often colliding in funny ways with her modern characters. "The great thing about getting a doctorate was that no one expects you to finish it," she says. "Every time I would get stuck on my dissertation I would procrastinate by writing my novel, and vice versa, so I never felt like I was doing any work."

Growing up, she sensed what she describes as a thinness to American Jewish literature. "In the 1980s and '90s, when you told someone you were interested in Jewish literature, they'd hand you a book by Philip Roth. This whole generation of Jewish writers from the last century were really writing more about the first-generation American experience, the experience of Judaism as a social identity. And I was like, 'This is so not what I'm looking for.'" Those authors dwelled on questions about assimilation and authenticity; Horn was uninterested in that conversation (which she calls "annoying"). Since her college and doctoral work, she has come to link this thinness to the disappearance of Hebrew and Yiddish context from contemporary American Jewish writing. "When you're reading modern Hebrew, there are references to ancient Hebrew embedded in the work—you can't avoid it. So many figures of speech are linked to ancient sources and the commentaries on them."

Horn didn't start writing fiction until the year after college, while on a miserably lonely postgraduate fellowship at the University of Cambridge ("England just wasn't my scene," she says, laughing). She had always been terrified of the genre, until the realization that "books don't come out of nothing"—that they're in conversation with other books—gave her the confidence to make up stories of her own, to fill the gaps in modern Jewish literature. "When I first started writing my novels, part of my motivation—in the way that you're massively ambitious when you're younger and then realize, 'Oh, that was dumb'—was to 'fix' this problem," she says. "I thought, wouldn't it be cool if we could have this in English? Contemporary stories that bring alive these ancient texts?" And so Horn's 2006 novel _The World to Come_, written while she was avoiding her doctoral work, weaves the life and stories of the Soviet Yiddish writer Der Nister into the present day. Unlike a Jonathan Safran Foer or a Michael Chabon, she fills the void of "Jewish identity" with a deep knowledge of Jewish sources.

Horn's interest in engaging imaginatively with Jewish texts extends to her personal religious practice. "We have a Passover Seder that's extremely epic, where we put up a pyramid in the living room, I wear a pharaoh costume and my husband wears a Moses costume, we have 'plague drops' where stuff falls out of the ceiling, we have a 'hail cannon' that fires Ping-Pong balls into the room, and we have a drone strike for the last plague," she enthuses. "What's important to us, she emphasizes, "is less about the ritual aspects, or that you have to believe x, y, and z. What's important to my family is being invested and creatively engaged with this tradition, which is of a piece with what I'm doing in my books."

She aims to make the Jewish tradition welcoming not just to a Jewish audience, but to a broader readership. "Is everyone going to understand every reference in there? No, but that's not a problem. When I'm reading Salman Rushdie, I'm not sitting here waiting for an explanation of why some character is covering her hair. I don't want to read a book with footnotes—I want to be welcomed into a world."

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America's Little Giant

_Revisiting the father of the Constitution in an era deeply divided by factionalism_

_by Lincoln Caplan_

_Dolley Payne Todd called her soon-to-be husband, just before she met him, "the great, little Madison." She was about to turn 26, a widow who had lost her first husband and their baby son to yellow fever and had been left with their toddler son and a small amount of money. James Madison Jr. was 43, a congressman from Virginia temporarily frustrated by politics, and a gentleman by birth who would soon inherit more than 100 slaves and 4,000 acres. They met in 1794 in Philadelphia, America's temporary capital while Washington, D.C., was being built.

In his estimation, she was "5 feet, 7 inches and three quarters, well proportioned, her features pleasing though not remarkable in form except her mouth which was beautiful in shape and expression." He was three or four inches shorter, physically frail and prone to severe migraines, and deeply introverted. He asked her to marry him because, quite unexpectedly after failing in one previous attempt at courtship and becoming a bookish bachelor, he fell in love with her. She accepted his proposal because he was "the man who of all others I most admire." The marriage, she wrote, would provide "everything that is soothing."

Dolley Madison was the presidentress (as she was called after her husband was elected president in 1808) who made the role of first lady an influential and gracious position as one of the new capital's most ebullient and popular hostesses. She founded a home for orphaned young girls while she and Madison lived in the White House, and as his widow and a beloved public figure, she was made an honorary member of Congress, among other tributes, and chosen to send the first personal telegraph message.

