



The effects of being separated

BY MATT MUDRICK
Contributor

The outbreak of COVID-19 universally changed multiple aspects of life for everyone. Perhaps no one experienced the consequential effects of this change more than the education system, and the students of whom it consists. No student has been alone in their struggle, and everyone can relate to the frustrations, confusion, challenges, and obstacles that have formed as a result of the pandemic.

Students went from seeing each other in class every day to spending over the next two years receiving their education through the lens of a camera. Naturally, this has resulted in an exponential, increased usage of technology, which extends far beyond the initial replacement of Zoom meetings. Students now use electronic

devices to complete most assignments, conduct most of their research, and communicate with most people in their daily lives.

Generation Z grew up hearing the concept that computers were meant to help further progress the evolution of humanity. After experiencing such a rapid evolution in the classroom, there are Gen Zers who beg to differ. "We're focused on smart boards, we're focused on laptops, we're focused on iPads. I just feel like there's no social aspect," said Abigail Rodriguez, a 23-year-old liberal arts major at County College of Morris. "A lot of time we're not really engaging with social interaction even in the classroom."

That lack of social interaction has naturally resulted in an overwhelmingly increased feeling of loneliness in schools. In addition to the rise in technologically induced separation, health and

safety precautions caused people to remain physically distant from each other. This decreased all students' serotonin levels, which is the reward center in the human brain, and was another experience shared by all students regardless of their academic institution.

As a result of these declining serotonin levels, students have reported experiencing difficulty when it comes to overall motivation and drive. "It definitely impacted my overall routine in a negative way," said Ethan Russo, a 21-year-old psychology major at CCM. "I had so much free time that routine and structure stopped mattering as all the days kind of felt the same and blended together."

Students became conditioned to sleeping in and not establishing a set routine. Although the safety restrictions were gradually lifted, there was never any one official

day that the lockdown ended. The World Health Organization declared that the outbreak was no longer designated as a pandemic on May 5, 2023. This was an indication that a light was at the end of the tunnel.

There were also students who felt that certain components of distance learning were better for them. "It was a lot easier getting out of school if you were sick," said Thomas Yurgel, a 19-year-old graduate of Veritas Christian Academy. "Honestly, school would just start and end at a more efficient time."

Despite all of these obstacles and challenges that Gen Zers have been through, there are still plenty of young people eager to learn. They are continuing to grow through a lens of understanding that humanity has never before seen. There's continued conversation surrounding potential impli-

cations for ways to help improve the overall academic experience for all.

The most effective way of progressing as a group of people has proven to be collaboratively working together to formulate solutions. As students continue to remain detached from one another, an increased number of high school graduates and drop-outs have entered the workforce. The desire to start immediately making money and work has appealed to multiple people, including Thomas Yurgel.

"For me, I just didn't want to wait in school anymore," said Yurgel. "Some people just did not work well in distance learning. This serves perhaps as an important reminder for those in school now to never take for granted the opportunity to come in person and interact as a student body every day."

The Good Bean in Dover is more than just a coffee house

BY WILLIAM EDMONSON
Opinion Editor

Nestled in the heart of downtown Dover, where Clinton Street intersects North Sussex Street, The Good Bean stands as more than just a coffee shop. It has become a cornerstone of community spirit. From the moment I first stepped in I was drawn by its convenient location near the Dover train station and affordable prices, but I sensed something special about this place beyond its affordability, which was a student's blessing compared to the coffee giants like Starbucks and Dunkin'. The Good Bean thrives on a unique sense of togetherness. Jeremy Cornejo, a loyal customer, and Uber driver captures the sentiment perfectly: "This is the only place in town I'll get my coffee. It's consistently good and that matters to me. Plus, it's nice to support a local business instead of a billion-dollar

coffee chain."

The ambiance is a delightful blend of rustic and modern aesthetics, with warm tones, and cozy seating arrangements. It's the ideal spot for both solo coffee contemplation and intimate gatherings. The soft hum of indie and pop music in the background complements the overall atmosphere, creating a serene environment that invites you to slow down and savor the moment. The menu at Good Bean is a testament to the artistry of coffee-making. From the classic espresso to teas and smoothies, each beverage is meticulously crafted by skilled baristas who have a passion for their craft. The menu also caters to various preferences, offering a selection of non-dairy milk alternatives and a range of flavored syrups for those who enjoy a personalized touch to their coffee. The staff at the Good Bean are knowledgeable and approachable, always willing



to share their expertise and recommendations. Their genuine enthusiasm for coffee is infectious and adds a personal touch to the overall experience. Whether you're a seasoned coffee aficionado or a casual drinker, the staff's friendly demeanor creates an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.

