. The SPLC asserted:

Churches that performed same-sex marriages or had banners advertising inclusivity have been targeted in the wake of the election, as in Bean Blossom, Ind., where St. David's Episcopal church was vandalized with a swastika and the phrases "Heil Trump" and "fag church."

In May 2017, however, the *Indianapolis Star* reported that far from its being the work of a Trumpist agitator, a gay man had been arrested and admitted being the vandal. After being charged with criminal mischief, George Stang told the *Star* that the election left him "fearful, scared and alone" and he "wanted other people to be scared with me." While the arrest came well after the SPLC report was issued, the incident remains uncorrected on the SPLC's website and in the report.

The reflexive citation of the SPLC by the media, as if that provides some evidentiary heft to their own reports, is unwarranted. The SPLC states that its stories are collected from two sources: "submissions to the #ReportHate page on the SPLC website and media accounts." The SPLC goes on to say that it "excluded incidents that authorities have determined to be hoaxes; however, it was not possible to confirm the veracity of all reports."

Many of the incidents in the "Ten Days After" report were self-reported to the SPLC with no documentation. For some of the remaining anecdotes I was able to find news stories verifying that events took place as portrayed by the SPLC, although my review was not comprehensive, and not all of the stories were equal in rigor or sourcing.

Given the frequency with which the SPLC is cited in media reports as an authoritative investigator of "hate crimes," the organization's lack of rigor should be disconcerting to reporters relying on the data. The SPLC's endowment grew to more than \$432 million last year, thanks to staggeringly successful fundraising—aided in no small part by the perception that it is a bulwark against the hate crimes its own reports exaggerate. If the SPLC wanted to engage in more thorough research before issuing alarming reports, cost should certainly be no impediment. ♦

# The Scientistic Delusion

*Lots of terrible political ideas come cloaked in a white lab coat*

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

Sigmund Freud's reputation has never been lower. The scholar Frederick Crews and the rest of the so-called Freud Bashers have reduced his intellectual position to almost nothing among those who bother about such things. His theories were unscientific, his methods unsound, his evidence at least partially falsified, his ethics monstrous. He mutilated female patients by ordering dangerous and unnecessary surgeries based on pure quackery, e.g., removing part of a woman's nose in order to treat pain from what was almost certainly an ovarian cyst. Freud thought that the patient bled as a result of sexual frustration. The more obvious explanation is that he was a butcher, and she was (as the case evidence suggests) a hemophiliac. Crews, who set out his findings in a 2017 book, *Freud: The Making of an Illusion*, speaks for many current Freud scholars in his conclusion that there "is literally nothing to be said, scientifically or therapeutically, to the advantage of the entire Freudian system or any of its component dogmas."

But dogmas die hard. Crews himself is a former Freudian, and Freud's few remaining defenders have suggested that his campaign against the Viennese showman represents—inevitably—a kind of academic Oedipus complex, the desire of the student-son to supplant his teacher-father. Crews, who is a pleasingly curmudgeonly writer, answered some of these claims in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* in 1995, writing:

In rendering their diagnoses-at-a-distance, my critics appear to have been guided by a principle that struck them as too obviously warranted to bear articulating—namely, that "Freud bashing" is itself a sign of mental dysfunction. They simply knew, after all, that Freud, despite some occasional missteps and out-of-date assumptions, had made fundamental discoveries and permanently revolutionized our conception of the mind. ... Freud proved once and for all that unconscious beliefs and emotions play a large role in our behavior; that the human mind is at once capable of the clearest distinctions and the most devious twists and that mental illness stems in large part from an imbalance within the human being between real and ideal, between our rational and irrational selves, and between what we want to do and what we have to do.

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These and similar formulations were noteworthy for their high quotient of generality and vagueness, approaching, in freedom from determinate content, the perfect vacuum achieved by the historian and Freud apologist Peter Gay, who has characterized Freud's "central idea" as the proposition that "every human is continuously, inextricably, involved with others ..." It is hard to dispute any of these statements about "humans," but it is also hard to see why they couldn't be credited as easily to Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, or Nietzsche—if not indeed to Jesus or St. Paul—as to Freud. Was it really Freud who first disclosed such commonplaces? Or, rather, has the vast cultural sway of Freud's system caused us to lose focus on his more specific, highly idiosyncratic, assertions, to presume that a number of them must have been scientifically established by now, and to transform him retrospectively into the very personification of "human" complexity and depth?

Of course it is not the case that Freud "proved" that our waking lives are dominated by unconscious beliefs. It has not even been shown to any kind of scientific standard that the unconscious mind of Freudian thought even exists. His model of the mind—id, ego, superego—was metaphorical, a literary device rather than a meaningful explanation of actual mental mechanics. As many critics have pointed out, the main attraction of Freudian theories of the unconscious mind for quacks is that they cannot be scientifically tested. Writing in *Psychology Today* last July, David B. Feldman relayed an illustrative anecdote:

I once observed a lecture by a psychoanalyst who endorsed this classical view of the unconscious mind. Over the course of an hour, he explained that almost everyone harbors unconscious resentment toward their parents. When one of the students asserted that he personally didn't harbor any such unconscious negative feeling toward his parents, the psychoanalyst replied, "See, that proves it's unconscious!"

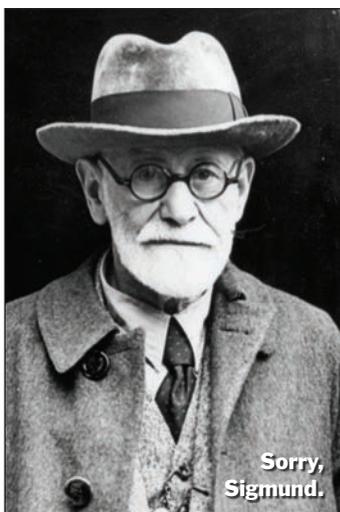
Those with a friendlier view of Freud argue that he should be evaluated not as a scientist but as a kind of cultural critic, a wide-roving mind that trafficked in the aesthetic and the mythological. Freud, as many critics have noted, was a fan of Sherlock Holmes and other literary detectives (he was his own Watson), and his case studies depict him as a Sherlockian figure, carefully uncovering the clues that are invisible to less-focused minds, those who see but do not observe. In places, Freud's case studies read like short stories. And he himself at times at least hinted that what he was engaged in was more mythology

than medicine: “One day I discovered to my amazement that the popular view grounded in superstition, and not the medical one, comes nearer to the truth about dreams,” he wrote in *Dream Psychology: Psychoanalysis for Beginners* (1899). And that, really, is what remains of the Freudian edifice: superstition, a kind of secular astrology for people too enlightened to be taken in by that sort of thing.

But Freud’s reputation was not staked on any claim to his being an aesthete or an interpreter of literature: He saw himself as a man of science, as heir to Copernicus and Charles Darwin. In Emil du Bois-Reymond’s famous formulation (often attributed, wrongly, to Freud), Copernicus took mankind down a notch by showing that the Earth was not the center of the universe, and Darwin took man down another notch by establishing that he is just another great ape with no special claim to having been specially created in the image of the Divine. Freud’s admirers taught for many years that the master had continued their work, taking man down a peg within the confines of his own mind, exposing him as a grubby, sex-addled bag of appetites hardly in control of his own life.

The sneering, vehement certitude with which Freudianism was preached until the day before yesterday is startling to revisit—and yet entirely familiar in tone to any reader of, say, Paul Krugman or Ezra Klein. Consider the introduction to the 1920 American edition of *Dream Psychology* by the long-forgotten Freudian André Tridon, who published well-regarded books about “gland personalities,” linking certain personality types and personality disorders to variations in the endocrine system in a model quite similar to the medieval account of “humors” and their effect on mood and health. Dream analysis, as Tridon puts it, was “the key to Freud’s works and to all modern psychology.” But it never quite caught on, and Tridon chalked up the resistance to the familiar factors: ignorance, suspicion of science, intellectual jealousy, an unwillingness to “sift data,” “laziness and indifference” to scientific achievement, an aversion to sexuality, “which puritanical hypocrisy has always tried to minimize, if not to ignore entirely.” Tridon was a true believer. “Besides those who sneer at dream study because they have never looked into the subject,” he wrote:

**The sneering, vehement certitude with which Freudianism was preached until the day before yesterday is startling to revisit—and yet entirely familiar in tone to any reader of, say, Paul Krugman or Ezra Klein.**



there are those who do not dare to face the facts revealed by dream study. Dreams tell us many an unpleasant biological truth about ourselves and only very free minds can thrive on such a diet. Self-deception is a plant which withers fast in the pellucid atmosphere of a dream investigation. The weakling and the neurotic attached to his neurosis are not anxious to turn such a powerful searchlight upon the dark corners of their psychology.

Tridon hit all the familiar notes: Freud did not argue that dreams were the key to understanding the human mind, he *proved* it. He insisted that what Freud was engaged in was science, full stop. “He did not start out with a preconceived bias, hoping to find evidence which might support his views,” Tridon wrote. “He looked at facts a thousand times until they began to tell him something.”

Freudian thought has gone from “established science” to obvious poppycock in a remarkably short period of time. There ought to be a lesson in that for the American news media. But the American news media are remarkably resistant to learning.

If there is a two-word phrase that should be excised from American journalism, it is “study proves.” A selection from *Vox*, probably America’s leading practitioner of the “study proves!” mode of rhetoric:

“We’ve been totally wrong about Hillary Clinton’s young voter problem, and a big new study proves it.”

“Harvard Business School study proves the humblebrag is a useless waste of time.”

“Yes, there is an echo chamber on Facebook, and this study proves it.”

Sometimes, *Vox*’s editors like a variation: “Study: Trump fans are much angrier about housing assistance when they see an image of a black man.” Over at the *Afro*, this claim became: “New Study Proves That Trump Supporters Are Racist, Infuriated by Black People. ... In a study reported by *Vox*, Trump supporters can be set off just by looking at a picture of a black person, and just seeing one can significantly change how they feel about a policy. This was discovered thanks to a new study by political scientists at Colgate and the University of Minnesota, which shed light on some of Trump supporters’ most racist behaviors.” If you are paying attention,

you can observe the evolution of a half-truth in the wild. But *Vox's* penchant is widespread.

*Audubon*: “Study Proves Outdoor Science Education Improves Test Scores.” *Study proves the thing we care about is valuable.*

*Quartz*: “A huge new Stanford and Harvard study proves that U.S. inequality isn’t just about class.” *Study disproves something nobody really thinks.*

*Huffington Post*: “Study Proves This Is How Women Prefer To Orgasm.” *Studies show that people click on these types of stories.*

A study making the journalistic rounds for the past couple of years “proves” that the climate-change policies favored by progressives would pay for themselves (oh, how we love it when the things we want *pay for themselves!*) because the economic losses they would impose would be offset by savings in health care as cleaner sources of energy and a decline in industrial activity relieve millions of people around the world of respiratory stresses. The study—or, more precisely, the journalistic presentation of the study—assumes things that are literally unknowable.

