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For the Soul of France

Will the National Front win?

CÉCILE ALDUY
ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER
DAVID A. BELL

The country will elect a president in May.
Parks and Re-Creation

Paterson, New Jersey, like many once-flourishing industrial cities, is struggling economically, as Richard Kreitner observes in “Alexander Hamilton’s Trickle-Down City” [March 13]. But Kreitner’s polemic offers no ideas to improve urban life. Instead, he pillories Paterson’s founder, Alexander Hamilton, as well as the musical and the city.

More important than Paterson’s association with luminaries like Hamilton is its embrace of impoverished and often unwelcome immigrants who built better lives as Americans. Kreitner ignores the resilience of Paterson residents, past and present, who remain committed to revitalizing the city.

What sets Paterson apart from other distressed postindustrial towns is the new Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park, which attracted 200,000 visitors last year. Local residents and organizations worked for many years to create this urban national park with spectacular natural wonders; a celebrated Negro League baseball stadium; a history of innovation; and inspiration for artists, filmmakers, writers, and poets. Yet Kreitner pillories the park, too.

A park cannot solve all the problems of a poor city. But Paterson’s new national park reminds us of the power of American reinvention and provides a special place to begin shaping paths toward a better future. This park has already engaged young people in history and science, furthered environmental justice, stimulated cultural tourism, and attracted new patrons to the city’s bustling Latin American and Middle Eastern restaurants. Readers can see some of the initial progress at nps.gov/pagr/index.htm and hamiltonpartnership.org.

Leonard A. Zax
President, Hamilton Partnership for Paterson
Paterson, N.J.

Richard Kreitner Replies

Leonard Zax disputes nothing in my account of Alexander Hamilton’s legacy in Paterson and in the United States more generally. His issue is not with my piece’s veracity, but its utility. He is essentially saying that the people of Paterson cannot afford, and therefore do not deserve, an honest accounting of their own history. I am happy to recommend several good restaurants in Paterson to any Nation readers inclined to visit, as they certainly should. Paterson is, as Zax says, a special place. But I think the city’s long-suffering residents have had quite enough of economic-development strategies based on patrons, patronage, and patronizing. It’s time to try something else.

As for what that might be, I hope disinterested readers will find that Zax is not entirely right that my article “offers no ideas to improve urban life.” True, I had thought a critique of the national mythology delivered as a theater review by way of historical investigation/personal meditation/reportage was already ambitious enough. But my piece did suggest one place to start, and I’ll reiterate it, more explicitly, here: We must strive to tell true stories about our past. Zax says the national park at the Great Falls “reminds us of the power of American reinvention.” I could not have put it better myself.

I would also like to personally acknowledge a few factual errors that unfortunately made it into the piece. Historically, the Great Falls has indeed been a “popular location for murder and suicide,” as I wrote, but there seems to have been only one person—an infant—involuntarily tossed from the footbridge in recent memory. Further, at last summer’s picnic reenactment, Zax said, according to my notes, “as Alexander Hamilton knew, the past is what you make it.”

The Hamilton Partnership claims
service providers (ISPs) from selling your browsing history. But the
and selling by your ISP.
Republicans feel, should be available for mining
pornography in private-browser mode. All this,
someone on your computer habitually watches
researched freezing your eggs on medical web-
and likes J.Crew. Your ISP also knows that you
mother of three who went on the Women's March
net. Facebook might know that you're a Jewish
a holistic view of what you're doing on the Inter-
benefit one group of favored companies over another
words, overturning "privacy regulations designed to
the FCC, just like phone service is, and the
Internet, are regulated as public utilities by
the Federal Trade Commission's guide-
like Facebook or Google, are governed by
offer a particular Internet-based service,
Big Telecom companies simply want to make money the
privacy. But it should be plain to any observer that
discounts through advertising to maintaining their
advocates offered a fig leaf to Republicans by arguing
American Citizens and OCA–Asian Pacific American
civil-rights groups like the League of United Latin
has reported that telecom-funded, self-described
digital redlining is when companies draw on your online information (for example,
that you went to a for-profit college and come from an impoverished town) and use it to sell you
harmful products, like payday loans or scam debt
relief. With the quantity of information available
to ISPs, this will only get worse.
One of the most dangerous potential effects
of the repeal is what Astra Taylor and Jathan
Sadowski have, in these pages, called “digital
redlining.” Digital redlining is when companies
come up with explanations for
the repeal other than Pai’s lame fairness
argument, or that they sold your privacy for
campaign contributions (the telecom industry
contributed an average of $138,000
to each of the House Republicans, over
the course of their careers, who voted
for the resolution). Journalist Lee Fang
has reported that telecom-funded, self-described
civil-rights groups like the League of United Latin
American Citizens and OCA–Asian Pacific American
Advocates offered a fig leaf to Republicans by arguing
that their constituents would prefer being alerted to
discounts through advertising to maintaining their
privacy. But it should be plain to any observer that
telecom companies simply want to make money the
way that edge providers do: by collecting and selling
your personal information to advertisers.
One of the previous week's party-line votes in the House
and Senate.
Trump's new head of the FCC, Ajit Pai, is the
telecom industry’s knight in shining armor. Over
the past few weeks, as Congress prepared to repeal,
he has advanced a truly peculiar argument in the
repeal camp’s favor. Currently, “edge providers” that
offer a particular Internet-based service,
like Facebook or Google, are governed by
the Federal Trade Commission’s guidelines,
which allow them to sell information
about what you do on their sites. But ISPs,
because they form the backbone of the
Internet, are regulated as public utilities by
the FCC, just like phone service is, and the
FCC mandates tighter privacy protections.
Pai argues that the repeal is simply making
data exploitation “fair.” Or, in his own
words, overturning “privacy regulations designed to
benefit one group of favored companies over another
of disfavored companies.” Poor AT&T.
Privacy advocates note that while you might be able to avoid Facebook or even Google to protect
your privacy, it’s awfully hard to avoid one of the
major telecom providers in a nearly monopolized
field. You have to deal with them if you want to
be part of the modern world. And they have quite
a holistic view of what you’re doing on the Internet.
Facebook might know that you’re a Jewish
mother of three who went on the Women’s March
and likes J.Crew. Your ISP also knows that you
researched freezing your eggs on medical websites,
you regularly visit High Times.com, and that
someone on your computer habitually watches pornography in private-browser mode. All this,
Republicans feel, should be available for mining
and selling by your ISP.
One of the most dangerous potential effects
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Advocates offered a fig leaf to Republicans by arguing
that their constituents would prefer being alerted to
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privacy. But it should be plain to any observer that
telecom companies simply want to make money the
way that edge providers do: by collecting and selling
your personal information to advertisers.
Republican lawmakers have managed to pass a bill
that absolutely no one but the telecom industry
could love. Privacy is now a luxury item, available
to the tech-savvy and those who can pay extra for it.
The rest of us are now in the position of paying
large companies to mine our private information.
Call it surveillance, call it exploiting us twice, or
call it what even one Breitbart commentator did:
“an attack against freedom.” SARAH LEONARD
McCarthyism & Trump
Are we reliving an old scourge, in different form?

So Peter Beinart in The Atlantic writes an article on “The New McCarthyism of Donald Trump.” Simon Jenkins in The Guardian informs us that “Donald Trump on terror is just McCarthyism for a new age.” Jonathan Chait in New York magazine argues forcefully that “Donald Trump Is The Perpetrator of McCarthyism, Not the Victim of It,” and Trump himself famously tweets, “Terrible! I just found out that Obama had my ‘wires tapped’ in Trump Tower just before the victory. Nothing found. This is McCarthyism!” Even the Russians chime in, with Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov observing that the uproar over Jeff Sessions “strongly resembles a witch hunt or the times of McCarthyism, which we thought were long over in the United States as a civilized country.”

The charges of McCarthyism are important because (a) McCarthyism indeed had such a profound impact on our country, our culture, and beyond; and (b) because some of its consequences may still be with us.

So what is/was McCarthyism? Joseph McCarthy came to national attention with his Lincoln Day speech to the Republican Women’s Club of Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950, when he famously said, “I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the secretary of state as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.” But, of course, McCarthyism (and the Red Scare) was in force before McCarthy himself came on the scene to lend it his name; during its heyday, it encompassed J. Edgar Hoover’s omnipresent FBI (which seemed to see, as the saying went, a Red under every bed); the House Committee on Un-American Activities, orHUAC (whose infamous hearings led to the Hollywood blacklist, among other antidemocratic practices); the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee; the attorney general’s list of subversive organizations; the Subversive Activities Control Board; and the mini-HUACs and police Red squads in states and cities across the country, not to mention private-sector blacklisters like “Red Channels” and much more.

Methodologically, McCarthyism involved irresponsible and careless charges of communist affiliation; substan-
tively, it imported the assumption that to be a Red was to be a subversive (and, of course, to be a liberal was to be a socialist was to be a Red), all of which helped create and escalate the anticommunist hysteria.

How does McCarthyism apply to the present situation in general and to ‘Trump and Trumpism’in particular? Exhibit A of irresponsible and careless charges (though obviously, in this case, not of being a communist): Trump’s allegation that Obama wiretapped him.

The larger question of how McCarthyism applies to the present situation is complicated by the charges that Russia hacked the Democratic National Committee and perhaps the entire American electoral process. My own view is that we won’t know what the Russians did or didn’t do until a special prosecutor (or some other impartial mechanism) is put in place to investigate the matter, but that the readiness of much of the Ameri-
can press and establishment to assume that the worst charges against Russia (including collaboration with and by Trump) are true is, given the lack of specific evidence, at least in part a legacy of Cold War attitudes toward the Soviet Union.

One lesson to be learned about McCarthyism has to do with the role that much of the liberal community played in it. I include here some of our staunchest liberal humanists and organizations, like the historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr., New York Post editor James Wechsler, Senator Hubert Humphrey, Americans for Democratic Action, and even the American Civil Liberties Union, all of which were infected, I would argue, by the hysteria over the Red Menace. (There were, of course, noble exceptions: a small band of left-liberals like Yale Law School’s Tom Emerson, Princeton’s H.H. Wilson, the law firm of Rabinfeld and Boudin, and, not least, The Nation’s former editor Carey McWilliams, among others.)

To cite one example, Schlesinger advocated that the government should name the Communist Party “as a criminal conspiracy” and that all who were associated with it be subjected to prosecution as co-conspirators. As for those he considered “fellow travelers,” like Emerson, he conceded that they were not communists but said, “They are the Typhoid Marys of the Left, bearing the germs of infection even if not suffering obviously from the disease.”

One of the legacies of the McCarthy era is the cloud of suspicion that still hangs over anything and anyone connected with the former Soviet Union. Former KGB agent Vladimir Putin is undoubtedly guilty of ruthlessness, repression, and much else, but he is not Stalin; and especially given the paucity of specific direct evidence, I would suggest that those (including liberals, in and beyond the media) who too easily assume that Trumpites who talked to the Russians (even those who then falsely denied it) are guilty of colluding or collaborating with them may be victims of the same sort of irrational forces that tainted too many Cold War liberals.

If Trump or his associates were indeed guilty of collaborating with the Russians by interfering in the American election, then they broke the law and should be held accountable. But in a world threatened by nuclear weapons, ISIS, and climate change, it seems to me more important than ever that we talk to our adversaries (especially Putin) and work toward détente.

Victor Navasky

““This is going to be their new frontier.”

Dallas Harris, a privacy attorney, identifying browsing habits as the new area for ISPs to profit by the hysterical. But in a world threatened by nuclear weapons, ISIS, and climate change, it seems to me more important than ever that we talk to our adversaries (especially Putin) and work toward détente.”

Victor Navasky, publisher emeritus of The Nation and former chair of the Columbia Journalism Review, is the author of Naming Names, which won a National Book Award.
Finding an ethical solution depends on some details. Half a million dollars is a lot, but if Jennifer has been out of the workforce for years, she lacks skills and connections, and her wealth might not last long. A house is a dubious asset because if you sell it, you still have to live somewhere, which costs money. (Also, is there a mortgage on it?) And what is Amy’s income? A corporate lawyer without family wealth is better off than someone with half a million dollars, a house, and no job. (Though the latter person is better off than a Head Start teacher.) Of course, if Jennifer is a multimillionaire, it would be outrageous if Amy had to share her hard-earned income with her.

Whatever her net worth, Jennifer needs to be more transparent about her own assets and needs, and more realistic about Amy’s ability to support her. Shielding wealth is a privilege that has no place in managing a family.

Still, Jennifer wants to see her unpaid contribution to the family recognized, especially if that contribution helped Amy’s career. Jennifer may see payment from Amy as the only clear measure of the value of her labor.

Divorce can make a person feel disposable and worthless, especially if the ex has a new partner. Jennifer also may see spousal and child support as reparations for heartbreak. The couple need to consider how, without bankrupting herself, Amy can show appreciation for the partner she is leaving. A therapist can help them talk this through.

If all else fails, Amy may need a forensic accountant.

Parents should always remember that we’re showing our kids how to conduct grown-up relationships. Fighting over money doesn’t set an example of how to live in a family.

Questions?
Ask Liza at TheNation.com/article/asking-for-a-friend.

ILLUSTRATED BY JOANNA NEBORSKY
The Right to Make Art

Should an artist’s identity matter?

What does it say about the Whitney Biennial that the only artwork people are talking about outside the insular art world is a representational painting of a historical subject? Not a word about William Pope.L’s Claim, a room-size cube studded with some 2,755 slices of real bologna intended to represent a fraction of New York City’s Jewish population, in the center of each of which is a dab of paint that, if you look very closely, contains a photo of—maybe—a New York Jew? Or Jon Kessler’s Exodus, an endlessly circling procession of small, kitschy figurines that is supposed to make us think about refugees’ travels? Or Cauleen Smith’s whimsical banners bearing wistfully humorous slogans like “No Wonder I Go Under?” After wandering about for an hour, I was ready to agree with Frances Stark, whose painted reproduction of Ian F. Svenonius’s manifesto Censorship Now! covered several walls: “Art is in a lost state now. It’s a mess.” Svenonius puckishly suggests, “censorship would...give it its power back.”

