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DON'T WORRY, THEY'LL BE FINE

A little
parenting heresy
on smartphones
and screen time

BY LAURA VANDERKAM



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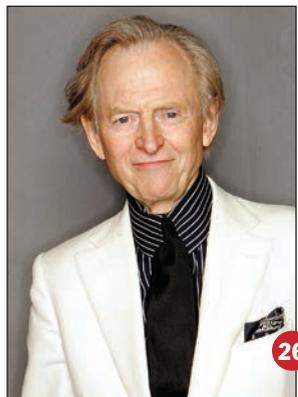
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COVER: GARY LOCKE

An Open Bathroom Door Policy

Like Paul Newman’s chain gang in *Cool Hand Luke*, Starbucks is suffering from a failure to communicate. First, of course, was the Philadelphia branch manager who had two African-American men arrested on the grounds they were loitering (they weren’t). Then, in a burst of enthusiasm and contrition, the company’s executive chairman, Howard Schultz, announced that from now on all Starbucks bathrooms would be open to everyone, even if they haven’t paid for a Frappuccino or some other sugar bomb.

“[W]e’re going to make the right decision 100 percent of the time and give people the key,” Schultz said at a gathering in Washington, D.C., according to NPR. “Because we don’t want anyone at Starbucks to feel as if we are not giving access to the bathroom because you are ‘less than.’ We want you to be ‘more than.’”

More than what, you ask? See, that’s why you’re not a Starbucks executive chairman.

It transpired, however, that Schultz



didn’t know either. Our modern agora, Twitter, erupted at his announcement. From what we could tell, a majority of the tweeters seemed worried that Schultz’s lavatorial egalitarianism would make their local coffeehouse a hamlet for the homeless and/or drug users. The reason for such policies in the first place—the reason you can buy premade signs bearing the words “restrooms for paying customers only”—is that otherwise they become meeting spots for drug purchases and other unsavory activities. “Starbucks’ new bathroom

policy offers conclusive proof that Starbucks executives never use them,” wrote one unhappy, and highly perceptive, customer.

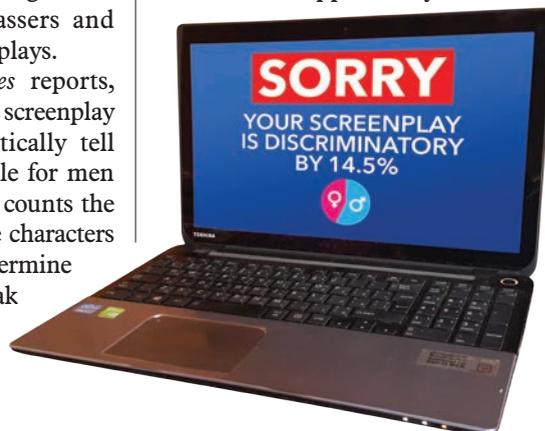
Starbucks flacks rushed to “clarify” the new policy. (“Clarify” is their word for “change.”) They told the *Wall Street Journal* that “employees now have detailed instructions on what to do if someone is behaving in a disruptive manner, such as smoking, using drugs or alcohol, using restrooms improperly or sleeping.”

Unfortunately, the new policy is about as clear as latte. What’s “disruptive,” for instance? The poor baristas are back where they started, back where they were before that hapless store manager called the cops in Philadelphia. Our advice: If you can’t decide whether a nonpaying customer’s sleep is disruptive enough to give him the boot, just call Howard Schultz, preferably late at night. The new bathroom policy was his idea, after all. We’re sure he’ll be “more than” happy to help. ♦

When Sally Met Harry

Hollywood is notorious for taking certain ideas to unpleasant extremes: CGI in *Star Wars* movies, saccharine romantic comedy tropes, the *Fast and Furious* franchise. But in our current #MeToo moment, activists intent on remaking the world in a more female-friendly image have gone beyond outing harassers and found a new villain: screenplays.

As the *New York Times* reports, activists have created “new screenplay software that can automatically tell whether a script is equitable for men and women.” The software counts the number of male and female characters and analyzes dialogue to determine whether women or men speak more often, regardless of the storyline or setting.



The technological tweak, which is now part of the popular Highland script software program, was the brainchild of Christina Hodson, whom the *Times* describes as being involved with Time’s Up, “the activist Hollywood organization addressing inequities in the industry.” The *Times* describes the software in neutral tones as an “opportunity to rethink

some of the storytelling” scriptwriters do, and the man (!) who helped develop the software tool insists that “in no way did I want this to feel like scolding.” Hodson is blunter. The software, she says, is “a tool for people to self-police and look at unconscious bias in their own work.”

This isn’t the first time technology has been drafted to promote gender activism in scriptwriting. In 2016, something called the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media at Mount Saint Mary’s University worked with Google to create “a software tool that used video and audio recognition and algorithms to decode gender and other details of characters on screen.” The institute’s leadership described it enthusiastically as “a spell-check for gender bias.”

Its supporters make the process

BOTTOM: TWS ART; LAPTOP: KSKHH

sound as easy as creating your own cuddly toy at Build-A-Bear, only instead of adorable accessories you add woke insights and gender quotas to build a politically correct screenplay. But that happy outcome turns out to be far more difficult to achieve than even the wokest writer might assume. Hodson's own work, described as consisting largely of "heroine-centered movies," failed the gender balance test—a result the *Times* described as "surprising."

Hodson and other advocates for the software seem unconcerned with how the self-censorship encouraged by this new tool might stifle creativity or storytelling. "This is all pretty easy," said the founder of WriterDuet, which also has a gender-policing function (he clearly hasn't considered how such software will deal with transgender or race parity). "Technology can do this, and technology should be doing this."

Call it the *Ishtar* principle: Just because you can do something doesn't make it a good idea. ♦

Hell Hath No Bellyaching

Hillary Clinton seems to have made her choice of post-political career: incessant unfunny whining. Consider her address to Yale University's graduating class of 2018.

How's this for an icebreaker? "I am thrilled for all of you, even the three

of you who live in Michigan and didn't request your absentee ballots in time." To borrow a line from another presidential loser, Jeb Bush, "Please clap." Of course, the idea that college students

didn't do enough to elect Clinton is laughable, but it's also true that her campaign in the Midwest wasn't firing on all cylinders. Her Brooklyn headquarters ordered resources out of Michigan in the campaign's final days.

"In her speech, Clinton declared that she was not going to get



political," observed James Hohmann at the *Washington Post*. "Then, in the very next sentence, she said the right deserves more blame for the radicalization of American politics than the left. A minute after that, she advocated for gun control." She went on to comment on the state of politics by referencing three books: Madeleine Albright's *Fascism: A Warning* and Yale historian Timothy Snyder's *On Tyranny* and *The Road to Unfreedom*.

We share some of Clinton's concerns about the state of politics, though we're not so sure how many of these problems would be solved by swapping Donald Trump's flaws for hers. At the very least, there are 10,000 voters in

Michigan who concluded that she had a particular talent for making Trump look good by comparison. At this point, if Clinton really believed her own warning about the United States being "on a pathway to relinquishing our freedom," the best thing for her to do would be to go away. ♦

Other Than That . . .

A recent *New York Times* piece took aim at Mark Dubowitz, CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies (and occasional *TWS* contributor). A lot of Beltway policymakers are upset at Dubowitz, mainly for his scathing

JEWEL SAMAD / AFP / GETTY

criticisms of the Iran nuclear deal over the last several years but also for the ambivalence he expressed over the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the deal.

But the *Times* didn't confine its attacks to Dubowitz's policy views. "He is far from the usual tweedy think-tanker," wrote reporter Gardiner Harris. "Raised in Canada, trained as a lawyer and having worked in venture capital, Mr. Dubowitz wears tailored French suits and keeps his curly hair just so. In 2016, he received \$560,221 in compensation as the foundation's chief executive." That salary, Harris went on to suggest, is nearly twice the size of those of most of Dubowitz's think tank counterparts.

For the record, we know lots of Washington think tankers. Not one would we describe as "tweedy," whatever that means. Nor are we sure why a Canadian provenance or a law degree makes Dubowitz an outlier. THE SCRAPBOOK has met the man once or twice and does not recall his hair being "just so."

The piece went on to suggest that FDD is an arm of Israel's Likud party and bankrolled by Jewish billionaires. A day or two later, however, the *Times* issued a wee correction. The article, said the *Times*,

referred imprecisely to the salary of Mark Dubowitz, the chief executive of Foundation for Defense of Democracies, when compared with those of leaders of other Washington think tanks. Mr. Dubowitz's \$560,221 compensation in 2016 was determined by the foundation's board of directors and is commensurate with the average annual salary of other think tank leaders in Washington in recent years. It is not nearly twice as much as the salaries of his counterparts. The article also inaccurately linked the foundation to Israel's Likud party. While the think tank does align with some of Likud's positions, it is not directly involved with the party. The article also referred imprecisely to the funding of conferences held by the foundation and the Hudson Institute. While

Elliott Broidy provided \$2.7 million in funds for consulting, marketing and other services, the foundation says it received only \$360,000 from Mr. Broidy for one conference.



Maligned Mr. D.

The term "fake news" gets thrown around a lot these days, but when the correction is nearly as long as the original article, it just might qualify. ♦

'Diversity' Indeed

Liberals and progressives sometimes complain that Republicans win more elections, and they do. But cheer up, lefties—you've got a lock on the nation's elite colleges. The thought occurred to us when we read through *Homogeneous: The Political Affiliations of Elite Liberal Arts College Faculty*, a new study by the National Association of Scholars (available at NAS.org).

We won't relay all the study's findings. Suffice it to say that at America's most prestigious liberal arts colleges, gatherings of the GOP Faculty Club won't violate any fire-marshall regulations. At a significant number of these elite institutions, you can count the number of registered Republican faculty on one hand. At Barnard, there's 1 Republican and 98 Democrats. At Mount Holyoke, there are 2 Republicans and 89 Democrats. At Smith, the ratio is 4:131. At Vassar, it's 4:140. At Bryn Mawr, you don't need any hands at all to count GOP faculty.

We're guessing, though, that each of these institutions employs plenty of diversity administrators. ♦



Hey, look—there's our Republican faculty!

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Professor Exterminator

Ten years ago when I was a lowly lecturer in English at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I took a summer job to help fill the perpetually empty stomachs of our four young children. It was the dirtiest work I had ever done—and no, it wasn't for a political campaign. It was termite work for my brother-in-law's pest control company in Raleigh.

If you've ever done termite work, you know what I'm talking about. To treat a home for termites, you have

going-to-be-fun laugh. The space stunk, and as I was making my way around the inconceivably tight interior, I discovered why—or one reason why—as I came nose to pelt with a partially decomposed possum or cat (I didn't check). The other reason for the smell? The sewage line was leaking.

Other than the work, the job was great. Scott and I would sometimes go out for sushi afterwards—me partially caked in dirt—and talk about our kids or the books we were reading. He played in a couple of bands



to dig a six-inch trench around the exterior of a house's foundation, fill it with chemicals, and cover it up. Then, if the house has a crawl space—and most houses in North Carolina do—you do the same thing along the interior of the foundation.

It's trenching the interior wall that's messy. While some homes have a spacious crawl space rising cathedral-like to three or four feet above ground, most are two feet high or less. Some were so low, I had to turn my head sideways to avoid eating dirt.

Crawl spaces are also home to all sorts of critters . . . and other things. I'll never forget one home we did—a double-wide outside Fuquay-Varina. Things started badly when we opened the crawl space door to find two black widows hanging in the corner of the entry. Scott—my partner on these jobs and co-owner of the company—sprayed them with some aerosol insecticide and laughed his isn't-this-

after high school and worked at various pest control companies before joining his brother, Kevin, at Innovative Pest Solutions. He was—and still is—a voracious reader, and we would sometimes stop to browse the shelves of used bookstores on our way back to the office.

Scott liked to tell homeowners that I taught English at Chapel Hill. The occasional surprise at the apparent incongruity of a university lecturer crawling under their house in overalls with a pickax was too delicious to pass up. Though it seemed to me that the simpler the house, the less surprised the owner (or renter) was. It was unremarkable to them that one had to do whatever was needed to make ends meet.

For those that were surprised, it was, perhaps, a reminder that you can't judge a book by its cover or a man's interests by his job. Two guys who show up in a truck to work on

your house might care about little else besides football and beer—and thank God for football and beer—but they also might be Dostoyevsky aficionados. Who can tell? Blue-collar workers might cling to their “guns and religion,” as one former president put it, but some also hold on to their Tobias Wolff and Theodore Roethke.

Only once did it backfire. We worked occasionally with the Department of Entomology at NC State. When a homeowner didn't have the money for a termite job, Kevin and Scott would see if they wanted to try an experimental treatment gratis. The university would pick up the tab. A professor in the department—let's call him Dr. Verner O'Sullivan—would meet us at the house to drop off the chemicals and give instructions. The first time this happened, Scott introduced us (“Dr. O'Sullivan, Micah; Micah, Dr. O'Sullivan”) and mentioned my regular job. “Call me Verner,” he says as we shake hands. In the five years that Scott had worked

with Dr. O'Sullivan, he'd never once told him to call him Verner. Scott tells me this with a smile, though he's a little baffled.

Of course, there is still such a thing as a “community of scholars” and small privileges that come with belonging to the club, and rightly so. But titles do not make a man, nor does the work one does or the places one lives tell us much that really matters about a person.

My time with Scott that summer was a case in point. Our conversations were more wide-ranging and interesting than many I had had on campus during the academic year. There was no performance—no practiced bons mots or five-minute summaries of research that even the speaker didn't believe in—just a genuine interest in life in all its strangeness and complexity.

MICAH MATTIX

Seeking Disclosure

There is a great deal we don't know about the case of Stefan Halper, the Anglo-American academic who insinuated himself into the Trump campaign in order to help the FBI learn about any connections to Russian election meddling. The president and his allies claim the FBI planted Halper as a spy with the goal of undermining Trump's candidacy. Trump's critics argue that the bureau was already investigating meddling in the election and so it was proper to find out if campaign officials were dupes for Russian manipulators.

It would be extraordinary that FBI officials would sign off on the surveillance of a U.S. presidential campaign. Political campaigning is a sacred activity in our republic, and the chances of catastrophe resulting from agents of the government investigating a presidential campaign are enormous. But we have a high regard for the men and women who serve in law enforcement and believe they've earned the presumption

of good faith. We can assume the FBI had reason to believe Russian operatives were using Trump campaign officials for nefarious purposes and had more than sufficient reason to seek out the operatives and identify their aims.

Devin Nunes (R-Calif.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has demanded documents related to the investigation from the FBI, and heretofore the bureau, citing White House support, has resisted those demands. The bureau altered its stance this week when the president tasked chief of staff John Kelly with ensuring that the FBI complied with congressional demands. That led to two separate meetings on May 24 where FBI director Christopher Wray and director of national intelligence Dan Coats briefed lawmakers on the documents. Originally there was to be only a single briefing for just two lawmakers: Nunes and Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.), chairman of the House Oversight Committee. Democrats protested, and the White House scheduled a second meeting with congressional leaders of both parties.

As we go to press, it isn't clear what the FBI presented to lawmakers. But it is doubtful that it will have mollified Trumpian anxieties or convinced Democrats that the FBI went rogue. Depending on who you are, the documents will have "proved" the FBI illegally spied on the Trump campaign or "proved" the FBI acted with proper restraint.

DoJ inspector general Michael Horowitz is already reviewing the FBI's use of FISA warrants to investigate

Trump associate Carter Page, and on May 21 the department announced that it has asked Horowitz's office to expand its probe "to include determining whether there was any impropriety or political motivation in how the FBI conducted its counterintelligence investigation of persons suspected of involvement with the Russian agents who interfered in the 2016 presidential election." That's a good move—the IG has shown himself capable

of censuring bureau officials for improper behavior. It was Horowitz who faulted former FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe for leaking information to the media and misleading investigators.

John Kelly and the president's personal lawyer Emmet Flood were both briefly present at the two briefings, sent according to the White House to "relay the president's desire for as much openness as possible under the law." We suspect that Trump's call for transparency is conditional. He favors openness

that might cause trouble for those investigating him but opposes transparency on matters relating to him, to his campaign, and to his businesses. (Did we ever see his tax returns?) So count us skeptical about the sincerity of the president's sudden call for openness.

But we agree with his words. In the aftermath of President Trump's accusation that the FBI wiretapped Trump Tower, we called for "radical transparency."

As charges and leaks fly back and forth, as partisans maneuver in Congress and out, we see only one way out of this crisis: The truth. . . . The normal caution about impeding existing investigations or even many concerns about sources and methods need to yield to the requirements of civic health. Sunshine is not only the best disinfectant, it is in this case the only possible disinfectant.

It's been nearly 15 months since we published those words. In the interim, Robert Mueller was named special counsel. His team has been investigating for more than a year. As we've noted before, he is a man of integrity, and we have confidence that he is running an investigation driven not by politics but by the pursuit of truth.

Given the behavior of the president and his defenders, we're willing to bet that much of what we're seeing here is an attempt to thwart investigators and obfuscate the facts—to create a counternarrative in which the president is an innocent victim of the "deep state." We



Michael Horowitz, the IG

already know too much to accept such a claim at face value. If there have been legitimate concerns raised about parts of the investigations and about those charged with carrying them out, we continue to believe that the best way to address them is with radical transparency. It's the only policy that stands a chance of breaking the present impasse in Washington. We are past the need for explanations. What's needed is simple disclosure. ♦

Regulatory Release

In 2010, Congress passed the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act, and President Obama signed it into law. The legislation, more than 2,000 pages long, imposed cumbersome regulations on financial institutions, which the bill's authors took to be responsible for the 2008 financial crisis and the consequent recession. The law also established the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, or CFPB, an advocacy agency for consumers that, to no one's surprise, quickly turned into a Naderite anti-corporation attack dog.

Complicated laws passed in the middle of a crisis usually make things worse in the long run, and so Dodd-Frank proved. The Democrats, who controlled both House and Senate in 2010, took the blinkered view that the financial crisis had come about exclusively thanks to the unregulated excesses of the private-sector financial industry; regulating that industry was, for them, the only rational response. The law thus deprived the market of liquidity in the middle of a recession—with predictable results.

The Democrats ignored two important points. First, the role of the federal government itself: Government-backed mortgage giants Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae—then as now boasting powerful allies in Congress—encouraged precisely the sort of risky and foolish loans that led directly to the housing-market collapse and attendant financial meltdown. Second, what many of the investment banks did was already illegal: “cooking the books,” to use the popular term. To that extent, it was an enforcement problem, not a regulatory one. Greater regulation of investment banks largely missed the point—though it allowed powerful Democrats in Congress to blame someone other than themselves for the crisis. (The bill's authors, Chris Dodd of Connecticut and Barney Frank of Massachusetts, both had a long history of encouraging Fannie and Freddie's worst practices.) One of the law's further follies is that it shackled small and mid-sized banks with the same provisions, despite the fact that they had had nothing to do with the financial crisis. ♦

On May 22, Congress partially repealed Dodd-Frank. President Trump, who vowed upon taking office to do a “big number” on Dodd-Frank, signed the bill on May 24. The Senate passed its version with the help of 17 Democrats. In the House, 33 Democrats joined Republicans. This is an extraordinary admission on the part of members of Barack Obama's party that his signature financial reform was a failure.