The “study proves” model of argument is popular on both ends of the political spectrum, though it is leaned on more heavily by progressives, many of whom take seriously the delusional notion that they are beyond ideology, that they simply are relying on disinterested experts to guide them in the pursuit of “what works.” Barack Obama says he told Raúl Castro in Cuba not to worry too much about choosing between socialism and capitalism, but to approach both like a buffet and “just choose from what works.” And, as it turns out—surprise!—everywhere progressives look a “study proves” that they should be doing whatever it is they already wanted to do.

Studies—and those holy facts and fact-checkers we’re always hearing about—are reliably subordinated to the social and political ethic of the party citing them. Take *Vox's* cofounder, Ezra Klein, who writes with precisely the same faintly ridiculous certitude with which André Tridon presented the scientific facts of Freudian psychology. Klein’s hectoring, sneering, “just-the-facts” school of rhetoric is best exemplified by his indefensible claim during the 2009 debate over the grievously misnamed Affordable Care Act that Connecticut senator Joseph Lieberman was “willing to cause the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people in

order to settle an old electoral score.” Klein had a study to back him—something from the Urban Institute. It didn’t exactly say what he was saying it said, and it certainly did not say that if Congress failed to pass a specific piece of health-insurance legislation that tens of thousands of people would die. Nonetheless: *Study proves you have to support my policy preferences or you’re a mass murderer!*

Studies have a way of ceasing to be studies once they are taken up by politicians-in-print like Ezra Klein. They become dueling implements. Mary Branham of the Council of State Governments: “Evidence Shows Raising Minimum Wage Hasn’t Cost Jobs” vs. Max Ehrenfreund of the *Washington Post*: “‘Very Credible’ New Study on Seattle’s \$15 Minimum Wage Has Bad News for Liberals” vs. Arindrajit Dube of the *New York Times*: “Minimum Wage and Job Loss: One Alarming Seattle Study Is Not the Last Word.” Much of this is predictable partisan pabulum. The study that confirms my priors is science. The study that challenges my preferences is ... just one study. Our friends among the global-warming alarmists, embarrassed by the fact that every time Al Gore shows up to give a speech it turns out to be the coldest March day in 30 years, are forever lecturing us that weather doesn’t tell us anything useful about climate—except when it’s

hot in the summer, or there’s a drought in California, or there’s a hurricane in Florida.

‘S’cience Says You Have To Support Our Politics or Thousands/Millions/Billions of People Will Die!’ is a well-established genre of American political discourse, one practiced most famously by Paul Ehrlich. Fifty years ago this month, he published, together with his wife, Anne, *The Population Bomb*, which predicted that “hundreds of millions of people will starve to death” in the 1970s. The decade was full of disasters—Nixon, disco, leisure suits—but none of the disasters was one that the Ehrlichs had predicted.

But the end is always near. Science says so, at least if you ask a scientist like Paul Ehrlich, who trained as a biologist but whose actual profession was that of rhetorically incontinent anticapitalist. In 1980, Ehrlich made a bet with the economist Julian Simon, who had predicted “the cost of non-government-controlled raw materials (including grain and oil) will not rise in the long run.” The

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**Socialism, like Freudianism, came disguised as science and borrowed the prestige of science. The philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon insisted that socialism was nothing more or less than ‘scientific government.’ Socialists believed that we could apply the scientific method to the entire productive activity of society.**

bet was over whether the prices for copper, chromium, nickel, tin, and tungsten (Ehrlich's choices) would rise in 10 years. Ehrlich was wrong on every count. Commodity prices fluctuate, of course, and there were 10-year periods in the postwar era in which Ehrlich would have won the bet. But Simon was on more solid footing: Commodities have been on a downward trend since the 1930s, and for solid economic reasons. When the price of a commodity rises, people invest more in producing it or seeking substitutes. In 1876, for example, the average yield of an American wheat field was 10.9 bushels per acre; in 2016, it was 52.7 bushels per acre. Durum wheat yields went from 3.8 bushels per acre in 1954 to 44 bushels per acre in 2009. Rising oil and gas prices made it economical to combine hydraulic fracturing with horizontal drilling to extract more petroleum out of deposits once considered depleted.

Ehrlich and his apologists insist that *The Population Bomb* was fundamentally correct—and fundamentally scientific—and that the dire predictions have only been delayed by unforeseeable developments such as the work of Norman Borlaug, whose “Green Revolution” brought high-yield varieties of grain crops to Mexico and then, notably, to India, where wheat production increased by 45 percent in a single year. Nobody could have predicted that, they say.

And that is the point.

The scientific project that goes under the broad heading of “complexity” considers the behavior of certain natural and social systems, which are not—this is key—subject to forecast. Some systems are chaotic and hence their behavior is “impossible, even in principle, to predict in the long term,” as computer scientist Melanie Mitchell puts it. The textbook examples of chaotic systems are markets and weather patterns. Complexity is an interesting subject, even when simplified for a mass audience. Natalie Wolchover’s recent *Wired* report on how scientists are using machine learning to predict the behavior of the Kuramoto-Sivashinsky equation, an “archetypal chaotic system,” is fascinating. Complexity theory connects modern science with classical-liberal political economy, particularly with the information

problem made famous by F.A. Hayek and Ludwig von Mises, who argued that the nature of information in a complex society makes rational economic calculation under central planning an epistemic impossibility. In their analysis, socialism isn’t a bad idea but an impossibility.

Socialism, like Freudianism, came disguised as science and borrowed the prestige of science. The philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon insisted that socialism was nothing more or less than “scientific government.” Neither

socialism nor Freudianism has survived contact with reality quite intact, but both endure because they offer an identical promise: predictable progress. Freud believed that we could simply apply the scientific method (which he conflated with the method of Sherlock Holmes) to the cases of unhappy people with disordered lives and disturbed minds, illuminating the dreadful chthonic passions that were running and ruining their lives. The socialists believed that we could apply the scientific method to the entire productive activity of society, eliminating waste and “destructive competition,” that great bane of the late-19th century.

The scientific delusion—the pretense of knowledge, Hayek called it—promises us that there is a way forward, that it is discoverable, and that it may be revealed to us by applying familiar, widely

understood principles. The alternative—that minds and markets are *beyond management*—is for many too terrible to contemplate. The world beyond science is not only religion, it is also art and literature, which have been in notable if predictable decline as our increasingly timid culture defers ever more desperately to white coat-wearing figures of authority, demanding that they provide lab-tested, peer-reviewed, eternal answers to life’s every question.

Science, broadly defined, may inform our politics. It will not liberate us from politics. Nor will it liberate us from making difficult choices. And while the physical sciences have earned their prestige, the scientific consensus of any given moment may prove unreliable. Sometimes, what all the best people know to be true turns out to be a bizarre and embarrassing fantasy cooked up by an Austrian strange-o with a gift for self-promotion.

It pays to be cautious. You know it in your id. ♦



Detail from ‘The Alchemist, In Search of the Philosopher’s Stone,’ by Joseph Wright

# Beyond Boko Haram

*America's biggest partner in Africa faces a host of internal crises—  
and its approach to security only makes matters worse*

BY JAMES H. BARNETT

Once asked a Nigerian taxi driver in a moment of cheap, Tom Friedman-esque curiosity what he wished Americans knew about his country. He responded, “Great culture. Horrible politics.”

It's hard to imagine a pithier formulation of Nigerian society. Contemporary Nigerian literature is diverse and internationally acclaimed. The Nigerian brothers known as P-Square were Africa's biggest rap act until they broke up last year, “Nollywood” cinema has spread across the continent thanks to ever-higher production values, and the Nigerian diaspora is one of the best educated in the world.

At the same time, if there are four words most Americans would associate with the country, they are not those of my sagacious cabbie but rather the ones on the signs held by Michelle Obama, Julia Roberts, and other luminaries in 2014: Bring Back Our Girls. The kidnapping of nearly 300 Chibok schoolgirls by the jihadist group Boko Haram was an international cause célèbre featuring a cast of familiar characters: a depraved millenarian warlord, a helpless group of children, and an outraged international community.

But if much of the public's image of the country is that of an archetypal African tragedy, American investors and politicians are finding Nigeria increasingly difficult to ignore. It is one of the 30 largest economies in the world and among the 10 biggest exporters of oil. It is home to more Muslims than Egypt and more Christians than Italy. It is one of the barometers by which outsiders measure Africa's progress or lack thereof. Nigeria is at the heart of the “Africa rising” narrative championed by optimists who contend that a young, entrepreneurial population is unleashing Africa's economic potential. It is also exhibit A for skeptics on the right and the left who worry about the expansion of Islamist militancy

across Africa, about the economic and political effects of climate change, or about the dangers posed by exploitative multinationals in the third world.

The country is inarguably America's most important strategic partner in Africa, and on April 30, Donald Trump welcomed Nigeria's president, Muhammadu Buhari, to the White House. The 75-year-old former military leader, who recently announced that he will seek reelection in 2019 despite concerns about his health, is the first African leader the president has hosted since taking office. Discussions of counterterrorism and economic growth

dominated the meeting. The issue of terrorism has driven U.S.-Nigerian relations in recent years as Boko Haram and then its splinter group, the Islamic State in West Africa, have made a name for themselves within the global jihadist network.

Trump, like his predecessor, is understandably reluctant to commit U.S. troops to fight Boko Haram, preferring to leave counterinsurgency efforts to the Nigerian security forces and their partners from Chad, Niger, Cameroon, and Benin, which together

constitute the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF). A small contingent of U.S. special operations forces provides training and assistance. The presence of these advisers undoubtedly deters some of the task force's more egregious behavior, but the incompetence and abusive practices of the Nigerian security forces nonetheless pose a massive impediment to an effective counterinsurgency. In late 2016, the Obama administration withheld the sale of a dozen A29 Super Tucano aircraft to Nigeria over human-rights concerns. The Nigerian Air Force's accidental bombing of a refugee camp in January 2017 only validated the concerns further. In December, the Trump administration approved the deal on the grounds that the aircraft would give a much-needed boost to our partner's fitful efforts against an Islamic State-affiliate.

Boko Haram is far from defeated despite the Nigerian government's frequent claims to the contrary. While the



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group's territorial control has diminished significantly, it still moves freely throughout much of the countryside and can stage large-scale assaults and suicide bombings in northeastern Nigeria, as well as in neighboring Niger, Chad, and Cameroon. The kidnapping of 110 more schoolgirls this February in Dapchi, a northern Nigerian town previously untouched by the violence, should belie any claims that the insurgents are on the back foot. Further, the task of reconstruction in those areas that have been cleared is immense: Millions of Nigerians have been displaced during the nine-year insurgency.

