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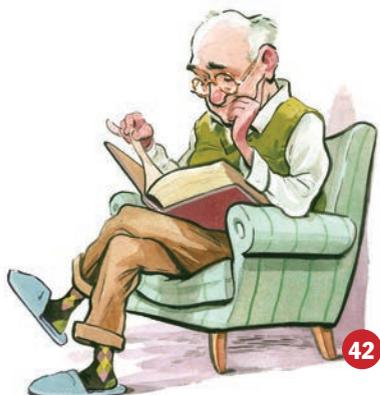
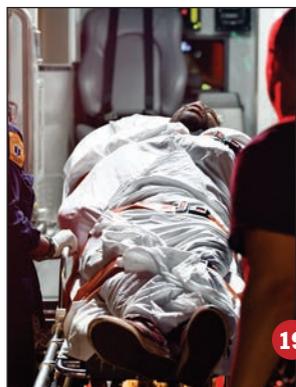
NOT THE RETIRING TYPE

Nikki Haley plots her next move

BY MICHAEL WARREN

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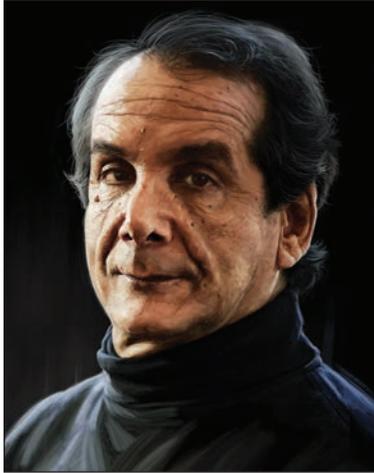
COVER BY GARY LOCKE

The Point of It All

THE SCRAPBOOK has a weakness for hardcover collections of essays and columns. Not many people like them, judging by how well they sell, but we boast several shelves full of collections by William F. Buckley, Joseph Epstein, George Will, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Christopher Hitchens, and many others.

Some months ago we heard that a second collection by the late Charles Krauthammer was in the works, and now it has arrived. *The Point of It All: A Lifetime of Great Loves and Endeavors*, edited by the author's son Daniel, is, unsurprisingly, superb. The book assembles many of his best columns and includes several longer essays and addresses on a dizzying array of topics. Among these is a heretofore unpublished work titled "The Authoritarian Temptation" in which Krauthammer reassesses what 25 years ago looked like the final victory of liberal democracy.

The columns, even those dating from the 1980s and reflecting on political topics of the day, read wonderfully well. Krauthammer had an unequalled gift for using relentless logic and just a few efficient words to realign or clarify the reader's murky thoughts about a complicated topic.



Among the best pieces, for us, is an essay originally published in the *New Republic* in 1980—here titled "Suicide ad Absurdum"—on the documentary *Choosing Suicide*, about the slow, deliberate self-slaying of New York artist Jo Roman. The subject's decision to kill herself as a final work of "art," her final weeks surrounded by friends and film crew, offended Krauthammer, and the result is a little masterpiece of a scathing review.

The masses, I infer, could begin to understand the angry crash into the highway abutment, the impulsive leap from the apartment window.

They could begin to understand the everyday anguished acts of self-destruction full of killing and pain and suffering. What they would find difficult to understand is the bloodless, careless, motiveless, meaningless art of Jo Roman's rational suicide. Jo's friends, however, are awed by her innovation. After all, one friend comments, we need something more dignified than sidewalk splatter (as *passé* as action painting, I suppose). . . .

Jo has other reasons for suicide besides art. She and her flock coo responsively about how all this has brought them closer together, put them in touch with their own feelings, given them a profound "learning experience." In an interview taped 12 days after Jo's death, husband Mel, looking grave and lost, reflects on how the whole year leading up to Jo's death caused him great pain and suffering. But it has been worthwhile, he says, because he has learned a lot about himself. I found this a particularly sad sight: a grown man in his bereavement seeking solace in the shallowest cliché of adolescent solipsism—the world as an instrument of one's own education. It marked the moment in the show when the banality finally transcended the pathos.

The Point of It All is full of such little masterpieces. It is the fitting final work of a great and virtuous mind. ♦

Nice Work . . .

NEW information from the Census Bureau confirms that the Swamp is still the Swamp. Between 2013 and 2017, the five wealthiest areas in America by median income were Loudoun County, Virginia; Fairfax County, Virginia; Howard County, Maryland; Falls Church City, Virginia; and Arlington County, Virginia. Wealth has been accumulating in the environs of our nation's capital for ages, but we take the opportunity of the new data to ask the question: Why? Are the residents there more productive, harder working, just



more capable of generating wealth? No, dear reader, we regret to say that this is not the reason.

The reason—as readers of THE SCRAPBOOK know full well—is that there are lots of government teats in the area and lots of people slurping

from them. There are, most important, hundreds of thousands of federal workers in the region, and their average salary—not counting benefits—easily exceeds \$100,000. Add the attorneys, lobbyists, contractors, and consultants all waiting their turn to suckle, and you have the wonderland of wealth that is the greater Washington, D.C., area.

As ever, the best and most reliable business of all is government. Federal salaries exploded under George W. Bush, and between 2001 and 2011, federal workers saw their pay and benefits grow at double the rate of the private sector's. Today the average

TOP: JASON SELLER. BOTTOM: ROCKIN' DAVE 1.

federal worker's compensation is around double the private sector average. When Barack Obama assumed office, the country was in the throes of a devastating recession with double-digit unemployment. That didn't stop him from presiding over a 7 percent growth in the federal workforce over his first two years.

It's too early to tell what the Trump years will reveal, but we see no signs of anything different. That giant sucking sound you hear (to borrow a phrase from Ross Perot) is not the sound of a swamp being drained. ♦

The Stand-Up Stands Down

It was a routine and utterly predictable turn of events: Comedian Kevin Hart was tapped to host the 2019 Oscars ceremony; some enterprising do-gooder unearthed untoward wisecracks made on social media by Hart in times past; Hart then, without quite apologizing, announced he would relinquish the honor because the controversy had become a "distraction." "I'm sorry that I hurt people," he pleaded. "I am evolving and want to continue to do so."

The offending tweets were deemed homophobic. "Yo," he tweeted in 2011, "if my son comes home & try's 2 play with my daughters doll house I'm going 2 break it over his head and say n my voice 'stop thats gay.'" In an interview around the same time, Hart said: "One of my biggest fears is my son growing up and being gay. That's a fear. . . . Do what you want to do. But me, as a heterosexual male, if I can prevent my son from being gay, I will."

THE SCRAPBOOK takes no view on Hart's culpability or whether he was treated fairly or unfairly. Hollywood prides itself on its moral anarchy and byzantine hypocrisies, and those who brave its minefields must accept the consequences when they get themselves maimed. As for the Oscars, if



The repentant Mr. Hart



the whole grotesque ritual were swallowed up into the earth like the sons of Korah, we wouldn't miss it.

Still, it's hard not to sympathize with Hart's contrite protest: "I am evolving and want to continue to do so." He didn't evolve fast enough was the problem. As the prim opinion writer Alyssa Rosenberg pointed out in the *Washington Post*, his offenses took place too recently for Hart to claim

the passage of time as an absolution.

He was threatening to beat his child over the boy's sexual orientation in 2011, 13 years after Matthew Shepard's murder prompted a national conversation about homophobia; seven years after Massachusetts became the first U.S. state to grant marriage licenses to same-sex couples; two years after "Glee" and "Modern Family" debuted, bringing gay kids and gay families firmly in the mainstream of popular culture. . . . The times *were* as sensitive as they are now.

It's no wonder so many seemingly successful people in the entertainment industry become drug-dazed paranoids. Imagine living in a world in which

the tenets of the religion to which you must subscribe are constantly revised and altered, the changes marked by the subject matter of each new sitcom. So rapidly do the industry's expectations change that Rosenberg is forced to collapse the chronology: Hart cracked anti-gay jokes, she writes, "13 years after Matthew Shepard's murder prompted a national conversation about homophobia." That "national conversation," recall, was based on the falsehood that Shepard was murdered because he was gay, whereas the evidence strongly suggested that his killers wanted simply to rob him. It would be more accurate to say that Hart cracked his jokes at a time when Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton still didn't support same-sex marriage.

The lessons here are pretty clear. (1) Don't say anything on social media, ever. But (2) if you must crack an edgy or inappropriate joke for all the world to read, have the decency to make it funny. ♦

Who Are These People?

THE SCRAPBOOK has had occasion to complain from time to time about the way in which journalists in the mainstream news media use the terms "conservatives" and "Republicans." "Conservatives" hold this loathsome opinion, they might write, or "Republicans" are doing that bizarre thing, but when you read closely you discover that the writer can only name two or three actual "Republicans" or "conservatives" as instances, and often they barely fit the description at all: Donald Trump Jr., say, or Tomi Lahren.

Consider a recent piece on the *Washington Post's* popular politics blog, *The Fix*: "Republicans Were Upset about Election Fraud—Before It Threatened Their Candidate." The piece, by Eli Rosenberg, was about the

North Carolina congressional race in which the Republican candidate, Mark Harris, squeaked past his Democratic opponent by (as it appears) aggressively "harvesting" absentee voters: that is, by having operatives go door to door cajoling likely non-voters to fill out absentee ballots and then dropping them off at the elections board. That's illegal in North Carolina, as it should be everywhere, and writers on the right have accordingly expressed skepticism about the election's outcome. *National Review's* Rich Lowry, the editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal*, and the editors of this magazine have all suggested that the Harris campaign or its operatives were likely up to no good.

Of course, Rosenberg might easily and more convincingly have written a piece headlined "Democrats Dismissed the Existence of Election Fraud—Before It Sank Their Candidate." We leave that point aside and ask: Who were all these Republicans who suddenly dropped their concerns about ballot integrity in order to protect an endangered GOP candidate? In a 1,500-word piece, Rosenberg names precisely one: a guy named Dallas Woodhouse, the executive chairman of the North Carolina GOP.

Rosenberg faults other Republicans because they've "remained silent" on the North Carolina race, although he appears not to have asked them for comment.

That settles it. The next time THE SCRAPBOOK makes a broad generalization about the dumb things "liberals" or "Democrats" say and think, we will have in mind our Uncle Merv, who is both a liberal and a Democrat. What, you've never heard of him? ♦



PAX AHIMSA GETHEN

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Beyond the Bleak Midwinter

Maybe you have to live in the bleak midwinter to get it. Maybe you have to see the countryside in its ash-white purity to understand—the landscape burnt-over by the dead indifferent cold. Maybe you have to wonder, as you wander out under the distant stars, what it would mean to live in a universe that cared.

Or maybe, before you see, you have to step off the curb of a city street and splash into the slush of a pothole. Maybe you have to trudge up some alley, slipping with each step on the unshoveled snow, stained and crushed to patterned ice by the delivery trucks. You know that strangely sweet and sickly smell of the exhaust from diesel engines on a cold morning? Maybe you have to notice the odors of the city—the avenues insensible with crowds of harried people, hurrying about their business.

Maybe you have to notice the paper cups of beggars and the pots of the red-robed Santas, ringing their Salvation Army bells while their breath steams out toward the passing taxis. Maybe you have to feel the cold heart of the city before you grasp what it would mean to live in a world of concern.

I've always thought depressed people understand Christmas best. Oh, by all psychological accounts, the season only manages to make them more depressed, more vulnerable, more prone to misery. But why wouldn't it? For the happy and the well-content, everyone out on the other end of the satisfaction spectrum, Christmas may not matter much: just a dollop, a drizzle of sweet frosting, on the wonders of winter. For the disheartened, Christmas looms much

larger: the inverse of all they lack. Christmas appears to them as what it is—an image of optimism and hope. A picture of a cosmos capable of love.

My neighbor was decorating his house last month. Well before Thanksgiving, I saw him up on the rooftop, tacking down strings of Christmas lights. Out on the driveway, spilling from the boxes he had hauled from the garage, were plastic candy canes



and an inflatable sleigh. A crèche, too, but mostly the secularized and faintly commercial elements of the holiday season: Frosty the Snowman. Illuminated icicles to hang from the eaves. Elves you knew were from the North Pole because they came with a mailbox that read *Santa's Workshop, North Pole*.

We chatted a little, once he had come down the ladder, gone back up to get the staple gun he'd forgotten, then come back down again. I joked with him about how mid-November seemed a little early. I hadn't even gotten my Thanksgiving turkey, but here he was decorating for Christmas. And he admitted the season had spilled its banks, pouring out of Advent. The grocery store had its first Christmas items for sale the week before Halloween. Still, he told me, he just enjoyed

getting ready for the holiday too much to let it wait. And back he went to work, illuminating his house with all the paraphernalia of the season.

The curious thing is that without Christmas there might not be lights for him to put up. Or electricity and plastic and all the strange gifts of human progress—since Christmas gave us the idea of progress. Optimism. Hope.

A sense of the world as moving toward a goal, a picture of humanity as changing in history, begins with the gradual absorbing into the human psyche of the idea that history is meaningful. And that idea spreads into the world from the belief that God has entered history. At the highest metaphysical level, the divine cares about the temporal order. At the furthest reaches of being, the supernatural is concerned with the natural.

As a culture these days, we may lack a clear vision of where that progress is going or even (given the number of the fashionably pessimistic) of what makes it progress. But the key is the sense that time *matters*. And that came to us from Christmas. In the

traditional church calendar, Advent is a penitential season, precisely in order that Christmas would mark a difference—just as progress, optimism, and hope take their meaning from a sense of a darkness that came before.

Maybe, to get it, you have to see the snowy fields, still and lonely beneath the frozen sky. Or maybe you have to plunge into the winter city, your cold hands jammed into your pockets as the uncaring crowds stream by. Or maybe you just have to put up some decorations. But one way or another, Christmas promises that there is a light in darkness, a fire in winter. *And therefore be you merry. Set sorrow aside, as the old carol insists. Christ Jesus our Savior was born on this tide.*

JOSEPH BOTTUM

The Cohen Memos

Tracking the progress of Robert Mueller’s wide-ranging investigation into potential election crimes committed by the Trump campaign is no small task. The special counsel runs a tight ship, releasing information at his own methodical pace and permitting few leaks, and the investigation has become so broad—to date, 33 individuals or companies have been charged with or pleaded guilty to crimes—that it’s often hard to remember its origins and purpose. The bewildering complexity is an advantage to the president, whose message is simple: He did nothing wrong, and the Democrats and the media are trying to bring him down because they couldn’t beat him at the polls.

That’s precisely why the sentencing memoranda filed by prosecutors on December 7 are so important: They condense the facts—the ones we know anyway—into a single narrative easy to understand. According to prosecutors for both Mueller and the U.S. attorney’s office of the Southern District of New York, President Trump directed his personal attorney, Michael Cohen, to buy the silence of two women who threatened to go public about affairs with the candidate and, further, used Cohen as a go-between to conduct business deals in Russia far into his presidential campaign—deals that Trump claimed were scotched long before he ran for office. Even for those skeptical of the left’s collusion narrative, the memos are deeply incriminating.

Consider the 2016 hush-money payments to the pornographic actress Stormy Daniels and the nude model Karen McDougal. When the payments were first reported earlier this year, Trump denied that he had known of them at the time. But in their memo, Southern District prosecutors are unequivocal: “Cohen coordinated his actions with one or more members of the campaign, including through meetings and phone calls, about the fact, nature, and timing of the payments. In particular, and as Cohen himself has now admitted, with respect to both payments, he acted in coordination with and at the direction of Individual 1.” Individual 1 is the president of the United States.

Prosecutors also contradict Trump’s assertion that Cohen was reimbursed via a “monthly retainer” and allege the Trump Organization disguised the reimbursements:

At the instruction of an executive for the Company, Cohen sent monthly invoices to the Company . . . falsely indicating that the invoices were being sent pursuant to a “retainer agreement.” The Company then falsely accounted for these payments as “legal expenses.” In fact, no such retainer agreement existed and these payments were not “legal expenses” . . . but were reimbursement payments.

Whatever the legal consequences of this fraud, its revelation chronicles lie after lie after lie by Trump and his associates.

The other memo was filed by the special counsel’s office (SCO), and it details the numerous lies Cohen told Congress and investigators about a Trump business project in Russia. Prosecutors assert that these lies were told with the express purpose of heading off the investigation into Russian election meddling: “The defendant admitted he told these lies—which he made publicly and in submissions to Congress—in order to (1) minimize links between the Moscow Project and Individual 1 and (2) give the false impression that the Moscow Project had ended before the Iowa caucus and the first presidential primaries, in hopes of limiting the ongoing Russia investigations being conducted by Congress and the SCO.”

Prosecutors also give the lie to Trump’s assertion on November 30 that his business deals were immaterial to the Russia investigation:

The defendant’s false statements obscured the fact that the Moscow Project was a lucrative business opportunity that sought, and likely required, the assistance of the Russian government. If the project was completed, the Company could have received hundreds of millions of dollars from Russian sources in licensing fees and other revenues. The fact that Cohen continued to work on the project and discuss it with Individual 1 well into the campaign was material to the ongoing congressional and SCO investigations, particularly because it occurred at a time of sustained efforts by the Russian government to interfere with the U.S. presidential election.

The memo reveals several new pieces of testimony from Cohen, most notably a late 2015 phone call with “a Russian national who claimed to be a ‘trusted person’ in the Russian Federation who could offer the campaign ‘political synergy’ and ‘synergy on a government level.’” Cohen recalled that this Russian “repeatedly proposed a meeting between Individual 1 and the President of Russia,” Mueller’s prosecutors write, and claimed that “such a meeting could have a ‘phenomenal’ impact ‘not only in political but in a business dimension as well,’ referring to the Moscow project, because there is ‘no bigger warranty in any project than consent of [the President of Russia].’”

Whether this amounts to “collusion” with the Russian government to win an election is far from clear. It’s not obvious from the filing that this Russian was in a position to facilitate any collusion, and too many details

of the charges remain redacted. But Mueller appears to believe some coordination took place between the Trump campaign and Russian officials. We already knew that Russian operatives worked hard to influence the election and that top Trump campaign officials—the candidate’s son, son-in-law, and campaign manager—were eager to meet with them. “If it’s what you say,” Donald Trump Jr. wrote in an email after it was suggested the Russians wanted to provide the campaign with “dirt” on Hillary Clinton, “I love it.”

It is commonplace today to say that the old criteria of decency and honor no longer apply. But it’s worth remembering that high-ranking public officials have resigned from office for doing far less than Donald Trump is credibly accused of doing in these legal documents. For all the Trump-Russia story’s confusion and complication, that much, at least, is simple and clear. ♦

A Fine Mess

In most of the European Union, when the authorities hold a plebiscite and don’t get the result they want, they hold another, and another, until the voters see it their way. The English tradition holds democracy in greater esteem than that. Or at least it used to, before the Brexit mess.

In 2015, David Cameron, the British prime minister, announced a national referendum on whether the country should remain in the E.U. Few of London’s politicians and commentators exhibited much awareness of the resentments and anxieties beneath the surface of British life. Cameron’s Conservative party hoped mainly to renegotiate E.U. membership on more favorable terms and marginalize the anti-Europe U.K. Independence party. The plebiscite, it was expected, would reaffirm Britain’s ambivalent status as an independent, non-eurozone member of the E.U., and the Conservative party would reassume its traditional role as the sensible protectors of British values and economic interests. All would be as it was before.

It didn’t work out that way. High levels of immigration from other E.U. states; regulations on everything from food safety to handicapped-access ramps courtesy of faceless bureaucrats in Brussels; court decisions on medical ethics and child-rearing handed down by foreign judges—all this had given millions of ordinary Britons a sense of dislocation and injustice that found expression in a vote to leave the E.U. Thus did the British electorate oblige its leaders to carry out a policy in which those leaders didn’t believe.

Cameron resigned after the June 2016 vote, and for two and a half years his replacement, Theresa May, has poured her energies into forging a Brexit deal. It was a short time

to accomplish such a vast task, and May has blundered at every point. She called for an election in April 2017 in order to strengthen her majority, but ended up diminishing it. She has let the Europeans—E.U. president Jean-Claude Juncker, European Council president Donald Tusk, and Michel Barnier, the E.U.’s chief negotiator—dictate to her the terms of Britain’s departure. The deal is hopelessly complicated, but the crucial point is that the 585-page withdrawal agreement would establish a “transition period” of two years or more after the Brexit deadline of March 29, 2019, during which new trade and immigration agreements would be negotiated. During the transition, goods, services, and people would continue to move freely into and out of the U.K., but the U.K. would have no say in any E.U. policy. All the while, Britain will be expected to pay a portion of the E.U.’s budget, amounting to around £40 billion. Britain, a vassal state in all but name, could only exit this transitional status with E.U. approval.