Among the aims of Dodd-Frank was to prevent banks from becoming “too big to fail,” the phenomenon in which top-tier institutions grow so immense that the government, and thus the taxpayer, has no choice but to bail them out or risk global meltdown. Dodd-Frank achieved the opposite. By shackling all U.S. banks with the same onerous regulations, the law enabled what economists call “regulatory capture.” The big banks had the resources to cope with the new rules and remain competitive; the smaller ones did not. In essence Democrats, in a misbegotten effort to prevent large financial firms from becoming “too big to fail,” simply made them bigger.

Banks with over \$50 billion in assets were all treated the same by Dodd-Frank. So, for instance, the SVB Financial Group with \$53.5 billion in total assets is bound by the same regulations, with commensurately high compliance costs, as J.P. Morgan Chase & Co, with its \$2.5 trillion in total assets. The new law rectifies that imbalance by increasing the threshold to \$250 billion. There were around 8,400 community lenders in 2007; today there are 5,500. Small community banks and credit unions may rebound now that they no longer face the same strict regulations as those with over \$250 billion. Under the new law, only 12 banks will need to abide by the stricter guidelines. The solution isn't ideal—\$250 billion is an arbitrary number, and the larger banks must expend enormous resources (i.e., their clients' money) on compliance rather than in investment. But the higher threshold will help smaller banks compete.

The reform, though, still leaves far too much of Dodd-Frank's structure in place. The egregious CFPB stays. Its mission, “to protect consumers from unfair, deceptive, or abusive practices and take action against companies that break the law,” is redundant. Numerous other federal agencies have the same function and the same powers. The CFPB has gone far beyond its statutory authority to target small and mid-sized businesses its agents believe are taking advantage of consumers—particularly local and regional banks—with the result that these institutions must spend ever more on compliance and legal counsel. The CFPB's current head, Mick Mulvaney, is attempting to bring the agency to heel, but it's no easy task. This magazine has called for the elimination of the CFPB before. We can only renew that call. Too many other provisions of the 2010 law remain, too. But Republicans have achieved a worthy reform in repealing the worst components of a massively foolish law. ♦

FRED BARNES

Congressional Republicans' Secret Weapon

Democrats are expecting a landslide in the midterm elections, and it's lulled them to sleep on Capitol Hill. A case in point: Republicans have been using the Congressional Review Act (CRA) to wipe out Obama-era regulations since the Trump presidency began. And Democrats, responding groggily, have just gotten around to doing something about it.

What they're doing doesn't amount to much. In mid-May, senators Cory Booker (D-N.J.) and Tom Udall (D-N.M.) introduced a bill to kill the CRA. There was no fanfare or excitement, and no angry vows of resistance.

As important as it is, the CRA doesn't command media attention, much less public acclaim. It was enacted in 1996 when Newt Gingrich was House speaker. And until January 2017, when Republicans achieved a Washington trifecta—control of the White House, Senate, and House—it had been invoked successfully only once. That was in 2001 when it ended the life of the Labor Department's oppressive ergonomics policy.

But the CRA hasn't been forgotten. Republicans tried five times to eliminate Obama regulations, including the Environmental Protection Agency's "Waters of the United States" policy extending federal regulation of wetlands to vast new chunks of America. President Obama vetoed all five.

As the 2016 election approached, Republicans had no plans for reviving the CRA. They were expecting Hillary Clinton to win. That would have entrenched the massive regulatory machinery imposed by Obama. The swamp would be bigger than ever.

The day after Trump won, House and Senate Republicans, mainly aides of Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell and House speaker Paul Ryan, began conspiring with Trump aides. The CRA was now on the agenda, right near the top. And there were plenty of regulations to target.

How does it work? The CRA allows Congress to look back at reg-

ulation rule"—regulations affecting issuance of permits for mining operations—had been rewritten after a judge struck it down. The replacement was adopted by the Interior Department on Obama's last day in office. Death came quickly. Trump revoked the rule on February 16, 2017.

Since the Trump-McConnell-Ryan axis took charge, 16 regulations have suffered death-by-CRA. Last week, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) was stripped of its ability to look into discrimination in auto loans. An amendment to Dodd-Frank had flatly barred the bureau from investigating the auto business, but it went ahead anyway. In the end, Republicans and the CRA prevailed.

One GOP clash with Obama involved a drug-testing requirement for those seeking unemployment benefits. In 2016, Obama's Labor Department limited the right of states to force recipients of jobless pay to be tested. Now states are free to ignore that directive.

Gingrich, who created the CRA, then watched it win only once in two decades, is thrilled with its current success. But not surprised. "It's a practical way," he insists, to rein in the bureaucratic monster. Trump, McConnell, and Ryan have been "just brilliant," Newt says.

Democrats will never use the CRA. "They like all the regulations the system creates," Gingrich says. The CRA represents "a real transfer of power." Republicans have found it a powerful weapon to challenge the administrative state, curb the bureaucrats who run it, and thwart the Democrats who support them.

The clock may have expired on many egregious Obama regulations. But the CRA appears to have a longer lifespan than the 60-day timetable might suggest.

Senators Pat Toomey (R-Pa.) and



Republicans have used the Congressional Review Act to kill Obama-era regulations since the Trump presidency began. Democrats are now waking up.

ulations adopted in the dying days of a president's tenure and, if it so chooses, vote them down. In effect, this requires one party to be in control. And they better be Republicans. Democrats adore regulation.

There are limits on CRA power. The act applies only to rules and regulations put into effect in the prior 60 legislative days.

But it has significant advantages. To kill a regulation, only a simple majority is needed. So filibusters are of no use. And a CRA vote is an official act of Congress, though the regulation under review is not. Reversing a CRA vote would take congressional action. A presidential order—Obama's favorite way to govern—wouldn't do the job.

Republicans moved fast when Trump arrived. The "stream pro-

Jerry Moran (R-Kan.) discovered this in taking on the CFPB's auto-lending probe. The bureau had issued a document with guidance on auto loans that was finalized in 2013. That's way outside the bounds.

But the folks at CFPB didn't abide by the proper procedures and failed to submit the document to Congress, which is what starts the CRA consideration clock. Toomey asked the Government Accountability Office if this allowed the CRA to be invoked despite the late date. The GAO ruled that it did. Republicans then used the CRA to keep the CFPB from pursuing auto lenders for discrimination.

There may be more victories. There are many more regulations out there that agencies have failed to file officially with Congress. They've been enforced till now because no one stepped in to challenge their legitimacy. The CRA gives Congress the incentive to find those regulations. They're ripe for liquidation.

It's a task Republicans have shown they're quite good at. ♦

Worth Repeating

from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

'The sport of baseball has deep links to the American psyche, but the business of the NFL is America. And like America itself, the NFL almost always elects to punt its problems. Telling players that they can either stand or absent themselves from the national anthem doesn't address the root cause or solve the real problem.'

—Jonathan V. Last,
'What the NFL Should Have Done About the National Anthem'

Italy's deplorables unite against Europe's elites

In March, Italian voters decided they had more to fear from corruption than from incompetence. Despite the warnings of experts, they voted overwhelmingly for two parties that want Italy to reclaim its sovereignty from the overweening European Union. One of those parties, the League, is on the nationalist "right"; it has played only a small role on the national scene since it arose at the end of the Cold War. The other, the Five-Star Movement (M5S) is on the madcap "left"; it has never been in government at all.

There is nothing odd about Italians' behavior. Americans similarly thumbed their noses at elite analysts when they elected Donald Trump, and Britons rejected the E.U. in a referendum the same year. What is unusual is how slow the E.U. was to recognize the threat. The details of the policies that the League and M5S plan to enact leaked last week, and it is striking how much these juggernauts of right and left have been able to agree on: a renegotiation of the E.U. treaties, the write-off of part of Italy's \$2.7 trillion debt, a loosening of E.U.-monitored deficit requirements, an end to the diplomatic ostracism of Russia, a hard line against the hundreds of thousands of African illegal immigrants who have been pouring out of boats onto beaches across Italy, and the preparation of a currency instrument called the "mini-BOT," which could replace the euro in a pinch.

Suddenly there were lectures from pro-E.U. newspapers (Italy was causing "angst," according to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and "trembling," according to *Le Monde*) and warnings

from pro-E.U. politicians ("If the new government takes the risk of breaking its commitments on debt, the deficit, [and] bank reform, then the financial stability of the eurozone would be in danger," said France's economics minister Bruno Le Maire).

The tone, with its combination of alarm and condescension, gives an



Countries tied into the European Union are not really democracies, as most people understand the word. There are lots of avenues for overturning popular verdicts.

idea of why European bosses had been taking Italy's populist landslide in stride: Countries tied into the European Union are not really democracies, as most people understand the word. There are lots of avenues, formal and informal, for appealing and overturning popular verdicts. In 2011, European leaders were able to drive premier Silvio Berlusconi from power by withholding credit from the Italian economy and to force the cancellation of a Greek referendum on membership in the euro. Germans voted last year to punish their chancellor Angela Merkel for her decision to open the country's borders and repudiated her junior coalition partner, the Social Democrats. The result, after five months of negotiations, was a new Merkel government in which the Social Democrats had an even bigger role.

Italy's populists have learned these lessons and ruses. Five Star leader Luigi Di Maio distrusts what he calls the political "caste" on principle. The League's Matteo Salvini, a former leftist, has proved an able politician. In the days after he and Di Maio agreed to cooperate, he launched via Facebook video a preemptive strike against any future campaign to sow doubts. Bearded, bumptious, no stranger to the pasta buffet, he knew by heart the whole litany of establishment warnings and answered it point by point before it showed up in the newspapers and broadcasts. Pinching all his fingers together and shaking the back of his hand at the camera like a real Italian, Salvini spoke for 18 minutes:

The threats of the French minister, of the German politicians, of the ratings agencies about the debt. . . . I just want to say as a citizen, not as the secretary of the League but just as a citizen, Excuse me! Following your prescriptions—the ratings agencies, austerity, "European ties" . . . following your prescriptions, the national debt has risen to historic highs, poverty has risen to historic highs, insecurity has risen to historic highs. So why are we supposed to obey the suggestions—or, even worse, threats—of those who dragged Italy and half of Europe into a situation of instability, insecurity, and idleness unlike any we've ever seen?

Salvini and Di Maio, each of them unwilling to see the other as prime minister, have agreed between them to give the post to Giuseppe Conte, a lawyer close to M5S with expertise in bureaucratic streamlining and no political experience whatsoever. The coming months will see a battle between the two party heads to determine who will lead the anti-establishment movement. This will depend on whether Salvini, as minister of the interior, is able to expel immigrants faster than Di Maio, as minister of economic development, is able to create jobs.

The odds are against their successful cooperation. And those eager to see the government fail still have a lot of cards in their hands. Italian president Sergio Mattarella, who has a constitu-

tional responsibility to oversee the formation of governments, spent much of May lecturing the two parties. He praised one of his predecessors of the 1950s for throwing a government with a popular mandate out on its ear. Now that the public has voted overwhelmingly for two explicitly anti-European parties, Mattarella is scrutinizing the government's makeup to assure its pro-European sentiment. Conte may be the weak link. He said after his provisional appointment that he was "aware of the necessity to confirm the European and international position of Italy."

But the international position of Italy is so diminished that it is beyond the capacity of E.U. well-wishers to shore it up. Salvini's criticism is basically correct: Italy's economy has shrunk since the turn of the century. Its debt is rising, so are interest rates, and its population is falling. Italy lost

100,000 people last year, and it will lose 16 percent of its population by mid-century at current rates. If the population doesn't shrink, it will only be because Italy's southern shores have been overwhelmed by immigrants from Africa. In the face of this incursion, European Commission president Jean-Claude Juncker has said: "We remain attentive to safeguard the rights of the Africans who are in Italy." That's all Brussels is going to do—not share the burden of rescuing, maintaining, and finding homes for them. Italy can do that itself.

There are politicians like Juncker all over the West. They seem sincerely to believe the average voter is only one good lecture away from changing his mind about everything. But they are wrong. Italy has hit the wall. Populists are taking power there not because the public has heard too little talk, but because it has heard too much. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

If you don't like the results, democracy must be crumbling

It's fitting that Sen. Elizabeth Warren should have chosen the Center for American Progress's ideas conference to declare, as she did last week, that "democracy is crumbling around us." For the death knell of democracy is one of her party's oldest ideas, a staple of progressive nightmares from Justice Brandeis ("We can have democracy in this country, or we can have great wealth concentrated in the hands of a few, but we can't have both") to Bill Bradley ("Our politics is broken").

Of course, Senator Warren may be forgiven for playing to her rapturous audience: The CAP "ideas conference" is really a place for prospective presidential candidates to distinguish themselves from the Democratic herd. And in that sense, Warren did not disappoint: "Nearly three million more people voted for Hillary Clinton than for Donald Trump," she said. "But Trump

took the presidency. That is not exactly the sign of a healthy democracy."

If Donald Trump "took the presidency," then democracy really is crumbling around us. But as Warren—who used to teach at Harvard Law School—well knows, Trump won the electoral vote despite losing the popular vote, and that is how we elect our presidents, as the Constitution prescribes. So my assumption is that Warren plans to rally the troops for 2020 with a call to amend the Constitution and abolish the Electoral College. Hillary Clinton has already suggested as much, and there may be a bandwagon gathering.

Truth to tell, I can understand the left-wing frustration. Five times in American history, the presidency has gone to candidates who lost the popular vote, but never to the (comparatively) progressive one. The problem, of course, is that the Electoral College

reflects the fact that we're not a "pure" democracy but a republic, a confederation of states whose powers—especially as ranged against the federal government—are enshrined in the national charter.

Liberals, however, keep changing their minds on the subject. A century ago, progressives looked benignly on the states they controlled—California, say, or Wisconsin—that were laboratories of social progress and legislation. In the civil rights era, however, states' rights became synonymous with racism and segregation. Now, thanks to the Trump presidency, the progressive mind is not just enraged about the outcome of the 2016 contest but more ominously, about the Constitution that allowed it to happen.

I suspect that, as a practical matter, any effort to amend the Constitution and abolish the Electoral College is doomed to failure. But in the recent past, short-term politics—I would call it hysteria—has propelled successful amendments with long-term (and unforeseen) consequences. Indeed, in my view, modern constitutional amendments almost invariably cause more problems than they solve and tend to penalize proponents. Be careful what you wish for.

I would offer two examples to Elizabeth Warren and friends. When Republicans swept Congress in the midterm election of 1946, they had been out of power for 16 years and had just emerged from the shadow of the four-term presidency of Franklin Roosevelt. Their solution—the 22nd Amendment, passed in 1947 and ratified by the states four years later—limits presidents to two terms. Yet in striking retroactively at the late Democratic president, the congressional GOP effectively prevented the very next president, Republican Dwight Eisenhower, from running for a third term in 1960, which (I think) he could easily have won.

Enthusiasts of term limits, take note: The gods of politics are not mocked.

Nor are Democrats immune to

bright ideas gone awry. When, in 1963, John F. Kennedy was assassinated and Lyndon Johnson succeeded him as president, there was no provision in the Constitution for appointment or election of a new vice president. Up until then, the eight presidents who succeeded deceased predecessors—or the eight whose vice presidents either died or resigned—had simply done without a vice president until the next election. And the republic somehow endured.

But in 1963, the 55-year-old LBJ had suffered a serious coronary just



Modern constitutional amendments almost invariably cause more problems than they solve and tend to penalize proponents. Be careful what you wish for.

eight years earlier, and progressives gazed in horror at the line of succession: speaker of the House John McCormack, age 71, and the 86-year-old president pro tem of the Senate, Carl Hayden. This worrisome state of affairs yielded the 25th Amendment, which was drafted, passed, and ratified in record time and provided not only a course of action if presidents should be incapacitated in office but furnished a mechanism to appoint a new vice president as well.

Once again, the aforementioned gods of politics didn't wait very long to make a mockery of constitutional reform. Our next vice president, Spiro Agnew, resigned from office in the wake of financial scandal (1973), and in accordance with the 25th Amendment, Richard Nixon appointed a new vice president (Gerald Ford)—who, of course, succeeded to the presidency when Nixon resigned the following year. Whereupon Ford appointed Nelson Rockefeller to the vacant vice presidency.

I was a very junior member of the

Washington press corps at that time and had the luck to witness Governor Rockefeller's confirmation hearings in the Senate. The interest of the Senate, which can be variable, largely centered on this rare opportunity to use the confirmation process to allow senators to reveal and examine—in almost prurient detail—the size and scope of the Rockefeller family's wealth. And yet, despite the fact that little love was lost between the (overwhelmingly) Democratic Senate and (the famously Republican) Rockefeller, he was confirmed in short order and installed in office by Christmas 1974.

So traumatic had the two years of Watergate proved to political Washington that the newly installed executive team of Ford and Rockefeller was regarded as comforting evidence that ours is a government of laws, not men, and that the system works. As, indeed, it had—and from my perspective, had furnished the nation with two public servants of exceptional quality and experience. Still, even in the afterglow, I could not help but reflect that, from December 1974 until January 1977, the president and vice president of the United States were fully and constitutionally in place, and neither one had been elected, by any voters, to their respective offices.

Whether this state of affairs was a "sign of a healthy democracy" I leave to Senator Warren's expert judgment. But it seemed a little extraordinary at the time, and has not since been duplicated. By contrast, when Donald Trump "took the presidency" in 2016 by winning the electoral but not the popular vote, he had two centuries of constitutional precedent on his side, as well as the experience of history.

To which I might add a mortuary footnote. The nervous authors of the 25th Amendment could hardly have known that the aged Speaker McCormack—who, in 1963, was three years older than Elizabeth Warren is now—would survive Lyndon Johnson by some seven years, and even the ancient Senator Hayden died less than a year before LBJ. Democracy may be "crumbling around us," but not every tremor is an earthquake. ♦

Managing Trump's Demands

The Department of Justice plays defense.

BY JACK GOLDSMITH

President Trump's norm-defying "demand" that the Justice Department "look into" whether it infiltrated or surveilled the Trump campaign "for Political Purposes" at the behest of the Obama administration threatens less damage to Justice Department independence than to larger executive branch prerogatives that any president other than Trump would want to protect.

Trump's tweet-order came just after noon on Sunday, May 20, in angry response to stories about an FBI informant who approached Trump campaign officials in 2016 and to the Justice Department's refusal to accede to congressional demands for information about the informant.

Trump's tweet crossed an important line of Justice Department independence, but it is not quite the sacrosanct boundary it has been made out to be.

The president has constitutional authority to order the Justice Department to investigate a particular matter, or to cease investigating one. But after Richard Nixon abused that power spectacularly, every subsequent administration, including Trump's, has issued guidelines about contacts between the White House and Justice Department to prevent abuse.

Technically those guidelines bind the president's subordinates, not the president. But the memos and the practices and cultural understandings that have grown up around them have created the expectation that presidents

should not comment on law enforcement matters, much less direct them, absent very special circumstances.

We should not be naïve about the extent to which presidents strictly comply with these norms. For example, President Obama breached them when he twice commented publicly, in the midst of the Hillary Clinton email investigation, that she had done nothing to endanger or intentionally harm national security. These statements "jeopardized the Department of Justice's credibility in the investigation," wrote former FBI Director James Comey in his memoir.

Beyond public influences, presidents have let their attorneys general quietly know their preferences on particular prosecutions and investigations. It is not intrinsically bad that a president exercise this influence, so long as he does so responsibly. The Constitution gives the president ultimate control over investigators and prosecutors because he is accountable for their actions, and they are unelected and cannot always be trusted to act properly.

