

**HEATHER MAC DONALD**  
on Jeff Sessions

**KYLE SMITH**  
on Chelsea Clinton

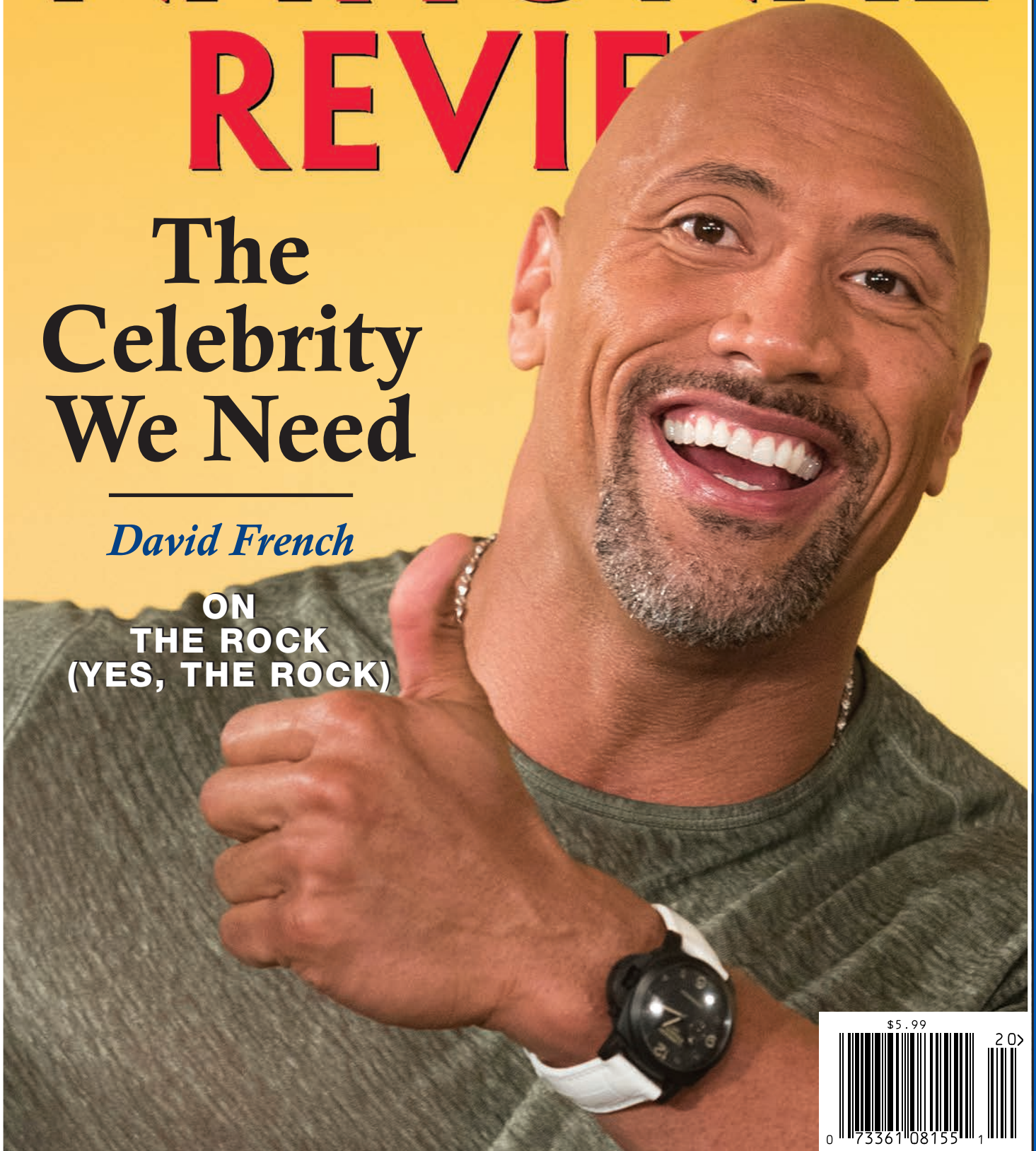
**DAVID PRYCE-JONES**  
on Recep Tayyip Erdogan

# NATIONAL REVIEW

## The Celebrity We Need

*David French*

**ON  
THE ROCK  
(YES, THE ROCK)**



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The Rock is one of the few culturally unifying figures in American life, and he's a culturally unifying figure with a message of gratitude and hard work that also happens to be culturally edifying. At this time in American life, we need points of agreement, and right now tens of millions of Americans on both sides of the political divide agree on The Rock. [David French](#)



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## Rock's Other Pioneer

I have only one quarrel with Andrew Cline's "Founding Rocker" (April 17). There is another iconic rocker who should also be considered—Little Richard, circa 1955, with his testosterone-laden "Tutti Frutti" and "Lucille." Wop baba loo bop a wop bam boom!

Warren Frederick  
San Marcos, Calif.

## Vinyl Survival

David Harsanyi seriously harshed my mellow with his "In the Groove" (April 17) when he mentioned his remaining collection of around 20 records but failed to identify which albums survived the liquidations of time, space constraints, and changing taste. What gives, man? Don't leave us hangin': Who are the authors of these holy grails?

John C. Kaspar  
Lebanon, Ohio

DAVID HARSANYI RESPONDS: Now that you ask, I'm not sure why these records survived six moves over the past 20-odd years. I definitely lugged around the Replacements' discography for sentimental reasons. *Let It Be*—their third and best album—was the soundtrack of my teen years. The same impulse probably led me to hold on to discs such as Meat Puppets' *Huevos*, Hüsker Dü's *Zen Arcade*, and Dinosaur Jr.'s *You're Living All Over Me*. Others I suspect were a visual choice: There's the Velvet Underground's *Loaded*, an original from 1970, with its smoky subway entrance, and the Ramones' first album, with the scruffy band defiantly staring out at me. Then again, I can't tell you exactly why I held on to Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass's *Whipped Cream and Other Delights*. The music was always outside my palate, so I suspect I was being ironic (though throwing it on recently, I could appreciate its lounge-y cheerfulness). The USSR State Symphony Orchestra's recording of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 5—released by the state-owned Melodiya label—is most definitely not cheerful, and most definitely not something I enjoyed listening to as a teenager. It's one of my favorites now. Not only is it beautiful and haunting, it reminds me that my record collection outlasted the Soviet Union.

## Correction

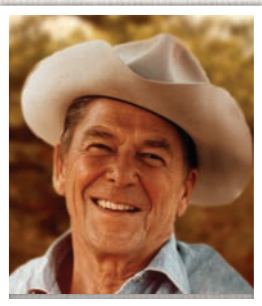
In the book review "The Powerhouse on Fifth" (April 17), John Hughes was referred to as a cardinal. In fact, he never attained that rank; he was an archbishop.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to [letters@nationalreview.com](mailto:letters@nationalreview.com).



# “A Reagan Ranch conference is an essential RITE OF PASSAGE for any young conservative.”

Viraktep Ath,  
University of California-Riverside

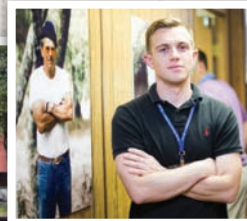


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It was so humbling;  
walking in his footsteps  
is an experience I’ll  
never forget!”**

Marlena Bhame,  
Rutgers University

**“I was inspired to become a conservative leader on campus after seeing Ronald Reagan’s home. ANY YOUNG PERSON who is serious about conservatism MUST VISIT THE REAGAN RANCH”** Tory McClintock,  
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# The Week

■ In Trump's first 100 days, "Tough on China" became "Tough on Canada." Now that's tough.

■ *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign*, by Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, is gripping reading, chock-full of juicy, revelatory reporting about the Democratic nominee's campaign—reporting one wishes had been offered up during the election season. The Clinton campaign was perceived to be an experienced, well-funded, well-organized, well-oiled machine, brimming with dozens of offices in swing states and possessing a proven ground game. The reality, as Allen and Parnes reveal, was less impressive: Ten writers, consultants, and aides had a hand in writing Clinton's muddled announcement speech; her Wisconsin volunteers lacked basic resources such as campaign literature to distribute while door-knocking; campaign manager Robby Mook chose not to spend money on polling, relying instead on analytics surveys; and by late October, aide Jake Sullivan "believed there was a reasonable chance Hillary would lose the election, and he began pressing Mook and others to abandon efforts to expand the Electoral College map in favor of locking down states that added up to 270." In other words, quite a few people knew that Hillary Clinton's campaign was a paper tiger, but the usual political considerations kept them from speaking publicly and honestly about it. If any journalists had been able to run this story before the election, maybe the results of the 2016 election wouldn't have been so stunning.

■ For a week or so, Jon Ossoff was the great Democratic hope. The former congressional aide was going to win the special election to replace Tom Price, who left the House to become secretary of health and human services. While the Georgia district has long been Republican, many of the Republicans in it were unenthusiastic about Trump. Better still, multiple Republicans were running in the first round of the election, letting Democrats concentrate on getting Ossoff an outright majority that would obviate a second round. Ossoff fell two percentage points short and now faces a runoff that he is expected to lose to conservative Republican Karen Handel. Both parties started spinning, but each has cause for concern. The vote pattern largely mirrored that of the Trump-Clinton race, which could mean trouble for Republicans in similar districts. At the same time, the election may have shown the limits of a Democratic campaign based purely on "resistance" to Trump. Republicans have no reason to be complacent, even as Democrats return to despair and rage.

■ Bernie Sanders and Nancy Pelosi, of all people, have emerged as voices of reason on, of all things, abortion—or, at least, on how Democrats should treat members of the party who have moderate views on the issue. While on a unity tour with Democratic National Committee chairman Tom Perez, Sanders held a rally for Heath Mello, a candidate for mayor of Omaha. Mello has



See page 6.

described himself as personally opposed to abortion and supported such mild measures against abortion as a ban on it at 20 weeks after conception. Pro-abortion groups attacked Perez and Sanders for betraying women. Perez quickly folded, saying that every Democratic candidate should support "reproductive health care." Sanders has not yet folded, though, and Pelosi said that pro-lifers could be Democrats. A recent Marist poll for the Knights of Columbus showed that most Democratic voters have some views on abortion to the right of Mello's. For a party that finds itself shut out of government nearly everywhere to turn its back on them is certainly an interesting move.

■ On the campaign trail, Donald Trump repeatedly promised—"a solemn vow," he called it—to label China a currency manipulator and hit Beijing with retaliatory sanctions. Trump's concept of a solemn vow is elastic, and he has for the moment abandoned the idea; he says that he has just learned that China is no longer manipulating its currency. In reality, there has been no major policy change in Beijing for several years. But even after sharing warm words and a slice of cake with Xi Jinping, Trump has China on the brain, and he has ordered a federal investigation of whether Chinese firms are "dumping"—another flexible term—steel in U.S. markets. The regime in Beijing is guilty of any number of horrifying crimes: It is a government that murders men and women for their political and religious views and then harvests their organs for profit. If conspiring to sell Americans things they want at low prices is a crime at all, it is the least of China's transgressions.

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P.S. These foods might be extremely harmful to your health. About 80% of Americans consume at least one of these foods. So please watch this shocking presentation at **[www.BadFood8.com](http://www.BadFood8.com)** before it’s too late.

■ The same day that President Trump and Xi Jinping had dinner at Mar-a-Lago, with first daughter Ivanka in attendance, China approved three new trademarks for Ivanka’s jewelry, bags, and sauna services. The Chinese make a big deal of



“princelings”—the children of muckety-mucks, who are being groomed to take their places, and showered with favors meanwhile. Must we ape Chinese customs in return, by acting as passive participants? Ivanka Trump put her business in a trust, but she still profits from it. Her status as a formal adviser to her father makes the deals all the more unseemly. If she wants to count her earnings, let her stay home and do it. If she has the president’s ear, let her hold a fire sale. When Henry Lee asked first Treasury secretary Alexander Hamilton for an inside tip, Hamilton replied, “Remember the saying with regard to Caesar’s wife.” Cc: Caesar’s daughter.

■ When President Trump told Fox News on April 11 that the U.S. was “sending an armada” to the Sea of Japan to deter further North Korean aggression, the news flashed around the Pacific Rim. Trump was referring to the aircraft carrier USS *Carl Vinson* and her strike group, which had left Singapore a few days before. But as tensions rose, news reports across East Asia trumpeted the impending arrival of the U.S. fleet, and the Kim regime threatened to sink the carrier, the *Carl Vinson* was actually steaming in the opposite direction, on her way to take part in previously scheduled exercises with the Royal Australian Navy—3,500 miles from Korea. (In a 21st-century touch, that news broke when a U.S. Navy website posted a publicity photo of the carrier sailing through the Sunda Strait between Java and Sumatra en route to the Indian Ocean.) The whole mess seems to have been a case of crossed wires, imprecise language, and the obvious need for a modicum of obliqueness on the Navy’s part about the precise location of its ships: The carrier finally arrived in the Sea of Japan two weeks later to drill with the South Korean and Japanese navies. The USS *Carl Vinson* is a 1,092-foot long, 100,000-ton *Nimitz*-class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier capable of carrying up to 90 fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters—you’d think she’d be hard to miss.

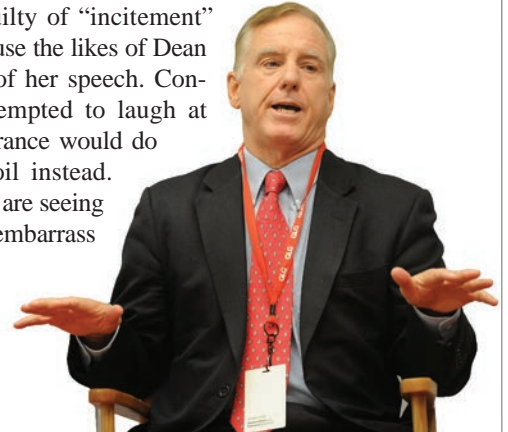
■ When it came to its negotiations with Iran, duplicity was the hallmark of the Obama administration’s public statements. (Sanctimonious preening was a close second.) A new *Politico* investigation shows just how many concessions the administration was willing to make to strike any nuclear accord. In addition to releasing, as part of a swap, seven Iranian-born prisoners—some of whom were accused by Obama’s own

Justice Department of threatening American national-security interests, contrary to the White House’s public assurances—the administration “dropped charges and international arrest warrants against 14 other men, all of them fugitives.” Several of them were wanted for alleged roles in helping to funnel matériel to Iranian-backed terror outfits, such as Hezbollah, or for participating in the global network to procure components for Iran’s nuclear program. One was believed to have helped to supply Shiite militias in Iraq with a particularly deadly type of IED—one that killed “hundreds” of American troops. President Trump has declared, on more than a few occasions, that when it comes to dealings with foreign powers, he will aim to put American interests first. His predecessor has left him with an object lesson in how not to do that.

■ Americans wondering what the next step will be in the Left’s ongoing fight against the First Amendment need look no farther than to former Vermont governor Howard Dean, who has been quietly laying out the blueprint. Having claimed incorrectly that “hate speech is not protected by the First Amendment,” Dean quickly scrambled around for a justification. In the course of that adventure he contrived some novel theories about speech in American jurisprudence. He has claimed, for example, that the “fighting words” doctrine laid out in *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* can somehow apply to conservatives giving lectures on college campuses; that the rules that apply on the public airwaves are transferable to the public square;

and that the likes of Ann Coulter might be guilty of “incitement” simply because the likes of Dean disapprove of her speech. Conservatives tempted to laugh at Dean’s ignorance would do well to recoil instead.

For now, we are seeing a governor embarrass himself on television. Next time, it could be a judge.



■ The so-called March for Science was a lot of fun for a certain kind of sneering progressive who doesn’t want to talk too much about Bernie Sanders’s views on modern agricultural practices. (He is an anti-GMO loon, in addition to being a general-purpose loon.) The Left has a love-hate relationship with science: Talking about evolution is an easy way to get a rise out of a certain kind of Christian, but progressives are queasy when it comes to questions such as the heritability of intelligence—Charles Murray has been ridiculously denounced as a “white nationalist” for even having considered the question. Invoking Science—capital-S Science—is also a useful rhetorical ploy for reconstructing contested public-policy questions as matters of settled fact. The great example is global warming, which presents politics and their leaders with complicated questions involving economic and political



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Reported by J. Page

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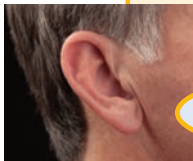
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trade-offs between rival goods. The Left demands what it demands (always the same thing: subject more of the private economy to political regimentation) and offers the preface: “Science says.” (Not that its curiosity about what “science says” extends to evaluations of the effectiveness of its favorite programs. Head Start, anyone?) Science has rightly earned the prestige attached to it, but appeals to authority are no substitute for ordinary democratic discourse.



■ All of a sudden, Chelsea Clinton is on the front of the glossies. Before a few weeks ago, “What does Chelsea think?” was a question that nobody sane had uttered. Now, it is all the rage. On Twitter, in the political dailies, in the anti-Trump #resistance—there she is, as a voice of moral authority. The profiles are glowing. Her defenders are vehement. Her denials of ambition are exquisitely parsed. We have

seen this movie before. There is something in even the American psyche that longs for royalty, and Chelsea Clinton is being groomed to meet it. They can’t really be this reckless, can they?

■ While Barack Obama was president, Donald Trump frequently attacked him for his vacations and his golf (and his golf vacations). He said that Obama was a heedless gobbler of taxpayer dollars. Here’s one tweet: “The habitual vacationer, @BarackObama, is now in Hawaii. This vacation is costing taxpayers \$4 million [sic] +++ while there is 20% unemployment.” (Never mind the unemployment number.) Well, believe this: At his current pace, President Trump will spend more on personal travel in a year than Obama spent in eight years. A president should not be “cooped up in the White House,” to borrow a phrase from Nixon. As for the hypocrisy, perhaps Trump could make up for it by asking Obama to hit the links with him.

■ The H-1B visa program is supposed to let employers import foreign workers to fill high-skill jobs only when American workers are impossible to come by. The rules governing the program are, in theory at least, strict: The company must have made a good-faith effort to hire American workers, and foreign workers must be paid the job’s prevailing wage. Unsurprisingly, these are rules frequently observed in the breach. Disney and other high-tech employers have come under sustained criticism for using the H-1B program to undercut American workers—in some cases, going so far as to force American employees to train their foreign replacements. A new executive order from President Trump says that the executive branch will “rigorously enforce and administer the laws governing entry into the United States of workers from abroad” and orders the Departments of State, Justice, Labor, and Homeland Security to work together to “promote the proper functioning of the H-1B visa program.” The order will seem superfluous only to people unfamiliar with how the program has operated.

■ Bill O’Reilly is out at Fox News, felled by multiple allegations of sexual harassment and a left-wing pressure campaign against advertisers on his show. A combative populist who portrayed himself as the champion of “the folks,” O’Reilly forecast the Trump phenomenon and won every argument on his program, by means fair and foul (on cable TV, interrupting is a powerful forensic weapon). He also, by all accounts, considered his fame and power a license to force himself on women. Fox is a formidable brand that has shown so far that it can weather the recent turmoil in its upper ranks and prime-time lineup. There is no reason for it to ignore the standards of the modern workplace, or basic decency.

■ A few years ago, Missouri created a public-safety program that used scrap rubber from old tires to resurface playgrounds. A preschool run by Trinity Lutheran Church applied for the rubberized flooring and was rejected. The state cited a provision in its constitution that prohibited the spending of public money in aid of any church, sect, or religion. (The provision, known as a Blaine amendment, was one of many such amendments states passed in the 19th century with the intent of ensuring that Catholic schools didn’t receive public funds.) Trinity Lutheran sued. In April, the case was argued before the Supreme Court. At issue is whether a religious institution can be denied a neutral public benefit solely because it is exercising a constitutional right. The oral arguments suggest that the justices know they have an easy case before them.

■ In a Detroit suburb in April, federal agents arrested three people on charges of conspiring to commit and aiding and abetting the commission of female genital mutilation, which has been prohibited by an act of Congress since 1995. A doctor and his wife, the office manager, let another doctor use their clinic to “cut” the genitals of two seven-year-old girls from Minnesota earlier this year. The case is the first federal prosecution for violation of the law against performing the brutal procedure. Those who defend female genital mutilation often compare it to male circumcision, but any similarity between the two practices is superficial. Some multiculturalists argue that Americans should accept female genital mutilation because it’s prevalent in other parts of the world, though in many places where it is, it’s also, no surprise, opposed. The fight against female genital mutilation is so clearly the side of common decency that even the United Nations is committed to it. The FBI should stay on the case.

■ The first round of the French presidential election sent Emmanuel Macron and Marine Le Pen into a runoff on May 7. Macron is a Socialist who leapt from the sinking ship of his party to run as an independent. He seems fresh because, although he is a child of the establishment—graduate of an elite university, banker by profession—he is too young and inexperienced to have his fingerprints on any failed policies. Le Pen represents a counter-establishment of her own—the anti-immigrant French Right, which is a Le Pen family business. She purged her fascist father from the National Front, the party he founded, and absorbed much of the old Communist party with a program of dirigisme, radical secularism, and kisses for Vladimir Putin. Responsible voters across the spectrum will unite behind Macron who, if elected,

will be the perfect foil for Le Pen. The great issues of French identity and Muslim integration will continue to have no honorable champion.