In James Madison's public career, spanning four exceptionally productive decades, this private passion of his—what he called "the sentiments of my heart"—is the most visible evidence of the force that fueled him. As Noah Feldman, Frankfurter professor of law, writes in his excellent, authoritative, and lucid reassessment of Madison, "Dol-
ley frequently expressed opinions and emotions that Madison hid from view.” He was known as a dispassionate man of reason, systematic and mild-mannered, who preferred the company of ideas and lacked the need for attention many politicians have. Yet his profound sense of purpose made him a statesman of enormous impact. He imagined the United States as a unified nation rather than a confederation of republics with diverging interests in agriculture and trade, and helped shape that country.

Madison is rightly known as the father of the United States Constitution. (Jack Rakove, Ph.D. ’75, the Stanford historian and political scientist whom Feldman acknowledges as “the master of Madison scholars,” called him “the Greatest Lawgiver of Modernity.”) From 1776, when he was only 25, until 1791, he was: the primary dreamer, designer, and drafter of the nation’s fundamental law; one of the chief publicists in getting it ratified; and its principal modifier as the proposer and drafter of the Bill of Rights. He embraced the First through Tenth Amendments to protect individuals from government infringement and stave off a second constitutional convention, which he feared would rip the northern and southern states apart. (Rakove wrote that Madison had the “capacity to think like a historian and predict like a social scientist.”) He is less well known and secondarily recognized for his accomplishments between the ages of 50 and 67, when he served as Thomas Jefferson’s and his Democratic-Republican Party, they led it to national power. Finally, he established America’s place in the world, as secretary of state and, during the War of 1812, as president. Feldman presents these chapters as a story of Madison’s intellectual, psychological, and political growth, starting with his college years at Princeton. (It was “the only institution on the continent where a diligent student could acquire the foundations of a truly excellent education,” Feldman advises, since Harvard and Yale were then “parochial in their teaching.”) This growth was reflected in a series of surprising and major about-faces in his thinking about the needs of the new nation.

Madison's first solution was “enlargement.” He favored a nation large enough that the interests and factions within it would be less likely to overlap and, if they did, it would not be easy for them to come together and form a dangerous majority. His second solution was checks and balances. He foresaw factions, whether political, economic, religious, or otherwise, checking each other. He envisioned branches of government expressly designed to balance as well as check each other, so the government did not set up “an interest adverse to that of the whole society.” In Federalist No. 51, Madison wrote: “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition,” with the Constitution giving “those who administer each department, the necessary constitutional means, and personal motives, to resist encroachments of others.” Part of his design was to attract outstanding and ambitious people into government. As Feldman writes, his goal was “to eliminate
Other founders regarded Madison’s idealistic goal, “to eliminate the need for political parties,” as naïve.

It was an idealistic vision, which some other founders regarded as naive. Hamilton wrote that “Patricians were frequently demagogues” who could stir factions into a national majority, because an “influential demagogue will give an impulse to the whole.” Hamilton was neither patrician nor demagogue, but as the secretary of the treasury in Washington’s new Federalist government, he found meaning in the Constitution that Madison hadn’t intended it to hold. For Hamilton, a strong national economy was as essential to the new country as an effective national government. He convinced Congress to charter a national bank and to support a permanent national debt, which Madison viewed (Feldman’s words) “as a blatantly unconstitutional attempt to shift power from the people to the capitalists.” Hamilton prevailed, becoming the most influential person in the nation’s founding who never served as president, and “their presidential demagogue will give an impulse to the national majority, because an ‘influential person in the nation’s founding who never served as president’ will lead the country.”

When Jefferson became president in 1801 and made Madison his secretary of state, Madison (Feldman again) “undertook a sixteen-year odyssey to establish America’s place in a world shaped by the long war between Great Britain and France.” Initially, his goal was to use power in the form of economic sanctions to secure shipping to Europe—“and to do so without an army or navy that could potentially subvert the republic from within.” But sanctions did not work well enough and as president, “Madison gambled on decisive action. Overcoming his republican aversion to military action,” Feldman writes, “he asked Congress to declare the War of 1812” and “when the British turned the tables and tried to invade the United States, the constitutional republic was strong enough to defend itself.”

But barely. The British easily overran the nation’s capital, burning the White House to ruins. They then set their sights on Baltimore, the country’s third largest city and the last stronghold preventing them from marching up and down the coast. The battle for Baltimore lasted three nights and days. Francis Scott Key, a lawyer and poet from Maryland, witnessed the bombardment of the city’s Ft. McHenry. In “the dawn’s early light,” when he noticed a U.S. flag flying over the fort, signaling its survival, he started a poem called “The Defence of Fort M’Henry.” It got printed in handbills and newspapers and was set to the tune of a popular song. A century-plus later, it became the national anthem.