In our post-Watergate constitutional world, however, we worry especially about presidents who seek to influence investigations of their own behavior or that of their close associates. And this is how Trump's blustery order was interpreted: as his latest tactic to try to derail Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation.

This is an apt interpretation of the order, given the background of the president's year-long effort to undermine the Russia investigation's credibility through vicious, abusive, threatening tweets and other statements accusing the Justice Department and the FBI (including Trump's own appointees and Mueller) of bias, witch hunts, and other turpitude.

And yet Trump's order to the Justice Department to "look into" possibly inappropriate government actions toward his campaign is not a crazy idea. One of the FBI's central responsibilities is countering the activities of foreign spies. The FBI had a professional duty to pursue the signifi-



cant evidence—based on the limited information we have thus far—of Russia's attempts to infiltrate the Trump campaign.

But the FBI's resulting secret investigation of that possible infiltration was also highly unusual and maybe unprecedented. And like any exercise of power by any government actor, it was potentially subject to abuse.

I do not believe that the FBI or the Obama Justice Department did anything inappropriate in conducting this

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investigation. All of the evidence I have seen is to the contrary. And it is hard to see how an investigation kept secret during the 2016 presidential campaign could have been motivated by a desire to hurt Trump in that campaign.

But many people of good faith believe that the FBI and Justice Department acted inappropriately, and they are especially worried since the investigation took place under the auspices of an administration of one party against the campaign of a candidate from another party. No government officials are beyond review and reproach. It is unusual to investigate the investigators in the midst of an investigation. But given where we are now, and the large stakes for the country, it would be useful and potentially healing to have a credible public accounting of precisely what happened in the investigation of the Trump campaign in 2016.

Ironically, Trump's norm-defying tweet created just such an opportunity. Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein—the person in charge of the Mueller investigation and a frequent target of the president's ire—defly responded to the president's tweet by asking the Justice Department's independent Inspector General, Michael Horowitz, to add to his related ongoing investigation the question of whether the FBI acted with “impropriety or political motivation” in its counterintelligence investigation during the 2016 election.

“If anyone did infiltrate or surveil participants in a presidential campaign for inappropriate purposes, we need to know about it and take appropriate action,” Rosenstein said, with an alacrity and confidence that suggests he knows the answer. By asking Horowitz to gather facts on the matter in his ongoing related investigation rather than opening a new criminal investigation, Rosenstein minimized the president's attempted blow to Justice Department independence and at the same time set in motion a process that will let the American people understand what the FBI did in the 2016 election.

Horowitz is the most credible

person in the government to look into this matter. He was appointed by President Obama but has a well-deserved reputation for independence. Horowitz issued a damning report in 2012 on the Obama administration's “Fast and Furious” program. He recently released another that was critical of someone Trump dislikes, former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe. He is about to issue a new report on the Justice Department's

It is unusual to investigate the investigators in the midst of an investigation. But the call on this issue is ultimately the president's because it is the president's prerogative that Rosenstein is protecting.

and the FBI's actions during the Hillary Clinton email investigation that is also expected to be unfavorable. Trump will be hard pressed to question Horowitz's bona fides if he issues an exonerating report on the FBI performance in the Russia investigation.

Horowitz is certainly better positioned to investigate the FBI investigators than his most likely rival for the task, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee and Trump henchman Devin Nunes. Nunes has, for a year and with Trump-like vigor, violated norms of honesty and trust that undergird legitimate intelligence oversight. He has been an open ally to the president in his effort to discredit the Mueller investigation. And he has made unusual demands on the Justice Department for information about the ongoing Russia investigation to which Rosenstein, under pressure from the White House, has largely acceded.

Rosenstein has balked, however, at giving Nunes and his congressional allies information about FBI informants in connection with the Russia investigation. This is standard executive branch practice that is necessary

to attract and safeguard informants who are vital to law enforcement and counterintelligence.

But the call on this issue is ultimately the president's because it is the president's prerogative that Rosenstein is protecting. On May 21, Trump convened a highly unusual meeting at the White House with Rosenstein, FBI Director Chris Wray, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly. At the end of the meeting the White House announced that it would allow congressional leaders to review at least some of the “highly classified and other information” they had requested.

While the scope of this concession remains unclear, any revelation of informant information to Congress would constitute the worst sin committed during these recent events. Presidents are typically keen to protect the powers of the presidency and the vital tools of law enforcement and national security. Here, President Trump appears instead to be exercising his constitutional discretion to give them away for the personally self-serving end of discrediting the Russia investigation.

Whatever the impact this action may have on the Russia investigation, the harm to the executive's prerogatives vis-à-vis Congress, and to the government's ability to develop and recruit sources and informants, will be long-lasting. Rosenstein and Wray understand this. They are balancing their duties to the president for whom they work with their commitments to the norms of the Justice Department and the FBI. And more than anything else, they are trying to protect the integrity of the Mueller investigation that the president so despises.

They have thus far succeeded in that important task and last week bought Mueller more time to carry on with his work. Whatever other blows Justice Department independence may have suffered from Trump's onslaught, it remains a remarkable testament to that independence that a president who has constitutional control over the department has nevertheless not yet been able to stop it from investigating him and his associates. ♦

The End of the Line

Light rail is a very expensive way to move very few commuters. **BY TONY MECIA**

Nashville's singers and songwriters have long liked to write about pickup trucks. Light rail? Not so much. And the city's voters seemed to share this distaste when they went to the polls last month. They faced a choice encountered by people in dozens of U.S. cities in recent years: Would they hike their taxes to pay for a rail system?

Music City's political and business leaders were pushing an \$8.9 billion plan to build four light-rail lines connecting the county's outskirts to its honky-tonk-lined downtown. The plan, they said, would help the environment, provide alternatives to traffic congestion, and show Nashville to be "forward-thinking and good hearted."

Against them was an unusual coalition of African-American voters and anti-tax activists worried about its cost. A "yes" vote would have made Nashville's sales tax the highest in the country, at more than 10 percent.

The campaign had several bizarre turns. The city's Democratic mayor, a strong transit booster, resigned two months before the vote after being caught in a sex scandal with her police bodyguard. Transit opponents were accused of taking "dark money" from the nefarious Koch brothers. When the polls closed May 1, though, the results weren't close. The transit plan lost 2-to-1.

Light rail is having a tough time nationally. City leaders across the country might embrace it, but

commuters keep favoring cars. Ridership is down—even though the two-dozen cities with light-rail systems are generally prosperous and growing and are adding more miles of tracks.

As fewer people ride the trains, though, Washington keeps the money flowing. A Trump administration



Light rail in downtown Houston

proposal to slash transit funding and require cities to pick up more of the tab is headed nowhere—even in a Republican-controlled Congress. Members from both parties are pressing administration officials to sink additional federal money into light-rail projects. The Transportation Department typically subsidizes up to half of a light-rail system's capital costs.

The main knock on light rail is that it is an expensive way to move very few commuters. Light rail makes sense for people who live near a line and work downtown. The trouble is that in most cities, the vast majority of jobs are located outside of the city center and most commuters live nowhere near the rail stations. Nashville, for instance, has about 67,000 workers downtown

in a metro area of about 1.9 million. Even in cities where light rail is touted as a success, such as Portland, Ore., light rail accounts for just 0.9 percent of miles traveled.

Mass transit does best in cities with big downtowns that were built when riding buses, streetcars, or trains was the main way to get around—that is, before cars were popularized after World War II. Transit accounts for 12 percent of miles traveled in New York City and 7 percent in San Francisco. Urban areas that sprang up in the second half of the 20th century lack the population density needed to make mass transit a cost-effective option for most of their residents.

About 70 percent of transit referendums pass, on average. Lately, though, communities have been hitting the brakes. Besides Nashville's recent no, Virginia Beach voters shot down light rail in 2016. Elected officials in Tampa this year are pushing for more buses, following a string of votes in the last decade in which residents opted not to trade sales-tax increases for light rail. It's the same in San Antonio, where voter skepticism over light rail led local officials to push a transit plan that relies on souped-up buses that resemble train cars. On May 1, the city's mayor told the local paper, "We have the opportunity to be innovators rather than last in line for old technology. ... We are beyond light rail. The world is beyond light rail."

Light-rail advocates proclaim that it is environmentally friendly for pulling cars off the roads, that it creates jobs, and that it encourages economic development. They rarely say it will reduce traffic congestion, because traffic only increases in fast-growing cities. "The pitch usually is 'Congestion is terrible. It's going to get worse. We have to do something. This is something. Let's do it,'" says Randal O'Toole, who studies transportation and land use at the libertarian Cato Institute. "They have to strongly imply it will reduce congestion. They say it provides an alternative to congestion, but it's an alternative hardly anybody uses."

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GEORGE ROSE / GETTY

O'Toole points out that congestion pricing and synchronizing stoplights can help mitigate heavy traffic much more cost-effectively than multibillion-dollar light-rail systems.

Then there is the question of ride-sharing services and driverless cars. Uber averages 15 million rides a day. Lyft averages more than 1 million. Together, that's nearly 6 billion trips a year—more than 10 times the number of U.S. light-rail rides last year. And these services are growing quickly. A study last year by the University of California Davis's Institute of Transportation Studies found that once people try ride-sharing, they become 3 percent less likely to ride light rail and 6 percent less likely to ride buses. The most common reasons cited were that mass transit is too slow, that there aren't enough stops or stations, and that no transit services are available when traveling.

The ongoing experiments with self-driving vehicles suggest an answer to such complaints. Such cars could make driving more efficient, with fewer accidents and less congestion, and poach even more riders from mass transit. "With this pending technological disruption, do we really want to be investing in legacy infrastructure?" asks Aaron Renn, who studies transportation and economic development at the Manhattan Institute, a free-market think tank. "I'd be arguing the same thing with roads. Do we really want to be building a massive amount of roads when we don't know what's going to happen with driverless cars?"

The American Public Transportation Association (APTA), which represents transit agencies, private bus and rail makers, and related businesses, says it sees no crisis in light rail. Eleven of the nation's 29 light-rail systems had ridership increases in 2017, according to APTA figures. Nationally, ridership fell about 1 percent. Darnell Grisby, APTA's director of policy development and research, says ridership last year was "flat" but that it came after years of ridership gains. Low gas prices played a role, he thinks. "Ridership is cyclical in nature," Grisby says. "Ridership has been high

over the last 10 years. There has been a great momentum in increased ridership in public transportation. The trend is still up."

The future for transit is strong, he says, because innovative transit systems are partnering with the ride-sharing companies. The two types of transportation can be complementary, not competitive, he believes. He points to the example of St. Petersburg, Fla.,

Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.), chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that oversees transportation funding, told the acting administrator of the Federal Transit Administration and other Department of Transportation (DoT) leaders: "I don't think a lot of you will see support on this committee for the deep cuts to important DoT programs." He said the \$2.6 billion Congress allocated for 2018—

Low riders: U.S. light-rail rides, 2008-2017

2008	462,122,000
2009	457,117,500
2010	464,977,000
2011	488,503,000
2012	510,022,000
2013	518,536,000
2014	528,478,000
2015	528,030,000
2016	548,006,000
2017	543,451,000

SOURCE: American Public Transportation Association

which started a program to replace little-used bus routes with subsidized Uber rides. Passengers receive a \$5 discount to take the ride-sharing service to a bus stop. Local governments are moving into ride-sharing, too: Los Angeles is planning to test its own ride-pool service.

At the same time, the Trump administration is trying to rein in federal spending on mass-transit construction. For the last two years, it has proposed budgets that chopped the Federal Transit Administration's capital grant program—the main source for big transit projects such as light-rail systems. This year, the administration proposed \$1 billion for fiscal year 2019, down from the \$2.6 billion allocated for 2018. The lower figure would be enough to pay for projects already approved, but not enough to approve new ones. But the White House request is getting little response in Congress.

At a hearing in April, Representative

more than double the administration's request—was "the highest level ever funded and something that I'm very pleased with." In May, he introduced a 2019 funding bill asking for *another* \$2.6 billion. He declared in a news release: "For the second year in a row, I have worked to protect hard-earned taxpayer dollars and reduce waste and abuse, while providing historic funding levels to improve our airports, roads, bridges, and seaports."

Even Nashville might get another chance. City leaders say that despite their big defeat at the polls, they haven't given up on transit. And nobody is ruling out light rail. "I can tell you that we're not waiting for a referendum to work on transit," acting mayor David Briley told *Governing* magazine. "We're already starting to think about what the next steps are going to be, with or without a referendum."

As in so many of the country songs the town is famous for, no one knows how this relationship will end. ♦

The Race to Be the Next Speaker

Or minority leader.

BY HALEY BYRD

Rep. Kevin McCarthy is a people person. He makes a point to remember details about his fellow House members, such as the names of their spouses and kids and their birthdays. “There is nobody better at understanding all the members and where they come from,” Jason Chaffetz, a former congressman from Utah who retired last year to become a Fox News contributor, tells me. The California Republican might be adept at the small gestures that can win people over, but as his failed bid to replace former speaker John Boehner in 2015 proved, those attributes are not necessarily enough to win him the speakership.

When House Speaker Paul Ryan announced this spring that he would be retiring after nearly 20 years in office, the Wisconsin Republican was quick to anoint McCarthy as his preferred successor. “I think we all believe that Kevin is the right person,” Ryan told NBC, arguing that McCarthy had gained much-needed experience as the majority leader since his first attempt to fill the job. But McCarthy finds himself today in a perplexing spot—if not a more challenging one—than he was in three years ago. Not only could the conservative House Freedom Caucus deny him the speakership amid policy disagreements as they did last time, but the approaching midterm elections in November could rob him of the opportunity altogether if Democrats retake the House.

Haley Byrd is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Chaffetz, who challenged McCarthy for the speakership in 2015, shares his thoughts about the current leadership race during a phone interview. “I was concerned the Republicans didn’t



McCarthy and Ryan

have a choice,” he says of his decision to run. “I didn’t think I could necessarily win, but I also felt like we needed a choice. At the time, we didn’t want to just simply promote everybody in leadership.” But that’s exactly what the Republican conference appears poised to do this time around. Chaffetz does see benefits in a potential McCarthy speakership. “He’s one of the hardest-working people. He raises an exceptional amount of money,” Chaffetz tells me. “But there are others that are going to differ with him on a lot of policy issues. I think those are legitimate concerns.”

Chaffetz is referring in part to the roughly three dozen members of the Freedom Caucus who are withholding their support until they can negotiate better representation for their caucus members on key House committees and more influence on the legislative process. Whether they

will support McCarthy is an open question, but his close relationship with President Donald Trump could easily factor into the decision.

Some conservatives, like Michigan’s Justin Amash, don’t appear willing to consider McCarthy at all. “He hasn’t earned the trust to be speaker of the House,” Amash tells me. And Kentucky libertarian Thomas Massie argues that any member who supported the recently passed \$1.3 trillion omnibus spending bill should automatically be out of the running. “If you followed this leadership off of that cliff,” Massie says, “then you are not qualified to lead us around the next.” As well, it doesn’t help McCarthy’s cause with conservatives that Ohio Republican and founding Freedom Caucus member Jim Jordan is seriously considering a run.

Chaffetz doesn’t offer a clear answer as to how he would vote if he were still in the House. He says his decision would depend on who else chooses to run, but he notes that McCarthy has done a lot to support Republican candidates on the campaign trail. “I’m not anti-Kevin McCarthy,” he hedges. “I just feel like there should be a choice and there really ought to be a dialogue around where we’re going and how to do things better.”

McCarthy’s first attempt at the speakership failed due to a combination of conservative opposition, a gaffe about the Benghazi investigation that drew criticism from fellow Republicans, and rumors of an extramarital affair (which McCarthy denied). When he dropped out of the race, McCarthy argued that Republicans needed a “fresh face” in order to unite. At the time, then-presidential candidate Donald Trump took credit for McCarthy’s failure. “You know Kevin McCarthy is out, you know that, right?” Trump said at a campaign rally, to cheers from the audience. “They’re giving me a lot of credit for that, because I said, ‘You really need somebody very, very tough and very smart.’”

ASTRID RIECKEN / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY

Today, however, McCarthy has established himself as one of the congressional Republicans closest to the president, largely by painstakingly cultivating Trump. He infamously had a staffer sort through a bag of Starburst candies for the red and pink ones (Trump's favorites) and delivered only those to the White House, the *Washington Post* reported. At one time McCarthy was even rumored to be under consideration to be Trump's chief of staff if John Kelly were to leave. Some House members view McCarthy's and Trump's interests as more compatibly aligned than Trump's and Ryan's. "Ryan is the policy wonk, and the president isn't," Iowa Republican Steve King told the *Washington Post*. "The president picks up on Kevin being a different kind of guy," he added. During interviews with members and staffers who have worked with McCarthy, the Californian



Jim Jordan

receives high marks for his political chops and personal skills, but many worry that his knowledge of policy is lacking.

House members might be concerned about McCarthy's familiarity with policy, but the president is not. In fact, Trump has expressed support for the

idea of pushing Ryan out of the speakership before November in order to hand the gavel over to McCarthy. As *THE WEEKLY STANDARD* first reported on May 20, McCarthy and his allies weighed the prospect of pressuring Ryan to leave sooner, arguing that triggering a vote on the speakership before the midterm elections would compel Democrats to vote for (or against) Nancy Pelosi for the position, which could be used against them on the campaign trail. The president liked the idea when he was told of it but has not made a final decision about how to act, a source

close to the conversations tells me.

White House press secretary Sarah Sanders left the question open when asked on May 22 whether Ryan should stay through the midterms, saying, "At this point that's something for Speaker Ryan and members of Congress to make that determination." Behind the scenes, though, the notion of Ryan leaving sooner has won support within the administration. Office of Management and Budget director Mick Mulvaney endorsed the idea at a *WEEKLY STANDARD* summit in Colorado Springs last week, admitting he had spoken to McCarthy about it in private. "I've talked with Kevin about this privately but not as much publicly," Mulvaney said. "Wouldn't it be great to force a Democrat running in a tight race to have to put up or shut up about voting for Nancy Pelosi eight weeks before an election? That's a really, really good vote for us to force if we can figure out how to do it." Mulvaney's spokesperson later said he was speaking hypothetically.

Business Offers Path to Purpose for New Grads

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

Summer is here, school is out, and a new class of college graduates is officially entering the workforce. As they receive their diplomas and plan their next steps, they are sure to be met with an abundance of advice on how to maximize their impact on the world. Let me add a little insight of my own into the mix.

Throughout my career I've gotten to know successful people in a range of fields—from public service to medicine to education to the arts—all of whom have made a positive difference in the world. I've noted the greatest impact, however, from a field that doesn't always get its due credit as a driver of progress in our society: business.

Business has always been a leading force for good in America. Its very purpose is to solve problems, meet

needs, and devise new services to make life better. Those who enter careers in business are entering into a competition to provide value for consumers and society.

Through the American free enterprise system, businesses have created lifesaving drugs, efficient new ways of doing things, and groundbreaking inventions from the automobile to the computer. Just as important, they have enabled people to achieve security for their families, create meaningful jobs for their neighbors, and improve the quality of life in their communities.

Businesses also fuel the economic growth that funds our government, including our public schools, social safety nets, strong national defense, and support for scientific research. Further, many businesses go above and beyond to contribute to society. Next time a natural disaster strikes, pay close attention to how many

companies rush to donate money, food, supplies, services, and shelter.