The snack selection is equally impressive, featuring a variety of pastries and other baked goods that pair perfectly with your chosen brew. What truly sets The Good Bean apart is not just the quality of its coffee but the intimacy fostered by its modest-sized staff. In this snug space, a sense of familiarity envelops both patrons and employ-

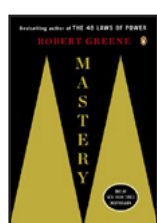
ees, creating a rare bond not found in larger establishments.

But it's not just about coffee; it's about community. Owner Mike Franks, who opened The Good Bean in 2018, has a longstanding commitment to community welfare. For over two decades, he has overseen The Milestone House, a nonprofit addiction recovery center in Dover. The Excel Treatment Center, conveniently located next door, adds another layer to this support network, offering mental health services and treatment for substance abuse. Nikoleta, the Director of Milestone and manager of The Good Bean highlights the palpable synergy between the two organizations and how it extends even to the staff and customers who share a common journey of recovery: "It's been a great place for people to connect with Mentors and sponsors..." said Nikoleta, the Director of Milestone and manager

of the Good Bean. She followed that up by saying "What is great is we hire any of the residents at Milestone at Good Bean to help provide some of the stability many recovering addicts need". Maggie, the senior barista, has a journey that exemplifies the transformative power of this community. Her technical skills as a Barista are second to none and this is made all the more impressive by the fact that she had no experience before she started working here a year ago. "I started off in Milestones partial hospitalization program, I had worked in restaurants and had been a student before I got treatment but I had never worked as a barista before. No one working here had any experience and almost all of us came out of Milestone but they trained us and invested in us. It's given me an opportunity to focus

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Professor's Purview: Cultural anthropologist and author Dr. Jill Schennum

**BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH A. SHOULER**
Moderator for the Youngtown Edition

A new feature for the *Youngtown Edition* is "Professor's Purview," where professors share their thoughts about teaching, writing, retirement, and whatever strikes their fancy. In this instance, the occasion for my interviewing Dr. Jill Schennum was the publication of her new book, *As Goes Bethlehem: Steelworkers and the Restructuring of an Industrial Working Class* (Vanderbilt University Press, 2023).

Dr. Schennum is the chairperson of the Department of Social Sciences. After earning her B.A. at Carleton College, her M.A. (in Cultural Anthropology) from Boston University, and an M.Ed. at Rutgers, Professor Schennum was hired as a professor of anthropology at CCM in 1998.

Her fastidious research focuses on the impact that the bankruptcy and closing of Bethlehem Steel in Pennsylvania in 2003 had on steelworkers. Professor Schennum explains that she became interested in studying the steelworkers after being a social worker in Bethlehem during the 1980s. "The visual of the steel mills were so intriguing," she recalled. "It was all so huge and so tremendous. They dominated the landscape," she recalls.

She wrote a dissertation in 2011 (the same year she received her Ph.D. at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York). In her dissertation, *Bethlehem Steelworkers: Reshaping the Industrial Working Class*, Schennum followed the experiences of workers who joined Bethlehem Steel between 1964 and 1979. When those workers were hired, the steel industry was riding high. Workers could rely on a robust union, guaranteed pensions, and perhaps a job for life. "It was a world where steelworkers performed hard and dangerous work but a world where they also earned a good living and gained middle-

class status," notes Schennum. By the time the plant closed, however, pensions were reduced, health coverage was lost and the majority of steelworkers either ended up retiring with much less than they expected or were hired by other companies at significantly lower wages.

"What I'm looking at is the process of deindustrialization and what has happened to the industrial working class as we have moved to a post-industrial society," says Schennum. That dissertation was turned into a book. What has happened, she says, is that the decline of unions and the shift to a service economy have resulted in a "reduction in wages, benefits and control over work and the workplace."

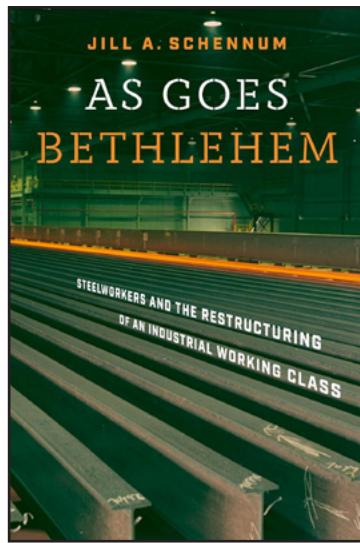
A footnote says the author interviewed more than 120 steelworkers and family members between 2010 and 2020. The ineffable quality and not just the quantity of those interviews is evident straightaway, over 306 pages. It's also clear how such a book would take 15 years to complete, especially when your day job is being a full-time professor. Of necessity, writing and publishing become a quarter-time or half-time occupation.