Maybe he’s onto something. Because that old-fashioned painting everyone is talking about, Dana Schutz’s Open Casket, owes at least some of its power to calls for its removal and destruction, as well as to the political questions it raises about race in and out of the art world. As you probably know by now, Schutz is a 40-year-old white woman, and the subject of her painting is Emmett Till, the black 14-year-old from Chicago savagely murdered in 1955 for supposedly whistling at a white woman on a visit to Mississippi. (The woman has recently admitted the story was false. Her husband and the other killers were acquitted of the murder.) Till’s mother, Mamie Till Mobley, famously kept his casket open at his funeral, and the iconic photograph of his mutilated body in Jet magazine helped spark the civil-rights movement. You can see why some black artists are angry, why they feel it’s their story to tell and why it’s infuriating to have it depicted by a white artist for whom it would seem to be just another aesthetic subject. As the black British artist and writer Hannah Black wrote in an open letter to the Whitney calling for the painting to be destroyed, “Through his mother’s courage, Till was made available to Black people as an inspiration and warning. Non-Black people must accept that they will never embody and cannot understand this gesture.” Schutz says that as a mother she can identify with Mobley’s loss.

Calls for censorship and destruction are always a big mistake. The high-minded argument is that freedom of expression is a bedrock principle of an open society, but there’s a more practical argument too: The main thing such calls do is increase the allure of the work under attack, whether it’s Ulysses or Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margaret or Open Casket. I wish right-wing Christians would call for my books to be removed from public libraries. Then lots more people would read them. Like Chris Ofili of the elephant-dung-decorated Madonna, Dana Schutz is now a household name.

Further, attacking Schutz for making art out of black lives seems to deny the very ground on which art rests, the communicability and permeability of human experience. If, as James Baldwin said, American history is black history, how can it also be the possession of black artists only? Any work of imagination is bound to use the lives, experience, and history of others, and sometimes there is indeed something voracious, even cannibalistic about that. When Flaubert supposedly said, “Madame Bovary, c’est moi,” was he claiming empathy with that foolish, trapped provincial housewife or celebrating a hostile takeover? Or both? Either way, you can’t reduce art to the creator’s autobiography. There have been too many cases in which authors who appear to be writing from within a particular identity turn out to belong to another. “Danny Santiago,” who won a prize in 1984 for his ostensibly Latino novel Famous All Over Town, was actually the well-born WASP screenwriter Daniel James. The pseudonymous Elena Ferrante was thought to portray the slums of Naples so intimately she had to have grown up there herself. If the investigation of her identity by Claudio Gatti is correct, she actually came from a middle-class Jewish family and grew up...
The Guardian and Financial Times
“Best Book of 2016”
“An exceptionally thoughtful and engrossing biography.”
—Washington Post

“In this irresistible study of female desire, Carol Dyhouse asks tough questions about what—or rather who—makes female hearts beat faster.”
—Kathryn Hughes, University of East Anglia

“A revelation. This is a lost world of American Entertainment brought to life…”
—Nick Fraser, Writer and Broadcaster

“This is a well-researched, engagingly written, and remarkable work of scholarship.”
—Publishers Weekly

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The cold reality is that artists of color, like women artists of any race, have far too little space in our culture.

Dear Concerned,

our culture.

The cold reality is that artists of color, like women artists of any race, have far too little space in our culture. (I thought it was too pretty for its subject, although the gouged parts, not visible in reprints, complicate that a bit.)

The concept of racist or colonial appropriation can be used to attack any kind of borrowing or syncretizing, whether it’s white women wearing corrons or Chinese food being Americanized or anybody not an Indian practicing yoga. What those arguments miss is that culture is always mixed, never pure. Native Americans got their horses from the Spaniards, and early American feminists like Elizabeth Cady Stanton were inspired by Iroquois women. Still, it’s hard to argue that white people haven’t reaped the lion’s share of the profits in the supposed free-for-all of cultural exchange. Big Mama Thornton did well with “Hound Dog” (written by Leiber and Stoller, two Jews), but it was Elvis who became a worldwide sensation.

The cold reality is that artists of color, like women artists of any race, have far too little space in our culture: They get less work, less attention, less money, and less fame, and they are put into identity boxes while white people, especially white men, get free range. And on that level I can relate—and how!—to Dana Schutz’s critics. I constantly feel how little space women have—in the arts, politics, scholarship, even our own lives—and I keenly resent the loss of any inch of turf. I feel it even when I see all-male performances of Shakespeare, even though Mark Rylance was a genius as Olivia in Twelfth Night, and I know the plays were written for male actors. Actresses already have so few opportunities to shine, I mutely protest. Must men have everything? Maybe it’s the same for race. As a clever young white woman I know put it, “Sometimes white people should just bust”—even if they don’t have to.

Dear Liza,

My friend (really, my friend—not me!) works a minimum-wage job. She was promised that she would get a raise after a three-month trial period, but that keeps getting delayed. Last month, when the receptionist at her office quit, her bosses made her take that job over, even though reception is listed nowhere in her job responsibilities and despite the fact that she hates it. She’s also been corresponding with a colleague via work e-mail in which they’ve both complained, and her colleague just got suspended over “making the workplace negative”? Apparently, their boss has been reading the e-mails. My friend is afraid the same thing could happen to her, never mind that raise.

Her office is not unionized and turnover is super-high. She’s just out of college and hasn’t been able to find another job. Would you have any advice for struggling workers with terrible bosses and no union?

—Concerned and Helpless

Dear Concerned,

Your Tips Here

The Nation has been a home for adversarial journalism for 150 years. Today, new technologies make it possible to contribute to the magazine’s mission by leaking or sharing information in a secure manner.

As this issue goes to press, we are launching a page describing a range of new ways to share information with The Nation: TheNation.com/tips. Our methods include WhatsApp, Signal, PGP, and good old-fashioned postal mail. These methods are designed to allow you to send The Nation a tip. A good news tip is a piece of information that is (a) newsworthy, (b) documented with evidence, and (c) clear to our reporters. We are happy to join our colleagues at The Guardian, The New York Times, The Intercept, and other outlets that have made secure communications a priority in the newsroom.

Together, we can confront and expose power in these troubling political times. Just tip us off.
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All proceeds from The Nation’s travel program support our journalism.
THE RIGHT

Lacanning America

For years, right-wing ideologues from Paul Ryan to Nigel Farage have driven a reactionary political project whose only purpose is to destroy whatever is put forward by others. But as recent history shows, the basis of their politics—a desire for negation—is undone by their ascent to power. To quote Slavoj Žižek, “desire must have its objects perpetually absent.” If a dog catches a car that it chases, the car ceases to exist as an object of desire. As Gary Younge describes at right, the same holds true for the British and American right, which have pushed narrow agendas that only bear meaning in relation to liberal formations like the Affordable Care Act and the European Union.

Without the dominance of liberal institutions, oppositional right-wing programs lose all substance. In the writing of psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the objet petit a stands for an unattainable object of desire; the more you possess it, the greater the lack. We can only hope that Ryan, Farage, Donald Trump, and their friends find something to fill the vacuum that power has created inside them, and perhaps a good therapist as well.

—Evan Malmgren

The Dogs That Can’t Drive

The far right got what it wants. Now it doesn’t know what to do with it.

Back in late September 2013, the GOP-controlled House of Representatives was throwing one of its episodic hissy fits about ObamaCare. Shortly before the GOP shut down the government for over two weeks, one of its members laid out the Tea Party negotiating strategy for refusing to set a budget for the biggest economy in the world. “We have to get something out of this,” said Indiana Representative Marlin Stutzman. “And I don’t know what that even is.” Genius.

Three and a half years later, Republicans have control of both houses of Congress and the White House and their strategy is no more sophisticated. Gifted with a president unhinged enough to sign off on whatever legislation it passes, it turns out that when it comes to figuring out the health-care policy they want, Republicans still “don’t know what that even is.” Despite voting more than 60 times to repeal ObamaCare since it was introduced, the moment the Republicans actually get the chance, it turns out they can’t come up with a coherent plan for its replacement.

In its reflexive oppositionalism, a significant and growing section of the Republican Party is like the dog that caught the car. Dogs like to chase cars. But they are not supposed to catch them. Indeed, catching them is always a disappointment. What use is a car to a dog? Dogs can’t drive.

The British far right finds itself in a similar spot. But while the ineptitude of its American counterpart pulled the United States back from the brink (at least for now), the British far right is about to drive its country off the edge of a cliff. At the end of March, as promised, British Prime Minister Theresa May wrote to the European Union triggering Article 50, initiating the two-year timeline for Britain’s departure from the EU. Like the moment when Trump was sworn in at his inauguration, nobody knows how this will turn out, but few progressives think it will end well.

And unlike the US presidential elections, which come around every four years, this is it for Britain and the EU.

Within a week of Article 50 being triggered, Michael Howard, a former Tory leader, had threatened war with Spain over Gibraltar, a British overseas territory and limestone promontory of negligible strategic value; Douglas Carswell, the sole member of Parliament for the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which spearheaded calls for a referendum, left the party; and a tabloid columnist at The Sun, Britain’s best-selling newspaper, had branded the Spanish as “donkey rogers.” The hard right in Britain has been fantasizing about this moment for decades. Now that it’s got what it wants, it has no idea what to do with the moment beyond making empty threats and issuing brazen insults.

The politicians who led this charge have, predictably, fled the scene. Nigel Farage, the former UKIP leader, has resigned from politics for the third time. Assorted Tories, some of whom contested the leadership, have made themselves scarce. Of the principal architects of the Leave campaign, only Boris Johnson, the Eton-educated, mop-haired toff from central casting, remains as foreign secretary—and he is being sidelined by both the Tory establishment and his European counterparts. So long as Brexit was unlikely, it had many parents; once it became a certainty, it became an orphan.

It’s not difficult to see why. In two years, Britain has to extricate itself from an institution of which it has been part for more than 40 years, with which it shares a huge number of laws and obligations, while simultaneously saving face and not cutting itself off at the knees. It’s not obvious that it can achieve either. There is much to discuss. The bill must be settled, as Britain is called upon to stump up for the obligations it has made while it has been a member. This could be £10 billion or more. A recent poll showed two-thirds of Britons opposed paying it. There is also, more urgently, the human bill. Roughly 3 million people living in Britain are from other EU countries; roughly a million Brits live elsewhere in the EU. Some have

So long as Brexit was unlikely, it had many parents; once it became a certainty, it became an orphan.
been there decades and, having assumed that Britain’s membership in the EU was permanent, made no bid for new citizenship.

This stuff is just the terms of the divorce, which is messy enough. Afterward (although Britain would like to negotiate it all simultaneously) will come the trade deal. The principal substantial opposition to EU membership was immigration. But in the absence of the free movement of people, the EU will not allow free trade. Meanwhile Scotland, which voted heavily to remain, has called for another independence referendum, which stands every chance of being successful this time around. The situation for Northern Ireland, which also voted heavily to remain and whose soft border with Ireland was underpinned by EU laws, is also complicated. Those who sought to put the Great back in Great Britain may soon find themselves exposed as the Little Englanders they always were. It will be left to May to align the politics of Brexit with the economics.

Even if everyone were working in good faith, good humor, and a generous disposition, it’s unlikely all this could be figured out in two years. But they’re not. Britain has made a series of laughable threats and boasts that only expose how unprepared it is for the task ahead. The EU owes Britain no favors. Its task is to defend the rights of those who are in it, not look out for those who are leaving. These discussions will take place while both France and Germany are holding national elections in which the far right is setting the agenda. Moreover, Britain has little to negotiate with. It’s leaving. The less belligerent tone it has adopted in recent times reflects that realization.

May has said that when it comes to Brexit, no deal is better than a bad deal. As it stands, those might be the only two deals on offer.

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**SNAPSHOT/AMMAR AWAD**

**Running Free**

A girl running in the annual Palestine Marathon waves a Palestinian flag along the separation wall in Bethlehem. This is the fifth consecutive year that the marathon has been held, drawing 6,000 runners from 47 countries.

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**BUSINESS AS USUAL**

The conflicts ethics watchdogs see

To Trumps are hardly worth a mention.

To them the presidency is

Another form of brand extension.

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**BACK ISSUES/1956**

**Le Penisme, Avant la Lettre**

In 1956, J. Alvarez del Vayo wrote in these pages about the alarming rise of a new far-right political movement in France, led by Pierre Poujade, a former follower of Philippe Pétain, the head of the collaborationist Vichy government during World War II. It was a by-product of the Cold War’s shakeup of political alliances: “From the moment that the enemies of yesterday became the new allies and the allies of yesterday the new enemies, the fascist elements which had sought cover when the Axis powers went down to defeat began to emerge.” Poujadism began as a tax revolt, but del Vayo observed that it couldn’t have found so much electoral success “had there not been enough fascist virus in the air to spread the demagogy of a ruthless agitation against democratic and republican institutions.”

The far right’s strategy was simple, del Vayo wrote: “It counts on a deterioration of the whole situation in France…to rally every embittered, disillusioned Frenchman. In sum, Poujadism is today not a powerful force, an immediate menace, but circumstances might easily favor its growth.”

Charles de Gaulle swept into power two years later, but “a disturbing feature” of the 1958 election, noted Al-exander Werth, The Nation’s European correspondent, “was the sweeping victories in Paris of extreme Fascists like [Jean-Marie] Le Pen, former head of the Poujade parliamentary party.”

—Richard Kreitner
If Marine Le Pen doesn’t win the French presidential election, it would be a near miss, not an outright rejection.

by CÉCILE ALDUY
HRE-QUARTERS OF 1 PERCENT: THAT WAS THE VOTE TALLY that Jean-Marie Le Pen managed to eke out the first time he ran for the presidency of France in the early 1970s. In the late hours of election night, May 5, 1974, the 45-year-old leader of the far-right National Front downplayed the disappointing results with his usual bravado. Sporting a gangster-like eye patch and a plaid tie (legend has it that he lost his left eye in a political brawl), his black suit bursting at the seams around his massive frame, the former paratrooper boasted: “This political campaign gave us the occasion to rise from oblivion, to get our name out, as well as our ideas, those of the social, popular and national right we represent.”

More than four decades later, Jean-Marie’s daughter, Marine Le Pen, president of the National Front since 2011, has led in the polls for France’s upcoming presidential election for two straight years, and she’s projected to win up to 28 percent in the first round of voting on April 23. Meanwhile, even as Marine sereneely cruises along enjoying these stratospheric figures, her rival candidates ride up and down the roller coaster of public opinion, rocked by breaking scandals, sudden betrayals, and the planned obsolescence of media coverage.