I'd like all graduates entering the workforce to know that a career in business can be a profound personal calling, especially when coupled with strong values. It's a calling to put your unique gifts into the service of society and, in doing so, to create value not just for yourself but for your family, community, and country.

For any graduates looking to make a difference, I encourage you to start by identifying a need or a problem that you want to address and then apply your knowledge and skills to addressing it through free enterprise. Whether you wish to do so at an existing company or by starting your own, business offers endless opportunities to find dignity and purpose while making the world a better place.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.

McCarthy denies ever speaking to Mulvaney about the issue, but he did feel compelled to publicly fall in line with Ryan, saying that a leadership election should not happen until November. “Paul is here until the end of the election,” he told reporters on May 21.

Some Republican House members speculated about why McCarthy might want to circumvent a drawn-out speaker’s race. “Common sense will tell you the longer any race goes on, the more potentiality you have for different people or different stories or different events or different problems that could arise,” a Republican lawmaker tells me.

And McCarthy is keenly aware of one looming issue rife with possible obstacles: immigration. Within the party, debate rages over the funding of Trump’s promised border wall and the future of nearly 700,000 unauthorized immigrants who were brought to the United States as children (under the program known as Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA). Led by south Florida Republican Carlos Curbelo, some members have filed a discharge petition to force a vote on four separate immigration measures. The so-called “Queen of the Hill” process would allow for the bill with the most support (above the threshold to pass) to move on to the Senate. The Republican leadership in the House worries that such a process would lead to a more liberal immigration package passing the chamber, which the president would likely refuse to sign. “I would like to have an immigration vote before the midterms. But I want to have a vote on something that can make it into law,” Ryan said during a press conference after the discharge petition was filed, perhaps failing to remember that in remarks to a bipartisan group of lawmakers in January, Trump promised to sign whatever Congress presented to him. “I am signing it. I will be signing it. I’m not going to say, ‘Oh gee, I want this, or I want that.’ I will be signing it,” Trump said.

Sensing the hazards of an internecine struggle over immigration, McCarthy would like to bypass the

conversation altogether. “If you want to depress [GOP voter] intensity, this is the No. 1 way to do it,” McCarthy told members during a recent conference meeting, according to *Politico*’s Rachael Bade and John Bresnahan.

For now, Ryan is promising he will bring up immigration measures for consideration in June to placate centrists who want to see long-awaited movement on the issue. For

most members, however, as the same Republican lawmaker tells me, “the big question is can we sustain the status quo for the next five months?”

“That’s going to be challenging because there are some that would like to see Paul go even now.” Asked to outline the best-case scenario for the conference, the lawmaker pauses.

“At this point, I don’t see a best-case scenario,” he says. ♦

Joe Versus the Democrats

In Connecticut, a populist pitbull battles a preppy plutocrat. BY ALICE B. LLOYD

Hartford, Conn.

Just 20 miles divide Bridgeport and Greenwich, two cities on Connecticut’s commuter coastline. But Greenwich, the closer to New York, is \$70,000 richer in per capita income. It’s almost twice as white and more than nine times safer than Bridgeport, where deadly drive-by shootings are routine. And now, in a tale of two Connecticut, the mayor of Bridgeport, a convicted felon on a comeback tour, is running a longshot campaign in the Democratic gubernatorial primary against a millionaire businessman who went to Exeter and Harvard and has lived in Greenwich most of his life. Mayor Joe Ganim wants to take down Ned Lamont, the runaway favorite, who easily secured the endorsement of the state party convention last weekend.

Lamont, 64-year-old heir to an early J.P. Morgan chairman, made his personal fortune in cable television and a name for himself stealing the Democratic nomination in 2006 from hawkish Senator Joe Lieberman, who then ran as an independent

and won. The establishment candidate this time around, Lamont netted nearly 87 percent of the floor vote at the Democratic convention in Hartford on Saturday, May 19, ceding the slim remainder—half of them from the state’s depressed post-industrial cities—to his one unrelenting opponent. Lamont campaign staffers told me they believed Ganim might drop out as soon as Monday. Ganim staffers said I must have garbled the quotation.

“If they think that, they definitely don’t know Joe,” said Ganim campaign coordinator Troy Jackson as he hurried from the convention center after Saturday’s vote, off to knock on more doors in New Haven.

Bridgeport knows Joe, and they elected him anyway. The 58-year-old mayor of the state’s poorest and most populous city won reelection in 2015 after serving seven years in prison for running an elaborate kickback scheme from city hall. That conspiracy, in its human scope (10 associates went away as well) and half-million dollar haul, surpassed the crimes of any of Connecticut’s other corrupt big-city mayors. Ganim first took office in 1991 and steered Bridgeport’s revival from bankruptcy until his 2003 conviction

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on 16 felony counts of bribery, conspiracy, racketeering, mail fraud, and tax evasion. Astonishingly, he revived his political career 12 years later.

Jay Marlin, a Washington-based political consultant who figured Ganim for a future governor a quarter-century ago, remembers him pre-prison as an uncommonly good campaigner. And a stint in the slammer didn't rewire him much. "Politically, he says he's more transparent. But personally he's the same. He has the same energy and love of people," Marlin tells me while incumbent governor Dannel Malloy bellows his valedictory at the convention. Malloy is America's least-popular governor, according to *Morning Consult's* annual state-by-state survey. His back-to-back tax hikes have led to an exodus of corporate and individual wealth from the state. But he is here to nominate Senator Chris Murphy, the uncontested object of tonight's adoration, and he tacks on a promise that Democrats will hold Connecticut and, despite the crippling debt load his governance deepened, will raise the minimum wage "again and again. And again!"

It may be too late for Malloy, but Ganim's here to redeem himself. "He was on the path to be governor, and it all came crashing down. It was like a Greek tragedy," Marlin says. But then he came back. "People knock him down," Marlin says. "Like a Whac-A-Mole, he keeps popping back up again."

Or, as Ganim euphemized to me, "I've been given the honor as a second-chance candidate—after lessons learned from mistakes made, as I say—of a renewed sense of transparency and accountability." And he skillfully spins: "It not only makes me want to be someone who will create second-chance opportunities that

I've had in Bridgeport, but also first-chance opportunities for people." His campaign, he says, targets Connecticut's crumbling cities, population centers Democrats depend on but don't really understand.

Having failed to secure the support of 15 percent of the convention delegates, Ganim needs to collect 15,500 petition signatures by June 12—he's

onto the ballot at the convention. But the morning of the floor vote, former state senator and longtime conservative columnist for the *Hartford Courant* Kevin Rennie says he's starting to expect a solid showing from the mayor. "He's gained a grudging admiration from a lot of people," Rennie tells me—meaning Ganim's opponent must have lost some.

The Lamont mystique comes with a certain smugness, an unlovable invulnerability. Some of this is just Greenwich, a town where country clubs and hedge funds buttress an enviable quality of life, despite rising taxes and plummeting real estate values, as corporate taxpayers flee for New York and Massachusetts—tax havens now, compared with Connecticut.

With his thick brown hair slicked back and wearing a dove gray blazer, Donny Landis, boyfriend of Lamont's elder daughter Emily, tells me at Starbucks the morning of the vote that the Lamonts, like most of Connecticut, consider their patriarch's primary win a foregone conclusion. Ganim, he says, is "not getting to 15 percent, not even close." And the 11,000-plus signatures he's collected? "It's a nonissue," he says. The Lamonts are "not concerned." But what of the coming class war, the populist uprising after the millionaires put down

the Bridgeporters? He laughs. "More power to 'em. Hey, it's a free country."

As an outsider clawing his way back "from great sin," says Hank Sheinkopf, a veteran Democratic strategist uninvolved in the race, Ganim speaks to "working people, when they're alienated." And in a state with climbing tax rates and dwindling opportunities, they are. "When populism is the religion of the moment, he fits that moment. But is it all an act?" he wonders.



Ned Lamont, above, and Joe Ganim, below, greet delegates at the state Democratic convention in Hartford, May 19, 2018.



secured over 11,000 now—to get on the ballot for the August 14 primary. That's the immediate task. Then, "if we're successful in getting that message out, I think the party will be a better place, and I think we'll win," says Ganim. "Because there's such affluence in some of the communities, Greenwich being one of them . . . there seems to be such a divide and insensitivity, almost lack of care, toward our cities with the greatest populations."

Ganim didn't expect to make it

Even if it is an act, Connecticut kind of buys it. Darlene Clouter, a Litchfield delegate, says she won't vote for Ganim, but her smile takes on a conspiratorial glint when I ask. "He's a nice guy who's paid his time," she tells me, recalling a town council meeting last year where Ganim gave her his cell number. "He said, 'Call me if you're ever in Bridgeport and you need anything at all.'" Clouter hasn't called, but she likes that she can.

"He certainly makes an impression," says Robert Schrage, a lawyer from Easton, "and he's the candidate with the most direct experience"—but "under ordinary circumstances somebody with Joe's background wouldn't even be on the table." That is, in a year not so weighed down by Malloy's disastrous record that several state-level Democrats, obvious contenders on paper, declined to run. John Ryan, a delegate from East Hartford, doesn't much like the choice that's left. "I truthfully do not know who I'm going to go for, and it'll come right down to the wire, I guarantee." To win him over, a candidate would need to talk tough on the state's mounting pension debt and unbalanced budget. "It would have to be somebody recognizing the problems, verbalizing the problems," and so far no Democrat has. "We've got businesses leaving, we've got people leaving. My son graduates from law school on Sunday, and

he's interviewing out of state for jobs."

Hacibey Catalbasoglu, a 20-year-old New Haven delegate and a senior at Yale, decided he'd be voting for Lamont once the field winnowed to just him and Ganim. He and I look at Bridgeport's rowdy, relaxed delegation—seated directly in front of the Greenwich group with their legs crossed fussily and lips pursed. "How much do you want to bet there's one of these people"—he gestures toward a Greenwich delegate in a blue blazer, frayed-cuff weekend khakis, and hundred-dollar haircut, then to the Bridgeporters—"worth more than all these people combined?"

Sitting with Bridgeport's bloc, largely black and Hispanic, are the mayor's mother and father. "He's 91, and she's 82, but they're good on the phones," Ganim says. Many of the Bridgeporters boo when Lamont prepares to take the stage to accept the party's nomination. But first, they hoist all five feet, six and three-quarter inches of the mayor onto a chair in front of the platform. He pumps his fist in time to their chant, "Joe! Joe! Joe! Joe!" All the Greenwich delegates can do is silently hoist their signs: "Believe," "Ned 2018," and "ConNEDicut."

"Look, I'm not going to kid you," Ganim tells me later, as Lamont and his running mate rack up TV and radio interviews. "We've still got an opponent who's going to spend

\$10 million. But we kind of relish in that kind of contrast." At some point during the hubbub of the floor vote, an AP reporter snaps a photo of Lamont's back with a round "Joe Ganim for Connecticut" sticker between his shoulders, while Ganim bounds around the floor with a pitch Jay Marlin paraphrased thus: "You don't have to be for Ganim to vote for him tomorrow. Be for democracy."

Lina Deleon, a New Haven proxy delegate who voted for the mayor on behalf of an absent alderman, says Ganim came up to her during the floor vote, shook her hand, and made soulful eye contact, as though they'd known each other for years and he owed her his ongoing redemption. "He couldn't even have known how I was voting," she says, marveling at the contrast with Lamont's nervous smiles from within a protective posse of staffers. "He seems authentic, like he stands for 'the forgotten people,'" she says, but appears unconvinced of it herself. "Does he?" I ask, and she shakes her head, "That's the question."

If it's at all unclear exactly what's driving Joe Ganim ever onward, one thing is more obvious now than before he charged through the convention in Hartford. While the Republican Governors Association pushes giddy press releases declaring the blue state in play, Democrats ignore what actually ails Connecticut: an economic downturn that their persistent progressive one-upmanship promises only to worsen. When he took to the stage to second his own nomination, Ganim echoed Malloy, saying, "I'll work with you, if given the honor, to support an increase in the minimum wage and to fight for collective bargaining rights."

East Hartford's John Ryan, who said he'd lost patience with his party's silence on the state's financial ruin, admits after the vote that neither candidate swayed him. Of his town's 20 delegates, 2 went for Ganim and 17 to Lamont. The 20th was Ryan. "I couldn't vote for either," but he got a good show. And he went home with an honest sense of one choice he'll have in August. "He's got some serious guts," he says of Ganim. ♦



Don't Worry, They'll Be Fine

A little parenting heresy on smartphones and screen time

BY LAURA VANDERKAM

My 10-year-old asked for an iPhone for his 11th birthday. Many of his friends have them. He will be starting middle school in the fall and will no longer have just one teacher responsible for handling dismissal changes. He has various activities with various calls on his time (and our transport). There were practical reasons to get him a phone. But since he is the eldest of our four children, my husband and I knew that whatever we decided for him would become our official family “phone policy.”

Which implied that we needed a family phone policy.

Being the diligent parents we are, we decided to hash this out while also evaluating our wider approach to screen time. We have accumulated a surprising number of electronic devices: two TVs, three laptops and three iPhones for the parents’ work (and, okay, some Instagram perusal), one home computer, four Kindles for children’s games and videos (in various states of repair based on who last dropped it or spilled orange juice while watching *Pokémon*). My husband decided to email friends and family with older children. I poked around online for advice.

I soon discovered that children and phones, and indeed screen time in general, is one of the most fraught topics of modern parenting. The Internet—ironically—is full of angsty, virtue-signaling essays from

parents promising they will keep their children offline and off devices as long as possible. The essays follow a basic arc: The writer sees a toddler glued to an iPad, is tormented by this image, and waxes nostalgic about a lost era of childhood, which seems to have occurred on some day in August 1956. He or she declares that the children will henceforth spend all their free time climbing trees.

What I can’t find is the follow-up essay, written from the ER after one of the kids has broken a leg falling out of a tree. I’d like to know if that parent is still unwilling to hand over the phone to help pass the long hours of waiting. I rather doubt it.

Screen time turns out to be like a lot of things in parenting. If you’re the kind of parent who’s concerned about it, you shouldn’t worry. Your kids are going to be fine. Indeed, your kids, by virtue of having conscientious parents whose worries tend more toward iPhone use than to getting evicted, are among the luckiest people on the planet.

What you decide about screens doesn’t really matter. This might sound like heresy. Everybody has their stories. Haven’t I seen a fragged preschooler after a YouTube binge? Or there’s that time that youngster did something terrible after seeing something terrible on some terrible app I’ve never even heard of. The irony of this is that in our connected world, such tales spread so fast that they feel like data.

Amidst the barrage of anecdotes, it’s no surprise that people worry about what media exposure “does” to kids. As with any broad topic, one can find certain studies pointing certain directions. There is some evidence that exposure to media violence leads to increased aggression. There is also some evidence that children who have devices in their rooms sleep a bit less than children who do not.



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The problem with any broader inquiry or conclusion, though—and with attempts by official bodies such as the American Academy of Pediatrics to issue guidelines—is that the world and children and screens are all complicated. Smartphones and tablets haven't been around long enough for researchers to know much about their long-term implications and whether anything is materially different from the television era. Not all screen time is equal; chatting with Grandma via FaceTime is likely different from watching *Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood* or playing *Grand Theft Auto*. And someone with a familial predisposition to eating disorders discovering how-to forums on crash dieting is something else again.

Also, it's hard to control for all the variables in how children "turn out"—whatever that parental obsession means. (Is the best measurable endpoint graduating from an Ivy League university or avoiding jail time?) No one is randomly assigning some children to have zero tech exposure and others to watch DanTDM narrate video games for 18 hours straight. The few studies that have aimed to get parents to reduce screen time have achieved very little real reduction; harried parents trying to get through the day are unlikely to change their lives to satisfy researchers' curiosity. "Research shows parents with more confidence and more resources are more likely to limit screen time," says Anya Kamenetz, author of *The Art of Screen Time*, NPR's lead education blogger, and a mother of two. "So any benefit we see from limited screen time is confounded by the other advantages those kids enjoy."

Indeed, despite widespread worries since the dawn of the Internet era that children from less privileged backgrounds might miss out on the wonders of technology, the opposite turns out to be true.

To know what playing video games or spending hours on Instagram does to kids, we have to know what they might have done instead. If the other option is reading Proust, screen time is going to be less intellectually engaging. If the other option is that your child would wander around a dangerous, gang-plagued neighborhood while you work an extra shift to keep the family from falling behind on rent, letting the kids play *Fortnite* is probably the wise choice. And so that is the choice parents in more strained circumstances make.

There is much to be written about (and lamented about) inherited inequality. But in the world we live in, the broad demographic truth is that the children of educated

professional-class people, the sort who fret about screen time (or gluten or organic farming practices), almost always "turn out" to be educated professionals themselves. Children from tougher backgrounds have a tougher time of it.

It's just not about the screens. As for the various crises ascribed to modern childhood and adolescence, some of which are pinned on smart phones and Internet access, these are likewise a mixed bag.

Teenagers have always been stupid, but it is true that modern technology enables young people to engage in idiocy that would have been tough to pull off in prior generations. Before iPhones and Snapchat, sharing naked photos of yourself or others with total strangers would have involved such a mind-boggling number of steps that anyone pondering it would have sobered up long before completing the process. Another issue: The Internet is forever. Future employers will have access to the I-hate-the-world screed a teen posts in a moment of romantic disappointment.

The Internet likewise hosts plenty of horrible things that adolescents might have trouble handling. It's not just the obvious stuff (pornography); the recent van attack in Toronto by a man claiming membership in the "incel" (involuntarily celibate) community brought to light angles of misogyny

I hadn't even thought to worry my boys might learn about.

There is also evidence that mental-health issues are more widespread than in the past. A study published in *Pediatrics* in 2016 found that the percentage of adolescents reporting a major depressive episode in the previous 12 months rose from 8.7 percent in 2005 to 11.3 percent in 2014. "Modern kids don't have as much ability to manage their behavior, thoughts, and emotions as in previous generations," says Katherine Reynolds Lewis, a parenting educator and author of *The Good News About Bad Behavior*. This decline in self-regulation skills has risen at the exact same time that kids have spent more time interacting through texts and social media, rather than in person. "It would be naïve to think there wasn't a relationship," she says.

But while any rise in depression or self-harm rates (including suicide) is worrying, even at these slightly higher rates, the vast majority of kids are doing all right. Indeed, plenty of indicators point in a positive direction since the smartphone era began. Teen pregnancy rates have

The broad demographic truth is that the children of educated professional-class people, the sort who fret about screen time (or gluten or organic farming practices), almost always 'turn out' to be educated professionals themselves. Children from tougher backgrounds have a tougher time of it.

plummeted 51 percent since 2007. The proportion of juveniles (ages 10-17) arrested annually has likewise dropped by more than 50 percent since 2007. With fewer young people experiencing these life-derailing events, the U.S. high school-graduation rate recently hit an all-time high.

There are many factors at work here, but it would be equally naïve to think there isn't a screen-time relationship, too: When teens spend more time interacting online, rather than in person, they may not learn all the subtleties of interpersonal interaction, and they may be able to access some wretched content, but they aren't doing problematic things with each other's physical bodies either.