Professor Schennum introduced herself as a cultural anthropologist before a faculty gathering a month ago. She proceeded to describe all that it took to write a story. The book entailed long-term participant observation, in-depth interviews, attending reunions, picnics, meetings, talks, and political projects with steelworkers and their families. In short, the writing of a cultural anthropologist is immersive.

The result is impressive beyond belief. *As Goes Bethlehem* is



**PROFESSOR
KENNETH
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As Goes Bethlehem: Steelworkers and the Restructuring of an Industrial Working Class, by Jill A. Schennum (Vanderbilt Univ Press, 2023)

a triumph, a thorough, leave-nothing-out *tour de force*, a piece of investigative writing that ranges from the workers' unions, the effects of gender and ethnicity, and the sexual harassment in the mills. The book is tireless in its execution. The writing is as clear as gin.

Consider these sentences describing a steelworker:

On a warm day in late autumn of 2012, I finally met Jack Franken (a pseudonym to protect his identity), a steelworker I had spoken to many times by phone. Sitting in a cluttered ranch-house kitchen, I was aware I was in a bachelor's home—the kitchen was plied with dirty dishes, the spare rooms filled with junk, and the yard slightly unkempt and overgrown. Jack, a thickly bearded, messy-haired bear of a man, had recently returned to his family home in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, after a career as a steelworker, for twenty-three years at Bethlehem Steel's flagship mill, then for 145 years as a transferred worker at the sprawling mill in Sparrow's Point in Baltimore, commonly called the Point. Jack had just been laid off from his steel job in Baltimore when the point closed. The afternoon I sat with him, he was living with his brother. Jack's story is hard to hear, although he tells it without regret, shunning sympathy. After all, according to him, there are many workers in worse situations than his.

Professor Kenneth Shouler: Did you know when you started writing that Vanderbilt University Press would publish your book, or did you find them in the process of writing?

Professor Jill Schennum: When I wrote a dissertation in 2011, I started doing revisions as well as continuing to do participant observation in Bethlehem. I put a book proposal out to Vanderbilt a few years after that when I felt the book was in better shape.

KS: This reads like a labor of love. Care to comment?

JS: This is absolutely a labor of love. Faculty do not need to publish academically at CCM to qualify for tenure, nor is academic publishing financially lucrative. Doing this research and writing the book was important to me as it offered insights into how broader societal transformations play themselves out in the everyday lives of actual people. I also felt it was important for steelworkers and their families in Bethlehem, and for the broader community of the Lehigh Valley to give new insights into their community's recent history.

KS: Your cultural anthropology approach to your subject and subjects seems ideal for capturing them not just as workers but as people. Thoughts?

JS: Anthropologists always want to understand people, in all their complexity and humanity. Anthropologists hope to understand the meanings and experiences of regular people, and how they build lives that they can define as "good" oftentimes in the face of diversity.

KS: Can you explain the overlap between the methodology of a cultural anthropologist and that of an oral historian?

JS: Oral historians collect oral histories (in-depth oral interviews with people who have lived and experienced that history). Anthropologists do participant observation — they observe, participate with, and interview (as well as doing archival research, statistical research, etc., etc.). This complex methodology is built on trust — establishing trust between the anthropologist and the people he or she studies — and on collaboration in building an understanding of a community, social processes, and experiences.

KS: Is this oral history?

JS: This book incorporates interviews that explore the trajectory of people's lives, but the book is also based on participant observation.

KS: Your book may put some

readers in mind of Studs Terkel's *Working People*, since it gives great significance to working people's lives. Thoughts?

JS: While it has some similarities to *Working People*, as Terkel also wanted to understand how his interviewees attained meaning through their work, this book contains more anthropological analysis.

KS: Do you use a tape recorder?

JS: I do use a tape recorder, but only if the individual agrees to that in their informed consent.

KS: On the Vanderbilt University site it says that these workers are "alienated" from their work. Does this fit any of the four types of Karl Marx's concept of alienation? He says we can be alienated from the product of our labor, the process of our labor, from others and ourselves.

