

SENATOR MIKE LEE: A NEW AGENDA FOR CONSERVATIVES

SCULLY
ON ANIMAL WELFARE
OLSEN
ON CHRISTIE'S FUTURE

JONAH GOLDBERG: OBAMACARE HILARITY

NATIONAL REVIEW



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Health-Care Hell

I am writing to you regarding the November 11 cover of NATIONAL REVIEW. The allusion to Canto Three of Dante Alighieri's *Inferno* of the *Divine Comedy* featured on the cover is much appreciated and rather appropriate given the ongoing health-care disaster that our country is currently having to endure. As a college Italian instructor and a great admirer of medieval Italian literature and poetry, I was, for lack of a better term, ecstatic to see such a superb literary reference grace the cover of my favorite periodical.

NATIONAL REVIEW's cover echoes the final line on a sign that Dante and his guide Virgil encounter upon their entrance and subsequent descent into Hell: "Abandon all hope, you who enter here"—"Lasciate ogni speranza, voi ch'entrate." It is important to note that there is a rather striking dichotomy between Dante's journey through the *Inferno* and our having to endure the ill-conceived and pernicious Affordable Care Act. While Dante's trek through the *Inferno*, *Purgatory*, and *Paradise* resulted ultimately in enlightenment, understanding, and personal growth, Obamacare will afford us none of this. It will, most unfortunately, merely serve as a perdurable punishment from which we cannot be extricated. Unlike the misfortunes of many of Dante's sinners, though, this misfortune is not due to any sin of our own, but results from the inherent destructive nature of the Machiavellian regime to which we are subjected.

Lois Lemonda
East Setauket, N.Y.

A Walk on the Mild Side

Jay Nordlinger's article "Freedom from Fear, for Now" (September 2) was totally accurate. I grew up in New York City during the '60s and '70s before moving out to Colorado for school and then staying there to raise a family. The city couldn't control crime, graffiti in the subways, or filth in the streets. I still remember looking over my shoulder while taking a walk in the foothills of Colorado to see if I was being followed. I remember Times Square, the brunt of our teenage jokes about drugs, hookers, massage parlors, and porno theaters. My parents were ashamed when they took us kids to a restaurant they went to when they dated in the '50s: It was besieged by massage parlors on both sides. We never went back again.

I now have no fear when I take my wife and kids to see my parents and siblings, who still live in Queens. Times Square is a wonderland to the eyes, and we have no fear of being mugged in a subway car or on a dark street. Rudy and Bloomy have done great things to make the city safe: There is no doubt about it. It would be a shame to see the city once again fall into liberal disrepair, which would once again make it a city that people fear to live in.

Dave Albertsen
Arvada, Colo.

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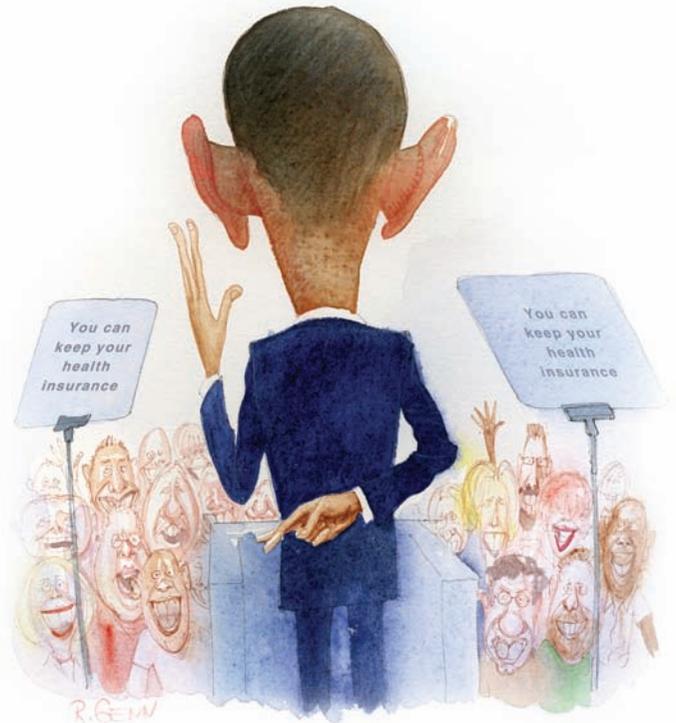
The Week

■ We can't keep insurance policies we like, *and* we have to keep a president we don't. Can't win.

■ New Jersey is the country's bluest state with a Republican governor, and it just reelected him in a landslide. Chris Christie's 22-point margin means that he could have compromised less and still won: He could have rejected the Medicaid expansion in Obamacare, kept a tighter lid on spending, and maybe above all reformed the state's hyperactivist judiciary. He has, however, been a better (and more conservative) governor than any the state has had for a long time. He has cut taxes, taken on the public-sector unions, and vetoed bills to fund Planned Parenthood. His record is much more impressive than that of the last Republican presidential nominee, Mitt Romney, in that Christie both governed more conservatively and won reelection. And did we mention he won big? His supporters in the next nomination contest will, and it will be a strong recommendation for him—so long as he, and they, understand that it will not clinch the case.

■ Everything went wrong for Republican Ken Cuccinelli in the race to be governor of Virginia, and he still came close to winning. He did not fundraise well, Republican donors wrote him off because of polls, he had no response to attacks on him as a social-issues extremist, the government shutdown made it harder to get his message across in the last month of the campaign, and the incumbent Republican governor had a scandal. The main thing Cuccinelli had going for him was the Democratic candidate, Terry McAuliffe, who cannot shake a perpetual aura of sleaze and does not try very hard. The good news is that Republicans have a supermajority in the lower house of the legislature and may, depending on the results of a pending special election, get a majority in the state senate. The bad news is that they lost a winnable race and kept a cog in the Clinton machine from being sent to the scrapyard.

■ Under 20 years of two Republican(ish) mayors, Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg, New York City enjoyed a spectacular renaissance. Crime decreased, then plummeted. Manhattan became a magnet for new construction and tourism, and the outer boroughs flourished. All now is at risk after Democrat Bill de Blasio cruised to victory over Republican Joe Lhota by a 49-point margin. The new mayor-elect began his adulthood as a creepy leftist, honeymooning in Cuba, and matured into a Democratic-party hack, working on Bill and Hillary Clinton's several campaigns. He proposes to raise taxes on those making more than \$500,000, for pre-kindergarten programs: a government babysitting service, to benefit the teachers' union. His message to cops will be to take no risks, since he will not back them in any controversy. His base will be race hustlers, mouths on the public teat, and Park Slope cause-mongers. "There is no such thing as a Lost Cause,"



wrote T. S. Eliot, "because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause." Time moves on, memories fade. The hard learning that gave New York its Antonine age will have to be done again.

■ At the Heritage Foundation, Senator Mike Lee gave a compelling speech (adapted in a piece on page 33) about the conservative future. The Utah Republican argued that conservatives can't let nostalgia for Reagan lock them into a bygone era. Instead, they need to do what Reagan did—translate our enduring principles into policies relevant to the challenges of the day. For Lee, that means an agenda that encourages uplift for the poor, that fights crony capitalism, and that addresses middle-class economic insecurity on a range of issues from the cost of living to traffic congestion. Lee has already done much to establish his intellectual leadership on the right in his short time in the Senate, and this speech shows why. We hope others will follow.

■ The White House has said that it will release Obamacare-enrollment numbers on a monthly basis, as only those can be "reliable." While there could well be some truth to this, the administration has not shied away from pushing the numbers it thinks look good—essentially meaningless metrics such as the number of unique visitors to the website. Meanwhile, federal officials have apparently been pressuring insurance companies, which of course possess data on the number of new



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patients covered, to withhold their numbers. And understandably so: Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Dakota revealed that the company had sold plans to just 14 people on the federal exchange. Interestingly, there is one number that liberal pundits have proudly cited but the administration has not: In states such as Maryland and Oregon, tens of thousands of people have enrolled in Medicaid—while few have purchased private insurance. Obamacare has so far been more an expansion of the broken old welfare state than of the broken new one.

■ Two brothers, Francis and Philip Gilardi, own Freshway Foods and Freshway Logistics in Sidney, Ohio. Obamacare backed them into a corner: Pay for contraception, which runs against their religious beliefs, or pay \$14 million in penalties. They sued the Department of Health and Human Services, and the D.C. appeals court ruled in their favor. The judges said, “We must determine whether the contraceptive mandate imposed by the Act [i.e., Obamacare] trammels the right of free

at nearby hospitals. The bill was passed in a special session, was stayed by the federal district court, and has been reinstated by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. It is probably headed for the Supreme Court—Planned Parenthood already has filed its appeal. As it stands, the bill will close down some abortion facilities and prevent some late-term abortions from being performed in Texas. If these regulations were being applied to anything other than the destruction of young humans, Democrats would cheer them—the people of Austin have to file a detailed report with the federal government every time they want to repair their spring-fed municipal pool because of nearby endangered species. The unborn children of Texas still won’t have the same protections as the Texas blind salamander, but the new rules are a start.

■ Abortion rights have no basis in the Constitution, Alan Dershowitz said on CNBC’s *Kudlow Report* last month, returning to an argument he has made before. In 2001, he wrote that *Roe v. Wade* lacked “clear governing constitutional princi-

Obamacare has so far been more an **expansion of the broken old welfare state** than of the broken new one.

exercise—a right that lies at the core of our constitutional liberties.” And “we conclude it does.” By the count of the Becket Fund for Religious Liberty, 31 courts have seen it that way, and six have not. As of now, all parties can only say, “See you in Court”—meaning the Supreme Court. We hope that Chief Justice John Roberts is feeling stalwart that day.

■ For years, the mere mention of “death panels” has been enough to prompt accusations of boorishness and mendacity. This, one suspects, is not only because defenders of the president’s health-care law considered the accusation to be frivolous, but also because they bristle at the reasonable suggestion that they would favor such a cold solution to the inevitable problem of rationing. And yet the passage of time is a remarkable thing. In *Slate* in late October, Adam Goldenberg wrote a much-vaunted column unsubtly titled “Canada has death panels—and that’s a good thing.” “Canadians,” Goldenberg complained, “tend to have more faith in our government and our bureaucratic processes than Americans” and thus, like Goldenberg, are satisfied that, “when humanity demands haste, and justice demands expert knowledge, Ontario’s death panels offer a solution.” “Experts and wise community members,” Goldenberg argues, play a positive role in Canada, and “other jurisdictions should consider following” suit. Where on earth could Sarah Palin have got the idea that more government involvement in health care leads to such thought and practice?

■ The passage of new abortion restrictions in Texas is a miniature epic, as such things tend to be. First, Senator Wendy Davis and her tampon-tossing riot squad managed to momentarily block the passage of the widely supported bill, which forbids abortions after the 20th week of pregnancy, requires that the procedure happen in a hospital or certified surgical center, and requires abortionists to be physicians with admitting privileges

ples.” The jurisprudential weakness of *Roe* and its companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*, is an old but neglected story, which Ramesh Ponnuru surveys on page 48 of this issue in his review of Clarke D. Forsythe’s book *Abuse of Discretion*. What makes Dershowitz’s agreement on this point notable is that he’s pro-choice. He considers the actual lives of unborn children to be merely “potential” but holds that the proper places for deciding whether they should be protected by law are the public square and the legislature, not the courts. Further, he insists that the debate be fair. He has criticized the ACLU, for example, for abandoning its commitment to First Amendment rights when the speech under attack happens to support the pro-life position. His intellectual honesty is admirable. We encourage him to follow where it leads.

■ The congressional committee investigating the Internal Revenue Service’s targeting of right-leaning groups has discovered how the National Organization for Marriage’s confidential donor list, which was contained in a document it filed with the IRS, suddenly wound up in the hands of its chief political opponent. (It was then used by several national media outlets to hammer Mitt Romney, in the midst of the 2012 presidential race, for having made a donation to the group, which opposes gay marriage.) The committee found that an IRS agent working in the division once run by the disgraced Lois Lerner leaked the list. But the committee, perversely, is prohibited from naming the leaker publicly. The IRS and Congress interpret the very provision of the Internal Revenue Code that makes it a felony to disclose taxpayer information, Section 6103, in a way that categorizes the findings of any investigation into violations of taxpayer privacy as confidential. In NOM’s case and in others, the felon is protected by the law he violated. Congress should rewrite the law, and the IRS should redouble its commitment to follow it.

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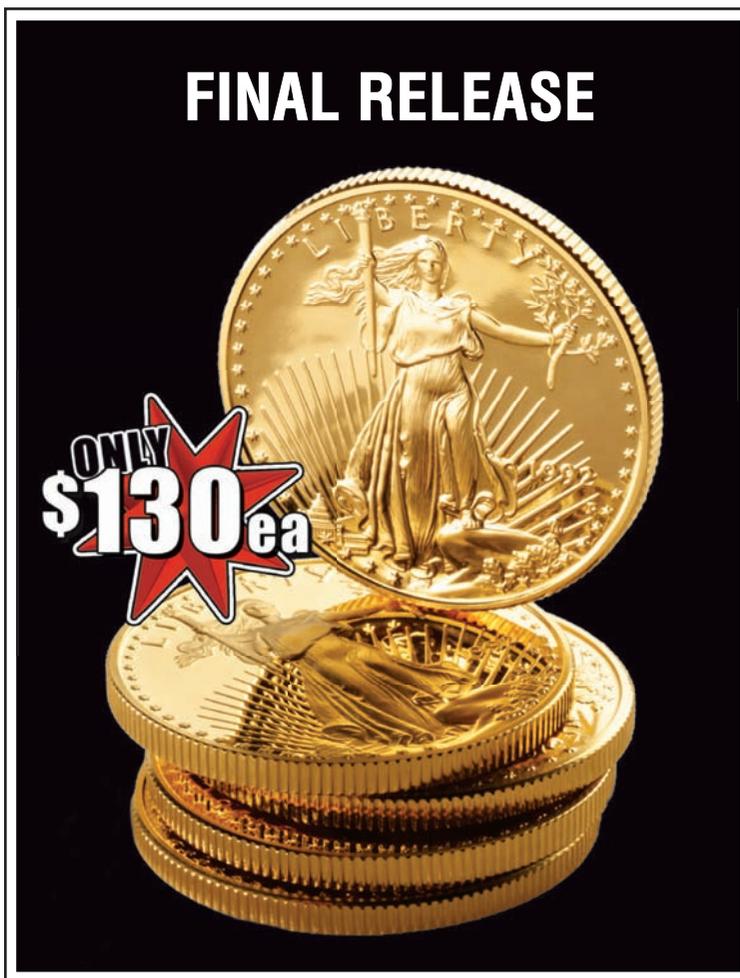
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■ The Senate looks set to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, making it illegal for employers to discriminate against people on the basis of their sexual orientation or “transgender” status. Most employers already refrain from such discrimination, and many states already prohibit it. The legislation would not address a major problem in American life and would modestly increase a real one (the amount of litigation in our country). The main import of the law is not practical. It is intended to put the federal government on record that there is nothing wrong with homosexuality or sex changes, while there is a lot wrong with freedom of association. In its current form, the law also embodies the view that religious freedom is

a concern subordinate to the enforcement of the new morality. To state the purpose of the law plainly is to make the case against it.

■ Harvard’s Henry Louis Gates Jr., the literary critic and black-studies professor whose arrest by Cambridge police in 2009 occasioned the famous “beer summit,” recently expressed an opinion that could get an academic of lesser standing into career trouble: Affirmative action in college admissions needs to be “redirected” to benefit the economically disadvantaged, regardless of race. “We should think about affirmative action for the poor,” he said on MSNBC’s *Morning*

Who’s the RINO?

Now that the sourness of the conservative family squabble has been tempered by the delicious sorbet that is the Obamacare disaster, I’d like to address a gripe about the R-word. I’m referring, of course, to the term “RINO,” or “Republican in Name Only.” I don’t always trust Wikipedia, but its definition of the term will do for our purposes: “Republican in Name Only (RINO) is a pejorative term used by conservative members of the Republican Party . . . to describe Republicans whose political views or actions they consider insufficiently conservative.”

The problem should be readily apparent. But if it’s not clear, indulge my analogical digression. As anyone who has read this magazine for the last half-century should know, there’s an inherent tension between the conservative movement and the Republican party. Call it the divide between the ideological camp and the partisan camp. I am a proud resident of the former, but my work often requires that I toil in the latter. Indeed, the health of both the conservative movement and the Republican party depends heavily on a policy of free trade between the two camps, while protecting the sovereignty of each.

The Republican party is a guild. Its job is to win elections for members of its guild. For the last half-century or so, it has usually done this by importing ideas from the ideologues. It rarely buys as many of our wares as we would like and we often feel it doesn’t use them correctly when it does buy them.

But like any good arms dealer, we want—or should want—to sell our ideas to any buyer. Indeed, in a perfect world, we’d have a monopoly on the sale of public-policy ideas (though such a world is, like all utopias, unattainable). The point of the conservative movement isn’t simply to move the GOP rightward, it is to move the country rightward. And that requires selling our ideas, not just to Republicans but to Democrats (and universities, movie

studios, public schools, and any other market we can find here or abroad).