Parliament was scheduled to vote on May’s deal on December 11, but the prime minister postponed the vote to 2019 as it became clear how badly her deal would be rejected. What now looms is the so-called Hard Brexit—the March 29 deadline passing with no deal or very little of one. Much of the news media speak of a no-deal exit in tones of hysteria. It’s true that British companies would be faced with the sudden imposition of duties on almost everything, that customs checkpoints would see a period of chaos, and that continental Europeans resident in the U.K. would find themselves in legal limbo. But the private sector has a way of adapting, and Britain’s civil service would sort out the mess. May’s government has made no preparations for the outcome—seemingly as some sort of bargaining chip to gain votes for whatever deal she negotiated.

Another possibility is a second referendum. London’s political elite, like the country’s media, were always firm Remainers. And they are furiously working for what they call a “People’s Vote”—another referendum, this one on the deal itself. This, in essence Remain by Other Means, would confirm what millions of Britons believe about the elites, namely that they no longer care about the consent of the governed.

Brexit may be a debacle, but it is a necessary one. The European Union was a noble attempt to bind nations together to prevent them from warring, but its intrinsic tendency to place power in the hands of anonymous bureaucrats in faraway places is an affront to those who are taught to believe they can govern themselves. If ordinary Britons believe their consent is a sham—that they may vote all they want but that London’s politicians will do what *they* want—that is a problem far more acute than a self-inflicted recession. Leaving the E.U. on March 29 may throw the United Kingdom into confusion, but the nation that defeated the Armada, Napoleon, and Hitler has met worse challenges. We fully expect she will get through this one. ♦

FRED BARNES

Let's not repeat the crime waves of the past

The hot cause right now is prison reform, and even lots of conservatives are on board. The Heritage Foundation put out an article with this title: “How This Criminal Justice Reform Bill Could Make Our Neighborhoods Safer.” My reaction: Have supporters of the bipartisan reform bill now before the Senate forgotten history? It sure looks like they have.

In the 1960s and early 1970s, the criminal justice system was swamped with liberal reforms. Judges were given wide discretion and jumped to exploit it. Jail terms were shorter, if there was any jail time at all. Prison inmates got early releases. They were given weekend furloughs. Remember Willie Horton?

The result was a crime wave. The reforms turned American cities into hotbeds of crime and violence. Neighborhoods were beset by drug dealing and shootings. Washington, D.C., became the murder capital of the country. Crime went up 300 percent nationally.

I believe a link was established: Liberalizing the criminal justice system leads to more crime. And there's a corollary: Toughening prison sentences and limiting judges' leeway lead to less crime.

It took years of strong anti-crime efforts to bring the violence down. “As determinate sentencing and existing mandatory minimums have taken hold over the last generation, crime is down by 50 percent,” former federal prosecutor William G. Otis wrote in 2014 when a fresh round of reform legislation was first gaining favor. The crime rate, by the way, is half today what it was at its peak.

Despite the lesson of history, the

criminal justice reform bill appears almost certain to be enacted. A bipartisan coalition that includes civil rights groups, evangelical Christians, and liberal and conservative leaders supports the measure. So does the Trump White House.

The bill would reduce prison sentences and allow more early releases. These types of reforms, Otis wrote in



Liberalizing the criminal justice system leads to more crime. And there's a corollary: Toughening prison sentences and limiting judges' leeway lead to less crime.

2014, “will give more power to ideologically driven judges for whom no criminal is without an excuse, and it will pave the way for the creeping return of irrational disparity in sentencing.”

In discussions and debates over the bill, the past hardly rates a mention. The notion that liberal reforms can lead to an increase in crime seldom comes up, except when a few senators raise it.

The biggest issue is no longer the crime rate. It's the incarceration rate. The lower that rate, the better the system. That's the new rule of thumb.

One of the top goals of the bill is reducing recidivism—that is, encouraging prisoners not to return to crime once they're released. It is a noble goal. Yet schemes to cut recidivism have often been tried and nearly as often failed to produce impressive results.

But the bill contains a plan for dealing with recidivism. Here's how the Heritage Foundation describes it:

The bill would require the Department of Justice to determine, using a validated risk assessment tool, whether each federal inmate poses a minimal, low, medium, or high risk of recidivating upon release. Each inmate would also undergo a “needs assessment” to determine what, if any, factors—such as a substance abuse or mental health issue, or a lack of education or job skills—contributed to his criminal behavior but might be meaningfully addressed while he is incarcerated.

That didn't stir my confidence. Nor was civil rights lawyer Peter Kirsanow impressed. He questioned the bill's “supposition that rehabilitation isn't merely possible, but probable, and that authorities can reasonably assess which offenders are likely to desist from crime. . . . Predicting which prisoners are likely to pose threats within prison,” he writes at *National Review*, “is different than predicting which are likely to desist from offending once they're outside a controlled environment.”

What has sparked one of the most noisily argued matters in the bill is the question of the crimes that would keep an inmate from qualifying for early release. The authors of the bill have stoutly resisted making cuts from the list of qualifiers. And the press rarely cites any of these crimes.

Here are seven of them that Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) is seeking to remove from the list:

1. Coercing a child to engage in prostitution or any sexual activity.
2. Carjacking with intent to cause death or serious bodily harm.
3. Assaulting a law enforcement officer.
4. Bank robbery by force or violence putting life in jeopardy.

5. Assisting federal prisoners with jailbreak.
6. Hate crimes.
7. Assault, including assaulting a child.

Cotton, the leading Senate opponent of the bill, caused a ruckus when he publicized a loophole in the bill that would give wardens the authority

to make dangerous prisoners eligible to earn credits toward early release if the warden believed them to be no longer a danger.

Supporters of the bill insisted the loophole wasn't a loophole. Whatever it was, they agreed to back off a bit. But pay attention to the lesson of history: They didn't back off very far. ♦

COMMENT ♦ PHILIP TERZIAN

France reminds us, not for the first time, that the center doesn't always hold

Not for the first time, Americans appear to be slightly confused about events in France. The mass demonstrations that began as a protest against President Emmanuel Macron's "climate-change" taxes gave comfort to conservatives here, and not without reason. The new levies on gasoline and diesel fuel—already steep in France—were seen as a sop to rich environmentalists at the expense of the working and middle classes. But then extremists on the left and right joined the fracas and, while taxes remained the focus of contention, the marches devolved into riots and vandalism against the established order, against modernism, elitism, globalism, whatever.

It was 1968 again. With a difference, however: Whereas in 1968 generational tensions in France were played out in a bipolar Cold War environment, the present turmoil is plainly a reaction to the abstract ideal of European unity. In a nationalist moment Macron is one French politician, among many, who seems to be most comfortable in a multinational world.

In that sense, things could not be worse for the 41-year-old banker-technocrat who, a little over a year

ago, was elected France's youngest president in history by a wide margin. With his impeccable credentials, boyish good looks, and older wife, Macron was at once glamorous, impressive, hip, and a feminist hero. Even his



The French right is weary and wary of being governed by arbitrary, affluent bureaucrats in Brussels, and the French left is customarily in revolt against the powers that be.

new, self-invented political party—La République En Marche!—seemed designed to appear to be all things to all Frenchmen.

But it was a delicate balancing act. Macron has managed to enjoy amicable, even productive, relations with our own mercurial president. At the same time, as his colleagues in London (Theresa May) and Berlin (Angela Merkel) began to falter, he crowned himself champion of the international order against a rising tide of national-

ism, in Europe and across the Atlantic.

The fuel tax shattered that particular illusion. The French right is weary and wary of being governed by arbitrary, affluent bureaucrats in Brussels, and the French left is customarily in revolt against the powers that be. Whatever constitutes the French center is furious with Macron for losing control. The beleaguered president is now the object of bipartisan anger among people who resent global norms, distrust the cultural and political elites, embrace national sovereignty, and dream of destroying the power of finance and capital.

That instinct, of course, is called populism and, in Europe as in America, seems to draw strength from both sides of the barricades. The general assumption is that the populist wave that propelled Donald Trump into the White House, animated the Brexit vote in Britain, and has taken root in governments in Eastern Europe and Italy is an "irritable mental gesture"—in Lionel Trilling's famous description of conservatism—that will soon be adjusted by sensible people.

I am not so sure. As we have learned in our own country, the post-1945 international order in commerce and trade has been immensely beneficial to the economy. But the benefits have not been enjoyed by all, and global markets sometimes disrupt domestic tranquility. Immigration is a case in point: The growth of the economy in recent decades has required the importation of hardworking, low-paid workers—who in turn have displaced American wage-earners. Man does not live by bread alone and, in the fullness of time, economic logic takes a toll on the social order.

In Europe, by contrast, the curtain on the drama parted suddenly. Violence in the Middle East has generated an army of refugees/migrants, and while Europe's political leaders—for varying reasons—were happy to welcome them, the European public was less sanguine.

This might have played out in separate ways, depending on the special circumstances of particular countries. But Europe, as a whole, seems

to have arrived at a crossroads of sorts about the E.U. project, especially its undemocratic evolution. Just as the Germans were wrestling with their consciences about refugees, the British were debating their own internal union and growing discontent about their governors in Brussels. Scandinavia was awakening to the cost of welfare states, Greek insolvency had strained the neighborhood resources, and countries once captive to the Soviet Union were swiftly rediscovering their national identities.

France, champion of Charles de Gaulle's vision of European unity from the Atlantic to the Urals as well as Germany's faithful E.U. partner, might have enjoyed some immunity from the virus. But events have a way of transforming placid landscapes: French market forces, too, have produced inequality along with wealth, and restive, segregated immigrant communities have undermined civil order in French cities.

It is a curious irony that Germany, a historic patchwork of ethnic states and principalities that remained disunited until 1871 and was fractured for four-and-a-half decades after World War II, has been remarkably cohesive in its modern incarnation. Yet France, a singular civilization since the fall of the Roman Empire, has been surprisingly unstable since its famous revolution (1789). In the 1930s, political order was shaken and weakened by conflict at the outer edges of left and right, and as recently as 1958—even, arguably, in 1968—France hovered dangerously close to civil war.

This does not mean that Emmanuel Macron is destined to lose his office, much less his head, or that the populist wave in the world is an irresistible force. The global order and institutions constructed after 1945 have proved to be resilient, and uprisings fail as much as they succeed. But human inventions don't run forever and tend to grow rigid and self-satisfied with time. History is a series of centrifugal forces, shaking and shattering the plates when we least expect it. ♦

COMMENT ♦ ADAM KEIPER

Restoring Congress's brain

At a congressional hearing this week, Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) asked an irate and not entirely comprehensible question about his granddaughter's iPhone. The only problem, as the tech exec who was the hearing's sole witness explained, is that iPhones are made by Apple but the tech exec was the CEO of Google.

Such ignorance-revealing incidents—and the humiliating headlines and videos that follow—seem to happen whenever Congress tries to tackle some complicated technical subject. But as embarrassing as the gaffes can be, they're not really the best gauge for the savviness of the legislative branch. Most members of Congress don't come from a technical background, of course, but on the scientific and technological subjects they most care about, they and their staffs are deeply informed and intensely engaged.

The bigger problem is that Congress as an institution is unequipped to understand and address the large, long-term policy questions raised by advances in science and technology—questions related to, for example, human cloning, the gene-editing technology CRISPR, cybersecurity and our elections, additive manufacturing, the shifting basis of America's energy economy, the growing private space industry, and robotics and artificial intelligence. While the executive branch employs an enormous number of scientists and technical experts, Congress must rely on staffers—who rarely have the time to concentrate on just one subject, and whose numbers have declined sharply in recent decades—and a few small, in-house support agencies. The lopsidedness confers a great advantage to executive agencies and ill serves the public interest.

It wasn't always this way. For 23 years—until it was killed off in a spasm of Gingrich-era budget-trimming enthusiasm—Congress had its own in-house agency dedicated to helping it anticipate developments in science and technology, the better to craft worthy legislation. The Office of Technology Assessment was established in 1972, the brainchild of Rep. Emilio Daddario (D-Conn.), who became its first director. The impetus for OTA's creation was a growing



Congress as an institution is unequipped to understand and address the large, long-term policy questions raised by advances in science and technology.

sense in the late 1960s and early '70s that technology was careening out of control—remember, this was the moment in which the space race climaxed and the environmental movement was born—and that Congress needed to better prepare itself to meet the challenges ahead.

By the time OTA was defunded in 1995, it had put out more than 700 publications—including a few hundred major, book-length reports, called “assessments”—on subjects ranging from nuclear proliferation to wheelchairs to reproductive technologies to the use of virtual reality for combat training. More remarkable than the breadth of OTA's work, however, was the agency's methodology. OTA's roughly 140 staffers weren't just scientists; they came from many different backgrounds, and so the agency

was well equipped to examine its subjects from a variety of technical, economic, historical, and social perspectives. It consulted with an enormous number of outside experts—roughly 2,000 per year—as well as stakeholders from different sides of the issues OTA was studying. And instead of trying to produce reports that offered a consensus view or a single recommendation, OTA tended to offer Congress menus of policy options from which to choose and analyses of the tradeoffs relevant to each option. Many of OTA's reports were ahead of their time; some are still relevant today.

It is hard to say with exactness how much OTA helped Congress; certainly it is difficult to identify more than a few cases in which an OTA report had a clear-cut influence on legislation. Then again, much the same could be said of the Congressional Research Service, the respected, century-old agency whose duty it is to offer Congress the information it needs to do its work. Besides, as one former staffer told me, the subjects OTA covered tended to be “termites-in-the-basement problems” rather than “wolf-at-the-door problems.” Congress was better off with OTA than without it.

When Republicans won control of both chambers of Congress in the 1994 election, their reform agenda included plans to cut costs in the legislature. (Anyone who worked on Capitol Hill at the time will remember Newt Gingrich giving speeches while carrying a plastic ice bucket of the sort that used to be delivered regularly to congressional offices before he discontinued the anachronistic practice.) And beyond cost-cutting, some Republicans were wary of OTA, believing it to be too closely aligned with Democrats. After all, its biggest booster was Senator Ted Kennedy; its staff was believed to be stacked with liberals; and its reports were believed—not entirely wrongly—to lean toward regulation and intervention in the economy. And so, in a move widely characterized in the press as a self-performed lobotomy, the Republican majority zeroed out the agency's budget. OTA closed its doors in September 1995.

Recent years have seen a few attempts to fill the void created by OTA's absence. Most notably, another congressional agency, the Government Accountability Office, has performed on a pilot basis a handful of technology

“assessments”—not really comparable in quality to what OTA produced—and GAO recently announced the reorganization of this team to expand and improve upon its work. This is all to the good: Congress can use whatever help is available in understanding science and technology.

There have also been several attempts over the years to revive OTA; these efforts have mostly been led by Democrats, and bringing back OTA is on the agenda for the incoming Democratic majority in the House of Representatives. (The authorizing statute for the agency is still on the books, so bringing back OTA would require just restoring the funding.)

But some conservatives and libertarians have also taken an interest in bringing back OTA—after all, a smarter Congress might not necessarily be one that intervenes more but one that intervenes less clumsily or not at all. Other conservatives, like Senator Mike Lee (R-Utah) have taken a related interest in rebalancing our constitutional order by restoring the capacities and prerogatives of the legislative branch. For a stronger Congress, for a smarter Congress, for wiser policy—it's time to bring back OTA. ♦

Worth Repeating from *WeeklyStandard.com*:

In a certain sense adults need the spirit of Santa Claus as much as children do. The wonderment of childhood trains our minds and hearts to believe in realities we cannot verify physically or scientifically. Then, when the literal meaning of the tale dissolves—as it must and should—the symbolism remains, and we can attach that same wonder to things that are all the more fantastic but all the more real. Just because we cannot see the edge of the universe, the human soul, angels, or God, does that mean they don't exist? Just because it is absurd to think that God would become a defenseless infant, is that any reason to deny it? Our world needs wonder.

If we hold onto that essence of Santa Claus, then we honestly can say with the Editor that he does exist, no matter how old we get. Perhaps we find him in the selfless affection of a spouse, in the sacrificial love of parents, or in the kind gesture of a friend. We need to remember the wonder from our childhood dreams. With it, we can “push aside that curtain [covering the unseen world] and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond.” And if ever, like Virginia, we have a doubt and ask, “Is it all real?” we can return to the reassuring reply, “Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.”

—*Sophia Buono, 'Yes, Virginia, Santa Claus Is Timeless.'*

A Crisis That Hasn't Happened

The astonishing resilience of the Department of Justice. **BY JACK GOLDSMITH**

When President Trump forced Attorney General Jeff Sessions to resign on November 7 and appointed the unqualified Matthew Whitaker as acting attorney general, just about everyone assumed that special counsel Robert Mueller's Russia investigation was in trouble. Whitaker, after all, had sharply criticized the investigation before coming to the Justice Department. And now he would be supervising Mueller with an array of tools—including the power to fire Mueller, to starve him of funds, and to reverse his important legal decisions—that could slow and maybe kill the investigation.

Trump appeared to think he had found his man. When the *Daily Caller* mentioned Whitaker in an interview with the president a week after the appointment, Trump responded that the Mueller investigation was “illegal” and “should have never been brought.” A few days later, Chris Wallace of Fox News asked Trump whether he would accept Whitaker's curtailing the Mueller investigation. “I think he's astute politically,” said Trump. “I really believe he's going to do what's right.”

Many observers interpreted Trump's appointment of Whitaker as evidence that the fix was in. “This is a constitutional crisis,” said Supreme Court litigator Tom Goldstein, in a brief begging the Court to declare

Whitaker's appointment illegal. Democratic senator Chuck Schumer made a similar claim in urging Congress to act to protect Mueller. Many others were alarmed.



But to date these worries, and Trump's confidence in Whitaker, have been misplaced. The Russia investigation and its offshoots have charged forward during Whitaker's first month in office. Last week they reached a new and dangerous place for the president. Mueller's team revealed that Trump's former attorney Michael Cohen had disclosed potentially damning preelection links between Russian interests and the Trump campaign and organization,

and that Cohen had lied to Congress about Trump's “Moscow Project.” And New York federal prosecutors essentially accused the president of directing Cohen's criminal campaign violations for his involvement in paying off women who claimed to have had affairs with him.

These are but the latest in an 18-month-long string of extraordinary achievements by the Department of Justice in investigating the chief executive and his associates despite Trump's objections, threats, and firings of important DoJ officials. There has been feverish concern that Trump's actions would destroy the department's independence. Quite the opposite has happened. Trump's efforts have failed entirely. And DoJ independence is stronger than ever.

This independence was first on display in March 2017, when Sessions recused himself from any investigation into Russian meddling in the election. Trump had pressured Sessions not to recuse, but the politician-turned-attorney-general refused his guidance and bowed to the norms of the department. The president reportedly went “ballistic” and their relationship was thereafter poisoned.

The next show of DoJ independence came a few months later when Trump fired FBI director James Comey over what Trump later acknowledged was at least in part a response to Comey's handling of the Russia investigation. Here was an exercise of hard presidential power designed to insult the president. But the gambit backfired spectacularly.

The following week, deputy attorney general (and Trump appointee) Rod Rosenstein followed DoJ protocol and appointed Robert Mueller as special counsel to lead the Russia investigation. Trump immediately realized the dire implications of the square-shooting former FBI director looking into his business. “This is the single greatest witch hunt of a politician in American history!” Trump tweeted 12 hours later. But Trump was unable

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THOMAS FLUHARTY

to stop the department ostensibly under his control from acting sharply against his interests.

Nor was he able to replace Comey with a crony. After interviewing and considering partisan politicians, Trump bowed to the realities of the confirmation process and settled on Chris Wray, a seasoned DoJ official. Before and after Wray assumed office, the FBI has quietly assisted Mueller as he circles the president.

Since Mueller was appointed, Trump has not stopped berating him and his investigation. In June 2017, amid a flurry of new “witch hunt” tweets aimed at Rosenstein and Mueller, Trump reportedly ordered White House counsel Don McGahn to have Mueller fired. But he backed away when McGahn “threatened to resign rather than carry out the directive,” according to the *New York Times*. The following month Trump complained publicly about what he called Mueller’s conflicts of interest and out-of-control investigation and refused to rule out firing him. But he never pulled the trigger.

Trump has also hinted that he would fire Rosenstein on numerous occasions. He hasn’t followed through on that threat either, even after it was revealed in September that Rosenstein had floated the possibility of wearing a wire to record the president and invoking the 25th Amendment to remove him from office for unfitness.

These examples present a constitutional puzzle. Article II of the Constitution states, “The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States.” As Justice Antonin Scalia said in his much-admired 1988 dissent in *Morrison v. Olson*, this clause of the Constitution gives the president “complete control over investigation and prosecution of violations of the law.” This is true, Scalia emphasized, “even when alleged crimes by [the president] or his close associates are at issue.”

In theory, then, the president should be able to achieve his goals of shaping or even stopping an investigation he doesn’t like, subject to impeachment by Congress or rebuke at the polls.