JS: While some steelworkers are alienated from their work, many of the steelworkers I spoke with found great meaning in steelwork. One of my arguments in the book is that a steel mill is not like an automobile assembly line. There is a great diversity of work (skilled and unskilled) within a steel mill, workers are often together in teams that have great camaraderie, and in many jobs, there is a lot of variation to the work.

KS: You said it took you 15 years?

JS: Yes. A lot of that was finding a publisher, revisions, etc, but much was also ongoing research.

KS: Were the interviews the most time-consuming part of writing this book?

JS: The whole process was time-consuming. Interviews, participant observation, reading all the literature relevant to this study, writing, revising, writing grant applications, etc., etc.

KS: What are the benefits of publishing with a university press?

JS: I think the book reaches an academic audience.

KS: After working for 15 years on the book, you must have a very strong feeling for it now that it's out?

JS: I am very proud of it, and am thrilled to hear steelworkers telling me that it captures a great deal of their experiences.

THE YOUNGTOWN EDITION

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All students are welcome to contribute articles to The Youngtown Edition either in person or via e-mail. However, students cannot receive a byline if they belong to the organization on which they are reporting. The deadline for articles is the Monday prior to a production.

COFFEE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

on myself". The Good Bean isn't just a coffee shop; it's a testament to the strength of community support. It's a place where the aroma of coffee mingles with the fragrance of mutual aid, creating an environment where everyone, from the staff to the customers, is part of the shared journey toward recovery and personal growth.

Despite any reservations some may have about the proximity to those in recovery, The Good Bean stands as a beacon of inclusivity, challenging societal norms around addiction. As one student at CCM who wished to remain anonymous puts it, "It doesn't bother me at all. The openness around our shared struggles with mental health and addiction destigmatizes it, and it's something I wish more places were willing to do." Milestone's events and resources further contribute to the well-being of Morris County

residents, solidifying The Good Bean as a hub of support, connection, and safety for the community. The combination of exceptional coffee, inviting ambiance, knowledgeable staff, and a genuine connection with the people of Dover make it a standout establishment in the North Jersey coffee scene. Whether you're looking for a quiet place to work, catch up with friends, or simply enjoy a moment of solitude with a cup of expertly brewed coffee, the Good Bean is a must-visit.

Matt Rife: Cancelled?

BY LEAH FACELLA
Editor-in-Chief

Matt Rife, an American stand-up comedian and actor, has been cultivating his rise to fame. He first became interested in comedy at the age of fourteen. After performing in a school talent show, he knew he wanted to start a professional career with it, so he started performing professionally at age fifteen.

Born on September 10, 1995, in Columbus, Ohio, Rife did not have an easy childhood and he had not opened up about it until an interview with Bert Kreischer in April 2022 on *Bertcast*. When Matt was seventeen months old, his father Michael Eric Gutzke committed suicide. According to Matt, his father “was 20, I think. It’s weird to think about. Because I’m 26 now, and when you think about your dad, no matter what state, you think about a grown man. But I’m older than my dad ever was.” Kreischer questioned Rife about what caused his father to commit suicide. Matt does not have a clear answer but has heard stories from others. “My mother April said it was just probably depression, and he was living with his dad at the time who was a massive alcoholic. I guess the story is, my dad came home drunk to his dad’s hotel and was talking about killing himself, and apparently, his dad was egging him on, like, ‘You won’t do it,’ is the story, I suppose. I don’t know.”

Though this is the story he heard, there are other aspects that could have influenced his choices. Matt admitted to not looking like anyone in his family, but his mom said he looked like a man she dated in high school. Michael was convinced Matt was not his child, as he and April were not to-

gether at the time of Matt’s birth. He went as far as to have April take a paternity test, but Matt was never given a definitive answer about who his father was. If it is true that Matt was not his son, could that be the reason for his killing himself?

Being one boy out of five kids, Matt was outnumbered by females. He has three older stepsisters and one younger half-sister, however, he gave little information about them, perhaps wanting to keep their lives private. Not having a typical father figure in his life, Matt looked up to his grandfather, Steven Rife, and his stepfather, who became a figure in Matt’s life when he was five. Steven was the only male role model Matt had. Unfortunately, Steven died in November 2022, devastating Matt. On Instagram, Matt posted, “Growing up without a dad, he was my father figure. He taught me every single thing I know and gave his entire life for me... Thank you so much for being my best friend, my teacher, my father, my grandfather, my inspiration, my soul, my everything”

Prior to his comedic success, Rife was found on television shows. In 2015, he was on Disney Channel’s *Gamer’s Guide to Pretty Much Everything*, Season 1, Episode 2, “The Gaming Club” as Doyle. He was found on *Brooklyn Nine-Nine*, Season 6, Episode 3, “The Tattler,” playing Brandon Bliss. On *Fresh Off the Boat*, Rife was on Season 6, Episode 13, “Mommy and Me,” playing Logan. He also plays Alex, a security guard, in the 2021 show, *Burb Patrol*. His most important TV role in getting comedic fame was on *Nick Cannon Presents: Wild ‘N Out*, created, produced, and hosted by Nick Cannon. Rife



was a recurring cast member on this show, which helped to get his name heard.