Most Nigerians, though, have never viewed Boko Haram as the greatest threat to the country. More pressing is the growing violence between Fulani pastoralists and non-Fulani farmers in the Middle Belt, the region of states in central Nigeria that are the crossroads between the country's Muslim north and Christian south. Religious questions have shaped the Middle Belt since the early 19th century, when the charismatic Islamic scholar Usman dan Fodio led the Fulani in a jihad against the Hausa kingdoms and established the Sokoto Caliphate. With British soldiers and traders in the late 19th century came Christian missionaries. Until 1914, the British governed Nigeria as two separate colonies: a southern Nigeria where they proselytized, invested, and built up infrastructure, and a northern one, ruled indirectly and neglected economically. The British promoted a distinct northern identity based on Islam and on Hausa and Fula culture, in opposition to a Christian south dominated by ethnic Igbo and Yoruba (though home to dozens of other ethnicities). Nigeria has never fully overcome the cultural divide resulting from the unification of these two colonies over a century ago.

If the Middle Belt has long seen cultural and religious disputes, the scale of the recent violence is nonetheless notable. A sectarian narrative that has begun to emerge around the various localized conflicts paints Muslim Fulani herders—pushed ever further south in search of pasture as a result of desertification—as an invading force linked to international jihadists. Ethnic militias have formed as the lines between reprisal and preemptive attack blur. Local politicians have rallied their constituencies around these militias as forms of collective defense in the absence of any effective security presence by the state.

The balance of power between north and south is the perennial question in Nigerian politics. Buhari is an ethnic Fula with close ties to a trade group of herders. Impartial as he considers himself, Buhari is attacked incessantly in the Nigerian media, especially by non-Fulanis, for the government's poor response to the Middle Belt crisis. His recent comments blaming the violence on an influx of weapons through the Sahel following the fall of Qaddafi prompted a deluge of mockery on social media. President Trump may

have been alluding to the Middle Belt during his joint press conference with Buhari when he expressed concern about the killing of Christians in Nigeria, saying that “we’re gonna be working on that problem ... very, very hard.” If his administration is concerned about the plight of Christians in the Middle Belt and hopes to play a constructive role, it first needs to recognize that the sources of the con-



*Muhammadu Buhari and Donald Trump (above) held a joint press conference at the White House on April 30. Demonstrators (below) in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, mark the 50th anniversary of the declaration of the Republic of Biafra, May 30, 2017.*



flict are complex, that the violence is not one-sided, and that sectarian narratives are liable to exacerbate tensions.

Buhari's government is also increasingly at odds with Nigeria's Igbo population. For the past six years, the Indigenes People of Biafra (IPOB), an Igbo separatist movement, has combined a mythical pseudo-zionism that posits the Igbo as descendants of ancient Hebrews with very legitimate historical grievances to agitate for independence. The group takes its name from the Republic of Biafra, the self-proclaimed Igbo nation whose attempted secession led to the Nigerian Civil War of 1967-70. In its own words, IPOB seeks to free its peoples from the “shackles of caliphate domination and creeping Islamization” and to remedy the

injustices of the civil war, during which more than a million people died in a famine that many scholars consider an act of genocide. IPOB supporters protested outside the White House on April 30, holding signs accusing Fulani of being Sudanese invaders. One explained to me that for Biafrans to accept Buhari's government would be akin to America accepting rule by the Taliban.

Buhari's government has officially labeled IPOB a terrorist organization. The Igbo number some 32 million within Nigeria's population of 190 million, and while IPOB does not necessarily enjoy sympathy among a majority of them, a heavy crackdown on the movement could fuel widespread resentment against the government. The group's founder, Nnamdi Kanu, disappeared last September after security forces raided his house. The Nigerian government claims to be ignorant of his whereabouts, but IPOB supporters believe he was murdered. Boko Haram's founder, Muhammad Yusuf, was executed in 2009 while in the custody of security forces, who claimed he died in a failed escape attempt. Leaked footage of his killing turned him into a martyr and helped the insurgency gain traction among wider segments of the population in the northeast. If Kanu has been similarly killed, his death could push many Igbo into the arms of IPOB or even more radical movements.

If IPOB wishes to resurrect the cause of a decades-old conflict, the oil-rich Niger Delta is a region where conflict risks emerging as the result of much fresher wounds. Fighting in the delta began in the 1990s thanks to disputes between foreign oil companies and local minority communities such as the Ijaw and Ogoni. The pervasive corruption of the Nigerian state ensures that most of the profits from the oil industry go to political and business elites in Lagos and Abuja while the delta communities grapple with the environmental damage. The conflict accelerated after the execution of several peaceful Ogoni activists by state security forces in the mid-2000s. Militants frequently blew up or sabotaged pipelines and kidnapped foreign workers for ransom. In 2009, President Umaru Yar'Adua announced an amnesty that included monthly stipends for any militant who would disarm, as well as lucrative contracts to guard oil installations. This bribery tempered the insurgency, but it did not prevent the militants from continuing their other criminal activities (which include drugs and arms trading).

When Buhari took office, he diverted \$1 billion from Nigeria's excess crude account to ramp up the fight against Boko Haram. This cut into the slush fund for the delta militants and, inevitably, prompted a backlash. The fact that Buhari is Fulani led many in the delta to see his move as an attempt to reward a northern community at the expense of the delta populations. That the fight against Boko Haram has been accompanied by staggering corruption has only contributed to this image. In March 2016, a new group

called the Niger Delta Avengers began attacking pipelines, causing Nigeria to temporarily fall behind Angola as Africa's largest oil producer.

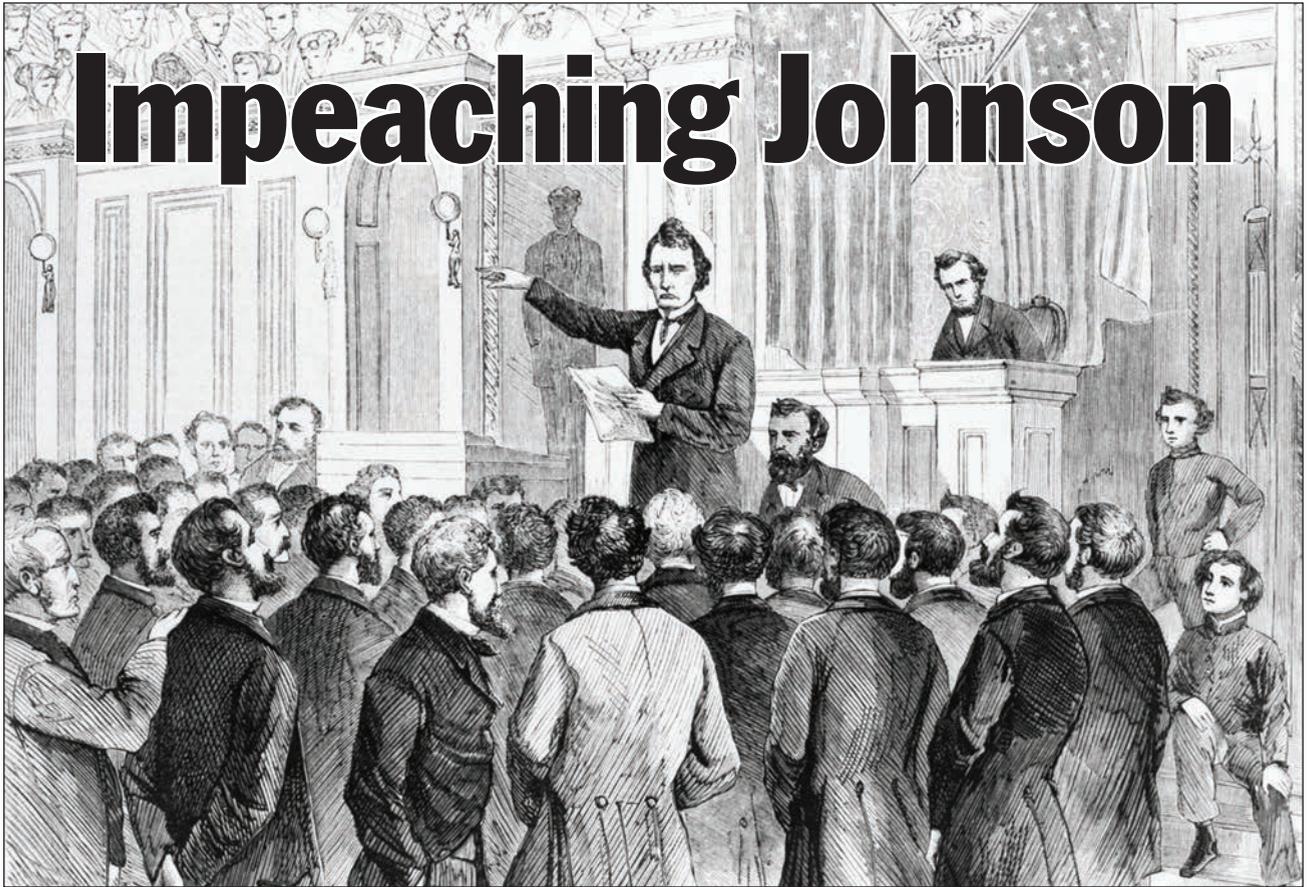
The Avengers' attacks have not yet reached the scale of the conflict prior to the amnesty, but they have exposed a crippling weakness in Nigeria's approach to security. The smash-and-forget model of brutally suppressing dissent to the point that it morphs into insurgency and then buying off the militants leaves the state in perpetual fear of old foes taking up arms again. In the Niger Delta, any time erstwhile militants are dissatisfied with the state patronage, they can put a stranglehold on the country's economic lifeblood by attacking the oil infrastructure. What does this foretell for the conflicts in the Middle Belt or for Nigeria's small Shia population, hundreds of whom were killed by security forces during 2015 protests?

Nigeria's shortcomings in governance and conflict resolution are intertwined with the generational challenges arising from an ever-more populous and diverse society. If Boko Haram is defeated, the Nigerian government will still face a northeastern population that largely supports political Islam in one form or another. And regardless of if and how the Middle Belt conflicts are resolved, Fulani herdsman must grapple with an ecological reality that means many will have to seek other forms of livelihood than the pastoralism which has defined their communities for centuries. The Nigerian government can presumably prevent a Biafran state from ever taking form, but Igbo nationalism will not die quietly. The list goes on.

These challenges are as old as the country's independence from Britain in 1960, and proposals for greater decentralization have gained influential backers in recent years. "Efforts at wishing away the problem associated with the Nigerian federation have only resulted in several tribal, ethnic, and religious movements that have even metamorphosed into terrorist syndicates," Yakubu Dogara, a stalwart in Buhari's All Progressives Congress party and the speaker of Nigeria's house of representatives, said in March. "One can, therefore, no longer fold his arms but engage some of the issues that have confronted us as a nation and threatened the federation."