Trump exaggerated only a bit when he claimed last year an “absolute right to do what I want to do with the Justice Department.” And he wasn’t far off in August when he said of the Mueller investigation: “I could run it if I want.”

And yet to Trump’s titanic frustration, he has not been able to convert his hard power into effective power. Trump has failed because he is inept at exercising executive power, which requires skills of self-presentation, organization, and persuasion that he lacks entirely. He has also failed because of the powerful norms of independence and commitment to the rule of law that have grown up inside the executive branch ever since Watergate revealed how severely it could be corrupted to serve a president’s partisan lawbreaking aims.

These norms took root when Gerald Ford’s attorney general, Edward Levi, wrote policies to ensure DoJ and FBI independence from the president in certain law enforcement and intelligence matters. Every subsequent administration, including Trump’s, has embraced these policies. The special counsel regulations under which Mueller operates are also a descendant of post-Watergate efforts to ensure that DoJ operates at arms-length when investigating executive officials, especially the president.

Much more consequential than paper policies and regulations are the normative expectations they fostered in generations of DoJ lawyers and in lawyers and policymakers throughout the executive branch of government. It is part of the deep culture of the Justice Department to resist influence by the president when he or an associate is under investigation. Every political appointee who assumes office in DoJ feels the heavy responsibility of upholding the departmental integrity that these norms represent. Even lawyers in the White House are influenced by them.

These norms draw important support when politicians and a vigorous press react with alarm to Trump’s intimidations. They are also bucked up by expectations of the outside legal profession to which senior Justice Department officials hope to return

after their government service. And they are strengthened by threats from senior officials to resign.

These norms have led Sessions, Rosenstein, Wray, and even McGahn to stand up to the president on the Russia investigation. And thus far they appear to have led Whitaker—Trump’s latest, greatest hope to slow Mueller—to refuse to do the president’s bidding. In the face of a public onslaught that post-Watergate architects of independence could not have imagined, the norms have shown astounding resilience and even growth in the Trump era.

We still don’t yet know precisely what role Whitaker played in last week’s events, and it remains possible that he will try to take steps to inhibit Mueller. It’s also possible that Trump’s nominee for attorney general, William Barr, will do the same—at least if he can get confirmed without Congress extracting pledges of independence akin to the ones it garnered 45 years ago from Nixon’s attorney general, Elliot Richardson, and his replacement, William Saxbe. And Trump can still disrupt Mueller’s efforts with his power to pardon and fire.

But these things can only happen if Trump and his cronies are willing to accept the political costs that they have avoided to date—costs that are much higher now than when Mueller began his investigation last May. Even if Trump decides to absorb these costs, it is too late to contain Mueller. Most of his work is complete and the still-secret information he has collected will be impossible to keep under wraps. Mueller and Rosenstein have decentralized the investigation to other parts of the Justice Department in such a way that even if Mueller’s team were checked, elements of the investigation that are dangerous for Trump would persist.

In short, the remarkable norms of DoJ independence have done their work. The truth about what happened between Russia and the Trump campaign in the 2016 election will come out. And then, as the Constitution envisages, it will be the responsibility of Congress and the American public to decide what to do. ♦

The Fuel That Wouldn't Die

One of every seven pickups sold in the U.S. is diesel—for good reason. **BY TONY MECIA**

Most customers have done their research by the time they step onto the Wilson Motors lot in Logan, Utah. Increasingly, that research is leading them to ask for a diesel truck. These are local cattle farmers, and they need big and powerful vehicles to haul trailers. The dealership's most popular diesels are the heavy-duty pickups like Ford F-250s and F-350s, and Nissan Titans. Ford also added a diesel option this year on its F-150 line, the best-selling vehicle in the United States for decades.

"I think diesel is getting more popular, just because they last longer," says Wilson salesman Cory Boehme. "They hold their value."

Diesel vehicles account for only a small fraction of the dealership's overall sales—maybe a dozen out of 150 or 200 sales a month, Boehme says. But at his lot and nationally, diesel is showing startling resilience among consumers. So much so that in the last couple of years, manufacturers have introduced or announced diesel versions of Jaguar's Land Rover, the Ford Transit Connect minivan, the Chevy Silverado, the Jeep Wrangler, and the Hyundai Santa Fe SUV.

Just a few years ago, diesel seemed headed for extinction. Volkswagen, which dominated the market with 70 percent of U.S. diesel-vehicle sales, abruptly stopped selling them after admitting in 2016 to years of cheating on federal emissions tests. The company's Audi and Porsche brands stopped selling diesel, too. Same with Mercedes-Benz. And all the hoopla over electric and hybrid vehicles suggested

there would soon be no place for gas engines, let alone diesel. Around the world, big cities such as Mexico City, Madrid, Paris, and Athens had promised to ban diesel vehicles by 2025 over concerns about air pollution.

But U.S. consumers have kept asking for diesel vehicles. In 2014, 2.8 percent of the vehicles sold in the United States were diesel. In the first 10 months of 2018, that figure remained 2.8 percent—even as the number of vehicles sold annually has risen—according to the National Automobile Dealers Association. Sales of electric cars and hybrids account for about 3 percent of the market.

There are a number of reasons why drivers might prefer diesel. Although diesel vehicles tend to cost more than their gas counterparts, they also tend to be more powerful and get better mileage. Historically low fuel prices have propelled drivers to buy larger trucks and SUVs in record numbers—about two-thirds of the vehicles sold in the United States last year were trucks or SUVs—and the diesel option makes more sense in trucks than sedans.

Diesel boosters will tell you it is the dependable and fuel-efficient option. "We are not a one-size-fits-all country—we never have been—and people are going to value choice in their vehicle type and in their powertrain," says Allen Schaeffer, executive director of the Diesel Technology Forum, a trade group. "People still see the inherent value in a technology that is proven to be fuel-efficient and that doesn't force them to compromise on anything. Maybe you don't hear about that from the popular media, because people would rather write about electric cars."

Diesel is a more efficient fuel than

gasoline and in that sense can seem more environmentally friendly. But diesel engines burn hotter, which means their exhaust tends to contain more of the particulates and gases that contribute to air pollution. "Diesel presents a tradeoff: It's more fuel efficient, so it emits less carbon dioxide, but it produces more nitrogen pollution," says Daniel Cohan, an atmospheric scientist at Rice University.

In the 1990s, car companies like Volkswagen and BMW hyped diesel as the environmentally friendly alternative to gas—one that contributed less to global warming. Some European governments even took the step of incentivizing the purchase of diesels to help meet their commitments to reduce carbon dioxide. Britain linked its vehicle taxes to carbon-dioxide emissions, which had the effect of favoring diesel. European taxes on diesel fuel tended to be less than on gas, too. The incentives worked: The percentage of diesel vehicles in Europe skyrocketed from 3 percent in the 1990s to 37 percent in 2015. Some countries have even more: In France, diesels account for about 70 percent of vehicles on the road. A recent paper published by Yale's School

Chugging along

The popularity of diesel vehicles in the U.S. has held steady in the last five years, and manufacturers are adding diesel engines—particularly in pickup trucks and SUVs. Here are 2018 model-year vehicles with diesel options rated by the Environmental Protection Agency (does not include some heavy-duty trucks):

- BMW 328d, 540d
- Chevrolet Cruze, Cruze Hatchback, Colorado, Equinox
- Ford F-150
- GMC Canyon, Terrain
- Jaguar XE, XF, F-Pace
- Jeep Grand Cherokee
- Land Rover Range Rover, Range Rover Velar, Range Rover Sport, Discovery
- Ram 1500

Source: U.S. Dept. of Energy/EPA Fuel Economy Guide

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of Forestry & Environmental Studies described Europe's pro-diesel incentives as a "well-intentioned response to climate change."

Today, though, the winds of environmental virtue are blowing a different direction. European leaders have largely abandoned diesel over concerns about air pollution. They are touting electric cars and hybrids. Hamburg, Germany, banned older diesel vehicles on certain city streets this year, and other cities are mulling similar restrictions. The European Commission took France, Germany, and a handful of other countries to court over their air pollution. To fight climate change, some countries have raised fuel taxes to make both gas and diesel engines less appealing—one of the sources of outrage fueling the recent protests in France. The European commissioner for industrial policy, Elzbieta Bienkowska, said in May that diesel is a "technology of the past" and that "diesel cars are finished."

For cars, even in the United States, that might well be true. It is challenging for the smallest of vehicles to meet emissions standards and remain affordable. Yet with trucks, the diesel outlook is rosier. About one of every seven pickups sold in the United States is diesel. And for heavy-duty construction equipment and commercial trucks, diesel remains the best choice. It will be a long time before electric vehicles will have the needed power or range. Tesla has said it is developing a semi-truck, but analysts are skeptical. In a dig, a Daimler executive said this year that a Tesla electric tractor-trailer still must obey the "laws of physics." London market-research firm IHS Markit predicts that even by 2040, 80 percent of commercial truck fleets worldwide will still have diesel engines.

Michelle Krebs, executive analyst with Autotrader, says that for cars, diesel is "pretty much dead." But it continues to hold value in bigger vehicles, she adds: "It's still an important offering in the pickup truck line for certain kinds of buyers. For work trucks, for trucks used to pull trailers and haul larger loads, there is a place for them." ♦

Defending DeVos

Will Republicans' embrace of due process be for Kavanaugh only? BY KC JOHNSON & STUART TAYLOR JR.

In October, Republican senators were the champions of due process. They argued that Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh must be presumed innocent in the face of the uncorroborated sex-crime accusations that Democrats had rushed to endorse. Forty-nine Republicans (and one Democrat) then confirmed his nomination to the Supreme Court.



DeVos: waiting for her party to speak

"In evaluating any given claim of misconduct, we will be ill served in the long run if we abandon the presumption of innocence and fairness, tempting though it may be," said Maine's Susan Collins on the Senate floor in the decisive speech of the confirmation process. "It is when passions are most inflamed that fairness is most in jeopardy." Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell declared, "totally uncorroborated allegations [must not be] enough to destroy an American's life."

Praiseworthy words, and yet congressional Republicans have been almost silent about another mockery of due process: the railroading of

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hundreds of college students on "sexual misconduct" charges considerably flimsier than those leveled against Kavanaugh. What's more, fearful of being branded retrogressive on gender issues, they are failing to support Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's valiant effort to right this wrong. In November, she proposed rules that would go a long way toward instilling fundamental fairness in the campus proceedings that follow an accusation of sexual misconduct. But rather than receiving vocal support from congressional Republicans, DeVos has been left to fend for herself in the face of vitriolic and often wildly misleading attacks from Democrats.

In the House, the only serious support for DeVos's work has come from outgoing education committee chair Virginia Foxx (R-N.C.), who described the effort to create "reliable and fair procedures" as "crucial." The proposed regulations, Foxx argues, would undo the "serious damage" caused by the Obama administration's "arbitrary Title IX guidance."

The only senator to publicly defend DeVos's new rule initially was Lamar Alexander, chairman of the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee. The Tennessean, himself a former education secretary, issued a press release cautiously praising DeVos for seeking "to balance fairness and support for survivors."

On December 6, we asked the other Republicans on Alexander's committee for comment on the DeVos proposals. Louisiana senator Bill Cassidy, who has previously expressed concerns about the fate of accused students on campus, endorsed her efforts: "Victims and the accused deserve to be treated fairly and receive due process, and I support Secretary DeVos's work to restore and support these fundamental principles on

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every campus.” None of the other committee members responded, including Susan Collins, who had been so eloquent about the importance of the presumption of innocence when the accused was a powerful jurist rather than a simple college student.

The record at the state level is equally bleak. New Hampshire governor Chris Sununu, perhaps eager to appease the new Democratic majority in the state legislature, demanded that DeVos withdraw the proposed regulations. “We know,” Sununu asserted, “that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 10 men will be sexually assaulted in college.” In reality, around 1 in 40 women will be sexually assaulted while in college, according to the most reliable survey data.

In New Jersey, a bipartisan state senate committee approved a measure to codify the Obama-era Title IX guidance and create a state “Campus Sexual Assault Commission.” Cosponsored by the state senate’s minority leader, Republican Thomas Kean Jr., the commission will include multiple figures representing the perspective of campus accusers—including at least one “individual who is a campus sexual assault survivor”—but no one specializing in defending accused students or representing a civil-liberties organization. This one-sided commission, Kean promised, would “keep generations of students safe from sexual violence.”

The silence of Republican legislators is all the more unsettling given the concerns repeatedly expressed by high-profile conservative judges about the state of affairs on campus. During oral arguments in September in a case against Purdue University, Amy Coney Barrett of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals (she was one of the three finalists for the Court seat Kavanaugh now holds) was shocked to learn that a student was suspended from school and dismissed from the NROTC after a hearing at which the accuser neither appeared nor had to submit an official statement. Sparring with Purdue’s lawyer, Barrett noted, “It was a credibility contest in which you not only did not hear directly from [the accuser], you didn’t

even read words that she had written.”

That same month, in a ruling involving a case against the University of Michigan, Amul Thapar of the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals held that public universities must include cross-examination in campus sexual-assault tribunals. “Not only does cross-examination allow the accused to identify inconsistencies in the other side’s story,” Thapar wrote, “but it also gives the fact-finder an opportunity to assess a witness’s demeanor and determine who can be trusted.”

Thapar’s opinion is one of more than 100 federal and state court decisions since 2011 in which universities found themselves on the losing side in lawsuits brought by students accused of sexual assault. In their

The silence of Republican legislators about Betsy DeVos’s Title IX reforms is all the more unsettling given the concerns repeatedly expressed by high-profile conservative judges about the state of affairs on campus.

rulings, judges have cited pervasive pro-accuser bias among academic officials; secret training of adjudicators to believe accusers even in the face of discrediting evidence; bans on meaningful cross-examination; concealment of exculpatory evidence; designation of a single bureaucrat as investigator, prosecutor, judge, and jury; and numerous other due-process outrages.

The rule DeVos is proposing seeks to end such abuses by requiring unbiased adjudicators and training materials; rights for accuser and accused alike to see the case evidence and the relevant training materials for adjudicators; and the right of accused students to designate agents to cross-examine accusers and other witnesses.

Dozens of Democratic legislators have attacked DeVos’s proposal. Without evidence, California senator Dianne Feinstein tweeted that allowing

cross-examination and equal access to evidence would “silence” and “drown out the voices of victims.” Her New Jersey colleague Bob Menendez claimed that the fairer procedures envisioned by DeVos would “discourage student survivors from reporting incidents.”

In the House, presumptive speaker Nancy Pelosi released a statement asserting, absurdly, that the proposed rule “denies survivors due process.” California’s Barbara Lee, who narrowly missed becoming the House’s fourth-ranking Democrat, openly embraced a presumption of guilt and complained that the proposed regulations would remove the burden of proof from the accused. Another California representative, Jackie Speier, accused DeVos of being “intent on putting us in a time machine and taking us back to the Stone Age, when it was okay to drag a woman by her hair.” “We aren’t going back,” Speier promised.

At a time when the campus climate across the nation is quick to “believe the victim” and dismisses due process as part of “rape culture,” DeVos and her team are almost alone in the federal government in showing concern for the rights of the accused. She may, however, soon be getting a potent ally: William Barr, President Trump’s nominee to be attorney general. Last year, Barr offered a blurb for our book *The Campus Rape Frenzy*. “Male students accused of sexual misconduct are found guilty, and their lives destroyed,” he wrote, “by campus panels operating without any semblance of due process and all too frequently on the basis of grossly inadequate information.” Barr’s willingness to speak out against campus injustices contrasts sharply with the timidity of GOP legislators.

DeVos’s proposed regulations are now open for public comment, and victims’ rights organizations are flooding the process with calls to uphold the one-sided procedures of the last seven years. Congressional Republicans can help thwart this effort by publicly endorsing DeVos’s attempt to create a fairer campus system for all. It would show everyone that their demands for fairness to Kavanaugh go beyond partisan politics. ♦

Losing by Winning

Theresa May retains office but hemorrhages power.

BY DOMINIC GREEN

Theresa May is the master of disaster and the mistress of distress. These are not compliments but indices of the sustained malfunctioning of the British political system and of a Conservative party unable to resolve its deep ambivalence towards the European Union. No British prime minister has survived through such adversity—and to so little positive effect.

For a few sweet hours this week, hopes were raised that the long agony of May's premiership was about to end. The knife went in some time on the evening of December 11. While May was returning from the continent after another fruitless and humiliating attempt to revive her Brexit deal, one of her MPs delivered a letter of no confidence to Sir Graham Brady, chairman of the 1922 Committee, which regulates the disordered inner life of the parliamentary Conservatives. Sir Graham, realizing that the tally of letters had passed the 48 required to trigger a leadership contest, informed May.

Stabbed in the back, May prepared to be stabbed in the front in the vote the next day. With the misplaced sense of duty and the pedestrian adherence to procedure that have defined her sorry tenure, she proclaimed her determination to fight it out. The analogies to *Julius Caesar* are purely procedural, for May is a leader who fails to lead,

a contriver of base compromises and gratuitous defeats, and the deliverer of the Brexit deal that is not.

When the votes in the no-confidence motion were counted on the evening of December 12, it emerged that, in defiance of reason and the national interest, May had won by 200 votes to 117. Her survival continues a personal winning streak that is a losing streak for her party and country. This was a typical May victory—demoralizing even for the winners.

In 1990, Margaret Thatcher won 204 votes in the first round of the Conservative leadership ballot. She accepted that she had lost her party's trust and resigned. In 1995, John Major gambled that winning 218 votes in the first round of a leadership ballot was good enough. He managed to retain control of the party and the premiership, but his victory won him just two more years in power, whereupon Tony Blair led a revived Labour party to a landslide victory in the 1997 general elections. It is Major, the gray mediocrity bound for failure, who May now seeks to emulate.

In order to secure the votes against the no-confidence motion, May promised that she would not lead the party into the next general elections, scheduled for 2022. This amounts to an acceptance, proven by her squandering of an inherited majority in the 2017 general elections, that she is an unworthy leader of the Conservatives. Which indeed is the case. She was pushed into Downing Street after the 2016 Brexit referendum not as the best leader for

the country at a crucial juncture but as a compromise candidate for the Conservatives, an unsafe pair of hands who could be trusted to bungle the task. No one expected her to be this good at doing a bad job.

May has portrayed herself as a “bloody difficult woman,” a slogger in the national interest. Yet her entire premiership has been a catalogue of disasters from its initial misstep—her choice to negotiate with a hostile E.U. instead of making preliminary arrangements for a “No Deal” alternative, including free-trade arrangements with friendly countries like the United States and India—to the misfired general election that was intended to secure her a mandate but instead annulled it, and finally to her sustained and quasi-delusional insistence that the most the E.U. was willing to offer would be acceptable to the Commons and the public.

In the first week of December, May attempted to sell her Brexit deal to the House of Commons. She lost three votes in a single sitting. One of these votes found her government to be in contempt of the House of Commons, apparently for attempting to hide the attorney-general's damaging legal advice about the Brexit deal. May and her ministers had claimed that the deal would not place Britain in an open-ended limbo, from which it could only escape with the E.U.'s permission. The government's own legal advisers, however, had told May otherwise.

The same went for May's insistence that the Northern Irish “backstop,” a device for avoiding a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, was a temporary measure. It turned out that the backstop could be permanent, if Britain and the E.U. proved unable to agree on an alternative.

A stronger prime minister, caught in a lie and humbled three times as members of her own party rejected the only legislative attainment of her premiership, might have reflected overnight and then resigned. A braver prime minister would have resigned that very day. But May pressed on, with the bravery of the coward who



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THOMAS FLUHARTY

prefers a thousand humiliations. These duly arrived.

On Monday morning, December 10, ministers were still telling BBC Radio that nothing would stop the vote on the deal scheduled for the following day, even though some 100 Conservative MPs had already announced their intention of voting against it and members of May's cabinet were reported to be begging her to delay it. She accepted their advice and canceled the vote, sparking a furious Commons session. At one moment, a Labour MP even picked up the giant ceremonial mace, the symbol of the queen's authority, and walked up and down the Chamber in an impotent impersonation of Oliver Cromwell.

May, deploying her peerless talent for delusion, kept insisting that the Brexit deal could be saved even though E.U. and European leaders insist it is not up for renegotiation. As though galvanized by her humiliation in the Commons into creating a new indignity, May shuttled off to beg for concessions from Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte and Germany's Angela Merkel. When May's car pulled up in Berlin for her meeting with the German chancellor, Angela Merkel was left waiting on a small piece of red carpet as May appeared unable to open her door and security men pulled at the handle in an increasingly farcical attempt to free her. Eventually, May staggered out, as she always does from whatever wreckage she has contrived to trap herself in, and gave a game shrug and a smile to Merkel, who returned the same gestures, if only from pity. There was no pity, however, in Merkel's statement after their meeting that the Brexit deal could not be reopened.