Madison gave his final message to Congress in December 1816—America’s fortieth year as a nation. It was the Constitution’s twenty-fifth year of providing for what he called “a government which watches over the purity of elections, freedom of speech and of the press, and the trial by jury.” The speech was about the Constitution because, in Feldman’s assessment, “Constitutional freedom was the central core of Madison’s legacy.” After designing the Constitution “to preserve liberty,” Feldman writes, Madison had “created the Republican Party to defend constitutional liberty against subversion by the Federalists,” and had maintained it “even during the war he prosecuted.” He “truly believed that the Constitution would produce domestic tranquility and friendship, then spread those same values of peace globally, creating a world of free peoples coexisting peacefully and ruling themselves under their own free constitutions.” But he never extended that freedom to slaves. He maintained until his death (in 1836, when he was 85) his “lifelong contradictory views of the enslaved people on whose labor he depended,” Feldman explains. He thought of them as human beings and wanted to be seen as treating his slaves well. But he considered them property and said it was morally permissible to own and use them.

In his preface, Feldman writes, “Above all, I hope to use Madison’s creativity, commitment, and political flexibility to shed light on the birth, development, and survival of America’s distinctive form of constitutional government.” In a TED talk last summer, he set out how he thinks Madison’s constitutionalism equips the United States to survive its current acute partisanship and extreme polarization. At the heart of this mechanism is free speech under the First Amendment: if you are out of power, which about 60 percent of Americans think they are today, you have the right to say that the government is terrible and discuss how to fix it. Along with free speech comes free association: the First Amendment: if you are out of power, which about 60 percent of Americans think they are today, you have the right to say that the government is terrible and discuss how to fix it. Along with free speech comes free association: the First Amendment: if you are out of power, which about 60 percent of Americans think they are today, you have the right to say that the government is terrible and discuss how to fix it.
Montage

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Constitution, federal judges have the authority to make him. He doesn’t rule as an autocrat because he can only propose laws, not pass them. The president needs Congress to enact his policies, but Congress must look to the center of the political spectrum to decide whether a policy is acceptable. The center holds the power because elections for the whole House of Representatives come every two years. Feldman’s last line, elongated for emphasis, was: “It’s going to be okay.”

Another view, arguably more realistic, is that this moment in American history is gravely testing both the elasticity and strength of Madison’s constitutionalism. No voting expert believes in the purity of American elections these days. Digital elections are vulnerable to hacking from near and far. Even when they are not hacked, elections seem unfairly rigged as a result of the heavy sway of big money. Voter fraud is negligible in the United States, but, in the past two decades, Republicans have made it much harder to vote in much of the country: 33 states enforce voter ID laws, 18 of them requiring photo IDs, which are designed to reduce the number of minority voters and clearly do. And the obsolete Electoral College has twice in the
past 20 years awarded the presidency to the loser of the popular vote. No expert on freedom of speech or of the press believes they are serving American democracy as well as they must, thanks to attacks from the president and, more menacingly, assaults from bots and Web brigades. The latter engage in reverse censorship by drowning out real speech with floods of propaganda and sabotaging real journalism with fake news. No expert in law or political science believes the separation of powers is working as it was meant to. Congress rarely checks the president or serves the needs of the American people.

Feldman’s TED talk began with a neat summary of the Madison-Hamilton feud as the birth of partisanship in American politics and moved quickly to how the Constitution provided a mechanism for resolving that divide and many subsequent ones in American history. His book explains comprehensively how he thinks that happened. Using the constitutionality of the national bank as an exemplary case, and almost as an aside, Feldman observes that “Madison’s legacy included recognition that the Constitution could evolve—and that its framers’ original intention did not always control its meaning.” (Mary Sarah Bilder, J.D. ’90, Ph.D. ’00, winner of the Bancroft Prize for Madison’s Hand: Revising the Constitutional Convention, wrote about the Constitution, “In 1787, the framers were struggling to save the United States from division, potential invasion, and collapse. No one had the luxury of even imagining that each and every word possessed an invariable, sacred meaning.”) Madison had been certain the document he shaped didn’t give Congress

**Off the Shelf**

Recent books with Harvard connections

**Safe Spaces, Brave Spaces: Diversity and Free Expression in Education**, by John Palfrey ’94, J.D. ’01 (MIT, $19.95). The author, previously Harvard Law’s vice dean for library and information resources, now head of Phillips Academy, Andover, plunges into the fierce debate over “snowflakes” and calls to restrict speech. To reconcile liberty and equality, free expression and diversity, he makes the case for safe spaces (say, for LGBTQ students) and brave spaces (“learning environments that approximate the world outside” academia—where robust, unconstrained debate in pursuit of truth proceeds) and says the latter should envelop “the vast majority” of students’ time during their education.