Any plan faces strong opposition from many in the country's political elite, but the rise of such discussions reflects a recognition of the need for new thinking. U.S. policy towards Nigeria, on the other hand, continues to be driven by the same short-term security concerns. The U.S. approach clearly recognizes the gravity of the threat posed by jihadist groups in West Africa. But if the United States ignores Nigeria's counterproductive approach towards managing both violent insurgency and peaceful dissent, the partnership will be marred by perpetual concern that Nigeria's conflicts never die, but simply lie dormant. ♦

# Impeaching Johnson



Rep. Thaddeus Stevens for the prosecution: the last speech in the trial of President Andrew Johnson

*One hundred and fifty years ago this month, the Senate put the president on trial. Nobody emerged with his reputation enhanced.*

**BY ALLEN C. GUELZO**

**I**mpeachment is what democracies resort to when they can't hold an election but don't want to trigger a revolution.

Impeachment appears in the Constitution (Article II, Section 4) as a restraint on "all civil Officers of the United States," paving the way for their removal if convicted of "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." But impeachment is not a particularly clear-edged weapon. Treason and bribery seem fairly obvious as offenses, but what are "high crimes and misdemeanors"? Congress resorted uncertainly to impeachment over its first 81 years, and only to impeach four judges, two of whom it failed to convict. It would not be until 1868 that a Congress could

nerve itself to impeach a president, and the reason why that hesitation ended had a great deal to do with the man who then occupied the White House, Andrew Johnson.

As Abraham Lincoln's vice president, Andrew Johnson inherited the presidency on the morning of April 15, 1865, after Lincoln died from the gunshot wound inflicted by his assassin, John Wilkes Booth. Born in North Carolina in 1808 and orphaned at age 10, Johnson looked, on first meeting, like a copy of Lincoln's own rise from log-cabin poverty. Beginning as a tailor's apprentice, Johnson moved to Tennessee, won election as mayor of Greeneville, then to the state legislature, then as governor, and finally to the U.S. Senate in 1857.

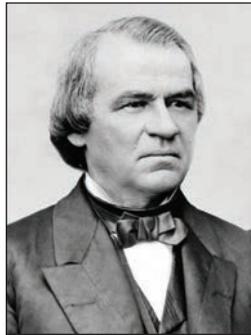
True, Johnson differed markedly from Lincoln in being a lifelong Democrat, and he had even owned slaves. But he was also a fervent Unionist and owed nothing to the plantation grandees who dragged the nation into civil war. He was the only senator from a Confederate state who refused to

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withdraw from Congress at his state's demand, and in 1862, Lincoln appointed Johnson military governor of occupied Tennessee. It seemed to Lincoln's Republicans that pinning Johnson to the Lincoln reelection ticket in 1864 would lure moderate Democrats to support Lincoln and provide the best proof that Lincoln and his party were not simply Southern-haters looking to exact a postwar revenge.

Just how wrong the Republicans were about Johnson became depressingly clear even before Lincoln's murder. Although he had no love for the thousand-bale planters, he also had no enthusiasm for freed slaves. When Johnson promised black Tennesseans in October 1864 that he would be "your Moses, and lead you through the Red Sea of war and bondage to a fairer future of liberty and peace," that future was only as part of "a *White Man's Government in America*." He showed up for his inauguration on March 4, 1865, drunk beyond any hope of disguise, and gave a rambling speech celebrating his "plebeian" origins. "This Johnson is a queer man," Lincoln remarked, and in April, when the Confederate capital finally fell to Union forces, Lincoln ignored a suggestion that he and Johnson meet there.



Andrew Johnson

Lincoln had always been reluctant to announce any elaborate plan for the postwar reconstruction of the Southern Confederacy. But he did insist on at least two general principles, the first being that any reconstruction initiatives belonged to the executive branch, not to Congress or the courts, and the second being that the Southern states should be reabsorbed into the normal functions of the Union as soon as possible. Johnson did not disagree with those principles—which is why, for the first six weeks of his presidency, he enjoyed something of a honeymoon with the powerful Republican majority in Congress.

But by the summer of 1865, it was becoming apparent that Johnson had a very different notion from Lincoln of what *as soon as possible* meant, and a wildly aggressive notion of executive power. On May 29, Johnson issued the first of a series of ever-expanding amnesties to "civil or diplomatic officers" of the Confederacy. He followed that immediately with proclamations authorizing the re-creation of state governments in the defeated Confederacy that could send representatives and senators to Washington when the 39th Congress opened for business in December. They promptly and unwisely elected many of the ex-Confederates Johnson had just amnestied. Johnson's new state governments grudgingly accepted the abolition of slavery. But they just as quickly replaced slavery with "black codes," designed to bind the freed slaves into virtual peonage.

This was not what Republicans had fought the Civil

War to win. Johnson's program seemed to Massachusetts senator Charles Sumner to be "like a somersault or an apostasy." Astonished Republicans caucused prior to the opening of Congress and agreed to ban the ex-Confederate members from taking seats, and then created a joint House-Senate Committee on Reconstruction that would reclaim management of the process from the executive branch. They funded the Freedmen's Bureau, to give economic assistance to the freed slaves; they passed a Civil Rights Act that overturned the "black codes"; and in February of 1867 they adopted the first of four Reconstruction Acts that seized control of Reconstruction from Johnson's hands and reduced the former Confederate states to occupied military districts.

Johnson, with mounting irritability, vetoed each bill. Congress, with mounting confidence, overrode the vetoes.

Even so, as president, Johnson still had considerable opportunity to interfere with Congress's Reconstruction plans. The military districts would be ruled by generals

whom Johnson appointed, and after Johnson bluntly asked General in Chief Ulysses Grant whom he would support "if I should have trouble with Congress," rumors began to thicken that Johnson was planning a military coup. That was the moment when the word *impeachment* came to life in Republican mouths.

There had been mutterings about impeaching Johnson as early as 1866, and a motion for impeachment made it to the floor of the House of Representatives on January 7, 1867. But the best rationale disgruntled Republicans could offer for impeachment was their political rage at Johnson's policies, and policies—even Johnson's—do not qualify as high crimes and misdemeanors. The motion died in the Judiciary Committee.

Emboldened, Johnson gave alienated Republicans a bigger stick to beat him with. Johnson had been purging the cabinet he inherited from Lincoln, and by the summer of 1867, he had successfully forced out any but unquestioning loyalists—except for the formidable secretary of war Edwin M. Stanton. To protect Stanton and other Republican officeholders, congressional Republicans passed the Tenure of Office Act, which insisted that any federal officeholder whose appointment had required the "advice and consent" of the Senate could not be dismissed without similar "advice and consent." More than that, the bill contained an impeachment trap. A violation of "any of the provisions" of the act "shall be deemed . . . a high misdemeanor."

Johnson vetoed the act, but the veto was overridden. Enraged, he deliberately put his foot into the trap. When

the 40th Congress recessed on July 21, 1867, Johnson suspended Stanton from office and named Ulysses Grant interim secretary of war.

This provided Republicans with what they thought was the key to impeaching Johnson. The explicit manner in which the Tenure of Office Act defined its violations as “high misdemeanors” finally seemed to provide a statutory basis for impeachment. Not quite. Johnson displayed some craftiness of his own by merely “suspending” Stanton, and when Congress reconvened in late November, a second impeachment motion went down to defeat in a floor vote.

This little victory convinced Johnson that he held the winning cards, and on February 21, 1868, arguing “that self-respect demanded it,” Johnson ordered Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas to deliver a dismissal notice to Stanton and assume the duties of secretary of war. Stanton refused; he refused, in fact, to vacate the War Department at all and set up temporary living quarters in his office, confident that Congress would support him.

Which it did, because now Johnson, by *dismissing* Stanton, was in clear and unambiguous violation of the Tenure of Office Act. With near-gee, the House of Representatives, following the lead of the implacable Pennsylvania Republican Thaddeus Stevens, voted 126 to 47 to impeach.

Unhappily for Stevens and the Republicans, the case against Johnson was feebler than it seemed, and obtaining a conviction more thorny with difficulty. The impeachment took the form of 11 articles, bristling with irritation. But irritation does not translate into proof of criminality, and reduced to cold type, the articles sounded petty and spiteful. There was also serious question about the Tenure of Office Act’s constitutionality and even more doubt about the propriety of destroying a president for what amounted to a personnel dispute.

Moreover, the Constitution specifies (Article I, Section 3) that “the Senate shall have the sole Power to try all Impeachments” and that the senators must summon a two-thirds supermajority in order to convict. Nudging that bar a little higher, it also stipulates that when the president is the object, “the Chief Justice” of the Supreme Court “shall preside.” The chief justice, in 1868, was Salmon P. Chase, Lincoln’s onetime secretary of the Treasury. Chase was aware that if Johnson were convicted, there was no sitting vice president to succeed him (the office had been left vacant when Johnson assumed the presidency). The man who would therefore inherit the presidential mantle would be the president *pro tempore* of the Senate, the fierce Ohioan Benjamin Wade, and Chase detested Wade. No motion that favored the prosecution was liable to be approved by Chase; and no one else in the Senate who

loathed Wade would, no matter how much they disliked Johnson, give a vote that made Wade president.

But it was the House prosecution that turned into its own worst enemy. The House designated seven managers to conduct Johnson’s trial in the Senate, and of the seven, Thaddeus Stevens was the most likely to take the lead. But Stevens was in rapidly declining health, and the primary role in prosecuting Johnson fell instead to the most eminently dislikable of the seven, Benjamin Butler of Massachusetts. Butler converted the trial, which began on March 30, into a farce of witness-badgering, legal nitpicking, and bluster.

Johnson, by contrast, allowed his attorney general, Henry Stanbery, to build a sterling defense team that included former Supreme Court justice Benjamin Curtis and William M. Evarts, who had moved the unanimous nomination of Abraham Lincoln at the 1860 Republican convention. It did nothing to hurt Johnson that behind the scenes, Johnson’s secretary of state, William Henry Seward, had put his New York political machine into action to spread strategic cash and promises of government patronage to swing votes among the senators.

By the time closing arguments ended on May 6, gamblers were already quoting odds in Johnson’s favor. Ten days later, the Senate took its first vote, on the eleventh of the impeachment articles, which the managers hoped would be the most likely to get the required supermajority. It didn’t. The final tally was 35 to convict, but 19 against conviction—just shy of the necessary two-thirds. On May 26, the managers tried again, calling for votes on the second and third articles. They failed once more, and at that point, Chief Justice Chase adjourned the proceedings for good.