Very little in life is all good or all bad. Screens also enable some really cool things—aside from your reading this essay because a friend posted a link on her Facebook page. “If we are so ready to ascribe negative effects to smartphones, we should be willing to consider the positive benefits of young people having a place to explore and connect that is physically safe and to access resources,” says Kamenetz. Teens with disabilities, or any sorts of differences, can connect with more kids who are like them than they could find in smaller communities. Young people can showcase their creative and entrepreneurial activities in a way that was difficult before.

Even some of the things people most lament about screens—like video games—aren't all bad or even a waste of time. My little boys sometimes set up their own playdates with friends, agreeing to be online at a certain time to play games together. This sense of agency is one of the things people claim screens diminish. The idea that “you can't make a living playing video games” is also emphatically untrue in the era of YouTube. For my kids, all this has provided a great opportunity to talk about the concept of income streams. Mommy makes her living by advancing her personal brand across multiple channels. Quite possibly my children will too.

None of this is either/or. All those essays lamenting the loss of childhood seem to gloss over the fact that many of us born before 1982 still spent quite a bit of time watching TV. Beating *Super Mario Bros.* was one of my proudest childhood accomplishments. I climbed some trees, too.

Any parent who wants to limit or restrict access to screens should feel free to do so. Your house, your rules—just as some families let people wear shoes indoors and others don't. Just recognize that it's mostly about preferences rather than right-or-wrong answers.

My husband and I settled on a screen-time policy of letting the older children get one hour a day, total, across their existing non-phone devices, Monday through Thursday, and just not worrying about it too much on the weekends. This will be self-policed, which might sound unworkable and maybe will be, but I also realized that structural factors preclude hours of zoning out. Among a certain demographic, there's only so much time available for screens anyway, even if they are ubiquitous. Most of us do make our children do their homework. I try not to “overschedule” my children—another meaningless bit of modern angst, right up there with gluten—but with four children, even if each kid does two things, that's eight activities for the family. That means the option doesn't exist to start

watching old episodes of *Survivor* at 7 A.M. on weekends and continue until 10 P.M. My kids may like killing time as much as anyone else, but if I forbid screens at meals and also make them go off an hour before an enforced bedtime, there isn't that much time available for the killing.

So I see no point in worrying about the precise amount within that window. There are also family benefits to allowing some slack. If letting my 3-year-old watch *Thomas the Tank Engine* on my iPhone means we can all eat dinner out some Saturday night without screaming, so be it.

As for the 11-year-old and the iPhone? I realized that my fears of giving him access to the Internet were unfounded,

because he already has access to it on numerous screens at home. While monitoring a phone might be more difficult than monitoring the home computer, I could demand the same access. I already keep him off the Kindle long enough to do his homework; I could likewise keep him off a slightly smaller screen. Many parents that we respect replied to our informal survey that they'd gotten their kids smartphones in sixth grade or whenever middle school started in their communities.

So all the signs pointed to my son's getting an iPhone on his birthday. My lingering trepidation is far more mundane than any existential angst about childhood and whether my child might become addicted to the Internet. This is a boy who managed to lose his winter coat twice in one weekend. The odds of the smartphone disappearing are high enough that I would not wish to write us an insurance policy. In the end, we bought an older, cheaper model. If I see no reason to worry much about screen time, I also see no reason to have money disappear faster than a photo on Snapchat. ♦



The Statustician!

Tom Wolfe was death on intellectual pretension, and he mocked those who always sought out the worst in America

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

America is a wonderful country! I mean it! No honest writer would challenge that statement! The human comedy never runs out of material! It never lets you down!

—Tom Wolfe, ‘Sorry, But Your Soul Just Died’

Tom Wolfe, who had a genius for garnering publicity, would not have been disappointed by that accompanying his death on May 14 at the age of 88: praising op-eds in both the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, a page on his stylishness in the latter and a full page, with four photographs, recounting his life in the former. There were two further articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, two in the *Washington Post*, and pieces in *Time*, *Forbes*, the *New Yorker*, and just about every other general-interest publication, print and online both. The words “great” and “greatness” were much bandied about.

All mentioned Wolfe’s clothes, the dandiacal get-ups, chiefly in white, with foppish accoutrements—high-collared shirts and homburgs and co-respondent shoes—without which, so far as anyone knows, he never left his apartment. One obituarist, Graeme Wood in the *American Scholar*, wrote that Wolfe “leaves behind a widow, two children, and (one assumes) a grieving Upper East Side dry cleaner.” Mark Twain, in his day, was known as the “Man in White.” Whether Tom Wolfe in selecting his wardrobe set out to be the Twain of our own day is not known—he left no *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* certainly—but the white duds seem to have worked in gaining attention for both men.

To go along with gaudy threads, the young Tom Wolfe devised an even gaudier prose style, which went well beyond the legal limit for ellipses, capital letters, exclamation marks, and ornate vocabulary. Nearly every sentence he wrote seemed a verbal extravaganza. One of Wolfe’s

first successes was a 1963 article for *Esquire* written in garishly Technicolor prose—“shotgun baroque edging over into machine-gun rococo” is how I described it in the *New Republic* as long ago as 1965. The legend behind this article, titled “There Goes (Varoom! Varoom!) That Kandy-Kolored (Thphhhhh!) Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby (Rahghhh!) Around the Bend (Brummmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmmm),” is that Wolfe had scribbled 49 pages of notes that he couldn’t pull together into a coherent article. With deadline pressing, Byron Dobell, *Esquire*’s managing editor, told him to bring in the notes, which Dobell then published without change. The story is one of the foundational myths of what came to be called the New Journalism.

Perhaps the quickest way for a school of thought, political program, or other phenomenon to reach obsolescence is to term itself New. Hence the New Deal, the New Criticism, the New Frontier, and, inevitably, the New Journalism. In its heyday, the New Journalism, whose home fields were *Esquire* and *New York* under the editorships, respectively, of Harold T.P. Hayes and Clay Felker, featured non-fiction using the techniques and devices of fiction: shifting point of view, present-tense description, foreshadowing, stream of consciousness. It also permitted its practitioners to insert themselves into their work, which in an earlier time would have outraged traditional journalism’s goal of objectivity. Under this reign of subjectivity, the author himself or herself—Joan Didion comes prominently to mind here—was not infrequently the subject.

Tom Wolfe was one of the leading lights of the New Journalism, along with Didion, Gay Talese, Hunter S. Thompson, Nora Ephron, and David Halberstam. Two famous novelists, Truman Capote and Norman Mailer, soon stepped out onto the New Journalism dance floor: Capote with *In Cold Blood* (1966), Mailer with *Armies of the Night* (1968), both of which works their authors termed “nonfiction novels.” How much of the New Journalism remains readable in our day cannot of course be known, but high estimates would doubtless be a mistake.

What Wolfe had was a dead eye for the telling detail, especially where it touched on the status life. He would become statustician in chief of American life. In “The

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Secret Vice” (1966), an essay on custom haberdashery, Wolfe wrote of a New York lawyer who divides the world between men “with suits whose buttons are just sewn onto the sleeve, just some kind of cheapie decoration, or—yes!—men who can unbutton the sleeve at the wrist because they have real buttonholes and the sleeve really buttons up.” In “Putting Daddy On” (1964), he described an advertising executive who calls his hat, a “sort of homburg with a flanged brim,” a “Madison Avenue crash helmet and then wears one.”

At the beginning of his career Wolfe wrote about the American sideshow: racecar drivers, Ken Kesey and his acid-dropping (not very) Merry Pranksters, Las Vegas, rich divorcées in Manhattan, the Rolling Stones, whom he designated like the Beatles, “only more lower-class deformed.” Good copy all, but still very much in the realm of journalism, however New the presentation. Wolfe’s subjects were people who had, in the cant phrase of the day, lifestyles, but not really lives, in the sense that they didn’t seem to live very deep down. He caught the sheen of their surface with great skill.

An admirer of Max Weber and of Thorstein Veblen, Wolfe established himself as a sociologist without license, a social scientist who took no surveys but operated out of pure instinct and subtle observation. He could tell you that the current teenage word for French kissing was “tonsil hockey” or that the CEOs of Silicon Valley corporations do not carry smartphones (they have vice-presidents to carry their phones around for them) and other *petits faits vrais*. Recounting a moment from a session at Esalen, in his 1976 essay “The ‘Me’ Decade and the Third Great Awakening,” Wolfe, homing in on the feast of self-regard of 1970s psychology, wrote:

Each soul is concentrated on its own burning item . . . my husband! my wife! my homosexuality! my inability to communicate, my self-hatred, self-destruction, craven fears, puling weaknesses, primordial horrors, premature ejaculation, impotence, frigidity, rigidity, subservience, laziness, alcoholism, major vices, minor vices, grim habits, twisted psyches, tortured souls—and yet each unique item has been raised to a cosmic level and united with every other.

For all the dazzle, Wolfe often seemed just another interesting journalist, a fellow who had developed a wow and whoopee style, little more. Then, in 1970, he wrote his breakout piece, the work that made him a writer to be reckoned with. “Radical Chic” was an account of the most famous case of reverse slumming of its time: the party that Leonard and Felicia Bernstein gave for the Black Panthers. The phrase “radical chic” was a perfect description of the behavior of an upper class with nothing at risk cultivating fashionable progressive opinions to reinforce its own self-esteem and at the same time seeming to demonstrate its large-hearted sensitivity to the condition of the underclass. The point about the phenomenon was that it was risk-free. As Wolfe later noted: “A Radical Chic protester got himself arrested in the late morning or early afternoon, in mild weather. He was booked and released in time to make it to the Electric Circus, that year’s New York nightspot of the century, and tell war stories.”

The roster of guests gathered at the Bernsteins’ Park Avenue penthouse duplex for an evening of fundraising for the Black Panthers was a splendid combination of the well-known and the well-to-do. Included were Jason Robards and Schuyler Chapin, Goddard Lieberson and Mike Nichols, Lillian Hellman and Larry Rivers, Aaron Copland and Richard Avedon, Stephen Sondheim and Jerome Robbins, Adolph and Phyllis Green and Betty Comden. A party for the

Panthers had its complications: Black servants had to be replaced by Hispanic ones, for a start. Then there was the question of the Black Panthers’ taste in hors d’oeuvres and so much more with which the thoughtful hosts had to contend. The Bernsteins’ mistake, of course, was letting Tom Wolfe in the door.

What he set indelibly on display in “Radical Chic” was that people who can afford them can wear their opinions as if they were designer clothes. Some opinions, like some clothes, were more *comme il faut* than others. Expressing support for the Black Panthers, a group that should its members’ dreams come true would have everyone in the



Bernstein apartment that evening on a tumbrel on the way to the guillotine, was the political equivalent of Dior, Hermès, or Givenchy.

Just behind the Panthers in progressive social prestige in those days came Cesar Chavez and his National Farm Workers Association. In the same essay, Wolfe gave a brief account of a fundraiser arranged for them by Andrew Stein in Southampton. “From the beginning,” Wolfe writes of Stein’s fête, “the afternoon was full of the delicious status contradictions that provide much of the electricity for Radical Chic.”

The men in their Dunhill blazers and Turnbull & Asser neckerchiefs, the women in their Pucci dresses, Gucci shoes, and Capucci scarves listened to heartrending accounts of grape pickers and their children rising at 3 A.M. for 12-hour days in the blistering hot fields with nothing to eat but a baloney sandwich. How sad, how gripping, how unjust it all was, until, Wolfe interjected, “the wind had come up off the ocean and it was wrecking everybody’s hair.” Perfecto!

Perfecto, that is, if one wishes to show how feeble, thin, and ultimately fraudulent was the sympathy of the rich and famous for the poor and downtrodden. “Radical Chic” put a serious dent in the radical movement that was then sweeping America and that today chiefly finds a home in the much shabbier surroundings of university humanities and social-science departments. Many thought the essay the work of a right-winger, but they were wrong. The essay was the work of a man who enjoyed the comedy of rich contradictions played out by people prepared to desert their common sense in the hope of boosting their status. And Wolfe didn’t in the least flinch when naming names: Jean vanden Heuvel, Jules Feiffer, Carter and Amanda Burden, Sidney and Gail Lumet, and other glittering names all hosted events like that of the Bernsteins. “Who do you call to give a party?,” Wolfe quoted the then-high-profile New York art dealer Richard Feigen asking.

Wolfe never minded making enemies. Early in his career he took on William Shawn and the *New Yorker* in an essay called “Tiny Mummies! The True Story of the Ruler of 43rd Street’s Land of the Walking Dead!,” guaranteeing that he would never appear in that magazine’s pages. Later, he wrote of Robert Silvers, the Anglomaniacal editor of the *New York Review of Books*, that “his accent arrived mysteriously one day in a box from London. Intrigued, he slapped it into his mouth like a set of teeth.” In those two strokes, he made himself permanently *non grata* with two of the most powerful editors in the land. He was no more tender about the leading intellectual figures of the day. He described

Susan Sontag as “just another scribbler who spent her life signing up for protest meetings and lumbering to the podium encumbered by her prose style, which had a handicapped parking sticker valid at *Partisan Review*.”

Along with conferring greater fame on him than he had hitherto known, “Radical Chic” gave Wolfe a strong taste for provocation. Literary and intellectual provocateur was a role he felt comfortable playing. He seemed greatly to enjoy a ruckus of his own devising. After “Radical Chic” came his book *The Painted Word*, a dazzling takedown of the pretensions of the contemporary art world and its star critics, which was excerpted in 1975 in *Harper’s*. (Six years later, in *From Bauhaus to Our House*, he would perpetrate a similar massacre of modern architecture.)

Wolfe was a brilliant titlist, and “The Painted Word” conveys the chief idea in the work—namely, that no contemporary painting could have any serious standing without a critical theory certifying and explaining it. Twenty-five years from the time of his essay, he prophesied, there would appear on the walls of the Museum of Modern Art “huge copy blocks, eight and a half by eleven feet each, presenting the protean passages. . . .

Beside them will be small reproductions of the work of leading illustrators of the Word from that period such as Johns, Louis, Noland, Stella, and Olitski.” The essay is a reminder that in Joseph Roth’s novel *Left and Right*, the criterion a wealthy character sets for buying art is “that a picture should repel his sense and intelligence. Only then could he be sure of having bought a valuable modern work.”

Wolfe grasped what difficult abstract and minimalist art did for its collectors:

Today there is a peculiarly modern reward that the avant-garde artist can give his benefactor: namely, the feeling that he, like his mate the artist, is separate from and aloof from the bourgeoisie, the middle classes . . . the feeling that he may be *from* the middle class but he is no longer *in* it . . . the feeling that he is a fellow soldier, or at least an aide-de-camp or an honorary cong guerrilla in the vanguard march through the land of the philistines. This is a peculiarly modern need and a peculiarly modern kind of salvation (from the sin of Too Much Money) and something quite common among the well-to-do all over the West, in Rome and Milan as well as New York. That is why collecting contemporary art, the leading edge, the latest thing, warm and wet from the Loft, appeals specifically to those who feel most uneasy about their own commercial wealth. . . . Avant-garde art, more than any other, takes the Mammon and the Moloch out of money, puts Levi’s, turtlenecks, muttonchops, and other mantles and laurels of bohemian grace upon it.

‘Radical Chic’ gave Wolfe a strong taste for provocation. Literary and intellectual provocateur was a role he felt comfortable playing.

I have an acquaintance in Chicago, a lawyer, an unembarrassed right-winger in his politics, who has an apparently valuable collection of social protest art from the 1930s, a collection that he obviously feels sets him apart from his confreres. That art collection, in his mind, is the white ass upon which he intends to ride into Jerusalem.

Hilton Kramer, in a powerful essay called “Revenge of the Philistines,” praised Wolfe’s account of the sociology of the visual art of the time. On the comedy inherent in the subject, he noted, Wolfe “is illuminating and often hilarious.” Yet when it came to the analysis of ideas, Kramer felt, “when it comes down to actual works of art and the thinking they both embody and inspire, Wolfe is hopelessly out of his depth . . . and, no doubt, beyond his true interests.” He faulted Wolfe for his inability to understand the historical context of the contemporary situation in art or how we have come to where we are in a way that carries us well beyond “the drawing-room comedy of *The Painted Word*.” Kramer concluded: “It is this fundamental incomprehension of the role of criticism in the life of art—this enmity to the function of theory in the creation of culture—that identifies *The Painted Word*, despite its knowingness and its fun, as a philistine utterance, an act of revenge against a quality of mind it cannot begin to encompass and must therefore treat as a preposterous joke.”

Tom Wolfe’s style, cast of mind, and literary mission were essentially satirical. The satirist is chiefly interested in exposé—in exposing the pretensions, hypocrisies, fraudulence, and even the hidden anxieties of others. In his work, the satirist is allowed—actually, requires—simplification, caricature, and hyperbole. Interested though he is in the truth, he doesn’t wish to be derailed, or slowed down even, by the whole truth. So when Hilton Kramer, in reviewing *The Painted Word*, pointed out Wolfe’s ignorance of, and indeed probable uninterest in, the history of the work he is mocking, he was correct. But unless that history were inherently comical, to recount it would only have obscured the sharpness of Wolfe’s attack, which was worth making and best made without stopping to deal with messy complication. When, in *The Kingdom of Speech*, Wolfe’s 2016 book about language and evolution, he remarked that upon learning that Alfred Russel Wallace had arrived at the basic notion of evolution before he, Charles Darwin “freaked” and that through the remainder of his life Darwin, because he was able subtly to edge Wallace out of his position of

deserved primacy as the discoverer of the theory of evolution, “over and over, until the day he died, . . . sent up flares signaling his guilt,” one knows that, far from the way things happened, this is the comic artist, the satirist, at work.

Apart from Jonathan Swift’s Houyhnhnms, who aren’t quite human, there are not many heroes for satirists. Nor are there, in the works, nonfictional and fictional, of Tom Wolfe. Wolfe approvingly quoted Nietzsche and Marshall



Black Panther ‘field marshal’ Donald Lee Cox, right, in Leonard Bernstein’s Park Avenue duplex, January 1970

McLuhan in various of his works and wrote admiringly about Robert Noyce, the physicist and founder of Intel, and the test pilots turned astronauts and their wives in his book *The Right Stuff* (1979). But the charivari of comic misbehavior in his time was too loud to leave much room for heroes.

In the early 1980s, Tom Wolfe turned to writing fiction, and in 1987 brought out *The Bonfire of the Vanities*, about the high-priced status life in Manhattan. “There it was,” the novel’s protagonist notes, driving in from the Bronx, “the Rome, the Paris, the London of the twentieth century, the city of ambition, the dense magnetic rock, the destination of all those who insist on being *where things are happening*—.” The book was a great success, commercially and critically, and made the kind of stir its author most enjoyed. *The Bonfire of the Vanities* tells of the life of Sherman McCoy, a player in the bond market, one of the self-acclaimed “Masters of the Universe,” earning \$980,000 a year and, owing to his headlong plunge into the New York status life, not making his nut. McCoy’s life goes bust when his 26-year-old mistress, driving his Mercedes, runs over

a thuggish young black man late one night, and they flee the scene. The full nightmare of modern life—a pestiferous media, glory-seeking politicians, corrupt prosecutors, race-activist charlatans looking for a cause to stir up trouble—comes down upon him with full force. The vanities of the novel’s various characters compete in a combined effort to promote themselves at the expense of Sherman McCoy.

Yet his plight is not what is most memorable about *Bonfire of the Vanities*. What is memorable is the relentless detail in which Wolfe demonstrates how far from the real McCoy is the life of his novel’s hero. Doing the math, setting out the numbers, he shows how a man earning a yearly salary only \$20,000 short of a million can fall into debt. He recounts how a night out on the town in little ole Manhattan—what with renting a limo, babysitting fees, hairstylists, and the rest—can run a man \$2,000.