Alongside other contemporary interpretations of the Ur Founder’s applied intelligence (see the review at page 56), Stanford’s Jack N. Rakove, Ph.D. ’75, revisits A Politician Thinking: The Creative Mind of James Madison (University of Oklahoma, $29.95). He considers Madison less as persuader than as analyst, thinking his way into issues before, rather than when, making a case to others.

**Ever the Leader: Selected Writings 1995-2016**, William G. Bowen [LL.D. ’73], edited by Kevin M. Guthrie (Princeton, $29.95). Bowen, a past president of Princeton and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, was an authoritative voice for higher education’s values, a powerful advocate for diversity in admissions, a sharp critic of athletic excesses, and an astute analyst of educational technology. From an inaugural speech for a new Williams president: “One of the most insidious aspects of being part of a wealthy, prestigious institution is that the association can lead to a most unfortunate blend of pomposity, smugness, and complacency. The assumption of superiority is what gives elitism a bad name.” In face of pressure to be practical, he continued, “colleges and universities have always had an otherworldly side.” A useful gift, perhaps, for Harvard’s future president.

**Digital World War**, by Haroon K. Ullah, M.P.A. ’02 (Yale, $25). Social media, useful in helping oppressed populations gain voice against oppressive regimes, have been weaponized by Islamic extremists. The introduction—which describes a virtual, online beheading and its subsequent realization via an actual execution by machine gun—is a vivid point of entry to a disturbing threat.

**Crusade and Jihad**, by William R. Polk ’51, Ph.D. ’58 (Yale, $37.50). An ambitious one-volume overview of what the subtitle calls “The Thousand-Year War between the Muslim World and the Global North.” Given Americans’ cartoon understanding of these forces, it is bracing, and maybe helpful, to be guided through such themes as “the Muslim recognition that, as practiced and conceived, Islam did not suffice to stop the European powers from invading and occupying their lands”—giving rise to a nationalistic response.

**Life without End**, by Karl S. Guthke, Francie professor of Germanic art and culture emeritus (Camden House, $99). As biologists and computer scientists raise the possibility of extended life or deferred aging, what has literature to say about immortality?
power to charter a bank, but after 20 years, when each branch of the government had recognized the bank’s validity, he accepted it as constitutional.

Yet behind Feldman’s observation is the knowledge and acknowledgment that Madison arrived at that moment of assent only after decades of brutally partisan disagreement. During them, in Feldman’s words, he set out “to destroy his enemies using the tools of faction.” Madison constitutionalized this disagreement by charging that his enemies were “violating the core principles of the republic” and vice-versa. From the vantage point of 200 years after Madison’s triumphant retirement as president, the constitutional system he had a giant role in shaping absorbed the hyperbole of his era and managed its fallout. Everything appears to have turned out okay.

In the presidential election of 1800, however, electors from the 16 states gave 73 votes each to Thomas Jefferson, the Democratic-Republican candidate, and to Aaron Burr, the party’s candidate for vice-president. Federalists in the House of Representatives refused to let Jefferson become president. Passion plainly crushed reason. The constitutional system was in a grim crisis. It was serendipity, not principle, that led to Jefferson’s election on the thirty-sixth ballot, and then to 24 years of Republican rule, and ultimately to the Era of Good Feelings. “Madison’s constitutional machine was working,” Feldman declares about Jefferson’s election. But barely.

When we sing the national anthem these

Lots, and much of it not good, Guthke explains, in a survey sweeping in Swift, Barrie, Babbitt, Amis, Rushdie, and many more. Hopefuls may be brought back to earth by a section titled “Immortality and Its Discontents”—a problem addressed anew in a contemporary novel (see page 55).

In City on the Verge (Basic, $30), journalist Mark Pendergrast ’70 returns to his natal city, Atlanta, to see whether a 22-mile circumferential streetcar corridor, the BeltLine, can knit together a sprawling, divided community that is the de facto capital of the Southeast. From the policy-analyst’s perspective, Stephen Goldsmith, Paul professor of the practice of government, and Neil Kleiman, of NYU, advance A New City O/S (Brookings, $31.99 paper), proposing ways mayors (Goldsmith’s former occupation, in Indianapolis) can harness technology, data, and social engagement to, you know, make local government work.