There was a time, not too long ago, when the Democrats bought a few of our products too, particularly in the area of foreign policy. Many Democrats claim, with some justification, that they got Obamacare’s individual mandate from our catalogue. Many conservatives respond that they didn’t read the instructions and installed it wrong. That’s an argument for another day.

My problem with the term “RINO” is that it represents a profound category error, confusing the customer with the manufacturer. The people most apt to use the term “Republican in Name Only” are actually the real Republicans in Name Only. I am a Republican by default, because the GOP is the more conservative of the two parties. This is true of all the purists denouncing Republicans for being insufficiently conservative. What the purists actually mean is that the subjects of their ire are *too Republican*, too concerned with protecting the guild and winning elections for its members. If we had our terminology right, it would be the conservatives—some openly flirting with a third party—who were being denounced as the true Republicans in name only.

Obviously, Republicans who are willing to embrace every liberal idea just to get elected are useless to conservatives. If they don’t buy our wares, what good are they to us? At the same time, Republicans are just retail middlemen. If the end consumer doesn’t like our products, you can’t expect retailers to stock their shelves with them. And that’s why we, the wholesalers, need the retailers to care about getting reelected. That’s the healthy tension. We need to listen to the salesmen and the salesmen need to listen to us. Neither will ever be right all the time. But we need each other.

—JONAH GOLDBERG

Joe. “I grew up in West Virginia with poor white people. They need affirmative action as much as my people do.” Noting that his own daughters lead a “privileged life,” he asked, “Do they really need to benefit from affirmative action?” With the overwhelming majority of African Americans who attend elite colleges coming from families in the top half of income earners, it’s not an idle question. The defenders of the current unjust system just don’t want to hear the answer.

■ Cass Sunstein, a Harvard law professor, former Obama-administration official, and proponent of the idea that restricting people’s choices doesn’t reduce their freedom so long as you call it a “nudge,” recently wrote a column purporting to explain the origins of the American conservative



movement. Sunstein traces the alleged radicalism of today’s Republican party back to the Alger Hiss trial. His explanation of the case is fairer than many liberals might give, and that’s the problem: He writes that the conviction of Hiss, a liberal-establishment darling, and the vindication of Whittaker Chambers, a conservative (and NATIONAL REVIEW editor) who held that liberalism was in some ways just a cousin of socialism and Communism, explains why many conservatives harbor serious suspicions of liberals, their patriotism, and the loyalty of America’s elite, its academic institutions, and more. But Chambers was right. Some of America’s liberal establishment was sympathetic to Communism, and Hiss’s trial did more than any other thing to prove it. As for why conservatives suspect that liberals generally have hidden agendas, whole books could be written, and have been.

■ Charlie Crist, the former Republican governor of Florida, has announced that he will run next year as a Democrat against Governor Rick Scott. There is so much to love in this comeback story: The same Democrats who once derided Crist as an empty suit are ready to anoint him—a man who used to campaign against same-sex marriage and abortion—as their leader, meaning that the self-described “good conservative” who denounced Marco Rubio as “the Republican Obama” will be running under the mantle of the actual Obama. Governor Scott, who is light on charisma but heavy on sensible conservatism, is suffering from a self-inflicted political gunshot wound after having joined the Obama campaign for Medicaid maximization, but he still looks like a Gibraltar

next to Crist. We hope that Florida’s voters take Crist’s comeback in the same spirit we do: one of amusement.

■ As any good prosecutor knows, it is bad courtroom practice to ask a question to which you don’t already know the answer. Up slightly on the scale of incompetence, perhaps, is filing a lawsuit based on documents that you don’t have and with an objective that you have yet to establish. Yet, in Louisiana, this is exactly what the U.S. Department of Justice has done. At first, the DOJ, which is disgracefully suing the state over its school-voucher program, announced that it was seeking an injunction. Then, under pressure, it backpedaled and claimed only to be looking for “information.” As it happens, this second approach was rather sensible because the administration can’t find the documents that it claims show that vouchers lead to racial segregation, and on which its whole case rests. In a press release, Governor Bobby Jindal derisively suggested that Louisianans might “go to Washington, D.C., to have a search party for these documents.” Even better, perhaps Washington could drop the case?

■ After pouring more than \$1 million into the coffers of New York governor Andrew Cuomo, the gambling industry secured for itself a ridiculously worded ballot referendum to allow the expansion of casino operations in the state. It passed on strong support from voters in New York City, where none of these depressing monuments to innumeracy and wishful thinking will be built. Governor Cuomo promises that expanded casino gambling will help to revitalize the zombified economy of upstate New York; he might have accomplished as much by ending the state’s ban on modern natural-gas-extraction techniques and created real value in the process. New York is as a state engaged in the same sort of wishful thinking that gamblers indulge individually: Nearby New Jersey is already seeing gambling revenues declining, and the Garden State and Delaware both have had to engage in expensive, embarrassing bailouts of their gambling operators. Sustainable economic growth requires real productivity and real investment, not the simple shuffling of cards and money.



■ Stop-and-frisk, the technique whereby cops search suspicious characters for concealed weapons, got a respite in New York City. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals struck down Judge Shira Scheindlin’s August decision that the policy was “indirect racial profiling.” The court also removed Scheindlin from the case for violating judicial ethics (she offered her anti-cop views to journalists even as she heard the case). Ideally the law-abiding would be allowed to protect themselves, but in anti-gun blue cities, stop-and-frisk is the next best recourse. New York’s respite will be brief because Mayor-elect Bill de Blasio is expected to stop or curtail stop-and-frisk. And if more

blacks and Hispanics die from the fire of un-frisked guns? Chalk it up to drive-by liberalism.



■ The German government is upset that the United States was tapping Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone, although it apparently stopped doing so in 2010. A number of other countries have expressed dismay at the National Security Agency's performing similar operations within their borders. Most of them, it has been revealed, either cooperated in the operations or have spied on U.S. officials in the same way. The president may well have been right to halt surveillance of Chancellor Merkel—snooping on our allies comes with costs. But knowing the undercurrents of German politics is self-evidently useful to American policymakers, and gathering non-public information for policymakers and intelligence officials—within constitutional bounds—is precisely what the NSA is, as former agency chief Michael Hayden has said, “expected to do.” Besides, foreign leaders aren't protected by the Fourth Amendment. German bellyaching over the bugging is in part a political ploy. The U.S. traditionally does not spy on its closest allies, the Anglophone nations, and shares with them the fruits of our surveillance, and Germany would like to get into the syndicate.

■ Hakimullah Mehsud, leader of the Pakistani Taliban, went to his reward courtesy of a drone from Uncle Sam. The Afghan Taliban called the strike “cowardly” and “barbaric” (cue laugh track). Mehsud's death caused consternation in Pakistan, where the government is engaged in preliminary talks with its enemy. The Pakistani Taliban will now suspect that Mehsud was ratted out by the government, which claims to oppose the U.S. drone program—not a comfortable feeling. Kudos to the administration for continuing to strike down the bloody-handed.

■ Iraq is going the way of Syria, and for much the same reasons. Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi prime minister, is a Shiite, every bit as prejudiced against Iraqi Sunnis as Bashar Assad is against Syrian Sunnis. When American troops were in Iraq, they were able to cooperate with Sunnis and establish a balance that more or less kept the peace. Two years ago, there was to be a Status of Forces Agreement that would have allowed American troops to stay in Iraq and act as ultimate guarantors of peace. But Maliki refused, and President Obama didn't particularly mind. American withdrawal has created a vacuum that Sunni militants have filled for defensive and offensive purposes. An offshoot of al-Qaeda is fighting in the name of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, ISIS for short. The suicide bomber and the car bomb are weapons of choice. Naturally Shiite bombers retaliate in kind. The toll is frightful. On some days there are four or five murderous explo-

sions anywhere in the country. According to Iraq Body Count, an organization that tries to keep track, this year 7,000 people have already been killed. Maliki has been to Washington to plead for American arms, including helicopters, in the hopeless task of controlling with one hand the sectarian violence that he encourages with the other hand. He got little or nothing. The Department of I Told You So has work to do.

■ *New Express* is a paper in the Chinese city of Guangzhou, or Canton, as we used to call it. It has been exceptionally bold. One of its reporters, Chen Yongzhou, wrote a series of investigative articles on a manufacturer partly owned by the state. The authorities arrested him. Later, the paper ran a startling front-page appeal: “Please Let Him Go.” The editors said, “If Brother Policeman can find any evidence of shabby reporting on our part, please make notice of it and we will gladly doff our hat.” They further said, “We are a small newspaper, but we have some backbone in spite of being poor.” Soon after, Chen appeared on television: head shaven, handcuffed, wearing a prison uniform, surrounded by police. He said, “I'm willing to admit my guilt and to show repentance.” He said he had written the articles “because I hankered after money and fame.” He said he had learned his “lesson.”



New Express did, too: abandoning its defiance and becoming suddenly contrite. This episode is but the latest indication that China is enduring tyranny.

■ Venezuela's government, which takes its inspiration from the Castros, is easy to laugh at—but Venezuelans have to live under it. Hugo Chávez once postponed Valentine's Day, because it interfered with his political plans. Such is the caprice of “presidential dictatorship.” His successor, Nicolás Maduro, has now created a Vice Ministry of Supreme Social Happiness. This is supposed to take care of the poor, who, said Maduro, are those “most loved by anyone who calls themselves a revolutionary, a Christian, and a *chavista*.” A housewife told the Associated Press that, rather than a ministry of Supreme Social Happiness, she would like to be able to buy basic groceries. “It's a Calvary getting the ingredients for any meal,” she said. A fruit vendor said he would prefer a Vice Ministry of Beer. “That would make me, and all the drunks, happy.” Yes, this is comic stuff—but the misrule of the *chavistas* is cruel.

■ India has launched a mission to Mars, a technological feat successfully achieved only by NASA, the Russians, and a joint European space program. (British, Chinese, and Japanese attempts all failed.) India's effort was met at home with some of the same complaints that NASA faces from its critics: The mission is a symbolic showpiece without practical value, some critics said, while others complained about the expense. “We can go to Mars but cannot provide clean water to our people on Earth,” colum-

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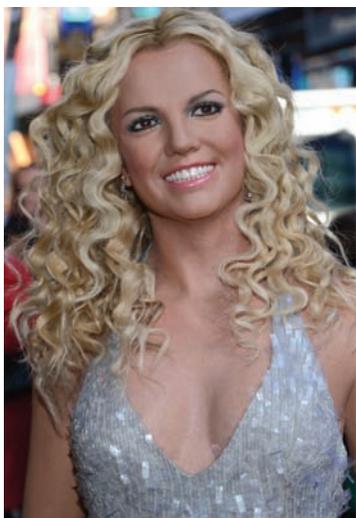
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nist Tavleen Singh harrumphed. But there is some hard-eyed calculation going on in New Delhi: If India is successful in its Mars mission, it will have accomplished at a cost of \$73 million what the United States had to spend \$671 million to pull off, establishing itself as a credible leader in low-cost but highly sophisticated space operations. As late as the 1970s, famine prevention was the commanding issue of the day in India's public life, and today it is debating interplanetary flight. In the 1950s, the idea that we'd be exploring Mars in the 21st century seemed like an inevitability—but if you'd said that India would be exploring Mars, it would have sounded wildly implausible. Funny how things go.

■ In *Married to the Mob*, Dean Stockwell, after surviving an assassination attempt by a thug dressed as an employee at a Jack in the Box-type restaurant, delivered the immortal line, “Some clown just tried to kill me!” It's unlikely that similar words escaped the lips of Francisco Rafael Arellano Felix, head of Mexico's Tijuana drug cartel, when he was successfully murdered last month by a hit man dressed in a clown outfit (who afterwards presumably blended in with the crowd and then made his getaway in a tiny car). The style of the attack was a surprise, because Mexico's murderous drug cartels are known to be terrifying and have no sense of humor—though, come to think of it, the same goes for most clowns. Delegates at a convention of Latin American clowns—no, we don't mean the OAS meeting—condemned the murderer's appropriation of their professional dress.



■ British vessels sailing around the Horn of Africa have a new line of defense against Somali pirates: Britney Spears hits. Crews have found that pumping the pop icon's music into the treacherous waters is an effective method for warding off pirates fond of kidnapping crews and holding them hostage for multimillion-dollar ransoms. Merchant naval officer Rachel Owens told the British newspaper *Metro* that the songs “were chosen

by the security team because they thought the pirates would hate them most. These guys can't stand Western culture or music, making Britney's hits perfect.” They have at least found their perfect use. There's a line in Britney's debut single “Baby One More Time”—“When I'm not with you, I lose my mind.” The Brits' new secret weapon might just make the Somali swashbucklers lose theirs.

■ New York City police commissioner Raymond Kelly was invited to give a talk and Q&A at Brown University about his department and its policies. Student protesters and local ruff-suff decided otherwise. A band of hecklers whooped and hollered for 30 minutes, whereupon Brown canceled the event. Kelly, who is a Marine in addition to being a cop, can take it. The real damage was to Brown. President Christina Paxson issued

a hand-wringing statement afterward, calling the demo an “affront” to Brown's “core values of dialogue.” If she means what she says, she should take steps to identify the students who took part and suspend or expel them. Otherwise Brown will stand self-proclaimed as a playground for well-off radical infants, and their nannies.

■ We know what must have happened: President Obama said to consult military experts, and the guy from the Marines thought he said “millinery,” so he went straight to Bergdorf Goodman, and the next thing you know, Marine grunts were set to be issued a darling little unisex uniform cap that would not look out of place on a French actress—or, worse, a French soldier. U.S. Marines have little tolerance for nonsense (though many words for it), so it's no surprise that the unisex cap lasted about as long as Karl Lagerfeld would at Parris Island. Marine Corps officials said it was all a misunderstanding—they were just considering options after a vendor went out of business, and there are no plans to change the male uniform cap. The fact that the story was so widely circulated, however, shows how strong opposition is to the current push to create a gender-neutral military culture. All we can say is that if the government wants our servicemen to get in touch with their feminine side, the Marines are the wrong place to start.

■ At a certain point, it becomes difficult for famously absurd institutions not to descend into self-parody. For the University of Colorado-Boulder this Halloween, the challenge proved too much. Administrations on campus sent out a directive ordering students to avoid any costumes that might “inappropriately perpetuate racial, cultural, and gender stereotypes.” Among the usual “crude stereotypes” that one would expect to vex the terminally joyless were cowboy costumes, “overly sexualized” dress (when portraying a particular cultural identity), and “anything involving a sombrero.” That the Western sartorial tradition is now deemed offensive will presumably have come as a shock to fans and members of the university's sports teams. The U of C's football mascot is a buffalo, Ralphie, who is led out by a group of men and women dressed as cowboys. Surprising, too, is the instruction that liberal-arts students should stay away from looking “over-sexualized.” Although one suspects that if the purpose of Halloween is to dress up in a manner foreign to normal life, then this idea actually deserves marks for creativity.

■ As leader of the late-1960s rock group the Velvet Underground, Lou Reed was to prove one of the greatest influences on music in the subsequent decades. The extent of this influence was best expressed by musician Brian Eno in his oft-quoted statement that, while the Velvet Underground's first album initially sold only 30,000 copies, “everyone who bought one of those 30,000 copies started a band.” He claimed that rock 'n' roll was his “god,” but he showed a greater willingness than many rock musicians to flout some of the clichés of the rock genre: He had a streak of independence of the sort that is at the heart of rock's self-proclaimed ethos but is all too often missing from the music world. He was, for example, a supporter of the State of Israel; on his 1989 album *New York*, he had a song titled “Good Evening Mr. Waldheim,” in which he criticized Jesse Jackson, for his embrace of Louis Farrakhan, and Pope John Paul II, for his meeting with Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, a former Nazi. (By 2000, in the latter case at least, all was forgiven: Reed performed

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for Pope John Paul at the jubilee celebrations in Rome.) *Rolling Stone's* review of the *New York* album called it Reed's "rock & roll version of *The Bonfire of the Vanities*"; and, like Tom Wolfe, Reed was a quintessential New York figure—simultaneously the outsider as social critic and the coolest imaginable hipster-insider. Dead at 71. R.I.P.

■ Robinson Risner was one of the best fighter pilots we've ever had, an ace in Korea and Vietnam. He was also one of the bravest men we've ever had. In September 1965, he was shot down in Vietnam, and spent seven and a half years in the "Hanoi Hilton." He endured terrible torture, which he resisted almost superhumanly. For more than three years, he was kept in solitary confinement, living in complete darkness. He held on to his sanity. Before his capture, he had been on the cover of *Time* magazine, as an example of the American warrior. The Vietnamese Communists waved the magazine under his nose: They thought they had caught a very big fish. Once, in 1971, Risner organized a church service for fellow POWs, knowing this would result in serious punishment. As he was led away, the other POWs sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." This ace, warrior, and patriot, the son of an Arkansas sharecropper, has died at 88. The *New York Times* recounted an anecdote: At a reunion of airmen, Risner met a Russian ace who had been in Korea. The Russian wondered whether he and Risner had ever faced each other in combat. "No way," said Risner. "You wouldn't be here." R.I.P.