Impeachment wrecked what was left of Johnson’s presidency, and even though he managed to win reelection to the Senate in 1875, his impeachment is almost all that Americans remember about him. But his impeachers did not fare well either. Thaddeus Stevens died less than three months after the trial; three of the managers—Butler, John Bingham, and James F. Wilson—were tarnished by scandals in the 1870s, and none of them enjoyed political success afterwards. There is a deep instinct in the American political soul that prefers to solve its presidential problems at the ballot box, even if it has to tolerate presidential misbehavior in the meantime. Gouverneur Morris argued at the Constitutional Convention that elections, not impeachments and trials, were the best test of any accusations of high crimes and misdemeanors by presidents. “In case he should be reelected,” Morris advised, “that will be sufficient proof of his innocence.” A century and a half later, we have still not fully absorbed that warning. ♦



# The Sting of Satire

*Today's church provides plenty of targets for the Babylon Bee.*

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

One of the most successful new media outlets in America does nothing but publish fake news. If that seems like a bad thing, it should be noted that the website in question is even more dedicated to spreading the Good News. Adam Ford, the founder and only full-time employee of the *Babylon Bee*, a Christian satire website, is clearly surprised at his success. “On the first of March, we celebrated two years in existence, and a couple of days later I noticed we had passed 100 million page views,” Ford tells *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*. The *Bee*’s social media presence—it now has over 400,000 followers

*Mark Hemingway is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

**How to Be a Perfect Christian**  
*Your Comprehensive Guide to Flawless Spiritual Living*  
 by Adam Ford and Kyle Mann  
 Multnomah, 208 pp., \$19.99

on Facebook and nearly 100,000 followers on Twitter—has grown quickly too. “All of this was totally organic. We’ve never run an ad, never boosted a post, never spent a dollar on spreading the word. And we’ve had no outside funding. Our growth has been totally driven by the content.”

If you’re one of the shrinking number of people to have never encountered an article from the *Babylon Bee*, the publication could be described as something like a Christian (largely Protestant) version of

the *Onion*. With such headlines as “Treasure In Heaven Revealed To Be Bitcoin,” “Satan Sprinkles A Few More Stegosaurus Bones Across Nation To Test Christians’ Faith,” and “Opinion: My God Is An Imaginary Deification Of My Idiotic And Contradictory Personal Opinions,” you can see where the site gets some of its conceptual inspiration.

The *Bee* taps into a huge audience less accustomed to being the subject of well-intended comedy than of being made the butt of jokes. “There was a kind of a thirst for that perspective. The *Onion*’s really funny, but a lot of [its humor] comes from a secular and even anti-religion” point of view, says Kyle Mann, the *Bee*’s head writer. “Whenever there’s a big topic of national discussion” that in some way might touch on religion,

TWS ART: OSTEEN; COOPER NEILL / GETTY

comedy and satire in general seem to have only “that one perspective.”

But the *Bee* doesn't just want to be a Christian spin on the *Onion*. The site regularly makes fun of evangelical America's tendency to produce bad, faith-based facsimiles of things that are popular in secular culture (see “Holy Spirit Empowers Man To Make It Through Christian Movie”). The *Bee* also mines humor from a part of American life and culture that secular comedians don't know the first thing about. If you're not already theologically conversant or a regular churchgoer, you may not even understand why headlines such as “Calvinist Dog Corrects Owner: ‘No One Is A Good Boy,’” “Rude Mother Fails To Put Baby On Silent Mode Before Church Service,” and “Pew Pencil Sharp” would make Christians scrolling through their Facebook feeds laugh out loud.

Now, two years after its launch, the *Bee* is going multimedia, with the release of the site's first spinoff book, *How to Be a Perfect Christian*. The book is an extended parody of a grab-bag of regrettable tropes in the Christian publishing industry's self-help genre. “We didn't want to do a collection of greatest hits because, honestly, that just seemed too easy,” Ford says. “We wanted to expand into a new realm.” Doing a standalone book seemed like “a way to leave a mark on culture that is more deep and lasting” than a collection of parody articles.

*How to Be a Perfect Christian* “is going to go down in the annals of history as a turning point for Christianity,” the first chapter says. “Think *Pilgrim's Progress* or *The Purpose Driven Life*, then kick it up a few levels.” Taking the form of a how-to guide, the book leads readers from picking a parish (“A church that will help you achieve perfection will have a superslick website”—and don't forget the “essential” church coffee shop and, preferably, laser lights for the sanctuary) to fellowship and ministry (“Your goal at the potluck is to enjoy as much food as possible while providing the absolute minimum contribution yourself”) to memes and emojis (“All the great Christians of centuries past found that they were closest to God when just abso-

lutely blasting people on Facebook”).

Although all manner of hypocritical pomposity and pretense comes in for parody in the book, many of the most pointed moments involve the commercial aspects of church life today (“An Ohio man once shopped at a shopping mall for over twenty years before realizing it was actually a church”). The nexus of evangelicals and conservative culture warriors also provides plenty of material. At the close of each chapter, a helpful holiness tracker monitors progress toward perfection; by the book's end, the careful reader, “doing the right things and avoiding the wrong things,” will be just as perfect and holy as Jesus himself.

‘Passion Of The Christ’ Sequel To Feature Jesus Helping Founders Establish America

Evil Christians Oppress Secular New Yorkers With Delicious Chicken Sandwiches

It's safe to say that thus far, to the extent it has noticed, secular America is confounded by the success of the *Babylon Bee*. In March, Facebook threatened to reduce the visibility of the *Bee*'s stories. The reason? One of Facebook's fact-checking partners, Snopes.com, obliviously labeled a *Bee* story (“CNN Purchases Industrial-Sized Washing Machine to Spin News Before Publication”) false rather than satire. Considering how important Facebook traffic is to Internet publications, the threat was no joke.

“We've been ‘Snoped’ before a number of times, but this was the first time Facebook used it to threaten us and to redirect readers away from our link and to Snopes's website,” says Ford. “Over an article about CNN spinning news in a washing machine! It was just insane.” Snopes has fact-checked more than a dozen other *Babylon Bee* stories in the last two years. Last fall, the *Bee* even responded to all the unwarranted attention by publishing an article entitled “Snopes Rates *Babylon Bee* World's Most Accurate News Source.” After an outcry on social media about the *Bee*'s mistreatment over the CNN gag, Facebook came

to its senses and issued a public statement calling its treatment of the *Bee* a mistake. For its part, Snopes has continued to classify *Bee* stories as false, as it occasionally does stories from the *Onion* and other satirical publications, but has apparently not repeated the mistake of labeling *Bee* stories as false in Facebook's fact-checking system.

As the CNN story suggests, the *Bee* is at least sympathetic to political conservatism and religious traditionalism. “Obviously there are topics that we just pound on again and again and we show no mercy on,” says Mann. “We hit Planned Parenthood and abortion pretty hard. That's just the biggest tragedy in our culture.” However, in a climate in which evangelical leaders responded to the previous Democratic president's suing nuns over paying for birth control by unreservedly endorsing the election of a publicly adulterous casino magnate, the *Bee* finds no shortage of targets among Christian conservatives, in addition to mocking the godless left.

Recent articles such as “Republican Party Publishes New, Improved Edition Of Jesus's Beatitudes” and an op-ed purportedly written by King David headlined “If You Could Stop Comparing Me To Donald Trump, That'd Be Great” testify to the fact that Ford and Mann grasp a fundamental problem with religion and politics: American Christians may be enamored of the idea of civil religion, but Jesus clearly wasn't. At one point in *How to Be a Perfect Christian*, Ford and Mann twist the quotation famously attributed to St. Francis of Assisi and sarcastically exhort Christians to “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use the voting booth.”

The *Bee* is largely ecumenical in the way it ribs all corners of Christendom. Ford and Mann are understandably coy about revealing their own religious affiliations, though they both seem to share a deep understanding of, and even affinity for, the culture of evangelicalism. However, much of their humor derives from critiquing the excesses of the megachurch experience that defines worship for millions of Americans (“Elevation Church Debuts Water Slide Baptism,” “Holy Spirit Unable To

Move Through Congregation As Fog Machine Breaks”). And they do draw a clear line on certain doctrinal matters—like the prosperity gospel, which Mann says is “one of the most dangerous things out there, and that’s within our own camp, that’s within evangelicalism or Christianity.” Prosperity gospel teaches that doing good works and acting righteous will bring you wealth and success. Although considered by many Christian leaders to be a heresy, prosperity gospel is preached by some major televangelists. Its best-known popularizer is Houston megachurch pastor, bestselling author, and Oprah consort Joel Osteen. He is probably the *Bee*’s favorite punching bag, inspiring such stories as “Joel Osteen Sails Luxury Yacht Through Flooded Houston To Pass Out Copies Of *Your Best Life Now*,” “Joel Osteen’s Bible Spotted Shivering Under Seedy Freeway Overpass,” “Joel Osteen Apologizes For Using Lord’s Name In Sermon,” and “Joel Osteen Launches Line Of Pastoral Wear: ‘Sheep’s Clothing.’”

However, Christians are commanded to put the best construction on things when rendering judgment about sinful behavior, and arguably the *Bee* has crossed lines it shouldn’t have. When televangelist and Trinity Broadcasting Network cofounder Jan Crouch died in 2016, the *Bee* published an article beginning:

As the nation mourns the sudden and unexpected loss of TBN co-founder Jan Crouch, various baffled prosperity gospel preachers have begun offering theories Tuesday on how Crouch could possibly have passed away, given her overabundance of faith, her supernatural ability to name and claim health and wealth at will, and her decades of collecting donations while promising that God’s will is for everybody to be wealthy and healthy.

Even fans of the *Bee* noted on the site’s Facebook page that it should perhaps not have mocked Crouch, her heretical beliefs notwithstanding, so soon after her death.

But good satire is often defined by fearlessness and not shirking from making readers uncomfortable for identifying with what’s being mocked. Ford doesn’t see the need to apologize for

being a satirist. “From God chiding Job in Job 38, to Elijah mocking the prophets of Baal, to Jesus’s famous ‘plank in the eye,’ satire is well established as biblical,” he says. “If being Christian means never criticizing anyone—even sharply—nobody told that to Jesus, or Paul, or countless others in the Bible.”

If *How to Be a Perfect Christian* is any indication, the *Bee* is unlikely to head in a kinder, gentler direction. Readers who attend churches that use T-shirt canons and who virtue-signal online or on bumper stickers instead of worshiping authentically and helping the poor are in for a lot of squirming. The book is an especially bold indictment coming from the reclusive Ford, a former atheist whose social anxiety is so pronounced it dashed his hopes of becoming a pastor and makes him very reluctant to talk to press or otherwise promote his own work. Fortunately for Ford, help is on the way. With the book coming out and the site’s continued growth, Mann plans to quit his job in the construction industry and work for the *Bee* full-time.