The British media often refer to May's harrowing humiliations as "setbacks." They are, in the sense that the Titanic striking an iceberg was a setback for the White Star Line's scheduled service. They are, in the sense that May's continued presence in 10 Downing Street, her leadership of the Conservative party, and her betrayal of the 2016 Brexit referendum result and her 2017 general election promises are setbacks for democracy.

May clings to office while her power leaches away, and the majority of Conservative MPs cling to her—more terrified of a pro-Brexit Tory taking over as leader today than of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour winning a general election tomorrow. But nothing can put off the reckoning forever, and the longer the Conservatives defer it, the harsher it is likely to be. There are three possibilities ahead for Britain, and none of them reflects well on the Conservatives. One is to abandon Brexit and the majority of voters who approved leaving the E.U. in the June 2016 referendum. Another is to shoot the rapids and leave the E.U. in March 2019 with no deal at all, an outcome that the *Washington Post*, exaggerating only a little, called a "humanitarian and economic crisis."

The third option is to rally around May and a slightly modified deal and attempt to force it through the Commons. Her victory on the no-confidence vote does not portend success.

Tory members of the pro-Brexit European Research Group may ally with the opposition parties and vote against the government. It is likely that the Democratic Unionist party, without whose support May's minority government cannot function, will reject any deal that contains a Northern Ireland backstop. And thus May may well endure further humiliations.

All political careers end in failure, but few premierships begin in it and sustain it throughout their term. As prime ministers go, May has already secured a place in the hall of shame right next to those appeasers Stanley Baldwin and Neville Chamberlain, and the all-time champion bungler of foreign affairs, Lord North. The raising of the mace in the House this week shows that it is past time for May to take Cromwell's advice—advice repeated by Leo Amery to Neville Chamberlain as he clung to office but not to power, in 1940: "In the name of God, go!" ♦

'Deaths of Despair'

What can be done about Americans' declining life expectancy? BY PHILIP LUKE JEFFERY

On November 29, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released three reports on disturbing topics that no one quite knows how to address. One of them, the annual overview "Mortality in the United States," revealed that in 2017 American life expectancy dropped for the third straight year—not since 1918, when a flu pandemic was piled atop the miseries of war, has that happened. The causes of today's decline are far less dramatic. CDC director Robert Redfield announced that "this troubling trend is largely driven by deaths from drug overdose and suicide," the subjects of the other two CDC reports.

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Data from the CDC show that these three interrelated trends have moved slowly but steadily in one direction. Such consistent decline is unprecedented. Back in 1918, life expectancy plummeted a full 15 years thanks to the Spanish Flu, only to bounce back to an all-time high the following year. What we have today is a more gradual slide. The suicide rate has likewise been worse before, spiking drastically during the Great Depression, but has never risen so steadily for so long. Over the last 18 years, the rate of suicide has grown by 33 percent, from an all-time low in 1999 to a rate as high as any since the 1930s.

Over the last decade, deaths from drug overdose rose by a steady 3 percent per year until 2015, when

the rate accelerated to an alarming 16 percent per year. In 2017, 22 of every 100,000 Americans died by overdose, and 14 by suicide.

Plenty of data is available, but we still don't know very much about the deeper issues underlying these "deaths of despair"—as Princeton professors Anne Case and Angus Deaton have dubbed them. While the CDC and other federal agencies publish data on life expectancy and related trends, they tend to avoid broad explanations for what they report. Redfield's brief statement called for action but offered no clear answers.

Of course, academics and commentators are always eager to propose explanations. Researchers outside the public sector tend to look at "deaths of despair" as economic and medical problems, requiring economic and medical solutions. At an event with Harvard's Center for Population and Development Studies, Deaton and University College London's Michael Marmot identified income inequality as "the key to global health" in general and to deaths of despair in particular. Meanwhile, in the *New York Times*, Moises Velasquez-Manoff proposed that we fight suicide with better drugs, arguing that because "no new classes of drugs have been developed to treat depression (and by extension suicidality) in about 30 years" the United States should liberalize the use of ketamine as an alternative to conventional antidepressants.

But the limits of these approaches become more obvious the more we learn about deaths of despair. On the one hand, it's difficult to believe deaths of despair are simple markers of economic anxiety. The CDC's new report on suicide shows that the rate grew at the same pace before the 2008 recession as during and after it, and while it's rising fast among people old enough to have lost a job to automation, it's rising just as fast among people too young ever to have held

such jobs. Overdose deaths are hardly exclusive to the straitened circumstances of blue-collar, red-state America. They happen relatively frequently in the Rust Belt, but also in New England and the mid-Atlantic, and are rarest in Nebraska and the Dakotas. An inconsistent correlation between deaths of despair and economic hardship makes it difficult to formulate policy-based solutions. Case and Deaton admitted last year that economic "policies—even ones that successfully improve earnings and jobs, or redistribute income—will take many years



A synthetic marijuana overdose in Brooklyn, May 21

to reverse the increase in mortality." Medical explanations run into similar problems. Plenty of drugs already exist to make people feel better, and Americans have been using them more frequently than ever. From 1999 to 2014, the proportion of Americans on antidepressants grew by 65 percent—and that's not even counting the use of opioids and other painkillers. Similarly, more Americans than ever are in therapy: People diagnosed with a mental illness in America were over 25 percent more likely to receive treatment in 2016 than in 2003. But despite the increasing prevalence of mental health treatment, the rate of suicide is still growing. It's impossible to know how high the rate would be without the widespread use of antidepressants, painkillers, and therapy, but their ubiquity suggests that despair runs deeper than the suicide rate can measure.

When a social crisis resists easy economic or medical answers, it's tempting to declare the problem insoluble and demand that it be taken out of "back alleys" and into the sterile supervision of state-approved experts. San Francisco pursued this idea. Last fall, the California state assembly passed AB 186, a bill authorizing the city to set up "safe injection sites" where addicts could bring their own drugs to consume while state employees would provide any necessary paraphernalia and emergency first aid. AB 186 aimed to provide addicts with a sterile environment and education on "safe" drug use (the bill did not specify the content of this education, but one can assume the legislators did not intend an abstinence-based curriculum).

Similar proposals in Philadelphia, Seattle, and several states provoked a response from Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein. In a *New York Times* op-ed, Rosenstein declared that the federal government would prosecute any "safe injection sites" that open. "Injection sites," he argued, "normalize drug use and facilitate addiction by sending a powerful message to teenagers that the government thinks illegal drugs can be used safely."

Following Rosenstein's lead, California governor Jerry Brown vetoed AB 186 when it reached his desk on September 30. "Fundamentally," Brown explained, "I do not believe that enabling illegal drug use in government sponsored injection centers . . . will reduce drug addiction." Brown and Rosenstein hope to reduce deaths of despair, not simply manage them. The problem is, proponents of "safe injection sites" clearly do not share that intention. Like others who want to "decriminalize but regulate" morally questionable practices, they redefine health from abstaining from harmful practices to simply not dying of them. "Safe injection sites" shift the focus from confronting the problem head-on

PAUL MARTINKA / SPLASH NEWS / NEWS.COM

to providing a setting where the problem can persist, and even grow.

Research into deaths of despair won't shed much light if the underlying assumptions are faulty. What if the life expectancy declines aren't primarily economic, or even medical, and the roots of American despair lie elsewhere? Some suggest that it's time to take a serious look at declining community and family life. Harvard's Tyler J. VanderWeele, for example, has found a link between church attendance and lower rates of suicide, especially among women, while University of California, Riverside sociologist Augustine Kposowa has noted "accumulating evidence that divorced and separated people have much higher suicide rates than their married counterparts." For men, divorce correlates strongly to suicide.

These results shouldn't be all that surprising. Church and family represent an organic social safety net—without them, people can become isolated, lose a sense of purpose, and be poorly equipped to cope with despair when it comes. It's easy to see how social isolation, especially if combined with losing a job or becoming reliant on an expensive medical treatment, can lead to a sense that one's life isn't going the way it should.

The downside of focusing on family, church, and community, from the perspective of an academic researcher or a federal agency, is that there aren't easy solutions. There are no taxes, tariffs, therapies, or pills to keep people in pews and families intact. It's reasonable to expect that the near future will therefore bring more campaigns for safe-injection sites, proposals to legalize the next miracle drug, and perhaps more latitude for euthanasia so as to make suicide itself more "safe." It's hard to believe any of these will increase Americans' life expectancy or stem the decline. But it's also possible that enough researchers will resist prevailing explanations, take seriously Redfield, Brown, and Rosenstein's calls to investigate the real problems behind the decline of American life expectancy, and so begin the difficult task of reversing it. ♦

DREW ANGERER / GETTY

Trump and Detroit

The president can't save an industry he doesn't understand. **BY RICHARD E. BURR**

For more than two years, President Donald Trump has pushed for a "new Industrial Revolution" that aims to put American workers first, build new car plants, and engage in trade wars if necessary to open foreign markets.

Detroit has its own vision for a new Industrial Revolution, and it has little to do with erecting higher tariff walls and bulldozing farm fields for new factories. It is focused on artificial intelligence, mapping technology, and

Unlike past layoff announcements, this one exploded politically. Elected officials in Michigan and Ohio denounced the moves and congressional representatives from those states got a meeting with GM CEO Mary Barra in early December.

Rep. Debbie Dingell, Democrat and former GM executive, called the moves "a warning" that means "we all must be concerned about protecting jobs and keeping them in this country." Ohio's senator Sherrod Brown,

who is considering a Democratic presidential run in 2020, labeled it "corporate greed at its worst."

Trump threatened to pull federal subsidies, including electric vehicle tax credits, from GM and talked about imposing a tenfold increase in car import tariffs, from 2.5 percent to 25 percent, arguing this would boost U.S. car sales and prevent layoffs like GM's.

For technology experts, by contrast, GM's restructuring

is all about adapting for the future. GM said it is paring down its car lines and potentially shutting plants in a bid to free up money to invest not only in electric vehicles but in expensive self-driving and autonomous vehicle research.

"You have to make changes to innovate and move to a digital economy," says Darrell West, founding director of the Center for Technology Innovation at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "But in making those changes, some people lose jobs, some plants close, and some communities get hurt. . . . It's very treacherous politically."

The domestic automakers already were highly unlikely to build new



GM CEO Mary Barra on Capitol Hill, December 5

changing corporate cultures to create the self-driving vehicles of the future.

The conflict between the auto industry's present and future was exemplified when General Motors said in late November that it would idle and possibly shutter up to five factories while laying off or buying out 8,000 salaried workers. America's largest automaker joined the rest of the domestic industry in deciding to eliminate many car models—including the gas-electric Chevrolet Volt—as it recognized the growing sales dominance of trucks and sport utility vehicles in the U.S. market.

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factories since sales peaked in 2017, are plateauing this year, and may decline in future years. The Detroit Three are likely to frustrate Trump's new industrialism even further as they lay off and shift workers from underused car plants and pour billions of dollars into research and development.

"I see autonomous vehicles on the road in many major American cities by 2021 and possibly earlier in a few places," West says.

The unionized Michigan automakers have an international battle on their hands. They are also competing with non-union Silicon Valley technology companies such as Google, Uber, and Waymo. The formerly European automaker Volvo, now owned by a Chinese firm, is making advancements in self-driving technology. And more generally, the Chinese are investing heavily in self-driving research because they feel they can compete in this new technology—they were left behind by the 20th-century auto industry and don't own patents

on the older technologies that will be supplanted in the coming years.

Autonomous vehicles are viewed as saving fuel, cutting commute times, reducing pollution, relieving congestion, and providing convenience. Owners of newer vehicles already experience the leading edge of the technology in today's semiautonomous features, whether it be through adaptive cruise control, automated parking, or emergency braking.

But there are going to be hiccups. Self-driving vehicles will have trouble in bad weather because sensors have difficulty recognizing roadways and surrounding traffic in less than ideal conditions. There is the ominous threat of hacking. America's poor road conditions remain an obstacle. There is the financial cloud of litigation, namely, the likelihood that juries will react to computerized vehicles killing people with large awards for damages. Public fears were heightened after an Ohio man died in a May 2016 crash with a tractor-trailer in

Florida while his Tesla sedan's autopilot program was on.

Plus there is the unresolved issue of federal regulation. Although all countries have issues with how they regulate vehicles, the weakness in the United States is the lack of uniformity among the 50 states on self-driving cars. Experts say Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao and her agency are trying to help the industry.

"The current administration does seem to be fairly receptive to automakers and suppliers developing autonomous technology, adjusting regulation to allow for expedited and driver-free testing on public roads," says Ed Kim, vice president of industry analysis for the AutoPacific consulting firm in North Tustin, California.

But this technological industrial revolution requires loads of capital. GM's plant idlings, early retirement offers, and expected layoffs are aggressive moves to address this issue. Ford Motor Co. has been mulling similar moves at a much slower pace, which

Space: The New Economic Frontier

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

When the world watched Neil Armstrong take that one small step onto the lunar surface almost 50 years ago, no one could have dreamed how space would one day become an integral part of daily life on earth. Today, a robust commercial space industry is taking off with huge economic potential. Whether or not they know it, all companies will soon be space companies. And all consumers use space-based technology each and every day.

Some of the examples of the commercial space industry are dramatic. Leading corporations and billionaire entrepreneurs are determined to make space tourism a reality—and getting closer every day. Biotechnology companies, including those in the pharmaceutical and agriculture industries, conduct research and development on the International Space Station because of the experimental advantages of microgravity.

Other examples are quietly at work across industrial sectors. The Global Positioning System (GPS)—made possible through satellites—has applications throughout the economy. Everything from financial transactions and supply chain management to wireless communications and weather forecasting use GPS technology.

It's no surprise, then, that the commercial space industry has grown from \$175 billion in revenues in 2005 to \$385 billion in 2017. As more private investors jump into the industry, growth will continue to skyrocket. U.S. Chamber of Commerce economists project that commercial space will be at least a \$1.5 trillion industry by 2040.

The Chamber has recently enhanced our space policy efforts to help all types of businesses take advantage of new opportunities in this rapidly evolving sector and navigate the risks that will inevitably come. In early December, we hosted *LAUNCH: Industry Taking Off*, the Chamber's first-ever summit dedicated entirely to commercial space. The summit brought together nearly 300 business

leaders and policy experts and top officials from almost every relevant federal agency such as NASA and the departments of Defense, Commerce, and Transportation.

The strong government showing at our event reflects this administration's integrated strategy for a national space policy that includes private sector collaboration. We look forward to working with government leaders to establish an effective regulatory regime and confront emerging challenges, including space debris and traffic management.

Harnessing the economic potential of space will be no easy feat. It took hundreds of years to create an efficient and well-regulated maritime system and nearly a century for aviation. But they are both vital parts of the global economy, and space increasingly is too. Indeed, space is the new economic frontier. The public and private sectors must work together as partners and pioneers to leverage its vast potential for humankind.



Learn more at
uschamber.com/abovethefold.

invited one Wall Street analyst to speculate that the country's second largest automaker may cut even more jobs than GM, a notion Ford disputes.

"If the capital saved from these actions really [does] help result in GM being a real and profitable leader in autonomous drive technology, that will be what's remembered rather than the layoffs," Kim says.

"That statement may sound cold, but these layoffs are another example of the Barra-era GM acting proactively with its eye on the future, unlike the old GM, which was reactive and could hardly see past the next quarter," he adds.

Morgan Stanley analyst Adam Jonas was blunt in his December 3 investors' note: "This is not just a GM or a Ford thing," Jonas wrote. "There are bigger forces at work driving global OEMs [original equipment manufacturers] to rethink the fundamental idea of supporting increasingly obsolete segments, propulsion systems, and geographic regions."

Trump's trade wars with the European Union and China don't help. The steel and aluminum tariffs have increased costs for the automakers, experts note. Trump's "messaging is stuck in the past when it comes to manufacturing," Kim says. "Automakers are now truly global entities that rely on resources from around the world to be profitable and efficient."

Tacking on tariffs makes U.S. automakers less competitive and contributes to GM and Ford's decisions to cut costs by shedding workers, he says, adding, "The Trump administration's restriction of free trade . . . has a negative impact on both automakers to have the capital necessary for autonomous vehicle development."

The president has barely acknowledged the self-driving phenomenon. In March 2017, he visited Michigan to jawbone domestic and foreign auto executives about building new conventional factories and to promote his manufacturing initiatives. He did so at the 335-acre Willow Run site, where bombers were made during World War II but which is now home to the American Center for

Mobility—Michigan's premier site for testing and developing connected and autonomous vehicles.

At the center, Trump never uttered the words "self-driving," "autonomous" or "connected" vehicles during a speech that focused on traditional car issues. "Now, these hundreds of acres that defended our democracy are going to help build the cars and cities of the future," he said in his one oblique nod to that future. "So I ask you today to join me in daring to believe that this facility, this city, and this nation will once again shine with industrial might."

Trump may have to settle for small victories on industrial plant-building. Unlike Ford and GM, Fiat Chrysler Automobiles NV is running its plants at practically full capacity and plans to

convert an idled Detroit engine plant into an assembly factory to help build a new Jeep SUV. The move could add as many as 400 jobs by 2020, according to a *Detroit News* report, though Fiat Chrysler has yet to officially announce the project.

But with a stagnating market, increased costs, and shifting consumer demand away from cars, job losses and factory closings promise to remain an issue.

Bob Lutz, a former fast-jet pilot in the U.S. Marine Corps and Detroit industry veteran, told the *Los Angeles Times* that the former New York real estate developer should be more sympathetic to the automakers. "I'll bet," Lutz said, "he's shut down some unprofitable hotels, resorts, and casinos in his day." ♦

Learning to Argue

A new curriculum to teach students how to disagree. BY IAN LINDQUIST

In recent years we've seen troubling trends in young Americans' intellectual growth. From college students' inability or unwillingness to tolerate disagreement to the increased partisanship of political elites, American society appears to have forgotten that a bedrock practice of liberal democracy is the hurly-burly back and forth of the intellectual arena. It is not a natural inclination for the young, either; it must be taught and cultivated. Some K-12 schools are taking notice and responding by committing to teaching the intellectual and moral habits that allow students to enter contentious debate and to disagree agreeably with their peers in high school and afterward.

Consider BASIS Curriculum Schools. Founded in 1998 in Tucson

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by Michael and Olga Block with the mandate of providing rigorous instruction to enable Arizona students to compete internationally with their peers, the BASIS Curriculum Schools network now includes 27 charter schools, 5 independent schools, and 5 international schools in China and the Czech Republic. The original BASIS Curriculum model emphasized rigorous education in math and science and a lot of high-level learning in subjects considered off the beaten path for younger students, like logic, economics, and Mandarin. As a result, the network's charters have, in the past few years, gained a reputation for excellence and now compete with some of the best schools in the country in the annual rankings in *U.S. News & World Report* and the *Washington Post*. Indeed, the top five public high schools in the country, according to *U.S. News*, are all BASIS charter schools.

BASIS will now attempt to address

the reluctance among young Americans to enter into genuine intellectual debate. In the fall of 2019, the network plans to launch a program for grades 8 through 10 at its independent school in McLean, Virginia, emphasizing liberal education. The Academy at BASIS Independent McLean, which will eventually grow into a 300-person program spanning grades 8 through 12, will include AP credit and other rigorous dimensions of the BASIS curriculum, but will add a new emphasis on humanities and seminar discussion. At the center of the program is the belief that students benefit by learning how to argue respectfully and that such an education will make them better citizens.

Peter Bezanson, chief executive officer of BASIS, reports that each history class in the new program will have 2 teachers who will convene 20 students around a seminar table. The teachers, whom Bezanson says will have different viewpoints on the historical material, will have one shared ideal: a commitment to encouraging students to debate, disagree, and discuss, and to model reasonable debate and disagreement for them.

To prepare teachers for a classroom hospitable to debate and discussion, Bezanson plans to send teachers from the BASIS Curriculum Schools network to study at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, each summer. St. John's is the natural choice for BASIS teachers because its course of study is grounded in the twin pillars of the great books and Socratic seminars. Seminar participants sit around a table and discuss the work at hand for two hours at a time. As a former St. John's undergraduate student, I can attest that in this environment debate and disagreement thrive. And as Frank Bruni recently wrote in the *New York Times*, this is not because the St. John's classroom is full of animosity, but because students sharpen their minds as they spend so much time interrogating texts.

Emily Langston, associate dean for graduate programs at St. John's, says that the St. John's classroom is based on two suppositions: "The idea that the text has something to teach

us" and the fact that "we don't all think the same thing about the text." Indeed, "the idea that we can disagree and be respectful and, in doing so, learn from each other, is part of what community means." Disagreement and discussion are the fabric of community, not its antithesis.