HEALTH CARE

The Quagmire Deepens

PRESIDENT OBAMA urged Americans to "just go shop around" for health insurance on the new exchanges, seemingly heedless of the fact that their dysfunction means that Americans cannot do what he told them—what he still plans to fine millions of them for not doing. As many as 16 million people who buy insurance for themselves—around two-thirds of those who do so—are having their plans canceled as a result of Obamacare. They will have to pay a fine if they do not get a replacement plan. So there is a chance that the result of Obamacare will be that they lose their insurance and pay a fine for the favor. Not to worry, says Health and Human Services secretary Kathleen Sebelius: The federal Obamacare website has never crashed, she testified before Congress, the site plainly offline even as she spoke.

None of this, we are to understand, is the administration's fault. Insurers are all behaving badly, seeking profit by, er, selling their

products to a lot fewer people, a strategy that had not occurred to them before Obamacare. Republican governors should have stepped in to help the administration implement the law, even though the law required no such thing, even though they opposed it, and even though states that have helped are mostly seeing disappointing results too. The cancellations are not cancellations at all: They are "upgrades" or "transitions" to better insurance—whether or not the people involved think that it is better to pay more for more comprehensive plans, and whether or not the insurance is accessible. A transition is supposed to take you somewhere, but right now Obamacare is a bridge to nowhere.

Senator Ron Johnson, a Republican from Wisconsin, has introduced simple legislation to at least spare many millions of people in the individual market from the Obamacare trap. Plans that received regulatory approval pre-Obamacare would keep that approval, and insurers would be able to keep selling them. President Obama's pledge during the campaign to enact the law was that people who liked their insurance would be able to keep it. (Recent reports have indicated that, at the time, high-level White House aides held meetings to determine whether they should go with the truth instead; cooler heads prevailed.)

Senator Mary Landrieu, a Louisiana Democrat who is up for reelection next year, has introduced her own version of the Johnson bill. Other Democrats are flaying the administration for its lack of preparation. Congressional Democrats are getting nervous. Republicans ought to do what they can to make them more so.



Health and Human Services secretary Kathleen Sebelius, October 30, 2013

EDITOR'S NOTE: The next issue of NATIONAL REVIEW will appear in three weeks.



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Fifty Years after Dallas

Our drift toward an imperial presidency

BY MICHAEL KNOX BERAN

WHATEVER bargain Joe Kennedy struck with the devil, the expiation of it was cruel. The poor man was forced to watch his three gifted boys precede him to the grave, and left to die in the knowledge that Ted would succeed him as head of the house.

Give Joe this much. It is not every guy whom the devil finds it worth his while to tempt with gifts of fame, fortune, and a dynastic legacy. Yet those of us whose humbler stations in life testify to our having been passed over in the diabolic sweepstakes have our ungenerous consolation; few things are more satisfying to us than the spectacle of the Theban sufferings of folk like the Kennedys.

It's nothing new. The sight of the great ones of the earth in extremis has ever soothed the passions of the little people. In the Periclean heyday of Athens the populace rejoiced, through the vicarious medium of the theater, in the gore that oozed from the palaces of Oedipus and Agamemnon. In 17th-century London

Mr. Beran, a lawyer and a contributing editor of City Journal, is the author of, among other books, Forge of Empires, 1861–1871: Three Revolutionary Statesmen and the World They Made.

the citizens imbrued themselves, figuratively and imaginatively, in the blood of Macbeth's Glamis and Hamlet's Elsinore. In America we have the tabloid media, which dexterously foment the gloomy passions of envy and revenge; so prompt, indeed, are the purveyors of schadenfreude that scarcely a week passes in which we are not treated to the destruction of some high-flier or other, an exhibition we as a rule take in with a most complacent glee.

Yet after all the revelations of his deceptions, his errors of policy, and his dissipated private life, Jack Kennedy remains one of our national darlings; a recent poll found him to be the most highly rated president of the past half century. What gives?

That he was murdered in the prime of life has of course something to do with it. In letters and diaries of the early Sixties we can trace the softening of feeling toward him that followed the assassination. "About Kennedy: I think you somewhat overrate his literacy," Edmund Wilson wrote to Alfred Kazin in March 1961. "His historical allusions are likely to be inaccurate in a way which suggests he cannot really have read much history. I suspect that his pretensions to

'culture' are largely worked up by Arthur Schlesinger." But the note of condescension in Wilson's attitude towards Kennedy is muted after Dallas, and he praised the dead president for having done "his best to establish an enlightened administration and to work for tax reduction, civil rights for the Negroes and a peaceful settlement with Russia."

Yet Garfield and McKinley were also murdered, and neither became an object of adoration in the way Jack Kennedy has. Lincoln after his assassination *did* inspire an intense popular devotion, but he was by any standard an important—indeed a great—president, something that cannot be said of Kennedy.

Bill Buckley came closer to the heart of the matter when he argued that what accounts for Jack's grip on us "is his sheer . . . beauty." Yet the thought requires qualification. Certainly Kennedy was, as Buckley said, an "all-American" fellow who was "splendid to look at." But very handsome men are not infrequently off-putting. Some are blockheads, their good looks having made things so easy for them that they have failed to develop other aspects of an attractive personality, such as a sense of humor. In others handsomeness breeds arrogance and hauteur, as it did in John Lindsay. Buckley recognized this, and in his attempt to characterize Kennedy's fascination he dwelt not simply on the man's physical appearance but on the "confident joy in life and work" that he radiated, and that "transfigured" the world around him.

We speak loosely of the mysterious springs of personal appeal that distinguish a leader as his "charisma," but the lazy word obscures all the subtler shades of human charm. Rose Kennedy said of Franklin Roosevelt that he was the most charming man she ever knew; Churchill compared meeting him to opening his first bottle of champagne. But Roosevelt had a mean streak in him quite foreign to Kennedy. Again, Ronald Reagan's personality brightened the nation; but he was a more private man than Kennedy, and harder to know. One would be startled to find an associate of Reagan's speaking of him, as Byron "Whizzer" White spoke of Kennedy, as "the most fun-producing man" he had ever encountered; yet millions of people who never knew Kennedy personally understand exactly what Mr. Justice White meant.

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Over an estimated ten-year period, Brain Research scientists will 'map' the human brain in an unprecedented quest to unravel its mysteries.

What's the Catch?

What President Obama and administration officials failed to tell Americans is that, for many, they don't have to spend \$100 million or wait ten-plus years for a fix for their foggy, forgetful mind.

In fact, evidence of a genuine, clinically tested, real, memory pill is here, now.

Real Memory Pill Exists!

A US-based research firm, Brain Research Labs, has developed and conducted successful human testing on a genuine memory pill.

Over a period of a few weeks in a landmark, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled clinical trial, published in a peer-reviewed journal, scientists observed the formula helping older brains function more youthfully.

In many cases, the formula allowed users to match the memory recall speed and brainpower of those up to 15 years younger, all within a 30-day time period.

It's no secret either. The US Patent and Trademark Office has granted the drug-free natural formula a United States patent.

Over the years, the sophisticated three-part formulation has gained the trust of medical doctors, a top clinical pharmacist, and is even a recommended component in an updated version of a legendary Medicare-reimbursed brain health protocol.

Preventive Gerontologist, Dr. Arnold Bresky, the man responsible for the Medicare-reimbursed brain tune-up protocol recommends this prescription-free memory compound as an integral part of his new *Four Pillars of Brain Health* program.

With more than 45 years behind a pharmacist's counter, and 25 years in a radio show booth, if Dr. Gene Steiner had a nickel for every time someone asked, "Do you have anything that can improve my memory," he would be a rich man today.

A Crystal-Clear Memory

It's a question he's heard many times. "This natural memory pill is to an aging, sluggish brain, what a breath of fresh air is to your lungs," he says.

Before prescribing the pill to patients, Dr. Steiner decided to first try it himself.

"Within a few days, I can tell you without reservation that my memory became crystal clear," he says.

"I had such marvelous results that I not only started recommending it to my customers, I even shared it with other physicians!"

A Pharmacy Best-Seller

"It became the best-selling brain health product in my pharmacy and customers were returning to thank me for introducing them to it."

"It felt great to see so many people whose lives were enriched by taking a simple, natural formula."

"With this simple, drug-free formula, we finally have something that we can recommend that is safe and effective. And you don't need a prescription either!"

Recently, Dr. Steiner relocated to another state and was apprehensive about taking the state board of pharmacy jurisprudence examination, a daunting examination that tests a candidate's mastery of pharmacy law.

"I began taking the natural

memory compound for two weeks prior to the test, and I passed with flying colors!" "The recall I personally experienced was fantastic," says Steiner.

"It's a unique process," he adds, "that pumps the brain full of energizing oxygen, helping improve blood circulation to the brain, while helping to boost key neurotransmitters in the brain responsible for cognitive functioning."

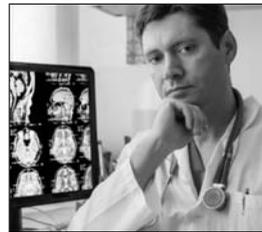
Alternative medicine pioneer, and retired medical school professor, Dr. Robert Heller, personally uses and recommends the formula.

Perks Up Tired, Sluggish Brains

"It's not a drug," smiles Dr. Heller, "it's a nutritional supplement that can help a foggy, sluggish brain become sharper, quicker, and healthier."

Head and neck surgeon and psychologist, Paul Nemiroff, PhD, MD, FACS, agrees, adding, "It is truly an amazing breakthrough for memory!"

Kasey L.* from Olathe, Kansas says, "I was having trouble finding words in my brain and remembering things. Now I am as sharp as a tack and I have a memory like an elephant. I will never stop taking it."



Many are asking the question, does the government's \$100 million scientific discovery initiative ignore the existence of a patented memory restorer?

Grace K.* of Alabama was in the same boat.

"I was having concentration problems and difficulty remembering things. After only one week, I felt mentally energized and more confident in myself! Now, I enjoy reading again. I've regained confidence in myself!"



On April 11, 2013, President Barack Obama announced a ten-year, \$100 million brain research project.

Crossword puzzle fanatic, Bobby D.* from western Nevada can't say enough about his super-fast mental abilities.

"Working four crossword puzzles in the morning paper, quicker, has amazed me with the answers just popping into my head! I stand outside myself and wonder where those answers come from!"

Anyone who has ever stood in front of a crowd and then, forgot what they were about to say, knows the horror of "drawing a blank." Professional speaker Sylvia. P.* from California found Brain Research Labs' memory discovery just in time.

"I started having a hard time staying focused and remembering important information."

"As a professional speaker in front of hundreds of people, I found these senior moments very embarrassing. Plus, it was threatening my career. Since taking this, I can now conduct a whole seminar without relying on my notes. I feel like my old self again!"

You don't have to spend million of dollars or wait ten years to do what Brain Research Labs has already done for you. If you are ready to do something about your mind and memory, here's your risk-free chance.

Get a Free 30-Day Supply of this Pharmacist-Recommended Memory Formula!

Call the toll-free number below to see how you can reserve your free 30-day supply of the same, patented memory formula used by Dr. Steiner.

It is the #1-selling memory formula in the US, and it is also mentioned in the medically acclaimed book, *20/20 Brainpower: 20 Days to a Quicker, Calmer, Sharper Mind!*

Claim Your Free Copy of the Top-Selling Book, 20/20 Brainpower

When you call the toll-free number below, ask how you can also receive a free copy of the medically acclaimed book, *20/20 Brainpower: 20 Days to a Quicker, Calmer, Sharper, Mind!* It's a \$20 value, yours free! But don't wait, supplies are limited!

Free Brain Detox Formula, Too!

Be one of the first 500 callers, and you can also receive a free supply of the brain detox formula that is scientifically designed to help increase mental clarity and focus even further by helping flush away toxins in the brain. Call now while supplies last!

Call Toll-Free! 1-800-646-1685

*These statements have not been evaluated by the FDA. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. Everyone is different and you may not experience the same results. Results can depend on a variety of factors including overall health, diet, and other lifestyle factors. Doctors Steiner, Heller, and Nemiroff were not compensated for their statements, which attest to personal and professional experience. They were compensated for the right to include their statements here.

It helped that (like Reagan) he was a younger son: Unburdened by the expectations that fall upon a firstborn, he developed an ironical view of life very different from that of his earnest, too obviously ambitious older brother, Joe Jr. Again, like Reagan, he was not, in his younger years, drawn to a political life. His father pushed him into it after the elder brother's death in the war. "I can feel Pappy's eyes on the back of my neck," Jack complained to Navy buddy Paul "Red" Fay at the time. "When the war is over and you are out there in sunny California . . . I'll be back here with Dad trying to parlay a lost PT boat and a bad back into political advantage. I'll tell you, Dad is ready right now and can't understand why Johnny boy isn't 'all engines full ahead.'"

The court Kennedy established in Washington after his victory in 1960 is easy to ridicule, and I, like a thousand other writers, have done so. The old preppie-Brahmin social regime in the capital, which dated from the days of William C. Whitney, John Hay, and Henry Adams, had already, in the early Sixties, something of the feel of Parisian society in the days before the Revolution of 1789. The fortunes of Washington's WASP establishment, with its nucleus in Georgetown, had long been closely tied to the State Department, which in the mid-century bureaucratic bloat had lost its exclusive character. The degeneration of society followed hard upon that of the civil service, and in their desperation the WASP magnificos were only too delighted to have Jack and Jacqueline preside over their last hurrah. Averell Harriman, who in his stiffly magnificent condescension might have been a Whig duke, danced the twist with Mrs. Kennedy in the family quarters of the White House, while Joe Alsop, a lacquered mandarin who had forsaken his calligraphy to pound out a syndicated column, was pleased to find himself received again at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, as he had not been since the days when his Roosevelt relations resided there.

"Jackie and the President," Alsop gushed, "gave occasional small dances at the White House that were as good as any parties I have been to." Doubtless it was amusing to go through "bottle after bottle of Dom Pérignon" in the president's company, and to feed at "an enormous gold bucket" of fresh caviar, all

the while laughing at the tastelessness of the Eisenhowers. "I can only recall," Alsop wrote, "the peculiar combination of vomit-green and rose-pink that Mrs. Eisenhower had chosen for her bedroom and bathroom," something he found almost as appalling as the fact that he had to tell his "cousin Franklin Roosevelt, Jr. that he could not go on calling the President 'Jack,' however close they had been in the past—a point he ought have known." I have, as I said, made mock of this; but had I been alive at the time, and received the invitation, would I have refused it, or gushed less? Probably not.

Jack was a great sinner, like the rest of us, yet in spite of his faults he was a winning human being. (Whether his winning qualities would have survived two terms in the White House, that hothouse in which the more extravagant forms of egotism are routinely bred, must remain a question.) Still, whatever his merits, our fixation on him is unhealthy. I don't mean by this the trauma he posthumously inflicted on the political class, the ties and psychoses that impelled Gary Hart to stick his hand in his coat pocket at odd times and made John Kerry (stricken by his experience of sailing with Jack on the *Manitou*) exhibit his own prowess in water sports by taking a turn on his windsurfer in the summer of his nomination for the presidency.

No, the problem with our obsession with Jack goes beyond the vainglory of the less gifted politicians who lamely imitate him. The real difficulty is that the presidency has come to occupy too large a place in our individual psyches, even as the federal nation-state over which the president presides has come to occupy too large a place in our individual lives. The imperial presidency that had its beginnings in the administrations of the first Roosevelt and Wilson has grown up with the imperial state, a noxious weed that is only too likely to culminate in a kind of Caesarian first magistracy, an office very different from the one the Founders envisioned when they drafted the second article of the Constitution.

As the federal government grows ever more potent, local and regional culture diminish apace; we are left only with national power and the national sanctities. Kennedy, who made the slenderest of marks on the policy of the nation, left the greatest impression on

its imaginative and mythopoeic life. He had, indeed, an eye for the enchanting symbol. He approved the peculiar logo that is to this day blazoned on the presidential aircraft; he conceived the Medal of Freedom; he laid down the protocols for the pageantry of the modern state visit. What is more, he chose for his mate a brunette of excellent taste who turned the dowdy White House into the most stylish of 20th-century courts, and selected for his (most notable) concubine a platinum blonde who continues to haunt that dream-vision of an America in which Huck Finn, Abe Lincoln, and Betsy Ross (or some such mythical company) are forever laughing and swapping yarns on a raft on the Mississippi.

It is, alas, a spurious dream. The reality from which it diverts us is found in the neighborhoods in which we actually live. Kennedy played a part in this ongoing nationalization of consciousness. He was the first TV president; his cult is as unthinkable without the boob tube as that of Dionysus would be without the grape. And the TV screen, whatever its virtues, is a great leveler of local culture; it is also too much with us. Implanted now in bars, airport lobbies, pizza parlors, elevators, the pumps in the gas station, as well as in our pocket gadgets, the TV screen insensibly draws us into the unnutritive dramas of the nation-state.

It would be too much to say that TV is our modern amphitheater, seducing us with fantasies remote from the sort of solid, traditional, *living* culture that grows up in particular places among the particular people who live there. But there is more than a whiff, in a TV cult like Kennedy's, of Roman decadence. Caesar and his heirs beguiled the people not only with bread but also with shows, and the shows not less than the bread eventually got the better of them. Ten years ago Bill Buckley opined that JFK, director and star of one of our most successful national shows, had come to be "worshipped, which word exactly describes the attitude we have toward him." An ominous development. The Romans, who after the deposition of their kings cherished *libertas* and the *res publica*, came in time to put their faith in the saving grace of their master showmen, the deified emperors. Is it possible that we are doing the same? **NR**

The Christie Challenge

Can he make it on the national level?