The predictions for the crucial second round of voting on May 7, when a face-off between the first round’s two leading candidates will decide the fate of France, are less favorable to Le Pen. But after Brexit, Donald Trump’s surprise victory, and even the French primaries—in which two underdog candidates, François Fillon and Benoît Hamon, won the nominations for the Republican and Socialist parties, respectively—all bets are officially off.

FROM FRINGE PARTY TO FIRST PARTY OF FRANCE, the story of the National Front looks like the chronicle of an irresistible rise. Climbing from 0.74 percent in the national election of 1974 to over 28 percent in the regional elections of December 2015, the political machine that Jean-Marie Le Pen set in motion more than 40 years ago has proved remarkably successful. National Front leaders have fashioned a self-serving narrative that presents their ascent as manifest destiny. For a long time, they say, Le Pen père was “right too soon” about the nefarious effects of globalization, “mass immigration,” and the European Union’s “totalitarianism.” Now, this story goes, the French are facing a perfect storm brought about by an explosion of Islamic terrorism, the social impact of 40 years of massive unemployment, and the pauperization of whole regions of the country, decimated by a regime of cutthroat global capitalism. As a result, the French are finally seeing “the truth” and rallying to the National Front’s worldview. “We have won a number of ideological victories,” Marine Le Pen asserted when I first interviewed her in October 2012. “Or rather, at some point it becomes impossible to ignore reality, and we at the National Front have had the courage to tell things as they are.” Her father was very much on the same wavelength: “The real dédiabolisation [mainstreaming] of the party is coming from a rapid evolution of public opinion in the face of a paroxysmal crisis,” he told me a few months later. “The people do not like to be told the truth too early,” he added with a touch of bitterness.

But 2017 is a good time to be a harbinger of the apocalypse: Some 240 citizens have died in terrorist attacks in the country since 2015, the highest number since the Algerian War. During that same period, prime-time television has shown lines of destitute migrants in Europe marching through fields, forests, snow, and mud, and makeshift boats packed to the brim with desperate families. Such images were once merely the rhetorical flourishes of fearmongers who warned of an “invasion” of Europe by legions of foreigners. If you add to this the country’s soaring income-inequality problem, the frustration with a European Union bent on austerity measures, the bloody confrontations between police and young people or union members during the many demonstrations in the last two years, and an unemployment rate stubbornly stuck around 10 percent, then the National Front’s incendiary rhetoric might just ignite the fires of electoral rebellion this time around.

In the eyes of the party’s sympathizers, recent history validates its long-held doomsday narrative of an imminent clash of civilizations between Western Christian nations and Muslim conquerors, a clash compounded by democratic and economic paralysis. What Marine Le Pen says she offers is a way out of this deadly scenario: an exit from the European Union, a return to a closed-off, recognizable country, and, if possible, separation from a globalization regime that is seen as a threat by 60 percent of the French, according to a May 2016 survey.

Over the past 40 years, French voters have feared that a National Front presidency would bring even more chaos than had befallen the country thus far. Yet since the Brexit vote and Trump’s election, Le Pen and her circle can point to precedents that make her victory sound not only plausible, but also like part of a larger wave. At a rally in Lyon on February 5, Le Pen proclaimed that “the wind of history has turned…. I believe in our victory,” she told the crowd of roaring supporters. “Other people have led the way. The British people, who chose freedom with Brexit…. The Italians, who disapproved of the constitutional referendum proposed by Matteo Renzi. The Austrian people, who have wiped out the old parties in the [2016] presidential elections. The American people, who voted in favor of their national interest.” This long list of “awakening nations” led to a simple conclusion: In France too, “the impossible can become possible.”

Yet a victory in May is still very far from certain. To date, pollsters have consistently predicted that Le Pen will lose the second round of voting under every conceivable scenario. In fact, if any lesson can be drawn from the last few election cycles, it’s that the National Front has managed to lead consistently in the first round only to go down to defeat in the second, when the face-off between the top two candidates becomes a referendum for or against the far right. On December 6, 2015, Le Pen scored an impressive 40.6 percent in the first round of the regional elections in Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie. A week later, she hit the wall of the “republican front,” a coalition uniting all of
her political opponents against her in the runoff. Le Pen may be breaking records each time, but so too are the voters who rally in ever-stronger numbers to keep her from power.

Joël Gombin, a political scientist who for years has been mapping the polling results county by county at the Jean-Jaurès Foundation’s Observatory of Radical Politics, acknowledges that “Le Pen could possibly reach 30 percent of the votes in the first round” of this year’s race. But, he continues, “the obstacle of the second round remains insurmountable, for lack of any political alliance or transfer of votes from other parties.”

For many, this is why the analogy with Brexit or Trump’s win is flawed. In a two-round election like those in France, the argument goes, voters can literally think twice about their choice: There’s no morning-after hangover as happened with Brexit, and no popular vote at odds with the final election results. This key difference speaks to the wisdom of having a robust system of political safeguards in place to shield a democracy from the depredations of populist counterfeits.

But the two-round system can also create the illusion that France will always be immunized against nationalist fevers like the current one. French politicians have been basking in a comfortable fantasy, sheltered by the system from the rebellion of the masses, and so they’ve done little to address the root causes of the National Front’s rise. This constant repetition of the same old tired politics fuels the frustration of those who have had enough and feel unheard, ostracized, and underrepresented by the system. The result is like a pressure cooker in which the steam has been steadily building—and when it finally explodes, the results will not be pretty.

Although the experts are skeptical that such an explosion will happen in this election, they nevertheless remain cautious: No other presidential race in memory has been as volatile, and, from the beginning, almost every single prediction has proved wrong. Former president Nicolas Sarkozy failed miserably in the primaries; so did Alain Juppé, an early favorite who was seen for months as the future president of France. Then the incumbent president, François Hollande, threw in the towel—a first in the history of the Fifth Republic.

In the meantime, Emmanuel Macron—a brash 39-year-old newcomer who has never run for office before—entered the race backed only by a solid dose of chutzpah, a shrewd sense of the vacuum in the political center, and an abundance of social-media know-how. With his Internet-based community En Marche! (“Forward!”), Macron appears intent on signing the death warrant for the old political order, even though he served as deputy chief of staff to Hollande, eventually became his economics minister, and had previously worked as an investment banker at Rothschild—a pedigree that puts him right in the middle of the decision centers where most of the failed policies of the last few years have been implemented. Yet he has managed to brand himself as an “anti-system” candidate, capitalizing on the rampant disgust with career politicians in France. Macron is certainly disrupting business as usual: For months, commentators dismissed him as a media-blown “bubble”; now, he is the only one to rival Le Pen in the polls.

Another complicating factor in this election is the degree of uncertainty that exists in many French voters. A mere seven weeks before the first round of voting, a third said they were still undecided, according to a March 5 survey of more than 15,000 voters by the Center for Political Research at Sciences Po in Paris. In the same study, 47 percent of those who had made a choice said they could still switch to a different candidate come Election Day. But this degree of uncertainty isn’t divided equally among the candidates. Le Pen has the most solid base of support, with 76 percent of her likely voters absolutely certain of their choice. For Macron, that number is only 42 percent; 58 percent of his likely voters admit that they could still change their minds.

Another variable that has analysts worried is turnout. While the average abstention rate in French presidential elections is usually around 22 percent, in the same study, a third of voters declared that they would probably stay home on April 23. Here again, the National Front’s supporters are more determined to take history into their own hands: 83 percent said they were certain to go to the polls, compared with 68 percent on average. In this sea of uncertainty, Le Pen is the only one to stand on a rock of stability.

And yet 58 percent of the French continue to think that the National Front “represents a danger for democracy”—an increase of 11 points since 2013, according to a survey by Kantar Sofres–OnePoint in February. This is despite Le Pen’s efforts to clean up the party’s image and her posturing as a champion of republican values. Even her polling numbers should be taken with a grain of salt: Although as many as 28 percent of voters say they’ll vote for Le Pen in the first round, only 19 percent actually want her to win, compared with 75 percent who don’t.

Today, as in previous elections, a first-round Le Pen vote doesn’t necessarily mean that you embrace the National Front’s agenda or hope to see it win power. Protest votes continue to account for a significant portion of the party’s electoral results.

Le Pen is even losing support on the two proposals central to her platform: Only 22 percent of the voters polled are in favor of leaving the eurozone and returning to the franc—down 12 points from 2011—and less than a quarter (21 percent) are in favor of the Front’s signature issue, “national preference,” which would discriminate against foreigners to give jobs preferentially to French
citizens. The latter number represents a 24-point drop since 1991, when the measure was first proposed. Here, history tells a different tale than the fable of continuous “ideological victories” by the far right.

Even so, the front’s alarming ascent from an obscure extremist coalition to a populist party contending for the French presidency owes as much to the failure of the country’s mainstream politicians as it does to the popularity of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s ideas. Apart from having been shat on by pigeons in the most massively attended demonstration in French history, President Hollande will probably be remembered as Mr. “Reversal of the Graph.” In July 2014, he pinned the future of his presidency on his ability to “reverse the graph of unemployment”—a mathematically and psychologically aberrant phrase that may have cost him the chance to run for reelection. If unemployment started to go down consistently, Hollande explained, he would feel that he had earned the right to campaign for a second term. But people are not automatically comforted by the sight of abstract economic indicators turning incrementally from red to green. They couldn’t care less that, on paper, the French unemployment rate has been dropping by one or two decimals of a percentage point. They want jobs, for themselves and their kids (24 percent of the country’s 18-to-24-year-olds are unemployed), as well as food on the table and wages decent enough to pay the bills. Perhaps even more important, they ask for respect, dignity, and the recognition that they matter. Hollande never talked about the French people to the French people—only about France and his “reversal of the graph.” On the condition of anonymity, a presidential counselor laments: “We have confused the government of things (public policies) with the government of the souls and human passions (which is the primary material of politics), that is, the human need to belong to a whole that transcends us, to know where we are going.”

For her part, Marine Le Pen prizes disillusioned voters for who they are (French) rather than what they have (not much). The working class has been solidly voting National Front for the last three decades: Among the working-class voters who intend to turn out this year (42 percent anticipate staying home), nearly half—44 percent—lean toward the Front. Even young people in France—especially the less skilled, those with no bright future ahead of them—are siding with Le Pen. What she promises is as much moral as economic security: a sense of belonging and a new narrative in which the forgotten “losers of globalization” can take their revenge on history. With her, the underprivileged trade a lack of economic status and social footing for symbolic, even “ethnic” capital. Resentment and identity politics are what give Le Pen her edge, not her economic platform of “smart protectionism.”

“Attacking her on her agenda is bullshit,” fumes a political counselor from Hollande’s cabinet. “People immediately retaliate: ‘What credibility do the failing elites have to give lessons on what does or does not work?’”

Overthrowing the political establishment is proving to be a strong motivation in this year’s election, perhaps even more powerful than throwing out immigrants.

Within the National Front, party officials are counting on this fact. Louis Aliot, who joined in 1990 and once served as Jean-Marie Le Pen’s chief of staff, is now the Front’s vice president and the companion of Marine Le Pen. Early in March, he bluntly described the mood on the ground to me: “People are already living with terrorism, unemployment, lack of security... they think it won’t be worse with us. ‘We have tried everything! Why not you?’ they say.” Rather than sing a tale of “ideological victories,” Aliot was pointing to a rather nihilistic moment in the country’s history: “The French don’t believe in anything and anyone anymore, except for a certain toleration for those who have not been in power yet. A kind of resignation and fatalism prevails—with, curiously, the hope that the end of the tunnel will come with a complete shake-up. People are starting to really want to topple the system.”

As of this writing, Le Pen remains unlikely to win the second round, even against such a discredited figure as the conservative candidate François Fillon, who is trying to extricate himself from a string of corruption scandals that saw him formally charged with embezzle-

ment on March 14. But the margins are incredibly tight compared with the 2002 presidential race, when Jean-Marie Le Pen stunned the nation by coming in second in the first round. He eventually lost soundly, with only 18 percent of the vote, to the incumbent president, Jacques Chirac, who received 82 percent in the runoff—a landslide victory that reassured the French about their democratic instincts. Today, with a mere eight-point difference separating Fillon and Marine Le Pen in some polls, her defeat would constitute a near miss—and a somber warning—rather than an outright rejection.

This year may not be Le Pen’s moment—but if she loses, it will only turn up the pressure one more notch. And if nothing is done to truly address the economic malaise and the social and moral depression that are eating up France from the inside, the next time could very well be hers.
THE STRANGE DEATH AND STRANGER AFTERLIFE OF FRENCH SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

After four decades of economic malaise, Emmanuel Macron is promising a rebirth—but without the “Socialist” label.

by ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER
France’s Fifth Republic has often been described as an elective monarchy. Late last year, it witnessed its first abdication: President François Hollande, whose approval rating had sunk to the low single digits, announced that he would not be running for a second term in the elections this spring. Hollande is the first president of the Fifth Republic not to at least attempt to succeed himself. But the republican monarchy was in trouble long before its faceless incumbent, elected in 2012, acknowledged what everyone else already knew: His reign had ended long before he finally mustered the resolve to renounce the throne, which has always been wrapped in a certain mystique.

It was the poet Charles Péguy who wrote that “tout commence en mystique et finit en politique”—everything begins in mystery and ends in politics. The thought encapsulates the history of the Fifth Republic, which Charles de Gaulle created in his own image in 1958. The regime he founded would come to divide its executive function between a president vested with extensive powers and a prime minister responsible to the Parliament, which can be dissolved by the president at will.

Political scientists call this type of regime, with its divided executive, “semi-presidential.” For de Gaulle, reared on Catholic thought, it was something more: a division of the political realm into two distinct domains, the one sacred and mystical, the other profane and political. The sacred was reserved for the chef de l’État, while the profane was consigned to the chef du gouvernement. (In French, “State” is always capitalized while “government” is not, marking a clear hierarchy.) The prime minister’s role was to navigate rough political waters; the president’s, to walk on them.

No president after de Gaulle could fully sustain this mystique, least of all Hollande. Months before the 2012 election, a leading French political theorist told me: “Hollande singularly lacks the ability to incarnate the presidency.” Though “incarnate” is an odd word to hear in a political context, it epitomizes the underlying Gaulist theology: The chef de l’État must transcend the political parties while simultaneously dominating them.