■ The British must be getting election-weary. Since 2014, they have seen a referendum on Scottish independence, an election for a new government, and a vote on leaving the European Union. In June, they will be asked again to settle on a government. The Conservative party does not have to call an election until 2020, but it is in its interests to do so. Current opinion polling shows the Tories running rampant over Labour, which has become something of a joke under the throwback socialist Jeremy Corbyn. Moreover, Theresa May, the current prime minister, was not the leader of her party when the last plebiscite was held, and evidently feels she needs a mandate while she oversees the tough task of implementing Brexit. Given the circumstances, the British Right now has a chance to solidify its power for at least half a decade. Carpe diem, chaps.

■ By a margin of 51.3 percent to 48.7 percent, Turkish voters solidified President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's grip on power. The Turkish presidency becomes by law the chief office in the state, with increased power over judges and civil servants and two five-year terms in which to wield it. Opposition parties have complained of stuffed ballot boxes, but Erdogan, who fired 130,000 government employees and arrested 45,000 after a failed coup last summer, is certain to brush all complaints aside. Erdogan is an Islamist and an admirer of the Ottomans: not a stable combination,

but enough to have overwhelmed Turkey's always-fragile democracy and (even worse) its seemingly more robust Westernization, undertaken by Ataturk. President Trump congratulated Erdogan on his victory. Silence would have been better.

■ For many years, American officials visiting Russia have found it important to meet with the democratic opposition to Vladimir Putin. Two senators, Marco Rubio and Jeanne Shaheen, had hoped that Rex Tillerson would continue this tradition. "We feel strongly that democratically-minded Russians should know that the U.S. supports their aspirations," they wrote to him, "and as our nation's top diplomat, you are in a unique position to communicate this message." Tillerson did not meet with any members of the opposition. Nor was he present, in March, when the State Department released its annual human-rights report. Traditionally, the secretary of state presides over this event and holds an accompanying press conference. America is more than "another pleasant country on the U.N. roll call, somewhere between Albania and Zimbabwe," as George Bush the Elder said. America is "a unique nation with a special role in the world."

■ Russia has a law that defines extremism so widely that it is being used against Jehovah's Witnesses, all the 170,000 of them who live and worship in the country. The justice ministry thinks they "represent a threat to the rights of citizens, social order, and the security of the state" and have closed their headquarters in St. Petersburg and their 400 or so regional branches as well.

## Doyle's War SAVE THE MALES



### **MEN'S LIB – It's about time.**

**The other side of the gender issues coin.**

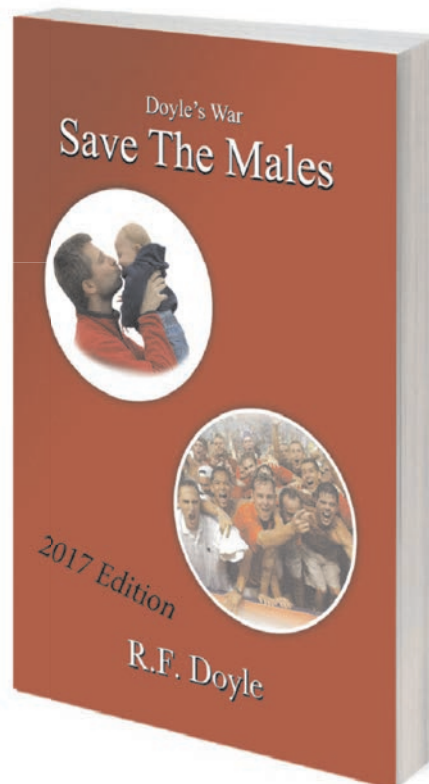
**333 pages of commonsense on gender and politics.**

**Causes of and solutions to legal and social problems.**

**Fight crime and drugs with fathers, not cops or social "workers." End emasculating, leftist social experiments.**

**Hard hitting. Politically incorrect!!!**

Received wisdom is that women are more discriminated against than men—a hoax promoted by mod/lib/fems. The war against men is harmful to all humanity, and must be taken seriously. This book refutes the idea that men cannot and should not do "fathering." Men's sorry situation results largely from misplaced chivalry, a universal zeitgeist. This and metastasizing of feminism have severely damaged men, society and especially families.



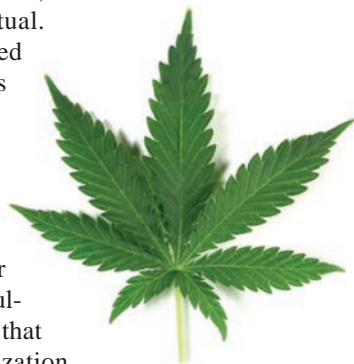
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About a hundred publications are banned, one of them with the title “My Book of Bible Stories.” The Witnesses turned to the law, but the supreme court found against them and concurred that “extremist organization” is a correct designation. All that’s missing from this rerun of the past is some senior official accusing the Witnesses of being spies and saboteurs in American pay.

■ The story is dog-bites-man, really: Saudi Arabia was elected to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. Yes, Saudi Arabia, a state that is infamous for oppressing women. But so is Iran, and it’s on the commission, too. Solzhenitsyn said that the United Nations was a bit misnamed. The U.N. is an assembly of governments rather than of nations or peoples—and this is the result we get. When the world has better governments, it will have a better U.N. In the meantime, democracies should push as hard as they can to promote humane values, and to keep the likes of Saudi Arabia and Iran off women’s-rights commissions.

■ Venezuela has broken down. Civilization is barely intact. People are starving. They are unable to leave the country. The slums have always been the strongholds of the ruling party, now led by Nicolás Maduro, Hugo Chávez’s successor. The people there have now turned against the government. One of the leading opposition politicians in the country was banned from running for office. Two others sought refuge in the home of a foreign ambassador (Chile’s). The supreme court nullified the congress. Under pressure, Maduro told the court to reinstate the congress. Protest is usually a young man’s game, but even grandparents, male and female, are out in the streets: because they have no food to feed themselves or their dependents. People are being killed in the streets as they protest. Venezuela was once a shining economic example in South America. It took the *chavistas*—bad government, bad economics, bad people—to destroy it. The world at large should do whatever it can to encourage the return of democracy, and decency, and food, to Venezuela.

■ Canada’s push to legalize marijuana is a reminder that this is one of those issues we do not necessarily enjoy being right about. Canada will become the second nation to fully legalize the recreational use of marijuana. (The other is Uruguay.) The fact is that the recreational use of marijuana and other drugs is not without serious costs: social, economic, medical, and spiritual. Marijuana often is presented by legalization advocates as the friendliest of buzzes, which it very well may be, but the habitual use of it can ruin lives. Cities as different as Amsterdam and Denver have discovered for themselves that the drug culture is a plague. The best that can be said about legalization efforts—which this magazine has long supported—is that they are preferable to the alternative. The so-called war on drugs is as expensive and futile as it is destructive, and it has proved a gateway to police gigantism and prosecutorial overreach. Addicts are more in need of



medical care and moral reform than incarceration, and prohibition in effect operates as a full-employment program for gangsters and Mafiosi around the world. Legalization mitigates some of that harm, but it does not eliminate it. We expect that Canada will discover, as Colorado has, that legalization is only the first step in managing the drug problem.

■ At Oxford University, shyness is now a hate crime. According to the university’s Equality and Diversity Unit, “not making eye contact or speaking directly to people” is officially considered a “racial micro-aggression.” And if you can’t manage a steady gaze and firm handshake, for heaven’s sake don’t try to make up for it with a little friendly getting-to-know-you chat, because even the question “Where are you from?” can be racist by suggesting the hearer is not British. Yet there’s a problem with all this: Elsewhere, the Equality and Diversity Unit has written that “people with [Asperger’s syndrome] may have difficulty with making eye contact, modulating their voices, shaking hands and expressing themselves verbally”—all micro-aggressions that, according to the directive quoted above, “can be tiring and alienating (and can lead to mental ill-health).” Speaking of mental ill health . . .

■ The editors of Wellesley College’s student newspaper have announced that “hostility may be warranted” against students, faculty, or other members of the Wellesley community who “speak hate speech or refuse to adapt their beliefs.” Not to be outdone, a group of students at Pomona College, part of California’s Claremont Colleges consortium, followed up the recent shouting-down of Manhattan Institute scholar Heather Mac Donald by declaring free speech “a tool appropriated by hegemonic institutions” and “truth” a “white-supremacist” “myth.” They also suggested that Pomona College’s president expel the staff of the *Claremont Independent*, the campus’s student-run conservative newspaper, for their “perpetuation of hate speech, anti-Blackness, and intimidation toward students of marginalized backgrounds.” The screeds of these students, of which we have given you a relatively distinguished sample, show that they are hostile to education and have none.

■ “Eerily timely” is the tagline of *The Handmaid’s Tale*, a new TV series adapted from the 1985 dystopian novel by Margaret Atwood. The series “arrives with a newfound and unexpected resonance in Trump’s America,” the *New York Times* reported in April. The tale imagines the violent overthrow of American government and the installation of a totalitarian theocracy, the Republic of Gilead, in which fertile women are stripped of all rights, imprisoned, and forced to bear children for elite men through state-sanctioned ritual rape. This nightmare bears no very striking resemblance to Trump’s America, but liberals have seen a nascent Gilead lurking in the hearts of Republican politicians since the Moral Majority. We’d wager the *Times* would have found the adaptation unexpectedly resonant in Kasich’s America.

■ Communism always was a fairy tale, and now the Left is finally admitting it. MIT Press has just published *Communism for Kids*, an illustrated storybook that uses princesses, swords, a magical chair, and other kid-lit favorites to reveal the glories

of collective agriculture and five-year plans. But most kids quickly figure out that fairies don't exist, animals can't talk, and Santa Claus can't create gifts out of nothing. It takes a college education to believe in "a different kind of communism, one . . . free from authoritarianism," that will spring up after "the people take everything into their own hands and decide for themselves how to continue" (to quote the publisher's summary). The author, a historian, weaves into his allegorical plot half a dozen attempts at collectivization "borrowed from historic models of communist or socialist change," all of which fail, of course; but he insists that if we learn a few simple lessons from these mistakes, next time we can get Communism right. You'd have better odds kissing frogs.

■ By turns exasperating, whiny, and tone-deaf, Lena Dunham has proved to be the very picture of a clueless, narcissistic Millennial. Yet her HBO show *Girls*, which—during a six-season run, concluding on April 16, that seemed to attract as many published ruminations as it did viewers—was engaging and funny, a relentless satiric onslaught against morally vacuous, self-deluding, over-entitled Millennials. In the show's final episode, Dunham's character, Hannah Horvath, having deserted hipster-infested Brooklyn for a sylvan university town, was finally finding something like stability and maturity thanks to the responsibilities associated with raising a baby, conceived in a typically heedless fling with a surf instructor untroubled by any thoughts of commitment to her. Many in her

generation praised Dunham for accurately chronicling their foibles; here's hoping they didn't miss the series' unmistakable warning that Millennial solipsism is an utter disaster.

■ At Boys' Latin, a college-prep charter school for boys in West Philadelphia, students are required to learn the language of Cicero, who knew a few things about good writing. Beautiful in its own right, Latin is also a key—to clarity of thought and elegance of expression in many modern languages, including English, as well as to the centuries of literature and scholarship that form the matrix of Western culture. The mother tongue of ancient Rome was disseminated across Europe, northern Africa, the Levant, and eventually the whole globe. It is read, written, heard, and spoken in America today, and not just in the classrooms of New England boarding schools. West Philly is hardly Exeter, N.H. "Nobody expects black boys to do Latin, because it's hard," says David Hardy, the school's CEO, "and that's exactly why we do it." About 97 percent of the school's graduates go on to college. *Bene factum*.

■ In 1990, Peggy Noonan wowed us with her memoir of the Reagan administration: *What I Saw at the Revolution*. She has since been wowing us with further books—such as *John Paul the Great*—and her regular column in the *Wall Street Journal*. She has now won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary. Four years ago, Bret Stephens won it. A decent run for conservatives, especially considering the judges.

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■ In 1967, Norman Podhoretz wrote his memoir *Making It*, a confession of ambition. Podhoretz was speaking for himself and others, whether they liked it or not. The book had a haunting, memorable opening line: “The journey from Brooklyn to Manhattan is one of the longest journeys in the world.” These days,



it is downright cool to live in Brooklyn. But not in the childhood of Norman Podhoretz. *Making It* was savaged by the critics. One of the myriad hostile reviews appeared in *The New York Review of Books*. This year, on its 50th anniversary, *Making It* is being republished—by the publishing arm of *The New York Review of Books*. As a classic. Few writers live to see such vindication. Norman Podhoretz has. Congratulations, Norman, and keep those memoirs coming.

■ “I have seen I think the very first attempt to talk about abortion that manages to avoid every one of the bloodcurdling clichés used both by those who believe in abortion and those who oppose it. It is a most remarkable essay by John T. Noonan Jr., and it is simply entitled, ‘How to Argue about Abortion.’” So wrote WFB in 1974, in one of his many commendings of the renowned law professor (Notre Dame, Berkeley), Catholic intellectual, author (of numerous books, and several pieces for *NATIONAL REVIEW*), and judge. He left his mark on issues ranging from contraception, abortion, usury, and bribery to constitutional conventions and religious freedom. In the early 1970s, when unrestricted abortion triumphed through judicial fiat, it was Noonan—often through essays for *The Human Life Review*—who constructed and provided for the pro-life movement the foundation of a reasoned counterattack. It was going to be a long slog, and the fight would require scholarship: He gave it, copiously and profoundly. Nominated to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit by President Reagan, he was confirmed in 1985 and served there for over a decade, and under senior status until his death this April 17, at the age of 90. One of the last great pro-life liberals, Noonan was a remarkable champion of unborn life, a giant of the movement to save and protect it. R.I.P.

## THE PRESIDENCY

## A Hundred Days

It is strange that American presidents and pundits fetishize the hundred days. FDR used the term to praise himself for his early New Deal initiatives. But the first Hundred Days was Napoleon’s return from Elba, which did not end well. President Trump has fallen between his two predecessors with a mixture of normality, farce, and vertigo.

His great achievement, beyond cavil, was the confirmation of Justice Neil Gorsuch. Trump understood that the composition of the Supreme Court was a top concern for many Republicans, including those otherwise skeptical of him. He farmed out the task of picking a replacement for Antonin Scalia to Leonard Leo of the Federalist Society. Leo found an excellent judge who—always a plus for Trump—looked the part. Trump made the call, the Senate confirmed, and there is once again a four-man conservative bloc on the Court.

Second in importance has been the creeping normalization of Trump’s foreign policy. The Trump campaign seemed to promise a worldview like that of Vladimir Putin’s European wannabes, at once autarkic and bellicose. Yet NATO, it turns out, is important to the president, and whatever else one thinks of his Syrian missile strike, it showed no fealty to Russia or its proxies.

Trump seems to have begun delivering on one of his most important campaign promises: The flow of illegal immigrants to the U.S. has drastically diminished. That is in part the result of a new seriousness about enforcement. We look forward to his proposing legislation to reform legal immigration as well.

But legislatively, the Trump administration has been a laggard. The attempt to repeal and replace Obamacare has so far been the Capitol Hill equivalent of an oil-rig fire. The House GOP, embracing both moderates and the Freedom Caucus, was fractious to begin with, and Speaker Paul Ryan could not manage them. But the White House failed to do its part. Trump boasts that he is a “closer”—the man who makes the deal in the home stretch. His closing here was to blow hard, then wash his hands, and then deny that he had ever washed his hands. He and the GOP need an Obamacare alternative; their next try will have to go better.

Then there has been the unbearable lightness of being Trump: the vanity; the word salad; the rise and fall of dodgy characters (Michael Flynn, Stephen Bannon); the looming influence of his Manhattan family members, product placements and all.

Trump’s campaign was powerful in messaging and showmanship, amazingly weak in detail. In this it was the shadow of the candidate. Where there is a coherent and organized conservative cadre—as with judicial nominations—or a long arc of governmental practice—as with post-World War II foreign policy—Team Trump has been good, or good enough. Left to its own, it drifts and bucks.

Keep in mind that nothing serious has happened yet. The Gorsuch nomination restored a status quo. Even North Korea’s burgeoning missile program is still at the stage of chest-puffing. How will Trump handle a crisis? We have thirteen and a half more hundred days to find out.

## OBITUARY

## Kate Walsh O’Beirne, R.I.P.

KATE O’BEIRNE was part of *NATIONAL REVIEW*’s world before she joined the staff. When she became the magazine’s Washington editor in 1995, her résumé already included stints at Senator Jim Buckley’s office, the Reagan administration, and the Heritage Foundation. She served *NR* in that position for ten years and then became president of National Review Institute for seven more.

She brought a witty and well-informed conservatism to a national television audience as well, through weekly appearances on CNN’s marquee political talk show *Capital Gang*. Conservatives were outnumbered there, as on cable news generally at that time, but it never seemed that way as long as she was on. Her gloriously old-fashioned New York accent could also be heard regularly on *Crossfire* and the PBS *NewsHour*.

Both her “Bread and Circuses” column for NR and her television commentary were marked by a rare combination of a deep interest in conservative policy, psychological insight, and common sense. Many of those same qualities put her advice—on politics, editorials, careers, and personal matters—in high demand.

It was advice she was happy to give, setting her listeners right while somehow also making them feel like geniuses. She enlivened every party, taking special care for the people who seemed shy or left out. This same impulse led her to take in young colleagues, or classmates of her children, who had nowhere to go for holidays.

And it made her one of the most beloved people of Washington, D.C.

You had to get to know her very well before you realized she was an introvert, one who was making a titanic effort to make sure everyone was happy.

Kate was a quiet apostle for the Catholic faith, taking great satisfaction in the people she had brought, or brought back, to it, and cooking for priests who would “eat me out of house and home.” Reverence was never a chore for her. Leaving last year’s National Catholic Prayer Breakfast—one of her final public outings—she saw a favorite priest tipping a bellman, she thought, inadequately. She gently corrected him: “Father, you took a vow of poverty, not him.”



Kate O'Beirne

Decades of chain-smoking caught up with her last year—vaping came too late for her—leading to an ordeal from which she shielded nearly everyone who loved her.

In her final days, she clutched a rosary while surrounded by her devoted husband, Jim; her adored sons, Phil and John; her sisters, Mary Ann, Virginia, and Rosemary; and many friends. Her great regret was that she would not be able to spend more time doting on her grandchildren. She died at noon on this Divine Mercy Sunday.

Phil noted that his mother had believed in the show-business adage “Leave them wanting more.” She has done that. R.I.P.

— Ramesh Ponnuru

## YOU’LL DIG ‘DIGGING IN’

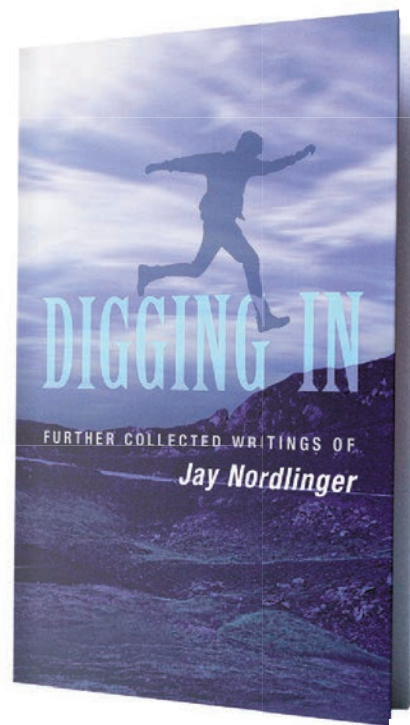
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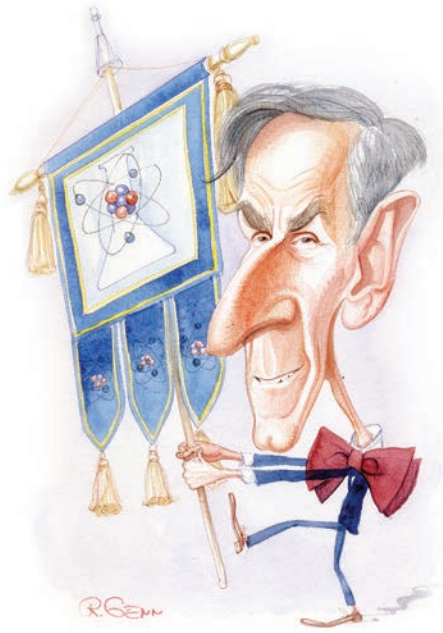
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Bill Nye

## The Inquisitor's Heirs

*Progressives claim to love science, but what they truly love is power*

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

**T**o be a good progressive is to adhere simultaneously to two incompatible notions: one, that science provides the final word on any question about which scientists offer any opinion; two, that the scientific method is illegitimate, a tool of the sundry atavistic forces conspiring to keep down the female, the black, the brown, the poor, the gay, the disabled, the gender-fluid—everybody except Mitt Romney.

If you were looking at the college campuses with the right kind of eyes in the Eighties and Nineties, you could have seen this coming.

The more philosophically self-aware progressives have long been ensorcelled by the belief that science—or, really, Science—could be pressed into service bearing loads of social management too heavy for a mere bureaucracy. The Soviet Union invested a great deal of its scarce capital in something it called “Soviet cybernetics,” a sort of Stone Age attempt at using what we’d now call Big Data to analyze and solve social problems, especially those related to the management of economic production. The old Marxists took their “scientific socialism” seriously.