The scope of the novel is impressive, even for its 659 pages. Wolfe’s characters range from gay lawyers and Jewish cops to alcoholic journalists and lower-middle-class Greek bimbos—the dialogue of this gallimaufry never striking a false note—his scenes from grand Park Avenue apartments to haute-cuisine French restaurants to police lockups. Wolfe was more than merely attentive to all his characters’ clothes and accessories. No surprise there. A character in the novel carries his shoes to work in a shopping bag and we learn that they are “not very elegant” Johnston & Murphy shoes. Another wears an English riding mac that was “bought at Knoud on Madison Avenue.” Henry James, as far as possible from Tom Wolfe’s model in the realm of writing fiction—Wolfe claimed Thackeray and Dickens as his literary forebears—notes of his character Gilbert Osmond, in *The Portrait of a Lady*, that “he was dressed as a man dresses who takes little other trouble about it than to have no vulgar things.” How much more economical, and effective, to leave such matters to the imagination of readers.

In 1987, political correctness hadn’t fully kicked in, and so Wolfe could produce despicable lawyers who are clearly Jewish (quite as despicable as not a few Jewish lawyers I have known)—though one of the few admirable characters in the novel, a figure of courage and competence, is the obviously Jewish judge Myron Kovitsky. The character Reverend Bacon, who attempts to make great hay over Sherman McCoy’s running over a black kid, is a portrait for which our own Reverends Jackson and Sharpton might have sat. McCoy’s wife Judy refers to three “V.I.F.’s,” which, as she explains to her husband, stands for “Very Important Fags.”

I mention all this not to indict Wolfe for political incorrectness—the last thing I should want to do—but to show his social accuracy and fearlessness. Wolfe, like every sensible person, judged all groups not by their ethnicity or social status but one man or woman at a time.

Yet rich as it is, something is missing at the heart of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*—as it would be in the three further novels Wolfe went on to write. And this was due to his greater interest in social scene than in character. In his fiction, Wolfe set out to show, to borrow the title of a Trollope novel, the way we live now—or rather, lived then. But the central task of the novel at its finest, recording the twists and turns of the human heart, eluded Tom Wolfe.

What one remembers from his novels are not specific characters, but the details of social scenes and situations. This is owing, I strongly suspect, to Wolfe’s view that the motor force of modern life is the struggle to achieve high status, whatever one’s line of work or station in life. Wolfe was dedicated, as he put it in his 1989 essay “Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast,” to a fiction that “would portray the individual in intimate and inextricable relation to the

society around him.” Somehow Wolfe, like the good journalist he was, so artfully created the society that the individual got lost.

What one remembers from his novels are not specific characters, but the details of social scenes and situations. Somehow Wolfe, like the good journalist he was, so artfully created the society that the individual got lost.

When Tom Wolfe’s second novel, *A Man in Full* (1998), a book 11 years in the making, was attacked by John Updike, Norman Mailer, and John Irving, Wolfe fired back in an essay called “My Three Stooges.” He had already set out his novelistic credo in “Stalking the Billion-Footed Beast,” which rightly condemned those academic novelists of the day—John Gardner, John Hawkes, Robert Coover, John Barth—for the aridity of the enclosed worlds of their work and called for a return to realism in fiction. He argued that there is a wealth of material available to the novelist, but to acquire it he needs the reportorial skill of a Zola, a Dreiser, a Dos Passos, a Sinclair Lewis. “Literary genius, in prose,” he wrote, “consists of proportions more on the order of 65 percent material and 35 percent talent in the sacred crucible.” Wolfe’s argument, in short, was that novelists needed to do what journalists do—the necessary legwork to get the story or, better, the story behind the story.

In “My Three Stooges”—Updike, Mailer, Irving being the stooges in question—he took things further

and argued that the school of realism is the primary, the best, and really only worthwhile school of fiction. George Costanza-like, he then went too far. If a novel doesn't sell well, Wolfe concluded, it is probably not very good. By falling back on the success of certain novels constructed out of the principles of realism, he suggests that the ultimate judge of great art is neither enlightened criticism nor time but popularity, citing the commercial success of his own second novel, *A Man in Full* (first printing 1.2 million copies with further printings to follow).

"It was not until after the First World War," Wolfe wrote, "that there came into being that sweaty colonial, the American 'intellectual,' who would value a James above a Dreiser, a Dos Passos, or a Sinclair Lewis." Proust, Joyce, and James were figures of contempt for Wolfe, treated as if no one but an intellectual, a person dead to life, could value their work above the pulsing-with-life novels of Zola. Elsewhere Wolfe compared the tedium of graduate school with reading *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, Saul Bellow's least solipsistic novel. When Wolfe named contemporary novelists working in the realist mode that he admired—James Webb, Richard Price, Pat Conroy, Jimmy Breslin, Terry McMillan, Joseph Wambaugh, Po Bronson—the list was disappointing.

Wolfe was opposed to the cerebral in fiction. In his ardor to capture the larger story of the battle for status, the journalist in him set society in the foreground, leaving the individual well in the background. In doing so, he mistook the true mission of the novel, which has always been to study human nature in moral conflict, and the home truth that the greatest novelists—Tolstoy, George Eliot, Henry James, Proust, Thomas Mann, Willa Cather—have been those with the most powerful moral imaginations. Tom Wolfe, percipient about so much, missed this.

Abundant and on the whole admiring though most of the obituaries of Wolfe have been, none attempted to find a pattern in his long career. Some, mistakenly, used the occasion of his death to score off what they took to be his politics. But he never wrote directly about politics or politicians. Here he doubtless reserved the right to attack figures on both the left and the right. When Michael Jordan was asked why a man of his renown didn't speak out more about politics, he answered, "Republicans buy sneakers, too."

If Wolfe was ultimately conservative, as satirists tend to be, his was a cultural conservatism. And this conservatism extended beyond what we normally think of as culture. Behind his preoccupation with status, and apart from the comedy with which he portrayed it, was an abiding sadness at what fools people were to devote, and thus lose, their lives to the pathetic snobbery that lies behind all such systems. As a cultural conservative, he viewed most contemporary social revolutions as bringing out the worst in people. He

thought the so-called sexual revolution, for example, "rather a prim term for the lurid carnival that actually took place."

Wolfe could be death on pretension, and on none more than intellectual pretension. He mocked those intellectuals who always sought out the worst in America and found the country on the edge of incipient fascism. He loved America and knew what tremendous advantages it had provided for all who lived here. In an essay attacking American intellectuals, "In the Land of the Rococo Marxists" (2000), he wrote:

The country turned into what the utopian socialists of the nineteenth century, the Saint-Simons and Fouriers, had dreamed about: an El Dorado where the average working-man would have the political freedom, the personal freedom, the money, and the free time to fulfill his potential in one way he saw fit. It got to the point where if you couldn't reach your tile mason or pool cleaner, it was because he was off on a Royal Caribbean cruise with his third wife.

In *The Kingdom of Speech*, his last book, Wolfe expressed his disdain for cosmogonists, those thinkers who devise theories that Explain Everything (his capital letters). In this case the chief such thinker he had in mind was Charles Darwin. But the real point of attack in the book is Noam Chomsky, who, with his theory that owing to evolution humans are born with a universal grammar and his organized arrogance in defending it, represents all that Wolfe disdained. In a single sentence, he tied together Chomsky's politics and, as several devastating pages show, his illegitimate authority as a linguist:

Chomsky's politics enhanced his reputation as a great linguist, and his reputation as a great linguist enhanced his reputation as a political solon, and his reputation as a political solon inflated his reputation from great linguist to all-around genius, and the genius inflated the solon into a veritable Voltaire, and the Voltaire inflated the genius of all geniuses into a philosophical giant . . . Noam Chomsky."

Although he mentions him only once in his writings, and that far from favorably, Tom Wolfe is a writer in the line of H. L. Mencken. Both devised original, altogether inimitable prose styles. Both were in hot pursuit of the quacks of their time: Mencken of healing and holy-rolling preachers, fatuous professors, and others, Wolfe of many of the sad social climbers and savant-idiots who went under the name of intellectuals. Each man in his work brought a literary sensibility to keen sociological instincts. Each exhibited his greatest energy on the attack: Mencken on such figures as William Jennings Bryan and Warren Harding, Wolfe on Leonard Bernstein and Noam Chomsky. Like Mencken, Tom Wolfe deserves a place in American literature for doing so much to pull the wool off the eyes of his countrymen. May the line of Mencken and Wolfe never run out. ♦



Young Berliners dance at a nightclub in a scene from *Babylon Berlin*, the most expensive non-English TV drama ever made.

Berlin on the Brink

A German noir series now on Netflix vividly captures the contradictions of the Weimar era. BY JAMES H. BARNETT

‘G’ermany, be on your guard! The spirit of Berlin is a demon.” So warned the reactionary Swabian author Ludwig Finckh in the fateful year of 1919. Finckh was among the many Germans who were from the outset implacably hostile to the Weimar experiment in liberal democracy and bitter toward the social democrats for the purported “stab in the back” that had killed their beautiful Reich. To Finckh, there was no city for which the historical trajectory was more concerning or tragic than Berlin. Once the mighty Prussian capital and

heart of a continental power, the city would become the epitome of interwar cosmopolitanism, a hotbed of radical left-wing agitation, home to the latest consumer trends from Paris and Vienna, and even—*Gott, steh uns bei!*—jazz music.

Finckh may just have been one in the long line of cranky German conservatives unequipped for the fast life of a modern European capital, but his writing is illustrative of some of the widespread resentment in response to the rapid social change and inequality of the Weimar era. This period began with a democratic revolution against the kaiser at the end of World War I, a revolution that many leading generals conveniently permitted so as to avoid

facing blame for Germany’s impending defeat. The catastrophic inflation of the immediate postwar era famously saw families paying for necessities with wheelbarrows of paper currency. After economic stabilization measures were implemented in 1923, Germany enjoyed a few brief years of prosperity—albeit with persistent inequality—during the *Goldene Zwanziger* or “Golden Twenties,” only to once again fall into depression after the Wall Street crash of 1929. During this time, democracy failed—or rather, it succeeded while liberalism died a quick death—and the Nazis made unimaginable gains in the 1932 elections before Hitler took the chancellorship the following year.

This 30,000-foot view is the one

SKY / NETFLIX

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with which most of us are familiar; it is usually discussed cursorily in the first few pages of any history of World War II, treated as the prelude to the more consequential history. What a shame. There was perhaps no more dynamic a society in 20th-century Europe than that of Weimar Germany. The short-lived Golden Twenties were defined by contradictory forces in all realms of society: Politically, there was competition between extremists on the left and right, spilling blood in the streets and attempting to win the hearts of the same electorate, the same neighborhoods, often recruiting members of the same families. Art was distinguished by the anti-realism of German expressionism and the Dadaists' embrace of absurdity, a striking juxtaposition to the quintessentially rational aesthetic of Bauhaus. It was an era when successful new corporations popped up all over the country, promising consumers unprecedented prosperity buoyed by the new Reichsmark while at the same time the socialist agitprop of Bertolt Brecht and the dystopias of Fritz Lang dominated theater and cinema. It was the best of times, it was not yet the worst of times.

The Golden Twenties and its contradictions do not feature much in popular culture on either side of the Atlantic—certainly not as much as Germany's Very Dark Thirties and Forties do—which may help explain why the new series *Babylon Berlin*, set in 1929, has become an international sensation. The German-produced show, which reportedly cost more per episode than any other non-English-language TV drama ever made, premiered last year in Germany and has been picked up for distribution in many countries, including by Netflix in the United States. Sixteen episodes have been made so far; more are in development.

In addition to the show's setting, *Babylon Berlin* is noteworthy for its high production quality—comparable to the best American and British TV dramas—its nail-biter of a plot, and its dazzling aesthetic (one of the show's creators is Tom Tykwer, director of the psychedelic thriller *Run Lola Run*). The noir drama is loosely based on a

series of novels by Volker Kutscher following the adventures of Gereon Rath, a Cologne detective and deeply traumatized WWI veteran who is sent to Berlin on a special assignment that lands him on the vice squad. His mission, we learn, is to investigate a sophisticated blackmail plot targeting the Cologne mayor (and future German chancellor) Konrad Adenauer. Rath is played

There was perhaps no more dynamic a society in 20th-century Europe than that of Weimar Germany, whose 'Golden Twenties' were defined by contradictory forces in all realms of society. It was the best of times, it was not yet the worst of times.

by Volker Bruch, whose carefully controlled face and perpetually baggy eyes manage to convey youth and age at once with restrained intensity.

Charlotte Ritter (played by Liv Lisa Fries) is Rath's unofficial partner and the quintessential Weimar *precariat*. Ritter wishes to translate the political emancipation of the era (women's suffrage having been introduced in Germany's 1919 constitution) into professional achievement by becoming Berlin's first female homicide detective. Her ambitions lead her into constant conflict with the pervasively misogynistic culture of the German bureaucracy, requiring her to take menial and irregular clerical jobs with the police as she turns tricks at the cabaret at night to feed her slum-dwelling family.

In the opening scenes of the first episode, we see a train hijacked and then sent to Berlin from Russia under mysterious circumstances. The train's contents remain a mystery to most of the characters until the end of the season, with rumors swirling that it carries poison gas or gold. The locomo-

tive attracts the interest of Trotskyite exiles, the Soviet secret police, a cruel mob boss known as "The Armenian," and the Black Reichswehr—a shadowy paramilitary cell within the army that seeks to rebuild Germany's military in contravention of the Treaty of Versailles. A deadly competition for its cargo develops while the Berlin police, save for Rath and Ritter, step back from the matter at the behest of shady officials in President Hindenburg's office.

The series was mostly shot on-site in Berlin, with digital effects used for establishing shots of the prewar Mitte district downtown, as well as a full-scale replica of the old police headquarters, the famous "Red Castle" in Alexanderplatz (now a shopping center, a fitting tribute to the End of History in the heart of what was once East Germany's plaza dedicated to socialist achievement). The show brings the city to life, and we find in Berlin a menagerie of radical ideologues, of disaffected young people itching for violence in the name of some higher calling who nonetheless generally manage to coexist day to day. The onslaught of what everyone calls "modern" simultaneously enralls and enrages those radicals looking for an escape from the ennui—or injustice, depending on who you ask—of social democracy. Proto-fascists and Trotskyites harangue against bourgeois excess even as they frequent the same jazz clubs and bordellos bedecked with the latest French chic, commingling with their ideological adversaries in dancing, drinking, cross-dressing, and all manner of debauchery before returning to their cellars to plot their respective coups and revolutions.

What might be *Babylon Berlin*'s greatest achievement is its relatively understated depiction of the rise of fascism. The show does not need to constantly remind its viewers of the impending doom. Hitler—who in 1929 was still busy building up the Nazi party's base—is mentioned casually in one episode; a few swastikas can be seen on street posters in the background, although their numbers

are always dwarfed by those of Communist or socialist or sundry right-wing groups; and it is not until the penultimate episode that we first see Brownshirts, in this instance harassing a politician at an U-Bahn station for having a Jewish mistress. The show's creators so deftly capture the zeitgeist of political dysfunction in every aspect of the show that the Nazis hardly ever have to be mentioned by name for the viewer to understand that this society was one of newfound but ephemeral freedom preceding more than a decade of totalitarianism.

All this makes *Babylon Berlin* a valuable contribution to popular history of the period: It is far more interesting for Germans and Americans alike to watch a series about interwar Germany that revolves less around the Nazis than around the proto-Nazis—the monarchists in the old Prussian officers' corps, the proud veterans' groups denouncing the feckless Social Democrats, the average pilsner-swilling day laborers who could just as plausibly become members of the Third International as they could Brownshirts. These groups all abetted Hitler's rise in some way and most embraced the *Führer* and his millenarian vision once the Nazis had come to power. But as of mid-1929, very few of them were self-avowed National Socialists. In the 1928 German federal election, the Nazi party took a mere 2.6 percent of the vote.

The Germany we see in *Babylon Berlin* is more frenetic and eclectic than it has ever been; it is a far cry from any monolithic fascist culture. At the same time, "all these Nazis did not just fall from the sky," as one of the show's producers said in an interview. We viewers know that the writing is on the wall; we can see the sources of the coming nightmare in the shots of disabled veterans on every street corner, in the conversations that make casual mention of the "traitors" who threw Germany to the wolves at Versailles, and in the self-assuredness with which the democrats in Berlin note that the Communists are the only political

force that poses any significant threat to German democracy.

The subtlety of the creators' approach lends itself to characters more complex than those of the typical cop drama. For example, a brief shot of a menorah in the home of August Benda, head of the Berlin Political Police, immediately compels the viewer to sympathize more with a heretofore controversial figure. Indeed, Benda—played by Matthias Brandt, son of Willy Brandt, the former mayor of Berlin and West German chancellor—may be the most compel-



Detective Gereon Rath (Volker Bruch) amid May Day protesters

ling character of the series. For all his many flaws (he oversees the coverup of a bloody crackdown on Communist protesters on May Day), he is one of the show's few idealists whose beliefs are not liable to beget mass murder. In a period we associate with interminable violence between Communists and fascists, it is fascinating to see the embodiment of the Weimar liberal and to find him simultaneously both so sympathetic and naïve. A Social Democrat committed to adhering to the terms of Versailles and prosecuting right-wing cells in the state apparatus, Benda spends the season doggedly pursuing the Black Reichswehr with Rath and Ritter while most of his colleagues opt for a "see-no-evil" approach. He is loathed by monarchists, fascists, and Communists alike, and, as we discover when his Jewish background is revealed, he has the most to lose should his country succumb to fascism.

But his mission is not simply one of self-preservation. Benda and his photogenic family embody the Weimar ideal: increasingly attainable

bourgeois comfort; empathy for the most vulnerable in society balanced by an emphasis on personal agency that lends itself to democratic meliorism; and a strong faith in assimilation, secularism, and civic nationalism. These are ideals he is prepared to fight for. We know he will ultimately fail. The viewer's hope is that the tragedy of his vision is not compounded by a tragic end for him and his family as well.

The antithesis of Benda is Bruno Wolter, Rath's new partner in the vice squad and another compelling if disturbing character. A large and gregarious Berliner, Wolter's disarming sense of humor hides his frightening political convictions and cold moral calculus. Wolter (played by Peter Kurth) is connected to right-wing putschists and shows no qualms about murder or extorting prostitutes. He is an ardent believer in the *Volk* and in his own community of WWI veterans. Within this community egalitarian-

ism and camaraderie abound. Wolter cares for his dementia-afflicted wife tenderly and acts as a father figure to the children of those men from his unit who never made it home. But anyone outside this tightknit society is treated with suspicion, if not hostility. Rath learns this the hard way, and soon the two partners are secretly chasing one another as part of the unfolding intrigue that keeps the viewer eager to start the next episode and—after the explosive finale—the next season.