Hollande, who spent much of his career immersed in day-to-day politics as leader of the Socialist Party, has never been capable of walking on water. One rival compared him, rather, to “the captain of a pedal boat.” Yet such facile mockery trivializes a failure that is more instructive if patiently analyzed rather than derisively dismissed. The upcoming election will turn on the question of why Hollande failed. Was it because he was not a good captain, or because he charted the wrong course—one that kept France tied to Germany at the center of the European Union and committed to the EU’s principles of free movement for capital, goods, and people?

As a navigator, Hollande was sure of his destination. It was the same one that the German Social Democratic Party had set for itself at Bad Godesberg in 1959: to reform capitalism rather than replace it. To get there, Hollande relied on two Socialist Party mentors, François Mitterrand and Jacques Delors. Mitterrand taught him how to conquer power; Delors explained what he could and could not do with it, given the rival or hostile forces with which he’d have to compromise—

The upcoming election will turn on the question of why François Hollande failed.

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notwithstanding the shrill insistence of voices both left and right that compromise is never necessary.

The young Hollande profited from Delors’s grasp of economic realities, but he faulted his economic mentor for failing to see what Mitterrand knew from experience. Writing under the pseudonym Cato in the early 1980s, Hollande remarked that Delors wanted “to do politics without getting his hands dirty.” Concerning what had to be done to reach the top, Mitterrand—nicknamed “the Florentine” for his Machiavellian cunning—was the better teacher. Hollande learned his lesson well.

Cato was not the only alter ego Hollande assumed as a young technocrat. In 1985, he co-authored a book under the pseudonym Jean-François Trans, in which he examined the need to “stabilize labor costs” and use “competition” as a “lever of social transformation.” Thirty years later, these ideas would shape Hollande’s economic policy, which one embittered critic of the president has derided as “supply-side socialism.”

A better term might be “neosocialism,” because it involves a range of policy instruments that include not only deregulation but also tax reform, investment incentives, and training initiatives. Shortly after taking office, Hollande commissioned a report from Louis Gallois, the former chief executive of the aerospace firm EADS. The report laid out a strategy for making French firms more competitive in the global market, and Hollande embraced it—unsurprisingly, given that it incorporated ideas he had learned from Delors and developed after hours while serving under Mitterrand.

A series of reforms followed, including a tax credit for businesses intended to promote competitiveness and job creation, and a so-called “responsibility pact” that granted further corporate tax relief. A robust if rather high-flown defense of Hollande’s neosocialist approach can be found in a book by Henri Weber revealingly titled In Praise of Compromise. The goal, says the Socialist exSENATOR, was “to reorient production toward the industries of the future and high-value-added services, to promote a new growth regime, to transform our social models and defend our ideal of civilization.”

Compromise, as Weber correctly diagnosed, lay at the center of Hollande’s conception of his presidency. He sought to impose a compact with capitalism on a somewhat refractory Socialist rank and file, but he couldn’t do so openly, as his German counterparts had done at Bad Godesberg and again in the 1990s under Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. He could, however, count on the support of the Socialist Party leadership, the so-called “elephants,” for whom the need to compromise with capitalism was obvious. Many are graduates of the highly selective École Nationale d’Administration. These so-called énarques abound not only at the top levels of the state bureaucracy but also in corporate boardrooms, and there’s a time-honored tradition of padding back and forth between the public and private sectors—a practice picturesquely termed pantouflage (from pantoufles, bedroom slippers).

Business and political elites therefore speak a common language, although their enemies go too far in accusing...
them of groupthink. The shared tongue is more often than not a vehicle for vigorous disagreement about the many problems—chronic unemployment, declining exports, rising public debt, banking troubles, lagging investment, high levels of public spending, and slow growth—that have beset the French welfare state in the era of globalization, deregulation, and intensified international competition. But such disagreement is always bounded by a prudent respect for the power of the economic forces that the elite believes it alone understands and was ordained to manage.

The degree to which French socialists like Mitterrand have accommodated themselves to a system of political power and analysis that their left-wing forebears dreamed of overthrowing may seem surprising. Superficially, one might be tempted to draw a parallel with the “neoliberalization” of the Democratic Party in the United States, which the author Charles Peters described as stemming from a recognition that it no longer made sense to “automatically favor unions and big government or oppose the military and big business.” Peters’s “neoliberal manifesto” was published in 1982, the year after Mitterrand’s election. But the neosocialist turn in French elite thinking about economic reform originated decades earlier, after the end of the Second World War, and not with political strategists like Peters but within the state bureaucratic apparatus itself, which the French call l’administration.

Postwar recovery under conditions of scarcity called for the kind of centralized planning apparatus that had long been part of the socialist economic vision, which increased the importance of the administrative bureaucracy. With much of the old economic elite discredited by wartime collaboration, bright young administrators trained by elite schools rose rapidly to commanding heights. Many of them had participated in the Resistance, where they had acquired leftist sympathies to a degree unknown in previous generations of the administrative elite.

French neosocialists had thus become wedded to the state long before their party won power in 1981. But neosocialism is less a political strategy than a strategy of governance adapted to France’s statist political culture; hence, it’s a mistake to conflate it with neoliberalism. Elections change the people in charge of the state apparatus, but the apparatus has a policy mind of its own, as well as an inertia inherent in its self-conception as custodian of “the general interest.”

This Rousseauian concept implies a certain suspicion of democracy’s vicissitudes. The state’s top servants, believing that voters are often swayed by powerful but ephemeral passions, see their role as one of rationalizing the vagaries of popular emotion. François Bloch-Lainé, an exemplary representative of this postwar administrative ethic, described himself and his comrades as a “priesthood” sharing a “vocation of public service” and a “mystique of the state.”

There was a natural affinity between the Gaullist conception of the chief executive as a detached arbiter hovering above the contending parties, and the administrative conception of the government bureaucracy as the permanent rational core of state power. Over time, the political and administrative elites drew closer together. Énarques ran for office and worked for political parties, shedding their priestly aura in favor of the carnal pleasures of la politique.

The historian and philosopher Marcel Gauchet even goes so far as to suggest that Marxism’s emphasis on economic determinism encouraged the French Socialists who came of age in the 1960s and ’70s to believe that the social transformation they desired could best be achieved through shrewd state management of the economy. With Mitterrand in power in 1981, it became possible to think of the Gaullist state as an instrument for social change rather than for preservation of de Gaulle’s “certaine idée de la France.”

From Mitterrand, Hollande learned the necessity of stealth.

From Mitterrand, Hollande also learned about the seductiveness of ambiguity and the necessity of stealth. In 2011, he became the Socialist candidate by setting aside the reformist mask of Jean-François Trams and donning a different disguise. In a campaign speech at Le Bourget, he declared to a wildly cheering audience that he had but one true “adversary, the world of finance.” He also promised to renegotiate an unpopular treaty that his predecessor, Nicolas Sarkozy, had signed with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, which among other things limited France’s freedom to maneuver when it came to economic policy. The cautious, neosocialist Hollande had veered sharply to his left to pose briefly as an adversary of the system rather than a technocratic reformer.

The subterfuge worked, but it created expectations that Hollande had no intention of fulfilling. Just as Mitterrand had turned to Delors, a former banker who had served under the Gaullist prime minister Jacques Chaban-Delmas before joining the Socialist government, Hollande turned to Emmanuel Macron, an énarque who had put his experience as an investment banker at the service of a reform commission organized by former Mitterrand adviser Jacques Attali at the behest of the neo-Gaullist Sarkozy. It was Macron who,
first as a presidential staffer and later as minister of the economy, would flesh out the reformist program to which Hollande finally committed himself openly in early 2014, when he declared that he was in fact a “social democrat”—a president who proposed to manage capitalism, not replace it. Indeed, who could even imagine what replacement might mean? Having at last come clean about his true commitment, Hollande watched his approval rating plummet to a low of 4 percent by late 2016.

Ultimately, he had no choice but to capitulate. Hollande had clung to the hope that unemployment would eventually begin to drop, since this was the condition he had set on running for reelection; meanwhile, challengers for the Socialist presidential candidacy emerged from within the party. Arnaud Montebourg and Benoît Hamon, two former ministers who’d been cashiered in 2014, threw their hats into the ring early, while Prime Minister Manuel Valls temporized out of loyalty to Hollande.

But the unkindest cut of all came from Macron, the 39-year-old wunderkind whom Hollande had described to two Le Monde journalists as his spiritual son: “Emmanuel Macron, c’est moi,” he said, echoing Gustave Flaubert’s remark about Madame Bovary.

Long after everyone else had taken Macron’s occasionally impudent expressions of independence from the man who had made him a minister as signs that he was preparing a presidential run, Hollande continued to deny that his protégé had political ambitions. But by the fall of 2016, Macron had turned the movement he called En Marche! (“Forward!”) into a personal presidential vehicle (the initials of the party’s name are also his, while the exclamation point suggests a rocket, a fitting symbol of the youthful candidate’s astonishingly rapid rise). Shrewdly, Macron chose to avoid the primary of the Belle Alliance Populaire, a name wistfully chosen by the Socialists to suggest that the winner might actually be able to unify the left as Mitterrand had done.

Macron thus became the candidate of the center. Conventional wisdom has it that a centrist can never win in France, least of all a centrist with only an embryonic party behind him. Conventional wisdom also holds that in this year of extraordinary populist and nationalist backlash throughout the Western world—with the Brexit vote and Trump’s victory illustrating the dangers of elite complacency in the face of angry electorates and soothing but misleading polls—a candidate with Macron’s background would be summarily rejected by “anti-system” voters. After all, Macron graduated from an elite school; amassed considerable wealth during his brief stint as an investment banker; worked as a consultant for governments of both the right and left while declaring himself independent of both; pushed for weaker market regulations and diluted job protections; defended the European Union; praised Angela Merkel for having “saved Europe’s honor” by accepting refugees; argued that protectionism is a recipe for economic decline; insisted that it would be good if more young people in France aspired to become billionaires; and told striking workers that the best way to afford a fancy suit like the one they jeered him for wearing was “to work.” Yet he has emerged as one of the two candidates most likely to make it to the second round, where he is expected to compete against the protectionist, nationalist, xenophobic, and EU-hostile Marine Le Pen, a politician who is in every respect his antithesis. This is the Macron paradox.

Macron’s strategy seems brilliant in retrospect, but he could hardly have anticipated the surprising rise and even more stunning...
fall of François Fillon, who in November 2016 defeated Sarkozy and Alain Juppé, the favored candidates, in the primary of the center-right Republicans. Both men had scandals in their past, while Fillon, having survived 35 years in politics without a hint of impropriety, ran as Mr. Clean, only to be sandbagged shortly after his victory by charges that he’d paid his wife and children nearly €1 million in taxpayer money for allegedly fictitious work. Having said that he would withdraw from the race only if he was indicted, Fillon reneged on that promise upon learning that he would be. He soldiers on, but his candidacy at this point looks unlikely to recover from the scandal.

Meanwhile, on the left, an equally surprising primary upset in January lifted Benoît Hamon above the favorites, Arnaud Montebourg and Manuel Valls. Hamon ran on an “ecosocialist” platform, embracing the notion that economic growth is not only more difficult to achieve today than in the past but is actually undesirable for the environment. Like Bernie Sanders in the United States, Hamon has attracted a young and enthusiastic following, but polls show him garnering no more than about 15 percent of the first-round vote. He may even finish a dismal fifth, behind Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the candidate of the far-left France Insoumise.

**Which brings us to the remaining contender in a race that seems to be narrowing to a two- or perhaps three-person contest: Marine Le Pen, the leader of the far-right National Front.**

For Le Pen, Macron and Fillon are simply two sides of the same coin, the “happy face” and “ashamed face” of globalization. Neither neosocialist nor neoliberal strategies for managing global capitalism can work, Le Pen argues. Only the reassertion of national sovereignty can protect working-class jobs and halt the erosion of national identity due to the influx of immigrants.

Since taking over the party from her father Jean-Marie in 2011, Le Pen has purged it, at least on the surface, of some of its more unsavory elements. She has expelled the anti-Semites and neo-Nazi skinheads and attempted to recast hostility to foreigners as a defense of “republican values.” Rejecting the European Union is central to her economic-nationalist platform, and if elected she promises to hold a referendum on “Frexit” and take France off the euro.

Le Pen has also renewed the party’s leadership. In Paris this past January, I spoke with Sébastien Chenu, who oversees cultural matters for the National Front. Chenu was formerly a member of the center-right Union for a Popular Movement (now the Republicans) and served as chief of staff to Christine Lagarde, the current head of the International Monetary Fund, when she was France’s trade minister. I asked him how difficult it had been to leave the mainstream for what many people still regard as a pariah party. The decision had not been easy, Chenu said, but he had entered politics as a follower of Philippe Séguin, a staunch nationalist among the Gaullists, and had gradually lost confidence as the party shifted to a more pro-European stance. He had also been disappointed by the strength of opposition among the Republicans to the Tübira law, which legalized same-sex marriage. The National Front’s relative friendliness to gays can be gauged by the prominence of Florian Philippot, a close political adviser to Le Pen. Like Chenu, Philippot—an énarque who was once a follower of left-wing nationalist Jean-Pierre Chevènement—quit one of the mainstream parties to join the Front, which proved not only ideologically congenial but also wide open to ambitious political talent.

The campaign is now in the homestretch, with Le Pen expected to top all of the other first-round contenders on April 23 with just over 25 percent of the vote, Macron to finish second with just under 25 percent, and Fillon to finish third with around 20 percent. In the second round, which will take place on May 7, all pollsters to date still have Le Pen losing to whichever of the other two emerges from round one, with Macron noticeably stronger than Fillon. But after the tumultuous experience of 2016, who still has faith in polls?

The numbers will, of course, fluctuate as the candidates elaborate their positions and participate in televised debates. There is major uncertainty about how Macron will fare: He has never run for office before or been tested in a head-to-head debate with Le Pen, who is a skilled retail politician and formidable debater. Economists may find her positions indefensible, but France is a country where Mitterrand famously crushed the incumbent, Valéry Giscard d’Estaing, in a presidential debate with the quip “I am not your pupil” after the latter quizzed him about the exchange rate between the franc and the German mark.