In the English-speaking world, progressives, under the influence not only of political philosophers such as John Dewey but also of the engineer and management theorist Frederick Winslow Taylor, fell into something like a cult of expertise. Experts under the tutelage of Science could, would, and should decide . . . almost everything. How much steel should U.S. firms produce? How should they produce it? What should the line workers at the factory be paid? What about their supervisors? Taylor’s *Principles of Scientific Management*, published in 1911, provides a testament to the ambitions of the Progressive Era: He and his contemporaries believed that, using such new technological tools as stopwatches and motion-picture cameras, one could study industrial processes at the most granular level—how a certain employee turns a certain screw—and produce a single, best way of performing any task.

There is a great deal of ideology embedded in that belief, along with a great many political assumptions, but Taylor and the others denied that they were engaged in any sort of politics at all: Their business, as they saw it, was Science. There is a reasonably straight

line from early-20th-century progressivism to contemporary, Barack Obama-style “pragmatism,” which is dishonestly and glibly characterized as simply “doing what works.” In reality it means “doing what I want done, in the most convenient way.”

But managerial progressivism, with its implicit faith in hierarchy and its inescapable elitism (not everybody gets a Ph.D. from Harvard), was always set for conflict with the more populist and emotional tendencies on the left that came to prominence in the Sixties, political currents originating largely in issues of identity (from black power to Chicano power to what we used to call “women’s liberation”). Such concerns exist uneasily alongside a managerial progressivism based on the wisdom of people who were—and are—overwhelmingly white, male, and highly educated, working in institutions built by (and, the identity Left would argue, *for*) people who were overwhelmingly white, male, and highly educated. For years, this played out as old-fashioned progressive elites’ exercising a kind of managerial veto over the wilder ambitions of the identity Left: Bernie Sanders proposes reorganizing the American economy around the cultivation of organic hemp, and somebody responsible tells him, “No.”

This gave the identity Left a very strong incentive to work to undermine the prestige of Science, a project that was undertaken with great enthusiasm back during the heyday of postmodernism. The academic world endures a lot of vogueish nonsense about “African science” and “feminist mathematics” and “queer physics” (“My early postulate is that queer physics speaks about knowledge-making in physics that takes the form of subverting the hegemony of a dominant and mainstream discourse”). The extreme, Foucauldian version of that analysis was ridiculous and lame and easy to write off if you were not an academic. But the more moderate version of that view became quite mainstream: We may not hear very much about feminist physics, but we hear about “women’s ways of knowing,” gay perspectives on this, black perspectives on that, etc., as if there were not as many black perspectives as there are black people. Michel Foucault’s lurking malice was reinvented as the motive force in the rhetoric of “intersectionality,” the



belief that the oppression of people with certain characteristics (black, gay, disabled, etc.) isn't a matrix of attitudes and discrete episodes but a complex nest of social relationships that can, conveniently, explain anything—the phlogiston of identity politics.

The Indiana Jones heuristic—the search for fact is science, the search for Truth is philosophy—can go only so far in finessing the inherent conflict between science, which is organized around assumptions of objectivity, and the poisonous identity politics holding as its fundamental principle that everything is subjective. The scientific view is that true is true and false is false, irrespective of any particular demographic or political characteristics of the speaker. (Though these of course may provide grounds for skepticism: “Who paid for your study?” is not an entirely unreasonable question.)

At the same time, the identity Left has its uses for Science. For one thing, it was a convenient cudgel to use against conservative-leaning Christians distressed by certain implications of evolu-

superstitious attitudes about modern agriculture and evidence-based medicine. You will not hear Democrats complaining about the fact that the Affordable Care Act clears the way for subsidizing such hokum as acupuncture and homeopathy. Seventh-day Adventists may make some claims about the world that sound ridiculous from the scientific point of view, but so do practitioners of yoga and sweat-lodge enthusiasts. The public adoration of Science isn't about science.

Which brings us to the recent March for Science and the popular poster boy for all things Science, Bill Nye. The March for Science was no such thing; in the main, it was a march for the one thing almost every faction of the Left can agree on: a larger public sector. Progressives are culturally at home in large institutions (universities, federal agencies, Fortune 500 HR departments), and they have learned how to game those systems pretty well. More funding for “science” means a lot of funding for things tangentially related to science and a lot of comfortable sinecures related to

department at Middlebury, has apologized for the episode in which Murray was prevented from speaking on campus by rioters: Professor Johnson apologized to the rioters for having had the poor judgment to invite someone to campus whose views are at variance with their own. It could be that Murray's work represents poor science; some respected parties have made exactly that argument. But what does Science have to say about the disputation of claims?

The postmodernists were correct in one thing: There is some politics built into the scientific method, in that the scientific method assumes an environment in which people are at liberty to speak, debate, and publish—a liberty with which the American Left, particularly on college campuses, is at war. They are not interested in debate or conversation. They are interested in silencing those who disagree with them, and they have high-profile allies: Democratic prosecutors around the country are working to criminalize the holding of nonconformist views about global warming

## The scientific view is that **true is true and false is false**, irrespective of any particular demographic or political characteristics of the speaker.

tion or discombobulated by the possibility that homosexuality is a phenomenon with roots that are biological rather than diabolical. That sort of thing is usually the stuff of low-value conversation: A certain kind of eternal adolescent never stops getting a thrill out of scandalizing his retrograde Lutheran grandmother. But if you have a sufficient number of such interactions—and we have no shortage of them—they can become a part of the tribal identity that is the real basis of our politics, however much we might pretend that what we are really talking about is public policy. As the identity Left moved out of the communes and into the suburbs and progressivism became much more strongly associated with the interests and habits of affluent, educated, coastal elites, professing one's love of Science became an exercise in telegraphing status.

But if it were really about science, we'd be hearing more from scientists and less from people who have batty,

science in the vaguest way: A great many people with degrees in women's studies or Latino studies have jobs in “science” as community-outreach coordinators and program officers with responsibilities that might charitably be described as “light.” It's a safe bet that \$100 spent on “science” gets you about \$17.50 worth of astrophysics with the balance going to “community development,” paid political activism, and overhead. That is not an argument against spending on science—it is an argument for better and more responsibly run programs.

And that would be a fine argument to have, if we could have an argument. Which we can't.

Charles Murray, who wrote one of the world's most famous books bringing scientific research to bear on social questions, has in effect been forbidden to speak at college campuses. In one of the most shameful spectacles of contemporary academic malfeasance, Bert Johnson, the chairman of the political-science

(some prominent activists have openly called for jailing “climate deniers”), and Howard Dean has taken up the novel argument that the First Amendment does not actually protect political speech with which he disagrees. (It is, he insists, “hate speech,” a legally null term in the American context.) Dean has argued that the federal laws governing the conduct of political campaigns could and should be used to regulate *all public speaking*.

The partisans of Science believe themselves to be part of an eternal war between Galileo and the Inquisition, but they have in fact chosen the Inquisition's side. They have chosen the side of the Censor and the Index—so long as they get to choose who serves as Censor and who manages the Index. That is how they have reconciled Science and its claims of objective fact with identity politics and its denial of the same: They are engaged in neither the pursuit of fact nor the pursuit of Truth—only the pursuit of Power. NR

# Tax Reform For the Working Class

*Three ideas to meet the needs of new  
Republican voters*

BY HENRY OLSEN

**T**HE Trump administration and congressional Republicans are champing at the bit to introduce a comprehensive tax-reform bill. All indications are that the bill will dramatically slash the marginal rate of taxation that applies to most corporations. This may be great long-term economics if supply-side theory is correct. But without more targeted tax relief that offers immediate and direct benefit to the swing voters who elected President Trump, Republicans might not be in power long enough to enjoy the economic upturn.

Trump won because he received over 5 million votes from people, largely non-college-educated whites, who had voted twice for President Obama. From an economic standpoint, these voters are likelier to be unemployed or underemployed than the typical Republican. They are also likelier to have suffered financially during the Great Recession and to have faced stagnant or declining wages for the past two decades. They crossed party lines because they saw Trump as someone who was committed to delivering what they want most: good, high-paying jobs.

Economic theory says that corporate-tax reform will deliver them to American workers, but only over time and not necessarily in any way that voters can directly perceive. The economic benefits will flow only if corporate managers believe the rate reductions are permanent, something President Trump's continued historically low approval ratings and the likely hostility from Democrats will call into question. Even with this belief, corporations do

not turn on a dime. It takes months or years to plan major investments, and longer still to actually build the new plants, factories, and businesses that would deliver new jobs and higher wages. Hurting and angry voters may not have the patience to wait to see whether the promises are kept.

A tax bill that includes provisions that are clearly intended to benefit these people directly, however, might increase their support and patience. But here traditional supply-side theory might not offer a palatable solution. Cutting these voters' marginal income-tax rates won't deliver much benefit. Many of these voters already pay little to no income tax because of the increases in the child tax credit and the lower marginal rates that the George W. Bush tax cuts installed in the early 2000s. Moreover, what these voters really want is a return to the prosperity they believe is their due. Cutting their tax rate from, say, 15 to 13 percent won't give them much money now and won't do anything to make them think the future will be noticeably brighter.

Three ideas stand out as possible provisions that could help these voters quickly. None of them fit neatly with supply-side theory, but each would deliver immediate benefits to workers and, just as important, show them that the GOP cares about people like them.

The first is a tax credit for hiring American citizens. This credit would be in addition to the current deduction for all compensation paid to a business's workers, and it could be structured as a percentage of compensation or wages or even as a flat per capita amount. It would, in effect, be a partial subsidy for job creation. It would directly meet the need these workers have, and it would be clear and easily understandable: Hire a citizen, get paid.

This provision would also address concerns about the level of immigration. Low-skilled immigration, often illegal, exerts a downward pressure on wages for many native-born Americans. Make these credits available only for citizens, however, and on the margin it becomes cheaper to hire American than to import labor legally or to overlook the legal status of your employees. Since it would be attached to a tax bill that would go through reconciliation in the Senate, this idea would not require any Democratic support, unlike immigration legislation

or appropriations for a border wall. It would also allow the Trump administration to deter illegal immigration even in sanctuary cities. A citizens-only jobs tax credit, therefore, would address two priority issues for voters—jobs and border control—with one act.

The second idea is related: a tax credit for wage increases for workers earning the national median wage or less. It should be set as a percentage of wages paid above the annual national increase (if any) in the median wage. Thus, if the national median wage rose by 1 percent in a calendar year, the tax credit would be provided for any wage increases above that percentage.

This provision would directly attack the other main economic problem that less skilled workers face: stagnant paychecks. In effect, it would provide a small but real subsidy for a business to give a marginal dollar to a low-income worker rather than pay it to a manager or to stockholders. It could be viewed as an alternative to Democratic proposals for minimum-wage hikes, and it would likely cost many fewer jobs, because it would not increase the marginal cost of all less skilled labor.

Like the first tax credit, this wage-hike credit could also be given only for U.S. citizens, further increasing a native-born American's economic competitiveness. Moreover, by pegging the credit to the national median wage, this provision would provide additional benefits for workers in low-wage regions of the country. A firm operating in a less prosperous area, such as West Virginia, probably pays a larger percentage of its total labor bill to workers earning less than the national median wage than does a similar firm in Silicon Valley or New York. This credit would therefore provide a subtle but potentially significant subsidy to firms outside the larger metro areas, which in turn would help spread gains from economic growth more evenly throughout the country.

The third provision is to exempt a share of wages from the payroll tax. This provision would directly address the "money in the pocket" issue, giving every worker an identical tax cut regardless of income but providing a bigger proportional boost to the less well-off. If applied to the entire payroll tax, every \$10,000 exempted would give a worker an additional \$765 a year

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to spend. A two-earner family making \$30,000 a year—a common situation in inner cities and in “Trump Country”—would thus get a bit over \$1,500 a year more to spend. If those wages were also exempted from the employer’s share of the payroll tax, it could lower the marginal cost of hiring an additional employee.

Since the payroll tax pays for Social Security and Medicare, any such provision should include other changes that would recoup some of the lost revenue. There are plenty of ideas for doing so, such as reducing the premium subsidies that go to well-off seniors on Medicare, increasing Medicare co-pays for wealthier seniors, or increasing the share of Social Security benefits that is subject to income taxation for seniors who receive income of, say, at least \$50,000 or \$75,000 outside of that venerable program.

Supply-siders may resist these ideas, but they should recognize that there is more than one way to produce broadly shared economic growth. Provisions such as these could help ensure that the gains from a faster growth rate do not accrue primarily to people at the top of the income and education scales, as they did over the last 15 years. These provisions would also give less skilled workers “skin in the game” as regards tax reform. Such workers might not be terribly interested in corporate-rate reductions, but they might nonetheless care about passage of an entire tax bill if it includes these proposals as well.

The GOP leadership thinks correctly that it has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pass vital tax reform. It also has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a durable political majority, a task that has eluded it in the 40 years since Ronald Reagan brought the modern Republican party into being. As Reagan told the 1977 Conservative Political Action Conference, “If we are to attract more working men and women of this country, we will do so not by simply making room for them, but by making certain they have a say in what goes on in the party.” The tax provisions I have outlined are exactly the sort that these men and women would adopt if they in fact did have a real say about what the Republican party does. GOP tax-reform advocates should use the expected tax-reform bill as a way to complete the political task Reagan bequeathed to us.

NR

# Dictator Erdogan

*The dismantling of Turkish democracy continues*

BY DAVID PRYCE-JONES

**R**ECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN has been prime minister of Turkey, then president, and now a referendum has approved constitutional changes that crown him dictator in all but name. This is a display of political sleight of hand at the highest level, comparable to Vladimir Putin’s performance in Russia, perhaps even studiously

copied from it. Fraud and violence rigged the voting in the referendum. A state of emergency was in place, and still is. Selahattin Demirtas, head of the pro-Kurdish party in parliament, was in prison, and still is. Other prominent opponents of Erdogan were intimidated. A million or so unstamped ballots were considered valid. Erdogan advised the supervisory panel, all of them Turks, “to know their place,” as he put it with unmistakable clarity, and they duly dismissed all complaints. Yet in spite of the manipulation, his majority was scarcely more than 1 percent. Throughout the country, in the words of Elif Shafak, a leading intellectual, “fear, anger, anxiety, and paranoia have become normal.”

As with all dictators, the drive for absolute power must lie deep in Erdogan’s



Recep Tayyip Erdogan

unexplored psyche. Born in 1954, he grew up in Istanbul. Committing himself single-mindedly to politics at an early age, he became mayor of Istanbul in his thirties and by all accounts was a success. However, in an address at the end of his time in that office, he quoted a 19th-century poem that amounts to a declaration of war: “The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful our soldiers.” Islamism of this kind was an unwelcome novelty at the time, and Erdogan was sentenced to prison for ten months, though released after four.

Founder and leader of the Justice and Development Party (AKP in its Turkish acronym), Erdogan won three successive elections, earning a reputation as a capable administrator of the economy. Self-confident to the point of recklessness, he set about accumulating wealth and power. He has built himself a palace with over a thousand rooms, inviting comparison to Ceausescu’s architectural

caliphate with a republic intentionally modeled on contemporary secular and democratic lines. His purpose was to ensure that Turkey and the West would meet on equal terms. In his eyes, Islam had been the cause of backwardness; it had lost Turkey the war and risked losing it the peace. Ataturk’s reforms subjected Islam to state control. In practice, the life and culture of the country remained Islamic, and so it fell to the army to decide what was permissible and what was not. No other state institution had the authority, and if necessary the capability, for the task.

Responsibility for the protection and perpetuation of Ataturk’s legacy has been a burden for the army, and the source of permanent political tension. Since 1960, there have been no fewer than three military coups. During the first of these, I happened to be in Istanbul. It was simple: Tanks had merely to rumble down the street. From a vantage point in a restaurant onshore, I was able to hear the wailing over the water of men

has historically fought Shiite Muslim Iran to a standstill, and is a counterweight to it today. The twists and turns of alliances and enmities have led Muslim states to define their relation to Islam and Islamism. Erdogan’s version is extreme: “The term ‘moderate Islam’ is ugly and offensive. There is no moderate Islam. Islam is Islam.” Burak Bekdil, a most distinguished journalist with the courage of his convictions and a feel for history and politics, speaks of Erdogan’s “confrontational Islamist-nationalist rhetoric” and explains that its purpose is “restoring the country’s Ottoman influence.” This leads to potentially disruptive questioning of things long settled, such as the national boundaries to which Turkey agreed in a moment of defeat and shame, or the claims to Arab territories that once were Ottoman provinces.

At one of the annual meetings in Davos of the World Economic Forum, Erdogan appeared on a television program with the then Israeli president,

## ‘Democracy is like a train. You **get off** once you have reached your destination.’

monstrosity in Bucharest. Someone somehow obtained and posted on YouTube audio recordings in which he is heard urgently instructing his son Bilal to get rid of shoeboxes filled with millions of dollars in cash. When his son, then a student in Bologna, was detained by Italian authorities on a charge of money-laundering, Erdogan threatened reprisals at the national level. He only just managed to survive a scandal that would have destroyed a politician in almost any other country.

The longer Erdogan has been in office, the more he has concentrated on what it means to be Turkish and Muslim, two strong identities whose uncertain compatibility has become one of the overriding issues of the moment. Turkey’s place in the world is at stake. Until the end of the Ottoman Empire, the sultan had also been the caliph, a figurehead for the worldwide community of the faithful. In the aftermath of the First World War, Kemal Ataturk won the powers of a virtual dictator and used them to replace the sultanate and the

whom the army was already holding in prison on the offshore island of Prinkipo.

Having won the tests of strength, the ringleaders of these coups invariably restored the status quo, ordered their soldiers back to barracks, and handed power to parliament. It may be difficult to accept that the military has a progressive role, but the consensus in the West has been that Turkey is a successful amalgam of Islam and modernity, a sort of honorary democracy that other Muslim nations would do well to imitate. Membership in NATO and participation in joint military exercises with American and European forces has been taken as confirmation of a mutual identity. In addition, Turkish guest workers and immigrants have settled in their millions in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Successive Turkish governments have repeatedly sought membership in the European Union.

It is a fact of life, however, that Islam gives a great many Turks their sense of pride and power. In many ways the pre-eminent Sunni Muslim state, Turkey

Shimon Peres. Without warning, he accused Israelis of being “good at killing” and strode off the set, as though Turks had never killed—and sometimes massacred—Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, and Kurds. The Germans, the Dutch, and the Israelis, he likes to repeat, are Nazis who surpass Hitler in barbarism. In response, every Turk who lives in Europe should have five children and take it over. What Ataturk emulated he scorns as a mere expedient: “Democracy is like a train. You get off once you have reached your destination.” He is looking to the past as the way out of the present. And it has to be said that this is why large crowds gather and cheer, wave flags, and vote for him.

The hold of the army had to be broken if Erdogan was to set up a latter-day sultanate and caliphate. His first attempt to do this was in 2007. The chief of staff, some generals, and other senior officers were accused of a conspiracy known as Ergenekon whose aim was to overthrow Erdogan. Arrested and tried, they received long prison sentences. A couple

of years later, the highest appeals court could not find evidence of the guilt of a single one of the 531 indicted, and was unable to prove that Ergenekon was anything other than fiction.

Last July, the army had had enough, presumably taking it for granted that mounting a coup was the simple affair it had so often been. Commandos stormed the hotel in Marmara where Erdogan had been on vacation but discovered that he had escaped to Istanbul, quite probably forewarned; conspiracy theorists are muttering that the coup attempt has done him such a favor that he must have arranged it himself. By the time loyalists had regained control and spent the night in the streets shouting “Allahu akbar” and “We want execution,” 265 people had been killed and hundreds hurt.

The incompetence of the military played into Erdogan’s hands. Fethullah Gulen was a colleague of Erdogan’s until they had a falling out and he went into exile in the United States. In his mid 70s, he runs Hizmet, a slightly mysterious semi-spiritual and semi-charitable Muslim network. No evidence supports Erdogan’s immediate claim that Gulen is responsible for the coup attempt. Almost certainly a fabrication like Ergenekon, the accusation has facilitated the arrest of many guilty only by association. According to the interior minister, Suleyman Soylu, 47,155 people have been jailed since the attempt and a further 113,264 detained, among them 168 generals, 7,463 other military officers, 2,575 judges, and 10,732 police officers. Among the 135,000 who have been purged and have no employment are 7,317 academics and over 20,000 teachers. One hundred seventy-nine television stations, newspapers, and other media outlets have been closed in the aftermath of the attempt, and 150 journalists are in jail.

In Ottoman Turkey in 1826, the elite military corps of janissaries rebelled against Sultan Mahmud II, and he had all 135,000 of them murdered, imprisoned, or exiled. This brutality came to be referred to as the Auspicious Event, but it was a step towards unstoppable historic decline. Erdogan’s Auspicious Event is not as murderous, but it has gutted Turkey, condemning it to division and crisis until someone like the real Ataturk comes to the rescue. NR

# A Different Kind of Crisis

*The standoff over North Korea’s nuclear weapons heads into uncharted territory*

BY MICHAEL AUSLIN

**A**T the Passover festive meal, the key question, asked by the youngest child at the table, is: “Why is this night different from all other nights?” The question is asked every year, and every year the set response is designed to highlight why this night really is distinguishable from all the rest.

With similar regularity, North Korea precipitates a crisis over its nuclear and missile programs. And, as at the Jewish seder, the same questions are always asked and the same answers always given. Why is *this* Korean crisis different from all other Korean crises? *This* time, the North Koreans will launch a successful intercontinental ballistic missile; *this* time, the U.S. Navy will shoot it down; *this* time, China really is upset and will pressure North Korea; *this* time, Washington will make a grand bargain with Pyongyang or Beijing; and on and on. Like the traditional Passover readings, the questions and answers never vary.