For all its edifying value, *Babylon Berlin* is also simply fun to watch. It has all the elements of a good crime drama as well as the angst we would expect of German cinema, and we can shrug off what might be its only glaring flaw—the absurdly stylized action scenes—as a matter of taste if not a self-aware ode to classic Hollywood. If an academic history seems too dry or an Alfred Döblin novel too inscrutable, *Babylon Berlin* offers a digestible and entertaining introduction to the intriguing Weimar era. ♦

SKY / NETFLIX

Spies in the Sky

The creation of the U-2 reconnaissance plane and its role in two tense Cold War episodes. BY HARVEY KLEHR

The U-2 spy plane figured in two of the most consequential American-Soviet confrontations of the Cold War. One plane, piloted by Francis Gary Powers, was shot down over the Soviet Union in 1960. President Eisenhower, assured by the CIA that neither the plane nor the pilot could have survived, insisted a weather reconnaissance aircraft had gone astray. After the USSR produced the pilot, still quite alive, and pieces of the aircraft, Eisenhower was forced to admit he had lied, then apologized and watched helplessly as his plans for a great-power summit collapsed. Two years later, U-2 planes discovered that the Russians had lied about the presence of nuclear-armed ballistic missiles in Cuba, bringing the United States and the Soviet Union to the brink of nuclear war before Nikita Khrushchev backed down.

While traditional forms of espionage—stealing documents or suborning those who possess secrets—remain staples of today’s intelligence agencies, the U-2 was one of the earliest high-tech attempts to peer into the secrets of America’s enemies. Its successes and failures demonstrate some of the risks and rewards of new methods of espionage.

Two recent books explore the history of the U-2 project, some of the people who created it, and its impact on American foreign-policy-making. Neither offers any new revelations or digs into previously closed or unknown sources. Both are written in a lively, popular style, making them enjoyable reads, although one suffers from cloying,

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A Brotherhood of Spies
The U-2 and the CIA's Secret War
by Monte Reel
Doubleday, 342 pp., \$28.95

Above and Beyond
John F. Kennedy and America's Most Dangerous Cold War Spy Mission
by Casey Sherman and Michael J. Tougas
PublicAffairs, 329 pp., \$28

breathless, and overly dramatized prose.

Monte Reel tells the more interesting story in *A Brotherhood of Spies* by focusing on four men who played critical roles in the U-2’s history—Edwin Land, a brilliant scientist and founder of Polaroid; Kelly Johnson, the legendary aerospace designer at Lockheed; Richard Bissell, the hard-driving CIA official who oversaw the plane’s development and missions; and Francis Gary Powers, the pilot whose plane was downed over the Soviet Union.

Four more disparate people could hardly be imagined. Land, a Jewish immigrant from Kiev, son of a scrap-metal dealer, had built a business empire on his inventions and was one of the wealthiest men in America. Johnson grew up in a poor mining town in Michigan before quickly working his way up the corporate ladder at Lockheed, where he had designed the P-38 Lightning and the P-80 Shooting Star, America’s first combat jet plane. Lockheed gave him enormous autonomy in running his now-famous Skunk Works R&D facility. Bissell was born to America’s elite, attended Groton and Yale, and abandoned his America First isolationism after Pearl Harbor. Hired by the CIA in 1953, his first assignment had been to facilitate the overthrow of the left-wing Árbenz government in

Guatemala. Powers, a product of western Virginia coal country, was newly married to a difficult woman and struggling with money problems when he was recruited for a top-secret project that promised adventure and a far better salary than his Air Force pay.

The U-2 was the product of fear. In 1949 American officials and the public had been blindsided by a years-earlier-than-expected Soviet atomic test. In response, President Truman ordered development of the H-bomb. Further spooked by the Soviet rollout of new long-range bombers in 1954, and by speculation that these bombers left the United States vulnerable to a devastating surprise attack, President Eisenhower tasked James Killian, president of MIT, with convening a scientific panel to consider how to respond. How serious was the Soviet threat? The CIA had had little success in recruiting spies within the USSR. Land, participating in the panel out of patriotic concerns, argued that a plane capable of flying at very high altitudes, above Soviet radar, equipped with a high-resolution camera, could provide the intelligence that would allow the administration to base its policies on hard data.

There was a design available; Kelly Johnson had cooked up for the Air Force plans for an unarmed craft with very long wings and a narrow fuselage. But Air Force chief of staff Curtis LeMay—perhaps because he considered unarmed airplanes anathema, perhaps as payback for a clash with Johnson years earlier over the technical feasibility of nuclear-powered aircraft—rejected Johnson’s design as a “bunch of s—.” Land was informed of Johnson’s design and was immediately attracted by its promise of flying at 70,000 feet, almost at the edge of space. He was also convinced that it would allow the United States to avoid the dangerous and immoral activities associated with traditional espionage.

Land and Killian enlisted the CIA as an ally and Eisenhower approved the project. Today, when building a new airport can take more than a decade and rolling out a new weapons system is an exercise of staggering complexity, the breathtaking speed with which the U-2

was developed seems impossible. Johnson promised to provide 20 planes in 8 months and have them operational in 20 months at a cost of \$22 million. That the U-2 was produced on time and under budget was astonishing enough; given the technological problems that had to be solved it was a truly remarkable feat, in no small degree owed to Bissell's exacting oversight.

Designers had to develop a new aerial camera with a higher resolution and greater range than anything yet in existence. Kodak's new but as yet untried polyethylene plastic provided a photographic film much lighter than the standard acetate-based film, thereby cutting down the plane's weight significantly. Thin aluminum framing, the use of light bolts instead of steel rivets, and special low-vapor kerosene all had to be developed. A desolate test site, some 75 miles northwest of Las Vegas, was designed and set up within three weeks. (The secretive use of this site, called Area 51, led to many pop-conspiracy theories about its purpose.) And in July 1955, one day before the eight-month deadline, a disassembled U-2 was shipped from California to Nevada and put together. The first test drive—a chance just to check the engine by taxiing around on the ground—was almost a disaster: Because of its unique wing structure, the plane accidentally became airborne without the pilot even knowing; he had to make a forced landing.

Changes were improvised on the fly. Originally designed to land on its belly—to obviate the need for heavy landing gear—the plane soon had rudimentary wheels added. Pogo sticks were used to keep the long wings from collapsing before the plane was airborne. The pilots had to breathe from tanks of pressurized pure oxygen for two hours to drain nitrogen from their blood and then were fitted into uncomfortable pressure suits. Sweating profusely, U-2 pilots could lose up to 10 pounds on a long flight. The plane was tricky to fly; several pilots were killed in crashes.

But the U-2 produced results. Early flights over the United States gave remarkable images; Eisenhower was shown details of a flight over his Gettys-

burg farm and was stunned by the level of detail and clarity. His concern that the plane might be shot down or crash over the Soviet Union was assuaged by the CIA's "absolutely categorical" assurance that the pilot could not survive a crash. A self-destruct button could be used to destroy the plane and all its equipment. While pilots were given a poison pin and assured they could eject and parachute to earth, Bissell was confident that, at worst, the American government could explain a crash as the result of a weather reconnaissance plane getting lost and crashing, and that no pilot would survive.

The first U-2 overflights of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union began in 1956. The intelligence was invaluable; pictures revealed that the Soviet long-range bomber program was still in its infancy. Photos of secret naval bases, missile sites, and industrial plants gave priceless data to CIA analysts. But from the U-2's very first flight over Soviet territory, radar stations were able to detect it. The Soviet Union protested the violation of its airspace and embarked on a program to build surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) capable of reaching its altitude. While the State Department dismissed the Soviet claims, Eisenhower now required that he personally approve all future flights. They continued for several more years, identifying chemical weapons sites and nuclear testing facilities. By late 1958, perhaps 90 percent of the hard intelligence on the Soviet Union came from U-2 flights. Bissell moved up to the number two position in the CIA and was widely regarded as Allen Dulles's successor as director.

Eisenhower, because of his upcoming summit with Premier Khrushchev, wanted no overflights after May 1, 1960. Francis Gary Powers, the most experienced U-2 pilot, took off that day for a long flight over the heart of the USSR. Because it was a Russian national holiday, there were virtually no commercial flights and radar was able to track his plane. Over Sverdlovsk, a SAM exploded near his craft, disabling it; he barely was able to eject himself. (A detail

that Reel does not mention: The proximity fuse that brought down Powers's U-2 was directly modeled on the one stolen by Julius Rosenberg and handed over to his KGB controller at a Manhattan automat during World War II.)

Describing Powers's subsequent trial, conviction, and exchange for Soviet spy Rudolf Abel, Reel largely plods over ground that will already be familiar to readers who know about this Cold War episode. In the United States some commentators and military men were angered that Powers had not killed himself or that he had confessed, but Reel agrees with the CIA's assessment that he had behaved honorably and given the Russians only information he was sure they already had. After returning to the United States in 1962, Powers was hired by Johnson, working at Lockheed until around 1969. He died in 1977 when a news helicopter he was piloting crashed in Los Angeles.

Johnson went on to design for Lockheed spy planes intended to fly higher and faster than the U-2 and to be much harder for radar to detect. One of these, the SR-71, turned out to be the fastest airplane ever built; even now, two decades after its retirement, it holds the world airspeed record.

Land remained an adviser to the government on national security matters until the early 1970s, when it was revealed that his name was on one of President Nixon's "enemies lists." (Land "was particularly honored," a friend recalled, "as it was the only honor he had received without working for.") His experimentation, innovation, and style of leadership at Polaroid inspired, among others, Steve Jobs, who called him a "national treasure."

The U-2 fiasco did not damage Bissell's career, but it collapsed the following year after the disastrous Bay of Pigs invasion that he spearheaded.

If Reel's book is the saga of a remarkable technology that revolutionized the business of spying but wound up embarrassing the government when a mission failed, Casey Sherman and Michael Tougias explain the role played by the U-2 in the Cuban missile crisis

a few years later. *Above and Beyond* highlights both the dangers of the spy flights and the hazards they created in 1962 as the United States and the USSR came frighteningly close to nuclear war. Much of the book rehearses the well-known timeline of the crisis. Its short, dramatically written, episodic chapters read more like an article in *People* than serious historical analysis, and its breathless odes to John Kennedy (“we are all lucky that someone as levelheaded as John Fitzgerald Kennedy occupied the White House on October 27, 1962”; he “was no stranger to death, which is why he had fought so hard to preserve life”) ignore how JFK’s foreign policy mistakes and misjudgments helped fuel the crisis.

There was evidence that Soviet military shipments to Cuba were increasing, but the Kennedy administration, wary of provoking the Soviet Union during a period of rising tensions, had limited U-2 overflights of the island—worried that if one were shot down unpleasant echoes of both Powers’s ill-fated flight and the Bay of Pigs invasion could damage America’s image around the world. Khrushchev, convinced that JFK was weak, insisted that the Soviets were only supplying Cuba with defensive weapons to thwart another American attack on the island. Finally, Kennedy, concerned about the political and military costs of ignoring the buildup, okayed the first U-2 flight in six weeks—and was stunned when an October 14 flight provided clear evidence that the Soviets were installing medium-range ballistic missile sites. Subsequent missions determined that the sites were close to being operational and that they likely would have nuclear missiles mounted on them.

The most interesting portions of *Above and Beyond* focus on several of the U-2 pilots who flew missions during the tense standoff after the United States imposed a blockade of Cuba. Although Capt. Chuck Maultsby flew his U-2 in Alaska, collecting air samples from Soviet bomb tests, one of his flights during the crisis, on October 27, nearly provoked an aerial battle. Flying



Francis Gary Powers looks at his flight helmet at a Moscow exhibition related to his trial.

by celestial navigation near the North Pole with no visual landmarks, he went far off course after the stars were obscured by the aurora borealis. Unable to establish radio contact, Maultsby wandered into Soviet territory and was tracked by Soviet MiGs for more than 300 miles but they were unable to reach his altitude. American planes sent up to find and protect him were themselves armed with nuclear air-to-air missiles. After a harrowing flight of more than 10 hours, he finally landed safely.

Things ended much worse for Maj. Rudy Anderson, killed when his U-2 was shot down by a SAM, also on October 27, just two days after another U-2 had been fired upon over Cuba. In both cases, the decision to try to shoot down the planes was made by lower-level Soviet military generals stationed in Cuba. Anderson was not the first pilot to die flying a U-2; as early as 1956, three had died during training accidents. But his death—and the possibility that any other surveillance flights by the defenseless U-2s might be targeted—led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to recommend attacks on the Cuban SAM sites by October 29 and a full-scale invasion a week later. Only the U.S.-Soviet agreement reached on October 28—in which the Russians agreed to remove the ballistic missiles and nuclear warheads in return for an American pledge not to invade and to remove U.S. mis-

siles from Turkey—prevented the crisis from turning into a war.

The crucial role played by the U-2 in confirming that the USSR did not have the long-range bomber capability to strike the United States and that Soviet offensive missiles had reached Cuba was intelligence that American officials could not have received from human sources or that would not have been as believable without photographic images. Gathering that intelligence required both vision and risk.

Like all technologies, the U-2 had its limitations, and the Soviet Union eventually developed measures that reduced its effectiveness and raised the costs of using it. Ironically, during Powers’s trial a spy satellite, Discoverer 14, went into successful orbit, flying hundreds of miles above the USSR and providing more information than all previous U-2 flights, albeit with less clear resolution. Given the many reconnaissance satellites now in orbit, not to mention the advent of unmanned aircraft for aerial surveillance, one would think that the U-2 would have been retired long ago. But remarkably, it still remains in use by American intelligence: Its capabilities have kept it flying in the Middle East, and although there have been several efforts to retire the U-2, current plans have the spy plane remaining in service indefinitely. ♦



Souvenir fan with a view of Versailles (ca. 1780-85)

Versailles for Sore Eyes

The art and architecture (and tourist souvenirs) of the Sun King's palace. BY JAMES GARDNER

When we think of Versailles today, if we think of it at all, we are apt to see it as a decadent waste of time and money on the part of an absolute monarchy slated for imminent extinction. There is much to commend this view, for although there is surely greatness in Versailles, there is not nearly enough of it. Jules Hardouin-Mansart's chapel is inarguably one of the finest buildings from the reign of Louis XIV, and the Petit Trianon with its sundry pavilions, designed by Ange-Jacques Gabriel, is among the worthiest conceived under Louis XV. As for the rest of it, we might say, paraphrasing a 19th-century humorist's comment on Wagner, that it is not nearly as good as it looks.

In many respects, Louis XIV, the main force behind the structure we see today, was a surprisingly superficial man. Possessed of an intelligence only slightly above average, in contrast to his predecessor and his successor, he rarely read a book and was primar-

James Gardner is completing The Louvre: A History, to be published by Grove Atlantic in 2019.

Visitors to Versailles

1682-1789

Metropolitan Museum of Art
through July 29

ily interested in grand scenographic effects. The art historian Anthony Blunt was exactly right when he wrote that Versailles "presents a whole of unparalleled richness and impressiveness; but it offers little in either painting, sculpture, or architecture which is of the first quality in itself. Louis XIV aimed first and foremost at a striking whole, and to produce it his artists sacrificed the parts."

Thus the most emblematic image that we have of Versailles is its endlessly expanding garden façade, which seems to consume the entire horizon. This too was designed by Mansart, but at breakneck speed, with none of the care he lavished on his chapel: Its use of the classical orders is merely adequate, while the massing, with its flat roof coursing uninflected for a quarter of a mile, is an exercise in tedium. And although the interiors, especially the Hall of Mirrors, were ably designed by Charles Le Brun, the *premier peintre du*

roi, they have been marred by the very indifferent paintings that cover the walls and ceilings and that, more often than not, were executed by Le Brun himself.

It is the splendor of Versailles, rather than its failings, that is on display in a valuable new show at the Met, *Visitors to Versailles*, curated by Daniëlle Kisluk-Grosheide and Bertrand Rondot. In essence, this is a show about Versailles itself, its architecture, interior décor, and garden design. But its stated concentration is a little unusual: It purports to be about the experience of visitors, mostly foreigners, to the palace, and it certainly sustains this theme in the early part of the show by focusing on the protocols of dress and demeanor incumbent on all visitors to Versailles. Among the exhibits are 18th-century guidebooks and souvenirs, as well as period apparel of the sort that visitors were required to wear. Ultimately, however, one suspects that this unusual focus may have served as an excuse to bring in Jefferson and Franklin and thus to entice American viewers who might otherwise balk at an exhibition devoted essentially to decorative art.

Nevertheless, the show's real interest is in its forays into art and architecture. Through paintings and architectural models, we gain a very solid sense of visiting Versailles, either in the ancien régime or today. And although the palace and its grounds might seem as removed from our world as the pomaded fops who once haunted its endless corridors, in fact it is one of the more influential buildings in history and the implications of its urbanism are directly relevant to our modern realities.

In the most literal sense, the Palace of Versailles was meant to project, in purely architectonic terms, Louis XIV's supremacy among the earthly powers. More immediately, the Corinthian capitals, rusticated bases, and demure balustrades of its exterior, no less than the tapestries and paintings, the silver and porcelain of its interiors, bear witness to that moment, some 60 years into the reign of the Sun King, when the poles of European art shifted and France replaced Italy in the forefront of visual culture. The hegemony thus established would last well into the 20th century.

At the same time, Versailles played into the mercantilist economic policy of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's finance minister. However spend-thrift the French monarchs were, with their endless wars and endless palaces, they—or at least their ministers—had a practical side. Colbert and before him Cardinal Mazarin were quite explicit in wanting the French to import nothing that French artisans could produce themselves and produce so well that other nations would feel compelled to buy it. This thinking led to the founding of the great royal manufactories of Louis XIV's reign, from the porcelain at Sèvres to the carpets of Savonnerie and the tapestries of Gobelins. The Palace of Versailles became a vast showroom of the French-made luxury goods on view in the Met show, and many an ambassador or foreign visitor to Versailles went home with a Sèvres tea service or a Riesener mechanical table like the one he had just seen in the king's chambers.

Versailles quickly became a huge tourist draw, perhaps the first great tourist destination in France. From all corners, visitors descended on the palace to marvel at this wonder of the modern world. Although they had to observe a dress code and, if attending an audience with the king, follow a punctilious protocol, in general everyone was welcome to visit the vast gardens of André Le Nôtre and even to enter the palace itself. A brisk touristic infrastructure emerged, consisting of souvenirs in the form of ornamental fans and guides to the palace's history, its menagerie of exotic animals, its famed hedge maze, and its orangerie.

And if many of these visitors came away feeling they had to have a Sèvres tea service of their own, some visiting monarchs were convinced they needed a Château de Versailles of their own. From Peterhof and the Winter Palace in Saint Petersburg to the Royal Palace of Stockholm, from the Caserta near Naples to the Palacio Real in Madrid, many an estate was built because European potentates were drawn irresistibly into the game of keeping up with the Bourbons.

Even those most antimonarchical emissaries of our nascent republic,

Franklin, Adams, and Jefferson, could not fail to respond to the transcendent effect of Versailles. But in a sense they surpassed even the most vainglorious grandees of old Europe in conceiving not a palace but an entire city—Washington, D.C.—on the model of Versailles and its grounds. If they appear to have learned little architecturally from the building itself, they immediately grasped its urbanistic implications. Surely it is no coincidence that the creator of Washington's 1791 master plan, Pierre L'Enfant, spent his formative years in or near the palace. In consequence, it is difficult for an American to visit Versailles without being powerfully reminded of Washington and difficult to understand Washington's genesis without knowing something about the gardens and urban planning of the palace.