BY HENRY OLSEN

CHRIS CHRISTIE'S victory has predictably ignited talk of his seeking the presidency. Before his backers start reserving the moving van, though, it's worth stepping back and calmly surveying what he's accomplished. For all his notoriety and political acumen, neither his political nor his policy victories are directly translatable to the national stage.

Christie's backers argue that his tremendous margin in a deep-blue state and his much-larger-than-normal support from blue-collar whites, women, and minorities show that his appeal transcends partisan boundaries. This contention, however, ignores the context in which those margins were obtained. Plenty of Republicans have done well in non-presidential elections among non-traditional GOP voters. Former New Jersey governor Tom Kean won nearly half of the black vote in 1985; former Jersey City mayor Bret Schundler won reelection in his heavily Democratic city because of his appeal among minorities. Neither result was a harbinger of future GOP success. Schundler was unable to transfer his city appeal to his statewide run for governor, and Kean's accomplishment remains merely a ripple in an otherwise stagnant sea of GOP support among blacks.

The similar experience of former governor William Weld in Massachusetts is useful to recall. In 1994, this fiscally conservative, socially moderate Republican won reelection with almost 71 percent of the vote. He carried every county in the state, including Boston's Suffolk County, in which he received 60.4 percent. National speculation grew that the GOP had a winner, and so Weld tried to take a step up to the presidency by challenging Senator John Kerry in 1996.

Weld lost that race by seven and a half points, 52.2 to 44.7 percent, and the race's geographic breakdown mirrored national election trends rather than those Weld had had in 1994. Weld lost Suffolk by over 30 points, getting barely 30 percent, and dropped over 25 points in most other counties. Voters who were willing to pull the lever for a Republican for a state reelection were unwilling to do so when national issues were thrust to the fore.

The real question Christie backers need to ask is whether Christie's New Jersey accomplishment translates well to the national level. On that score, I'd invoke ancient Scottish law and say the verdict is not proven.

Christie owes his state dominance and national fame to two acts. First, he limited public-employee pensions at a time of fiscal straits, thereby preventing large tax hikes that the bulk of voters would have had to bear. Second, he presided over a great catastrophe, Hurricane Sandy, with skill and compassion, turning from a fiscal lion into a socially responsible lamb.

The latter experience is unlikely to help Christie go national. Rudy Giuliani presided over a much more searing and nationally prominent catastrophe, 9/11, with similar calm, compassion, and aplomb. America's Mayor, however, found that such qualities did not lead to Republican primary votes because voters were looking for something else from a potential president. And that brings us to Christie's signature accomplishment, the pension battle.

As difficult as this battle was, it was politically easy compared with the

national fiscal issues he will have to address. Public employees are a distinct minority in New Jersey; the taxes that would have had to be raised to pay for their benefits would have been borne by all. Christie showed courage in fighting the unions, but because he was addressing only compensation excesses rather than the programs themselves, he was able to rally the many—the voters—in opposition to the few.

At the federal level, the fiscal problem comes from the programs themselves. Any credible attempt to deal with our fiscal challenge without raising tax rates must involve persuading the many that restricting their own benefits is in their interest. That's going to be a hard battle and one utterly unlike any Christie has yet fought.

Furthermore, he will have to fight this battle on two fronts simultaneously, among Republicans angling to get to his right and Democrats angling to hold the center from the left. Each battle will pose a challenge the governor has not yet had to face.

The standard Republican argument on entitlements, which is made by establishment and base alike, stands Christie's New Jersey argument on its head. This argument—cut entitlements to avoid tax hikes on the well-off, which indirectly come back to hurt the many—is complicated and lacks immediate intuitive appeal to the swing voter. It makes the many appear to sacrifice on behalf of the few, and as such would immediately eliminate Christie's ability to obtain extra votes among non-traditional constituencies. This approach simply reestablishes traditional partisan lines and will cause Democratic-leaning groups to return to their party just as Massachusetts Democrats and independents returned to Kerry against Weld.

Christie cannot avoid this trap by simply invoking his purported ability to work across the aisle. Without a clear rationale as to why Democrats would submit to his will, Christie will be unable to explain either how he is substantively different from his competitors or how his plan works in behalf of everyone.

It will be relatively easy for his competitors to demonstrate this; all one needs to do is work through the ten-for-one question Byron York asked in the summer of 2011. York famously asked the 2012 GOP competitors if they would



Mr. Olsen is a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

"Let me know how this stuff works—I've always been afraid to try it myself!"



The \$5 Problem

The scandal of Americans' Third World net worth

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

AN examination of Americans' household balance sheets uncovers something to discourage everyone: For those with preferences for minimalistic government and a maximally free economy, the disastrous state of our private finances must force some skepticism about the traditional conservative belief that people are, if sufficiently incentivized, capable of making rational long-term decisions about their own economic affairs. For those better disposed toward the welfare state and government intervention in the economy, the same data should inspire a great deal of skepticism about the ability of well-intentioned political steering to produce results that are something other than catastrophic, especially for the least well-off among us. We are collectively many trillions of dollars—\$6.6 trillion, according to a recent Senate report—short of the savings we will need to maintain our standards of living in retirement, which will necessitate a greater reliance upon Social Security, itself more than \$20 trillion short of what it needs to fund its promised benefits.

First, the big picture: In terms of median adult wealth, Credit Suisse calculates that the United States, at \$38,786 per adult, is a relatively poor performer, not only lagging small outliers such as Luxembourg (\$153,967) and Switzerland (\$87,137), but also well behind Japan (\$141,410), Italy (\$123,710), and Canada (\$81,610)—with barely 20 percent of the median wealth of category leader Australia (\$193,653). It is tempting to draw facile conclusions about macroeconomic policies from these rankings, but both Scandinavian social-welfare states such as Sweden (\$41,367) and the freewheeling capitalists in Singapore (\$95,542) enjoy higher median wealth than does the United States, which comes in at No. 27 on the world rankings.

With every increase in the level of detail at which the issue is examined, our situation looks worse. Married couples do rel-

common person because of his background and his manner of speech. As such, he is perhaps the only one of the major GOP contenders being bruited about who could conceivably rally mass public opinion behind a coherent center-right economic platform. But such ability does not come from the fighting Christie or the crisis leader, nor is it directly connected to the issues involved in the pension war: It comes straight from the average-Joe part of the Christie persona.

Christie's New Jersey success ultimately rests on the notion that he represents the aspirations of average New Jerseyites against the elites. Translating that to the national stage would necessarily require him to explain to Republican elites why they must sacrifice to deal with our fiscal woes. Subsidies for business and the upper middle class will have to be cut to simply maintain today's tax rates. Such translation would also apply to average

Americans: Those who can afford to do more themselves will need to do so to avoid the tax hikes that could cripple our economy. Such a formulation would avoid the "many versus the few" trap the Democrats are waiting to deploy. Christie as the tribune for the common man would be defending the common good, asking the many to contribute for themselves.

Such an approach would draw on, but not simply repeat, Christie's New Jersey experiences. Common Man Christie can be angry at times and soft at times, so long as in each case the emotion is deployed on behalf of the many and not on behalf of the few.

Christie enthusiasts may want to believe that Christie need not learn anything new from his New Jersey experience or that the standard GOP economic playbook will fly if only we have an articulate messenger. But I think that deep down the governor knows this is what he'll have to do. And if we can see this Christie start to develop over the next year, then this November's reelection could be very consequential indeed. **NR**

accept a deal that raised taxes \$1 for every \$10 in spending cuts. Not one candidate said he would. Should such a question be posed to Christie, he would have to break ranks—or else he would have to drop his contention that he can work with Democrats, as no one believes Democrats will deal without new revenue. But an opponent could then skewer him by asking why he thinks Democrats would take that deal, given the popularity of the programs he would have to cut. Without explaining how he can persuade average Americans that such a lopsided ratio would be in their interest and not in the interest of the rich, Christie's answer would have to be solely personal: His charisma and will would compel the Democrats to make a deal. That would be patently unpersuasive to both a primary- and a general-election audience.

Christie does have a powerful advantage that was in evidence in his New Jersey experience that would help him address this national dilemma, but it is not one he has yet brought forth. Christie has an unusual ability to connect with the

THINK ABOUT IT!

*It is compliance to natural laws that bestows the gift of life to people!
And it is also natural laws that specify the ways to nurture that gift of life.*

Thus when people take credit for the successful results of their actions, in effect, they are stealing that credit from the *natural law of right action* identified by Richard W. Wetherill decades ago.

This natural law requires people to *think, say, and do what is rational and honest*, no matter what is happening.

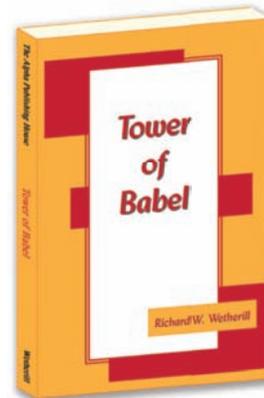
People already know that obedience to the created laws of physics enables them to benefit from each law's successful application—gravity for example.

All through the ages, without realizing their mistake, people have continued claiming credit for any of their actions that actually do succeed. Failures tend to be blamed on bad luck or a variety of other things.

Because that human, credit-seeking attitude continually contradicts the creator's intended rational, honest attitude for mankind, society's problems and troubles remain *unavoidable* and *unsolvable*.

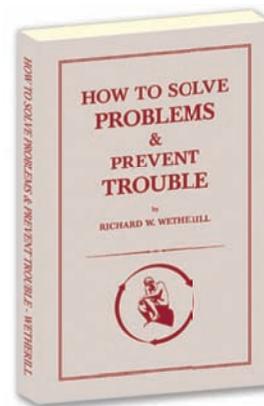
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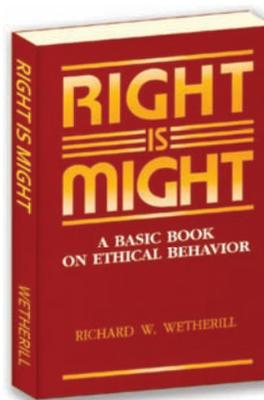
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- Alex





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actively well: A study by Mariko Chang incorporating data from the Survey of Consumer Finances finds that married couples between the ages of 35 and 49 have a median net worth of \$134,300, and those 50–64 have a median net worth of nearly \$300,000. But for single men, that number drops precipitously: \$42,050 for the younger group and \$105,000 for the older. Single women take yet another step down, and a big one: \$15,000 for the 35–49 group, \$96,630 for the 50–64 group. The disparity between racial groups is pronounced: Sampie Terreblanche, a professor at Stellenbosch University, calculates that black Americans in the Age of Obama are worse off vis-à-vis their white neighbors than black South Africans were relative to their white countrymen under apartheid; the average black man in the United States has a net worth somewhere between that of the average adult in Swaziland and Sri Lanka. Chang calculates that 15 percent of married white households (ages 18–64) have a net worth that is zero or negative, but it is 28 percent for married blacks and 31 percent for married Hispanics. Nearly half of single black and Hispanic women have zero or negative net worth. Single white women in their prime earning years (ages 36 to 49) have a median net worth of \$42,600; black and Hispanic single women in that same age group have a median net worth of—this is not a typo—\$5.

One finicky. That's a venti frappuccino at Starbucks, not a life's savings.

Net worth is the sum of savings and debt, and less well-off Americans have problems on both fronts. Some 82 percent of married whites own their homes, with median equity of \$104,000, two-thirds of them own stocks, with a median portfolio value of \$45,000, and nearly a fourth of them own a business, with a median value of \$99,000. A quarter of single black men do not even have a bank account, only a third of single black women own a home, only 48 percent of married blacks and 28 percent of married Hispanics own stocks. White women are more likely to own their homes than are non-white women, but they have on average smaller mortgages. Whites finish college at higher rates than non-whites, but fewer of them have student-loan debt. Hispanic men owe 50 percent more on their credit cards than white men do.

There are several conclusions to take

away from this. One is that Charles Murray is right about the cultural divorce between well-off America and dysfunctional America. The median net worth of a married couple far exceeds that of a single man and a single woman combined. It may be that married people get rich, or it may be that rich people get married. It's probably a bit of both, and the two are mutually reinforcing. What is much clearer is that women who have children outside of marriage end up being the poor mothers of poor children. But the declining economic prospects of a great many young American men make them less likely to marry even if they want to.

The interaction between policy and culture is difficult to untangle. The Dutch, for example, have a famously laissez-faire attitude toward marriage (a trio was married in 2005), but their out-of-wedlock birthrate is not very different from the overall American rate—though it is far lower than the black-American rate and the Hispanic-American rate. Being an unmarried Dutch woman does not correlate as strongly with being poor or having a relatively low rate of savings—though the Dutch, in general, save even less than Americans do. You find poor countries at both ends of the household-savings-rate distribution (high-savings China, low-savings Jamaica); in the middle you'll find the United States, with a rate comparable to that of Canada or Italy, though well below the German or Australian rate.

There are two political problems here: One is government consumption, the other is government steering. With total (federal, state, and local) spending amounting to 42 percent of GDP, according to the Heritage Foundation, the United States is a lot closer to the free-spending Netherlands (50 percent of GDP) than it is to thrifty Singapore (17 percent of GDP), and far more like Canada (43 percent) than Australia (35 percent). And the United States has a good deal less to show for it. The great scandal of American life is that we pay for German levels of government without enjoying the related benefits. These expenses are passed on in both explicit and hidden taxes, both of which contribute to our relatively low household wealth, but they do not support the sort of reliable safety net that mitigates the effects of relatively low savings in places such as the Netherlands.

So the government consumes too much, but it also pushes private consumption in

the wrong direction. The great example of this was the housing bubble, the collapse of which has contributed significantly to the reduction of Americans' net worth. But that is simply a dramatic example of a more general trend: encouraging low interest rates, consumer spending, and consumer borrowing as the medicine for every economic ailment we experience, from the dot-com retreat to the millennial recession to the housing bust. We have spent a generation encouraging Americans to use their houses as substitutes for savings accounts on the theory that outsized returns on the former would offset negligible returns on the latter, even though most Americans have to take on the largest loans they will ever carry to participate in that market. Better-off Americans save through stocks and other financial instruments, but those carry risks and costs that keep most lower-income Americans from availing themselves of their long-term benefits, even as they forgo such low-return conventional savings instruments as cash accounts and certificates of deposit. The problem is that the same higher interest rates that would make saving more attractive threaten the fiscal stability of the federal government, which is the world's largest debtor. This is a national financial pickle that there is no easy way out of.

At the same time, those \$0.00-net-worth households and \$5 households are an enduring problem, our most serious domestic problem after the national debt. The racial and cultural fault lines that run through those household balance sheets separate the policymaking elite from those whose interests they purport to serve, and crossing over them is no small task. But conservatives looking for an issue to connect them with voters in zip codes outside their traditional strongholds, who correctly intuit that one more chorus of "Let's Cut Income-Tax Rates" is not going to get the job done—politically or economically—might begin by pointing out that we have an expensive welfare state that has not contributed much to the measurable welfare of its so-called beneficiaries, that the War on Poverty has been a much larger and costlier disappointment than the War in Iraq, and that the political party that has wrapped itself in the mantle of justice for the black and the brown has left a lot of them with nothing more than couch-cushion money to show for themselves. **NR**

The E-Word

Thoughts on the use and abuse of 'establishment'

BY JAY NORDLINGER

WHEN we were schoolkids, we were taught that the longest word was "antidis-establishmentarianism." Lately, I've been thinking that the most *common* word is "establishment"—as in "establishment Republican." I read it every day, especially in the conservative press. I read it in virtually every article about politics, certainly in articles about the Republican party. And I find it nearly as empty and cheap as it is common.

At the end of October, a reporter for the Associated Press wrote, "The GOP is struggling to control tensions between its tea party and establishment wings and watching approval ratings sink to record lows." Further on in his article, he reached for different language, to describe the same division. He spoke of "business-oriented Republicans and the GOP's more ideological wing." None of these words will quite do.

"Establishment" really got going in the 1950s, when Henry Fairlie, the famed British journalist, employed it. He used it to mean "the whole matrix of official and social relations within which power is exercised." There have always been people eager to join the establishment (and if you want to make it seem really powerful and fixed, you use a capital E). They want to go to the right school, or work for the right firm, or belong to the right club. Dreaming on a grand scale, they may aspire to the Trilateral Commission or the Bilderberg Group.

On the flip side, there have always been people eager to oppose the establishment, or to give the impression of doing so—to stand up to the Man. "Hey, Johnny, what're you rebelling against?" asks the girl in *The Wild One*. "Whaddaya got?" answers Marlon Brando.

I'm not entirely sure what an establishment Republican is. Someone elected to

office? Someone who has a position of serious responsibility? Someone who has been around for a while? Who doesn't huff and puff? Speaking of puffing, there used to be smoke-filled rooms, in which party bosses selected candidates. Now we have primaries—and voters, to a considerable degree, are the bosses.

The definition of "establishment Republican," I think, is partly emotional. The term is almost always used vituperatively. I don't think anyone has ever called *himself* an "establishment Republican." The term means something like, "I disagree with you, I think I'm to the right of you, I resent you, get out of the way." It is the latest form of derogation. A friend of mine said the other day—not in a light vein, but with genuine concern—"Establishment" is the new 'neocon.'"