They have become a constant in East Asian diplomacy over the past 25 years, since the Clinton administration threatened to bomb Kim Il-sung’s nascent nuclear program in 1994, only to pull back at the last minute and begin a well-intentioned but futile attempt to negotiate with the dictator in Pyongyang. In Clinton’s wake, Presidents Bush and Obama both made similar diplomatic attempts, despite endemic and increasingly sophisticated North Korean cheating on promises to shutter its nuclear program. Bush continued the fiction of negotiations even after North Korea detonated its first nuclear device in 2006, in the middle of the six-party talks.

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A particularly fevered season of North Korean–crisis speculation has broken out recently, as another round of missiles have been launched and apparent nuclear-test preparation has commenced. Yet perhaps it is worth asking whether this North Korean crisis really is different.

There are several reasons it could be. The first is straightforward: Kim Jong-un. North Korea’s current dictator has been in power since December 2011, so this is not his first provocation. Indeed, since he took power, North Korea has launched dozens of missiles and conducted three nuclear tests, one in 2013 and two in 2016.

Yet American intelligence and national-security officials feel that the young Kim, about whom the world knew almost nothing before he took power, is a less predictable, less controllable, and less disciplined personality than his father or grandfather. Instead of seeming to use his nuclear and missile tests as bargaining chips, as his father did, Kim has increased the pace of banned activity, keeping the peninsula on a steady crisis footing, and matched it to chilling if routine rhetoric about launching devastating attacks on the United States and its allies.

Kim is certainly as brutal as his predecessors, if not more so, having executed as many as 340 people since taking over. (Needless to say, precise numbers are hard to come by.) Those who have fallen under his sword include his half-brother, Kim Jong-nam, murdered in broad daylight at Malaysia’s Kuala Lumpur International Airport, and Jang Song-thaek, his uncle and China’s key agent in North Korea—an assassination that has many wondering whether Kim has no fear of Beijing. North Korea continues to exist because its leaders have long had a strange ability to approach the point of no return without ever reaching it, but it’s not clear that Kim is quite so sophisticated. He could precipitate armed confrontation owing to arrogance, mania, or simple miscalculation.

The second reason this North Korean crisis may be different is the American leader: Donald Trump. The track record of American failure vis-à-vis North Korea may complicate the situation for Trump—but it could also liberate him. The Bush administration’s repeated attempts to negotiate with Kim Jong-il, even as Pyongyang worked assiduously toward a nuclear weapon, put paid to the conceit that intensive, multilateral diplomacy could change the Kim regime’s behavior. By contrast,



*Kim Jong-un inspects North Korean special-operations forces.*

Barack Obama’s policy of “strategic patience” (marred by the ill-considered and ill-fated 2012 Leap Day Agreement, which tied food aid to North Korea’s promise not to conduct missile tests) showed that ignoring the North would lead to . . . nothing. The Obama administration passively observed three nuclear tests and multiple missile launches. The need for a new approach, or a third way, is evident.

Trump has matched North Korea’s hyperbolic rhetoric with some of his own, marking a sharp break with recent U.S. practice. In doing so, he may be following his familiar playbook, staking out an aggressive, maximalist position (“We’re going to take care of North Korea”) to shape subsequent negotiations. Trump also has ordered a U.S. Navy aircraft-carrier strike group to the waters off North Korea, and his vice president has publicly declared that the era of “strategic patience” is over. Setting aside the overwrought controversy about whether the strike group was dispatched to Korea exactly when Trump said it was, this White House is clearly quick to flex muscle. Moreover, anyone doubting Donald Trump’s resolve to use military force has to be reconsidering after his missile strike on Syria. Deploying an aircraft carrier to Korean waters appears for now a more credible way to pressure Kim into better behavior or into another round of negotiations than were the policies of Trump’s predecessors.

If the president intends to open negotiations with Pyongyang, he probably will distance himself from both Bush and Obama by negotiating with the constant threat of military action. The tactic will be to display limited American patience with

Kim’s conduct—a major reversal from the prior two administrations—in order to extract maximum concessions. The likelihood of Pyongyang’s breaking an agreement would be high, but its doing so would risk punitive action from the U.S., assuming the Trump administration were willing to pursue it. Whether that would tame the North or precipitate an all-out conflict is unknowable; but backing down would surely undercut, perhaps fatally, U.S. influence on the North Korean issue, leaving China as the dominant actor.

That suggests a third reason this Korean crisis may be different from others. There is little doubt that China is reaching the end of its patience with Kim Jong-un. Beijing’s turning against Kim does *not* mean a Chinese abandonment of North Korea itself—the hermit nation is still far too valuable to Beijing as a buffer between U.S.-aligned South Korea and itself, not to mention as a convenient thorn in the side of the United States.

But as the execution of Jang Song-thaek proved, Kim Jong-un is no mere Chinese puppet. According to those in the know, he has spurned Xi Jinping’s summons to China, and his brazen murder of his half-brother in a foreign country showed the dangerous reach of his secret services. There are whispers that Xi finds Kim a threat to China’s continued hold on North Korea, and perhaps to stability in northeast Asia generally. That China is publicly refusing coal shipments from North Korea and turning away its ships (whether the coal was already paid for has not been disclosed), and has suggested that it might cut off oil to the North, may be seen as the beginning of a campaign to squeeze Kim,

to foment unrest among the North Korean elite, or to block more-assertive Trump-administration action by feigning cooperation. In any case, the withdrawal of Chinese support for Kim has the potential to be enormously significant—potentially even prompting a crisis that threatens the Kim regime’s grip on power.

Finally, this crisis may be different because of *South* Korea. The impeachment of former president Park Geun-hye has turned South Korean politics upside down. It appears that progressive Democratic-party candidate Moon Jae-in will replace her in the upcoming election; and, if not, the winner will almost certainly be center-left politician Ahn Cheol-soo, of the People’s party. Either way, the next leader of South Korea may well decide to return the country to the “sunshine policy” of the 1990s, which was based on engagement with North Korea and a distancing from the United States. Candidate Moon, in particular, has demonstrated an openness to downgrading South Korea’s alliance with Washington and moving closer to both Pyongyang and Beijing. That could lead to the formation of a bloc of countries opposed to the United States and Japan; the former would find its influence severely diminished, while the latter would face new, difficult questions about how best to defend itself. It is unlikely that anything like a formal alliance, let alone unification with the Kim regime, would take place, but the result nonetheless would isolate Washington and strengthen Beijing as it weighs whether to work with Kim or precipitate his removal from power. South Korea would have set in motion a train of events that would reshape northeast Asia and dramatically increase the power of illiberal states.

Given the well-worn ruts of the North Korean nuclear and missile crisis, it is likely that all actors will simply revert to form—blustering and threatening one another, mulling more negotiations without preconditions, and trying to kick the can farther down the road. Yet the longer this slow-motion crisis accumulates, the likelier it is that new conditions will emerge. Once that happens, all bets are off, and the country with the boldest approach, the most sophisticated policy, or the greatest national will is likely to emerge the geopolitical victor. The United States should prepare. A North Korean crisis different from all the others is on its way—if it isn’t here already. **NR**



# The Celebrity We Need

*Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson unites in a time of division*

BY DAVID FRENCH

**T**HERE are cinematic moments that define a career. For Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, that moment occurred before wildly cheering fans on April 3, 2015. The fans were packed into movie houses worldwide. The Rock was onscreen, playing diplomatic-security-service agent Luke Hobbs in the movie *Furious 7*.

The movie was approaching its climax, a pitched battle in the streets of Los Angeles between the movie’s supervillain and the makeshift “family” of heroes, led by Vin Diesel’s Dominic Toretto and Brian O’Conner, played by the late Paul Walker. The Rock is sidelined, in the hospital with his arm encased in a cast. He sits next to his daughter when he spots a distant explosion and fire.

What follows is peak Rock.

He stands, gazes outside with a look of fierce determination, and then says, “Daddy’s gotta go to work.” Keep in mind that he knows nothing at this point about the explosion and fire. He just sees flames and *knows*. It’s time. So he flexes his enormous biceps, and the cast explodes off his arm. He tears away the remnants, gives his daughter a fist bump, and gears up for combat.

Moments later, he commandeers an ambulance and races at breakneck speed to the scene of a battle between a heavily armed aerial drone, a stealth attack helicopter, and Toretto’s beleaguered squad. Just as the drone flies through a tunnel and seems to achieve a deadly missile lock on a hero’s car, The Rock’s ambulance busts through a concrete barrier, collides with the drone in midair, detonates, and falls to the pavement below.

Is this the end of The Rock? Did he meet his doom in a valiant kamikaze attack to save his friends? Of course not. He emerges from the wreckage, unscathed, flexes his muscles (he does that a lot), picks up a minigun from the drone’s wreckage, and strides off to take on the attack helicopter in single combat. As he leaves, he has an Oscar-worthy exchange with co-star Michelle Rodriguez:

LETTY (Rodriguez): You bring the cavalry?

HOBBS (The Rock): Woman, I am the cavalry!

Cue the wild cheering in theaters stretching from Columbia, Tenn. (where I was front row, center), to Los Angeles, to London,

to Beijing. It was absurd. It was over the top. It was funny. It was oddly inspiring. It was The Rock.

It would be easy to say that The Rock is having a pop-culture “moment.” He’s coming off a 2016 in which he was the highest-paid movie star in the business, he was named *People* magazine’s sexiest man alive, and he was even floated as a future presidential contender. He’s charged into 2017 with another star turn in the *Fast and the Furious* franchise, with the latest installment, *The Fate of the Furious*, enjoying the largest opening weekend in global box-office history. We’re weeks away from The Rock’s reboot of the *Baywatch* franchise, this time on the big screen as a summer blockbuster comedy, and he’ll be returning soon to HBO for the third season of *Ballers*, the channel’s highest-rated comedy when it debuted two years ago.

And that’s just the start. He’s formed his own production company (called “Seven Bucks Productions” because that’s all the money he had when he launched his entertainment career) and has a dizzying array of projects in the works. Add all this to a dominant social-media presence (he has almost 100 million more followers on all platforms than Donald Trump), and it’s clear that The Rock isn’t just enjoying a “moment,” he’s building a juggernaut. Arguably, he’s in the process of becoming the world’s biggest celebrity.

And that’s a very good thing indeed.

**T**o understand why, and to understand the cult following he’s gained with young conservatives across the land, it’s important to track his career arc and to define the persona that he’s developed through a two-decade march into public consciousness.

Dwayne Johnson was originally supposed to be a football star. He was recruited to play for the Miami Hurricanes at the peak of that university’s football dynasty, but he never achieved stardom. Overlooked by the NFL, he was cut after a brief sojourn with the Calgary Stampeders of the Canadian Football League. Out of money, his football dream dead, he turned to the family business—professional wrestling.

Though he had a pedigree—both his father and his grandfather wrestled—Johnson was no overnight success. It took years to become “The Rock.” He started as “Rocky Maivia,” as an homage to his father’s and grandfather’s wrestling names—his father wrestled as “Rocky Johnson” and his grandfather was “High Chief” Peter Maivia—and audiences largely rejected him, famously chanting “Die, Rocky, die!” It took time (and a brief turn to the dark side as a wrestling “heel”), but he eventually carved out the niche that he occupies to this day—The Rock is the “People’s Champion.”

For a generation of wrestling fans, The Rock was an electrifying, entertaining, and heavily muscled version of Andrew Jackson. He expressed amused skepticism with the arched “people’s eyebrow.” He finished off opponents with the legendary “people’s elbow”—a blow to the chest of a prone opponent delivered only after stoking the crowd to a high-decibel frenzy. His insults (including “Know your role” and “It doesn’t matter”) leaked into high schools and colleges across the country.

Like a number of WWE stars, The Rock had his eye on Hollywood. Unlike most, his movie success far exceeded any

of his exploits in the ring. But again, it took time. There were hits, there were busts, and there were some plain ol’ bad movies (I’m looking at you, *Tooth Fairy*), but by 2011, he seemed to have figured it out. He joined an already-successful *Fast and Furious* franchise and helped catapult it into the financial stratosphere.

The numbers don’t lie. The fourth movie had a worldwide gross of \$363 million. The fifth movie, his first? \$626 million. And the numbers kept climbing. The sixth movie hit \$788 million, the seventh movie pulled in a whopping \$1.5 billion, and the eighth is already on pace to gross close to the same amount.

The Rock’s other movies also hit box-office highs. *San Andreas*, a disaster movie that featured The Rock as a rescue-helicopter pilot facing down an earthquake and a tsunami, raked in \$473 million. *Central Intelligence*, a buddy action comedy with the diminutive Kevin Hart, made \$216 million. Disney’s *Moana*, in which he voiced a Hawaiian demigod, has grossed \$639 million. The *Baywatch* premiere awaits later this summer, and he has potential future blockbusters planned or in production from now through 2019 (at least).

But why should we care? Why is this a good thing?

Because, simply put, in our hyper-polarized age, The Rock has become the celebrity America needs. He’s doing celebrity the right way, and he’s one of the few people in public life who have truly learned to thread the needle—leading to rapturous coverage in both *BuzzFeed* and the *Federalist*. (Conservative writer Sean Davis amusingly tweeted last summer, “There are two kinds of people: those who are on the 2020 Dwayne Train, and filthy terrorists.”)

Until the GOP jumped with both feet onto the Trump Train, there was an emerging schism in the political approach to celebrity. With Hollywood overwhelmingly liberal, Democrats urged celebrities to “use” their popularity for the sake of social justice. If audiences loved Meryl Streep on the silver screen, wouldn’t they be receptive to her views on women’s rights? Conservatives, sick of the celebrity moralizing, responded with a simple retort: “Shut up and sing” or “Shut up and act.” Don’t use your fame to preach your politics.

Now, as polarization brings with it the politicization of everything, celebrities are expected to toe their respective political lines. The GOP has a celebrity in the White House, he brings in celebrity friends for photo ops, and, outside the White House gates, progressive celebrities spew vitriol at their hated former entertainment-industry colleague.

The Rock, however, has followed a different path. Rather than self-seriously viewing his career as secondary to his activism, Johnson clearly aims to entertain. He understands a core truth: that there is nothing wrong—and a lot right—with sheer, unmitigated fun. Not everything has to have a Message. Not everything needs to reveal Larger Truth. Sometimes a man has to shoot down an attack helicopter with a minigun. Not for social justice and not for individual liberty—but because it’s a cool thing to do.

At the same time, Johnson is keenly aware that he’s come a long way. He’s an unabashed patriot, and his Facebook and Instagram feeds are full of expressions of gratitude to his country and his fans. He constantly reminds fans that he was



once broke and struggling. He blesses his family with the fruits of his labor. And in his own turn, he seems to positively delight in bringing joy to others. His Instagram feed is full of small incidents demonstrating his love for “the people,” even the smallest admirers of The Rock. If young girls hold up a sign on his route to work, asking him to stop for a picture, he stops for a picture. If a two-year-old asks him to play patty-cake while he’s on the set of *Hercules*, he plays patty-cake. And when it comes to veterans, he’s extravagant with his praise and his time.

Part of the legend of The Rock is this May 1, 2011, tweet: “Just got word that will shock the world—Land of the free . . . home of the brave DAMN PROUD TO BE AN AMERICAN!” He tweeted this at 10:24 P.M. It was not for another 45 minutes that major networks began reporting Osama bin Laden’s death, and it was 11:35 P.M. that night when Barack Obama formally announced the successful raid. How did The Rock know in advance? He had a cousin in the SEALs, but he won’t confirm his source.

These family military connections have led The Rock to be among the foremost celebrity supporters of the military. In December 2016, he hosted a “Rock the Troops” event at Joint Base Pearl Harbor–Hickam in front of 50,000 service members, veterans, and family members. His YouTube feed is full

most important thing right now is strong honest leadership from our current and future leaders of this country. Thanks again *Washington Post*.”

The Rock is a registered Republican, and he spoke briefly to the 2000 Republican National Convention (as part of a WWE get-out-the-vote initiative), but his precise political positions are undefined. He’s been friendly with Barack Obama and Bill Clinton. After the 2016 election, he took issue with the Under Armour CEO’s statement of support for Donald Trump but refused to distance himself from the company itself. We know The Rock loves America, but we can’t begin to guess where he stands on the EPA’s Clean Power Plan.

Rather than speculating about whether The Rock could run and win, let’s ask a different question: What is his highest and best purpose as a patriotic American? Is it really in politics? Or is it in expanding a public platform that combines an enormous amount of pure fun with outspoken patriotism, love of his fellow citizens, and evangelism for hard work and perseverance?

Those of us who write about and study both politics and pop culture are keenly aware of the truth famously articulated by Andrew Breitbart: Politics is downstream from culture. Indeed, more alarming than the political polarization of the nation is its increasing cultural polarization. Red and Blue

## At this time in American life, we need **points of agreement**, and right now tens of millions of Americans on both sides of the political divide agree on The Rock.

of tributes (and gifts) to vets. He diligently and enthusiastically honors American heroes.

And that brings us to inspiration—one of the animating purposes of The Rock’s public persona. When he “uses” his public platform, he uses it to promote the value of hard work. As he tweets (and constantly states), “Blood, sweat, and respect. The first two you give, the last one you earn.” The mantra is constant. And it accompanies every aspect of his personal story. Without hard work, you can achieve nothing. As a basic cultural message—particularly to an entitled generation—it’s hard to beat.

**S**INCE it’s 2017—and since a *less popular* celebrity made it to the White House—the question has arisen: Will The Rock bring the people’s eyebrow to politics? Will we see the rhetorical equivalent of the people’s elbow delivered to the solar plexus of his political opponents? Questions that once seemed crazy to ask are now a normal part of American political life. And indeed, Johnson seems to enjoy thinking through the possibilities.

Last June, the *Washington Post* ran a piece by Alyssa Rosenberg exploring whether he could run and win. The Rock responded in an Instagram post, concluding with this: “I care DEEPLY about our county [*sic*] . . . and the idea of one day becoming President to create real positive impact and global change is very alluring. Buuuuu until that possible day, the

Americans live in different places, watch different shows, and increasingly adopt different manners and mores. We seem to be growing apart.

The Rock is one of the few culturally unifying figures in American life, and he’s a culturally unifying figure with a message of gratitude and hard work that also happens to be culturally edifying. If he moves into the naturally polarizing world of politics, where he’ll have to take positions on issues great and small, will he be forsaking a larger unifying role for the lesser polarizing path of public policy? At the risk of sounding corny: At this time in American life, we need points of agreement, and right now tens of millions of Americans on both sides of the political divide agree on The Rock.

In *Fate of the Furious*, The Rock arguably tops his *Furious 7* minigun scene. In the midst of a climactic chase on a field of Siberian ice, a nuclear submarine bursts from the depths and launches a torpedo straight at The Rock and his fleeing friends. As the torpedo surges past The Rock’s vehicle, he leans out and physically alters its path with his bare hands. Yes, in his career, he’s graduated from wrestling people to wrestling 6,000-pound Soviet-era munitions.

If The Rock steps down from film to promulgate regulations and appoint judges, who will take his place on the ice? Who will shoot down drones with stolen ambulances? For now, we want him behind that minigun. We need him wrestling torpedoes. The Rock is the right celebrity for our polarized time. The politics can wait.

NR

# TERRIFIC! DAY 4 ON THE NR 2017 TRANS-ATLANTIC CROSSING

Well, I've got to admit it. I always figured my secret wish to do an ocean sailing on Cunard, on one of its historic ships, was maybe ... silly. That people like Stan and I just didn't do that -- "other" people did. But after spending four nights on the Queen Mary 2, boy was I wrong. This was indeed meant for us, and we are having the time of our lives. The time! In November, when I saw that NR magazine ad about the 2017 summer voyage, and the pre-sailing tour in southern England, where I have always wanted to visit, I just knew the time had come for me to live my dream. And it turns out it is was the secret dream of so many in the NR group (Stan said he feels sorry for those who wanted to come but "just couldn't get over their inhibitions; they literally missed the boat"). You live and learn ... and enjoy!



Honey, please bring my copy of Liberaltzscism to dinner -- we are dining w/ Janah!

I signed us up for the NR shuffleboard contest. RandOne is us versus the Lilelks!

Charlie said he and Karin will tape a "Mad Dogs" podcast tomorrow by the pool -- he'll answer your question then.

\*Made the spa appointment for Wednesday at 2! I'M LOVING THIS - AND YOU!!

About today: After breakfast we ran into our new best friends, Don and Gayle Willey, who we met at the London airport (he was wearing an NR cap!) and decided to take a walk on the Promenade Deck. It was a glorious day. Jay Nordlinger was out too, and about to lap us, but when he saw that I was carrying his book "Digging In" he stopped and we had a swell impromptu visit. He and Gayle are both Michigan grads so they had a lot to chat about. Anyway, Jay told us he had tried out the QM2's golf simulator the previous night, and that was all that the guys needed to hear. As soon as Jay left they were off to play. But just as they disappeared who came along but Jim Geraghty (we had dinner with him the first night). He told a couple of funny out-of-school tales about NR. What a swell guy.

**LUNCH** When we booked the trip, we didn't know what to expect of the NR speakers. Outside of the scheduled events, would they ... interact? Well, there we are at the Britannia Restaurant, just sitting down to lunch when Charlie Cooke and his lovely wife Kate ("I remember you from the first cocktail party") stop at our table to ask if they could join us. Stan is a huge CCWC fan and said "Heck yeah," and not five

minutes later Rob Long wandered by looking lost, so Charlie waved him over and he joined us too. For nearly an hour we talked about favorite tv shows and movies and Rob regaled us with stories about Hollywood craziness. I felt we were with good friends. And, maybe, we were.