Although plans are still under consideration for the first cohort of teachers to attend in the summer of 2019, Langston has been encouraged by the interest shown by BASIS teachers in the first few days since the application process opened. "We've received over 50 statements of interest from their teachers in only a few days," Langston says. It's not only BASIS that has shown interest. A handful of institutions, including the Collegiate School in New York City, have brought in St. John's instructors to teach their teachers. As a result, St. John's is revamping its graduate programs and will begin offering a Certificate of Liberal Arts Education in the summer of 2019.

In addition to the regular course of study offered to all graduate students, those enrolled in the St. John's program will take classes on classical texts on pedagogy, such as Plato's *Meno*, Rousseau's *Émile*, and the work of John Dewey. "We hope to have a broad influence on American K-12 education," says Langston.

The new program at BASIS is encouraging, but one school network can only do so much. There are approximately 4 million students in the United States who entered freshman year of public high school in fall 2018 and over 56 million K-12 students. Only a handful will ever see a classroom based on the pedagogy of disagreement and debate. Bringing this model to scale is going to take some time.

The two biggest challenges to growing the number of seminar-style classrooms at the K-12 level are cost and human capital, according to Bezanson. Seminar classes are usually small—between 12 to 22 students—and including 2 teachers in each classroom comes at a huge cost to a school. Finding the right teachers also presents a challenge. "It's hard to find teachers

who are subject experts but also talented seminar leaders," says Bezanson. "In order to be a talented seminar leader, you have to leave some of your expertise at the door so that you don't dominate and create a quasi-lecture environment." At the same time, these teachers aren't merely moderators and need to "know their stuff."

Discussion based on a text in a seminar-style format helps students achieve aptitude and high-level practice in the four grammatical skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. These are critical and essential to any further education. They're also, in many cases, requisite for a meaningful life in literate society.

Most importantly, seminars inherently teach how to be a citizen in a liberal society by teaching participants how to weigh words, and, in doing so, practice a standard of truth and goodness. Students learn to recognize words that demonstrate the truth of a point rather than trusting the authority of the one who speaks them. This inculcates a taste for demonstrable truth and persuasive argument and a distaste for propaganda.

Seminars allow students to enter into a shared space with their peers even as they disagree. There is no sarcasm, no withholding of oneself or one's efforts from the group, which means that two people can disagree on almost every point of interpretation about a text while still sharing something fundamental: common and equal investment in the discussion.

In the adoption of seminar-style classrooms we may find a remedy to the precarious state of current political discourse. Around the seminar table is where citizenship is best forged—face-to-face, peer-to-peer. It's an encouraging sign that BASIS, already a leader in K-12 education, recognizes a need to train students in habits that will make them good friends, neighbors, and citizens. It will be more encouraging still if we see more schools follow their lead. Possession of the habits of a good friend, neighbor, and citizen are not guaranteed, and K-12 schools have a role to play in helping students develop them. ♦

Nikki Haley Is Fierce

The outgoing U.N. ambassador sounds a lot like someone running for something

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Nikki Haley has accomplished something no other Republican has managed in the Trump era: She's departing a high-profile job in better shape politically than when she came in. The 46-year-old U.N. ambassador leaves her post on December 31 with a reputation enhanced and a star on the rise. She has the second-highest approval rating among Trump cabinet members, behind only James Mattis. Trump Republicans respect her. Anti-Trump Republicans see a savior in her. The mainstream media treat her as an object of fascination rather than an enemy.

In her time in the cabinet, she's had no scandals—unlike many other departed Trump officials—nor any public spats with her boss. She's no lame-duck member of Congress trudging back home after humiliating losses to Trump's Grand New Party. Nor is she any sort of Trump sycophant, having publicly disagreed with him at times. She asserted in a September op-ed in the *Washington Post* that when their opinions differ, "I pick up the phone and call him or meet with him in person." Haley has carved out an independent profile while remaining loyal to the president.

The political world is seemingly her oyster, which is why it's hard to believe her answer about what's next. "I don't know," she tells me. "I have some ideas." A book, maybe, she says, or a job at a think tank. She's talking with the casualness of a college kid considering how to spend the summer break. But she quickly resumes the political position. "I think that I will always have a voice when it comes

to defending America and when it comes to fighting for our values or fighting for human rights," she says. "It's such a part of me, so I will look for an opportunity to do that."

A young, charismatic former governor, the daughter of immigrants from India, with foreign-policy experience and national name recognition: Many don't see a mere "voice" in Nikki Haley, they see a future president. Friends tell her she ought to run one day. "I hope she does," says Trey Gowdy, a retiring congressman from Haley's state of South Carolina. "She's very smart, very tough, very politically skilled." People in the administration who worked with her say similar things.

Talk of a White House run began early for Haley—all the way back in April 2017, after just a few months in Turtle Bay, when a CNN reporter asked if she had presidential designs. "I can't imagine running for the White House," she said at the time, but the questions never stopped and picked up considerably this October, when Haley announced she would be resigning from her post. The speculators were not thrown off by the fact that Haley's announce-

ment came while she was sitting next to President Trump, nor by the fact that she preempted any further questions by outlining her plans for 2020. "I can promise you what I'll be doing is campaigning for this one," she gestured toward Trump. "So I look forward to supporting the president in the next election."

But the staging of the announcement sent a different message. Haley and Trump were sitting in identical chairs in the Oval Office, something a president usually does with visiting heads of state. And Haley held forth with a quiet confidence that suggested she belonged in the room. One Haley confidant insists there's no set plan for her political career. "It's important to realize that she is not a plan-ful



Haley with Trump after announcing her resignation, October 9

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OLIVER DOULIERY / AFP / GETTY

person,” he says. “She’s not one of these political operators who always calculates her next move of her career path.”

Haley has decided to remain in New York after leaving the U.N. so that her 17-year-old son can finish high school there. (Her daughter, 20, is a nursing student at Clemson, Haley’s alma mater, and her husband, Michael,



Above, a July 18 cabinet meeting; below, at the U.N., September 24



remains in South Carolina, where he serves as an officer in the National Guard.) Friends of hers also note that a decade in public service during one’s prime earning years can take a financial toll—South Carolina’s governor earns below the national average and a lot less than plenty of public employees in high-tax states—and that Manhattan is a good place to find your footing. The center of the news media universe, it’s also a convenient perch to remain a presence in the national conversation. A book, a think tank role, some TV hits, and a bit of distance from the president she once served? It sure sounds like the beginnings of a campaign for something.

The Haley-for-president talk is also advanced by the success of her tenure at the U.N. At her resignation announcement, President Trump said “she’s done an incredible job” and is a “fantastic person.” Tim Scott, a Republican senator from South Carolina and a close friend, says Haley has been “one of the more effective members of the Trump administration and perhaps one

of the most consistent members as well.” He points to her admirable willingness to stand up for the United States and for Israel in a body that’s hostile to both: “She’s been clear, she’s been concise, and I think she’s been fierce, at times, which is necessary.”

According to former national security adviser H.R. McMaster, Haley played a “central role” in brokering the U.N. sanctions on North Korea. “She has what we call strategic empathy,” he says. “She’s able to take problems from the perspective of others and then frame these problems from their perspective. What she was particularly adept at doing was convincing others why it was in their interest to join us.”

Haley calls her service at the U.N. the “honor of a lifetime.” “I think that the opportunity the president gave me to fight for our values, fight for our country, not let us get disrespected, fight dictators who weren’t taking care of their own people,” she says, “it was an amazing way to serve the country.” She is disdainful of where the United States was at the end of Obama’s tenure. “The previous administration wanted to focus on domestic policy and didn’t want to rock the boat when it came to foreign policy,” she says. “For example, right before I came in, there was a Cuban-sponsored anti-American resolution.” That would be the evergreen condemnation of the U.S. embargo of Cuba, which the General Assembly has considered every year for more than two decades. In the fall of 2016, Barack Obama was at the end of his two-year thawing of relations with Cuba, and when the vote came up, “The United States abstained,” Haley recounts, her disgust growing as she repeats the word. “*Abstained*. I mean, it blamed America for all of Cuba’s problems, and we just ... abstained.”

Things would be different on her watch. Demonstrating a gentle but combative style, Haley took strong positions in the Security Council and her comments there quickly became fodder for cable news and Twitter.

In early April, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad used chemical weapons on his own people in Douma, an act Haley condemned as “a violation of all standards of morality”; she suggested the administration would consider a military response. The Russian ambassador, Vassily Nebenzia, began a meeting of the Security Council by criticizing the United States for making threats. Haley’s response went viral. She blasted the Russians for siding with the Syrian dictator: “I started to listen to my Russian friend and respond, but instead, I’m in awe, Vassily, how you say what you say with a straight face.” She went on to note how “strange” it was that Russia was focused on the “unilateral threats” supposedly posed by the United States. “What is strange is that Russia is ignoring the real threat to international peace and security that has brought us all

TOP: JABIN BOTSFORD / WASHINGTON POST / GETTY; BOTTOM: NICHOLAS KAMM / AFP / GETTY

here, and it is ignoring its own unilateral responsibility for all of it,” she said.

Republicans and Trump supporters weren’t the only ones to cheer some tough talk at the United Nations. Mainstream news outlets gave Haley’s speeches plenty of coverage, particularly if they could be interpreted to cut against the president’s stances.

Haley insists that her goals at the U.N. and the president’s were the same. But what’s notable from our interview is how rarely she mentions Trump. As she tells it, she is the active agent—bringing ideas and proposals to the president. “A little over a year ago, I went to the president, and I gave him a binder, and I said ‘I want you to look at this,’” she tells me. “And it listed every country, the number of times they voted with us or against us, and how much money in aid we give to them. And he was shocked, furious, but determined to do something about it.” In March, a 53-page confidential memo from Haley’s office outlining this proposal somehow found its way to the press. But Haley’s contribution was only a part of a larger interagency review of foreign aid that Trump had initiated soon after taking office.

And at times, Haley has also gotten ahead of the mercurial president. In April, while appearing on CBS’s *Face the Nation*, she said new sanctions against Russia were coming in response to its continuing support for Assad’s regime in Syria. “Secretary Mnuchin will be announcing those on Monday, if he hasn’t already, and they will go directly to any sort of companies that were dealing with equipment related to Assad and any chemical weapons use,” Haley said. “I think everyone knows that we sent a strong message and our hope is that they listen to it.”

But Trump scuttled those plans just a few hours later in a meeting with his national security team. There were no new sanctions that Monday, and the White House’s explanation for the confusion was that Haley had misspoken. A day later, White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow went further, saying Haley got “ahead of the curve” and that there was “some momentary confusion.” The U.N. ambassador shot back in a statement responding to Kudlow: “With all due respect, I don’t get confused.” He ended up apologizing. What might have been an embarrassing moment turned into an opportunity for Haley to assert her independence in the Trump orbit—and with a feminist undertone that has eluded the other high-profile Republican women in the administration.

Haley has shown a knack for winning these kinds of battles in the media. In September, the *New York Times* ran a story about the U.N. ambassador’s State Department-funded apartment, and it looked at first like Haley might be another Trump official living large on the taxpayer’s dime. “State Department Spent \$52,701 on Curtains for Nikki

Haley’s Residence” read the headline, implying Haley had approved the expenditure. She hadn’t; a detail deep in the story revealed that “plans to buy the mechanized curtains were made in 2016, during the Obama administration” and that Haley had “no say in the purchase.” The media piled on the *Times*, which eventually reworked the story and headline, complete with an editor’s *mea culpa* note. Another win for the ambassador.

Haley attracts a lot of admiration among Republican-leaning women. Dina Powell, who served as deputy national security adviser for strategy in 2017, begins a conversation about Haley by announcing, “I absolutely love her.” When I bring up her popularity with women at a time when the GOP’s standing with that group of voters couldn’t be much worse, Haley places a hand on her chest, nods, and closes her eyes in a gesture of gratitude. “Young girls and women come up and say something, and it’s humbling but I get it,” she tells me. “The reason I get it is because women balance so much and they try so hard to be great at everything, and it’s not so much as they look up to me, but I think they see one of them doing it, too.” Haley says that women seek out “camaraderie” with other women and can see her as a kindred spirit: “We’re doing the best we can and we know that there is someone out there looking at us as we do it, and we don’t want to disappoint.”

If Haley is a feminist, she’s unquestionably a conservative one. “I don’t think women have more challenges. They don’t. I’ve never thought that. I think our challenges can be different, but I don’t think we have more challenges,” she says. “The frustrations, I think, are literally what every other woman goes through. Balancing your marriage and your kids and your finances and your work and wanting to really make people proud. Making sure your parents are okay. Loving the job you do and wanting to be great at it.”

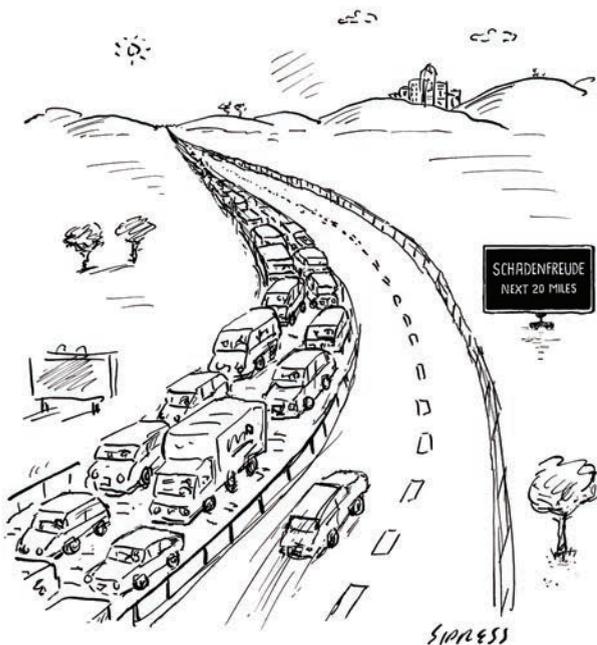
We are meeting the day before the funeral for George H.W. Bush, and I ask Haley about the former president, who himself had a stint as U.N. ambassador. As she talks about Bush, her eyes brighten and a smile emerges. “Did you ever read the Jon Meacham book?” she asks, referring to a 2015 biography of the 41st president. “It was amazing. He just got into positions that he really didn’t want or wasn’t supposed to get. But then it’s just fascinating to see how doors opened and how it played out.” It played out pretty well for Bush who, a decade after accepting the U.N. job, found himself in the vice presidency and on the way to taking up the mantle of commander in chief himself. “You want to talk about a lifetime of service,” Haley says. “It’s really a remarkable career.” I ask her if she thinks she could have a legacy like his. She demurs. “I’m most proud of being able to serve my country,” she says. “It’s really been just the coolest opportunity.” ♦

Schadenfreude for Beginners

The guilty pleasure whose time has come

BY STEPHEN MILLER

In the past two decades *schadenfreude*, a German word that means (according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*) “malicious enjoyment of the misfortunes of others,” has gained popularity in the English-speaking world. Google’s graph for word usage shows a steep upward curve for *schadenfreude* during the first decade of the 21st century.



Many observers think *schadenfreude* is closely connected to envy. In a cartoon by Roz Chast there is this sentence: “*Schadenfreude*: when simple envy isn’t enough.” Some people may enjoy the misfortunes of people they envy, but one is more likely to have *schadenfreude* upon learning

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about the misfortune of a person one dislikes. (Of course we may dislike the person we envy.) We take pleasure in seeing people we dislike get their comeuppance.

A case in point: A few months after I was fired by a boss whom I disliked, I learned that he had been fired. *Schadenfreude!* I felt the same way when I read a negative review of a book by a French professor I disliked. He had humiliated me in class by asking me to pronounce the word *riche* five times. I could not correctly pronounce the French “r.”

The popularity of *schadenfreude* in English is a relatively recent phenomenon. In *When Bad Things Happen to Other People*, published in 2000, John Portmann writes: *Schadenfreude* “has not caught on in America.” Since then, it has. In the award-winning musical *Avenue Q*, first performed in March 2003, there is a song about enjoying *schadenfreude*. In April 2018 a writer in the *Washington Post* said many Americans relished “a golden moment of *schadenfreude*” when they learned about a videotape that allegedly revealed what President Trump did in a Moscow hotel room in 2013.

Schadenfreude has caught on in Britain as well. In *Schadenfreude: The Joy of Another’s Misfortune* (2018) Tiffany Watt Smith, a British writer, says we are living in the Age of *Schadenfreude*. She notes that before 2000, “barely any academic articles were published with the word *Schadenfreude* in the title. Now, even the most cursory search throws up hundreds, from neuroscience to philosophy to management studies.”

The idea that one should be ashamed by the emotion has receded as the popularity of the term has grown. In a column last month, George F. Will wrote: “In the hierarchy of pleasures, *schadenfreude* ranks second only to dry martinis at dusk.” And Portmann maintains that “there is such a thing as Good *Schadenfreude*.”

The 19-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer would be disturbed by the notion of good *schadenfreude*. He called it “the worst trait in human nature . . . closely akin to cruelty.” Schopenhauer distinguished between envy and *schadenfreude*. “To feel envy is human; but to indulge in such

CONDÉ NAST / CARTOON BANK

malicious joy is fiendish and diabolical. There is no more infallible sign of a thoroughly bad heart and profound moral worthlessness than an inclination to a sheer and undisguised malignant joy of this kind. The man in whom this trait is observed should be forever shunned.”

Most contemporary observers would disagree. In *The Joy of Pain: Schadenfreude and the Dark Side of Human Nature* (2013) Richard H. Smith argues that *schadenfreude* should not be demonized. The emotion, he says, appears “more in gray hues rather than in darkest black.” Nevertheless, Smith finds *schadenfreude* troubling; it has “a perverse feel to it . . . because it is a feeling promoted by another’s suffering.” Bill Vallicella, an ex-professor who blogs as “the maverick philosopher,” agrees: “There is something fiendish in feeling positive glee at another’s misery.” Watt Smith, for her part, calls *schadenfreude* an “utterly shabby” emotion, yet she clearly enjoys it at times.

But was Schopenhauer right? Should we all be ashamed of ourselves? Before answering that question, we need to clarify what *schadenfreude* is. This is not easy to do.

According to many observers, the 17th-century French aphorist La Rochefoucauld is describing *schadenfreude* when he says: “We have enough strength to bear the misfortunes of other people.” But La Rochefoucauld is not saying that we take pleasure in the misfortunes of others. He is saying we can endure the misfortunes of others because they are not our misfortunes.

There is a passage from Lucretius’s *On the Nature of Things* that many observers regard as an early example of *schadenfreude*: “How sweet is to watch from dry land” a ship in danger of sinking because of stormy weather. “The sweetness,” Lucretius explains, “lies in watching evils you are free from.” The “sweetness” is relief, though, not *schadenfreude*. The person on the shore isn’t enjoying the doom of those on the ship; he is feeling fortunate that he is not on the ship.

Schadenfreude is always about someone you know—or know about. It would be sadistic to enjoy the misfortunes of anonymous people. But what if the person on the shore knew that the ship was filled with marauders who had raped and pillaged his village? Then he is likely to feel *schadenfreude*. The Bible says: “Do not rejoice when your enemies fall; and do not let your heart be glad when they stumble” (Proverbs 24:17). But most human beings rejoice when their enemy falls.

One more example of a misuse of the concept. A *New Yorker* cartoon shows a massive traffic jam on one side of a highway, but on the other side the traffic is moving smoothly. On the traffic-free side there is a large sign that says, “*Schadenfreude* Next 20 Miles.” The cartoon implies that those driving on the traffic-free side take pleasure in the misfortune of the drivers stuck in traffic, but surely the main emotion is thankfulness that they are not in a similar

jam. They might feel vaguely sorry for those stuck in traffic but they do not feel *schadenfreude*.

But what if I were driving on the traffic-free side and knew there was someone stuck on the other side whom I intensely disliked? The pleasant thought of him stewing there, cursing his bad luck—that is *schadenfreude*.

Most often, probably, the feeling arises about people in the news. Many people felt *schadenfreude* when they learned that Martha Stewart was accused of insider trading. Michael Kinsley called her trial and eventual incarceration “a landmark in the history of *schadenfreude*.” Joseph Epstein says he felt “a fluttering of not very intense but still quite real *Schadenfreude* of my own at her fall.” Richard H. Smith says that many people felt this way about Martha Stewart’s arrest because they envied her, but I doubt that Michael Kinsley or Joseph Epstein envied Martha Stewart.

The trigger, instead, is learning that someone who has made much of his or her superiority—moral, intellectual, financial—is not so superior. Stewart had promoted herself as a flawless hostess, so many people gloated: “Martha Stewart screwed up!” *Schadenfreude* is usually fleeting. The same people who felt *schadenfreude* about Stewart’s prison sentence may also have admired her for taking the sentence in stride and resuming her career afterwards.

Do we feel *schadenfreude* when any eminent person suffers a misfortune? In *Mao’s Last Revolution*, Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals speculate that when Mao urged the masses to denounce high Communist party officials during the Cultural Revolution, “he may have counted on the *Schadenfreude* of millions of his countrymen at the fall of the high and the mighty.”