Despite the *Bee*’s success, Ford maintains “the real motivation behind launching the *Bee* continues to drive us: speaking truth into the culture in an engaging, intelligent way.” For his part, Mann sees the *Bee*’s mission as something more than chasing modern cultural relevance. He sees it as also harking back to a time when Christian leaders were not afraid to take a stand for what they believed. Reading Martin Luther’s satirical and harsh criticisms, Mann says, a reader today might react, “‘Wow, this is crazy. Is this guy even a Christian the way he talks to his theological opponents? We don’t really use that kind of language.’ And so when we come along and do it, I think it really does wake a lot of people up.” The comparison to Martin Luther might seem a bit much, as Mann is quick to concede: “I don’t want to overstate what we do, obviously; it’s comedy—it’s fun. But I do hope that once in a while someone reads the article, laughs, and then starts to think about it.”

Amen. ♦

BCA

# Learning to Like Ike

*The strategic savvy of an underestimated leader.*

BY TEVI TROY

**D**wight Eisenhower appears to be having a moment. A popular president who was nevertheless looked down on by the media and the smart set in his time, Ike has grown in historical reputation and is now seen as one of our greatest presidents. Similarly, the 1950s have come down in popular perception as a dull time, but they were a time of peace, prosperity, and American success—and a period in which Amer-

ica made significant social progress.

For these reasons—and perhaps also because recent presidents may have made Americans nostalgic for some bygone aspects of midcentury politics—there are at least three new books on Ike that bear examination. In a short biography, Louis Galambos, an editor of Eisenhower’s papers, discusses how Eisenhower went from a humble childhood in Abilene, Kansas, to leading the Allied forces in World War II and then to the presidency. James Simon takes a narrower approach, examining Eisenhower’s relationship with chief justice and former California governor Earl Warren in the context of the civil rights stirrings of the 1950s. And

*Tevi Troy is a presidential historian and former White House aide. His most recent book is Shall We Wake the President? Two Centuries of Disaster Management from the Oval Office.*

William Hitchcock looks at the 1950s overall as exemplified and shaped by Eisenhower and his presidency.

For readers looking for an overview of Eisenhower's life and career, the Galambos book is a fine choice. Eisenhower the young man appeared to have very few prospects for greatness. He stumbled into West Point and didn't do particularly well while there. He accumulated many demerits, a significant number of them for the misdemeanor of smoking cigarettes, a lifelong habit that would contribute to the health problems he faced during his presidency. In the Army as a career officer, his forward progress was stalled for a long time, in part because his (correct) analysis that the United States needed to evolve beyond infantry and into mechanized tank warfare annoyed the Army brass. His friend George Patton, who was in the cavalry, was given more latitude to make similar arguments.

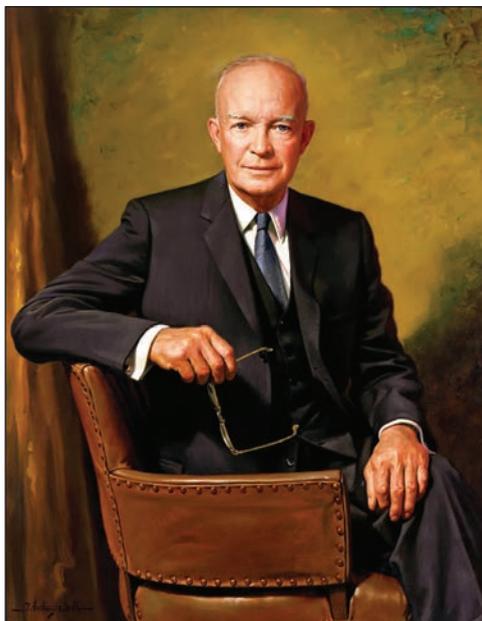
The tutelage of General Fox Conner rescued Eisenhower. Conner recognized something special in Ike and helped him get his career on track. The general gave the younger officer something like a course in grand strategy: Conner taught Ike about leadership and introduced him to books that helped broaden his horizons and his historic vision. He also had him read Clausewitz multiple times; later, as president, Eisenhower would impress national security staffers by quoting Clausewitz from memory.

Even with Conner's help, though, Ike's elevation to the top position in the U.S. Army in World War II was no surefire thing. As Galambos shows, Eisenhower had to learn a thing or two about bureaucratic infighting and outmaneuvering rivals—skills that would serve him well in managing the complex and far-flung war effort.

Ike's hard-earned political savvy would also serve him well as president.

Overall, the Eisenhower presidency was successful—and judged so both at the time and from today's vantage.

Ike served two full terms as the U.S. economy hummed and the country artfully ended one war and then avoided new military entanglements. He also shone in relation to his successors over



#### **Eisenhower**

*Becoming the Leader of the Free World*  
by Louis Galambos  
Johns Hopkins, 280 pp., \$26.95

#### **Eisenhower vs. Warren**

*The Battle for Civil Rights and Liberties*  
by James F. Simon  
Liveright, 427 pp., \$35

#### **The Age of Eisenhower**

*America and the World in the 1950s*  
by William I. Hitchcock  
Simon & Schuster, 650 pp., \$35

the next two decades. Following Eisenhower, no president managed to serve two full terms until Ronald Reagan.

Of course, he had his share of difficulties. Looking back he used to say that his biggest mistake was “putting that dumb son of a bitch” Earl Warren on the Supreme Court, and as chief justice no less. The title of Simon's *Eisenhower vs. Warren* suggests that the book focuses on the opposition and rivalry of the two men, but that is somewhat misleading; it is almost a dual biography. The direct confrontations between them were relatively few. They did, however, take differ-

ent views of how to pursue the issue of integration. According to Simon, Warren never forgave Eisenhower for not putting the full weight of the presidency behind Warren's groundbreaking *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Even with Eisenhower's more measured approach to things, the truth is the rivalry was much overblown, especially when compared to some of those *within* presidential administrations. With Eisenhower and Warren, their core differences hinged on their views of the Constitution and federal power and did not arise from specific personal animosities.

Ike's organizational genius and steady leadership defined the decade of the 1950s. This is the theme of Hitchcock's big book, *The Age of Eisenhower*—a look at the Eisenhower presidency in the context both of domestic politics and America's dominant role on the world stage. The latter is treated at greater length: From Sputnik to Castro to the Suez crisis to the shooting down by the Soviets of U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers, Hitchcock's impressive tour of international developments shows Eisenhower not as passive or merely responsive—and certainly not as the simpleton that so many of his contemporaries in the press and in the public took him to be—but as hands-on, engaged, and strategically minded during those critical Cold War years. Hitchcock draws on considerable recent scholarship that backs up this revisionist understanding of Ike.

Like Eisenhower, President George W. Bush, for whom I worked, understood how he was underestimated—and sometimes used it to his advantage. Bush also used to say he didn't worry about the historical record because they're still writing books about the first George W.—Washington, that is. Bush was right: It's hard to tell in the moment what a president's legacy and enduring reputation will be. The passage of time has made it possible to see Eisenhower more clearly—and these three books help show why he belongs in the pantheon of great American presidents. ♦

# Feynman at 100

*The intuition and integrity of the influential physicist.*

BY ALGIS VALIUNAS

**R**ichard P. Feynman, born in Queens on May 11, 1918, was the most extraordinary physicist since Einstein. He was also, briefly and late in life, the most famous scientist in America, the one everybody saw on the news performing a public demonstration of crystalline logic that helped explain a national tragedy.

“Performing” is a loaded word here, for Feynman was a showman, a master teacher who was chosen at the age of 26 to lecture his assembled Manhattan Project colleagues about the theoretical and practical fundamentals of putting together an atomic bomb; who clarified the preposterous impossibilities of quantum electrodynamics (QED) so that laymen might have a chance of appreciating, if not necessarily understanding, the basic laws of physics, chemistry, and biology; and who showed how a piece of rubber plunged into a glass of ice water could reveal the reason the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded in midair.

Quantum electrodynamics describes the interaction of electrons with light, and it was Feynman’s signature theory. He laid the groundwork for it as a Princeton graduate student and elaborated it as a Cornell assistant professor in 1947-48; he shared the 1965 Nobel Prize in physics for this work, with Julian Schwinger and Shin’ichiro Tomonaga, who independently of one another worked out different versions

*Algis Valiunas, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, writes about scientists’ lives for the New Atlantis.*

of the theory. Judged by the standards of classical physics—or the standards of common sense—QED seems absurd, as Feynman enjoyed telling baffled audiences. Electrons behave at once like



*Richard Feynman at Caltech, 1959*

particles and like waves; positrons, the antimatter counterparts to electrons, can be conceived as electrons traveling backward in time; light does not travel from one point to another in a single straight line but rather pursues every possible path along the way.

And yet the experiments prove the outlandish theory correct. Feynman called it the most reliable and comprehensive theory there is, whose truths paradoxically certify the very laws of classical physics they plainly upend. He was entitled to brag a little:

Out of quantum electrodynamics come all known electrical, mechanical, and chemical laws: the laws for

the collision of billiard balls, the motions of wires in magnetic fields, the specific heat of carbon monoxide, the color of neon signs, the density of salt, and the reactions of hydrogen and oxygen to make water are all consequences of this one law.

Feynman’s QED was a dazzling alternative to the forbidding mathematical tangle of Julian Schwinger’s theory, and Feynman made his version all the more attractive with the invention of the Feynman diagrams: On space-time coordinates, line segments represent the motions of electrons and positrons, wiggly lines stand for photons of light being emitted or absorbed, and loops denote some of their more arcane interactions. Although the diagrams can get exceedingly complicated, they proved not nearly as daunting as Schwinger’s algebra; they became a standard instrument in most every physicist’s repertoire, and for a host of uses besides QED.

**F**eynman was renowned for his unrelenting energy, which he turned to one question after another. Admirers who know about such things tend to agree that he did Nobel-worthy work on the frictionless superfluidity of liquid helium at the temperature of absolute zero, the weak interaction in radioactive decay, and the strong interaction that holds

the atomic nucleus together. With less success he also investigated the effect of wind on ocean waves, explored turbulence in gases and liquids, and hauled away at quantum gravitation, which had stymied Einstein. It frustrated Feynman as well—but failure was another way of learning something essential.

Feynman left Cornell for Caltech around 1951 and spent the rest of his career there. He loved his work and he loved his life. Physics was glorious play for him, as he declared repeatedly, and trying to make some sense of the physical world was his inborn response to what he called the wonder and miracle of Nature. Not that he ever gave a

serious thought to Nature's God: He had no need of that hypothesis. He avoided the metaphysical or religious question of why things are as they are, which science at any rate cannot answer; describing how things work would have to suffice. In that sphere he was peerless in his day, acclaimed by his colleagues for his preternatural intuitive grasp of problems that merely formidable minds sweated and groaned over to no avail. Some of his lectures for undergraduates were collected and published in 1964; they have sold more than 1.5 million copies in English and are still widely read.