In 2020, Rife started posting clips of his stand-up, which caught the attention of many. From topics typically about dating, relationships, and sex, Rife found a happy medium to entertain people of all ages. He also would perform crowd work, having the audience give him personal anecdotes for him to make jokes about. The fact that he can come up with jokes without preparing is mind-boggling to me. Crowd work is often high-risk, high-reward because you need to get an immediate response and be able to read the room, to either make the jokes darker or more lighthearted.

Rife has a few self-produced comedy specials. His first special, *Matt Rife: Only Fans*, came out in 2021 on YouTube. The hour and eight-minute special was full of laughs for some, while others despised it. He covered controversial topics, did crowd work, and not only roasted people but also

empowered them after the roasts.

In 2023, he released another YouTube special, *Matthew Steven Rife*, which he dedicated to his deceased grandfather, Steven. The reviews said it was “built by friends and fans, Matt pushes comedic boundaries with stories, improv, and positive messages. If you love laughing more than crying, this is the show for you!” Additionally, he released another YouTube special, *Walking Red Flag*, captioning it with “Y’all wanted crowd work so badly, we did a whole show based on your favorite ‘Red Flag’ themed interactions! Shout out to Miami for being the perfect toxic host of this wild ride :) Now stop coming to shows and yelling out LMAO!”

His most recent special, released on Netflix on November 15, 2023, *Natural Selection*, led to criticisms. Starting off the special with a domestic violence joke had viewers angry from the get-go, believing he is misogynistic. After the joke, he exclaimed he was “testing the waters, see-

ing if y’all are gonna be fun or not... I figure we start the show with domestic violence, the rest of the show should be pretty smooth sailing after that.” To make amends with any people he may have offended, he posted on his Instagram story his “official apology.” After clicking on the link he posted, you would be redirected to a website. This website was selling helmets to people with special needs. This was not the first time Rife had criticisms about his content. When asked if he was worried about losing fans over his content, he did not seem too concerned. “You don’t know what other people are into and that’s why you have to go out there and do your comedy and just lay it all out there, vulnerably, to find your audience.” Rife is well aware of the pros and cons he may be facing after telling his jokes, but he chooses to take the risk. “The way I look at it is, as a comedian everything comes down to intent,” he stated. “I know for me, everything that leaves my mouth on stage is purely with the intention of making people laugh, he added. “It’s never any deeper, never any more or never any less than that.”

Though there has been a lot of criticism towards Rife, he is continuing with his *Matt Rife: ProbleMATTic World Tour*, where he has announced over 100 performances. Though some may believe Rife has taken his jokes too far, it is important to remember that in the end, they are jokes. Some of his choices have been questionable, but his job is to criticize people and make jokes. From his wide range of jokes, many deprecating himself, or crowd work, he still has fans who love him, and those who hate him.

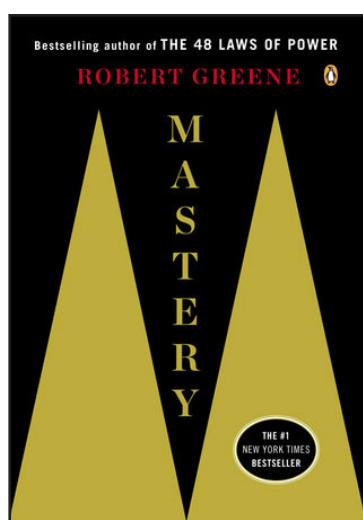
That’s show biz.

REVIEW: Reach ‘Mastery’ with bestselling author Robert Greene

BY TANISH PARLAPALL
Entertainment Editor

Mastery, by Robert Greene, author of various international bestsellers, discusses how you can develop your passion in an increasingly competitive world. He lays out three distinct phases—Apprenticeship, Creative-Action, and Mastery—that everyone must experience to comprehensively understand a particular field.