In December 2011, as the presidential primaries loomed, we at NATIONAL REVIEW published an editorial about those primaries. We counseled against nominating Newt Gingrich, among others. Shortly after, a colleague poked his head into my office and said, "They're calling us the E-word." Who was "they"? Certain conservative activists. What was the E-word? "Establishment." When I myself wrote critically of Gingrich, or Michele Bachmann, or Herman Cain, I too was called "establishment" (by angry e-mailers). That was kind of amusing. I held essentially the same views I'd held when I was working at a golf course for minimum wage.

I am in the position of many conservatives: blasted from the left for being Attila the Hun; blasted from the right for *not* being Attila the Hun. (Just to be clear: I am, indeed, Attila the Hun.)

The current poster boy for establishment Republicanism is Mitch McConnell—one of the smartest, ablest, most valuable conservatives in America. He has performed any number of services (such as standing athwart unconstitutional, or unwise, limits on campaign finance). We're lucky to have him in politics. But now he wears a scarlet E.

Probably, it's the position—McConnell is the Republican leader in the Senate. I have had occasion to recall something with my NR colleague Michael Potemra, who worked in the Senate for twelve years: When Howard Baker was Republican leader, a lot of us said, "We need to get rid of that moderate old com-

promiser and replace him with a *real* conservative, like Bob Dole.” When Dole was leader, we said, “We need to get rid of that moderate old compromiser and replace him with a *real* conservative, like Trent Lott.” When Lott was leader . . .

Baker went on to serve as chief of staff to that marshmallow President Reagan. And I find Dole a particularly interesting case: He was always known as a right-winger, a true-believing junkyard dog. President Ford had included him on the 1976 ticket, dumping the incumbent vice president, Nelson Rockefeller. In his debate against Walter Mondale that year, Dole inveighed against the “Democrat wars” of the 20th century: World War I, World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. (A sign of proper wingery is the use of “Democrat” as an adjective.) These days, some conservatives think of him as not much different from Rocky.

I was a Dole intern in 1984, the year he became Republican leader in the Senate. There was a mixture of Republicans in that body. We had true-blue, foursquare

conservatives, such as the Idahoans, Jim McClure and Steve Symms. (McClure, in fact, ran for the leadership position that year, to the right of Dole. I think my feelings were slightly torn.) The Idahoans were the most conservative pairing—unless you count the North Carolinians, Jesse Helms and John East. (The wheelchair-bound East was known, usually affectionately, as Helms on Wheels.)

But there were also moderates and liberals: the Oregonians, Mark Hatfield and Bob Packwood; the Pennsylvanians, John Heinz and Arlen Specter. We also had Chuck Percy of Illinois, Mac Mathias of Maryland, John Chafee of Rhode Island, and Bill Cohen of Maine, among others. (Cohen ended up in a Clinton cabinet, as defense secretary.)

The most liberal Republican of all, probably, was Lowell Weicker. Plenty of us wanted him to up and leave the party. But “I’ll always be the turd in the punchbowl,” he said. Like other politicians, he broke his promise: He left the GOP in 1990, becoming gover-

nor of Connecticut under a third-party banner.

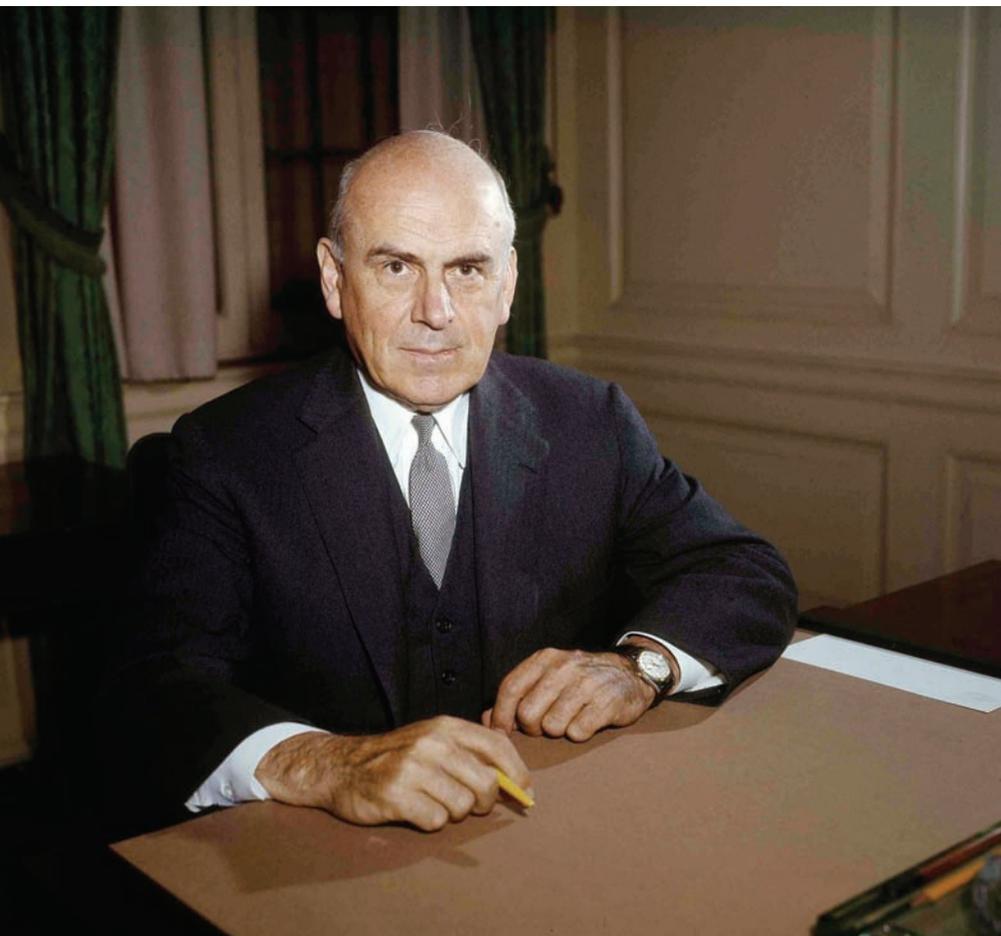
Today, there are no liberal Republicans in the Senate, and scarcely a moderate—maybe Susan Collins of Maine? There are no Rockefeller Republicans anywhere, so far as I’m aware. But, strangely enough, that term has come back into vogue: I know people who revere Ronald Reagan, and who worked for him, who have been tagged as “Rockefeller Republicans”—because they want to oppose Obamacare in ways other than their critics want.

Reagan, too, was attacked from the right: He raised taxes, amnestied illegals, pursued arms control, racked up debt. Conservatives liked to quip, with a sigh, “None of this would be happening if Ronald Reagan were still alive.”

Over in the House, though, there was genuine revolutionary, anti-establishment action: Newt and the boys were forming the Conservative Opportunity Society. This was after the 1982 elections, in which Republicans took a hit. They wanted to offer the public a positive agenda (rather than merely a blocking or temporizing one). And they wanted to reverse the minority mentality represented by our House leader, Bob Michel—a moderate and a swell guy. He played golf with Tip O’Neill, which, reasonably or not, bothered the hell out of us righties. Anyway, the Republicans triumphed at the polls in 1994, and Newt became speaker.

There is such a thing, no doubt, as a go-along, get-along mentality: a contentment with the status quo, a disinclination to fight. But there is not much of that in the Republican party today. Republicans have developed a healthy appetite for success. So, what is our division now? At the end of 1964, after the “Goldwater debacle,” as it was called, Robert Novak published a book called “The Agony of the G.O.P.” It told of the warfare between the Goldwater wing and the Rockefeller wing (roughly speaking). That was a real division. And today?

Much of the turbulence, or “agony,” I think, has to do with style. I repeatedly hear Mitt Romney described as a “moderate.” Why? He is a free-marketeer, a traditionalist, and a hawk. But his manner is moderate—he’s too polite or polished for some. I have noticed something curious over the years: If you espouse conservative positions in a moderate way, you may well be called a moderate. If you espouse



John J. McCloy: president of the World Bank, chairman of Chase Manhattan, and the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Ford Foundation—now that's establishment.

moderate positions in an immoderate way, you may well be designated a “real conservative.”

Obviously, governing is not for the pure, although we expect our office-holders to remember principle. Almost everyone who gets into a significant governing position is viewed by someone as a sell-out. Reagan certainly found this out (although he is now a conservative saint). By much of the Right, George W. Bush is seen as a moderate, an “establishment” type. But he was also the one who grabbed the “third rail,” trying to reform Social Security, a national sacred cow. And he ran up against an immense force, which might be called “the establishment.”

As of now, my friend Ted Cruz, the Texas senator, is the darling of the anti-establishmentarians. But if he becomes president, or even the GOP nominee, he’ll disappoint many of them. And he will be the same sterling conservative, the same Reaganite, he was years ago, when he and I jawed and schemed at Earl Campbell’s barbecue place in Austin.

No one who writes, no one who talks, can live without labels. We need our shorthands, generalizations, and crutches. In 2010, some people formed a group called “No Labels” (motto: “Stop fighting, start fixing”). But without labels, you’re practically mute. I have often used “establishment media,” instead of “mainstream media,” to describe the *New York Times*, *60 Minutes*, the *Today* show—you know. But labels can also be lazy and misleading.

In early 2003, a bunch of us were sitting around, figuring out where we stood on the impending Iraq War. A colleague said, “I know what the *neoconservative* position is, but what’s the *conservative* position?” In reality, there was no cupboard from which you could pluck conservative positions (or neoconservative ones). You had to think: “What’s the right thing to do, or the least wrong thing to do? What is the wisest or most palatable of the options?”

It may be convenient to label something “tea party” or “establishment,” “conservative” or “moderate,” “hard-core” or “squishy.” But it may be better to ask whether that thing is right or wrong, smart or dumb, promising or unpromising. I, for one, have had it with “establishment,” which has been used with gross promiscuity. I have an E-word of my own: Enough. **NR**

Eric The Red

*A report from Professor Hobsbawm’s
memorial service*

BY MATTHEW WALTHER

THE history of Western fashion in the 20th century will be very much impoverished if those who come to write it fail to emphasize the seminal importance of something I like to call “U. Marxist chic.” You know what I mean: three-piece tweeds, baggy elbow-patched cardigans, white oxfords with or without patterns (never colored), green or brown wool ties, simple brown loafers. I remember a professor of mine, nothing short of a fashion guru in his billowing, tentlike sweaters and threadbare trousers, who argued that, 60-plus million dead or nay, the Soviet experiment had been vindicated by the USSR’s female-literacy rate, which he assured me had been extraordinarily high. Why do only unrepentant Stalinists wear such fine old clothes?

I thought of my professor and his unpleasant political views, which still seem to me at odds with his very agreeable getup, when I attended a memorial service last month for Eric Hobsbawm, the perpetually tweeded and bespectacled English Marxist historian, university lecturer, sometime jazz critic, and card-carrying member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), who died last year at age 95. When the Hobsbawms of the world die, either the best or the very worst tends to be brought out in people. Thus, Bruce Bawer and A. N. Wilson were in fine form, in *FrontPage* and the *Daily Mail*, respectively, laying into Hobsbawm for, among other things, his championing of the Nazi–Soviet pact, his strange omission of Katyn and the Warsaw uprising from his account of the Second World War in *The Age of Extremes*, and his meh

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response to the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. Even the obituary that ran in the *New York Times* took the trouble to point out that his allegiance to the party was nothing short of fanatical, faltering not even when Peter Fryer, foreign correspondent for the CPGB’s own house rag, the *Daily Worker*, was booted out in 1956 for reporting accurately on the Hungarian uprising. Hobsbawm’s affiliation with the CPGB simply withered away in 1989. (According to Christopher Hitchens, no renewal form came in the mail, and Hobsbawm didn’t bother to ask after one.) Meanwhile, on the website of *The American Conservative*, Paul Gottfried praised Hobsbawm for not being a “fashionable, politically correct leftist,” as if being out and proud about one’s support for state-sponsored mass murder were somehow comparable to opposing affirmative action publicly. Age of Extremes indeed!

I’ve always had a hard time making up my mind about Hobsbawm. There is no denying his intelligence and erudition. He spoke five languages fluently, and read at least three more. He wrote or edited nearly 30 books and hundreds of essays about everything from bandits, tenant farmers, and trumpet players to the origins of fascism, the death of the British Empire, and the emergence of youth culture in the West. *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), a collection of essays he co-edited, is organized around the notion that traditions, whatever their value, often arise out of arbitrary, indeed sometimes outright venal circumstances. His cultural criticism of so-called late capitalism calls to mind the work of, say, Irving Kristol, who could muster only two cheers for it. Toward the end of his life Hobsbawm worried, presciently, about entire generations growing up with no sense of history, a development that he saw leading to an age of unfettered narcissism and vulgarity. While he dismissed much of popular culture as an aesthetic blind alley, heaping scorn upon such “popular divinities” as Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, he had even less patience for the postmodern avant-garde and reserved especial contempt for performance art (“a series of increasingly desperate gimmicks”).

Hobsbawm’s personal conduct was in some respects admirable. Born in Egypt in 1917 to an English father and an Austrian mother, both of whom were

Jewish, Hobsbawm was an orphan in Vienna by the age of 14, the same age at which he became a Communist. After the death of his father, he worked for some time as a tutor of English—the language spoken in the Hobsbawm household—to support his mother, his sister Nancy, and himself. He and Nancy were eventually adopted by his maternal aunt and uncle in Berlin, a city from which their family fled in 1933 hoping to escape both Hitler and (a bigger threat at the time, according to Hobsbawm) the German economic slump. Despite his craven pamphleteering on behalf of a Nazi–Soviet alliance, he eventually served Britain in a dogged if undistinguished manner during the war, which is more than can be said for some of his avowedly anti-fascist contemporaries, such as W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood, both of whom sailed for America in 1939. His 1951 divorce from his first wife notwithstanding—to say nothing of an affair that led to a son,



Joshua, born out of wedlock the same year—he seems to have been keenly devoted to family life, especially during his last years.

Yet surely he believed many things that anyone half as clever as the winner of the 2003 Balzan Prize for European History (purse: 1 million Swiss francs) would rightly dismiss as at best risible and at worst simply evil. “Communist Parties were not for romantics,” he wrote in his memoir *Interesting Times: A Twentieth-Century Life* (2003). “The appeal of the Party was that it got things done when others did not”—which is certainly one way of putting it. As a young immigrant in Britain, he told us, he “refused all contact with the suburban petit bourgeoisie which I naturally regarded with contempt.” This disdain for the ordinary English middle class would eventually extend to Nancy, who became a parochial Tory.

And often worse than what he said was what he failed or refused to say. Only Hobsbawm could have begun an essay by correctly asserting that “the 20th century was the most murderous in recorded history” and then wrapped up some 4,000 words later without having made a single reference to the central role that the Communist regimes he had spent decades defending played in bringing about this miserable state of affairs.

The memorial service took place in Greenwich Village at the New School, where Hobsbawm taught from 1984 to 1997. Before the service began, those who arrived early watched a slideshow consisting mainly of family photographs: Hobsbawm alone on horseback or in his library, with his second wife at parties and in generic Central European capital scenes, with numerous grandchildren sitting on a sofa alongside a stuffed version of Bullseye, the Target Corporation’s bull-terrier mascot.

For the most part the service was a dullish affair. David Van Zandt, the New School’s president, spoke warmly but vaguely about “Eric’s achievements.” (For reasons that were never made clear to me, all the speakers, even the music professor who claimed never to have been introduced to him, referred to Hobsbawm as “Eric.”) Colleagues praised Hobsbawm’s authoritative but informal teaching methods and his flashy—by the standards of British academic Marxists, anyway—prose style.

Giorgio Napolitano, Italy’s longtime president and a former comrade himself, spoke via a recorded message, reading from a sheet of paper without looking up at the camera. (He and Hobsbawm had met—once—in 1977.) A dean, lapsing into academic bureaucratese, lamented that the New School may never again have “an Eric-type hire.” Still, I learned a few things that one wouldn’t necessarily have gleaned from Hobsbawm’s memoirs. He was a great fan of Cel-Ray, the, ahem, flavorful vegetable soda, and a bit of a handyman. Ira Katznelson, one of Hobsbawm’s New School associates, recounted that his daughter once came home from Horace Mann and announced that a funny thing had happened at school that day: In her history class they had read an essay by a man with the same name as that carpenter who was always coming over for dinner.

Most of the goodwill I felt toward him after hearing about what a loving grandpa he had been was erased, however, when I remembered that he is supposed once to have said, at a dinner at which David Pryce-Jones (who reported the conversation in the October 29, 2012, issue of *NATIONAL REVIEW*) was present, that he hoped a nuclear bomb would fall on Israel. It would be, he seems to have claimed, worth the deaths of some 5 million Jews to prevent the deaths of at least 200 million people in some unspecified future world war. At best this is what some psychiatrists call “asyndetic thinking”; at worst, a perverse kind of anti-Semitism coming from a man who, oddly enough, asked that Kaddish be said for him, a request that was granted at his funeral last fall.