For his part, Macron has capitalized on his fresh face and youthful charisma, but at times he seems too eager for anointment as France’s latter-day savior. At the end of his first major rally in Paris, he thrust out his arms in a Christ-like pose and turned up his face as if beseeching favor from on high. But which father was he implying not to forsake him? To many, it seemed that he was looking neither to Mitterrand nor Delors, much less Hollande, but to former prime minister Michel Rocard, who had once galvanized the so-called “second left” not only with his brilliance but also with the sincerity of his commitment to both the modernization and moralization of the Socialist Party. Yet Rocard, who died last year, never made it to the Élysée Palace.

Come May 7, we will know whether Macron’s gamble pays off. If it doesn’t, he will probably move quickly to the private sphere. Macron’s unconventional approach to politics suggests that he is not a man to spend the rest of his years jockeying for position in section meetings and party congresses. If he can’t walk on water, he will ride in a limousine.

The nakedness of his political ambition may prove to be Macron’s fatal flaw in a law in which the mood in France has been described as one of dégagisme (“throw-them-out-ism”). But right-wing populism is not the novel force in France that it was in Britain during the Brexit vote and in the United States during the 2016 presidential election. Le Pen père et fille have been a national political presence for more than four decades. About them, there is no mystique: The politics of resentment is their only stock-in-trade. Macron’s mystique has taken him a surprisingly long way, but it remains to be seen whether it will be enough to make him this century’s successor to the general whose unique blend of cunning, chutzpah, and cheek twice saved France from itself.
On the wall above his desk, attorney Timothy Sandefur keeps a copy of The Liberator, a 186-year-old abolitionist newspaper that features an etching of a slave auction on its masthead. Sandefur is the vice president for litigation at the Phoenix-based Goldwater Institute, a nonprofit right-wing think tank with a donor roster that includes the Mercer family (Donald Trump’s biggest campaign contributors) and Donors Trust, a dark-money funnel for the Koch brothers, the DeVos family, and others. Goldwater is largely known for

by REBECCA CLARREN

“Our Children Have a Bounty on Their Heads”

Why is a conservative think tank trying to bring down the Indian Child Welfare Act?

Stolen youth:
Students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania, circa 1900.
ary williams, a member of arizona’s gila river indian community, was driving across the arizona desert, listening to the radio, when he first heard about one of the goldwater institute’s ICWA lawsuits. Williams immediately pulled over to the slim edge of the highway to listen carefully. His heart raced.

Williams is a living example of what could happen to American Indian children without what he calls “the safety net” of ICWA. His mother, a member of the Gila River Indian Community, died before he turned 1, and before ICWA was law. Williams and his three older siblings were placed in Arizona’s foster-care system. Over the next 15 years, he was separated from his siblings and sexually and physically abused. In all, he lived in seven different foster homes and one large institution.

For most of his childhood, Williams didn’t know that his mother was Native American; all he knew was that he didn’t look like other kids. By the time he learned about his heritage, most of his extended family had died.

“I feel cheated,” Williams said recently. “I would have loved to grow up on my reservation. I would much rather be able to hug my grandparents than talk to a mound of dirt—but the state took that right away from me.” Williams can’t get that time back, but he has tried to reconnect with his tribe; he now works as one of Gila River’s gaming commissioners.

Williams’s story of being separated from his family and tribe is common in Indian country. From the mid-1800s into the 1970s, tens of thousands of Native American children were taken from their homes, sometimes forcibly, and sent to government-run boarding schools, often hundreds of miles away. Intended to “kill the Indian...save the man,” the schools prohibited students from speaking Native languages or practicing tribal ceremonies. In 1958, the Bureau of Indian Affairs funded the Indian Adoption Project to find homes for the “forgotten child” who was “left unloved and uncared for on the reservation, without a home or parents he can call his own,” in the words of the project’s director. In fact, many of these children were being cared for by grandparents or aunts, traditional kinship roles in many Native communities.

By the 1970s, these federal adoption and schooling programs had created what one congressional committee called a crisis of “massive proportions.” An estimated 25 to 35 percent of all Indian children were no longer living with their families but instead had been adopted or were living in institutions or foster homes, the vast majority of which were non-Indian. “The wholesale separation of Indian children from their families is perhaps the most tragic and destructive aspect of American Indian life today,” the committee wrote in a 1978 report.

 recentley, the Goldwater Institute has stepped into an entirely different legal arena: an effort to dismantle a landmark law called the Indian Child Welfare Act. ICWA requires that before private and public agencies place Native American children in foster care or with an adoptive family, they try to keep nuclear families together or, if that fails, to place children with their extended family, their tribe, or a member of another tribe. It was passed in 1978 after government programs removed a large number of American Indian children from their families. But Goldwater and Sandefur argue that, rather than protecting Indian children, ICWA subjects them to an unfair set of rules that don’t apply to other kids—a type of discrimination that Sandefur likens to Jim Crow.

Cloaking its efforts in the language of civil rights, Goldwater has launched a coordinated attack against ICWA alongside evangelical and anti-Indian-sovereignty groups, adoption advocates, and conservative organizations like the Cato Institute. Since 2015, Goldwater has litigated four state or federal cases against ICWA, and filed several briefs in support of other cases. Goldwater’s stated goal is to have the US Supreme Court strike down ICWA as unconstitutional. The implications go far beyond child welfare. Many tribal members fear that if Goldwater is successful, it could undermine the legal scaffolding of Native American self-determination.
to place the child with a member of her extended family; second, with another tribal member; and finally, with an unrelated Native American family. In ICWA cases, tribes or parents can request to transfer the case out of the state court system and into tribal court.

Eighteen national child-advocacy organizations, including the Children's Defense Fund and the Casey Family Foundation, have called ICWA the “gold standard” in the field of child welfare. Studies have found that when Native youth are connected to their culture and feel pride about it, they’re more likely to have better grades and to attend college. Conversely, growing up separated from one’s cultural group can have deleterious effects, including an increased risk of depression, substance abuse, and suicide.

“For Indian kids, it’s especially important to be connected to their culture, which is not only our food and traditional practices but also our shared history of resilience despite the catastrophic attempts by the federal government at genocide,” said Sarah Kastelic, executive director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association. “Despite what Goldwater would say, ICWA is not an outdated solution to a problem long ago solved—it’s still a law that’s very much needed.”

In fact, nearly four decades after the passage of the law, some social workers and judges throughout the country continue to ignore it. Although there is no national compliance data, a 2011 investigation by National Public Radio found that 32 states were in violation of the act. Today, due to ongoing noncompliance, more than half of adopted American Indian and Alaska Native children are placed outside their families and communities, according to the National Indian Child Welfare Association. South Dakota is an egregious example: Since 2010, more than 1,000 Native American children in one South Dakota county have been taken from their families and placed disproportionately in non-Indian homes, according to a lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union. The child-custody hearings held after these removals typically lasted fewer than five minutes, according to the ACLU, and “the state won 100 percent of the time.”

The goldwater institute’s attention was directed to ICWA by its chief executive and president, Darcy Olsen, after she learned about the law while receiving training to become a foster parent. (She has adopted three of her former foster children, none of them Native.) In 2014, Olsen wrote a letter to Phoenix foster-care agencies, offering pro bono legal services to foster parents who were being blocked from fostering or adopting an Indian child due to ICWA.

The timing wasn’t coincidental. The year before, the Supreme Court had ruled on an ICWA case for the first time in 24 years, signaling to Goldwater a new interest in the law. Adoptive Couple v. Baby Girl concerned a man, a Cherokee tribal member, who tried to use ICWA to block his child’s mother, a non-Indian, from allowing a white family to adopt their daughter. In a majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito, the court ruled that because the biological father had given up custody before birth and the child had never been in his legal custody, ICWA didn’t apply.

Significantly, the ruling implicitly raised the question of what makes someone Native American. “The case is about a little girl (Baby Girl) who is classified as an Indian because she is 1.2% (3/256) Cherokee,” Alito wrote in the first line of his majority opinion. He went on to conclude: “The Act would put certain vulnerable children at great disadvantage solely because an ancestor—even a remote one—was an Indian.”

Currently, tribes decide membership eligibility in a variety of
ways. Some rule that you’re a member if one of your parents is; others allow a more distant family connection. It’s possible to be racially Native American and not a citizen of any federally recognized tribe. As a result, tribes and courts consider tribal membership a political designation having nothing to do with race.

But Alito’s emphasis on Baby Girl’s distant connection to her tribe is mirrored by Goldwater’s allegation that it is unfair to subject Indian children to a different set of rules, especially if their tribal connection is remote. Goldwater alleges that the law hurts kids by delaying their placement in stable homes, and by sending them back to live with potentially abusive parents.

The Goldwater Institute’s most significant case against ICWA, A.D. v. Washburn, argues that the law amounts to unconstitutional racial discrimination against Native children. (Laws that discriminate on the basis of race are subject to “strict scrutiny,” which requires the government to prove a compelling interest.) Named for a baby girl who is an enrolled member of the Gila River Indian Community, A.D. v. Washburn is a class-action lawsuit involving more than 1,300 Native American kids in the Arizona foster-care system. “The only basis for forcing these kids to be sent to tribal courts is because they’re racially connected,” Sandefur told me. “It’s like saying that children of Japanese descent need to be adjudicated by the court of Japan.”

Jacqueline Pata, executive director of the National Congress of American Indians, argues that this is a colossal misunderstanding of tribal treaty rights. “We were tribal citizens before we were American citizens, and while we recognize each other’s government structures, these rights to determine what’s best for our people are inherent to us,” she said, adding, “Goldwater’s suggestion that the law is somehow impermissibly unfair to Indian children ignores the reason why ICWA was passed and is still critical today: Indian children aren’t treated fairly by the justice system.”

Simmering close to the surface of Goldwater’s argument is the tacit accusation that children growing up on reservations are likely to be disadvantaged. “Native American death rates are rising and they have the lowest life expectancy rates, thanks in no small part to the way government policies have made reservations into economic wastelands,” Sandefur wrote on his blog last September.

Tribes dispute this characterization. It “perpetuates an unfounded, racist, historical stereotype that Indian reservations and homes are unfit,” said Stephen Lewis, the governor of the Gila River Indian Community and a board member of the Native American Rights Fund. “Like communities all across America, there are reservations that experience poverty and negative social conditions. But that in no way means that we cannot care for our own children.” Lewis believes that the groups allied against ICWA, which include attorneys representing for-profit adoption agencies, have a darker agenda. “The adoption industry is looking to monetize our children. It’s almost like our children have a bounty on their heads,” he said.

Goldwater has yet to be validated in court. In January, the Supreme Court declined to hear R.P. v. LA County, a case in which Goldwater had filed a supporting brief alleging that ICWA had harmed a child by not allowing her to stay with a California foster family rather than be sent to Utah to live with her sister and other relatives. And late in March, an Arizona federal judge dismissed A.D. v. Washburn, saying that Goldwater had failed to show how the law caused real harm to its plaintiffs.

Even so, these cases aren’t going away. Goldwater characterizes the Arizona judge’s ruling as nothing more than procedural and plans to take the case to the Ninth US Circuit Court of Appeals. The organization is powerfully connected: Its former vice president for litigation now serves on the Arizona Supreme Court, and Charles Cooper, whose firm partnered with Goldwater in the class-action case, is a close friend of US Attorney General Jeff Sessions.

F A D. V. WASHBURN WERE TO MAKE IT ALL THE WAY TO THE US SUPREME COURT, and if ICWA were to be ruled unconstitutional, experts say the decision could lead to a deeper gutting of federal Indian law. “Accepting Goldwater’s premise that tribal citizenship is nothing but a race-based determination undercuts all of federal Indian law,” said Kathryn Fort, an ICWA expert and director of the Indian Law Clinic at Michigan State University’s law school. “It’s a fundamental, purposeful misunderstanding of how we talk about tribes and tribal people and how courts and Congress treat American Indian people.”

A ruling in Goldwater’s favor, according to Fort and other legal experts, could undermine the authority of tribal courts, shutter tribal casinos, and open up reservations to privatization, something that could benefit oil and gas developers like the Koch brothers. While Goldwater denies that its ultimate goal is to undercut tribal sovereignty, some of the institute’s allies embrace the charge. “Maybe we should get serious about the 14th Amendment and equality and do away with federal Indian policy and say, ‘You’re an American like everybody else in America,’” said Darrel Smith, who serves on the board of directors of the Citizens for Equal Rights Foundation, a national organization that has long fought to diminish the power of tribes. Smith’s group has filed an amicus brief in A.D. v. Washburn.

At Goldwater’s offices in Phoenix, Sandefur insisted that his case is about nothing more than the welfare of Indian children. “It was a white Congress in Washington, DC, that passed a law saying, ‘The best interest of all Indians is as follows.’ Isn’t that why we have the problems we have?” When asked if Goldwater is working with any Native American members of Congress to reform ICWA or improve the circumstances of Native children, Sandefur said no—he hadn’t heard anything about that.

Rebecca Clarren is an award-winning journalist with InvestigateWest. This article was reported in partnership with that outlet.
Legitimate Interventions

Russ Feingold’s piece “Our Legitimacy Crisis” and Daniel May’s on “How to Revive the Peace Movement” in the April 3 issue offer a window into what is already happening in parts of America off the beaten path. On March 15, the town of New London, New Hampshire, passed a resolution calling for the end of the US nuclear-weapons modernization program; the removal of our guided missiles from hair-trigger alert; the resumption of serious negotiations to eliminate these arms, as required by Article 6 of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; and the application of the resources saved to meeting human needs and restoring our decaying public works. That resolution is being forwarded to New London’s state legislators, its congressional delegation, and New Hampshire’s governor. Meanwhile, Global Zero has drafted a similar resolution that it aims to promote nationwide. People across generations are combining in this effort!

John Raby
New London, N.H.

(continued from page 2)

he said “the future is what you make it.” And, finally, there were no enslaved persons represented at the reenactment, but members of George Washington’s Life Guard. I regret the errors.

Richard Kretzner
New York City

Love From Texas

I have been tardy with kudos for the “Obama Years” special issue [Jan. 2/9], so when the special issue on “Media in the Trump Era” [March 20] was equally superior, I had to write. Two wonderful reads. It is very comforting to know there are people “out there” who think like me.

Margaret Fitch
Plano, Tex.

Clarification

In “Paterson: Alexander Hamilton’s Trickles-Down City” [March 13], an image of a Hamilton Partnership poster appeared without credit on page 21. We regret the oversight.
WITHOUT ONLINE ACCESS, YOU’RE ONLY GETTING HALF THE STORY.
(SOUND FAMILIAR?)