**AFTERNOON PANEL** So far every session has kicked off with a fascinating one-on-one interview. I didn't think we could top yesterday when David French got Judge Michael Mukasey to describe at length the legal effort required to truly fight the Islamofascists. But this afternoon's -- Rich Lowry quizzing Tom Coburn about the dysfunction of Capitol Hill -- was off-the-charts smart. Then followed an hour-plus panel, with Reihan Salam moderating, featuring Charlie, John O'Sullivan, David Pryce-Jones, and Douglas Murray -- oh my what a lineup! -- analyzing British politics and the state of Brexit. No one in the Illuminations Lounge (it's really an honest-to-goodness planetarium) wanted to leave. The panelists got a standing ovation, were mobbed for photos, and asked to autograph books. Which seems to happen after every session!



**COCKTAIL RECEPTION** That session alone would have made my day. My year! But the day was far far from over. Tonight was the second NR cocktail reception, at the Golden Lion Pub, which like every other place on this ship is designed to perfection. We caught up with the Willeys talking and laughing with this lovely trio (a grandmother, mother, and daughter -- she's named Chris), and alongside them there was this group of eight



or nine "singles" who had found each other on the voyage's first day and became very fast friends (they all feared they might be fifth wheels, and all were thrilled to see just how wrong that was!), and before you knew it we melded into one big conservative martini-loving scrum, and Jonah Goldberg was swallowed up by us and held court, talking about his forthcoming book and his dog -- we gabbed about how much we loved our pets, shared pictures, took pictures. And then Ramesh and his wife April joined us and the talk turned to raising kids. And still lots of laughs. And then the man with that little gong came, banging away, breaking up the fun. Alas! But we had a sumptuous dinner ahead. (Brent Bozell was at our table! More fun!).

**SWEET DREAMS!** Stan is pooped. Me too. What a day. What a week!. I'm so glad it's not over! And so glad we made the decision to sail on the Queen Mary 2 with NR!

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the beautifully equipped Canyon Ranch SpaClub® Fitness Centre. **26.** Make up for that decadent breakfast by swimming a few laps in the domed Pavilion Pool. **27.** Unwind, refresh and enjoy the healing power and nurturing hot-and-cold environments at the Canyon Ranch SpaClub® aqua therapy centre. **28.** Hit the links at Pebble Beach or any of the 51 courses available on the golf simulator. Test your serve and volley with a match on the Tennis Court. **29.** Rejuvenate in a yoga class on deck (weather permitting). **30.** Welcome the morning with a cappuccino and fresh baked pastries at Sir Samuel's. **31.** Sample the Chalosse Duck or Wild Turbot en Papillote in newly opened restaurant, The Verandah. **32.** Join the chief sommelier to sample Sangiovese, Dolcetto and other varietals as you wine your way across Northern Italy. **33.** Order one of your pub lunch favourites in the Golden Lion: Fish 'n' Chips, Steak and Ale Pie, Chicken Tikka Masala or Bangers and Mash. **34.** Indulge in Memphis style Baby Back Ribs in the new alternative dining venue, the Smokehouse. **35.** Celebrate with a bottle of Chateau Lafite Rothschild from Queen Mary 2's famously large wine cellar. **36.** Fall in love with the signature dessert Tonka Bean Mousse with Extra Virgin Olive Oil ice cream in The Verandah. **37.** Take the Martini Mixology class so you can make it for your friends at home. **38.** Enjoy a fine cigar whilst savouring an aged Napoleon Cognac in Churchill's Cigar Lounge. **39.** Follow your ocean course as you gaze at the illuminated maps and enjoy delicious canapés in the elegant Chart Room. **40.** Indulge in the Veuve Clicquot Champagne Afternoon Tea in the Champagne bar. **41.** Mix your palette and discover your inner artist by joining a water-colour painting class. **42.** Salute the sun and unwind in one of the ship's relaxing whirlpools. **43.** Look forward: head to The Lookout, an observation area with endless views off the bow. **44.** Hit, stay or double-down in the Empire Casino. **45.** Visit The Clarendon Art Gallery and enjoy a presentation on the life, style and influences of Jack Vettriano. **46.** Embark on a literary journey at a meeting of the Cunard Book Club. **47.** Watch the waves crest as you sit and relax in a plush swivel chair by a sea-level window. **48.** Enjoy a stargazing stroll around the Promenade Deck and identify the constellations. **49.** Spar to be the top Bridge player in the Atlantic Room. **50.** Wrap up in a cozy blanket, relax in a steamer chair out on deck, sip on a cup of afternoon tea and gaze at the passing Atlantic!

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**Category Q5** DO: \$8,510 pp | Single: \$14,947

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class. **42.** Salute the sun and unwind in one of the ship's relaxing whirlpools. **43.** Look forward: head to The Lookout, an observation area with endless views off the bow. **44.** Hit, stay or double-down in the Empire Casino. **45.** Visit The Clarendon Art Gallery and enjoy a presentation on the life, style and influences of Jack Vettriano. **46.** Embark on a literary journey at a meeting of the Cunard Book Club. **47.** Watch the waves crest as you sit and relax in a plush swivel chair by a sea-level window. **48.** Enjoy a stargazing stroll around the Promenade Deck and identify the constellations. **49.** Spar to be the top Bridge player in the Atlantic Room. **50.** Wrap up in a cozy blanket, relax in a steamer chair out on deck, sip on a cup of afternoon tea and gaze at the passing Atlantic!



# Let the Police Police

*So says Jeff Sessions, but some  
big-city chiefs disagree*

BY HEATHER MAC DONALD

FEDERAL consent decrees—agreements between the federal government and a local agency to change how that agency operates—are burdensome, costly, and rarely justified. You would think, then, that when Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced in a memo at the end of March that he was reviewing police consent decrees, politicians and police chiefs in the affected cities would have let out a glad cheer. Instead, Sessions’s announcement produced a bizarre spectacle: Local officials proudly proclaimed themselves unable to function in the absence of federal control. Therein lies a tale about law enforcement in the Black Lives Matter era.

Sessions’s March 31 memo signaled an overdue federal course correction regarding policing, coming after the hostile Obama years. The Obama administration had slapped an unprecedented number of consent decrees on police departments, guided by the belief that policing was shot through with systemic racism. The methodology used by the previous Justice Department to determine whether a police agency was engaged in a “pattern or practice” of unconstitutional policing was deeply flawed. The civil-rights attorneys evaluated officer activity against racial-population ratios rather than against racial rates of criminal victimization and offending; if, say, officers arrested blacks at a higher rate than their representation in the local population would predict, that disparity would constitute proof of discrimination, regardless of whether blacks committed a disproportionate amount of crime. The resulting decrees cost tens of millions to hundreds of millions of dollars, funneled into endless paperwork and the wildly overpriced salaries of federal monitors.

The Sessions memo declared that the paramount duties of the Justice Department were protecting the public and guarding civil rights. Most consequentially, the memo recognized that local control is essential for effective policing. It is not the responsibility of the federal government, Sessions affirmed, to manage local law-enforcement agencies.

Sessions ordered an evaluation of all Justice Department activities to make sure that they supported the above principles. Among the first targets of reexamination were the Baltimore and Chicago policing decrees, which were in varying stages of completion.

The Obama DOJ, in a last dash to seal its legacy, had hastily finalized the Baltimore decree just a week before the inauguration of Donald Trump. All that remained was for a federal judge to sign off. On April 3, 2017, the Sessions Justice Department

asked U.S. District Court Judge James Bredar for 90 days to study the 227-page decree that had just been dumped in its lap.

The Sessions request was patently justified. Most of the decree’s 510 paragraphs contain mandates governing the day-to-day operations of the Baltimore Police Department that the federal government would be obligated to enforce. The most disturbing severely limit officers’ ability to maintain public order in the streets. Under the decree, officers may no longer on their own recognizance make an arrest for trespassing or loitering; they may take action against an offender only if a civilian has called in a complaint about him. Even then, the officer still needs permission from a supervisor to arrest the trespasser or loiterer. Supervisor sign-off is also required to arrest someone for disorderly conduct, failure to obey, resisting an officer, and making a false statement to an officer.

These gratuitous roadblocks to enforcement strip officers of essential tools for disrupting criminal activity. If the restrictions on public-order enforcement were not crippling enough, an all-purpose ban on any police activities that have a “disparate impact” on minorities has the potential to shut down virtually all policing in Baltimore, given the vast racial disparities in criminal offending. Not content with unleashing misguided disparate-impact theory on police tactics, the consent decree directs it at hiring as well. Alternatives must be sought to employment criteria that have a disparate impact on minorities. But the Baltimore Police Department is at least 40 percent black, as the Calvert Institute’s George Liebmann has pointed out. There is no need to eliminate vital screening devices for the sake of “diversity.”

ARRESTS in Baltimore, especially drug arrests, have already dropped 45 percent over the past two years, following the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the Freddie Gray riots in April 2015. Homicides reached their highest per capita level in Baltimore’s history in 2015, a level maintained in 2016. One typical shooting in East Baltimore in September 2016 involved three gunmen and eight victims, including a three-year-old girl. The toddler underwent a month of operations in the hospital to try to repair her leg and foot, but she still uses a wheelchair. Violent crime in Baltimore increased 40 percent during the first two and a half months of 2017, compared with the same period in 2016, as arrests continued to drop. In March 2017, a gangbanger threw two Molotov cocktails into a house in retaliation for a gang shooting two days earlier; two teens were burned to death in the ensuing conflagration, and two children and four other residents were injured.

In a word, now is not the time to discourage proactive policing in Baltimore further.

The media and Democratic politicians immediately denounced the administration’s consent-decree review. The U.S. Senate and House delegations from Baltimore declared: “We are gravely concerned that the Justice Department will retreat from its obligation to protect the federal civil rights of the citizens of Baltimore. . . . We owe it to the dedicated professional law enforcement officers of the [Baltimore Police Department] to bring this matter to a just, prompt conclusion.”

But if Baltimore officers are so “dedicated” and “professional,” why can only the Justice Department protect civil rights? Baltimore is far from a Jim Crow regime; it has been governed by black mayors, councilmen, and police chiefs for decades. Absent a complete breakdown of lawful governance, the primary responsibility for

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civil rights falls to local officials. Does the congressional delegation believe that local rule in the city has fallen apart?

The oddest outcry over the proposed Sessions pause came from the very officials who would be handcuffed by the decree and who would have to pay for it. Baltimore mayor Catherine Pugh decried “any interruption in moving forward” with the implementation process. Pugh has been competing with Baltimore councilmen to see who can propose the stiffest cuts to the Baltimore Police Department budget to offset funding increases to social services. Yet even as Pugh aims to slash the police budget, she insists on a consent decree that is predicted to cost \$12 million in its first year and at least \$7.5 million annually for the next five. (These estimates are greatly lowballed.) If spending more on social programs is such a high priority, why not do so with the money that is apparently available for the consent decree?

The reaction of Baltimore police commissioner Kevin Davis was even stranger. Sessions was in essence saying to Davis: “I am not prepared to accept without evidence that you are incapable of managing your own department. Absent clear proof to the contrary, I believe that you are committed to constitutional policing. If my review warrants it, I am going to allow you to run your department on your own.”

Davis was having none of this outrageous imputation of managerial capacity, however. He called Sessions’s requested delay

law. The decree gives powerful symbolic support for the Black Lives Matter narrative of endemically biased policing and will have ripple effects throughout the anti-cop movement.

Sessions has more leeway when it comes to putting the Chicago Police Department under federal control, and officials in the Windy City are clearly nervous that he will not do so. The Obama civil-rights lawyers released a typically specious report on the Chicago department in the final days of their reign. That report contained no quantified evidence backing up its charge of systemic unconstitutional policing. Ironically, the CPD had been the darling of left-wing academics for years, and the Obama Justice Department itself had touted the CPD’s “police legitimacy” curriculum to other departments. In late 2015, however, a video of an unjustified police shooting from 2014 was belatedly released and the Obama DOJ changed its tune. In January 2017, the Washington lawyers reached an agreement in principle with the city to negotiate a consent decree, but the clock ran out before they could finish.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel had initially opposed the Obama Justice Department investigation of the Chicago police, but he reversed himself once he saw which way the political winds were blowing. Now he, too, is striking a defiant tone in anticipation of a Sessions reprieve. “We’re on the road to reform,” he told the *Chicago Sun-Times* editorial board. “We’re not getting off.” Emanuel and police superintendent Eddie Johnson can reform all they want, but

## Until now, the consent-decree process has been a form of **political theater**.

“a punch in the gut to the community—certainly to me.” He added: “We have to continue to stress the necessity of constitutional policing in Baltimore. . . . I want to say to the community in particular that the Police Department is absolutely dedicated to the consent-decree process.”

Nothing prevents Davis from engaging in all the reform he wants. Even if he is convinced that every one of the decree’s paragraphs represents a necessary mandate, he could implement those mandates on his own, without having to accommodate an invasive federal monitor and his team of attorneys and consultants. The Baltimore Police Department has fewer officers than it has had in decades and is struggling to muster sufficient patrol strength, reports the *Baltimore Sun*. More officers will be taken off the street to write reports for the monitor. Judge Bredar himself called the decree “highly intrusive,” though he went on to call it necessary. The mystery is why Davis agrees with its necessity, thereby declaring himself an impotent public servant. If Davis wants better equipment and training for his officers, he should make the case directly to taxpayers.

Davis can breathe a sigh of relief, however. Judge Bredar rejected the DOJ’s request for a review period and entered the decree as fully enforceable on April 7, 2017, relieving the police chief of the distasteful autonomy with which Sessions had threatened him. Mayor Pugh declared the decision a “great victory for the citizens of Baltimore, as well as the Baltimore Police Department.”

**I**N fact, victory belonged only to the anti-cop activists and politicians, who have sought to snuff out proactive policing and to immunize low-level offenders from the reach of the

that job would be easier without having to divert millions of dollars a year to the care and feeding of a federal monitor.

Proactive policing has already plummeted in Chicago, with pedestrian stops dropping over 80 percent in 2016. As a result, the past 14 months have been the most violent in at least two decades, according to the *Chicago Tribune*. More than 4,300 people were shot in Chicago in 2016—one person every two hours. In February 2017, a twelve-year-old girl was killed when a bullet pierced her spine while she was playing on an elementary-school playground; 30 minutes later, a 19-year-old marijuana dealer sent a fatal shot through the right temple of an eleven-year-old girl sitting in her family’s minivan; four days later, on Valentine’s Day, a two-year-old boy was killed by a bullet to his head while sitting in a car with a 26-year-old gang member, who was also killed. Arrests are at their lowest levels in at least 16 years.

The consent-decree process has been a form of political theater. Big-city police chiefs feel more pressure from race activists than from the hard-working residents of high-crime areas, who fiercely want more policing but have no spokesmen to defend their interests. President Donald Trump and Attorney General Jeff Sessions want to change the false Black Lives Matter narrative, but it doesn’t look like they will have many allies among liberal mayors and their police commanders. Those public officials would rather conform to the conventional narrative about systemic racism than stand up for their departments.

Yet these prostrate officials, who declare themselves helpless to police constitutionally without federal control, suddenly become clarions of proud and defiant federalism when asked to cooperate with the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement in deporting convicted alien criminals. The ways of race politics become more tortuous by the day.

NR

# Her Chelseanness

*How to be entitled and boring  
without really trying*

BY KYLE SMITH

**C**HELSEA VICTORIA CLINTON was named after the Joni Mitchell song “Chelsea Morning,” and as of the spring of 2017, it’s Chelsea Morning in America. Boom, she’s in *Variety* . . . *CBS This Morning* . . . *The New York Times Book Review*. She even picked up a Lifetime award! Okay it was from Lifetime, as in the cable channel, not for a lifetime of achievement, but still, Chelsea Clinton is *everywhere*. America, whether it asked for it or not, has become the setting for an invasion-from-inside thriller: *The Chelsening*.

She’s not just a little girl anymore, you know, not just someone’s daughter or campaign prop. Chelsea Clinton is a person, no, a *citizen*, no, a *global citizen*, and she is *done* being quiet. Hear, world, as Chelsea speaks out. She is speaking out about social media: “I’ve recognized, as a lot of people have, that Twitter is a vehicle for me to share my thoughts.” She’s speaking out on movies: “Of course I’m going to see *Furious 8*. I’ve already seen *Logan*. I love that Logan is being succeeded by a little girl.” She’s speaking out on the Clinton Foundation: “At its most distilled level, we try to make a positive, impactful, empowering difference in whatever ways we can.” She’s speaking out on speaking out: “This is not the time to be silent or stay on the sidelines.”

With the exception of a few resentful Twitter pokes at the man responsible for rendering her mom an isolated forest monster—Chappaquatch—instead of the most powerful woman in the history of the planet, everything Chelsea says is pretty much like this. The positions she articulates on progress (pro), climate change (anti), and gauzy, inspirational, make-the-world-a-better-place-for-girls-and-women goodness (super-duper pro) are verbal fentanyl. Everything she says is a platitude wrapped in a cliché washed down with a bromide. She’s the dusty end of the greeting-card section, the lite FM of famous-person chatter, a human press release. In short, Chelsea Clinton is becoming the champion dullard of our time. This didn’t happen by chance: We’re talking about the ever-calculating Clintonworld here. The dullness is a strategy, a demented post-last-ditch effort by the Clinton gals to finally power Hillary into the Oval Office. But I’ll come back to that.

**I**T’S not like Chelsea Clinton lacks for interesting things she could talk about. What’s it like being in college when your dad humiliates your mom with an intern your own age? What’s it like watching said mom humiliate herself by losing the presidency, after a lifetime of preparation for the task, to a cheesy reality-television star running on a whim? What’s it like

living in a \$10 million New York condo with 250-foot-long hallways? Oh, and do you have any comment on longtime Clinton Foundation officer Doug Band’s claim, in a private e-mail uncovered by WikiLeaks, that the foundation paid for your “wedding and life for a decade”?

Yet *Vogue* writer Jonathan Van Meter, after spending much of the spring and summer of 2012 with Chelsea, was so lost for a juicy anecdote about her that he led off his lengthy profile with this tidbit: “I am pretty intrigued by Joplin Avenue Coffee Company,” Chelsea told him in Joplin, Mo., adding, “When in doubt, *coffee*.” Van Meter italicized the final noun in a heroic attempt to make the remark sound a little more electrifying than it was.

*Variety*’s writer Ramin Setoodeh whipped up this pulse-pounder to open his profile: “Chelsea Clinton is about to tell you some things you may not know about her. In an interview with *Variety*, she lists the last great movie she saw (*Hidden Figures*), her most surprising job (an internship at a cattle ranch in 1999), and her favorite food growing up (cheddar cheese).”

Supposedly the media have an intriguing new angle. After 20 years of declaring that Chelsea has at last found a niche for herself, they’re now saying that Chelsea has at last *really* found a niche for herself. Said niche is her new social-media role as the tart-tongued Trump tormentor of Twitter. “Now on Twitter: Chelsea Clinton, Unbound,” proclaimed the *New York Times* in a story of more than 1,100 words—longer than the same newspaper’s April 18 story about the Fresno Islamist who slaughtered three people while yelling “Allahu akbar.”

You’d have to grade on a steep curve, though, to call Chelsea’s anti-Trump tweets withering or even amusing. After Sean Spicer, defending Trump’s notorious tweet about alleged Obama wiretapping, said, “The president used the word ‘wiretaps’ in quotes,” Chelsea fired off the following semi-coherent riposte: “Is the lesson that we should put in ‘quotes’ things we don’t mean? Rather than what we say (and mean)? Asking for . . . the world.” In another supposedly wicked tweet cited by the *Times* as evidence that the Clinton heir is now “unbound,” Chelsea criticized Trump for not condemning whoever left Nazi leaflets at a Jewish student center at Virginia Tech. After a *Washington Post* writer tweeted, “Huh. Looks like Trump’s version of taking on Wall Street is to deregulate it. Who could have predicted this?” Chelsea retweeted the remark, adding her own comment: “Anyone taking him seriously.” This stuff isn’t exactly insult-comedy gold; even for a celebrity, Twitter Chelsea isn’t interesting.

*Variety* did take a deep breath and dare to ask Chelsea whether she is running for anything. Her answer inspired a breathless March 29 headline on its site: “Chelsea Clinton: I Am Not Running for Public Office (EXCLUSIVE).” And she did say those words: “I am not running for public office.” But the world may be pardoned for pointing out that the formulation sounds a bit Clintonian. Of course she isn’t running for public office *right now*, just as Bill Clinton was not receiving favors from Monica Lewinsky at the exact moment he said, “There is not a sexual relationship.” What we want to know is: Will she *ever* run for public office? Here’s a fuller quotation of her thoughts on the matter: “If someone steps down or something changes, I’ll then ask and answer those questions at that time. But right now, no, I’m not running for public office.”

So a more accurate *Variety* headline would have been “Chelsea Clinton Leaves Door Open to Running for Public Office,” more



or less the opposite of the one that actually ran. Given the timid, deliberate pace of her emergence into public life, though, it is a bit hard to picture Chelsea *jogging* for anything, much less running for anything. Low-level city-council-type gigs would be beneath Her Chelseanness, and the big juicy jobs would require too much glad-handing, too many speeches she wouldn't be good at giving, too many intrusive questions from pesky political reporters. If she were really staking her claim in politics, would she be confining her interviews to *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *Variety*? Sure, like Caroline Kennedy, she'd probably enjoy being tapped to fill a vacant Senate seat. Who wouldn't? But actually fighting for elective office seems like it would require more fire in the belly than she's got. At her age—37—her father, having started with nothing, was in his second term as a governor. She has instead assembled a résumé that bespeaks a certain lack of . . . focus.