How did someone as intelligent and cultivated as Hobsbawm believe such nasty things? Bertrand Russell, who held any number of such views himself, famously decried the pervasiveness of opinions “so absurd that only very learned men could possibly adopt them.” Hobsbawm was a very learned man, and many of his opinions were absurd. Frequently they were immoral and vicious as well. It is far too early to say which, if any, of his writings—*Primitive Rebels*, the *Ages* tetralogy, his jazz columns—will survive, but I will say that if Hobsbawm is read 50 or 100 years from now, it will probably be despite rather than because of his politics.

NR

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Schadenfreudarama

Obamacare is a joke, so why not laugh at it?

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

To paraphrase Oscar Wilde, you'd have to have a heart of stone not to laugh at the unraveling of Obamacare.

First, the obligatory caveats. It is no laughing matter that millions of Americans' lives have been thrown into anxious chaos as they lose their health insurance, their doctors, their money, or all three. Nor is it particularly amusing to think of the incredible waste of time and tax dollars that has gone into Obamacare's construction. And the still-unfolding violence that this misbegotten legislation will visit on the economy and our liberties is not funny either. This very magazine has been downright funereal about the brazen and unconstitutional seizure of one sixth of the economy, and rightly so.

But come on, people.

If you can't take some joy, some modicum of relief and mirth, in the unprecedentedly spectacular beclowning of the president, his administration, its enablers, and, to no small degree, liberalism itself, then you need to ask yourself why you're following politics in the first place. Because, frankly, this has been one of the most enjoyable political moments of my lifetime. I wake up in the morning and rush to find my just-delivered newspaper with a joyful expectation of worsening news so intense, I feel like Morgan Freeman should be narrating my trek to the front lawn. Indeed, not since Dan Rather handcuffed himself to a fraudulent typewriter, hurled it into the abyss, and saw his career plummet like Michael Moore jumping into a swimming pool have I enjoyed a story more.

Alas, the English language is not well equipped to capture the sensation I'm describing, which is why we must all thank the Germans for giving us the term "schadenfreude"—the joy one feels at the misfortune or failure of others. The primary well-spring of schadenfreude can be attributed to Barack Obama's

hubris—another immigrant word, which means a sinful pride or arrogance that causes someone to believe he has a godlike immunity to the rules of life.

The hubris of our ocean-commanding commander-in-chief surely isn't news to readers of this magazine. He's said that he's smarter and better than everyone who works for him. His wife informed us that he has "brought us out of the dark and into the light." The man defined sin itself as "being out of alignment with my values." We may be the ones we've been waiting for, but at the same time, everyone has been waiting for him. Or as he put it in 2007, "Every place is Barack Obama country once Barack Obama's been there."

In every tale of hubris, the transgressor is eventually slapped across the face with the semi-frozen flounder of reality. The Greeks had a god, Nemesis, whose scythe performed the same function. It was Nemesis who lured Narcissus to the pool where he fell in love with his own reflection. Admittedly, most of Nemesis's walk-on roles were in the Greek tragedies, but in the modern era, comeuppance-for-the-arrogant is more often found in comedies, and the "rollout" of Healthcare.gov has been downright hilarious. (I put quotation marks around "rollout" because the term implies actual rolling, and this thing has moved as gracefully as a grand piano in a peat bog.) But, as the president says, "it's more than a website." Indeed, the whole law is coming apart like a papier-mâché yacht in rough waters. The media feeding frenzy it has triggered from so many journalistic lapdogs has been both so funny and so poignant, it reminds me of nothing more than the climax of the classic film *Air Bud*, when the lovable basketball-playing golden retriever finally decides to maul the dog-abusing clown.

ROMAN GENN

DURING the government shutdown, Barack Obama held fast, heroically refusing to give an inch to the hostage-taking, barbaric orcs of the Tea Party who insisted on delaying Obamacare. It was a triumph for the master strategist in the White House, who finally maneuvered the Republicans into revealing their extremism. But we didn't know something back then: Obama desperately needed a delay of Healthcare.gov. In his arrogance, though, he couldn't bring himself to admit it. The other possibility is that he is such an incompetent manager, who has cultivated such a culture of yes-men, that he was completely in the dark about the problems. This is how you know we're in the political sweet spot: when the only plausible excuses for the administration are equally disastrous indictments.

Either way, if Obama were a tenth as good a politician as he thinks he is, he could have blamed the delay he desperately needed on his political enemies, calling them "hostage-takers" even as he secretly understood they had rescued his most beloved hostage from his own incompetence. Instead, on September 26, he went out and told an adoring audience: "On October 1, millions of Americans . . . will finally be able to buy quality, affordable health insurance. In five days." "Starting Tuesday," he added, Americans will be able to "compare and purchase affordable health-insurance plans, side by side, the same way you shop for a plane ticket on Kayak—same way you shop for a TV on Amazon. You just go on and you start looking, and here are all the options." Come on, that's hilarious.

Okay, maybe he didn't know then what bad shape the website was in. But how to explain the president's remarks three weeks after the debut of Healthcare.gov? Even if it's true that the president only hears about bad news from the newspapers, by then the papers were full of reports that Healthcare.gov worked about as well as a Somali superconducting supercollider. Obama knew that Healthcare.gov was a fiasco, and that the "navigators" used the same broken website that consumers had spent days poking at like Chinatown chickens in an abandoned tic-tac-toe machine, desperately but fruitlessly trying to get some reward.

And yet the president strode out into the Rose Garden anyway and told millions of Americans they could buy their coverage by phone. He told them the 1-800 operators were standing by. He told them it would take only 25 minutes to apply. None of these things were true. In his mind, Obama surely thought he was putting the issue to rest, like Zeus declaring that Odysseus would make it home alive. But here's the thing: All that Zeus needs to do to make something happen is to say it. When Barack Obama says things, reality doesn't bend to his will. Somehow, Barack Obama has been led to believe that his job is simply to go out and say things, as if saying things alone could change facts on the ground. So while I'm sure he thinks he sounded like the voice of eternal truth, in reality he sounded like the infomercial spokesman played by Chevy Chase in the old *Saturday Night Live* skit:

WIFE (GILDA RADNER): New Shimmer is a floor wax!
 HUSBAND (DAN AYKROYD): No, new Shimmer is a dessert topping!
 WIFE: It's a floor wax!
 HUSBAND: It's a dessert topping!
 WIFE: It's a floor wax, I'm telling you!
 HUSBAND: It's a dessert topping, you cow!
 SPOKESMAN [enters quickly]: Hey, hey, hey, calm down, you two. New Shimmer is a floor wax and a dessert topping! Here, I'll spray some on your mop . . . and some on your butterscotch pudding . . .
 HUSBAND [eating while wife mops]: Mmmmm, tastes terrific!
 WIFE: And just look at that shine! But will it last?
 SPOKESMAN: Hey, outlasts every other leading floor wax, two to one. It's durable, and it's scuff-resistant.
 HUSBAND: And it's delicious!

BUT not as delicious as the tears of his praetorian guard. First of all, every day Jay Carney looks even more like a little boy who put on his dad's suit. You have to wonder what goes on in his mind, as a former journalist, when he tells his former colleagues that "the American forces have been completely destroyed with minimal Iraqi casualties." (Oh, wait, that was Baghdad Bob. I get them confused.) And what about Dan Pfeiffer going on the Sunday shows to insist that no American should believe his or her lying eyes?

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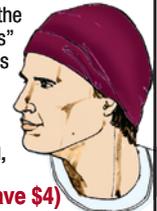
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On October 1, Media Matters for America—David Brock’s sweatshop for twentysomethings who couldn’t get an internship at the DNC—raced to defend the crashed website as a sign of success, in keeping with the idea that all Obama failures are further proof of his awesomeness: “Right-Wing Media Frantically Spin Obamacare Exchange Success Into Failure.” Taking their cues from the White House, MMFA insisted that the administration’s only mistake was failing to appreciate just how popular the program would be. “Right-wing media were quick to jump on the problems, declaring them a sign of the law’s shortcomings rather than its popularity,” cackled MMFA’s Samantha Wyatt. She went on to mock various Fox News journalists and, of course, Rush Limbaugh for calling the disastrous launch a disaster. Meanwhile, Ezra Klein called the initial popularity of the site exactly “what the Republicans were afraid of.” Now even Klein has turned on the White House—more in sorrow than in anger, to be sure. When the White House has lost Ezra Klein . . . well, it still has the cast of *Morning Joe*. No, wait—even they have abandoned the president. Heh.

To be sure, there was some apparent plausibility to the claim that the website was working only too well, because the White House lied so confidently about what was going on. Few critics grasped at first that this was going to be the Charlie Sheen of IT launches—a spectacularly mortifying failure, punctuated with desperate shrieks of “Winning!”

It wasn’t until later that we learned that, of the uncountable hordes flocking to the federal exchanges that first day, the number who actually registered for an insurance plan totaled exactly six. At that rate, Obamacare would reach its target of 7 million enrollees around the year 5013, or 3022 A.O. (Anno Obamae).

Obviously, the website will get better. It could hardly get worse, short of a finding that it causes irritable bowel syndrome. Indeed, on the second day, the number of enrollees hit 248, according to the same leaked contractor memos. But the site needs to be able to handle tens of thousands of enrollees per day.

The new target date for when Obama can plausibly say, “Behold the power of this fully functional website!” is November 30. Politically speaking, with every day still producing another terrible story for the White House, that is the sort of timeline that would make Godot look punctual. And that’s if they hit the deadline. So far, the press has been unable to produce a prominent IT expert willing to say on the record that the target date is feasible. But let’s assume HHS secretary Kathleen Sebelius makes the most of that copy of *Web Sites for Dummies* that a protester handed her at a town-hall meeting last week. Then what?

We have a hint from Colorado, where the state’s own version of Healthcare.gov has been up and running. Al Jazeera America interviewed one of Colorado’s exchange navigators a month after the debut. When asked how many people she had signed up, she replied, “So far, no one. Thus far everybody has taken a look at the rates and they’ve walked out the door. There’s sticker shock. They just can’t afford it.” Medicaid has been driving most of the enrollments, and those who have ended up in private plans are older and poorer on average than the planners had hoped. Every day, the supposedly conspiratorial right-wing smear that Obama cared more about economic redistribution than he did about the middle class or economic growth looks more reasonable. Surely we’re allowed to say, “We told you so”?

As a matter of public policy and fiscal health, this is a mixed bag. It’s good that poor sick people without insurance coverage are getting something. On the other side of the scale, we have the fact that the country is racing towards entitlement-fueled bankruptcy. But if you can overlook that, yippee!

But as a political and ideological matter, this is beyond fantastic. For years we’ve been told that Democrats were more “reality-based,” that “facts have a liberal bias,” in the words of Paul Krugman, and that if they could just have their way, they could fix all of our problems. No one represented this arrogant promise more than Barack Obama himself. But, with an irony so rich Sophocles could have written the script, the only way he could get his signature legislation passed was to baldly and brazenly lie about it, over and over and over again. He created a rhetorical cloud castle where no one would lose his insurance, every family would save thousands of dollars, and millions of the uninsured would suddenly get coverage. Anyone who doubted this was called a fool or a liar, or even a racist. It was, in the parlance of liberalism, a “false choice” to assert that Obamacare couldn’t be a floor wax *and* a dessert topping.

And all of this—every bit of it—is their own fault. The bedraggled cadres of Obama’s defenders are valiantly trying to blame it all on Republican sabotage: The Obama administration had to keep the whole thing secret for fear of “feeding the opposition,” in the words of a *Washington Post* reconstruction of the debacle. But when you read the stories, if you replace phrases like “keep the Republicans from finding out” with the more accurate “keep the public from finding out,” you’ll get a better sense of things. The Obama White House, by which I mean the Obama campaign, was desperate to keep voters from grasping the scope of its misinformation campaign until after the election. And then, after the election, it was afraid to let the public know what they’d been misinformed about.

The argument against gloating holds that conservatives should want Obamacare to succeed even though we said all along it couldn’t. It’s such an odd argument, particularly since the Democrats’ lies were of the first order, in that Obama’s aides actually debated and discussed them, no doubt presenting them to focus groups like a jar of “new Shimmer, now an erectile-dysfunction treatment and paint thinner all in one!”

When a product is brought to market and the market discovers—as it eventually has to—that the advertising wasn’t merely a tissue of lies but a geological stratum of lies, the utterly fair and justified response from the critics is “I told you so!”—not “Let’s make this thing bipartisan now.” That’s particularly true when the president continues to lie. On September 26 he said, “If you already have health care, you don’t have to do anything” to keep your plan. On November 3 he said, “What we said was you could keep [your plan] if it hasn’t been changed.” Who knew that dozens of flat declarative statements—“You can keep your plan. Period”—were trailed by a cloud of asterisks like so many invisible fireflies?

If Obamacare had been a shining success from Day One, do you think the Democrats would be in the mood to share the credit? Then why should Republicans be in more of a mood to share the blame?

Feel free to cross your fingers that reality will bend to the gravitational pull of Obama’s stellar ego, his invincible hubris. As for me, I’ll be sitting on the sidelines cheering on Nemesis, with joy in my heart.

NR

A New Agenda

Charting a course from our crossroads

BY MIKE LEE

WHAT do we do next, not only in the fight to stop Obamacare but, more generally, to advance a larger, positive vision of America and craft a practical plan to get us there?

One of conservatives' defining virtues is our insistence on learning from history. And in recent weeks, I have come to believe the most instructive history that conservatives can learn from today is our own: in particular, the history of the conservative movement and the Republican party in the late 1970s. In this history, conservatives today can find hope and encouragement, but also an urgent challenge.

By 1977, the Republican party was in disarray. The party establishment had been discredited by political failure and policy debacles, foreign and domestic. A new generation of grassroots conservatives was rising up to challenge the establishment.

The culmination of that challenge was Ronald Reagan's 1976 primary campaign against a far less conservative, establishment incumbent. That campaign failed, of course, and was derided by Washington insiders as a foolish "civil war" that ultimately served only to elect Democrats. In other words, we have been here before. And, of course, we know now that Reagan and the conservative movement were vindicated in 1980.

So it is tempting for conservatives today to believe that history is on the verge of repeating itself, and that our struggles with the Republican establishment are only a prelude to pre-ordained victory, and our own vindication—our generation's 1980—is just around the corner.

But there is still a piece missing, a glaring difference between the successful conservative challenge to the Washington establishment in the late 1970s and our challenge to the establishment today. Much of the difference can be found in the years between 1976 and 1980—when the systematic translation of conservatism's bedrock principles into new and innovative policy reforms occurred.

In *The Conservative Mind*, Russell Kirk observed that "conservatives inherit from [Edmund] Burke a talent for re-expressing their convictions to fit the time."

That is precisely what the conservatives of the late 1970s did. The ideas that defined and propelled the Reagan Revolution did not come down from a mountain etched in stone tablets. They were forged in an open, roiling, diverse debate about how conservatism could truly meet the challenges of that day. That debate invited all conservatives and, as we now know, elevated the best.

There was Jack Kemp, advancing supply-side economics to combat economic stagnancy. There were James Buckley and Henry Hyde, taking up the cause of the unborn after *Roe v. Wade*. There was Milton Friedman, promoting the practical and moral superiority of free enterprise. There were Cold Warriors like

Irving Kristol and Jeane Kirkpatrick, challenging the premise of peaceful coexistence and moral equivalence with the Soviets.

There were Peter Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, arguing in *To Empower People* that the "mediating institutions" of civil society protected and promoted human happiness more effectively than big-government programs. There were Professors Robert Bork and Antonin Scalia, challenging the received wisdom of constitutional interpretation laid down by the Warren Court. There were think tanks such as the American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, and the new Cato Institute, and a flowering of grassroots organizations around the country.

Together, that generation of conservatives transformed a movement that was anti-statist, anti-Communist, and anti-establishment and made it pro-reform.

Contrary to the establishment's complaints, conservatives in the late 1970s did not start a "civil war." They started a (mostly) civil debate. And because of that confident and deeply conservative choice—to argue rather than quarrel, to persuade rather than simply purge—the leaders of the establishment never knew what hit them. Put simply, in 1976, the conservative movement found a leader for the ages, yet it still failed. By 1980, the movement had forged an agenda for its time, and only then did it succeed.

What that generation did—comprehensively re-expressing conservative convictions to fit the time—the GOP has not done since. Conservative activists and intellectuals are still providing new energy and producing new ideas. But on the whole, elected Republicans and candidates have not held up our end. Instead of emulating those earlier conservatives, too many Republicans today mimic them—still advocating policies from a bygone age.

It's hard to believe, but by the time we reach November 2016 we will be about as far, chronologically, from Reagan's election as Reagan's election was from D-Day. Yet as the decades pass and a new generation of Americans faces a new generation of problems, the party establishment clings to its 1970s agenda like a security blanket.

And so, to many Americans today, especially to the underprivileged and middle class, or those who have come of age or immigrated since Reagan left office, the Republican party may not seem to have much of a relevant reform message at all. That is the real reason the GOP is in such internal disarray today.

The gaping hole in the middle of the Republican party today—the one that separates the grassroots from establishment leaders—is precisely the size and shape of a new, unifying conservative reform agenda.

For years, we have tried to bridge that gulf with tactics and personalities and spin. But it doesn't work. To revive and reunify our movement, we must fill the void with new and innovative policy ideas. Today, as it was a generation ago, the establishment will not produce that agenda. And so, once again, conservatives must.