I doubt that most Americans reflexively experience *schadenfreude* at the fall of a high and mighty politician. They would first have to dislike this person. I would not feel *schadenfreude* if I learned that Ronald Reagan had taken bribes; I would be deeply disappointed because I admired him. But if I learned that Jimmy Carter, who struck me as sanctimonious, had a mistress I would feel *schadenfreude*. Millions, of course, would experience *schadenfreude* if they learned that Donald Trump had lost a lot of money in hotel and golf course deals.

Ron Chernow notes that Alexander Hamilton felt *schadenfreude* when he learned that Horatio Gates, a general he despised, had fled from the scene of battle. “Was there ever an instance of a general running away, as Gates has done, from his whole army?” Hamilton wrote. If Hamilton had admired Gates, he would have been upset.

A literary example is the pleasure we feel at the end of Molière’s *Tartuffe*, when the eponymous scoundrel is sent off to jail. *Tartuffe* uses religious piety to gull the head of a

family into signing over his house to him and disinheriting the son, so it is reasonable to take pleasure in Tartuffe's arrest. In comedies there is always pleasure when the bad guy gets what he deserves, but in tragedies the main emotion we feel when an evil person dies is catharsis—a kind of deep relief that order is being restored. In real life when evil people are brought to justice, we feel catharsis and relief—and maybe the pleasure of revenge.

This is nonsense. Anyone who has read *The Gift*, *Pnin*, and—especially—*Speak, Memory* knows that Nabokov often writes affectionately and movingly about people. But he writes sarcastically about people whom he regards as fools. He did not take kindly to being lectured to by Wilson about Russian history and the Russian language.

What are the limits of *schadenfreude*? Richard H. Smith's book on the subject is called *The Joy of Pain*, but *schadenfreude* is rarely about enjoying someone's pain; it is usually about enjoying the fall in a person's reputation.

Is it right to feel *schadenfreude* if we learn that someone we dislike is suffering from a life-threatening disease? Joseph Epstein nicely states the problem: "I recall learning of cancer having been found in a literary critic who always claimed something close to moral perfection for himself. I recalling telling this to my wife, adding that, moral prig though I thought him, I didn't wish him to die."

In general we don't feel *schadenfreude* if the misfortune is catastrophic. If I learned that the boss who fired me died of cancer, I wouldn't feel *schadenfreude*. I would feel nothing at all. But I might feel something akin to *schadenfreude* if I learned that a dicta-

tor who had imprisoned and murdered millions was suffering from a painful and fatal disease. John Portmann writes that "*Schadenfreude* can accommodate great suffering because the notion of desert that lies at the heart of much *Schadenfreude* can expand infinitely."

We usually experience *schadenfreude* from the misfortunes of jerks, not despots. Another of Roz Chast's *New Yorker* cartoons, entitled *Adult Amusement Park*, depicts what I would call *schadenfreude*. One of the park's attractions: "Be filled with glee as supermarket-line-cutter-inner gets parking ticket!" I feel *schadenfreude* when someone who has been driving like a maniac gets pulled over by a cop. I feel it when someone in a restaurant who has been giving a waiter a hard time accidentally gets something spilled on him. I get many scam phone calls—four or five a day—so I would feel a great rush of *schadenfreude* if I learned that someone who made a living doing this was convicted of fraud.

What about sports and *schadenfreude*? A website called *Words in a Sentence* offers this example: "When the winning team saw their rivals saddened by defeat, they felt a sense of *schadenfreude*." I doubt this is the feeling of many winning teams. To feel that way is

Adult Amusement Park



Intellectual life is a great breeding ground for *schadenfreude*. I am pleased when I learn that a writer I dislike has gotten a bad review or that his novel is not selling well. Is this because I envy the writer? Not necessarily. I don't envy the literary critic Edmund Wilson, but I dislike him, mainly because of his political views; he admired Lenin and thought the Cold War was the fault of the United States. I felt *schadenfreude* when my Hungarian wife pointed out that every Hungarian word or phrase that Wilson used in an article he wrote about learning Hungarian was grammatically incorrect. I felt *schadenfreude* when I read Patricia Blake's comment about Wilson's proficiency in Russian: "It would seem that this most erudite man's great weakness was that he loved to display linguistic expertise he scarcely possessed."

Wilson accused Vladimir Nabokov, a friend who became an ex-friend, of *schadenfreude*. In *Upstate: Records and Recollections of Northern New York*, Wilson writes: "The element in his work that I find repellent is his addiction to *Schadenfreude*. Everybody is always being humiliated." In *A Window on Russia*, published posthumously, Wilson makes the same point more strongly, saying that "the addiction to *Schadenfreude* . . . pervades all his work."

unsportsmanlike. But what if the losing team had engaged in trash talk—bragged that they were the superior team and would win easily? Then *schadenfreude* on the part of the winning team would be appropriate.

Is taking pleasure in watching people on reality TV shows make fools of themselves a type of *schadenfreude*? Richard H. Smith devotes an entire chapter to “humilitainment.” One could say that these people have chosen to act like fools, so taking pleasure in their humiliation is legitimate. But we do not know these people and have nothing against them. “Humilitainment” is a creepy and distasteful kind of *schadenfreude*.

There is an even uglier kind of *schadenfreude*—the malicious pleasure someone gets from the misfortune of a friend. La Rochefoucauld writes: “In the adversity of our best friends, we always find something that does not displease us.” He may only mean that we are relieved that it is not our misfortune. In any case, this maxim did not appear in the second edition of the *Maxims*, so maybe La Rochefoucauld was no longer happy with it.

Nevertheless, the maxim stirs up a question: Do I experience *schadenfreude* if a book written by a friend gets a bad review? Gore Vidal said: “Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies.” If my friend is a more successful writer than I am, wouldn’t I enjoy learning that one of his books is a failure? Edmund Wilson, one critic says, wrote a very negative review of Nabokov’s translation of *Eugene Onegin* because he was envious of Nabokov’s success. Wilson’s novel, *Memoirs of Hecate County*, was not well-reviewed and did not sell well; Nabokov’s *Lolita*, which came out a few years later, got good reviews and made Nabokov rich and world-famous.

Writers are very competitive souls. Samuel Johnson wrote, “The reciprocal civility of authors is one of the most risible scenes in the farce of life.” I have one friend who is a very successful writer; I envy her but in a benign way. I don’t think I would experience *schadenfreude* if her next book were a failure. But maybe I’m so ashamed of the idea of enjoying a friend’s failure that I won’t admit it to myself. La Rochefoucauld says: “It is as easy to deceive ourselves without noticing it as it is hard to deceive other people without their noticing it.”

Some people are more prone to being envious than others, and therefore they are more likely to feel *schadenfreude* if the person they envy suffers a misfortune. In *Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst*, Robert M. Sapolsky cites a recent study that shows a neurological correlation between the pain of envy and the pleasure of *schadenfreude*. “More activation of pain pathways at the news of the person’s good fortune predicted more dopaminergic activation after

learning of their misfortune. Thus there’s dopaminergic activation during *schadenfreude*—gloating over an envied person’s fall from grace.”

A Princeton study reports similar results, but the researchers noted that many of the people whose brains’ pleasure centers lit up, so to speak, at an envied person’s misfortune did not admit that they felt pleasure. This unwillingness to admit to the feeling is understandable. Our pride—our desire to think well of ourselves—makes us ashamed to feel *schadenfreude* when a friend we envy suffers a misfortune. La Rochefoucauld offers an explanation: “Often the pride that rouses so much envy also helps us to mitigate it.”

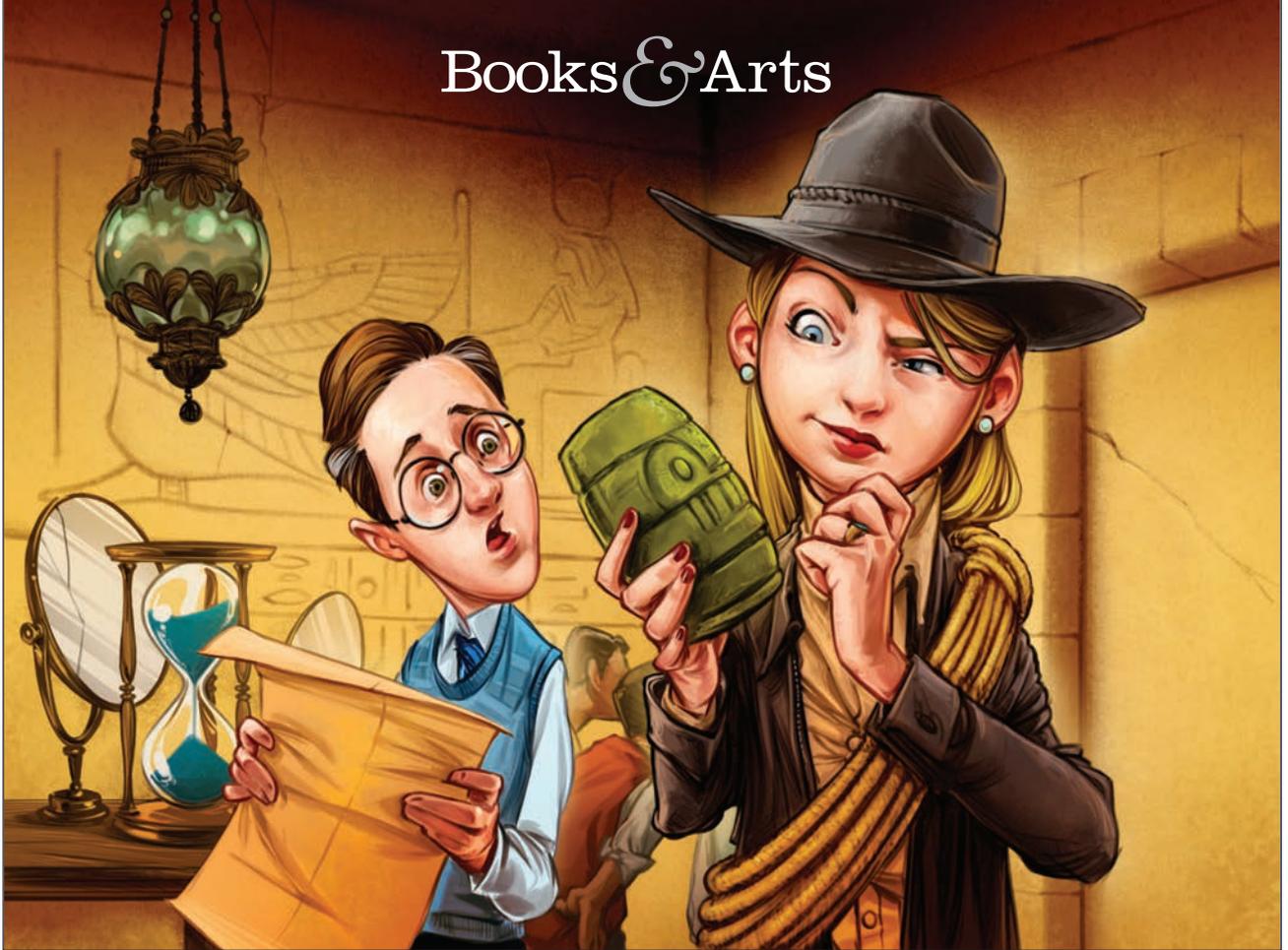
A friend of Tiffany Watt Smith’s confides, after too much to drink, that he is very envious. “The thing that I get, and I mean *a lot*, is when my friends do better than me. I hate it.” Are most people as consumed with envy as this man seems to be? I doubt it. If someone is always comparing himself to others, he or she is likely to be miserable.

Most people experience a twinge of *schadenfreude* occasionally. It’s shameful to feel *schadenfreude* when hearing about the misfortune of a friend, but it’s not shameful to feel *schadenfreude* when learning about the misfortune of an arrogant self-promoter or a self-righteous blowhard. Richard H. Smith says “the deservingness of a misfortune can go a long way in disconnecting *schadenfreude* from shame.” Researchers in the Netherlands found that *schadenfreude* is common when a misfortune is perceived as deserved.

I am sure that even Schopenhauer would have had a rush of *schadenfreude* upon reading a negative review of a book by Hegel, whom he called a charlatan. Schopenhauer’s biographer says that he “delighted in obtaining any information that he could use to demean the philosopher of the absolute”—i.e., Hegel.

Schadenfreude is here to stay. There are words or expressions for it in many languages besides German, including Danish, Hebrew, Dutch, Chinese, Hungarian, and Russian. And a life without *schadenfreude* is a life with little or no humor. Anyone who agrees with Schopenhauer’s view of *schadenfreude*, John Portmann says, “would make a poor comedian.” Schopenhauer indeed seems to have been humorless; he said that nature had endowed his heart “with suspicion, irritability, vehemence, and pride.” His publisher called him “a chained dog.” His mother broke off relations with him because he was so arrogant and ill-tempered.

“Our temperament decides the value of everything brought to us by fortune,” La Rochefoucauld says. A daily dose—a small one—of *schadenfreude* may improve our temperament, making us better able to cope with our own misfortunes. ♦



Great Escapes

Escape-room operators are locking in fun and profit. BY HANNAH LONG

You learn things about yourself when you're trapped in an Egyptian tomb with a group of relatives and strangers. In my case, I found out I'm a control freak.

I watched in dismay as our group of intrepid adventurers splintered with no sense of organization at all. Some knelt around a pedestal attempting to decipher ancient writing. Others skidded their sneakers through piles of sand on the floor, looking for clues. A few tinkered with small mirrors, trying to bounce light from one to the next, hoping to trigger a hidden door that would allow for our escape. Poor com-

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munication hampered our progress.

Finally, sporting hangdog expressions, we shuffled over to the corner of the tomb and picked up a dusty telephone to ask for help. A voice crackled over the line giving us just the right hint to nudge us along in our quest.

For we were, of course, not in an actual Egyptian tomb. Nor were we on a movie set or playing a video game. We were in an escape room—a kind of hip-yet-geeky entertainment that has swept the country in recent years. According to one tally, there were 22 escape-room facilities in the United States at the end of 2014. By July 2018, there were some 2,300.

Escape rooms are something like a theme-park version of a locked-room mystery story—Agatha Christie meets

Walt Disney. Participants enter a room together, usually in groups of two to eight people, and must solve a series of puzzles to escape within a set time. The escape room my family and I visited looked from the outside like any other Georgetown business—an inconspicuous black storefront huddled among the overpriced boutiques. But down a dark staircase are five basement rooms tricked out with electronic special effects and atmospheric decorations—and, in the room we entered, a sandy floor, two sarcophagi, carved hieroglyphics that glow when touched, and eerie noises.

The Georgetown escape rooms are part of a larger Washington-based company, started in 2014 by Ginger Flesher-Sonnier, a retired high school

DAVE MALAN

math teacher then dabbling in real estate. Flesher-Sonnier first encountered escape rooms in Prague, when she and her husband were honeymooning. She had fun, and even though she had never run a business, she decided to try to re-create the attraction at home; the concept appealed to her lifelong love of puzzles and interior design.

“It was almost nice going in semi-blind,” she said, “because if I had known all that I didn’t know, I probably would have backed out. But it was kind of a learn-on-the-fly situation. ... Within months of opening, I even asked my husband—I’m like, you have to quit your job and come and help me. Because we’re making more with this than what he was doing.”

Flesher-Sonnier benefited from starting early. She entered the business as it was just taking off in the United States (and two years later she received a boost by selling a 40-percent share of her business to the hosts of the TV show *West Texas Investors Club* for \$800,000). Her company, Escape Room Live, had 13,297 visitors across three locations during July 2017; that comes to more than \$350,000 in gross revenue for just one month.

From mazes to haunted houses to scavenger hunts, there is a long history of using puzzles and obstacles for fun. The DNA of the escape-room idea can be found in such entertainments as the “dinner mystery” fad of a few decades ago. Some British and Japanese TV shows of the 1980s and ’90s featured escape-room-like challenges. The Tokyo Broadcasting System’s *Takeshi’s Castle* (1986-90), for instance, had contestants overcome a series of loony barriers on a steep, vast, and varied cross-country obstacle course to reach the stronghold of the evil Count Takeshi. Winners were exceedingly rare, and the moments of triumph passed swiftly and without fanfare.

Adventure quests came to computers around the same time. The graphic-adventure games churned out in the ’80s—like Sierra’s *King’s Quest* and *Space Quest*—contributed to the early popularity of the PC. The most direct digital ancestor of today’s escape rooms

are the point-and-click escape games programmed in Flash in the early 2000s. One such game—*Crimson Room*—inspired Takao Kato to create what is generally credited as the first physical escape room, in Kyoto, Japan.

Kato started Real Escape Game (*Riaru Dasshutsu Ge-mu*) in 2007 out of frustration with the lack of adventure in real life. “The fact is that stories have the power to make the real world a better place,” he said in a 2009 interview with the *Japan Times*. “By creating a game, an ordinary desk can suddenly become the hiding place of secret treasure.”

In 2012, the company that owned Real Escape Game started the first U.S. escape room in San Francisco. Rags-to-riches stories were common among early escape-room entrepreneurs. “All of the people who had opened the initial escape rooms ... have the same story, which is that they opened up with \$10,000, a dream, and some moxie,” said David Spira, who runs the blog *Room Escape Artist* with his wife, Lisa. “What you started to see was people with all sorts of different backgrounds getting into escape rooms ... people who really understood how to produce proper games—how to design games that flowed and that made sense.” As the marketplace matured and the design and experience of escape rooms improved, soon there were “people who were either able to keep up with that or who weren’t.”

David met Lisa just as escape rooms were taking off. These days, their blog is the go-to site for reviews, stats about the industry, and practical tips (a recent article offers advice on designing well-hidden trap doors).

The Spiras have tried to keep up with the industry’s rapid growth, which seems to have peaked sometime after a 2015 *MarketWatch* article pitched escape rooms as get-rich-quick schemes. That led, according to David Spira, to a “land rush of people who thought this was going to make them rich with no effort.” The result was a marketplace crowded with inexperienced entrepreneurs opening subpar escape rooms. A correction is underway: By Spira’s count, about 220 escape rooms have been shuttered this

year, up from 45 closings in 2017. The rate of new escape rooms opening for business has fallen as entrepreneurs wise up to the risks. And the market is becoming more intimidating for small-business owners as companies with vast resources come to dominate.

The high end of the escape-room biz is very high indeed. Seattle escape-room operator Nate Martin told the *Wall Street Journal* that he started in 2013 with a \$7,000 investment but now his company, Puzzle Break, shells out over \$100,000 for each new room and generally earns back that investment quickly. That scale of spending, Spira said, is “not uncommon in the upper tier of the industry.”

None of which is to say that the bar is prohibitively high for newcomers. But Spira discourages casual entrepreneurs from alighting on this particular industry as an easy way to score a buck. “There’s this long list of stuff that you need to do to make a successful escape room,” he said, “from the standard business stuff of legal and marketing and accounting” to “the game-design and game-development aspect and puzzle technology and game play.” Any escape-room business that doesn’t focus on the latter will suffer. While bigger companies can afford to hire out-of-house talent, small companies don’t usually have that luxury.

But small businesses can still thrive with the right teams. “There are companies where all of the partners have different backgrounds—someone has a background in set design, someone has a background in software engineering, and one person maybe doesn’t have a background in game design but they really love playing tabletop games and video games and they’ve gotten a good handle on [designing escape rooms] by doing years of what they didn’t realize was research,” Spira said. “If you get a group like that together, you can make an incredibly high-end game.”

One type of prior experience that can benefit aspiring escape-room owners is work with haunted houses. Alumni of those Halloween-season attractions “have the business experience, and they have the design

experience,” said Ginger Flesher-Sonnier. They’re “opening escape rooms” that “look gorgeous.”

Her own process of designing escape rooms starts with picking a theme. Then she shops for decorations, both online and in thrift shops and antique stores. “If you go with antique you have to go with something that’s extremely sturdy,” she noted. “Wear and tear on the rooms is unbelievable.”

Flesher-Sonnier’s rooms have grown more elaborate over the years. Her first attempts were just old offices that had been redecorated. Her more recent creations, like the Georgetown escape rooms, have temporary walls—“just two-by-fours with vacuform and decorating over them.” It is easier to incorporate wiring and electronics when you create rooms with freestanding walls. In the “Curse of the Mummy” room I visited, players decode hidden messages and manipulate mirrors to shine a laser onto a target. Other rooms use iPads and *Pokémon Go*-style augmented reality. Flesher-Sonnier said she and her colleagues want to make sure the technology doesn’t take people out of the story.