A crackerjack storyteller, Feynman—who never lost his New York accent—collected autobiographical anecdotes in “*Surely You're Joking, Mr. Feynman!*” and “*What Do You Care What Other People Think?*” The charming stories in these books of his, and in such books about him as James Gleick's 1992 biography, *Genius*, depict his vivid, loopy, sometimes brash, and largely alluring personality; his finding diversion in recreational drugs, bongo drums, topless bars, and other amusements not commonly associated with topflight physicists; and his sometimes complicated love life.

When Feynman was asked to serve on the government commission of inquiry into the *Challenger* disaster in 1986, he was suffering from two rare forms of cancer that would kill him two years later. He proved invaluable to the commission's work. His famous experiment demonstrated that the rubber O-rings in the rocket booster failed to expand as necessary at an air temperature just below freezing, allowing hot gas to escape from within and precipitate the space shuttle's explosion. Moreover, he demonstrated the moral courage the other commissioners lacked, calling out NASA managers for their failure to heed the warnings of their engineers and identifying the design problem that built failure into the shuttle system. “Nature cannot be fooled,” he closed his jeremiad on NASA's follies. The only authority Richard Feynman recognized was the truth, and his devotion to that inviolable standard honored him and the scientific calling. ♦

B&A

# Colony Chaos

Christopher Buckley's latest is a romp through 17th-century New England. BY ADAM KEIPER

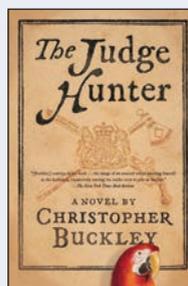
Christopher Buckley's style of satire has a peculiar bite: It nibbles, nibbles, nibbles—gently, even delightfully—before chomping down and leaving teeth marks as distinctive as any known to forensic science. In such novels as *Thank You for Smoking*, *Little Green Men*, *Florence of Arabia*, and *Boomsday*, he gnawed at journalists, spies, lobbyists, and other assorted taffies. But he seems to have tired of the taste of present-day

political culture. His last book, 2015's *The Relic Master*, is a tale of historical fiction set in the 1500s; his new book, *The Judge Hunter*, is set in the 1600s; and he apparently aims to write subsequent books set in subsequent centuries through our own.

*The Judge Hunter* is a brisk adventure with protesting Quakers, dour Puritans, violent Indian tribes, and a Brazilian parrot. The great English diarist Samuel Pepys gets the story rolling in 1664. He wants to be rid of Balthasar de St. Michel, his wife's nuisance of a brother, and so contrives to have him shipped off to New England on a royal assignment to hunt down two fugitive judges who had signed the death warrant for Charles I in 1649. What Pepys doesn't know, however, is that his in-law's mission has a secret secondary purpose: “Balty” is, simply by being his dunderheaded self, to raise a ruckus not only in New England but in New Netherland, antagonizing

and confusing the Dutch leadership there to soften them up for an invasion by a small English fleet.

Many of the personages Pepys and Balty encounter were real: Lord Downing, who masterminded the covert plans to take over New Netherland and for whom Downing Street is named; John Winthrop (the Younger), governor of the colony of Connecticut; Rev. John Davenport, a cofounder of New Haven; and Peter Stuyvesant, the grouchy,



bird-loving director-general of New Netherland whose name is still on many institutions around New York. The regicide judges were real fugitives, too, although Balty's character is largely a creation of Buckley, and Balty's mysterious bodyguard Huncks, as competent as Balty is incompetent, is entirely fictional.

Buckley's signature wordplay transposes well to 17th-century England and America, and anyone familiar with the real Pepys will take special pleasure in Buckley's pitch-perfect fictional diary entries for him. In *The Judge Hunter*, as in most of Buckley's other books, the stakes somehow never quite seem real—his wit keeps us at a safe remove from the blood being shed—although there are some affecting moments. But the point of the thing is in the adventure and in the glimpses of a past that is distant but familiar, not only because of the names that still resonate three centuries on but because all the manners of stupidity and greed, intrigue and intrepidity he describes are still very much with us today. ♦

Adam Keiper is Books & Arts editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

# Revisions of Love

*Unreliable memories of a passionate affair  
and its aftermath.* BY DIANE SCHARPER

Although the focus of Julian Barnes's compelling new novel, *The Only Story*, is a love affair, it isn't merely a book about love. It is mainly about memory and the vagaries of memory. Nor does Barnes tell just one story. He tells three, weaving their threads together. It's only after you've finished reading the book that you understand the nature of what you've read.

At first it might seem that Barnes—the recipient of numerous literary awards, including the Man Booker Prize for his 2011 novel *The Sense of an Ending*—has written a British variation of *The Graduate*. The narrative begins in the late 1960s, as 19-year-old Paul Roberts is home from university for the summer and has joined a tennis club where he meets 48-year-old Susan Macleod. She stands out from the other suburban London types whom Paul scorns, along with their middle-class values. His first sight of Susan, standing in the sunlight in her white tennis dress with green trim and buttons and a green ribbon tied insouciantly in her hair, could have come right out of James Joyce's classic on first love, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*.

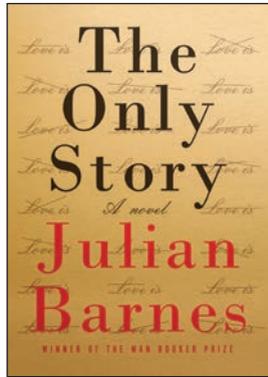
Nothing happens at that first meeting, Paul says. But he's already interested in her and suggests as much to her.

Soon he is playing tennis with Susan,

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## The Only Story

by Julian Barnes  
Knopf, 253 pp., \$25.95



driving her home, buying contraceptives, and meeting her family. Her overweight husband, Gordon, plays golf, works in the garden, and eats spring onions. Her two daughters are older than Paul by a few years and are busy with their university studies; neither of them seems interested in Paul, which is fine. *Everything is fine. Nothing bothers Paul.* In the blush of this first love, he is overflowing with youthful vitality:

I don't know when the habit developed ... but I used to hold her wrists.

Maybe it began in a game of seeing if I could encompass them with my middle fingers and thumbs. But it rapidly became something I did. ... What the exchange was about didn't need words. It was a gesture to calm her, to pass something from me to her. An infusion, a transfusion of strength. And of love. ... I simply thought: Well, that's the certainty of love between us settled, now the rest of life has to fall into place around it.

But *The Only Story* isn't really just a tale of first love. We see Paul not only as a young man; we also see him as middle-aged and then elderly. Set up to resemble a memoir, the story is told in first-, second-, and third-person points of view, with each section adding a new perspective to what came before. This postmodern technique—telling the story as *I*, *you*, and *he*, with somewhat conflicting accounts—can at times be cumbersome, although it

helps to deepen the emotional impact.

Readers who have lived and loved (and perhaps lost) will not be surprised to hear that the heady days of infatuation do not last. Barnes also seeds hints into the narrative that suggest worse days ahead.

In the second section, which begins a year or so later, Paul and Susan are living together and Susan's nascent alcoholism is dominating her life—and Paul's as well. Paul suggests that Susan attend a variation of Alcoholics Anonymous, but she rejects the idea because she's an atheist and the association has a religious connection. They've taken several trips to the hospital and the shrink—to no avail.

Paul also begins to remember “some stuff I left out” earlier in the story, which concerns Susan's husband Gordon's abusive behavior toward her. But what Paul remembers here seems to contradict his earlier portrayal of the mild-mannered man who works crossword puzzles and was more than forbearing about her affair.

In the third section, which takes place 50 years later—more or less in our present-day—Paul brings the story up to date with the death of his parents, who went from playing a significant role in Paul's life to becoming an afterthought. They go from being helicopter parents to MIAs who don't even try to contact their 21-year-old son after he moves out. This is hard to believe and makes one doubt the efficacy of Paul's memory.

By now, several characters have died, including Gordon—who, in recollection, seems to have changed again from an abusive husband to one who loved his wayward wife. Paul, meanwhile, has “handed Susan back” to one of her daughters because he can no longer care for—read love—her in her demented state. And although Paul is trying to preserve his memory of Susan and to protect her reputation, he's now wondering what love means and whether he's ever loved her. He's also wondering about death and whether he will be ready when it's his turn to hear the “shutting of the doors.”

Several images from the past are repeated in each section. One of the most compelling concerns Susan's

intent to kill herself: Susan has climbed out of the window. Paul is holding her by her wrists—recalling the gesture of their early love—and in a moment of clarity realizes that he doesn't have the strength to pull her back into the room. But he won't let her drop. "They were locked together at the wrists like trapeze artists: he wasn't just holding her, she was holding him."

The unstated question is whether she will have the ability to pull him down and destroy them both, a question that will not be answered until the novel's final pages and only with much remembering and misremembering of the facts and what Paul calls the "counterfactuals."

As Paul muses several times over this and other scenes, he arrives at a slightly different understanding of what happened. He also realizes that as he grows older, his memory may not be reliable and the remembered event may not have happened the way he thinks it did. It may not have happened at all.

Paul's uncertainty about events in his past makes the novel seem like a memoir and paradoxically adds to its authenticity—suggesting what Barnes in his own memoir *Nothing To Be Frightened Of* calls "beautiful shapely lies" that writers invent to tell a story and the way those lies state the truth.

In each stage of his life, Paul tries but fails to remember accurately the particulars of his time with Susan. He wonders whether memory is biased toward optimism or pessimism and finally decides that it is unreliable. Paul's musings are affected by Susan, who both as a mother figure and a lover often tells him that nothing is what it seems—a notion he at first dismisses but later uses to try to understand her behavior and his own response. Ultimately, none of this helps him to measure the effect of the affair on his life or on Susan's—which seems to be one of the novel's chief lessons.

The novel's other main lesson is to be found in the sound of those shutting doors—in a question that Paul raises several times during the book's final section: When death comes, will we be ready for it? Or will we, like Paul, feel that in spite of our best efforts, we have not really lived? Or loved? ♦

BCA

# Pivotal Pope

*Pius IX, the creation of modern Italy, and the transformation of the papacy.* BY LAWRENCE KLEPP



Engraving of Pope Pius IX giving concessions to his people, 1848

**I**n the waning light of a late November afternoon in Rome, in the year 1848, a man in the simple black garb of a parish priest could be seen leaving a back door of the Quirinal Palace, the papal residence. In front of the palace was an angry mob of 10,000 Romans, many of them armed. Meanwhile, in the pope's private quarters, the French ambassador was engaged in a long conversation ... with nobody. Alone in the room, he kept talking to convince any eavesdroppers that the pope was still there. For the exiting priest was Pope Pius IX in disguise.

He stepped into a waiting carriage, accompanied by a Bavarian count armed with a pistol. Pius was on his way to exile, though only his companion, the Bavarian ambassador, knew where—not Marseille, as the French ambassador thought, not Majorca, as the Spanish ambassador hoped, but a small town down the coast called Gaeta, under

Lawrence Klepp is a writer in New York.