Those broad, seemingly infinite avenues, those vast monumental prospects that overwhelm the pedestrian and announce their terminal point half an hour before one reaches it are the essence of both Versailles and the American capital. The revolutionary urbanism of Louis XIV's palace manifests itself in three massive avenues,

among the broadest in the world at their creation, that commence at the gate of the Ailes des Ministres and fan out in a three-pronged configuration known as a *patte d'oie* or goose foot. Although this monumental urban form seems fairly commonplace today, it was nearly unprecedented in 1682 and was the inspiration for the half-dozen avenues that radiate from Dupont Circle, among other intersections. The Washington Mall as well, implicit in L'Enfant's plan and explicit in the 1902 McMillan Plan, was clearly modeled on the mile-long Grand Canal and the accompanying parterres that dominate the gardens of Versailles.

Like such other planned capitals as St. Petersburg and La Plata—the administrative center of the Buenos Aires province—Washington exhibits the virtues of Versailles in its elegance and instant spatial legibility. But it also partakes of the defects of Versailles in its massive, almost superhuman scale and in that taxing, all-conquering regularity that can overwhelm the visitor. This defect, however, seems entirely beside the point amid all the charming, glittering objects now on view at the Met. ♦

BCA

'We Also Serve'

*Honoring the animals that work (and sacrifice)
alongside our soldiers and sailors.* BY GRAHAM HILLARD

If, as Vicki Hearne wrote in her 1991 essay "What's Wrong with Animal Rights," happiness in animals is the fulfillment of "a capacity for satisfactions that come from work in the fullest sense," then joyful indeed was the Scots homing pigeon White Vision, which, in 1943, crossed 60 kilometers of windswept ocean to alert rescuers to the position of a disabled American flying boat. Blissful, too, were fellow birds Winkie, which

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the previous year aided the crew of a downed British torpedo bomber; Beach Comber, which carried news from France to Britain of the commencement of the Allied attack on Dieppe; and Kenley Lass, which, in 1945, successfully delivered a communiqué from an intelligence agent deep in Nazi territory to the agent's handlers in Shropshire. For their efforts, all four pigeons were awarded the Dickin Medal, a prize given as warranted by a prominent U.K. veterinary charity to animals that serve heroically in theaters of war. And thus, for a moment, were matters

between man and the lesser creatures ordered rightly.

The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) has awarded the medal 70 times since 1943. Pigeons account for 32 of the recipients. Dogs account for 33, including Mali, a Belgian Malinois who, on the hunt for explosives, sprinted twice through enemy fire during a 2012 deployment to Afghanistan. Salty and Roselle, Labrador retrievers who led their sight-impaired owners down more than 70 floors of the World Trade Center during the 9/11 attacks, were awarded the medal in 2002. Four horses have been awarded the medal, and so has one cat: Simon, a feral feline smuggled aboard HMS *Amethyst* in 1949 by a 17-year-old English seaman, only to spend the near-disastrous Yangtze Incident—in which the British sloop became trapped on that river for three months late in the Chinese Civil War—rooting out the ship's rat infestation, thus protecting the ship's food supply. The animals selected are part of the millennia-old story of domestication that has shaped nearly every facet of the human experience; in honoring them, we acknowledge that world-shaping partnership.

So, too, do we remember one of the most important animal advocates in modern British history. Born in London in 1870, Maria Dickin was a successful businesswoman in her own right (she ran a voice production studio in Marylebone) before her marriage to a wealthy first cousin. As was the case for many women of her class and means, Dickin's interests soon ran to social work, in the pursuit of which she was horrified to discover that the animals belonging to London's poor often lived in circumstances even more appalling than their owners'. Reflecting upon her tours of East End poverty in her 1950 book *The Cry of the Animal*, Dickin recalled the “many dogs and cats walking on three legs, dragging along a broken or injured limb; [as well as the] others nearly blind with mange; covered with sores; nearly all looking dejected and miserable and searching for food in the gutter.” Determined to address what she saw as the “suffering [of] animals all over the world,” Dickin

founded the PDSA in 1917 with a single one-veterinarian clinic in a Whitechapel basement. By 1924, the fledgling organization had expanded to 17 pet clinics across the United Kingdom and had begun to treat as many as 150,000 animals every year.

Despite her focus on the misfortunes of beasts rather than those of their masters, Dickin understood animal welfare largely in terms of human need, insisting to a public skeptical of both her project and the habits of the downtrodden that “poor people do not only keep animals as pets but as a means of earning their living” and that London's



Lucca, a German shepherd that lost a leg while with the Marines in Afghanistan, is the first U.S. military working dog awarded the Dickin Medal.

humbler dwellings would be “overrun with vermin” if their inhabitants “did not keep a cat.” It was in the spirit of this philosophy of stewardship that the PDSA instituted the Dickin Medal in the fifth year of World War II. Aware of the exertions of animals in that utterly human conflict, and mindful of their devotion during previous wars, Maria Dickin resolved to establish an animal analogue to the Victoria Cross, which recognizes courage “in the presence of the enemy” and is the highest honor a British soldier can receive. Dickin's creation, a bronze medallion bearing the words “We Also Serve” and “For Gallantry,” captures the humanistic ideology at the heart of her vision. The first of those phrases places animal heroism in the fitting context of a critical social endeavor, without which it would have no significance. The second is pure anthropomorphism, an ascription of human virtues—nobility, generosity,

and high-mindedness—to beings that cannot, in any real sense, possess them. To acknowledge as much is not to make light of the contributions of animals but to understand and value them properly.

It hardly needs arguing that the Dickin Medal is not ultimately *for* its recipients but for us, their masters and companions. It is we, not they, who must define our relationship correctly, an idea approached by Vicki Hearne when she wrote, of her Airedale, “I have enfranchised him in a relationship to me by educating him, creating the conditions by which he can achieve a certain happiness specific to a dog, maybe even specific to an Airedale.” Given the Dickin Medal's obvious alignment with such thinking (and the fact that, as Hearne noted, “the very keeping of a dog or a horse or a gerbil or a lion

is in and of itself an offense” in the minds of “people who claim to speak for animal rights”), one wonders why the award has not become a source of controversy in these squeamish times, implicitly positing, as it does, that animal suffering in the cause of human progress is not only to be borne but *celebrated*.

Because suffering is the line that many have chosen to draw—the theme of myriad “rights” treatises from Jeremy Bentham to Peter Singer. If the Dickin Medal feels subversive today, it feels so precisely because it turns such thinking on its head. Sergeant Reckless, a Marine Corps horse who evacuated numerous fallen Americans in Korea before taking wounds herself, suffered. So, too, did Lucca, a German shepherd who completed 400 missions in Iraq and Afghanistan before losing a leg after an IED blast. Failing to honor such creatures would be obscene. But so, in the end, would arguing that their use in man's service was anything other than right.

Happily, it seems that the Dickin Medal will continue to be awarded, a fact affirmed in part by the presence of nominating information on the PDSA's website. May the prize endure, a symbol and reminder of our gratitude for our animal companions. ♦

LANCER CPL. CAITLIN BEVEL (USMC); INSET: SERGEANT ADRIAN HARLEN (OGL)



A second violent, raunchy, hilarious movie for Deadpool (with Ryan Reynolds in the mask)



Fourth Wall Screwball

We needed a review of Deadpool 2, and this is it.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The second act of *Deadpool 2*, the sequel to the hyper-violent and potty-mouthed 2016 blockbuster, shows the title character assembling a team of young superheroes to serve as his sidekicks. Such a thing would seem a violation of everything Deadpool stands for. As we learned in the first film (and as you comic-book readers knew already), Deadpool is a mean and selfish loner who doesn't believe in anything.

But then, in one of the movie's many Brechtian asides, Deadpool helpfully explains that "we need 'em tough, morally flexible, and young enough to carry their own franchise for 10 to 12 years." Nor does the gag end there. After the sidekicks are recruited—they include a guy named Peter who has no superpowers whatever but does sport an excellent 1970s 'stache—*Deadpool 2* then features a sequence in which (spoiler alert) all but one of them die in comically gruesome fashion largely due to Deadpool's inattention and sloppiness. Somehow, the sequel actually succeeds in matching the first movie in storytelling irreverence.

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

Deadpool 2

Directed by David Leitch



How you feel about that irreverence should provide a guide to whether you would like this movie. *Deadpool 2* continually deconstructs itself. The only other movie of its kind, I think, is the hilarious and wildly underrated *Gremlins 2: The New Batch*, which is an all-out, Looney Tunes-inspired parody of the original. Throughout *Gremlins 2*, characters debate the ludicrous rules governing the emergence of the titular monsters; like, if they only emerge at midnight, what would happen if one of them were on a plane that crossed the international date line? At a key moment in *Deadpool 2*, as one character attempts to explain how his time-traveling works, Deadpool turns to the camera and says, "Well, that's just lazy writing." Later, he travels back in time to the point at which the actor Ryan Reynolds is first reading the script for his mammoth superhero flop *Green Lantern* (2011) and shoots Reynolds in the head. Ryan Reynolds is, of course, Deadpool.

If you really love the genre, you

might be annoyed by this stuff and feel it destroys your ability to suspend disbelief. And to be sure, if you can't take violence, cursing, or extreme sexual references, this is not a movie for you. As for me, I'm so desensitized by now from the idiocy of superhero plots, conversations overheard on subway platforms, and a horrified reading of *50 Shades of Grey* that I accept we're already living in *Idiocracy* and will take whatever despairing laughs I can get. And I laughed a lot during *Deadpool 2*.

Though there are amusing side character bits here and there (one of them by T.J. Miller, the deeply troubled comic actor who is probably going to go to jail for phoning in a bomb threat to Amtrak), *Deadpool 2* is a one-man show for Ryan Reynolds, who also cowrote it. He's dazzling. Reynolds spent more than a decade on the cusp of major stardom as a present-day Gary Cooper who could also do fast-talking comedy. But he never really broke through until he put a red mask over his gorgeous punim, slapped on uglifying makeup (the same process that gives Deadpool his indestructibility also makes him look like he has third-degree burns all over his body), and cracked nihilistic dirty jokes like a strip-club comedian.

The original *Deadpool* was made by Fox, one of three movie studios in the Marvel comics-to-movies biz. Made at a cost of \$58 million, or roughly \$250 million less than *Avengers: Infinity War*, it grossed nearly \$800 million. And considering how seriously these companies protect the image of their "intellectual property," its assault on the genre was so unexpected it was as though someone were screaming, à la *When a Stranger Calls*, "The attack is coming from inside the house!" But its success also opened the door to a newer, rougher kind of R-rated superhero picture—in particular, last year's *Logan*, also released by Fox, a terrific and heartfelt neo-Western about the last days of two X-Men characters. Needless to say, *Deadpool 2* begins with a spoof of Logan's death. Now, if only *Deadpool 3* could be set in a universe in which Reynolds goes back in time and blows up the set where they were making *Batman vs. Superman* . . .

20TH CENTURY FOX

A Historian in Full

Bernard Lewis, 1916-2018.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT



Bernard Lewis in 2012

The university flag at Princeton is flying at half-mast. It's an appropriate tribute to Bernard Lewis, who died on May 19, less than a fortnight from his 102nd birthday. Professor Lewis was one of the great scholars of the 20th century and a happy Princetonian. He left the University of London and moved to New Jersey in 1974. He could be testy about the lack of gastronomic and bookstore possibilities in his new home, but given his London and Paris pedigrees, he was goodhearted about the insufficiencies. I've been taking out Lewis's books since he passed, skimming them, looking at the notes I've jotted in the margins over the decades. One can read Lewis's many works as one reads great novels: repeatedly, for something new always pops out. I'd often circled Arabic, Persian, and

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Turkish words because they are the signposts that Lewis used to demarcate the primary themes of Islamic civilization. Lewis was old-fashioned and modern: He insisted on understanding foreigners in their own languages, the first rule of the much-maligned orientalists, and he always understood, in much the same way that Wittgenstein did, that our entire frame of reference, our identities—the superstructure of our thought—hinge on words and how they radiate within us.

Lewis is easily the greatest pun-meister I have encountered: He could pun in a dozen languages and he would eagerly await to see if the listener picked up his humor, which could be, befitting his English sensibilities, subtle. His luminescent eyes and omnipresent grin would immediately reward a listener who caught his playfulness. If it took several minutes to catch the allusion, if it took days, the professor always, cheerfully, gave partial credit. Lewis was sincerely, deeply,

unstoppably puckish—a relief in any academic field, but especially in Islamic studies, which increasingly seems populated with killjoys. I always saw the professor's river of puns as a polite but impish way of taking issue with the political correctness that had descended on American academic life, the crude earnestness that cheats young men and women of the immensity of the knowledge and experiences that make good minds great.

Lewis loathed text-destroying literary deconstructionism—the pernicious movement born of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault that has run amok in history and sociology, giving birth to, among other things, Edward Said's *Orientalism*—which made subjectivity a virtue among scholars. In his famous 1982 takedown of Said's defining work in the *New York Review of Books*, Lewis stood staunchly for the Western historical tradition that any civilization or culture is open to critical examination by those who do the necessary homework, first and foremost doing the natives the courtesy of learning their languages and reading what they have said about themselves. Although he never told me that he had a list of commandments for a historian, his commentary and methodology certainly revealed that at the top of his guide for the historically curious would have been: Thou Shalt Not Mirror Image. His second commandment would likely have been: Never Condescend. In describing and critiquing Muslim societies, be they long vanished or modern, Western historians should never dull the edge of their observations because of sensitivity, compassion, guilt, or the incidental fact that the historian isn't Muslim. Lewis's greatest historical work, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, published in 1982, was the product of a 50-year curiosity about how Muslims saw Christendom and the far more complicated and alien force, the secular West.

Contrary to much that has been written, Lewis wasn't a particularly political person. He was a proud

TIM BOXER/GETTY

patriot, of both America and Britain. Having been a member of MI6 during World War II, he understood that scholars could serve their country without diminishing their intellectual probity—as only one who’s been inside truly knows. This disposition, familiar to Americans who saw World War II and the early Cold War, is foreign to many younger scholars, who’ve been raised to suspect all associations between intellectuals and government. (These sentiments are more common in the United States than in Europe, where intellectual and official elites continue to commingle more easily.) Lewis’s sincere patriotism—the commendable imperative that if democratically elected representatives ask for the opinion of scholars they should have the decency to give it—led him occasionally to Washington to see bureaucrats, congressmen, and presidents.

Lewis unfailingly understood that American soldiers, diplomats, and spies aren’t trying to dominate or conquer or exploit foreign societies when they do their utmost to penetrate them, to learn how the natives think and how they see foreigners. When I was in the Central Intelligence Agency, I once had an asset who loved the medieval Persian vizier Nizam al-Mulk’s *Siyasatnameh*, perhaps the most famous “mirror for princes,” the guidebooks written to instruct rulers on how to govern their realms. Lewis and I once spent hours on the literary genre as I tried to understand better how my asset understood Mulk’s masterpiece. I later told the gentleman what I had done. I asked him if he felt “victimized”—a plaything for the amusement of conspiring imperialists. He felt honored.

Despite his willingness to offer his advice, Lewis was never at ease in Washington. The capital’s urgent seriousness was not his cup of tea. He knew the place was an all-consuming maw, that it is even nastier than academe. Lewis loved the socializing of good salons, which in his day weren’t yet extinct in the capital of the free

world. But his preference was always for something more mirthful than what Washington could usually provide. Once when I flew in from overseas to see him in Princeton, he told me to not unpack my bags, that we were leaving immediately for a dinner party. I remonstrated, preferring to just drink with him. He answered that we were going to an intimate gathering of 12, we would likely be the only men present, and “we had to sing for our supper.” I relented. As I was

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ready to knock on the mansion’s door, Lewis stopped me, reminding me that he was getting old, that he could sometimes repeat himself in conversation, and that I was to signal him if he was doing so. He added, however, that if the women appeared to be enjoying his stories more the second time round, “please, don’t stop me.”

Lewis’s scholarly instincts didn’t lend themselves well to American political etiquette. His willingness to critique anyone or anything through his multi-angled historical prism meant the professor could be dangerous in small gatherings. As much

as Lewis didn’t care for leftists who viewed him as a Zion-loving bigot, he wasn’t fond at all of right-wingers who viewed Islam—the vast, variegated, cosmopolitan civilization—as essentially a long prelude to Osama bin Laden and contemporary jihadism. I was with Lewis and the late Fouad Ajami, to whom Lewis had grown close, at a gathering of intellectuals and scholars in Washington not long after 9/11. Lewis was at his most acerbic when a prominent conservative politician addressed our group, revealing that he had zero idea of what Islam was and probably had spent no time with Muslims. Lewis turned to me, Ajami, and others and complimented the man’s diction. Since the early 1980s, Lewis had the deepest foreboding about Muslim immigration to Europe, that neither Muslim immigrants nor Europeans could adjust well to each other given the numbers involved and the proud, deeply rooted, (secularized) Christian identities that underlay European nationalities; he had considerable sympathy, however, for the immigrants who wanted better lives but found it hard to forsake the traditions of their homelands. Lewis could slice at Islamophobes as mordantly as at Saidians. He excelled at appreciating difficult, seemingly intractable situations.

Where Lewis was most comfortable was around books, of course. His personal library, which he gave away to Tel Aviv University, was vast. Among my most cherished memories of him is walking through the rows of books in his Princeton home, stopping as Lewis took out volumes and told stories. He would transport me through space and time, to distant lands and people. So often, he got me off the ground so the winds could carry me. I thanked Lewis for what he had done for me; I didn’t thank him enough. The professor was more than a teacher and a friend: He was an oracle, a gift from the gods who allowed men to see their humanity.

Goodbye, Bernard. I loved you dearly. ♦

"The Obama Channel? Barack and Michelle Obama Sign Deal With Netflix"
—Wall Street Journal headline, May 21, 2018

PARODY

VARIETY

INTERNATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY ■ MAY 30, 2018

Obama Channel: Yes, We Cannes 'We are the shows we've been waiting for'

By THORA THACKER

Ad execs and crix alike showed their "O" face, praising the hotly anticipated lineup for the Obama Channel, following its upfront presentation at Lincoln Center. The Netflix netlet rolled out several dozen series, specials, and documentaries, mostly revolving around the Obama family, their friends, trusted confidants, and even their Portuguese Water Dogs, Sunny and Bo.

Among the primetime lineup: "The Story of O," a reality series focusing on the day-to-day struggles of the Obama family. (In the pilot, President Obama discovers he is slated to speak at Goldman Sachs at the same time he is scheduled to appear at a nearby food bank. The president delivers brief remarks to the bankers, whom he then invites to the food bank, discovering Americans have more in common than you might think.)

"Let's Move!" is an intense core workout hosted by former first lady Michelle Obama, which seamlessly blends power yoga, Iyengar yoga, Bikram yoga, and a spin class. "Let's Eat!" is a cooking show featuring the first lady and a variety of celebrity chefs making healthy meals using the vegetables from the Obama garden. She

also sells her own products, including the popular Michelle, My Bell Peppers. (Episode 3 is being retaped as it featured Mario Batali.)

"Eat at Joe's" is a sitcom starring former vice president Joe Biden, who now runs a diner in Wilmington, Del. (In the first episode, Biden tries to fire his cook in Spanish but mistakenly hires his entire family. Antics ensue. Special guest star: Ken Salazar.)

Former secretary of state Hillary Clinton will also be hosting a remake of "Unsolved Mysteries" on Sunday nights at 11 p.m.

Not to be outdone, former president Bill Clinton announced that he, too, will be starring in his own new reality series centered around his social life, "Bend It Like Bill." The deal, signed with the adult premium channel Braz-

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