The greatest creative challenge lies in designing mysteries that seem fair to players. “You don’t know in which order they’re going to discover things, what path they’re going to choose,” Flesher-Sonnier said. Her company has partnered with a puzzle designer who once worked on MIT’s famous annual puzzle hunt. Flaws that slip past the creators are often ironed out during beta testing—when volunteers try out the rooms. Even so, customers find any number of ways to get into scrapes. An employee at Escape Room Live told me a player once attempted to escape by climbing out a window into a back lot. Some customers, less industrious but equally discouraged, just plopped down on the furniture to wait out the clock, ignoring encouraging hints from an employee over the loudspeaker.

“I remember watching a room once where some guy just lay down on the

carpet and was lying in the middle of the room and was like, ‘I quit, I’m not doing this.’ And everybody was stepping over him,” said Flesher-Sonnier, laughing.

Given the variety of puzzles offered by Escape Room Live, it is easy to see how things could go wrong. But a small control booth behind the game space contains a bank of screens that let employees monitor the players and manage the special effects. Between groups of players, employees reset the rooms—adding more sand to the “Curse of the Mummy” floor, sweeping



Players exploring an escape room

the wood chips on the floor of a cabin in the “Friday the 13th” room.

As escape rooms became popular—first in Asia, then Europe, then America—a fan base grew online. The largest dedicated Facebook group has 15,000 members, one of whom recently wrote, “We have done 61 escape rooms though out 11 diff states and also 2 others in Sweden and Amsterdam!” That’s a low number compared to some die-hards. David and Lisa Spira have done over 600. Even his marriage proposal came via scavenger hunt.

“We get a lot of proposals,” said Flesher-Sonnier. “They will contact us beforehand and we’ll decide on where to hide the ring in the room and we orchestrate it so that they can propose to the person during the actual game or at the end of the game.”

There are escape-room podcasts (of course). There are even escape-room conferences. TransWorld’s Room

Escape Show & Conference—which claims to be the world’s largest conference for the industry—showcases the latest in escape-room technology, design, and puzzles. The conference has escape rooms for attendees to try and training sessions to teach escape techniques. At this year’s conference, held in Nashville in July, nearly 60 companies registered to exhibit.

Some aficionados like to visit escape rooms with a regular team. Thomas Nicol of central Illinois and his wife, Becky, discovered escape rooms in 2015. “It has actually been a while

since we’ve gotten grouped in with strangers to play a room; we have our group of friends we’ll play with,” he said, adding that the games often draw on players’ differing strengths. “Personally, I’m most useful with puzzles based in logical deduction, pattern matching, or spatial reasoning, but almost worthless at lateral thinking and memory challenges.” It helps to have teammates with complementary skills. “A room we played recently had a

puzzle whose solution was something that’s typically frowned upon in escape rooms, and so the experienced players totally missed it—but the first-time player figured it out pretty quickly.”

The potential of escape rooms for corporate team-building exercises has not been lost on management types. My father’s small engineering company recently used an escape room for just that purpose. One team member, more experienced with this particular pastime, helped lead by finding ways to draw on the various skills of the team members.

What ultimately accounts for the rapid rise of escape rooms? For Takao Kato, the original inspiration was escapism—to bring to real life an Indiana-Jones-like fantasy. So perhaps part of escape rooms’ popularity arises from a desire to get away from this world and to inhabit, however briefly, a more dramatic one.

Flesher-Sonnier has a different explanation: not a wish to escape from the world but a wish to live in it more fully. She points to the contemporary desire for experiential entertainment. (In this regard, it is worth mentioning that she now operates in the nation's capital an axe-throwing bar, another phenomenon she's catching on the rise.) "People are looking for more and unique things to do," she said. And "with social media, everybody wants to share what they're *doing*, not just what they *have*. They want to show that they're out living and creating experiences for them and their family and their coworkers."

David Spira agrees in part. Nowadays "it is bizarrely revolutionary to do something in real life. I think that that's the short answer. But this is another means of story conveyance," he said. Escape rooms "are a new way of telling stories." And unlike novels or movies, this new way of telling stories is social and gives its participants agency, so that "when you sit down and talk with your friends afterward, you're not just talking about what someone else did, you're talking about what *you* did. And that's powerful."

It seems reasonable to think that people whose lives are increasingly lived virtually—like those millennials whose relationships are more and more conducted digitally—might long for offline adventure. Escape rooms are hands-on, so players can feel they've had some sort of genuine experience. Of course, escape rooms are also artificial, safe, controlled settings. They offer all of the kudos and glamour of #authenticity with none of the risk. They come prepackaged with built-in photo-op moments—perfect for Instagram.

In playing escape rooms, there is always one risk: the risk of doing badly and embarrassing yourself in front of friends, family, colleagues, or strangers. In my visit to the Egyptian tomb, I barely put together one clue. I left the game frustrated. I couldn't control all the moving pieces. I couldn't control the outcome. I had expected to go in and have a good time, because I had expected to win. Alas, I fear I'll have to seek my escapes elsewhere. ♦

BCA

Prophecies and Prices

Value in the art world.

BY IAN MARCUS CORBIN

The artist has more glitter, and would be open to installing the work in multiple locations."

I responded with a thoughtful scowl and nod, as if considering which of my homes I might like to start with. I was standing in a prestigious Chelsea art gallery, dressed, apparently, like a man who might have \$30,000 to drop on a smallish pile of blue glitter, or even \$60,000 on two. According to the press release, the work was calibrated to "challeng[e] viewers' perceptions" by creating "gradient zones between light and shadow, and opacity and transparency." The artist had dumped the glitter herself, I learned, and spread it with her foot.

I left the exhibition, as many other visitors surely did, feeling too smart to fall for that and yet somewhat out of my depth. That was a few years ago. Since then, I've opened my own contemporary art gallery, and the questions of what makes a thing art and why art costs so much have, if anything, grown in importance to me.

Let's begin with what we all know: An artistic masterpiece with a famous name attached to it can be fearsomely valuable. Last year, a not-unattractive painting of Jesus Christ that was very likely painted in large part by Leonardo da Vinci sold at auction for almost half a billion dollars. If Amsterdam were burning, it would seem reasonable for the Dutch to evacuate some sentient creatures first and the paintings of Rembrandt and Vermeer second—before any other material goods. This all might seem perfectly intuitive to an armchair economist; after all, Leonardo, Rem-

brandt, and Vermeer made only so many paintings and when you combine limited supply with strong demand you get high valuation and all the reverence that goes along with it.

But why, in the first place, is there such powerful demand for beautiful, useless objects like paintings and sculptures? This question may seem obvious and simple to answer, but it leads down into a fascinating warren of spiritual desire and physical intuition. In our increasingly secular age, the art gallery, museum, and auction house are almost religious institutions; the things they house are sacred to us for reasons that are very specific yet rarely spelled out explicitly.

Tellingly, the valuation of an artwork hinges on its authenticity, which matters very little for the visual appearance of the thing—especially now, in the age of digital reproduction. The knowledge that Leonardo or Picasso or Warhol laid his own holy hand on *this* particular object transforms an interesting or beautiful thing into a priceless treasure, whereas an art student's copy—one of a kind, perhaps even more visually striking than the original—would be all but worthless.

The parallel to religious ritual is hard to miss. Walter Benjamin explored it in the 1930s in his famous essay *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*. "The earliest art works," Benjamin wrote, "originated in the service of a ritual—first the magical, then the religious kind," and "the unique value of the 'authentic' work of art has its basis in ritual, the location of its original use value." The idea is that if such-and-such a particular thing played some effective role in the task of the priest, shaman, or witch doctor, it has helped to traverse the divide between the realms of

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flesh and spirit, and it's not really just a thing anymore; it is an instrument of the ultimate, longed-for traversal.

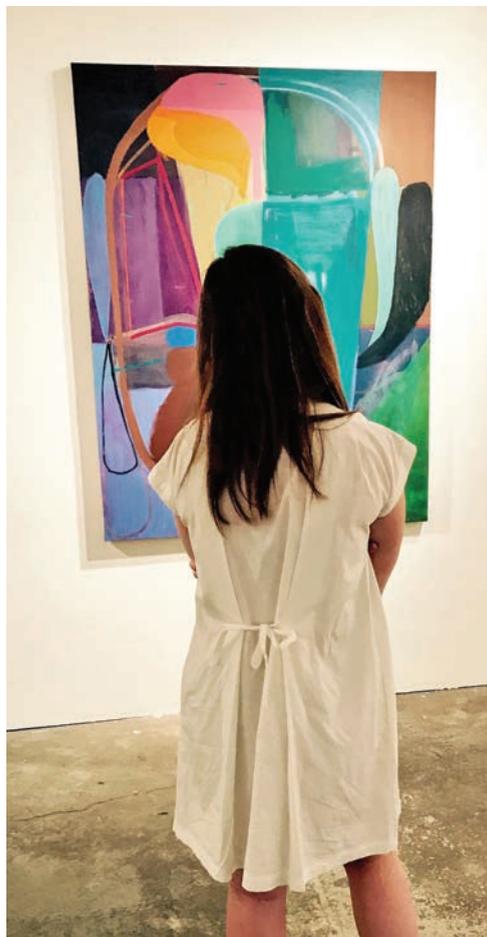
Even in our supposedly disenchanting age, this reverent posture survives in intuitions about the unique aura of an original piece of art. We don't just pay a lot of money for it; we hush ourselves in its presence, let it speak to us, attempt to bring our thoughts and emotions into concord with it, and maybe, if we open ourselves nakedly enough to whatever virtuosic assemblage of wood or metal or paint or paper stands before us, we might hear something akin to what the poet Rilke heard, gazing at the archaic torso of Apollo: "You must change your life." We might glimpse a path to some state of transcendence above the striving, preening, exhausted squalor of our normal reality.

The act of making art, even in our very sophisticated present day, is an act of prophecy, and the artwork is a tool of the prophet. There are two distinct, overlapping forms this prophecy can take. Each is present in both ancient holy books and contemporary art galleries.

The first kind is a seeing of hidden truths. Artists working in this mode look at trees and faces, at color and line and texture, and see something deep and vital that unifies and explains the chaotic flux of physical reality. It may be something redemptive like God or world-spirit or universal empathy, but it need not be. Maybe it's universal emptiness and decay, as in the case of Lucian Freud; maybe it's brashness and filthy vitality, as in the case of Willem de Kooning; maybe it's squirming, sensual oblivion, as in the case of Cecily Brown. Looking at such art well executed we gain access to realities both deeper and higher than the concrete facts of rush-hour traffic and stiff new shoes and an aging body. We come to understand better—viscerally, intuitively—our existential condition, and through this understanding we become more able to navigate our world and feel at home in it. Art of this kind aims to change our posture toward reality,

and then maybe, eventually, society. Better living through better seeing.

The next type of prophecy is less obvious as prophecy and provokes much of the befuddlement that is common when non-specialists tour a contemporary gallery or museum. It is the denunciation of injustice and the call



to moral purification—prophecy in the mode of Jeremiah or Ezekiel. In today's version of this prophetic mode, artists feel compelled to, say, "upend traditional notions" of masculinity or narrative or authorship or commodification or orgasm or whatever. Making art is a simple matter of finding the right target and assailing it with sufficient incisiveness and novelty, often by denouncing, flouting, or playfully remixing traditional aesthetic standards. The guiding assumption here is that the world as currently governed is evil, and so to make peace with it would

be craven capitulation. The imagined world that we might create, however, by overturning current power structures (especially those related to identity categories like race, gender, and sexuality) will be good. This is the great hope that pulses through the veins of much "serious" contemporary art, and for the past couple of decades there has been something like consensus amongst elite art schools, galleries, museums, and critics that this is the vital, responsible kind of hope. The art it inspires is often intentionally ugly, puzzling, or childlike, meant to afflict the comfortable—and in so doing, goad us toward a world where the afflicted will be comforted.

Different as they often are in execution, these two types of prophecy share a motivation: Both aim to transform rough, raw matter to reveal in it some glint of a reality desired but too rarely seen—in one case because it is threaded only thinly through the coarse, bulky fabric of existence, in the other because it is held in abeyance by strong, power-hungry men. On this canvas, or in this wood or clay or metal, or nowadays, perhaps, this LED screen or discarded sneaker or pile of glitter, the prophet finds a glint, and if it's a glint of what we too desire, we might be mightily moved—we might think this thing is one of the most momentous objects we could ever encounter. We might hush in its presence, or pay an exorbitant price to take it home. We might, if we're honest with ourselves, also want to flaunt our cultivation or our wealth, but if we have any sensitivity we understand that this is not a simple object among objects. It has been party to something of the deepest significance.

On the other hand, let's not collapse a meaningful distinction. The two types of prophecy are vitally different—not only in execution but in desired effect. One is meant to inculcate a kind of understanding through an experience that is pleasurable and clarifying. The other is meant to provoke the viewer to action. James Joyce explores something like this difference in his *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where Stephen,

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the protagonist, argues that true art is “static”—it moves the viewer to stillness, to contemplative satisfaction with the thing he beholds. Bad art, on the other hand, he calls “kinetic”—it provokes the viewer to action by exciting either desire or loathing—and is either pornographic or didactic.

One need not follow Joyce’s protagonist all the way in order to see something enduringly valuable in art that doesn’t immediately try to provoke political outrage or action, that allows us to stand still and silent in peaceful appreciation, to let ourselves be drawn slowly into harmony with the deep realities it gestures towards. If we achieve a perfectly just world, motivated by the proddings of a million works of political art, actualized via Twitter shamings and callouts, policed with perfect pronoun-parsing diligence, death and decay will still be with us. Relationships will still be prone to fracture and dissolution. Life will still be terribly, horribly difficult for the human animal, which wants so much more than it can have. When all the hierarchies have been toppled, and all the paradigms subverted, what will we do then? How will each of us live on this ridiculous planet, among these ridiculous people?

The answer is with great difficulty, and, let’s hope, also with some humility, gratitude, and joy. And this is where the first kind of prophecy—the attempt to help us see better, to love what we see every day—is so vital. Because in fact, none of us will live to see the promised land. Oppression and immiseration are stains on the fabric of our world and should be addressed whenever we have the wherewithal. But they will reappear roughly as many times as we scrub them out. If we are to have any kind of peace, we will have to locate it here, in this imperfect world. There’s plenty of room for art that aims to change things for the better. Make it; show it; let’s talk together about what has to be done. But let’s also make a lot more space for art that helps us understand how this world, unfinished and filthy as it is, peopled by hapless creatures like ourselves is, well, ok. And maybe even beautiful, in some deep, mysterious, partially hidden way. ♦

BCA

Of Fairies and Dragons

What these creatures of myth and mystery reveal about ourselves and civilization. BY CLARE COFFEY

There is a sudden reversal at the ending of Yeats’s “The Stolen Child.” In the first three stanzas we hear the call of the world inhabited by fairies—the waters and the wild, Sleuth Wood in the lake, the hills above Glen-Car. It is into this untouched, enchanting world, a world beyond time and pain, that the fairies intend to steal the child. But the last stanza switches to a different, unmistakably human sweetness: man-made objects ranged round, the fruits of human labor stored up for a wintry future. The child stolen will be leaving all this behind, “For he comes, the human child / to the waters and the wild / with a faery, hand in hand / for the world’s more full of weeping than he can understand.” The coziness of the hearth—and the mortal capacity to understand tragedy—are absent from the ageless beauty of fairyland.

Yeats’s poem appears nowhere in *Fairies: A Dangerous History*, which is surprising for two reasons. First, because Richard Sugg’s book offers a richly detailed look at fairies in art and literature, emphasizing the Elizabethan period through our own. Second, because Yeats was a devotee of Celtic folklore, and while Sugg’s book is purportedly a general study of fairies, he is really interested in the legends and phenomena of the British Isles.

The first half of the book sketches the broad outlines of the fairy landscape through regional folklore and firsthand accounts. Among the fairies, there are the gentry, often tall and beautiful and given to hunting, fighting, and revelry. There are the smaller, more practically active types into

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Fairies

A Dangerous History
by Richard Sugg
Reaktion, 279 pp., \$25

The Dragon

Fear and Power
by Martin Arnold
Reaktion, 328 pp., \$27

which brownies and leprechauns fall. There are wood spirits and sea people and things which admit of no particular classification. There are the fairy islands that appear only once every century but from which the sounds of bells and singing float over the water. There are the changelings, supposedly sickly fairy children substituted for human, and so subject to brutal real-life abuses to make the fairies take them back. And there are the fairy doctors, the scammers who drew prestige and authority from claimed contact with fairyland and its healing powers.

Sugg leans heavily on the work of W.Y. Evans-Wentz, an Edwardian anthropologist given to raptures on the mystical qualities of ye olde Celtic peasant (possibly a hazard of the genre). Sugg also refers frequently to Robert Kirk’s *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies*. Kirk, a 17th-century Scottish minister, is sometimes described as a folklorist, but the sense of analytical remove in the term is inaccurate: He was something closer to a travel writer of the underground.

One night in 1692, Kirk went out in his nightshirt for an evening stroll to the local fairy fort. He did not return alive. Nor is Kirk the only fairy amateur to meet a strange or untimely end after depicting the gentry in some way. The artist Richard Dadd painted the



Richard Dadd, *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* (1855-64)

frenetic and arresting *The Fairy Feller's Master Stroke* in one insane asylum and then died in another asylum. Which direction the causality goes is for the reader to decide. But some accounts of fairy encounters include threats of reprisal upon publicity; fairies don't like snitches any more than we do.

Sugg is always careful to differentiate firsthand narratives from widely accepted legends and to note the source and date and circumstances of a given account, but he emphasizes sources that treat their subjects with personal interest rather than as a tool of academic analysis. He is interested in everything the fairies might mean, but especially in what they are: powerful, inscrutable beings at home in a world of their own and capable of significant incursions into ours.

For instance, Sugg points out that it was common to delay, reshape, or relocate buildings in order to accommodate a reputed fairy easement. This practice has continued well into modern times in Iceland and some parts of Ireland and Great Britain. Fairies seem an alternative aristocracy, whose claims can supersede those of both landlords and real estate developers.

For Sugg, fairies represent the totality of an alternate society, one characterized by wonder, creativity, and harmony. In invoking a fairyland that is a dark mirror of our world, the fairy-tellers were, as Sugg has it, subverting our world's social oppression, industrial rapaciousness, and Christian chauvinism. Sometimes this gets a bit hard to take, as when Sugg writes of Calypso's island "Perhaps too, the feminine and masculine had not

suffered the schism and the hierarchy which they would do under centuries of Christian misogyny." But the corpus of myth to which Calypso belongs is an endless catalogue of rape.

Nor has fairy interest always tracked with progressive egalitarianism. In her 1999 book *Strange and Secret Peoples*, Carole G. Silver points out that Charles Darwin's ideas combined with the psychological research modish in the late Victorian years to produce a kind of fairy phrenology. The little people became a racial category, with long genealogies of the putative pygmy races that once inhabited Britain and intricate accountings of whether "savage" races stood above or below elemental spirits in the astral order of being.

Sugg is correct that by all accounts fairies and Christian faith were at the best of times uneasy bedfellows. But he overstates the degree of subversion necessarily entailed by fairy beliefs. Like everything else involving them, accounts of the fairies' cosmological place are multiple, contradictory, unpoliced, and uncertain. Some fairy beliefs are obviously heretical; others are merely highly speculative. One common narrative holds that fairies were neutral angels, who neither rebelled nor affirmed their allegiance to God, and were condemned to be a middle people, neither one thing nor the other, until the day of judgment.

As a fairy supposedly told one of Evans-Wentz's sources: "We could cut off half the human race, but would not . . . for we are expecting salvation."

Dragons are easier to get a handle on than fairies. Unlike fairies, dragons are defined by what they do: hoard treasure, breathe fire, eat maidens. They also possess a morphological consistency that for fairies only starts showing up when Victorian representations and Cicely Mary Barker's illustrations became popular. A dragon may be closer to a snake or closer to a lizard, but is certainly some kind of reptile. And while dragons show up all over the world, they don't represent an entire hidden people.

Martin Arnold's *The Dragon: Fear and Power* explores the civilized

dragon—the dragon as it has coalesced in an enduring and remarkably consistent body of legend, the dragon as it has cross-pollinated with other legends via the rise of powerful empires, and the dragon as it deals with the problems of civilization itself. In practice, this means that Arnold does not hew closely to any consistent vision of a dragon. Instead, he focuses on the best examples of dragons (or dragon-like function) within Semitic, Indo-European, and East Asian cultures, and finally in globally exported Western pop culture.

The maiden-capturing dragons of hagiography and medieval romance have largely faded away; it is the dragons of northern Europe, with their cunning and age and greed, that linger in the industrial and postindustrial imagination. And it is with these Norse dragons that Arnold really hits his stride. He moves from Nidhogg and the Midgard serpent to Beowulf, who ends his career facing a dragon, deserted by all but his faithful kinsman Wiglaf. The Beowulf cycle, Arnold contends, highlights the breakdown of reciprocal social obligations. The story deals with three great threats to peace: Grendel is social disharmony, or, as others have argued, bastardy; Grendel's mother is the blood feud; and the dragon is greed.