The apprenticeship phase suggests that you receive guidance from a master you look up to. Books and YouTube videos won’t necessarily provide you with the same knowledge that an expert can, and Greene makes this clear throughout the book. The creative-action phase comes after you’ve learned enough to apply your skills creatively. This period is for you to experiment and determine your strong suits or specialization. Finally, you reach the master phase once you’ve gained an intuitive connection to your skill. Creative applications of your interest come naturally to you, and, in



Mastery, by Robert Greene

the words of Greene, “you are bringing your mind closer to reality and to life itself.” However, entering this phase does not mark the end of your journey. Greene suggests that we keep learning, tailoring our skills according to the interests of the times, and finding novel ways in which we can continue to improve. This means resisting stagnation and the temptation to quit learning, instead adopting a curious and ambitious attitude.

The Good

Mastery is meticulous. Nearly everything one would desire from a how-to guide for getting good at something exists in this book, and it even briefly covers aspects of business and people management to help monetize your skill. Greene provides guidance for finding your area of interest by detailing how personal values and inclinations can align with certain activities. Temple Grandin, for example, found that her innate emotional connection with animals could be employed to drive advancements in better livestock living conditions. Greene’s use of historical and contemporary figures such as Albert Einstein, Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Thomas Edison, and Cesar Rodriguez works in the book’s favor, as it allows readers to understand a master’s progression throughout his/her career. The book also explains how we can develop our skills in a holistic manner, allowing us to adapt to constraints easily and find innovative, outside-the-box methods of approaching an issue.

The Not So Good

While *Mastery* will be engaging if you haven’t delved into personal development books, its themes can seem redundant if you’re familiar with the genre. Commonplace suggestions such as “find your passion and get good at it” are at the core of this book, and if you’ve already internalized this belief, then Greene’s ideas may seem self-evident. Moreover, unlike Greene’s previous books, *Mastery* relies heavily on historical figures and current ‘masters.’ Although this choice mostly benefits the book, it can feel, at times, like events are manipulated to fit the book’s objectives. On occasion, there wasn’t a clear line between a master’s actions and Greene’s attempt to insert them in one of his three phases. This becomes especially apparent when Greene details Einstein’s progression toward the Theory of Relativity and Mozart’s uncanny ability to understand the inner workings of music.

Moreover, though Greene makes an effort to provide readers with actionable suggestions,

the book would have been stronger if it laid out a more pragmatic approach to *Mastery*. In general, I would recommend watching Greene’s online videos if you’re more interested in real-world recommendations rather than theoretical concepts.

Finally, the last phase, *Mastery*, takes up a significant chunk of this book but is easily the most esoteric and difficult to apply. While the apprenticeship and creative-action phases flowed smoothly into each other, *mastery* feels unorganized. It has entire segments that I feel could be omitted to reduce the read time and increase conciseness.

The Verdict

Overall, *Mastery* is great if you’re unfamiliar with Robert Greene’s core philosophy. But if you are, the book might feel like a comprehensive retelling of his ideas, especially toward the final segment. However, for anyone interested in sharpening a particular skill and understanding ways in which it can be monetized, this book is for you.

Will we have a democracy if Trump is re-elected?

An NYU professor's dire warning for our time

BY PROFESSOR
KENNETH A. SHOULER
Moderator for the Youngtown Edition

It is said that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Author Ruth Ben-Ghiat, who is tireless in her writings, not to mention appearing to discuss her book, can never be accused of such idleness. She knows that if Trump gets re-elected in 2024, we will likely be living under an autocratic government impossible to recognize by 2026.

There is no fog in this author's eyes. A professor of history and Italian Studies at New York University and a frequent interview subject on MSNBC, Ruth Ben-Ghiat weaves a thread, effortlessly, from Benito Mussolini (Prime Minister of Italy from 1922 to 1925) to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who had to be endured during over three turns: 1994, 2001-2006, and 2008-2011. Her book captures the authoritarian practices of 16 such dictators, finishing with former president and autocratic wannabe Donald Trump.

In a November MSNBC interview, Professor Ben-Ghiat offered her most dire warnings about Trump's plans for 2024. Her appearance followed Trump's Veteran's Day diatribe in which he vented a singular *non sequitur*: he claimed he was honoring veterans by promising to rid the country of his political opponents, who he compared to "vermin" who must be eliminated. Ironically, many of those veterans were fighting to preserve democracy, not to eliminate it. Such a reality check would surely have been lost on Trump and his often clueless and always obnoxious audience.