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Before Donald Trump, before Nigel Farage and Brexit, before Viktor Orban and Geert Wilders, there was Jean-Marie Le Pen. As far back as 1984, this crude, bullying, narcissistic, and bigoted former paratrooper shocked French opinion when his far-right National Front party received nearly 11 percent of the vote in elections for the European Parliament.

Le Pen’s party—and his style of nationalist, right-wing populism—has grown steadily ever since, sending tremors of panic through the French political establishment at regular intervals. Its current leader—Le Pen’s daughter Marine—has overall led in the polls for the 2017 presidential election for several years. And while a Le Pen presidency still looks unlikely, given the long-standing tendency of French voters to unite against the National Front in the second round of the country’s two-part elections, it is not at all inconceivable.

If you want to understand the wave of populism erupting in the West, France is a good place to start. Not only has the country had its own Trumps for a long time now, but the conditions under which Trumpism can flourish have been present in France for much longer than in much of the rest of Europe and the United States. There is a good case to be made that France is the place to look to understand where populism is coming from.

David A. Bell is the Lapidus Professor in the Department of History at Princeton University and the author, most recently, of Shadows of Revolution: Reflections on France, Past and Present (Oxford University Press).
made, in fact, that France was the “patient zero” of the West’s current epidemic of populist fever.

Think of the conditions that helped propel Trump to the American presidency. Economic stagnation? Since the 1980s, the French economy has expanded at barely half the pace of America’s, and for all but a few brief moments over this long period, unemployment has remained stubbornly at over 8 percent. Resentment of entrenched ruling elites? A very high proportion of France’s political and business leadership graduates from a handful of small, ultra-elite grandes écoles, and is widely criticized as aloof and out of touch. Perceptions of national decline? In many ways, France has still not recovered, psychologically at least, from its loss of great-power status and its colonial empire. Loss of sovereignty? France has surrendered far more to the European Union than the United States has done to any combination of international organizations and multilateral trade pacts. Xenophobia and controversies over immigration? Already in the 1980s, the expansion of the French Muslim population was giving rise to alarmist headlines such as “La France islamique?” in the mainstream French press. Terrorism? Spectacular terrorist attacks traumatized Paris in the early 1980s and again in the 1990s, and again in our own moment.

Just as in the United States, but over a much longer period, these factors have come together to propel the career of both Le Pens—political outsiders who, like Trump, have exploited an ethno-nationalist politics that admires power above all else, makes its case through veiled and not-so-veiled appeals to racism, and has built a base among the aggrieved and resentful older members of the country’s white working class.

Three new books—Jean-Yves Camus and Nicolas Lebourg’s Far-Right Politics in Europe, Jonathan Fenby’s France, and Maurice Samuels’s The Right to Difference—help illuminate different but related parts of this story. Camus, a political scientist, and Lebourg, a historian, place the National Front at the center of their wide-ranging survey of far-right parties across Europe. Fenby, a British journalist, surveys French politics since 1789 in an attempt to offer a better historical context for the country’s current crisis. And Samuels, a literary critic, examines modern French attempts to deal with ethnic and religious difference through a close analysis of the place of Jews in French culture. Each book, in its own way, highlights many things that are peculiarly French about the country’s current crisis. But taken together, they provide a troubling account of just how easily ethno-nationalism can establish itself in a self-consciously liberal democracy—even one in which ethno-nationalism seemed permanently discredited because of the way its adherents in an earlier generation collaborated with fascism.

Opponents of the National Front are quick to label the party “fascist,” but as Camus and Lebourg argue, this is a mistake. The party certainly shares traits with older fascist groups, including, above all, a sense of the national society as an organic whole under threat from parasitical alien intruders (Jews and Muslim immigrants have both filled this role). But it has no paramilitary wing, no program of seizing power other than via elections, and no revolutionary vision of molding human beings into a new form, as was the case with German and Italian fascism. As Camus noted in an interview, the use of the label “fascist,” and comparisons of the present day to the 1930s, ironically employ a “cyclical” vision of history that was often dear to fascists themselves. “Human beings,” Lebourg adds dryly, “are capable of inventing libicidal regimes other than fascism.”

So what is the National Front if not fascist? Camus and Lebourg suggest that it’s a “national populist” party that has managed either to co-opt or marginalize most other elements of the French far right, including neo-fascists, royalsists, and Catholic fundamentalists. It is ideologically flexible and opportunistic. At its origin, in the early 1970s, it defined itself principally against corrupt elites and didn’t devote much attention to immigration or Islam until the electoral utility of doing so became clear. More recently, Marine Le Pen has tried to scrub the party of its anti-Semitic taint and has even actively cultivated Jewish support (against the common Muslim enemy, of course); she has tried to “de-demonize” the party and to make it more appealing to centrist voters.

Above all, Le Pen père et fille have shown a talent for reworking a classic element of European right-wing ideologies, namely the vision of a lost golden age of a happy, organic society that the corrupt elites and alien invaders have combined to destroy. But whereas older right-wing parties associated this golden age with a rural, preindustrial society, the Front associates it with the heyday of heavy industry, when factory workers could earn a decent wage and aspire to a middle-class life. Obviously, this is a vision that Donald Trump has also deployed to great effect.

Far-Right Politics in Europe has much of interest to say about the broad span of right-wing movements in Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and Eastern Europe; about the influence of thinkers like the antidemocratic Italian philosopher Julius Evola (a favorite of top Trump adviser Stephen Bannon) and Alexander Dugin, the intellectual guru of Putinism; and about the contacts among all of these. Still, the book appeared in French in 2015, and so some of its analysis already has a dated feel. An updated version would have to take into account Brexit, the repressive actions of the Law and Justice government in Poland, and the effect of jihadist terrorism on European politics.

In one important sense, though, the book has been quite prescient. It emphasizes that oppositional politicians like the Le Pens tend to do best when the mainstream parties appear to have few differences between them. This has certainly been the case in France, where Socialist president François Hollande, elected in 2012, adopted centrist policies favorable to globalization and the EU that were in many cases virtually identical to those of the competing, center-right Union pour un Mouvement Populaire (UMP) party of former president Nicolas Sarkozy (who later changed the UMP’s name to Les Républicains). Marine Le Pen has long delighted in conflating the UMP and the Socialist Party into a single “UMPS,” and, in fact, derives much of her electoral success from doing so.

Camus and Lebourg argue that the entire phenomenon of a political “far right” ultimately had its origins in the French Revolution of 1789, when the most steadfast opponents of that event chose to sit on the benches furthest to the right in the meeting place of the new National Assembly, even as the most radical deputies sat furthest to the left. For this reason, Camus and Lebourg argue that “to understand the far right in Europe as it now exists, we must in fact begin with French history.” But, as French academics...
How To: Get Rid Of Deep Belly Fat

LOS ANGELES – Researchers have announced a radical new technique that not only fights potentially deadly belly fat, but also leads to slimmer waists, improved organ function, and perhaps even a longer, healthier life.

The only catch? The establishment wants to spend 5 years – and $65 million – testing this technology. But one doctor thinks that the technology is so effective, it is immoral to make people wait. So he’s offering his patients a new version of the technique...now.

“The science has already been tested. It’s safe and effective,” says Dr. Rand McClain, Chief Medical Officer at Live Cell Research. “I can’t make people wait 5 years for something that could be helping them today.” McClain is referring to a new field of health research that is said to activate a “master switch” inside your body’s cells.

This switch controls when your cells store fat, and when they convert the fat into energy.

Control the “master switch,” the theory goes, and you also control fat.

To researchers, this is far more than just an appearance issue. Scientists at Harvard and Johns Hopkins Medical School recently stated that excess belly fat leads to diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and even early death. And it could be even more important to Americans, who mistakenly believe that small amounts of exercise can radically change their bodies.

According to Dr. Todd Miller, professor in the Department of Exercise Science at George Washington University, “People don’t understand that it is very difficult to exercise enough to lose weight. If that is why you are doing it, you are going to fail.”

So a new way to battle belly fat – on the cellular level – could be the breakthrough the health community has been waiting for.

McClain feels the technique — which has been shown in clinical trials to actually alter specific cells in the human body — works best for people over 30, particularly those who may be experiencing excessive fatigue, weaker bodies, and even foggy thinking.

Best of all, McClain recently announced that he is making his method available — and affordable — to virtually all Americans.

With demand already high for his stunning technique, McClain created an online presentation detailing how the health breakthrough works.

You can watch the presentation here at www.NoFat17.com

This video has already caused a bit of an uproar, based in part on the honest, no-nonsense way Dr. McClain calls out both the medical industry and certain agencies. One viewer commented: “This is so interesting...I had physical problems for years and had NO IDEA I not know this before? Rand is telling it like it is...we need more doctors like this!”

But Dr. McClain’s breakthrough has also caused some controversy.

When we reached out to others for comment, many stated that, as with any newly released technique, people should be advised to watch the entire video report before committing to such an unconventional solution.

He’s showed that it works, everyone agrees on that. But we don’t want people to start using these quick shortcuts to better health. However if it works this well, it could put drug companies out of business. See his presentation here >> www.NoFat17.com
who originally wrote for a French readership, they take a great deal about French history for granted. Readers unfamiliar with the subject may wish, at least initially, to turn elsewhere.

One such destination is Jonathan Fenby's breezy new historical survey of France from the Revolution to the present, which provides an engaging, if very traditional, introduction to the subject. Fenby is a British journalist with more expertise on China than France, and in this book has relied heavily on secondary sources by other British writers. But he has put together a colorful, entertaining narrative, enlivened by gossipy passages about the scandalous private lives of public figures and pungent sketches of leading political figures. He has a journalist's eye for entertaining trivia, such as sketches of leading political figures. He has a livened by gossipy passages about the scandal-together a colorful, entertaining narrative, en-

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proaches, which Samuels usefully uncovers, have involved considerably more tolerance for Jewish difference.

Samuels notes, for instance, that in the French Revolution, the politicians who granted Jews full civil status did not require the sort of radical assimilation (and ultimately conversion) demanded by Grégoire. They required Jews to give up special communal privileges, but not the exercise of their religion or what present-day French critics call (mostly in reference to the hijab or burqa) “conspicuous” signs of religious adherence.

Samuels also shows how this alternate model of universalism manifested itself in literary works and intellectual debates throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. One brava chapter traces the career of the great French-Jewish actress Rachel Félix in the years around the Revolution of 1848 (she appears on the cover of the book, singing “La Marseillaise”). While some critics at the time ridiculed the idea that a person recognizable as a Jew could enter the sphere of the French stage, many others disagreed, and Félix’s very success testifies to the fact that their view prevailed. These critics, Samuels writes, “carved out a place for Jewishness at the very center of French culture.”

Samuels makes a similar argument with regard to Jean Renoir’s great film about World War I, The Grand Illusion. Renoir has come in for withering attacks for attaching stereotypically Jewish qualities, including ostentatious wealth and physical weakness, to the film’s Jewish character, the soldier Rosenthal. But Samuels, in a subtle, careful reading, insists that the film expresses a more ambiguous attitude toward the Jews and ultimately endorses a “more open form of universalism” that accepts them—however strong their marks of difference from other French citizens—as full members of the French nation.

Although Samuels makes a convincing case, his work might have benefited from some international comparisons. It’s worth noting, for instance, that the “place for Jewishness” carved out by Félix in French culture pales in comparison with the role played by Philip Roth, Woody Allen, or any number of Jewish writers, actors, and musicians who have infused large areas of American culture with a distinctly Jewish flavoring.

In America, important parts of cultural life as a whole have taken on a recognizably Jewish flavor. Something similar happened in Vienna and Budapest in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but nothing of the sort ever occurred in France. Allowing Jews to play a role as Jews is one thing; allowing them to help change the culture is another.

Still, Samuels’s book fits well with the work of a number of historians who have maintained for many years now that the rigid universalist model defended by intellectuals like Finkielkraut—and by French politicians across the political spectrum—is not, in fact, the only possible “French model.” These historians—scholars like Jean-François Chanet, Anne-Marie Thiesse, and James Lehning—have shown that the supposedly conformist Third Republic of the late 19th and early 20th centuries tolerated very large degrees of regional cultural difference, and that the Fourth Republic of the 1950s stood ready to introduce affirmative action for Algerian Muslims in France in its effort to keep Algeria a part of the country.

Their work—and now Samuels’s—has serious political implications. Today, nothing is more common in French political discourse than the insistence that French Muslims give up the bulk of their religious and ethnic particularities in order to “integrate”—perhaps even that they adopt a new, benign “French Islam” effectively controlled by the French republic. Commentators all too easily conflate active expressions of hostility to France by alienated Muslim youths with the sporting of “conspicuous religious symbols” in schools, or the wearing of a bathing suit seen as overly modest on a Mediterranean beach.

These attitudes have a doubly corrosive effect. They exacerbate the alienation of young Muslims who already feel caught between two cultures, accepted nowhere and discriminated against everywhere. And they reinforce millions of other French people in their conviction (belied, in fact, by the social-scientific evidence) that Muslims will never successfully integrate into the national community and don’t really belong in France at all. In other words, they play directly into the hands of Marine Le Pen and the National Front.

As the presidential election approaches (the two rounds of voting will take place on April 23 and May 7), the political situation in France remains enormously volatile. Both major parties are nearing a state of collapse, with the candidate of the center-right Republicans, François Fillon, now under indictment, and Socialist elected officials, including former prime minister Manuel Valls, fleeing their own candidate for Emmanuel Macron, the charismatic, centrist former banker. It is entirely possible that Macron will end up crushing Le Pen in the second round, despite her long-standing lead in the first-round polls. If so, commentators will joyously proclaim that the center has held, as it did in the Netherlands on March 15; that the worst have gone down to defeat despite their passionate intensity; and that the Western world’s populist fever has finally broken.

But there is little indication that a centrist government led by Macron will do any better at addressing the problems of economic stagnation that have plagued France for so long, or that he will help to palliate the country’s anti-elitist and anti-EU sentiment. In fact, things might only get worse under a Macron presidency. He is, after all (like Fillon and Hollande), a graduate of the much-hated, ultra-elite École Nationale d’Administration, and also a strong advocate of free trade and the EU. Right-wing populism, under these conditions, would continue to fester. Macron has tried to distance himself from the rigid universalist model of integration criticized by Samuels, insisting that “no religion is a problem in France today,” and he has also condemned the “crimes and acts of barbarism” committed by France during its rule in Algeria. This is certainly an important move in the right direction, and one that is rare among mainstream French politicians. But it will also likely drive away voters convinced that the integration of Muslims into French society is a futile proposition.