The Year I Was Peter the Great, by Marvin Kalb, A.M. ’53 (Brookings, $24.99). A memoir of 1956: the USSR’s temporary post-Stalin thaw, the crushing of the revolt in Hungary, and the suggestion that Russia might have a different future. The journalist was then an attaché in the U.S. embassy in Moscow, fluent in the language, fortified by his Harvard studies, and able to travel the country widely.

And Again: Photographs from the Harvard Forest, by John Hirsch (distributed by Harvard University Press, $50). Useful for armchair visiting during the winter; a photo collection that captures the forest’s simultaneous beauty and utility and importance as a working scientific venue. Essays by David R. Foster and Clarisse M. Hart, the forest’s director and its outreach and development manager, and by writer and photographer Margot Anne Kelley complement Hirsch’s images.

Humanity without Dignity: Moral Equality, Respect, and Human Rights, by Andrea Sangiovanni ’95, Ph.D. ’06 (Harvard, $39.95). A philosophical inquiry into the basic respect due fellow humans advances the useful, if perhaps uncomfortable, argument that it depends not on intrinsic human qualities but rather on a negative: aversion to cruelty. Pursuing a separate moral inquiry, Bruce Robbins ’71, Ph.D. ’80, now at Columbia, examines, in The Beneficiary (Duke, $23.95 paper), the literary idea of the prosperous helping the poor, and then applies the concept to contemporary problems of global consumption, inequality, and social justice.

Financial Decisions and Markets, by John Y. Campbell, Olshan professor of economics (Princeton, $75). An exhaustive, mathematically dense text based on the author’s graduate course, “Asset Pricing,” that provides academic underpinnings for investing. Campbell knows about practice, too: he is a founding partner of Arrowstreet Capital ($89 billion under management) and a former member of Harvard Management Company’s board. Confronting the material, individual investors will perceive that institutional investing is a different proposition entirely.

Building the Intentional University: Minerva and the Future of Higher Education, edited by Stephen M. Kosslyn and Ben Nelson (MIT, $45). Kosslyn, former professor of psychology and dean of social science at Harvard, is now chief academic officer of Minerva Schools, the interesting experiment in liberal arts profiled in “An Educated Core” (July-August 2017, page 47) and explained in thought-provoking depth here.

Pictures with Stories: A Memoir, by Tony Mendoza, M.Arch. ’68 (Thomson-Shore, $27). In 1973, the author quit his job as an architect “and became an artist.” His newest collection of photographs and quirky text (including some past favorites like Ernie the New York cat) demonstrates the continuing felicitous result.
How Father Columba Stewart ’79, a Benedictine monk from Minnesota, came to be hiding in a Timbuktu hotel during a jihadist attack last summer is a story that begins in the fifth century.

But the short answer is: he had flown to the medieval center of learning (and site of a United Nations peacekeeping mission since 2013), to start a new archival project—digitalizing tens of thousands of documents in the Imam Ben Essayouti Library. The collection holds “everything from commentaries on the Qur’an to letters, scraps of poetry, land deeds, just the whole written culture,” says Stewart, executive director of the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML) at Saint John’s University, about 80 miles northwest of the Twin Cities.

Christian monks have helped safeguard cultural patrimony for more than a millennium. As followers of Benedict of Nursia (c. 480-540), Stewart says, Benedictines ultimately became “leaders in the copying and transmission of texts.” In the last 15 years, he has taken that tradition to some of the world’s most volatile regions—Syria, Iraq, Israel, and parts of the Balkans—as well as India, Ukraine, and Russia, to help conserve documents threatened not only by religious wars and geopolitics, but also by poverty, natural disasters, and climate change. “We’ve already done a lot of the Christian material,” says Stewart, who holds an Oxford doctorate in theology. “If we want to grow, the question becomes, ‘If we think the preservation of general culture is valuable, then the growing edge of that for us is Islamic materials, not to mention East Asian stuff. Heritage is heritage. And the intellectual argument is, ‘Why not get all the material, of all the sides?’”

HMML is currently digitizing more than 250,000 ancient Islamic manuscripts, books, and literary treasures smuggled out of Timbuktu, in central Mali, in 2012 and 2013. That effort, the library’s largest project to date, is centered at a 12-camera studio in Mali’s capital, Bamako. Catalogued materials are accessible through HMML’s “virtual reading room,” developed and launched during Stewart’s tenure, where more than 25,000 complete manuscripts from libraries across Europe, the Middle East, South India, and parts of the Balkans are already online.