It's time for another Great Debate, and we should welcome all input. Grassroots and establishment, conservatives and moderates, libertarians and traditionalists, interventionists and non-interventionists, economic conservatives and social conservatives: All are part of our movement and vital to our success, and should be welcome in this debate.

There are still nearly three years before Republicans will have a chance to select a new, unifying conservative leader. But together we can start debating and developing a new, unifying conservative agenda right now.

Mr. Lee is a U.S. senator from Utah. This piece is adapted from remarks delivered at the Heritage Foundation on October 29.

WHERE do we begin? A generation ago, conservatives forged an agenda to meet the great challenges facing Americans in the late 1970s: inflation, poor growth, and Soviet aggression, along with a dispiriting pessimism about the future of the nation and their own families.

The great challenge of our generation is America's growing crisis of stagnation and sclerosis—a crisis that comes down to a shortage of opportunities.

This opportunity crisis presents itself in three principal ways: economic immobility among the poor, who are too often trapped in poverty; insecurity in the middle class, where families just can't seem to get ahead; and cronyist privilege at the top, where political and economic elites unfairly profit at everyone else's expense. The Republican party should tackle these three crises head on.

First, we need a new, comprehensive anti-poverty and upward-mobility agenda designed not simply to help people in poverty, but to help and empower them to get out.

Here, my home state of Utah can be a guide. A recent study found the Salt Lake City metropolitan area to be the most upwardly mobile region in the United States. In addition to having a well-managed, limited government that allows jobs and opportunity to abound, Utah is home to an enormously successful private welfare system led by churches, businesses, and community groups and volunteers.

A new anti-poverty effort must recognize that for able-bodied adults work is not a necessary evil but an essential pathway to personal happiness and prosperity. And it should also force Republicans and Democrats to acknowledge that there is another marriage debate in this country—one concerning fatherless children, economic inequality, and broken communities—that deserves as much public attention as the other.

Second, we need a new, comprehensive anti-cronyism agenda to break up the corrupt nexus of big government, big business, and big special interests. We need a new corporate-tax code and regulatory system to eliminate lobbyists' loopholes and giveaways, level the playing field between businesses, big and small, and foster a dynamic, globally competitive private sector.

We need to end subsidies that unfairly favor some businesses and industries over others. And the Republican party must make a fundamental commitment to end its support for corporate welfare in any form.

The Left today no longer represents the "little guy," but the crony clients of the ever-expanding special-interest state. Progressives have become the party of Wall Street, K Street, and Pennsylvania Avenue. The GOP must become the party of Main Street, everywhere.

The third essential piece of our new agenda should be a new conservatism of the working and middle classes. Today, working families' take-home pay is flat, but the staples of middle-class security and opportunity—health care, education, home ownership, work/life balance, and children—are becoming harder to afford all the time.

Progressives recognize these problems but say we just need more government programs to give working families more government money. But as we have seen once again over the last five years, big government creates opportunity for the middlemen at the expense of the middle class. Its programs only mask the broken policies that artificially raise costs and restrict access in the first place. Instead, conservatives need new ideas to address the root causes of those problems.

The first and most important policy goal Republicans must adopt to improve the lives of middle-class families is and will remain the full repeal of Obamacare. Health care is one of the main reasons that the cost of living in the middle class is increasing too quickly for many Americans to keep up. At the same time, it is the main reason government spending and debt are out of control. The law is going to make both of those problems worse—accelerating health-care costs for both families and the government.

At the same time, Obamacare poses very serious threats to our constitutional system, to the relationship between Washington and the states, to individual liberty and conscience rights, to the strength of our economy, and to the quality of our health-care system.

That puts health care right at the center of what conservatives need to be thinking about. And it means our movement has to be intensely engaged not only in the fight to repeal, but also in the debate to replace, Obamacare.

It took Obamacare to get Republican health-care-policy innovation off the sidelines, but we're finally in the game. And today, conservative ideas are not only superior to Obamacare—they are superior to the status quo before Obamacare.

The House Republican Study Committee has introduced a comprehensive health-care-reform plan. The Heritage Foundation proposed its own health-care-reform package as part of the Saving the American Dream plan, which I introduced in the Senate last year. It included, among other things, a universal tax credit to buy health insurance, with extra help for those with lower incomes. House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan and others are working on their own health-care plans that will continue to improve the debate.

And this is as it should be. Too many in Washington seem to believe that on any issue, Republicans should either have one plan, which everyone supports in lockstep, or have no plan at all. But unity cannot come at the expense of creativity. The day will come when Republicans need a health-care plan. Today we need ten.

Conservatives are supposed to believe in the wisdom of markets. So let's trust the marketplace of ideas. If we want policy innovation, we need to innovate policy.

For my part, I am currently working on four pieces of legislation specifically designed to address four leading challenges facing middle-class families today.

To address the rising cost of raising children, I have introduced a pro-family, pro-growth tax-reform plan that lowers rates, simplifies the code, and begins to correct what I call the "parent tax penalty." Under the current system, parents are required to contribute to Social Security and Medicare twice—first when they pay their payroll taxes, and then again by bearing the costs of raising their children, who will grow up to support those programs in the future, in addition to starting businesses, curing diseases, and having families themselves. Conservatives rightly emphasize reforms to promote investment, and so we should apply the same logic to the incalculable social and economic investment parents make in their children. Under my plan, a married couple with two children making the national median income of \$51,000 would see a tax cut of \$5,000.

To provide working parents more flexibility to manage work/life balance, I have introduced legislation to give private-sector hourly employees the same comp-time options currently enjoyed only by government employees.

Pro-Life, Pro-Animal

*Why not broaden our
awareness of suffering?*

BY MATTHEW SCULLY

To help cut down on wasteful commuting time and reopen the suburban frontiers, I have developed a bill to devolve federal highway authority to the states, which can raise and spend revenue for infrastructural improvements according to their own needs, priorities, and values.

And to open up access to post-secondary education, I will soon introduce a bill to allow states to create alternative college-accreditation systems—allowing federal student aid to follow students not only to traditional colleges, but to apprenticeships, training programs, competency testing, and off-campus learning opportunities.

Taken together, some more take-home pay, more time with the kids, a shorter commute, and more access to college won't necessarily revolutionize our society, or cause the oceans to recede, or make everyone rich.

What they—and other conservative reforms—could and should do is make our economy a little stronger, our society a little fairer, and life a little better for America's moms and dads and children. And that's a mandate for leadership in any generation.

THERE is obviously much more to be done. The Republican party, at its best, is a party of ideas. It is ideas that unite and inspire conservatives, and the leaders of Reagan's generation understood that. We must, too.

Especially in the wake of recent controversies, many conservatives are more frustrated with the establishment than ever before. And we have every reason to be. But, however justified, frustration is not a platform. Anger is not an agenda. And outrage, as a habit, is not even conservative. Outrage, resentment, and intolerance are gargoyles of the Left. For us, optimism is not just a message—it's a principle. American conservatism, at its core, is about gratitude, cooperation, trust, and above all hope.

It is also about inclusion. Successful political movements are about identifying converts, not heretics. This, too, is part of the challenge before us.

In his 1977 speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference, effectively kicking off that era's great conservative debate, Ronald Reagan said:

If we truly believe in our principles, we should sit down and talk. Talk with anyone, anywhere, at any time if it means talking about the principles for the Republican party. Conservatism is not a narrow ideology, nor is it the exclusive property of conservative activists.

Do we have the same spirit of charity and confidence in our ideas today? If we do not, this moment and opportunity will pass us by. We will lose, and we will deserve to lose.

And, rest assured, in that unfortunate event, it will not be the indifferent Republican establishment that profits from our failure. It will be a parade of progressives who will continue unabated to lead our country farther away from our hopes, and our values, and our ability to do anything about it.

If our generation of conservatives wants to enjoy our own defining triumph, our own 1980, we are going to have to deserve it. That means sharpening more pencils than knives. The kind of work it will require is neither glamorous nor fun—and sometimes it isn't even noticed. But it is necessary.

To deserve victory, conservatives have to do more than pick a fight. We have to win a debate. And to do that, we need more than just guts. We need an agenda. **NR**

IN 20 or so years of political speechwriting, the only condition I have ever set down in advance of being hired is that I would never, under any circumstances, assist any candidate or officeholder in promoting the cause of abortion. Among employers in that time, the one I admired most was a Democrat: the late Pennsylvania governor Robert P. Casey, a great man and gallant champion of life who viewed abortion on demand as “the ultimate exploitation of the weak by the strong,” who considered his party's all-in acceptance of abortion a tragic error, and who told me, long before Kermit Gosnell came along, about the filthy characters in it for the money.

In presidential speechwriting, during the first term of George W. Bush, my colleagues and I put special care into the “culture of life” theme, and I've sought to do the same in various campaigns going back to Bush-Quayle '92. The abortion question, rightly a defining concern of modern conservatism, will always center on mercy for the child, who is just as we once were, on our way into the world, waiting to be born and needing to be loved.

This *cursus honorum* of pro-life commitment is offered by way of asking readers, and especially those of shared conviction, to consider another moral concern, cruelty to animals, in the same merciful spirit. I kept thinking of the connection between abortion and extreme cruelty during the trial last April and May of Dr. Gosnell, the specialist in late-term abortions who is now in prison, because it was a case of people numbed to horrors that had become routine and normalized, and a case of euphemisms dragged into the light of day.

There's quite a bit of both, to take just the example closest to home, in the modern animal factories we call farms. One could equally cite other routine forms of abuse inflicted on animals, but this is the abuse that is the most widespread, and the most directly affected and sustained by the choices that you and I make. The factory farms—producing almost every animal product we see sold or advertised, in our country and most others—are places of immense and avoidable suffering. And though the moral stakes are not the same as with abortion, the moral habits are, relying in both cases on the averted gaze and a smothering of empathy.

We are cautioned in some quarters that a concern for animals—especially if carried to eccentric extremes like not eating them anymore because the brutality involved is morally unten-

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able—is somehow “anti-human,” coming at the expense of our human dignity and moral concern for one another. The point is lost on me, and least of all have I ever sensed any contradiction in being vegetarian (actually, if that’s not hard-core enough for you, vegan) and pro-life all at once. Come to think of it, I first learned about the “abortion rights” cause and about the ruthlessness of industrialized farming around the same time, at the age of 13 or 14, and my reaction to the two was similar: You just don’t treat life that way. As complicated, personal, and emotional (oddly so, in the case of meat and the methods that produce it) as both issues can be, in all the years since, I have never heard a single compelling argument for why the unborn must die or why the animals must suffer.

ANIMALS have a moral dignity of their own, a point that nearly everyone, including even some people in cruel industries, will happily concede in unthreatening contexts—that is, when we’re not talking about actually *doing* something to protect animals and respect their dignity. Pro-life Catholics, for their part, can find some stirring words on the subject in the very same sources they rely on for guidance about the inviolable dignity of human life. Pope Francis thought it important enough to speak, in his very first homily, at St. Peter’s, of “respecting each of God’s creatures.” Pope Benedict XVI cautioned against “the degrading of living creatures to a commodity,” with reference to the “industrial use of animals.” And the great John Paul II, in Assisi early in his papacy, urged humanity to heed the example of Saint Francis, whose “solicitous care, not only towards men, but also towards animals, is a faithful echo of the love with which God in the beginning pronounced his ‘fiat’ which brought them into existence. We too are called to a similar attitude. . . . It is necessary and urgent that with the example of the little poor man of Assisi, one decides to abandon unadvisable forms of domination, the locking up of all creatures.”

Far from presenting any threat to human dignity, animals and their moral claims upon us—the basic obligation never to be cruel, not just the option to be kind when it suits our purposes—are a constant hindrance to human presumption. What is the mark of that special status of ours, anyway, if not precisely the ability to be just instead of merely dominant, to be the creature of conscience and bring mercy into the world?

Consider “mass confinement” farming, the literal “locking up of all creatures” that John Paul II said it was necessary and urgent

that we abandon. Just one feature of an “intensive farming” system that is now the norm, mass confinement for pigs began in the 1960s when some devil figured out that if you put slatted flooring in sows’ stalls, so that their waste could fall beneath the structure and flow out to form lakes of excrement nearby, the creatures could stay there endlessly, never knowing the feel of soil, the warmth of the sun, or the least touch of human kindness. And, of course, the tighter the gestation crates, the more “production units”—*mothers*—could be packed in for maximum profit. Stuff the sows with vaccines and antibiotics to counteract the confinement-borne diseases that would otherwise kill them, feed their offspring growth hormones, so that “life” for the 350,000 or so pigs slaughtered every day just in our own country is six or seven months of mutilation and pain—and you’re talking real savings.

There’s just the one downside that pig farms, in North Carolina and now the world over, resemble concentration camps. Years of reform efforts by the Humane Society of the United States and other groups have sought, with success here and there, to restore a modicum of mercy to the industry, and the pork producers’ associations fight at every turn because—maybe you guessed—there’s no “turning back the clock on modern agriculture.”

Other factory farmers have meanwhile been dispensing with similar inconveniences in similar fashion. A quarter-million chickens might fill a single facility, with more scenes of privation and squalor even as factory farmers still boast of their “flocks.” In like manner, cattle blood is fed to calves as a replacement for mother’s milk, so that humans can drink the milk, and the rendered remains of herbivores are fed to other herbivores. “Downers”—dairy cows and other farm animals too sick or lame even to walk to their own death—for years have been beaten, prodded, and lifted or dragged to slaughter by bulldozers, and it still happens in disregard of minimal regulatory safeguards. Hundreds of millions of male chicks, of no use to the egg farmers because they can’t lay eggs or grow fast enough to be sold for meat, are hatched into the world every year with only “instantaneous euthanasia” awaiting them, meaning a conveyor-belt ride, alive and fully conscious, into the grinder. This is considered an acceptable cost of egg production—“standard practice,” as Associated Press was assured by an Iowa hatchery, “supported by the animal veterinary and scientific community,” which itself has been corrupted by the money and influence of agribusiness. No matter what new perversion of animal husbandry the industry might devise, it can always count on the sign-off of friendly veterinarians, as true to their oath (“to use my skills for . . . the protection of animal health and welfare, the prevention and relief of animal suffering”) as Dr. Gosnell was to the Hippocratic oath.

FACTORY farming amounts to a complete subordination of animal life to human convenience, the reduction of thinking, feeling beings to commodities only and of their fate, no matter how horrific, to a calculation of pure self-interest. And it is not by chance that the abortion culture and the culture of cruelty came about at the same time. They are products of the same mind-set and hardness of heart. They involve wretched things we don’t even want to think about. They rely on concealment of fact, denial, bluff, and euphemism, because it can take

just a moment of real reflection—informed conscience—to undo years of propaganda.

To escape judgment, in the insular world that cruelty creates, both interests spend a lot of time and money working on their image, relying on eerily similar contortions in science, law, and language. And for all their truculence, the propaganda of both conveys a deep insecurity, always straining for just the right pitch of mainstream respectability and settling on the same formula of smarm, appeals to self-regard, and false indignation over encroachments on privacy. The fur industry has for years played up personal choice, freedom, and rights to market its entirely frivolous products, and lately factory-farming interests have picked up the theme. Here's Rick Berman, a Washington, D.C., operator who runs various civic-sounding, tax-exempt front groups for animal-use industries: "Everyone should have the right to make his or her own choices about what to eat and drink. . . . We respect your personal choices, and we expect the same in return."

If thoughts of pain are what trouble you, "ag-science" can help there, too, with sober studies laboring to prove that farm animals don't experience pain or even fear. Animal pain is "mere pain," as the theorists have variously described it, something in the "hardwiring," an unfelt, "pre-programmed" neurological reflex to "negative stimuli" that silly people still tend to "anthropomorphize" as the conscious experience of pain and fright, comparable to how you or I would feel if we were caged, beaten, and prodded onward toward violent death, seeing ahead of us what was happening to the others. No form of advanced barbarism comes without a patina of scientific sophistication, and where animal suffering is not denied outright, it is declared empirically unprovable, left vague in the literature with a "decide for yourself" air of resignation and a prohibition of questions or final conclusions. It is the same general branch of science that gave us those experts trotted out a generation ago to brush off as mere "reflex" or "spasm"—as a fellow creature was "undergoing demise"—the obvious signs of fetal pain in the documentary film *The Silent Scream*.

In their PR campaigns, it is the all-important mission of both lobbying groups to prevent images like those in that still-unanswerable documentary from getting out. Indeed, it's hard to think of any two legal enterprises, at least in developed societies, that have more to fear from simple photographic images than abortion and factory farming. Many of the men and women who see those pictures are changed by the experience, their conscience awakened, never again able to talk around the matter in polite generality or comfortable cliché, while others react in rage and bitterness at the "emotional pressure" of being asked even to look. (Does any of this sound familiar?) So in recent years livestock interests have leaned on legislators to make it a crime to take pictures of factory-farmed animals, and in some states they have already succeeded. Subjecting animals to agonies that would shock and outrage the public if we saw these scenes on film—that, we are told, is nobody else's business. It's not the cruelty that needs to be stopped—it's those damned pictures.