There are some other faint signs of hope. Benoît Hamon, the official candidate of the Socialists (and several smaller, allied left-wing parties), has put together an innovative program centered on the reduction of inequality, the environment, and greater economic flexibility for France within Europe. A sort of low-key French Bernie Sanders, Hamon offers a populist vision shorn of nationalism and xenophobia. His campaign this year has failed to catch fire, in part because of competition from another, angrier, more explicitly nationalist left-wing populist, Jean-Luc Mélenchon. But in the longer run, such a program might draw working-class voters away from the National Front (which, by most measures, is now the principal party of the French working class) and back to the left.

Even with such positive changes on the horizon, however, Jean-Marie Le Pen’s long shadow continues to cast itself over French politics. The conditions that have brought it into being developed over many decades and have taken deep root in the country’s political landscape, much like similar conditions have now done in the United States. For this very reason, the right-wing fever consuming patient zero—and now, much of the West—is unlikely to break anytime soon.
Siep Stuurman, a Dutch intellectual historian, won’t be familiar to most American readers. Before The Invention of Humanity, his only book published in English was a biography—and a celebration—of another little-known author, the French Cartesian philosopher François Poullain de la Barre, who wrote three treatises on the equality of the sexes in the 1670s. “The mind has no sex whatsoever,” Poullain declared, and he told his female readers: “You are endowed with reason; use it, and do not sacrifice it blindly to anyone.” These treatises, Stuurman argues, played a significant part in “the invention of modern equality.” His new book is a much larger and bolder account of that “invention,” stretching across two millennia and virtually every known civilization; it takes as its focus not just the idea of equality but also of our “common humanity.”

Stuurman’s book is a big one, and it violates many of the current rules of academic writing—especially the ones regarding turf. Stuurman provides us with a critical discussion of texts and authors from ancient Israel, Greece, and China; early Christendom and Islam; medieval Europe and Central Asia; Europe’s colonizers and the colonized peoples; the Enlightenment and the American, French, and Haitian revolutions; the Indian and African national-liberation movements and the African-American struggle for equality. The book ends with an account of the drafting of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights following a critique of Samuel Huntington’s the “clash of civilizations.”

Stuurman includes a good number of philosophers and religious writers (Confucius, Ibn Khaldun, Francisco de Vitoria, John Locke, and many more) and also the sort of people we now call public intellectuals (Voltaire, W.E.B. Du Bois). Unexpectedly, he also writes about travelers and ethnographers. Covering such a wide terrain and such a long period of time means that he trespasses on many academic fields, and I am sure the book will be criticized by scholars defending their specific expertise. Don’t let that bother you; Stuurman offers very skillful readings of the texts and figures that he surveys.

The range of his work also requires him to reject the current commitment of many intellectual historians to deep contextualism. These days, scholars are supposed to tell us in great detail how a particular book was read in its time: What did the words mean to their first readers? What other, perhaps lesser-known books and pamphlets were written around the same time? What were the immediate occasions of this writing? Who were the living targets of its arguments? Too much of this sort of thing, Stuurman argues, makes it impossible to understand the lasting significance of a given text. He is, instead, interested in a different question: Why is a text still important to us? And so he provides a more limited context—and then focuses on the temporal placement of each book alongside the others in his universal history.

Given where the book begins and ends—with equality at first unthinkable and then a commonly accepted thought—I am inclined to call Stuurman’s account a story of progress, a “Whig history.” He’s reluctant to accept this though the support is often inconsistent and hypocritical. Once, long ago, the ideas of equality and a common humanity were literally “unthinkable”; today, they are the default position of almost all of us. The Invention of Humanity is the story of how this dramatic change came about—and how long it took.
description, and, in fact, some of the earliest assertions of human equality are as good as they get, and some of the latest are radically compromised. The book certainly doesn’t claim that humanity itself has advanced over the centuries, morally or politically. Stuurman’s argument is that the idea of humanity is probably more fully developed and more widely accepted today than it has ever been. This is not to say that we have reached the end of the story, for new versions of inequality have been invented in every age, including our own.

One of the most original features of Stuurman’s book is his account of “the anthropological turn,” which isn’t a single turn in time but a recurrent turning of travelers and ethnographers toward the outside and the “other.” Stuurman begins with the Greek historian Herodotus and the much less well-known Sima Qian, who lived in China three centuries after Herodotus and wrote about the Han empire and the surrounding lands. Both Herodotus and Sima Qian traveled widely, crossing the political and cultural frontiers that separated Greeks and Chinese from the people they called “barbarians.” And both suggested that the separation wasn’t as great as their compatriots thought. Again and again, the anthropological turn has produced reports similar to theirs: The natives of this or that foreign country, for all their strange customs and beliefs, are remarkably like us. Here, according to Stuurman, is a critical moment in the “invention” of humanity.

But one wonders whether what he is describing isn’t more a matter of discovery than invention. When Herodotus writes that the Egyptians call people who don’t speak their language “barbarians,” exactly as the Greeks do, is this an act of inventing or discovering humanity? Herodotus’s aim is to unsettle his Greek readers and force them to recognize their fellowship with the Egyptians. Similarly, when Sima Qian visits the nomads who live north of the Great Wall and reports that their way of life is remarkably and intelligently well-adapted to their environment, this is again a discovery meant to challenge the complacent self-regard of his fellow Chinese: They are not alone in their human ingenuity. Nothing like invention is going on here.

Perhaps the most engaging, and also the most disturbing, of the travelers and ethnographers in Stuurman’s account are the Dominican and Franciscan priests or friars who went to Central America in the wake of the Spanish conquest. Writers like Bartolomé de Las Casas and Bernardino de Sahagún described the high civilization of the indigenous peoples (another discovery), and Las Casas conducted a years-long campaign against the greed and brutality of the Spanish colonizers. With Sahagún’s help, a number of Aztec writers “drafted an account of the siege and destruction of the magnificent city of Tenochtitlán by Cortez.” So the colonized were given a voice—though Sahagún later wrote his own account, presenting the conquest as “providential.” Las Casas and Sahagún were hardly in full possession of the ideas of humanity and equality. But they portrayed the Spaniards as far less civilized than these indigenous peoples—and so they took a stand against the prevailing Spanish belief in their own racial and cultural superiority.

The anthropological turn continues with modern academic anthropology. Stuurman writes about the critique of “scientific racism” by Franz Boas and Ashley Montagu, both of whom would certainly deny that their defense of human equality was an invention; they meant to tell it like it is. But when it comes to the big philosophical and theological systems within which the ideas of humanity and equality have sometimes been defended, Stuurman is correct: These are indeed designed and constructed. Here we can see a long series of historical inventions of our shared humanity—Stoicism, Catholic natural law, Kantian idealism. Consider one of the earliest examples: From a secular standpoint, the God of biblical theology, in whose image all human beings are created, is an invention. The common image, however, is discovered again and again—by Las Casas, for example, and centuries later by Boas.

Discovery stands alongside invention and is probably more important. This is my only serious disagreement with Stuurman, and it’s mostly a disagreement with the title of his book. He really isn’t, and we shouldn’t be, the prisoners of postmodern “social construction.” Common humanity is a fact, even if, after several millennia of debate, we are still defending its factuality against multiple denials. It’s not fake news; we didn’t make it up.

Human inequality is commonly described by its defenders as a discovery, but we can allow ourselves to think that it, indeed, is socially constructed. Many different kinds of inequality appear in human history, and each one must be overcome if humanity and equality are to triumph in the practical as well as the ideological world. We have to deal with geographic inequality (the barbarians on the other side of the border), racial inequality (whites or Chinese and the inferior “others”), hierarchical inequality (masters and slaves, aristocrats and commoners), and economic inequality (the rich, the poor, and the desperately poor). These four inequalities are very old and ever-renewed; we know them well. Stuurman adds a fifth to this list, which he thinks is peculiarly modern: temporal inequality. “We” are advanced, and “they” are backward.

This is a modern version of inequality because it implies an acceptance, at least theoretical, of a future egalitarianism. Think of the “civilizing mission” of the modern imperial powers: The idea suggests that all human beings are capable of becoming civilized. It’s just that we are already there, and they have a long way to go—and need our guidance on the difficult journey. The theory of “modernization” is another example of temporal inequality: We are already modern; they have fallen far behind. The others definitely can catch up; the inequality isn’t permanent, though we are likely to insist for a long time that they are not yet where they should be.

There is, unhappily, a left-wing version of temporal inequality, which played a major part in leftist history throughout the 20th century—and still figures, I think, in the 21st. Vanguard theory is an argument not only that some of us are or should be leading the forward march, but also that some of us are more advanced than the rest of humanity in our knowledge of history and society. We have the correct ideological position, and they do not. Therefore, the vanguard’s historical task is to educate, even more than to lead, the others. But sometimes victory precedes education, and then the victorious vanguard is likely to produce a brutally authoritarian regime—required, so the vanguardists in power say, by the “false consciousness” of the masses. This, too, is a version of inequality that needs to be overcome.

The longest chapter in Stuurman’s book deals with the Enlightenment, which stretches in his account from Descartes (and Poullain de la Barre) to Condorcet—roughly a century and a half. This is Stuurman’s own field of expertise, and he treats the Enlightenment as a major turning point in human history. Still, the story he tells is nicely balanced: celebratory but also qualified (temporal inequality is invented in these years, though there were hints of it earlier on). He gives the revolutionary Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) the recognition it deserves, while acknowledging contemporary disagreements about the rights of Jews, blacks, and women.

The Enlightenment doesn’t only mark an advance in the long march of humanity and equality; it also leads to a significant change in the tempo of the march. There is a speedup,
which many people have noted when writing about the pace of everyday life in the modern age. But the speedup with regard to humanity and equality is quite specific: It is a political acceleration. Until the 18th century, there were many writers asserting our common humanity and many others denying it—and some, as Stuurman notes, doing both at once. But then something changes. Beginning with the American and French revolutions and developing in the early and mid-1800s, social and political movements committed to egalitarianism suddenly appear in Western Europe and the United States—"suddenly" given the scope of Stuurman’s two-millennia history. Now movements that call themselves “internationalist” aim to draw all humanity into the struggle for equality. This is something radically new, and with it comes the idea that theories about humanity and equality must lead to a practice of humanity and equality—to a radical politics. Abolitionism, the labor movement, feminism in its several waves, the civil-rights movement, and the gay-rights movement all have their origin in this moment when political action became, for people like us, obligatory.

Because The Invention of Humanity is an intellectual history and not a social or political one, Stuurman doesn’t discuss all of these movements. He lets the antislavery movement stand in for the rest, and this is entirely legitimate. But there’s an intellectual invention (I think that’s the right word) that he might usefully have noticed. It was the product of leftist militancy and is what militants call the “unity of theory and practice.” This new unity was critical to the development of the Western left, and it remains so today. The commitment to practice was the source of much of the left’s gains in the 19th and 20th centuries; it is what makes the movements move. The left has had its share of failures and disasters, some of them connected to its belief in temporal inequality and vanguardism. Still, it’s an important part of Stuurman’s story; he could have written more about it.

But the left is only a part of the story, as this splendid book makes clear. At times one might fault The Invention of Humanity for its survey-like quality, moving from one author and text to another. But Stuurman’s panoramic vision of discovery and invention, reiterated in many different cultural and religious idioms across a vast expanse of time and space, makes for a dramatically original history. Those of us who grew up on the Western left may think that it’s our egalitarian ideology that has been emulated around the world. Not so: The discovery and invention of humanity has been the work of humankind.

D

onald Trump almost never utters the words “liberty” or “equality.” With little fanfare, he has abandoned perhaps the two most traditional and aspirational touchstones of American political life. By way of contrast, Barack Obama, in his final address, reminded us that previous American presidents routinely used public occasions to draw straight lines, as he himself did, to those key words of the Declaration of Independence: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.” Obama even went the distance on this occasion to link these phrases back to the Enlightenment and forward to the struggle for civil rights and African-American freedom. But in his short time in office, Trump has thrown out this entire script, right along with the conventional history lesson behind it.

With Trump at the lectern, what we get instead are references to deal-making, money, and a temporally unspecific kind of national greatness associated with being “tremendous” and, always, “a winner.” This entrepreneurial jargon is then mixed with words and images intended to stoke anger and fear. Trump has a taste for terms like “stupid,” “dangerous,” “carnage,” and “swamp,” which he mainly uses to em-
phrases the distance between our former strength and the dilapidated America of today. It is not that the new president has exactly given up on the power of words as forms of action. He has, however, intro-
duced us to a startlingly different vocabu-
larly with which to take stock of the world around us. This is surely a revolutionary idiom—just not the one we’ve been living with most of the time since 1776.

So what does the new Trumpian language mean for our political future? And, more pointedly, what are its implications for our long-term investment in the story of liberty, equality, and the founding of the nation? Those who study history for a living generally make lousy prognosticators. But three new books on the era of the founders provide an answer to that second question. Richard D. Brown’s Self-Evident Truths, Danielle Allen’s Our Declaration, and Luke Mayville’s John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy explore the critical, if endlessly fraught, role of equality and inequality in shaping the American political imagination. And though this might seem a dated concern given how

n Self-Evident Truths, Richard D. Brown gives us a clear, albeit conventional, account of the first nine decades of American history after 1776 as a series of struggles over the promise and limits of equality. The tensions within the Declaration itself are given relatively short shift in this story. So are the framers’ motives. Brown’s focus is on the gap between the rhetoric—the “aspirations,” as he calls them, laid out in the text’s most famous lines—and lived reality in the new United States.

As Brown sees it, the Declaration handed Americans a kind of yardstick against which to measure their burgeoning nation. The opening to the second paragraph announced that, when it came to the law, all men should be considered equal, regardless of wealth or rank, and nation-states should be judged according to their compliance with this basic principle. Who precisely those “men” were was not spelled out. But the words that followed were widely understood to mean equal opportunities to prosper and, arguably, to participate in the political process. And as such, the Declaration opened a can of worms, since the articulation of these radical ideas occurred in a context of obvious social and economic inequality.