## The Pope Who Would Be King

*The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe*

by David I. Kertzer  
Random House, 474 pp., \$35

the rule of the reactionary King Ferdinand II of Naples. He must have felt he was running for his life. A few days earlier a sniper in the crowd outside the Quirinal had shot dead a papal official looking out a window; a few days before that an assassin had slit the throat of the pope's new civilian prime minister.

It was a dramatic moment—and a stunning reversal of fortune in just two years. Giovanni Ferretti, an amiable, obscure cardinal, was unexpectedly elected pope in 1846, making him the absolute monarch, as all popes had been for over a thousand years, of a realm that in the 19th century stretched from Rome east to the Adriatic and north to include such cities as Bologna, Ferrara, and Ravenna.

The previous pope, Gregory XVI, was a morose, intransigent monk who made sure modern ills like railroads, scientific books, and liberal ideas were kept out of the Papal States. Pius IX—Pio Nono in Italian—seemed the opposite. He was modest, accommodating, and had a gift for mischievous irony. A British envoy found his conversation “easy and unrestrained, sometimes almost playful.” “After the dour Pope Gregory,” David Kertzer remarks, “Pio Nono was the pope who smiled.”

He quickly won over an initially suspicious Roman populace. His first official act was to free all political prisoners, followed by tentative reforms, including a constitution, plus railroads and telegraph lines. He soon became a familiar, unpretentious presence in Rome, taking daily walks through the streets, chatting with humble citizens along the way. Cries of “Viva Pio Nono!” were heard from the crowds at his public appearances.

The American writer Margaret Fuller, probably the first woman to be anyone’s foreign correspondent anywhere, was in Rome for the *New York Tribune*, and she sensed a basic decency—he had “set his heart upon doing something solid for the benefit of man.” In a quieter time, that might have been the whole story.

But in the revolutionary year of 1848, it was, to modify a Mel Brooks line, not so good to be king. Wherever you stepped in continental Europe, you had to watch out for falling dynasties. The revolutions, each with an elaborate script of its own, mostly failed in the end, but they changed everything, especially people’s minds.

And in Rome, as Kertzer makes clear, there was a lot to change one’s mind about. The city, with 170,000 residents, was far from a modern metropolis. Inside its walls were open fields where shepherds tended their flocks among the ancient ruins. The streets and Baroque churches had taken on a faded and melancholy aura. There were almost no industries except the ecclesiastical one (and the mendicant one: Beggars were notoriously numerous and shameless). And Italy, which hadn’t been united under one government since the Roman

Empire, was still a mosaic of anachronistic kingdoms and small duchies, with extensive territory, including Venice and Milan, under iron-fisted Austrian rule.

Pio Nono found himself ruling three million restive subjects who had no say in how they were ruled. It was a government of the priests, by the priests, and for the priests. Cardinals held the highest positions, living like princes in palatial residences. Parish priests exercised police powers, having the right to enter the rooms of ordinary Romans at any time in search of illicit sex, blasphemy, or banned books and to report offenders to the courts, where all the judges were priests.

*In 1848, it was, to modify a Mel Brooks line, not so good to be king. Wherever you stepped you had to watch out for falling dynasties.*

Stendhal, who loved all things Italian except the church, kept a journal that wittily portrays Rome in 1827-29. In it he writes, “When my young barber tells me about some absurd custom about which he complains, he always adds, ‘What do you expect, sir, we are ruled by priests!’”

And the problem for Pio Nono was that he was a ruling priest just when Romans were wondering if the theocratic arrangements in place since the 8th century needed to last forever. His reforms didn’t satisfy anyone—not the scheming cardinals and Jesuits who opposed them, not the emerging newspapers and tumultuous café political clubs that were openly demanding, as censorship broke down, a new representative, perhaps republican, form of government.

When Pio Nono refused to order the small papal army to join Italian forces fighting Austrians in the north, he went from acclaimed patriotic hero to reviled traitor almost overnight. The rest of the story, in Kertzer’s telling, is not only dramatic but, being Italian,

operatic—confusing plot, large cast of passionate, declamatory characters, cloak-and-dagger intrigue, and some satirical and sartorial sacrilege (e.g., prostitutes parading through Roman streets dressed in priestly garb).

Despite the initial mob-driven violence, the Roman republic that was proclaimed after the pope’s flight was orderly and moderate under the direction of Giuseppe Mazzini, who had returned from exile in London. Garibaldi, the other charismatic hero of Italian unification, arrived to take command of its defense. But, despite the valiant resistance of volunteers from all over Italy, it was doomed, as the Austrians competed with a French expeditionary force for the dubious distinction of crushing it.

The French, tripping over themselves every step of the way, won out, losing most of the principles and honor of their short-lived Second Republic in the process. They restored to precarious and unpopular sovereignty a pope who, during 17 months of exile with the sinister, cynical Cardinal Antonelli whispering in his ear, had lost all interest in reform. The mess made even Alexis de Tocqueville, briefly the French foreign minister, look bad.

And even that resolution postponed the inevitable downfall of the papal realm, soon reduced to Rome itself, by only 11 years. In 1870, French troops left the city, and the new kingdom of Italy took it over as its capital. Pio Nono, his sense of humor long gone, became a symbol of papal obduracy, issuing the famous Syllabus of Errors (one error being any notion that the pope should “reconcile himself to progress, liberalism, and modern civilization”). He also convened the Vatican Council that declared papal infallibility.

Kertzer deftly sets the Roman scene and extracts a captivating narrative from the standard 1848 labyrinth of conspiracy, illusion, heroism, and ineptitude. This is a book not only for Italophiles but for anyone interested in the way Europe backed into modernity. Stendhal, who didn’t live to see the events it vividly describes, would have relished it. ♦



# Crowded Crossover

*Infinity War is funny, grand, tragic.* BY JOHN PODHORETZ

I've been writing about superhero movies in this magazine for going on two decades now, and I think over that time I've established that I am not a fanboy. I didn't read the comics, I don't care how closely the characters or the plots hew to the originals, and I'm pretty bored by fight scenes between supernatural beings who can't actually kill each other and whose blows don't even seem to injure. I feel like an umpire with no rooting interest. I call balls and strikes. I like some superhero movies; some bore me; some are terrible. And I've learned to go in without preconceptions; I thought the trailer for *Guardians of the Galaxy* made it look horrifically bad and then found to my amazement that the movie itself was wonderful.

The characters from that movie have been woven into the Woodstock of superhero adventures, *Avengers: Infinity War*—an epic that features just about every Marvel superhero but Ant-Man (one of the more charming, actually). The Guardians learn, pretty much in an aside, that the planet they saved at the end of the first *Guardians* movie has just been obliterated. The obliterator is an interstellar strongman named Thanos who has decided to purify and save half the peoples of the universe by deleting the other half from existence. The movie details the efforts of the Marvel superheroes to stop him—efforts that prove shockingly unsuccessful.

*Infinity War* violates several standard storytelling rules. It does little to explain who the characters are or their relationships with each other, so if you haven't seen previous Marvel pictures, you're going to find some of the action

and plot developments confusing. But then, if you haven't seen the previous Marvel pictures, why would you start with this one? The 19 movies in the "Marvel Cinematic Universe" have grossed nearly \$16 billion worldwide over the past decade at the box office. For many multiplex attendees, the Marvel Cinematic Universe pictures



*A tiny subset of the Marvel gaggle*

have comprised the bulk of their theatrical moviegoing since 2008. *Infinity War* is best understood not as a stand-alone movie but as a season finale. Not even that—it's really just the first half of the season finale. And if the conclusion of *Guardians of the Galaxy* was as lighthearted as the resolution of *Back to the Future*, then you'd have to say *Infinity War* ends like *The Empire Strikes Back*.

In my role as the impartial umpire, I declare *Infinity War* a solid multibagger—maybe even a home run, though not a grand slam. It's two-and-a-half hours long, and it held my interest the entire time, even when the pointless punching and fighting scenes started to get on my nerves. To prove my bona fides here, I must note that I deeply disliked the original *Avengers* and its sequel, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. Happily, *Infinity War* has a visual grandeur they lacked, as well as a genuine lightness of touch and sense of humor—qualities that came across in the other *Avengers*

movies merely as petulant adolescent sarcasm. Directors Joe and Anthony Russo and screenwriters Christopher Markus and Stephen McFeely had to come up with a way to feature no fewer than 22 superheroes and sidekicks from previous Marvel movies, give each of them something distinctive to do, and connect them to others and to the larger tale told by the movie.

They achieve this aim by dividing up the characters into teams in different locations in the fight against Thanos and introducing each new team just as the story of the previous team's efforts starts to flag. So we're on earth with Iron Man, Dr. Strange, and Spider-Man for a while, and then move into outer space, where the Guardians meet up with Thor before returning to Earth and saying hello to Captain America and Black Panther, among others.

This keeps things very lively, and some of the pairings are simply inspired. Robert Downey Jr. (Iron Man) and Benedict Cumberbatch (Dr. Strange) swan about arguing like aristocrats in a Noël Coward drawing room; their interactions are delightful. Meanwhile, Chris Pratt's Star Lord desperately wants to compete with Chris Hemsworth's Thor, hurling quips at the Norse god who barely even knows he's alive. Their scenes are laugh-out-loud funny, and these two should be paired up in buddy comedies from now until the end of time.

Thanos is a silly-looking villain, with a face that seems like it was carved out of rock and the muscles of a steroid freak. But in Josh Brolin's beautifully modulated motion-capture performance, he comes across as an intellectual fanatic insanely committed to a Malthusian view of the universe's limits—a set of ideas that makes him into a genocidal monster and gives surprising weight and depth to his villainy. Next to Erik Killmonger of *Black Panther*, he's the best bad guy in the series. And what he does in the final 10 minutes of the movie, which are wholly unexpected and genuinely chilling, take *Infinity War* to a new place for a superhero picture: into the realm of tragedy.

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

◆ MARVEL STUDIOS / DISNEY

MEMORANDUM

From: HRC  
To: The Onward Together Social Media Crew  
Re: My Twitter bio

It’s been pointed out to me that my Twitter bio, which starts with “wife, mom, grandma,” reads like something out of a *Family Circle* bakeoff. Team, let’s hit the *peregruzka* (or is it *perezagruzka*? I can never remember) button on this matter.

Let’s focus on what really matters:

- Sec. of State / Senator / Head-Butter of Glass Ceilings
- Hobbies: hiking, knitting, Chardonnay
- Queller of bimbo eruptions
- Made Bill Clinton AND Donald Trump president

Let’s change my photo to this, where I’m wearing the lovely coat I made out of the carpetbag I carried to New York for my Senate run.

And lastly, the “New York, NY” address might be a tad too elitist. Can we change my locale to “State of Denial”?

Thanks as always,