Gold-lust and the usurpation of power also appear in the two other Norse dragon legends Arnold deals with at length. Both Fafnir and Gold-Thorir are men who kill and cheat for gold; guarding their hoards, both turn over time into dragons.

Unlike Sugg, who cautiously proposes that whether or not fairies are real, some of the extant testimony about them refers to something real, Arnold does not entertain the possibility. His study is of the dragon as it appears in art and literature, not alleged firsthand encounters with giant lizards—besides, there seem to be far fewer of these than fairy encounters.

Nevertheless, Arnold can't resist a glancing inquiry into where dragons

come from. He tentatively suggests that dragons represent the struggle between nature and culture, which is why he includes legends—like Hercules taming Cerberus—that don't deal with dragons, strictly speaking, as much as other kinds of monsters. But his theory raises its own problems, as he concedes. First, a clean account of culture triumphing over threatening nature ignores the degree to which heroes like Hercules are agents of destructive chaos,



Detail from the Ramsund carving, a Viking runestone (ca. 1030) depicting Sigurd slaying the dragon Fafnir

brought down as often by their own vices as by their chthonic opponents. Second, a culture/nature opposition may account for monsters in general, but it can't tell us much about dragons in particular—their seductive malice, their deadly authority.

Arnold also hints at an inverse theory. The dragon in its more potent forms may represent not the threats to culture-building but the terrifying powers implicated in a developing civilization. Dragon symbols appear in cartography, in alchemy, in military insignia. The impressive Chinese dragon often functions as a symbol of imperial authority and might. In a type of English folktale that Arnold calls “the anti-establishment dragon,” the dragon also symbolizes the excesses of elite power. So, for example, the Dragon of Wantley, a stand-in for a disliked landowning family, is described as dying thus: “First on one knee, then on back tumbled he / So groan'd, kickt, shat, and dy'd.”

It takes only a slight imaginative squint to see our contemporary world

crawling with its own particular dragons, slithering and roaring through underground tunnels beneath centers of vast wealth, or soaring overhead and dropping fiery death on the embattled and oblivious alike.

In the end, Arnold falls back on Borgesian uncertainty: “We are ignorant of the meaning of the dragon in the same way that we are ignorant of the meaning of the universe.” This is not the most satisfying conclusion, but it is probably the most honest.

Fairies prove similarly difficult to pin down—unsurprisingly, as liminality is their defining feature. Contact with the fairies is dangerous not because they necessarily mean you harm but because you may become caught, betwixt and between, no longer safely fenced by the limits of human life. At best, fairy glamour is to be always listening for a music you once heard, longing for a food you once tasted,

straining for the sight of a vanishing island. It is to be deaf to the cries of your own children, unable to stay yet unable wholly to leave them. It is, as David Thomson's fisherman said of the selkie, for your sea longings to be land longings and your land longings to be sea longings.

Of course, there have been more optimistic accounts of the fairy effect on human life. When Frances Griffiths and Elsie Wright posed for photographs with their paper cut-out fairies, Arthur Conan Doyle rejoiced:

The recognition of their existence will jolt the material twentieth-century mind out of its heavy ruts in the mud, and will make it admit that there is a glamour and mystery to life.

Coming from the great popularizer of ratiocination, this may seem unbearably naïve. But the industrial-scale slaughter of the Great War was still fresh, including the the deaths of Doyle's son and brother therein. The time seemed ripe for a breakthrough, and he was expecting salvation. ♦



BCA

A Valediction

Forty years of reviewing.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

My career as a movie critic began almost 40 years ago in the pages of the *American Spectator* with a review of *The Warriors*, the story of a New York City teen gang from Coney Island forced to fight its way home from the Bronx through one very dark night. *The Warriors* was considered a dangerous and provocative film that caused life-threatening fights to break out near the theaters showing it. I saw it again last year, about 39 years later, and couldn't quite believe my eyes. Far from frightening, the cast of *The Warriors* looked not so much like young thugs as they seemed like overeager kids from theater camp hoping to get cast in a revival of *Hair*.

As it happens, I had had much the same experience around the time *The Warriors* was released, when I saw the

universally celebrated 1961 film version of *West Side Story* (a direct inspiration for *The Warriors*) on the big screen for the first time and found it hilariously dated and silly even though it had been released only 18 years earlier. (*West Side Story* still works gangbusters on stage, maybe because its theatricality is what sinks it as a movie—and on stage, there are no close-ups of Tony's flaring nostrils.)

If there is one painful truth I have learned in four decades of film reviewing, it is just how few movies stand the test of time—and often how unexpected the movies are that do endure and flourish in the collective memory. Consider the year 1980. The most celebrated film that year was *Ordinary People*, the family melodrama about a fragile teenager coping with the suicide of his brother and the cruel coldness of his mother. It won an Oscar for Best Picture and its director, Robert Redford, won his only Academy Award for directing it.

I loathed *Ordinary People*, but at the time I was all but alone in that sentiment. I think it fair to say this is a movie no one remembers all that fondly or has any interest in watching now—and I think you can say the same for such later 1980s Oscar fare as *Rain Man*, *Gandhi*, *Amadeus*, *Platoon*, *The Last Emperor*, and *Driving Miss Daisy*. But weekly, it seems, a throwaway comedy from the same year called *Airplane!* is shown on cable, which means it still has the capacity to amuse and involve viewers in a way *Ordinary People* simply cannot.

Indeed, it seems to me that the movies people still want to watch from the 1980s are far more in the *Airplane!* mode. *Ghostbusters*. *Diner*. *Tootsie*. *Stripes*. *Trading Places*. *When Harry Met Sally*. *The Princess Bride*. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. These are the movies that parents remember fondly from their own childhoods and have been eager to introduce their kids to in the decades since, with great success.

Sydney Pollack directed both *Tootsie* and *Out of Africa*. If they aired at the same time on different Showtime channels today, would anyone choose to watch the latter rather than the former? I doubt it. And here's the thing: *Out of Africa* is a good movie. But *Tootsie* is, it turns out, a classic. (*Out of Africa* would have benefited from a Pollack cameo as a Jew lost in Africa, just as *Tootsie* is memorable in part due to

DAVE GLEGG

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

Pollack's amazing supporting performance as Dustin Hoffman's agent.)

Out of Africa was perhaps the ur-version of The Beautifully Constructed Big-Budget Middlebrow Picture Made by a Major Studio That Takes on Serious Topics. It is an adaptation of a memoir by Isak Dinesen and therefore a work of High Purpose just for that reason alone. Such films have all but vanished from the scene in the decades since. One of the most important purposes such pictures served was to make people feel as though they were elevating themselves somehow by going to a movie theater. But that is no longer part of the list of demands American culture makes on its engaged citizenry. Now you are culturally ennobled by watching Samantha Bee shout about Trump, not by listening to Meryl Streep doing a pitch-perfect Danish accent.

Meanwhile, if you asked most professional movie critics about the 1981 Oscars, they would say the outrage was that *Ordinary People* bested Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull*, which continues to be ranked in polls of critics among the top five movies ever made. In truth, though, it's among the most unpleasant films ever made and deliberately so—*Raging Bull* is a character study of a jealous psychopath and it puts you in the positions both of voyeur (as he torments his victims) and of victim (as you are forced to witness his horrible behavior). People who watch movies for a living can develop a bad habit of confusing intensity with quality. We see so much that is mediocre and pointless that we can be falsely impressed by something that jolts us. But touching a live wire isn't the same thing as having a valuable or rewarding cultural experience.

This is another lesson I've learned. I remember writing in these pages that *Slumdog Millionaire*, the 2008 worldwide box-office triumph and Oscar winner, was one of the best movies I'd ever seen—but the only thing I remember from it now, a decade later, is the horrendous scene of a man purposefully blinding children as they slept to turn them into sightless beggars who would work for him in the

streets of Bombay. If indeed *Slumdog Millionaire* is one of the best movies I've ever seen I should surely want to watch it again, but the very thought of it makes me somewhat queasy. Perhaps I felt so strongly about it because I managed to watch that scene without bolting in horror from the theater and came away unconsciously proud of my false bravery.

ings have done pretty badly in the decades I've been writing. The most left-wing movie ever to win an Oscar for Best Picture is probably *Platoon*, which is supposedly a serious examination of an American crime against humanity during the Vietnam war but is actually an extended Oliver Stone psychotic fantasy about murdering his platoon's lieutenant. Most other



Sydney Pollack's *Out of Africa* is good—but would anyone prefer it to his film *Tootsie*?



The question I've been asked the most across the decades—besides “What’s your favorite movie?” to which the only correct answer is *The Godfather*, and that goes for you too and everyone else alive, because if you answer it differently you’re wrong, and no, *The Godfather Part II* isn’t better, shame on you—is “Why are movies so liberal and how can you stand it?”

The answer to “how can you stand it?” is that I stand it just fine so long as it’s not rubbed in my face. Oddly enough, that’s pretty much the same answer Hollywood gets at the box office; its most nakedly political offer-

efforts at direct conservative-bashing end up on the trash heap of cinematic history. Scooter Libby has good reason to dance on the grave of *Fair Game*, the film that sought to lionize Valerie Plame and earned a whopping \$9 million at the domestic box office. I hope Dick Cheney gets a similar chance with *Vice* this Christmas.

One comic element of having been one of the nation’s few right-leaning movie critics over these many years is the occasional use to which I have been put by liberals hoping to create a controversy where none, alas, existed. I wrote what I think was literally the

only unfavorable review of *Platoon* at the time, which gave *Time* magazine's Marc Cooper leeway to say Stone had been "barraged" from "his right flank." There was no right flank. Just me.

The same thing happened with James Cameron's *Avatar*, which I made fun of in these pages. A fanboy slavering over the movie in the *Los Angeles Times* used my piece and two others (one by Ross Douthat and one at Andrew Breitbart's website) to offer this hilarious observation: "To say that the film has evoked a storm of ire on the right would be an understatement." First of all, I had no ire. Second of all, please.

Now, of course, movies generate political controversies even when they don't mean to; witness *First Man*, the Neil Armstrong biopic that's lousy but not because (as the Twitter rage had it) it doesn't show the American flag enough. It's likely the flag kerfuffle was one of the elements that led to *First Man* drastically underperforming at the box office.

The truth is there's no way to know what message an audience is going to take away from a movie it sees. Vladimir Lenin once said that "of all the arts the most important for us is the cinema." He was thinking about the way the movies could be used to spread his awful gospel, to advance an ideological agenda. And of course, Hitler thought so too, which is why he empowered Leni Riefenstahl to make *Triumph of the Will*, her diabolical hagiography of the Nuremberg rallies of 1934.

What they did not understand, and what we still struggle to understand, is that while audiences can be told to think things and directed to look at things, they often do not do what they're told and do not follow the directions they are given. There's a story about Soviet audiences seeing *The Grapes of Wrath*, the 1940 American movie allowed into the Soviet Union because it showed Americans suffering extreme privation during the Great Depression. Stalin is said to have banned it after Soviet audiences were wowed by the fact that even the poorest Americans owned their own trucks. (It was directed, by the way, by John Ford, who later became the most prominent conservative in Hollywood and a rabid supporter of Richard Nixon.)

I've expressed a great many opinions in this magazine over the past 23 years, and looking back on them, I'm reminded of the fact that if you judge a movie critic by the accuracy of his opinions, you're never going to like any movie critic ever. There are views I can't even believe I once held. For example, I wrote that 1996's *Mr. Holland's Opus* was the only movie we'd remember from that year, and while almost nothing from 1996 was memorable, neither was *Mr. Holland's Opus*. The reason I said it, though, was that I was trying to make a point about what it is that makes movies stick in our collective unconscious, and I thought the movie's unadorned sentimentality would give it a timelessness it does not possess.

This is an occupational hazard for all critics of all art forms—trying to use the works we review to make grander cultural points when they simply

cannot carry that kind of portentous weight. Mostly, I think, I have avoided such pitfalls by the simple expedient of not taking anything I reviewed too seriously. The one movie I did take very seriously was the topic of the only review I ever wrote that made the cover of *THE WEEKLY STANDARD*.

That was *The Lives of Others*, the 2006 thriller about an East German intelligence officer who begins spying on the boyfriend of the actress with whom he and his boss are both obsessed. I'm not going to describe it here. I'm only going to say that it's the best movie I wrote about in the course of my 40-year career as a film critic, and for that reason alone, you should go watch it and thank me—and in this case, as in the case of *The Godfather*, if you don't agree, you're wrong. And shame on you!

Just kidding.

Not really. ♦

BCA

Last Lines

After all, tomorrow is another day.

BY ALICE B. LLOYD

Sometimes we know what a novel's last line will be from the beginning, we just don't know that we knew. It's a trick readers of *Less*—a recent comic novel of lost love and world travel by Andrew Sean Greer—will recall: *Less*'s last line is "Less!" *Right Ho, Jeeves* would end on the line, "Right ho, Jeeves," if Jeeves didn't then reply, "Very good, sir." Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* occupies its last lines with that titular concern—hoping that, all told, we can. And in the last line of *Rabbit, Run* Rabbit Angstrom (you guessed it) runs: "out of a kind of sweet panic growing lighter and quicker and quieter, he runs. Ah: runs. Runs."

But some of the best-remembered

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last lines are unpredictable and inconclusive. The famous ones have a way of leaving things unresolved. Which makes sense: Whatever they actually say, last lines carry the memory of everything that came before. Having to account for every meandering middle thing, last lines ring less singularly certain than openers. They may leave you with no idea of what's next—or they may simply act as though there's no end in sight. Some even seem to say something new with every rereading.

The one last line that everyone seems to know—*The Great Gatsby*'s "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past"—is a grim one to have collectively committed to memory, being not just hopeless but Hadean. And, like some of the crueler endings life offers, it sneaks up on us: The first-person plural—for some

reason, “we” are the Sisyphean sailors—swoops in without warning, interrupting what was an otherwise stylistically consistent gasping ode to Gatsby. Everyone remembers it, I first assumed, precisely because it’s so unsettling.

But then, nautical last lines do have a peculiar power all their own, what with the existential grandeur of the deep. The last pages of Joshua Slocum’s memoir *Sailing Alone Around the World* offer sweetly profound parting words: “To young men contemplating a voyage I would say go.” And, finally, “The days passed happily with me wherever my ship sailed.” The last line of *Victory*, the Joseph Conrad novel—when a sea captain, returned from his final visit to hero Axel Heyst’s island home, finds no trace of the drama that burned there: “Nothing!”—delivers the absolute finality of a return to the watery void, as only a captain’s report can.

Jane Austen’s loveliest last line is the seafaring send-off to *Persuasion*, her last complete novel—which painstakingly pairs a baronet’s shy daughter, Anne Elliot, with a love she let sail away without her once before, Captain Wentworth: “She gloried in being a sailor’s wife, but she must pay the tax of quick alarm for belonging to that profession which is, if possible, more distinguished in its domestic virtues than its national importance.” A happy future awaits Austen’s heroines more often than not. But only Anne and Wentworth are adventurers, baronetcy be damned.

With some last lines, the story’s over—but that’s all: The rest of life continues as it ever was. When Jake Barnes answers Brett Ashley, “Isn’t it pretty to think so?” at the end of *The Sun Also Rises*—it’s “pretty,” that is, to think “we could have had such a damned good time together”—there’s an empty carrying on, a perpetual posture of necessary indifference in which Jake is forever frozen.

The last lines of *Wuthering Heights* and Vladimir Nabokov’s *Bend Sinister* both feature moths, the nocturnal lepidoptera instinctively associated with the gathering darkness. Emily Brontë’s is a restful farewell: “I lingered round them, under that benign sky; watched

the moths fluttering among the heath and hare-bells; listened to the soft wind breathing through the grass; and wondered how any one could ever imagine unquiet slumbers for the sleepers in that quiet earth.” Whereas Nabokov bursts in on his dystopian denouement with a scene of himself an ill-fated moth on his window screen. “A good night for mothing,” Nabokov, an expert collector, concludes.

Last lines of novels may leave you with no idea of what’s next—or they may simply act as though there’s no end in sight. Some even seem to say something new with every rereading.

I’m now convinced that to be truly terminal, last lines must land, maybe moth-like, on death. *The Leopard* is fittingly funereal in the end, describing a dog’s corpse, “Then all found peace in a little heap of livid dust.” But the novel is one long last line, tending to the lost light of the princely Sicily that Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa’s grandfather knew.

Saul Bellow’s *Seize the Day* ends at an actual funeral, a stranger’s, where Tommy Wilhelm finally breaks through his unremitting misery while the church music swells and mourners wonder who he is. “He heard it and sank deeper than sorrow, through torn sobs and cries toward the consummation of his heart’s ultimate need.”

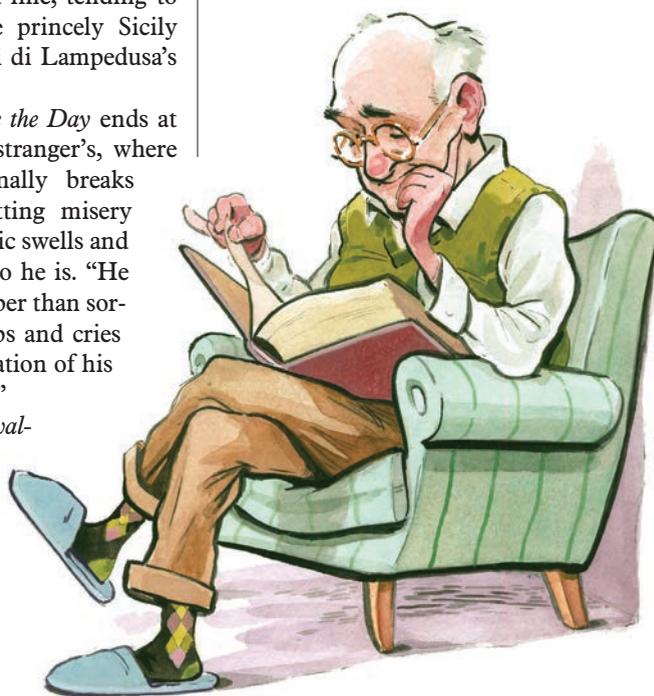
They Came Like Swallows, a semiautobiographical novel by the great William Maxwell, also ends at a funeral—and yet it finds a way not to end. “And with wonder

clinging to him (for it had been a revelation: neither he nor anyone else had known that his life was going to be like this) he moved away from the coffin.” The parenthetical opens on the boy’s future: a life defined by his mother’s sudden death.

Now that I have novels open to the last page covering every available surface in my house, I know my preference. The best last lines don’t let anything end. Death did come for the archbishop, but *My Antonia* lingers. It leaves us wondering what it is that friends impress upon each other’s lives. The last line: “Whatever we had missed, we possessed together the precious, the incommunicable past.”

The Portrait of a Lady, for all its comely twists, answers ... nothing. Isabel eludes Caspar Goodwood—again—having started for Rome already: “She [Isabel’s friend Henrietta] walked him [Goodwood] away with her, however, as if she had given him now the key to patience.” Whether Isabel chooses him or her independence in the end—an end that will never come—tends to depend on my mood. Either way, I know he’ll be waiting.

Anyway, all of this is to say that the best last lines aren’t endings at all. And, really, would anyone want them to be? ♦



“President Trump has spent much of his White House tenure being his own chief of staff—growing more frustrated with his closest aides as he has become increasingly reliant on, as he calls it, his ‘gut.’”

—Boston Herald, December 9, 2018

PARODY



OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 17, 2018

Statement from the President

Today, it gives me tremendous pleasure to announce my choice of successor to outgoing chief of staff John Kelly. Finding a suitable replacement for General Kelly has been no easy task, believe me. But after spending a considerable amount of time in consultation with my closest advisers and the hosts of *Fox & Friends*, I am fairly confident that my next chief of staff will be able to fully realize my hopes and dreams for this great nation and fight the good fight against the enemies of the people. Yes, folks, I have decided to go with myself. Or specifically, my gut.

Who knows best how to handle my Team of Rivals? Who knows how not to jam a 12-sheet high-security shredder? Who knows that my idea of surf-and-turf is a Quarter Pounder with Cheese and a Fish Delight? The gut of the world's most successful developer, bestselling author, and television's biggest celebrity, that's who. You're welcome, America.

Without fail my gut can tell me which shows to watch, what papers to read, and which security briefs to skip (all of them!). My gut can get me up in the morning and put me to sleep at night. So sleep well tonight!

My gut tells me he'd like a deputy chief of staff. His name is Kanye West.

My gut never goes on vacation and is reachable 24 hours a day. And my gut knows when to push back—or down! I will be relying heavily on my gut over the next few weeks as this sham investigation comes to a conclusion. My gut will tell me if I am potentially tampering with witnesses or obstructing justice. Or maybe it's just indigestion. Either way we will gut it out!