"Mainly I work really hard. I really believe in the work I'm doing, and so I work seven days a week," she told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* as her interviewer fawned at Chelsea's Stakhanovism. "I will just always work harder [than anybody else] and hopefully perform better," she told *Fast Company*. "And hopefully, over time, I preempt and erase whatever expectations people have of me not having a good work ethic, or not being smart, or not being motivated."

**T**HAT'S Chelsea: a workhorse. But what exactly does she *do*? So far, the career path is a random stumble in and out of school, in and out of entry-level jobs. After Stanford, she seemed to sample every ultra-connected Millennial pursuit except being a *Girls* co-star. She did some consulting. She scored first a master's, then a Ph.D., in international relations from the University of Oxford, which apparently allowed her to do her coursework remotely (you know, like the University of Phoenix). She did a stint on Wall Street, as an analyst. She slipped up to Columbia for a master's in public health.

Her most public gig so far has been her most disastrous one: lending her personality to NBC News at a salary of \$600,000 per annum. It was a gig *New York* magazine dubbed an "unbelievably cushy fake job" and for which, *Business Insider* calculated, she was paid \$26,724 for each minute she was on air—including all the minutes in which she was interviewed by other NBC staffers about her awesome work for the Clinton Foundation. In her own pieces, she interviewed the Geico gecko and reported on a program to provide therapy dogs to soldiers, in the process demonstrating that she takes after her mom when it comes to connecting with people. She is "bombing," said *The Week*. "Her debut was boring, her subsequent work has been boring, just as she planned," wrote *Gawker*.

Without establishing herself in any field, she segued gently into the realm of the ceremonial job, as though, having skipped entirely the "rising to the top of one's profession" part of life, it was time to kick back a little, to accept due recompense in the form of board seats (such as the one on the family foundation) and advisory sinecures and other such vapor-jobs, prestige appointments lightly tethered to the vaguest of duties. Remember how, on *Seinfeld*, the lifelong dilettante Kramer retired to Florida in his forties? That's our girl Chelsea, albeit with the wacky charisma replaced by an exceptionally monotonous raise-your-voice-and-be-heard female-empowerment component.

In 2010, Chelsea landed an appointment as "assistant vice provost for the Global Network University at New York



University," a job she said she got because she "met John Sexton," the president of the university, and "then met some of his team," as she told *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. She knew she wanted to "be part of translating their shared vision of NYU into reality." Vision-translating? Sounds sweet if not exactly arduous.

Along the same lines, Chelsea and three others are credited with co-founding NYU's Of Many Institute, a group that means to "reach across faith boundaries to solve social problems." Chelsea said she was inspired by her interfaith marriage (to Wall Streeter Marc Mezvinsky, who is Jewish). She also became co-chairwoman of an Of Many Institute advisory board of 20 members, including Jared Kushner. Since the institute appears on its website to have only five employees, including an office manager, it's not clear that it really needs a 20-person advisory board, but then again, Chelsea grew up in the age of meaningless résumé-padding. Maybe once you start accumulating credentials, you can't stop. Maybe the credentials become the point.

The closest thing to an actual job Chelsea seems to hold now is a gig as an adjunct assistant professor at Columbia's Mailman School for Public Health. "I'm committed to my teaching at Columbia," she told *Variety*. Well, not *that* committed. She teaches one three-hour class, Global Health Governance, a week.

Chelsea is also an author. Her name—her brand?—is on the cover of *Governing Global Health: Who Runs the World and Why?* She and Devi Sridhar, the chairwoman of Global Public Health at the University of Edinburgh, are listed as the co-authors. An adjunct who teaches one course a week and a department-chairing full professor—which one do you think did the bulk of the work?

Chelsea is listed as the sole author of *It's Your World: Get Informed, Get Inspired & Get Going!*—an intensely dull 402-page

book (“Most historians, economists, and social scientists—academics who study people and societies over time—agree that geography matters”) meant to nudge ten- to 14-year-olds in a progressive direction. Soul-scarifyingly tedious as the book is—it’s like the middle-school version of one of those campaign-manifesto blobs nobody reads—it seemed to take a village to write it. Hundreds of people are thanked in the acknowledgments, and some of these folks seem like they did more than simply offer a friendly read. “Ruby Shamir, Bari Lurie, Joy Secuban, Allie Gottlieb, Sarah Henning, Emily Young, Kamyil Bazbaz, and Tara Kole helped me build on a base of ideas, provided crucial research assistance, and supported the various phases and incarnations of *It’s Your World*,” Chelsea wrote in her voluminous thank-yous. “And last, though certainly as the saying goes, not least, the brilliant Lissa Muscatine.” Muscatine, a former *Washington Post* journalist, just happens to be Hillary’s longtime speechwriter and, according to Jeff Gerth and Don Van Natta’s HRC bio *Her Way*, the ghostwriter of the narcoleptic Hillary memoir *Living History*, for which Lurie served as lead researcher. Many of the other helpers Chelsea listed are also longtime Hillary flunkies and factotums.

Is it too much to expect of a Stanford grad who has two master’s degrees and a Ph.D. that she write her own book instead of calling in a ghostwriter? How hard can it be to produce a volume of stuporous change-the-world banality in the first place? Especially a bad book written with all the verve of the iTunes Terms of Service agreement? A book for *middle-schoolers*?

In April, Chelsea announced her latest authorial project: It’s a picture book. About the history of awesome powerful women. It’s called “She Persisted.” This is a grown-up with a *Ph.D. in international relations from the University of Oxford*, and she’s volunteering for the preschool ghetto. The branding seems a tad off: If a woman with all of Chelsea Clinton’s connections, wealth, and academic credentials, a woman to whom all options in the world present themselves, is directing her energies to supplying captions for a picture book illustrated by someone else, does this really advance the message “Women can do anything”? Shouldn’t an Oxford international-relations Ph.D. be editing *Foreign Affairs* or producing a 900-page history of diplomacy?

The one time that Chelsea accidentally said something revealing, what she revealed was that she is very much the daughter of the woman who claimed she was “dead broke” when she left the White House. Chelsea told *Fast Company*, “I was curious if I could care about [money] on some fundamental level, and I couldn’t. That wasn’t the metric of success that I wanted in my life.” She certainly cares enough about money to live in an apartment costing \$10 million instead of, say, a double-wide in Trenton, N.J., but the remark illustrated how ill acquainted Princess Clinton is with the reality that nice things cost money, which in turn must be earned. She likes nice things, but since they’ve always been there without her having to do anything, it has never occurred to her that others who want things one-tenth as nice are forced to care about money a hundred times as much. Trying to signal that she was better than the rest of us mere money-grubbers—while sitting in a chic apartment the length of an entire Manhattan block—simply defined her as Millennial Antoinette.

**N**OT that the media are interested in making much of that remark, because they’re living in a self-constructed matrix where Hillary’s career is still viable. It hasn’t

dawned on the editors of the slicks that, as Hillary Clinton is perhaps the biggest laughingstock in the history of American politics, her daughter’s emergence as a Trump critic carries the sad stench of sore-loserdom. Consider how outraged the media reaction would be if a bitter Ivanka Trump were sharpshooting President Hillary Clinton from Twitter. Moreover, if it’s true that, as Chelsea says, “everything is at risk. Our fundamental rights, our fundamental security, are at risk,” er, whose fault is that? As Andrew Sullivan put it in *New York* magazine, “any candidate who can win the popular vote by nearly 3 million votes and still manage to lose the Electoral College by 304 to 227 is so profoundly incompetent, so miserably useless as a politician, she should be drummed out of the party under a welter of derision.”

But in the febrile imagination of Hillary dead-enders—just last week they were tweeting out pictures of themselves smiling on the campaign trail in a pathetic attempt to counteract *Shattered*, the brutal new book on their failures and infighting—the mechanical-bull-ride-on-a-roller-coaster-during-an-earthquake Trump presidency will have America clamoring for bland competence and a return to normalcy. And the epitome of unobjectionable, experienced leadership will be agreed to be . . . Hillary? It’s utterly daft, but in the Clinton imagination, Chelsea’s dullness will rub off on her mother and be transmuted into normalcy. Which will—finally, after 30 years!—mean the much sought final humanization of Hillary Clinton. This new, boring, human Hillary will, the reasoning goes, seem like an ideal alternative to the way-too-exciting and not-at-all-normal President Trump.

Hillary won’t, of course, run again, because the donor money won’t be there. The donors know that she was looking at a two-inch putt of a campaign and somehow managed not only to miss but to shank the ball into the long grass while screaming about the Russians and misogyny. When she starts knocking on the donors’ doors, she is going to get nothing but gentle hints that maybe it’s time for her to catch up on *Veep*. The donors know that they can get the same progressive policy initiatives without signing up for a quarter century of baggage and reliving the humiliation of two face-plantly bad presidential campaigns.

Longtime Clinton flunky and former DNC chairman Ed Rendell gave away the game in a January story in *Politico* that was ostensibly about Hillary’s withdrawal from electoral politics and supposed pivot to the pure political altruism of helping other Democrats. As if Hillary, on the cusp of 70, were suddenly going to become a team player. In a remark that was buried at the end of the story, Rendell hinted that the real plan was otherwise: “I’m certain Trump will screw up enough that by the fall of ’18, Hillary’s numbers will be way up again,” he said. But why would Hillary or her team be thinking about her numbers next year if she’s done running for office? Who would even bother to poll the citizenry about her prospects? Does Gallup still ask people how they feel about pulling the lever for Al Gore or Michael Dukakis?

Chelsea Clinton is indeed working hard—on the family brand. But like her mother, she makes politics look effortful. She is clearly uncomfortable on the cover of *Variety*. All clenched eyes, big teeth, and stiff arms, she looks not like a person captured in a moment of levity but like someone who is trying very hard to look strong, confident, and fun. After all these years she’s spent carving out a niche for herself, she is right back where she started: a family implement, a maternal-humanization weapon, a campaign prop.

NR

## 'We Have Science!'

**T**HE March for Science, which occurred on that annual parade of pagan panic known as Earth Day, was a remarkable success. We have science again! Chemical scientists all across the nation are back to staring intently at beakers; space scientists are back to finding new planets; climate scientists are back to staring at computer projections, trying to figure out how to turn statistics into grant money.

It's a relief, isn't it? Obviously President Trump's legislative agenda to ban science is dead on arrival. The administration had proposed the replacement of science with old folk wisdom. Energy companies, for example, would find untapped oil fields with enormous dowsing rods carried by hundreds of men; medical research would consist of watching goats eat various plants and making pills out of the ones that didn't make the goats fall down and foam at the mouth.

That was the horrible future from which the March for Science saved us, right? No? Then what were the marchers protesting? This:

1. The replacement of constant screeching terror over global warming with an official policy of "Eh. Maybe. We'll see. Carry on."

2. Reducing the EPA budget so that the agency would be less inclined to declare the entire state of North Dakota a habitat for an endangered amoeba.

3. Less money to do stuff.

4. Trump, and anyone who voted for him, because they're idiots and bigots. The "MarchforScienceDC" group tweeted: "Colonization, racism, immigration, native rights, sexism, ableism, queer-, trans-, intersex-phobia, & econ justice are scientific issues."

Uh-huh. At least the Left loves science again. If the cultural climate is experiencing one of its back-to-nature periods, then science is the enemy, since it produces war and chemicals and plaaaastic, maaaaan. But should the cultural climate shift toward reducing government involvement in everything from the sex lives of newts to the science of Intersexual Colonialists, then all of a sudden science is awesome.

Well, *some* science. The Left has its pets. Good science: replacing all our current power sources with solar power and eagle-mincing wind farms. Not science: scary nuclear power, which produces toxic waste and Jane Fonda movies, but I repeat myself.

Fun experiment: When an anti-nuke person asks what we'll do with the waste, just say we'll store it for a few years and then shoot it into the sun when we develop a hyper-powerful railgun. Once they stop explaining why science could never invent such a thing, because science just . . . wouldn't, they get indignant: Shoot nuclear waste into the sun? Must we POLLUTE EVERYTHING?

Good science: organic food that's grown with copious amounts of night soil, because the nitrogen in organic

fertilizers is better than the scary nitrogen grown in labs by profit-mad corporations, which inject pure moral evil into their product because it comes from a lab instead of a cow's rear.

Bad science: GMOs, which tinker with plants to produce disease-resistant strains. Good science: understanding DNA so we can tinker with humans to produce disease-resistant strains.

And so on. It doesn't make one a better, more morally pure person to Love Science. If you march around with a poster of Spock and ask people to behave logically, that's cute. But if logic tells you we should have a eugenics crusade to weed out the defectives, you're bad and you're wrong. Even though the science on sterilizing the undesirables was once *quite* settled among the high-minded.

What we know for sure is often wrong, thanks to the earnest certainties of previous people who Loved Science. A recent study, for example, concluded that you can probably eat egg yolks without fear. Like saturated fat, they're not as bad as you were told. Turns out the steak-'n'-eggs platter at the diner is good for you, but if you have the pancakes, use the sugar-free syrup, because—

—hold on, this is just coming in over the wires—okay, turns out that people who consumed more artificial sweeteners had a higher rate of dementia and strokes. We suggest you put jam on the pancakes, because studies show that fruits are high in antioxidants, which are good! (Ten years later, a study ties antioxidants to oxidant-deficiency syndrome, which causes deformed duodenums in rats.)

Obvious disclaimer: Just because science was wrong then doesn't mean science isn't right today. A lot of science is settled, because humankind has smart people who figured stuff out. Water is made of H<sub>2</sub>O, not dinosaur tears. An eclipse is not a dragon eating the sun. Vaccines do not cause autism, which is a style of French cinema.

But science is not a belief system. It is not an alternative to religion, as some of the marchers seemed to believe. One sign had a picture of a rocket—a Soviet-era Proton, for some reason—and said, "You can't launch this with prayer." As if there were black-robed men at the Vatican Space Program chanting, "O Lord God, save us from perdition / and please initiate stage-one ignition."

More science in the schools? Yes. And if it means celebrating the spirit of inquiry and intellectual freedom that has characterized the West and memorializing the long line of people who made our modern world of marvels possible, and it turns out that most of these people were men, that's okay, right?

Hurrah for the West! Hurrah for men! Hurrah for—hey, why are you all so frowny? Okay, okay, if we said that Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone message—"Come here, Watson, I want to see you"—was an expression of homosexual desire, would that make you feel better?

Thought so.

NR



# The Long View

BY ROB LONG

## NSA SURVEILLANCE TRANSCRIPT

*Begin Extract*

*[Static.]*

**FEMALE VOICE:** Can you hear us, Chelsea?

**MALE VOICE:** Nod and smile if you can hear us.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Is she doing it?

**MALE VOICE:** I can't tell.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Chelsea, can you see the van? It's just past the rope line.

**MALE VOICE:** She's nodding. Okay. We've got you, Chelsea. We have visual and audio contact.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Okay, now, Chelsea, your mom really thought what we do here was helpful for her to navigate public appearances and speeches and so forth. The key is to act natural and don't call attention to the earpiece.

**MALE VOICE:** Remember: When the reporters ask you anything about 2020 or beyond, just smile and say the lines we crafted for you.

**FEMALE VOICE:** I have no plans to run for anything. I'm busy being a working mom and working for change, and I really don't want to get into politics.

**MALE VOICE:** Got it?

**FEMALE VOICE:** Just say that.

**MALE VOICE:** Chelsea, as you walk past the rope line, just remember to smile at the people there. Remember what we talked about in the van before the event: Real people are real, Chelsea. They have lives and feelings and—what is she doing?

**FEMALE VOICE:** Chelsea! Don't touch that woman's purse, okay? Do not do that. Okay? It's not your property. You are not allowed to take someone else's purse for any reason.

**MALE VOICE:** That's right. Just hand it back to the lady. Smile and say that your mom has one just like it. Then smile again. Great! Great smiling, Chelsea! You're really getting the hang of this kind of human interaction.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Keep moving, Chelsea. You'll be able to move away from these people soon. Just a few more smiles and—Chelsea! No! That was just a reporter, okay? Just a question. Don't do that face. Take that face off, okay?

**MALE VOICE:** What is she doing? She's just staring at that guy from the *Times*.

**FEMALE VOICE:** He asked about 2020.

**MALE VOICE:** Chelsea, use the speech. Use the speech. What we talked about. What is she doing? She's just staring at him.

**FEMALE VOICE:** She's wishing the reporter into the corn field.

**MALE VOICE:** What?

**FEMALE VOICE:** It's a thing she does.

**MALE VOICE:** Um, does she actually have the power to—

**FEMALE VOICE:** No, of course not. But she thinks she does. Okay, Chelsea? Please keep moving. You're supposed to give your speech in a few minutes.

**MALE VOICE:** Just keep walking. Wait. Stop.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Give that man his watch back, Chelsea. Remember: You are not allowed to take someone else's property. That watch is not yours to take, okay? Just hand it back . . .

**MALE VOICE:** Good, good. Nicely done. Okay now, moving inside, Chelsea, find your table. It's table one, and it's—

**FEMALE VOICE:** Chelsea, you have to sit in your assigned seat, you can't just—

**MALE VOICE:** Oh, wait. Okay, this is good interaction, Chelsea. Make eye contact with the server. Great smiling, by the way. Now as they

talk, be sure to nod—that's when you move your head in an up-and-down way—

**FEMALE VOICE:** Too vigorous! Slow it down!

**MALE VOICE:** Okay, now the server is telling you a story about her newborn baby and this is a good time to make a small physical gesture, just reach out and touch her shoulder—are we getting this? Are we taping this interaction? This is good interaction right here, let's get this up on the web and to Colbert—wait, what is she saying? You don't have to say anything, Chelsea, you don't—

**FEMALE VOICE:** Chelsea, I don't think the waitress is relating here. She doesn't have a doorman, I'm pretty sure. And she doesn't have two nannies, I don't think. Just please remember to smile, look intently into the subject's eyes, and keep verbal interactions to a minimum.

**MALE VOICE:** You can stop touching the waitress now.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Just keep moving to your table.

**MALE VOICE:** Leave the waitress where she is. Don't drag her to your table. She's a real person, okay?

**FEMALE VOICE:** Chelsea, you're at your table. Just sit there quietly while we load up the speech module. You may feel some slight pressure behind your eyes, pay no attention to it. It's just the new operating system running a background update.

**MALE VOICE:** And remember, there will be some Q-and-A after the speech, so remember that humans like it when you smile warmly at them. Don't forget to do that.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Be natural. Just be normal and natural.

**MALE VOICE:** You should probably stop saying that.

**FEMALE VOICE:** Why?

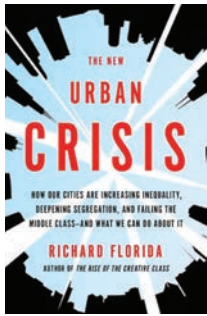
**MALE VOICE:** Because she has no idea what that means.

*End Extract*

# Books, Arts & Manners

## A Failed Urbanism

JOHN DANIEL DAVIDSON



*The New Urban Crisis: How Our Cities Are Increasing Inequality, Deepening Segregation, and Failing the Middle Class—and What We Can Do about It*, by Richard Florida  
(Basic, 336 pp., \$28)

RICHARD FLORIDA would like to clarify something. The creative class, it turns out, is not going to save your city—or any city. Florida, the stylish urban-studies professor who launched a lucrative career as a jet-setting urban theorist with his 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, thinks cities have become a big problem. In fact, the most problematic cities are the ones that seem most fully to embody his optimistic ideas about the creative class. Whether Florida is willing to admit it or not, his new book is more or less a sustained rebuttal of his famous theory, which in hindsight turns out to be a recipe not for urban renewal but for rampant income inequality and other evils, including “economic segregation.”

Florida’s conflicting theses would be laughable if they hadn’t proven so influential over the past 15 years. He popularized the idea that highly mobile young workers in growth industries—“creatives”—want above all to live someplace cool and tolerant. If cities wanted to attract those industries, they had to

appeal to their tech-savvy workers, which meant they had better get with the progressive program.

It turned out there were plenty of Rust Belt cities willing to dish out \$35,000 to hear Florida explain how gayborhoods, hipster coffee shops, and converted lofts could transform their former manufacturing hubs into bustling creative centers. If places like Cleveland, Toledo, and Rochester could just master what Florida called the “three T’s”—technology, talent, and tolerance—they might become the sort of places that artists, designers, and biomedical researchers wanted to call home. Right?

City leaders from Syracuse to Green Bay seemed to think so, and shelled out quarter-million-dollar studies on how to leverage their native “creative capital.” Florida’s theory of creative clustering—that a flood of laptop-toting creatives would lift all boats—had a certain appeal. It suggested that cities as seemingly uncool as Des Moines might be able to transform themselves into hipster hubs of the new economy, through progressive values (and good bars and restaurants).

The Great Recession put the lie to this hokum. In March 2009, Florida recognized as much—penning a cover story for *The Atlantic*, titled “How the Crash Will Reshape America,” in which he argued that we can’t stop the decline of

some places, no matter how many converted lofts and taxpayer-funded poetry events a city might have.