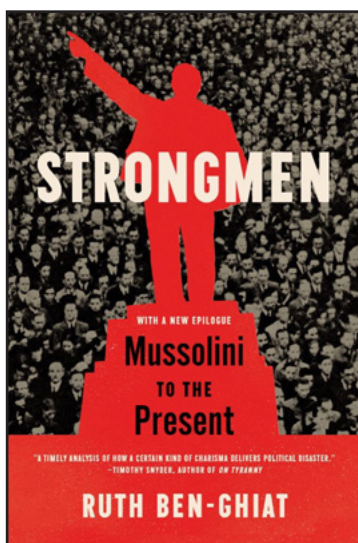
The language he employed was strikingly similar to that used by fascists such as Mussolini and Hitler. The *New York Times* wrote that the former president's increasingly intensive focus on perceived internal enemies was a hallmark of dangerous totalitarian leaders.

Trump claimed that the nation's top military general, General Milley, should be executed and he called for the "termination" of parts of the constitution. If he won back the White House, he claimed he would have "no choice" but to imprison political opponents.

Asked whether Trump's plans for a second term are unprecedented, Professor Ben-Ghiat said yes. "Trump is an autocrat, not a democrat," she began. "What he's doing here is straight out of the history of authoritarianism. It's not just the content of what he wants to do—the mass deportations, the mass detentions, and also he wants to expand psychiatric institutions, that is what authoritarians have always done. He mentioned Jack Smith, so locking up and declaring insane an investigator. That is what authoritarians do. The communists in the USSR routinely put dissidents in psychiatric institutions."

"It's not just all that. It's the method. Autocrats need a compliant bureaucracy to implement their repression quickly, and so they need lawless and corrupt people who are not going to have pangs of conscience. That's what happened the first time. He's learned from that. There were too many civil servants who actually had some ethics. So this time he's not making that mistake."

"It's like seeing the corruption chapter of my book come to life. You must have lawless and corrupt people in government in order to have an autocracy." The professor was then asked if United States institutions were resilient enough to withstand an assault on our democracy. "By 2026 we would be on the road to looking like [Prime Minister Viktor] Orban's Hungary, in ways that Americans are not prepared for," she said. Michael Steele, a political commentator, and former Republican National Committee chairman, joined the conversation and said, "People need to listen to Ruth. They need



Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present, by Ruth Ben-Ghiat

to read her book and listen to her and what those in this space are trying to warn us about. Because it is real. They learned a lot from January 6th. Ruth isn't here just because she has nothing to do on a Saturday night. Listen to what the smart people are telling you."

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At the beginning of her book, Ben-Ghiat avows, "*Strongmen* reflects a lifetime of thinking about authoritarian rulers and their destructive impact on individuals and societies." By the time she was a teenager, she was aware of composer Arnold Schoenberg, writer Thomas Mann and other exiles from Nazism settling in or around her town of Pacific Palisades, California. "Even in the 1970s and 1980s, their traces were everywhere," she writes, "inspiring me to learn about their histories." A seminar on German exiles that she took during her undergraduate studies deepened her interest.

A Fulbright Scholar Program offered a fellowship that landed her in Rome in 1994, at the moment that Berlusconi's center-right coalition brought neo-fascists into the government for the first time since 1945. Her foray into Fascism grew more surreal as she heard Italians now openly venting their feelings that they had previously kept quiet. "More than once, I heard shouts of 'Heil Hitler' and 'Viva Il Duce' coming from the German beer hall across from my apartment," she wrote. This longing for fascism was not a trend limited to Italy. When Trump began his campaign for the presidency two decades later she had a similar feeling. She writes, "Watching Trump retweet Nazi propaganda, and call for the imprisonment of Democratic presidential candidate Hilary Clinton, and lead his followers in loyalty oaths at rallies seemed all too familiar—and filled me with dread."

Drawing on her experiences in Italy—where the regime had con-

vinced Italians to see violence as a prerequisite for racial and political cleansing and imperial domination—she used her wisdom to publish articles warning the public about the "dangers that Trump posed to American democracy." By the time he was inaugurated in January 2017, Ben-Ghiat had predicted the "authoritarian playbook" Trump would use to consolidate power.

In another interview, MSNBC journalist Joy Reid asked Professor Ben-Ghiat. "What is it about American society in the last few years that is nurturing this tendency toward radical extremism?" Ben-Ghiat spoke of the election denialists in Arizona. "It's very telling that Mark Finchem, a self-proclaimed proud Oathkeeper, was the candidate for the Secretary of State [In Arizona]," she said. "That should give us all pause. He's thinking of running for office again. We've seen the trajectory [in Arizona] from John McCain to Kerry Lake and Mark Finchem. It is the history of the change of the Republican party that's become fused with anti-government extremism and all kinds of extremists. There was a 2022 study that said that one in five GOP leaders at the state and local level either have sympathies or affiliations with some kind of far-right or extremist movement. Arizona is a center of that. You have this radical individualism that flourishes there. We have to take very seriously this fusion between the Proud Boys and all the other extremist groups that is going on. This is part of the GOP's trajectory to become an autocratic party."