In this historian’s telling, much of the political strife in America’s early decades revolved around struggles by various distinct and disfavored constituencies—religious mi-

Our Declaration
A Reading of the Declaration of Independence in Defense of Equality
By Danielle Allen
WW. Norton & Company. 315 pp. $27.95

John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy
By Luke Mayville
Princeton University Press. 216 pp. $29.95

Self-Evident Truths
Contesting Equal Rights From the Revolution to the Civil War
By Richard D. Brown
Yale University Press. 387 pp. $40

The answers to basic questions about who held rights and what those rights entailed remained in flux for generations after the Revolution, even as these disputes laid the groundwork for future progress.

S o what did all this agitating and strife amount to in the decades leading to the Civil War? Brown’s own verdict is that, especially in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution, many Americans saw modest but still substantive gains in equality. A gradual shift to-
ward imagining the citizen as an individual rather than a property owner or taxpayer helped pave the way, for example, for universal male suffrage as well as an end to debtors’ prisons.

Yet Brown also takes pains to point out that these advances were always uneven and never took place in a linear fashion. Contemporary prejudices and old habits of thought—beliefs that, say, women were weak and irresponsible, black people lazy, immigrants dangerous—endured. Some of these assumptions even hardened over time as the idea of “nature” was marshalled to justify not just the recognition of rights but also existing hierarchies in American society.

Moreover, talk of legal equality was discovered to be an effective fig leaf in legitimi-

ating other, more entrenched forms of in-

equality, including everyday racial, class, and gender advantages. This meant that improve-
ment in status for some—such as poor white men of varied nationalities and faiths—came at the expense of others, namely women and people of color. (Brown notes that when New Jersey formally denied women and free blacks the right to the franchise in 1807, reversing previous policy, there was no protest at all.)

The answers to basic questions about who held rights and what those rights entailed remained in flux for generations after the Revolution, even as these disputes laid the groundwork for future progress.

The principal and lasting problem, ac-

According to Brown, was that the founders—in their attachment to a “right” to accumulate and hold private property as a precondition for personal and political liberty—refused to imagine anything like economic equality, or what philosophers now call “equality of outcomes.” Even the lower standard of “equality of opportunity,” or meritocracy, was rendered impossible by the founders’ insistence on heritable property, which is an-

other way of saying material inequality from the get-go. Brown does not claim that this made the drafters of the Declaration cynics or hypocrites; the Declaration, coupled with the subsequent decision to render primogeniture and a titled nobility defunct, represented a sincere effort on their part to inculcate repub-

lican values without completely overturning
the social and economic order. However, in Brown’s telling, these same framers left Americans with a permanent structural paradox. The Civil War may have finally solved the problem of chattel slavery, where the contradiction between natural-rights language, on the one hand, and the idea of property rights, on the other, was most blatant. But a deep American attachment to private property and its unequal distribution has created all sorts of lasting impediments to claims of equality. It has also, as Brown only notes in passing, kept the focus of American political life far away from what are sometimes called “positive” or “social” rights, such as a right to food, shelter, or, indeed, health care.

Brown ends up taking a position consistent with that of the historian Jack P. Greene and, earlier, Alexis de Tocqueville, who in different ways insisted that, from the start, American democracy went hand in hand with exclusion and informal aristocracy. Brown tries to give this finding a slightly sunnier tone by suggesting that, for those playing a long game, “arguably, equal rights doctrine has tilted the United States toward social equality.” Considering the vast disparities in income and access to political power that have developed over the last half-century, you might not close this book altogether convinced. In this view, liberty, as defined in 18th-century America and even by its most inspiring texts, all but ensures the preservation of various kinds of stratification and inequality, too.

Political theorists Danielle Allen and Luke Mayville beg to differ. Allen wants us to reread, as carefully as possible, every word and punctuation mark in the Declaration of Independence, no matter how hackneyed or seemingly minor, in an effort to absorb its full message. Then she wants us to repurpose the text—much as Susan B. Anthony and the other early women’s-rights advocates did in 1848, and the abolitionist Frederick Douglass did in 1852—with an eye to its possibilities for revitalizing democracy in the 21st century. She is convinced that, for the framers, the idea of equality was fully consistent with the notion of liberty. Or, as she puts it, equality is “the single bond that makes us a community, that makes us a people with the capacity to be free collectively and individually in the first place.”

Allen is able to make this argument about the primacy of equality, as well as its compatibility with liberty, because of the broad and multipurpose meaning that she gives to the concept within the form and structure of the Declaration. Equality, for Allen, is not limited to a guarantee of equal freedom from domination. Instead, her favored term takes on a variety of richer resonances. It stands for a shared opportunity to use the powers of government in pursuit of communal as well as individual liberty and happiness. It means a recognition of our equal ability to judge—and to judge in concert—what actions would further this goal. And, finally, it entails something akin to co-creation, a matter of recognizing and experiencing reciprocity through language.

Our Declaration is part professorial explication de texte, part affecting memoir, and part populist call to arms. It is also a love letter to English prose, and it is no accident that Allen, who writes beautifully herself, begins the book with a discussion of language and democratic empowerment. Ultimately, she wants all of us to build a more intimate relationship with the language of democratic politics and, in particular, with the language of the Declaration.

As such, American history both anchors Allen’s narrative and is somewhat beside the point. She acknowledges that it matters that the Declaration was a statement about liberty and equality written by well-educated white men, many of them, like Thomas Jefferson, owners of enslaved human beings. But she also insists, only somewhat convincingly, that the framers viewed their enterprise as a collective one, drawing on elements of Philadelphia’s wider community as they put the text together, and that they meant for their claims about liberty and equality to apply to many more people than themselves, even if not to all people. Allen works hard, in other words, to give Jefferson and company the benefit of the doubt, just as she wills a kind of optimism about human capacity into her own message.

At the same time, she also pushes back against the current scholarly demand for deep contextualization, suggesting that history can serve to distance us from the text and from each other, even as it can increase understanding. In the end, she knows she is on stronger ground when she sets history partly to the side and treats the Declaration as a timeless source of moral and political vocabulary that we, whoever “we” might be, can still make use of—and in greatly enhanced ways.

But what of material inequality, then and now, for which Brown claims the Declaration has no answer? Here Allen has little to say, either. It remains hard to determine if reciprocity and community-building are meant, in her vision, to be a substitute for or a complement to redistributive policies aimed at creating greater economic equality. In a rare moment in the text when she offers an explicit policy suggestion, Allen ventures that a good starting point for reversing growing inequality in America would be to change the housing and zoning laws that segregate by income and ethnicity. That suggestion, however, stands in isolation. Nothing else on economic inequality—including, say, on wages or taxes—comes up. And without any effort to redress this growing problem in American life, it is hard to know what social solidarity could really mean in practice. What’s clear is simply that Allen dreams of a political culture that revolves around a very different set of values than those associated today with markets. Her essential point, inspired by her deep reading of the Declaration, is that without some basic notion of democratic community, civil liberties—including even the libertarian’s cherished right to pursue individual happiness—remain hollow.

Luke Mayville, author of John Adams and the Fear of American Oligarchy, does not disagree that the founders still have something to teach us about the institutionalization of equality. But rather than turn to the Jeffersonian tradition and the Declaration of Independence, Mayville urges us in this slim volume to take another look at the public and private writings of Jefferson’s greatest ideological opponent, John Adams. For Mayville believes that Adams took up this question in a way that is especially relevant for our own inegalitarian moment.

Adams, a Federalist, is most often portrayed as the young republic’s great defender of aristocracy, a man from a fairly humble background who became the arch anti-egalitarian of his age. Mayville hopes to correct that reading. He argues that Adams presciently grasped something about democracy that Jefferson and his anti-Federalist allies missed: that vast inequality in wealth would produce, even in the absence of hereditary titles, a version of aristocracy every bit as threatening to the workings of a democratic republic as an actual nobility. Extremes of poverty and riches would end up distorting any attempt at the realization of liberty, equality, and self-rule.

Mayville is most interested, though, in the unexpected grounds on which Adams made this case. According to Mayville, what worried Adams—and what has led so many commentators (starting with his contemporaries) to misread his motives—was not that the rich would use their money to purchase power,
as today’s foes of *Citizen United* and super PACs see happening all around us. Rather, Adams, who was deeply taken with Scottish moral philosophy, fretted that the less-well-off would, for psychological reasons, hand their wealthier counterparts more power than they deserved. Even as the French Revolution was gaining steam in the early 1790s, Adams remained convinced that the grip of wealth on the human mind, not least in a commercial republic, would produce a kind of admiration and even sympathy for the rich and beautiful compatible with what Mayville calls “soft oligarchy.” This is a judgment that seems especially apt in light of the popularity of a particular billionaire president who has managed to represent himself as both a role model worthy of envy and the tribune of ordinary Americans.

But Mayville’s Adams offers us almost no palliative. His favored solution was honorary societies and special titles for those who made important contributions to civic or artistic culture—hierarchical inventions intended to redirect the common people’s instincts toward the emulation of their superiors in virtue and talent rather than in money alone. This is a project that Mayville tries, against the odds, to defend as worth taking seriously. Mainly it reveals Adams’s failure of imagination: He rejected suffrage or political education as effective means of achieving greater equality from the bottom up. Yet he also showed little interest in any form of redistribution starting at the top, either during one’s life or after death, perhaps because he saw economic inequality as natural from the start.

What we come to realize through these new readings of our 18th-century past is that the nation’s founders left us with few ideas for any way out of Brown’s structural and Adams’s psychological conundrum. Some 240-plus years later, we continue to witness increases in political and civil equality on a national level and an ever-larger wealth and income gap between the top and the bottom. Oxfam reported this year that just eight men—six of them Americans—now own the same amount of wealth as the poorer half of the world’s population, or 3.6 billion people, put together. In this context, one can’t help but wonder if equality, in concert with rights and liberties, is even a viable starting point from which to address our needs, locally or globally.

Indeed, as I write, just a short while into the Trump presidency, we might well ask if this whole Lockean vocabulary has finally been rendered obsolete, a victim of its own internal weaknesses and a changing world. Trump’s personal language recalls a lowbrow Hobbes, imagining a war of all against all without his strongman help, rather than a more familiar Locke, whose influence hovers over this early debate about equality, liberty, and property. Even the intellectual history we have long used in order to bulk up our sense of purpose could (pace Allen) be said to have run its course. According to some historians today, it is high time that the myth of American government as the concrete realization of Enlightenment aspirations toward liberty and equality be recognized for what it really is: an invention of Cold War American exceptionalism, not historical truth at all.

And yet there are compelling reasons offered by all three books not to give up now on either our living connections to our foundational story or our traditional (i.e., revolutionary) protest vernacular, with its promise of liberty and equality for all. As Brown makes clear, there have always been those—albeit generally not in the White House—who would have us reject the language of equal rights precisely because of the explosive possibility of the aspirations to which it gives voice. Brown cites naysayers, including Loyalists and slave owners going all the way back to the framing of the Declaration, who insisted (as would Edmund Burke shortly thereafter) that all this abstract talk about equality and liberty wasn’t only misleading in the context of various forms of concrete inequality and unfreedom; it was also potentially dangerous because of the ideas and expectations that it was liable to conjure up but not fulfill. And therein lies its potential power still.

Because talk of equality and liberty attaches the American idea of democracy to a long-term promise—even if it’s a seemingly unobtainable one, given social and economic circumstances—this idiom has, as many equal-rights advocates have discovered over the previous few centuries, an exceptional power to push the course of history at least partly toward justice. To resist the new Trumpian status quo, we undoubtedly need to harness its force once again. One goal of speaking in terms of equality now would be to counter the apparent triumphs of both libertarianism and authoritarianism—that is, to make all of us think again not only about who deserves rights, but what rights we all deserve. Another goal would be to draw disparate peoples together as a united front or oppositional mass movement. For surely this too, as Allen rightly notes, was a key purpose of the Declaration of Independence, that great founding model of resistance.
Puzzle No. 3430
JOSHUA KOSMAN AND HENRI PICCIOTTO

ACROSS
1 Where we constructed this puzzle, avoiding all the 22, and listening to choice cut (6)
4 Characters running west in newsless urban capital (8)
10 Having a weapon like an octopus? (5)
11 Trip over racket while restraining cross dog (9)
12 Mobile home in the style of faceless president (7)
13 Yonder is a woman (7)
14 Point back at circle and fuss (2-2)
15 Most often, it’s second to labs seen in chaos (6,4)
19 Laps a lager drunkenly with bar assistants? (10)
22 Stan tortured animals that invaded our 1A and this puzzle, affecting clues for eight Down entries (4)
25 Coward doesn’t finish embracing explosive figure on the ticket (7)
27 Alternative operating system: tool and instrument (4,3)
28 Moving train isn’t moving (2,7)
29 Doughnuts otherwise named for an Asian city (5)
30 Scandinavian taken back by arid song (8)
31 One hundred are defeated by Truman’s first cabinet (6)

DOWN
1 Vegetables for one who works the land (7)
2 Chief speaking, um, in frankness (9)
3 Not entirely free of studio backing: an inhabitant of Bangalore, perhaps (6)
5 Narration in poorly written article (7)
6 Fabric for an officer (8)
7 Best or (from another perspective) most common element in a Scrabble set (5)
8 Secure in Southwestern town (5,2)
9 10’s renter (6)
16 Uncovered lox and eggs (3)
17 They can’t recall scurvy seaman [sic] (9)
18 Simple banana (8)
19 Desserts or underwear (7)
20 Took a stab at someone in a hotel, we hear (7)
21 Sign for shed (4-2)
23 Send risqué messages with a navigator’s device (7)
24 Take a walk with small creature under a bridge (6)
26 Pointy hat made by Cambridge student? (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3429

ACROSS: ESP + ADRIEL + E 6 & 2 def.
9 anag. 10 “spite” GA(ME)R (reg rev.)
12 BALK + ANWAR 13 DEF + ENDER
15 H(I)AT + US 17 C + ENTER
18 B(OTHER)ED I S + IGNORI[N]G + A
22 RED/ADS 24 hidden 25 PHI + LANDER
26 W(OK)J 27 PI(ES)ANTRY

DOWN: 1 E + NRGED (anag.)
2 PS(ALM 3 D + R + STR(ANGE)OVE
4 IN + DEF + TED 5 LO-CAL + E
7 RAIN(WATER) [urant anag]
8 HE/ARDO + 5 10 SPAN + IS + HARM + A D A
14 FE + NUG (rev.) + REEK
16 hidden 17 CA SHICOV 19 [e]DES +
20 hidden 23 alternate letters

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