“The Rust Belt in particular looks likely to shed vast numbers of jobs, and some of its cities and towns, from Cleveland to St. Louis to Buffalo to Detroit, will have a hard time recovering,” he wrote, citing long-term—and rather obvious—trends in manufacturing, such as foreign competition and automation. Instead of trying to revive these doomed places, Florida declared, it was time for a “new geography” that eschewed suburban sprawl and old Rust Belt towns. Instead,

we need to encourage growth in the regions and cities that are best positioned to compete in the coming decades: the great mega-regions that already power the economy, and the smaller, talent-attracting innovation centers inside them—places like Silicon Valley, Boulder, Austin, and the North Carolina Research Triangle.

In other words, Florida seemed to say, quit trying to save your old manufacturing town and just move to Austin already. Not that he came right out and said so. Indeed, he defended his earlier speaking tours when Alec MacGillis interviewed him for *The American Prospect* in 2009. “I’ve never tried to sugarcoat the message to any of them,”

### LARKINESQUE

The trees have shed their leaves at last,  
Like something over—done and said.  
How shall their settled piles be read  
Now that fall is dead and past?

Perhaps like sibyl’s words that wait  
On wind to spell out some despair,  
When all their writing blots the air  
And hints that hope may be too late?

Above, do quires, runed though bare,  
Image the warning of a dream  
Where we fall too, until they seem  
To say, “Prepare. Prepare. Prepare”?

—LEN KRISAK

*Mr. Davidson is a senior correspondent for the Federalist.*

he told MacGillis. Of the cities that hired him to dispense advice on attracting creatives, he said, “I’ve given them the facts . . . about what they were up against. I never tried to give them false hope. I encouraged them to work on their assets, but I tried to be honest and objective in helping them engage their problems. I hope they don’t feel let down.”

But they must feel let down, in part because Florida himself has since all but openly refuted the entire premise of his creative-class argument. In a 2013 post (a version of which shows up in his new book) on the website *The Atlantic* Cities examining data on the economic effects of talent clustering, Florida admits that the creative class “provides little in the way of trickle-down benefits. Its benefits flow disproportionately to more highly skilled knowledge, professional, and creative workers whose higher wages and salaries are more than sufficient to cover more expensive housing in these locations.” Blue-collar and service workers might earn more in places such as Silicon Valley, but the rent is too damn high for it to do them any good.

*The New Urban Crisis* is all about economic inequality and the supposed disappearance of the urban middle class. “The central idea is that the very same clustering force that drives economic and social progress also causes the divides that separate us and hold us back,” Florida writes, as if it had just occurred to him that, say, an influx of highly paid techies to a former steel town might drive up the cost of housing and displace blue-collar workers. “Left unchecked,” he explains, “this clustering force generates a lopsided, extremely unequal kind of urbanism in which a relative handful of superstar cities, and a few elite neighborhoods within them, benefit while many other places stagnate or fall behind.”

In other words, Florida is discovering basic economics. It turns out, the cities that were the exemplars for his creative-class theory—Austin, Toronto, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, Boston, etc.—are among the most unequal and economically segregated. Again, not that Florida acknowledges he was wrong. The closest he comes is to say, in the opening pages, that in the years after his bestseller came out in 2002, his understanding of cities began to

evolve: “I realized I had been overly optimistic to believe that cities and the creative class could, by themselves, bring forth a better and more inclusive kind of urbanism.”

The larger problem with his course correction is that he swaps one set of faulty maps for another. Even his critique of his own clustering theory doesn’t quite make sense, in part because he focuses on every progressive’s favorite economic canard, income inequality. Setting aside the voluminous research showing income inequality to be a meaningless indicator of how the poor are actually doing, Florida still can’t quite twist the logic in his favor. In a chapter titled “The Inequality of Cities,” Florida claims that, “just as clustering and growth go together, so do clustering and inequality.” Two pages before that, he says income inequality is “a drag on economic growth,” even though the three most unequal cities in his “Composite Inequality Index” are New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—Florida’s very own “superstar cities and knowledge hubs.” How can income inequality be a drag on economic growth when, by Florida’s own measure, it is most pronounced in wealthy cities with vibrant economies that employ a great teeming mass of creatives?

In order to make the case that low levels of income inequality promote growth, Florida is forced to make dubious comparisons between the United States and other countries, arriving at the erroneous but unsurprising conclusion that redistributive policies and massive welfare states actually generate growth.

For all his complex charts and graphs, basic economics seem to flummox Florida throughout his rambling book. For example, it doesn’t occur to him how public policy can shape a local economy. In the final chapter, Florida says that it’s a “perplexing reality that the traditional American Dream of an affordable home is more achievable in sprawling conservative areas of the country than in dense, knowledge-based liberal ones,” noting that housing costs are nearly twice as much in deep-blue markets as in red-state ones. Perplexing indeed. Could it be that public policy has something to do with this difference? That taxes and regulations

have some effect on housing and the cost of living?

As with other questions that challenge his preferred conclusions, Florida lets these pass over him in silence as he moves on to his proposed solutions. But his alarmist rhetoric—the new urban crisis is “the central crisis of capitalism today”—doesn’t quite fit his recommendations, which amount to a laundry list of worn-out liberal talking points. It will come as no surprise that Florida thinks we need more government action. Whether it’s subsidized housing, a higher minimum wage, or high-speed rail, what’s needed is massive “taxpayer investment” in our cities. Florida even proposes a new layer of federal bureaucracy, a cabinet-level “Department of Cities and Urban Development,” to help coordinate all the new public spending and make sure cutting-edge new policies, such as diverting a share of foreign aid “from nation-building to city-building,” are properly implemented.

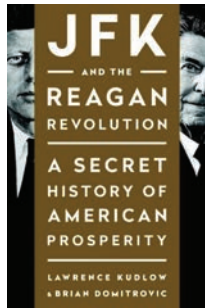
One can already see our cities gleaming with the luster of this 21st-century urban New Deal—or at least Florida can. Likewise, he can see the dystopia that awaits us if we don’t act. Today’s urban crisis, Florida warns darkly, will only deepen: “Our superstar cities and tech hubs will become so expensive that they will turn into gilded and gated communities; their innovation and creative sparks will eventually fade; and they will price out the essential service workers needed to keep their economies running.”

And what then? Will the urban billionaires starve in their towers because no one is around to feed them? What about the rest of the country? What will happen if we fail to implement the drastic reforms Florida calls for, such as a negative income tax that gives a guaranteed minimum income to the poor? “Our suburbs will grow poorer, more economically distressed, and more unequal. More middle-class neighborhoods will disappear, and our nation will further divide into walled-off enclaves for the rich and larger and larger areas of urban and suburban decay.”

In the end, Florida’s entire book is designed to give a veneer of urbanist scholarship to Bernie Sanders socialism. Its one saving grace is that maybe fewer people will take his muddled theories as seriously this time around. **NR**

# The Ture-Kennedy Blueprint

IKE BRANNON



*JFK and the Reagan Revolution: A Secret History of American Prosperity*, by Lawrence Kudlow and Brian Domitrovic (Portfolio, 256 pp., \$29)

**F**OUR decades ago, Larry Kudlow was part of a cabal that began thinking about tax policy not from the demand side—where the government gives people back a little of their own money for a bit so they spend more—but from the perspective that any tax changes should boost the incentives for people to work and firms to invest, and thereby stimulate output and employment. The movement these people begat came to be known as supply-side economics.

In the 1970s, the tax code strongly deterred entrepreneurship and work. The corporate tax rate was 48 percent and the top rate on small businesses and workers was 70 percent. In his fascinating biography of Johnny Carson, Henry Bushkin reported that Carson hired him as his agent partly because—after federal, state, and New York City taxes, combined with his previous agent’s 10 percent commission—it wasn’t clear that Carson was seeing anything from his salary, and Carson wanted Bushkin to do something about it.

Hundreds of thousands of Americans came to the same realization

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and began arranging their affairs accordingly: Wealthy capitalists began to seek out economically worthless investments that delivered beaucoup tax breaks, or they hid their money from the taxman, or they simply gave up and enjoyed the remaining fruits of their labors without laboring any more.

The nascent supply-siders—most notably Representative Jack Kemp (R., N.Y.), Senator Orrin Hatch (R., Utah), and the economists on the congressional Joint Economic Committee, as well as Kudlow—knew that a temporary tax cut of the sort Jimmy Carter proposed early in his tenure would not fix what ailed America: This group wanted a fundamental restructuring of the tax code to make it more conducive to work, investment, and economic growth.

Their idea that sky-high tax rates deterred economic activity was somewhat radical at the time. Eventually, the

worked for Wilbur Mills, the Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, but who was no Democrat.

Ture was a proto-supply-sider and the integral connection between Kennedy and the 1970s supply-siders, as he became staff director of the Joint Economic Committee for the Republicans in the 1970s when that committee was at its apex. Kudlow and Domitrovic report that Ture forcefully argued to Kennedy that the economy didn’t need a Keynesian jolt, and suggested that a reduction in the top corporate and personal tax rates would boost long-run growth. The final legislation signed by President Johnson did precisely that, reducing the top corporate rate from 52 percent to 48 percent and the top personal rate from 91 percent to 70 percent.

The extent to which the tax cuts succeeded at stimulating economic growth is a matter of debate, of course: The

## This book is an effort to reclaim the proud history of supply-side economics.

notion caught on, thanks in no small part to the editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal*, and it became the guiding force for the Kemp-Roth tax cuts in 1981 as well as the comprehensive tax reform in 1986. Kudlow played a role in both.

To some degree, this book is a work of humility: What Larry Kudlow and Brian Domitrovic suggest is that the work that Kudlow did with Kemp, Hatch, and the Joint Economic Committee in the 1970s actually had its roots in the Kennedy White House. And it’s easy to read this as a recommendation that Donald Trump emulate JFK as he pursues tax reform.

The authors praise Kennedy for being ecumenical in his appointment of cabinet members and senior staff and eschewing party loyalty in favor of competence, which is now as then a radical notion. He took the same approach when he began considering a tax cut, and among the people he brought into the fold was Norman Ture, an economist who at the time

economy did grow smartly in the years after passage of the tax cut, but the defense buildup associated with the Vietnam War and an increasingly accommodative Federal Reserve have led Keynesians to conclude that the long and robust expansion of the decade owed to demand-side effects. The authors beg to differ.

People have ascribed a supply-side motivation for Kennedy’s tax cuts before, but this book goes farther than previous efforts. Ture’s influence is illuminating: These days the man has an outsized reputation in conservative tax circles, and his role in crafting the Kennedy tax package is notable.

Discussions over what became the Kennedy tax cut began shortly after the economist John Muth published “Rational Expectations and the Theory of Price Movements” (1961), the paper that later became the foundation for a new school of economic thought that moved the economics profession beyond the ineffectual Keynesian perspective in the 1970s. Economists paid

little attention to it at the time, but Ture—who got his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago—may have grasped its importance early.

This book is, of course, very timely; not only are Republicans hoping to enact some sort of comprehensive tax reform in the next year, but too many of them have tried to sell reform as a Keynesian shot in the arm for the U.S. economy.

It is a powerful urge: The George W. Bush administration used such reasoning to push both the 2001 tax cuts and the 2003 acceleration of the remaining tax-rate reductions through Congress and largely eschewed any supply-side rhetoric. And, of course, politicians of all stripes embraced a Keynesian perspective when it came to the 2009 stimulus bill, and there was no shortage of economists willing to do likewise.

The return of Keynesianism in D.C. is understandable: The mere fact that it justifies more spending will always make politicians amenable to such thinking. (Keynesianism has not made a similar comeback in academia.) But it's also true that by the 2000s the supply-side moniker had become stained by various outlandish claims made by charlatans holding its banner.

One way to view this book is as an effort to reclaim the proud history of supply-side economics for the next fight and advance the view that economic growth should always be a primary goal of our government. Of course, the common perception is that any growth we've had over the past two decades has gone only to the wealthy, and these days people on the left would rather focus tax policy on redistribution. Thomas Piketty, the latest economic hero of our nomenclatura, has suggested that a 90 percent top tax rate would work just fine and still "leave plenty" to motivate the upper-income workers. This perspective makes many despair of any bipartisan tax reform.

If the populace comes to despair that economic growth will ever do them any good, it will bode ill for the future of our country, as well as that of the GOP, and the next tax reform won't be concerned about reducing tax rates at all.

And Larry Kudlow's efforts will have been in vain. **NR**

# Acts of Undermining

IAN TUTTLE

**D**ISCUSSING Rousseau's *Confessions* in his work *Allegories of Reading*, Paul de Man wrote: "It is always possible to face up to any experience (to excuse any guilt), because the experience always exists simultaneously as fictional discourse and as empirical event and it is never possible to decide which one of the two possibilities is the right one." This was a pregnant comment, though no one knew it at the time.

By 1979, when *Allegories* was published, de Man had become the toast of American academia, and his "deconstructionism" a staple of humanities departments. The above was the sort of erudite-sounding twaddle to which his acolytes thrilled: the both/and, the neither/nor, the ultimate "unreadability" of a text. The prospect of the indeterminacy of meaning was exciting. "The fall into the abyss of deconstruction inspires us with as much pleasure as fear," one of de Man's students would write. "We are intoxicated with the prospect of never hitting bottom."

In 1987, though, four years after de Man's death (which was noted on the front page of the *New York Times*), a sudden sobering occurred. That year, a young Belgian scholar, Ortwin de Graef, revealed that between 1940 and 1942 de Man had contributed some 170 articles to *Le Soir* and *Het Vlaamsche Land*, Belgian daily newspapers, one French, one Flemish, that acted as propaganda arms for the Nazi occupiers. Those revelations (which also appeared on the front page of the *New York Times*) were explosive, sparking a vicious battle between his detractors and defenders that occupied the pages of prominent academic and literary journals for several years, and prompting a reassessment of his work that included new, darker readings of passages such as the above. The fallout continues. In 2014, City University of New York professor Evelyn Barish published *The Double Life of Paul de Man*.

De Man is one of three 20th-century notables who share the stage in Jonathan

Leaf's new play, *Deconstruction*, which premiered in March in New York City, courtesy of the Storm Theatre Company and Christopher Ekstrom Productions. Set in the summer and early autumn of 1949, *Deconstruction* reimagines the relationship between a young de Man (Jed Peterson), newly arrived in New York City from Belgium, and novelist-critic Mary McCarthy (Fleur Alys Dobbins), by the late 1940s a member in good standing of the celebrated Manhattan literary circle that included Dwight Macdonald, Edmund Wilson (McCarthy's second of four husbands), and many others. It was through Macdonald that McCarthy met de Man, and she promptly procured for him a temporary teaching position at Bard College. But it has long been rumored that their relationship was not strictly professional, and *Deconstruction* imagines how that liaison might have unfolded.

The play is a study in sophisticated deception, as were the lives of the principals. Is de Man the bashful prey of a predatory older woman? Or is he the seducer? "There's something cruel about you," McCarthy says in the opening scene, and even as de Man acts the *ingénu*, it's a clear indication of what is to come. By the end of the play, de Man will have impregnated McCarthy, threatened her with blackmail, and abandoned her for one of his students, whom he has also impregnated.

Peterson and Dobbins handle their roles admirably, particularly as the emotional pitch of events escalates. Dobbins is a convincing McCarthy, shifting seamlessly between vulnerability and icy wit, while Peterson's amorphous de Man manages to be both repulsive and pitiable. These subtleties are facilitated by Leaf's smart script and the simple set, constituted largely of scattered books.

In real life, de Man, by the end of 1949—that is, a semester into his job at Bard—had conceived a child with a student named Patricia Kelley, whom he married shortly thereafter. It seems not to have fazed him that he also had a wife and three children living in Argentina. (They divorced sometime in the 1950s.) De Man and Kelley subsequently moved from prestigious institution to prestigious institution as his profile rose; they remained together until his death.

In *Deconstruction*, McCarthy is the collateral damage of these lies, which are



ultimately exposed by the play's third celebrity: political philosopher Hannah Arendt (Karoline Fischer). A refugee from Hitler's Germany, Arendt moved to New York City in 1941. While in fact it would be a few more years before their relationship blossomed, it's true that Arendt and McCarthy became extremely close friends. When Arendt died in 1976, McCarthy was her literary executor. The quarter century of intimate, sometimes profound, often gossipy conversation that they shared is partly recorded in *Between Friends: The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Mary McCarthy, 1949–1975*.

In Leaf's imagining, Arendt's cool, probing mind is immune to de Man's charms, and she acts as inquisitor, hoping to protect her friend from another ill-fated romance. Part of this searching-out is to inquire after de Man's philosophical convictions, and that conjures up Martin Heidegger and another, even more important 20th-century intellectual scandal.

Almost certainly the most significant philosopher of the century, Heidegger proposed, most famously in *Being and Time* (1927), a radical reorientation of philosophical thinking—back toward the question of Being, of what it means *to be*. Heidegger was also a member of the Nazi party, and his philosophy is entwined with the rise of the Third Reich. (To precisely what extent is a matter of fierce debate, renewed recently by the publication of the “Black Notebooks,” private journals that Heidegger kept through much of the 1930s and 1940s. They contain more-explicit anti-Semitism than appears in his previously known work.) Arendt was Heidegger's student, and his most famous lover.

Leaf's play requires three actors, but it has four characters. “Martin” looms omnipresent over the unfolding events, and threaded deftly through the plot is an ongoing, increasingly urgent debate about the merits and demerits of his philosophical project, which de Man claims as his intellectual patrimony. Against the background of Heidegger's Nazism and de Man's many sins (political and personal), Leaf's question is clear: How should we evaluate the intellectual achievements of these bad or misguided men? Is it just coincidental, in de Man's case, that “deconstruction” can be used to pardon the conduct of its founder?

Upon reflection, it should come as no great surprise that deconstruction took



Jed Peterson as Paul de Man and Fleur Alys Dobbins as Mary McCarthy in *Deconstruction*

hold when it did: following not just the traumas of the Second World War and the Holocaust, but the rebellions of the 1960s (which spanned the United States and Europe). A sophisticated conceptual apparatus that could justify the inversions taking place—of morals, customs, traditions, etc.—was surely a welcome arrival. Undoubtedly, it has been used to great effect.

But that apparatus was, it's clear now, flimsier than it initially appeared. Neither deconstruction nor any other grand philosophical or ideological project has been able to resolve the ordinary experience of deep and abiding guilt. For that, Leaf, in *Deconstruction*, turns to a much earlier tradition. The final, brief scene shows Arendt and McCarthy at the latter's Greenwich Village apartment on Thanksgiving Day, 1949. They are discussing the events of the last few months. (McCarthy has miscarried; her cuckolded husband, not de Man, was by her bedside.) The conversation prompts from McCarthy a memory, and the stage goes dark with her reciting—at first for Arendt's benefit, but finally for her own—the words of the “Hail Mary.”

This is a moving conclusion at which McCarthy purists will sniff. The author was raised in the Roman Catholic Church—the period is recalled in her *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood* (1957)—but shortly before her death she observed to the *New York Times* that she

had been an atheist from the age of 13. Indeed, in 1949, no moral reformation was in the offing. During the Vietnam War, she would offer apologies for the Vietcong, and, in a particularly disgraceful episode, attack an American POW she met during a trip to North Vietnam: Air Force colonel James Robinson “Robbie” Risner, held in captivity and routinely tortured for seven years. McCarthy was a sharp-tongued critic, in print and in person (it was she who said, of playwright Lillian Hellman, “Every word she writes is a lie, including ‘and’ and ‘the’”), and that sharpness could easily descend into spite.

The fondness with which Mary McCarthy is remembered has less to do with her literary accomplishments—she lavished an extraordinary prose talent on a handful of minor novels, the most famous of which remains *The Group* (1963)—than with the snobbery and sexual promiscuity that she parlayed into an enduring foothold in high society. Nonetheless, the facts of her life perhaps heighten rather than detract from the drama of *Deconstruction's* resolution. The lives that Leaf portrays could have been different. God is not jealous with his grace. But He demands that we call a sin a sin. Dismantling that claim on us was the project of many men and women of formidable intelligence during the last century. *Deconstruction* displays the wreckage, and suggests a way to begin to rebuild. NR

# An American Outsider

JAY NORDLINGER

Montclair, N.J.

**G**EORGE WALKER greets me at the door, smiling and dapper. I figured he would be (dapper). Mr. Walker is a gentleman of the old school. I've never seen a photo of him when he wasn't wearing a coat and tie. He is dressed that way now, in his own home. I have a feeling he wouldn't welcome a guest any other way.

We are in Montclair, N.J., a town some 15 miles from Manhattan. "I've lived in this house since 1969," Mr. Walker says. "I was the first black person in this neighborhood." I ask whether he ever had any problems. No, he says.

Mr. Walker has many "firsts" to his credit. He was the first black person to graduate from the Curtis Institute of Music, the famous conservatory in Philadelphia. He was the first black person to earn a doctorate at the Eastman School of Music, the famous conservatory in Rochester, N.Y. He was the first black person to win the Pulitzer Prize for Music. And so on.

Obviously, Walker is a musician—a composer and pianist. That's the right order, too. You can see it in the title of his autobiography (2009): "George Walker: Reminiscences of an American Composer and Pianist." There is something else about the title: the word "American," unqualified.

"I feel strongly about that," Mr. Walker tells me. "I've always disliked being called 'African-American.'" As he elaborates on this, he points out that his music is dotted with American tunes: hymns, spirituals, pop standards, and the like. You may not hear them—they are planted in this classical music. But they're there.