Reid pointed out that after Donald Trump said that General Mark Milley needed to be executed, right-wing Arizona Congressman Paul Gosar said, "In a better society, quislings like the strange sodomy-promoting General Milley would be hung. So they are talking about lynching the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff."

Ben-Ghiat was unsurprised. "The GOP is dependent upon violence and corruption for its identity," she replied to Reid. "In fact, the value of the coup attempt—meaning you use violence to move history forward, you lie about things that becomes institutionalized lying, that's the dogma of the Republican party now. And you know, election denial, which is Kerry Lake's thing and so many others, isn't just propaganda. It's actually a piece of corruption. And the end game of election denial is to get Americans to think that elections are so corrupt that they are not a good way to decide how we elect leaders. Tommy Tuberville came out and said, 'We don't really need

elections anymore.' I watch very carefully what these people say and I take it seriously.

Reid made the point that Jacob Chansley (the Q-anon Shaman), most notable for an absurd-looking wardress and a spear on January 6, started his climb to notoriety and self-display among those who were menacing poll workers in Arizona. "People forget that there was a growing intimidation of election workers before January 6," Reid said. "How concerned are you that the next election will be surrounded by a veil of violence and threats of violence from Republicans demanding that they be placed in office, whether they win or not?" Reid asked.

"I am very worried about it," Gen-Ghiat replied. "I was listening to President Biden and the role that silence can have in allowing authoritarianism to take hold. He said violence doesn't die through violence or guns, but when people feel too intimidated or afraid to speak out. And we see that: it's very sad when some of the most powerful people in our country, lawmakers with great resources and great security, are too afraid, or too conformist or too cowardly to speak out. When people stop speaking out, that allows authoritarianism to take hold. The goal of autocrats is to get you to self-censor. You are doing their job for them."

In a chapter entitled "Violence" in the revised 2021 edition of her book, Professor Ben-Ghiat describes Donald Trump at a February 2016 campaign rally in Las Vegas shouting about a heckler, "I'd like to punch him in the face. In the old days, protestors would be carried out on stretchers," Trump continued. "But we're not allowed to push back anymore." Ben-Ghiat's conclusion is ominous:

"In the tradition of the fascists, Trump uses his rallies to train his followers to see violence in a positive light. His speech in Las Vegas modeled an America where the press is penned up and anyone who criticizes the leader deserves a beating. Hate crimes have increased annually since Trump's arrival on the political scene, starting with a 17 percent jump between 2016 and 2017. A study by political scientists showed a 226 percent increase in hate crimes in countries that hosted a Trump rally in 2016."

"Scaring is caring," is a phrase that Joy Reid uses to justify her beating the drum about this movement toward authoritarian thinking. That drum is sounding a warning about what a second Trump term would look like. By that same measure, Professor Ben-Ghiat is caring too.

HOLIDAY PARTY
12:30- 2 p.m.
Thursday, Dec 7th
SCC Lobby

- PLAY HOLIDAY BINGO AND MOVIE TRIVIA
- JOIN THE UGLY SWEATER CONTEST AND WIN A PRIZE
- GET CREATIVE AND DECORATE A GINGERBREAD HOUSE
- ENJOY HOT COCOA AND COOKIES

COUNTY COLLEGE OF MORRIS
STUDENT ACTIVITIES PROGRAMMING BOARD

Holiday Party

The Student Activities Programming Board (SAPB) will be hosting the Holiday Party on Thursday, December 7th, from 12:30-2:00 PM in the SCC Lobby. All students are invited to this event. Come out and enjoy a fun party with all your friends to celebrate the upcoming holidays! There will be holiday bingo, holiday movie trivia, gingerbread house decorating, and an ugly sweater contest. The SCC Lobby will be decorated with wonderful holiday decorations on November 30th. Hot cocoa,

cookies, and holiday candy will be provided. Prizes will be awarded for the ugly sweater contest, holiday bingo, and holiday movie trivia. For any questions, please contact sapb@student.ccm.edu.

Michael Koutsokoumnis- President
Juan Vargas- Vice President
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