This summer, Mr. Walker will mark his 95th birthday. His latest composition is his *Sinfonia No. 5*. It will be played by the National Symphony Orchestra, in Washington, D.C., at the beginning of the 2018–19 season. Mr. Walker spends

much of his time doing three things: seeking commissions; seeking performances; and seeking recordings. That is the lot of a composer.

Speaking of D.C., he was born and raised there. When he was born—in June 1922—Warren G. Harding was president. Mr. Walker's father, also named George, had come from Jamaica. He was a doctor: a graduate of Temple University's medical school, in Philadelphia. Mr. Walker's mother, Rosa, was American-born and a high-school graduate. She worked at the Government Printing Office.

Both Walkers observed standards. They did not even use slang. Not even "okay," which was spreading like a weed.

Mr. Walker knew his grandmother—his mother's mother—very well. Her name was Malvina King. She had had two husbands. She lost the first one when he was sold at auction. The second had died. Mrs. King herself was an escapee from slavery. One day, young George asked her about it—the experience of slavery. She said one thing: "They did everything except eat us."

In 1946, Mr. Walker composed *Lyrical for Strings*, his best-known piece. It is dedicated to his grandmother.

He went to Dunbar High, the famous school in Washington—the most famous high school for blacks in all of America. It produced a who's who of people, including Edward Brooke, the first black senator (popularly elected). Mr. Walker says that some of the teachers at Dunbar were very good; and some were not so good. He really valued his classmates.

One teacher he unquestionably valued was Clyde McDuffie, who taught Latin. They spent one year—fourth-year Latin—on the *Aeneid*. Mr. Walker can still recite the famous opening: "Arma virumque cano . . ." Also, the poem impressed on him the importance of duty above personal desire.

He graduated from Dunbar at 14. Did his father pressure him to follow in his footsteps as a doctor? Not at all. "He never brought up the subject." Young George would be a musician. He went to Oberlin College in Ohio, which had been admitting blacks for a hundred years. George was the youngest student in the college, 15.

At Oberlin, he heard many of the greatest musicians of the day, including

Rachmaninoff. He also heard Horowitz. "He was a pianist who made me aware of what the piano could do," says Mr. Walker. He was not always on. Like many of us, Mr. Walker heard him great and heard him shockingly bad. But when he was on—there was hardly anything else like it.

There was another pianist at Oberlin, by the way: Frances Walker. Mr. Walker's younger sister. Later, she would be a teacher on the same campus, the first black woman to become a full professor at Oberlin. She still lives there.

From Oberlin, Mr. Walker went to Curtis, where one of his teachers was Rudolf Serkin, a major pianist. Mr. Walker remembers everything Serkin said. But he did not say much. And he did not know some of the scores, says Mr. Walker, as well as he thought he did. For composition, Walker had Rosario Scalero, who had also taught Barber.

One day, Samuel Barber returned to the school in his uniform: the uniform of the Army Air Corps. He served Wednesday tea with Mrs. Bok, the founder of the school.

Walker had an orchestration class with Gian Carlo Menotti. "It was a joke," he says. I respond, "He didn't give you much?" Mr. Walker says, "He didn't give us *anything*." Walker pretty much taught himself orchestration.

He is nothing if not blunt in his opinions. At one point, we're talking about *Kreisleriana*, the Schumann piece. "If you listen to that pianist from South America," he says, rubbing his eyes in disgust. The object of his disgust, he cannot remember the name of. "Martha Argerich?" I hazard. He nods his head. "Terrible," he says. "Terrible. She has no idea about the piece at all. No sense of the rhythm, no sense of the phrasing . . ."

In 1945, Walker played Rachmaninoff's Concerto No. 3 with the Philadelphia Orchestra, under Eugene Ormandy. The maestro was not very nice to very many people. "Was he nice to *you*?" I ask. No. Ormandy should at least get points for consistency.

Warmly supportive of young Walker was Nadia Boulanger, the famous composition teacher in France. She had taught anyone and everyone, including a slew of Americans: Virgil Thomson, Roy Harris, Aaron Copland, Elliott Carter. She taught Walker, too. "You're



George Walker

a composer,” she told him—a high compliment, from that source. She confirmed for him that he was on the right track. “Just keep going,” she said.

In the middle of the century, and for a long time thereafter, there was tremendous pressure on composers to conform to a modernist fashion: a fashion epitomized by Pierre Boulez, the famous Frenchman. Did Walker ever feel such pressure? “No,” he says. “I’m an outsider. I don’t have connections to composers. Even black composers.”

I ask him who, among his colleagues, is underrated. He cannot give me an answer. I ask who is overrated. He says, emphatically, “Boulez.”

Walker had a busy career of teaching, along with composing and playing. He taught at several institutions, mainly Rutgers, in New Jersey, where he was chairman of the music department. In 1996, he wrote *Lilacs*, for voice and orchestra (setting Whitman’s poem “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom’d”). It was this work that won him the Pulitzer Prize. Since its premiere, it has barely been performed at

all. This is tremendously frustrating for a composer, Pulitzer or no Pulitzer.

Mr. Walker was married to a fellow pianist, Helen Walker-Hill. They had two sons, Gregory and Ian. Mr. Walker’s father kept mum about medicine. What about Mr. Walker? Was he laissez-faire with his sons? No. “I’m the micromanager!” he says. Gregory is a violinist; Ian is a playwright. Gregory is a champion of his father’s music, including a violin concerto, written for him.

In his 90-plus years, George Walker has written 90-plus works. Interesting how that has worked out. In 2008, I interviewed Elliott Carter on the occasion of his hundredth birthday. (He lived to 103.) He was diligently working. Mr. Walker, too, works. “When you’ve been doing something for so long, there’s nothing else you can think of doing,” he says.

I ask, “Are there musical ideas in your head all the time?” No, he answers. “I try not to think about music except when I sit down to compose.” That both surprises and impresses me. I think of a modern word: “compartmentalization.”

We talk about race and the impact of discrimination. Mr. Walker says that a big problem is tokenism: People perform a work by a black composer, pat themselves on the back, and think, “Well, that’s done.” Also, black pianists may well be asked to play *Rhapsody in Blue*—instead of a concerto by, say, Mozart. (Note that *Rhapsody in Blue* was composed by a Brooklyn-born son of Russian-Jewish immigrants. The family’s original name: Gershowitz.)

Mr. Walker has many gripes about the music business, as everyone does. But he has no gripes about music. He had his first piano lesson at five, 90 years ago. And he loves music as much as he ever did. “The love of music permeates me,” he says. “The love of good music.”

Is there any music he is feeling especially close to now (apart from his own)? Well, it depends on his mood, he says. Often, he will go back to some piece he has known for many years—and discover something new in it. *Why didn’t I understand this initially?* he’ll think. But he does now. And “my respect for great music is never-ending.” **NR**

Film  
**Jungle  
 Fever**

ROSS DOUTHAT

‘O N this river, God never finished his creation.’ So says one of the natives in *Aguirre, the Wrath of God*, Werner Herzog’s fevered early-’70s nightmare about a mad conquistador in Amazonia, searching for El Dorado and finding only baleful, stagnant jungle. It’s a movie that haunts *The Lost City of Z*, which is about a kind of spiritual descendant of the conquistadors, the English explorer Percy Fawcett, whose early-20th-century search for a lost civilization in the rain forest captivated the world—right up until he (and his son) vanished without a trace.

The source for the film is the recent book by *The New Yorker*’s David Grann, which interweaves the history of Fawcett’s expeditions with Grann’s attempt to follow in his footsteps. Perhaps understandably, the film carves away the modern framework, giving us instead what amounts to a straight biopic of Fawcett, from his beginnings as a soldier-turned-cartographer to his mysterious celebrity-explorer end. But the result suggests why Grann made himself a character: Without a link to the present, the movie’s story starts strong and then fades out, its power evanescent with its subject.

The first act finds Fawcett, played by Charlie Hunnam (most famous from the TV biker melodrama *Sons of Anarchy*), trying to overpower social barriers with energy and charisma. An officer in the pre-World War I British Army, he’s dashing, courageous, bold—in the opening scene, we watch him down a stag by taking forest trails where the rest of the hunting party fears to go—but also fatally hamstrung by his family name: His father was a drunk and a gambler and that’s enough to put a ceiling on the prospects of the son.

Until, that is, the Royal Geographic Society comes calling, offering him a career-making opportunity in western Amazonia, where the rubber-rich borderlands of Bolivia and Brazil require a mapmaker to stave off a resource war.

Leaving his passionate spouse (Sienna Miller, excellent in her umpteenth anguished-wife role) and their small children, he takes ship for South America and a landscape familiar from Herzog, Coppola, and Conrad. The jungle is thick and steaming, the natives inscrutable, the whites sunk in moral squalor, the entire enterprise surreal. The edge of civilization is a rubber plantation that enslaves Indians while staging torchlit operas beneath the jungle foliage; its swollen proprietor permits Fawcett to go on upriver but everyone warns him that nobody comes back.

He goes on, accompanied by Henry Costin—a huge-bearded weirdo of an aide-de-camp, played by the *Twilight* heartthrob Robert Pattinson with eccentric glee—and the usual assortment of expendables. There are piranhas, spears flying from the foliage, boils, and black vomiting, and you wait for the *Aguirre*-esque madness to kick in . . . but it doesn’t, quite. Instead Fawcett successfully finds the river’s source, completes his map, keeps (most of) his men alive, and heads back to England a hero.

But he brings with him what he thinks is something more important than a map: shards of pottery and other goods, found deep in the jungle, that seem to him proof that there might have been, or might still be, a real hidden empire in Amazonia, a city to match the El Dorado of 17th-century legend. This city, dubbed “Z” (and pronounced “Zed,” in fine English style) because it would represent the last undiscovered civilization, becomes Fawcett’s life’s obsession, drawing him away from his family and back into the jungle time and time again.

So perhaps Fawcett found madness on the river after all. That’s one way of interpreting the movie—that its hero never escapes from the jungle of the mind, that the vines that creep around his neat brick English home are really creepers around his imagination. But the film isn’t sure it wants to say that; it doesn’t want to go the full *Aguirre* or *Kurtz* with its subject. So instead it tries to complicate things by suggesting that maybe Fawcett’s obsessions were actually visionary, idealistic, woke—portraying him as a kind of post-imperial explorer, an enlightened Dances-with-Jaguars sort who champions the capacities of the indigenes against racist condescension, a man who seeks Zed because he thinks it will prove all the white male patriarchal snobs of the British Empire wrong.

Charlie Hunnam in *The Lost City of Z*

As history this is rubbish: The real Fawcett was if anything more racist than the Edwardian norm, and he thought that his Zed would resemble the imaginary African empire of Zu-Vendis in his friend H. Rider Haggard’s adventure novel *Allan Quatermain*—an island of superior “white Indians,” perhaps of European ancestry, hidden away amid the under-evolved natives. But his invented wokeness lets the director, James Gray, play with a kind of politically correct reversal of the *Aguirre/Heart of Darkness* formula, in which the secret of the jungle isn’t horror but some kind of white-supremacy-destroying revelation.

Except there is no revelation within the confines of Fawcett’s story; only misapprehensions, blind alleys, overconfidence, and ultimate defeat. This was where Grann’s present-day framing device was useful, because it let him suggest—not always convincingly, given the gap between what’s been found and what Fawcett imagined—that subsequent excavations provide the vanished explorer with a kind of vindication. The movie tries to do that with a few lines before the end credits, but to weak effect: In the ending that matters, the shadows claim both Fawcett and his firstborn (Tom Holland), and all the studied, mystic ambiguity of Gray’s final scenes cannot turn that darkness into light.

The trip upriver is a departure for Gray, who up till now has made a series of moody, evocative, ultimately disappointing movies about ethnics and immigrants and gangsters in greater New York. But he’s traveled far to achieve the same results, because “moody, evocative, and ultimately disappointing” describes *The Lost City of Z* as well. **NR**

# The Staff Of Life



RICHARD BROOKHISER

‘**Y**OU cut them along the face, like a diamond. Then you have to shake them—shake them until your teeth rattle. Then you cook them in good oil.’

Anthony described making fried zucchini without the slices subsiding into sodden, shapeless messes. The shaking is to get the water out, the good oil is to make sure the freshness comes through. He had done it, or overseen it being done, for decades in his neighborhood restaurant, a red-sauce place with a light hand. Red sauce—and chicken francese and veal milanese—was the genre: familiar, popular, moderately priced. The light hand meant it was that much better than similar places. The kitchen remembered Grandmother, but you did not automatically become a peasant or a child eating there. You went up a staircase, grandfathered in: Today there would need to be a wheelchair-accessible funicular railway. There were white linen tablecloths and a picture of the pope (Polish—what can you do?). Anthony’s sons held divisional commands. The music was Frank and Dino but at levels that permitted conversation.

His empire expanded like Rome absorbing Carthage and Gaul. He bought established restaurants in Little Italy and the East Village, opened a cantina on his ground floor. Then the lease on the home property expired, the landlord’s children aimed at a new rate of return, and that was that.

Anthony did not repine. He had already moved into movement, opening

studios for Pilates and Gyrotonics. I did not follow him there—I move the weights my trainer tells me to as best I can—but my wife did. For eleven years I kept in touch at second hand.

Only weeks ago, my wife heard on the grapevine at the movement salon that Anthony was opening a new restaurant. In a vacant space on a corner there was activity. The old sign, for a defunct bistro—no longer an invitation but a tombstone—came down. There was light in the commercial sepulcher. Then came an invitation to the soft opening, a party for friends and family.

His new space was inviting—street level on an avenue, with outside tables; no more stairs. But the two dining rooms were dark and small. So he opened up the dividing wall, and painted the remaining walls white and the pressed-tin ceiling gold. The salt and pepper shakers were wrapped in gold foil with ragged tops—the pomegranates of the Hesperides. Anthony presided in a white chef’s jacket, with the Italian colors on the collar. He could not yet offer dessert or espresso, and the service was slow—an hour, plus eleven years—but the dishes tasted exactly as they had before.

Like Italian Americans of an older generation, Anthony speaks with his hands: on the shoulder (greeting, farewell), on the forearm (emphasis), on the hand (special emphasis). We, less articulate, are reduced to words and appropriate facial expressions. Eleven months ago, he was diagnosed with cancer. (Forearm.) (Mm! frowns.) They gave him radiation and chemotherapy, and rearranged his alimentary canal. (Gestures, showing what was rehooked where.) “So this,” we said to him, of his restaurant, “is your response.” (Nod/shrug: defiance and fatalism: I go on, fingers crossed. Then hand on hand, he had to go off to check on another order.)

Celebrants came and went: bald dancers from the movement salon, a Village person bearded like Father Ferapont, knowledge-class professionals who in the city consider themselves middle class. Passers-by, he told us, were stunned to see him again; one woman said she remembered being taken to his old place in a stroller.

Why is eating special? It is necessary for survival, and so evolution has made

it seem special to us—the voice of Mr. Science. But defecation is also necessary for survival, yet it is not special in the same way. Eating summons its own arts: farming, hunting, herding, cooking, serving. When they have done their work, eating is best done together. The person who eats alone is overworked, or under-socialized. Even if you are alone, as only those who live among millions can be alone, there are clean, well-lighted places where you can eat alone together. There may be no communication, but there is communion. We are all present and accounted for.

There is a young woman friend of ours whom we met 20 years ago when she was a coltish actress working as a waitress. She moved cross-country and got into real estate, which also depends on the suspension of disbelief. Then came her cancer. Luckily for her, the colt had become one smart animal. She researched online, picked the brains of fellow support-group members, found a clinical trial back on this coast, and is in the midst of a treatment that sounds like science fiction. One hurdle had been passed successfully, so we went together to the hard opening of Anthony’s restaurant on Easter Sunday.

If it had been a play, this would have been the tech rehearsal. You hard-open, as the SecDef said, with the restaurant you have. But once again, every dish was just what it should be. Why, I wondered, is cheesecake like this available no place else that I go? Is Grandmother’s recipe lost but for here?

Our young friend (so we think of her, for she will always be younger than we are) showed her suture: stapled, like tax returns. Anthony is thinner and more stooped; even his sons have, here and there, gray hairs. But not only do we go on, sometimes we can come back, from mischance or worse (disaster, misbehavior).

For a time. Every restaurant will close for good. The cancer that Anthony surmounted has killed two of my friends; baffled now, it can call up a hundred reinforcements, and time is the most powerful of all.

So let’s eat. And to be more impudent, let’s eat well. Friends at the front of the house, friends in the kitchen, friends at the table. Take a picture on the sidewalk before we leave. *Buon appetito.* **NR**

## Noisy Desperation

**B**EWARE, America: Hillary Clinton is officially out of the woods.

“I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.” That’s not our friend Hillary, of course, who has grown notorious for her post-election Chappaqua woodland hikes. It is Henry David Thoreau, whose ponderous *Walden*, published in 1854, went on to inspire thousands of future writers to cook up excuses to jaunt off to some supposedly mystical, deep-thought-inspiring wilderness cabin when they really just wanted some time off and a few rounds of s’mores.

Thoreau learned his lessons—“The mass of men,” one went, “lead lives of quiet desperation”—as did writer Bill Bryson, whose 2006 book *A Walk in the Woods: Rediscovering America on the Appalachian Trail* chronicled the ups, downs, and bear-streaked horrors of America’s best-known footpath/weight-loss program/center for prodigious beard growth. (Dear readers, a warning: If you meet a man who “just came back from the Appalachian Trail” and he does not look like an emaciated Grizzly Adams, he did not actually go on the trail.)

Among the many benefits of far-out wilderness experiences—on the Appalachian Trail, those benefits include earning a “trail name” such as “Danger Pants,” “Botox Marge,” or “Gluten Puff”—the most important, perhaps, is a sudden sense of clarity. Time spent in the great outdoors often reminds us, sometimes startlingly, of our embarrassingly small personal niche in a vast and churning universe.

“I understand now, in a way I never did before,” Bryson wrote, post-trail, “the colossal scale of the world.” The more starry-eyed Thoreau, who encouraged the building of theoretical castles in the air, nevertheless echoed the sentiment: “Resign yourself,” he wrote, “to the influence of the earth.” Here’s more of Thoreau on his stoic bent: “It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things.”

Since we’re speaking of desperate things, let’s turn back to America’s new queen of quiet—yet strangely entitled!—desperation. Hillary Clinton, as we all know, is not a contemplative Thoreau or a whimsical Bryson. After an embarrassing electoral defeat that was almost certainly her own fault, Clinton has slowly emerged from her own set of forest wanderings, armed with her own set of insights, bearing deep and valuable wisdom about . . . well, I’ll let her take it from here.

“It’s the kind of things you think about when you take long walks in the woods,” she told a meeting of the Professional Businesswomen of California in late March, describing her post-election exile and supposedly powerful bonding period with Mother Nature. Was it self-reflection? Self-accountability? The somber realization that it might be time to succumb to the old vaudeville hook and slide away

from the national stage? Oh, don’t be silly. Here’s what Hillary thought about—or at least what she’d like us to think she thought about—deep in the heart of the woods: “Resist, insist, persist, enlist.”

Official reports have not yet confirmed it, but sources tell me that at the exact moment Clinton spoke these lines, there was an instant national shortage of spare extra-large sighs. Meanwhile, the cairns marking Thoreau’s Walden Pond cabin trembled, shuddered, and shed small water drops resembling human tears, while a slow, ominous rumble startled hikers on the summit of Yosemite’s Half Dome. (“It was like the earth was trying to roll its giant eyes, man. You know, like in a cosmic sense,” one climber noted, munching a Clif Bar.) Two thousand four hundred thirty-three miles to the east, a winsome 26-year-old trekker named Astro Mulch barely dodged a wicked bolt of lightning at the pinnacle of the Appalachian Trail, just as the word “enlist” wafted into the air.

Since that fateful speech, one hasn’t been able to miss the indefatigable Hillary. She flits here and there, pitching a vague “resistance.” She grouches about misogyny. She’s frequently joined in the proverbial media salad by her mysteriously omnipresent daughter, Chelsea, whose public persona resembles a bland multilevel pile of overly processed “nutritious whole-wheat” bread. This is all rather hilarious, given that most reports credit Clinton, the valiant face of the “resistance,” with tanking her own presidential run.

In *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton’s Doomed Campaign*, reporters Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes detail the Clinton camp’s numerous woes, most of which had one thing in common: Hillary Clinton. And yet, as we now like to say, she persisted. “The one person with whom [Hillary] didn’t seem particularly upset,” Allen and Parnes write, was “herself.” Oh.

The American public might feel otherwise: A new poll “shows more buyer’s remorse” among Clinton’s voters than among Trump’s, reports the *Washington Post*. “While just 4 percent of Trump’s supporters say they would back someone else if there was a re-do of the election, fully 15 percent of Clinton supporters say they would ditch her. Trump leads in a re-do of the 2016 election 43 percent to 40 percent after losing the popular vote 46–44.”

Ah, well: What’s done is done. Let’s walk through this wild and crazy world, eyeing its wonders. We’ll traipse through national forests. We’ll trudge through deserts filled with pristine Native American artifacts, pondering time itself. We’ll weave through remarkably intact Egyptian ruins, dwelling on the majesty of history and our small part in the—

Hey, wait a minute! What kind of knucklehead would scrawl LEONARDO 1820 on top of rare hieroglyphics? While we’re on the topic, what about the yahoo who scrawled CARL + BESS + IT’S BEEN A SWELL 1920 on that priceless pictograph? And who on earth would carve MALLORY XO into that ancient, giant redwood? Why couldn’t they just take a walk in the woods?

Oh, never mind. We know the answer, don’t we? Boy, do we ever know.

NR

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