The contortions in reason and law, for apologists of both abortion on demand and animal cruelty, likewise seek to place as much cognitive and emotional distance as possible between the choice and the consequences, typically with abstract constructs



that painstakingly parcel out rights, allocate power, and invent whole new nouns to take the flesh and blood out of the picture. Abortion advocates, with their talk of "fetal matter" and "non-autonomous entities," are working the same philosophical ground as critics of the animal-protection cause, with their theories explaining why animals are "un-self-aware beings," "non-rightholders," or "inappropriate objects of sympathy."

In a column on the Gosnell trial and all the euphemisms it blew away, Rich Lowry got to the central problem: "His case is so discomfiting for liberals not only because it is such a stark picture of the seamy, money-grubbing side of abortion, but because it illustrates how slight the difference is between late-term abortion—or late-term 'health'—and what nearly everyone recognizes as a crime." As columnist Kirsten Powers summed it up: "That one is murder and the other is a legal procedure is morally irreconcilable."

All true. But the rules of clear thinking and moral consistency—above all, the rule of treating natural equals equally—lose none of their validity when we turn to animals, even if the sins of cruelty are of a lesser order than violence to a baby just weeks or days away from birth. In the way of other slight differences and arbitrary distinctions in law that should leave us feeling uneasy, compare the treatment of farm animals to that of other animals protected, on the books at least, by cruelty statutes. If you were caught even once inflicting on a dog the punishments that are directed daily at factory-farmed pigs, you would be arrested and answer for that offense in a court of law. Dogs and pigs are entirely similar creatures, equals in every relevant way including their intelligence, emotional capacities, variations in personality, and experience of pain. Yet the one is protected from human wrongdoing and the other you may lawfully and profitably treat like garbage, with no regard whatever for that creature's suffering or dignity.

A good many people first awaken to the suffering of farm animals by noticing just such contradictions and connections—not only because animal cruelty is bad morals, but because it is also bad reasoning. Why is it right or fair to pamper dogs (the lucky ones) and torture pigs? In some corners of the world they torture and eat both, and by what coherent standard can we tell those savage people that they've got it wrong? In the underground meat markets of Thailand, Vietnam, and South Korea, as CNN reports, "a common belief is that stress and fear releases hormones that improve the taste of the meat, so the dogs are placed in stress cages that restrict their movement," among many sufferings that

end only when they “have their throats cut in front of other dogs who are awaiting the same fate.” If such practices are morally out of bounds, that’s news to American agribusiness.

It’s all just cultural preference, habit, and custom, as Asian connoisseurs of meat from dogs (or horses, monkeys, dolphins, whales, and on and on) will be quick to tell you. Morally, the differences between pigs and dogs, and between our ways of treating them, are purely conventional, the technical term for meaningless. Appeals to convention may be well and good in matters of taste or social etiquette. But if we are being morally rigorous, then citing “custom” is a tautology: We do it because we do it. In this case, you could switch the picture here in our own country all around—dogs to the abattoir, pigs on the couch—and convention and custom would be just as defensible. Or, more to the point, just as indefensible. We can be consistently kind or consistently cruel, but anything in between has the whiff of moral relativism, right and wrong decided by whim.

Being personally opposed to such a wrong, moreover, but unwilling to act on that view within one’s power to do so, is not a coherent position in this case, either. If harming or killing, much less torturing, a given type of animal for a given reason is wrong, then it is wrong everywhere, in every instance. Nor is being fervently idealistic in defense of human life but jaded and indifferent about animal life a workable posture: Avoiding complicity in cruelty need not be *as* important as protecting human life to be important all the same, and efforts to diminish the wrong by comparison have the ring of an excuse. The morally consistent response to factory farming and all practices like it is to distance ourselves as far as possible not from the victims, but from the wrongs; and to forbid in law not the cameras, but the cruelty.

ALL of this reasoning works in reverse, of course. Though quite a few friends of mine involved in the animal-welfare cause are also pro-life, it’s probably true that most men and women who champion animals, and witness for a better way by becoming vegetarian or vegan, count themselves proudly pro-choice. The problem is just as glaring, if not more dramatically so. Why on earth not extend your compassion to the unborn child? In what moral universe does it make sense to protect a pig, dog, or any other animal from needless suffering and violence, but not a human baby stirring in her mother’s womb?

To their lasting credit, many animal activists post pictures on the Internet from factory farms, slaughterhouses, laboratories, and elsewhere, scenes so nightmarish at times that you have to study them for a moment before the horror of what’s unfolding becomes clear. How many of those same good people have ever brought themselves to look at pictures and films showing what happens in an abortion, especially after the second or third month of fetal development, and to whom it happens? Different people are called to serve different causes, and if your vocation is to protect animals, then no one is saying you have to sign up right away at National Right to Life. But if the calling is to speak for the voiceless, shouldn’t your sympathies at least tend in that direction?

Works of theory by the animal-rights thinkers of the Seventies and Eighties, with a heavy dose of utilitarianism and “liberation,” alienated religious and cultural conservatives and vastly complicated what might have been a natural partnership, as Mary Eberstadt, a Catholic, observed a few years ago in *First Things*.

Viewed in terms of basic convictions and motivations, she writes, “the line connecting the dots between ‘we should respect animal life’ and ‘we should respect human life’ is far straighter than the line connecting vegetarianism to anti-life feminism or anti-humanist utilitarianism.”

It is fitting that an eloquent pro-life Christian woman should offer this insight. The whole animal-protection movement began, in Western societies, with the consciences of Christian reformers acting on just such intuition. Trace the lineage of venerable groups like Britain’s Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals—the RSPCA—or its early American counterparts and you’ll find that they began with the mission of abolishing slavery and protecting women and children from exploitation, and branched out to animal welfare in what seemed to them, at least, an obvious extension of their vocation. Often these charities were founded by women, to shelter other women from users, louts, and bullies—the same types who also bring grief to animals. But there were heroic men, too, like the abolitionists William Wilberforce and Anthony Ashley-Cooper—convinced, as the latter wrote, “that God had called me to devote whatever advantages He might have bestowed upon me to the cause of the weak, the helpless, both man and beast, and those who had none to help them.”

Leaving aside the all-out conservative vegan credo that remains, of course, a tough sell for most people, why not at least this same spirit, in our time, of basic Judeo-Christian compassion for animals, to consistently uphold the dignity of human and animal life as different charges in the same calling? How could the defense of vulnerable humanity and of the *humane* be far apart? Between advocates of the unborn and of brutalized creatures, as Eberstadt puts it, there is a straight line, a connection as natural as the love that young children themselves so often feel for animals, and deeper than the usual, pragmatic ties of politics: “The work of developing that bond could be done, and the benefit might be immense for both sides—like finding a few million friends that you never knew you had.”

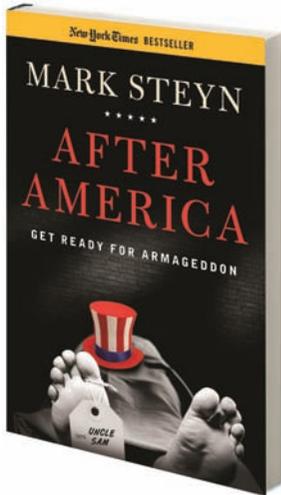
Exactly as straight is the line connecting the attitude that some human beings may be disposed of as defective, unwanted, or otherwise undeserving of the breath of life to the attitude that great multitudes of fellow creatures are unworthy of our empathy and respect, there only to be exploited as we desire. Challenge either attitude and you will encounter the same hardness of heart; you are drawing attention to the world’s discards, all the ones who get used or get in the way, kept off at a distance in unlighted places, and worldly people don’t like to hear about it. Thus the suspicion, hostility, and exasperated sighing to which pro-life and pro-animal activists are both accustomed, all for saying outright what nearly everyone knows to be true—about being decent and fair, and granting to others mercy as we would hope to receive it ourselves.

You can champion human life and scarcely notice the travails of lowly animals, or champion animal welfare and think nothing of the fate of the unborn, and still, by my measure, merit praise and gratitude for at least that much, for caring and trying where the need is great. Yet how much better to open our hearts to both, defending the innocent and powerless wherever they are, bringing to all creatures who have none to help them the love of their Creator, and by that example showing what it means to be pro-life all the way.

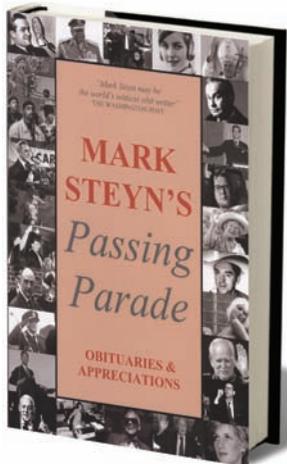
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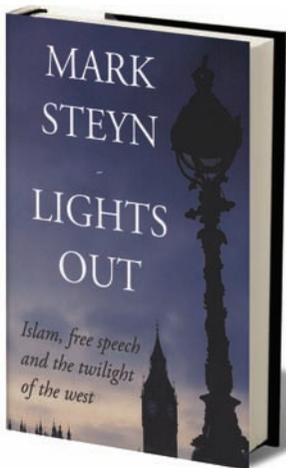
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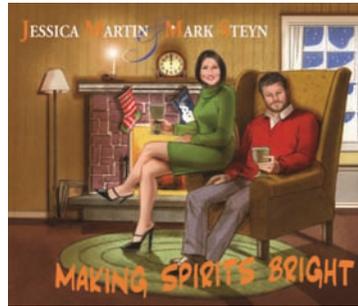
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The Long View

BY ROB LONG

BETHESDA MENTAL-HEALTH CLINIC *Doctor's Notes*

Tuesday: Spent a full session with Client BHO. Spent most of the session hearing how well the rollout has gone for one of his signature pieces of legislation—actually, his only signature piece of legislation.

Was experiencing transferred anxiety due to my own interaction with his health-care program—my self-employed son has been on the site for several days attempting to purchase health care—and so was in the awkward position of having to contradict Client BHO in his assessment, which of course violated the frame of therapy.

Luckily, Client BHO is currently suffering under a deluded—some might call “fugue”—state, and was unable to process my questions. I asked about the delays and unusable nature of the website and received blank stares. I asked about the “if you like your health plan, you can keep it” promises and received no response. Immobile, facially unexpressive, and without affect. Curious. Will also investigate possible medications for this psychotic non-acceptance of reality and simple cognition breakdown.

The traumatized brain often enters into a self-imposed “fugue” or protective immobility, where no new stimulus or thought can enter or exit, protecting its vital self-image functions and basic reptile-brain activity, and what we see here with Client BHO is precisely that.

At the end of the session, Client BHO asked me if we could continue our conversation—he calls them “conversations,” which is a familiar self-deluding term used by malignant narcissists, and extended-infancy adults, for critical therapy. I do not correct him, because I sense there is a small part of Client BHO’s consciousness that clearly perceives the world

around him. It was this small part that I believe compelled him to ask for further unscheduled extra sessions. I agreed to see him the following day.

Wednesday: What I expected would have been a breakthrough day for Client BHO—a session that he asked for, coming on the heels of a fugue and immobile state during session in reaction to my simple questions about reality and the world around him—was instead derailed by the appearance during the session of Client BHO’s official spokesperson, who, ironically, is also a patient of mine.

When Client BHO walked into the room, I thought I detected the signs of a consciousness struggling—and barely succeeding—to grasp the true nature of his surroundings and personality. Throughout our troubled doctor–patient relationship, Client BHO has presented a self-identity of grandiose, almost messianic flavor. Some of this has been controlled through small doses of Latuda™ co-utilized with Klonopin™. But mostly, due to constitutional and legal requirements, we have relied on nicotine and controlled, targeted enemies list-making and political witch-hunting to keep the larger demons at bay.

For the record, I counseled against this approach, despite its effectiveness during the recent general election.

Nevertheless, we have never actually had another real person in session with us. We have occasionally “role-played” another person—Client JBoehner and Client JBiden have often been “here” for fantasy “anger purging” sessions.

So when Client JayCarn entered the therapy space, I initially thought perhaps I had double-booked the session. I’ve been seeing Client JayCarn for several years in connection with his own cognition-acceptance issues, along with a very severe case of self-negation. (He tends to subsume his own needs/wants/selfhood/principles in the glow of a powerful patron, which has caused deep anxiety and unresolved sexual/personality issues, psychologically becoming a satellite—

or “mind slave”—of his hero/self-replacement object.)

I was informed that Client BHO and Client JayCarn were attending the session together.

Client BHO took a seat, then turned to Client JayCarn and motioned for him to speak. For the next 30 minutes I was subjected to an exhaustive and (mostly) fantastical recitation of the benefits and successes of Client BHO’s health-care initiative. I was placed on the telephone with the six happy customers of said health-care initiative—one of whom, although it’s difficult to diagnose over the phone, was clearly mentally ill; another of whom, I’m fairly certain, was Client JBiden using a high-pitched female-sounding voice.

When this recitation was finished, I asked Client BHO to respond to my initial question about his many statements averring, simply, that “if you like your health-care plan, you can keep it, period.”

Before Client JayCarn could jump in, Client BHO insisted that he had been misquoted. “What I said was,” he said, “if you like your health-care plan you can keep it . . . for a period. The period of time between logging onto the site and typing in your name.”

Unfortunately, I then uttered a thoroughly unprofessional compound noun describing the feces of a bull calf. Frame, at that point, was broken irretrievably, and any glimpse of progress I had seen with Client BHO receded as the transference process came to an abrupt end.

Client BHO left the session, followed at a subservient distance by his Dom/Sub Object, Client JayCarn.

I blame myself for this failure. Recommend Client BHO seek treatment elsewhere.

Thursday: Sessions canceled, due to doctor unavailability. Have been called to the local IRS office for a “random audit.” Unknown when I’ll return. Am pleased that Client BHO is returning to his safer methods of grandiosity/messianic-behavior abatement. Whoever his new doctor may be, he’s clearly making progress.

Killer Elite

D *DOUBLE DOWN*, an insider view of the 2012 campaign, reportedly quotes President Obama saying he's "really good at killing people" when it comes to picking targets for drone strikes. So he probably misspoke when he told al-Qaeda leaders, "If you like your life, you can keep it. Period." Without full context for the remark, you can imagine all sorts of meanings.

1. Surrounded by military men in uniforms with gleaming medals awarded for killing people hither and yon when the mood struck, the president felt the need for small talk, the idle manly chatter you find in a barbershop or a car garage. A fellow's under your Buick getting oily and dirty, and there you are in your work suit with shiny shoes and a dimple in your tie. "You know, I used to fix my old Chevy in high school. I'd get right in there and find the hole where the windshield-wiper juice goes, pour that sauce in, and top it off. Kinda miss the old days."

In this sense, "I'm good at killing people" is bonding banter, intended to form a more lasting relationship with his military. Later the generals will leave the room and go to their secret clubhouse—he knows they have one and they never invite him—and say, "You know, he may be a brilliant constitutional scholar and the defining orator of our generation, but there's steel in that lad's mettle. When you get down to it, he is good at killing people. We ought to leak a story to the *Post* about the forceful way he crosses out names with that special Sharpie he uses."

2. After a busy day of not meeting with Republican leaders to forestall a budget crisis and reminding himself he's a pretty good negotiator, and reading a document that said Healthcare.gov needed more work on the front end and the back end and adding, "What about the middle end? Is that an end per se?" and reminding himself he's a pretty good computer programmer, and finishing off a pastrami sandwich with wedgie fries, recalling how his wife would disapprove, and reminding himself that marrying someone who wanted him to eat more vegetables showed he was a pretty good dietician, he paged through the list of targets for the upcoming week, chose the ones who had the bushiest beards, and said, "You know, I'm pretty good at killing people." Then he gazed out the window at a cherry tree and reminded himself he was probably better at horticulture than George Washington, who just cut them down. As he understood the matter you had to prune them.

The only skill where he felt he could stand some improvement was golf. He picked up the phone and told them to bring the helicopter over.

The president does not seem like a fellow capable of ironical self-contempt.

3. The president paused while looking at the weekly target reports and noted that one of the generals was sniffing. His eyes were red. Obama mused again how the simplest alteration in the genetic code of the common cold could harden it against environmental degradation, allowing for a more effective aerosol dispersion. Simply isolate the gene that makes the virus unable to withstand a temperature below 68 degrees and change the numbers so it's 55 degrees. But of course that would be wrong. Still, it was an interesting mental experiment. You know, I'm pretty good at imagining the lethal viruses I could make if I hadn't gone into community-organizing. Shoot, they're looking at me odd; did I say that out loud?

4. His aides stood at attention, not saying a word; they knew this was a difficult time. Sometimes the president seemed irritated that he had to choose, when it was obvious that selections had already been made. He was merely acquiescing to a dismal reality far removed from the idealism that had swept him into office. He had provided the world with a sterling example on how to reorder human events, and these lunatics kept fighting as if the old ways of thinking still applied.

He made the selections and threw the dossier on the table. "I'm pretty good at killing people," he said, "for a Peace Prize winner. In fact I think I have that honor all to myself."

The last option seems the most likely, because the only guys who brag that they're good at killing people wear orange all the time, have tattoos on their neck, and are usually described as "convicted of two murders, suspected of dozens more." But it also seems the least likely, in a way. The president does not seem like a fellow capable of ironical self-contempt. Even if there was a note of auto-disparagement, it would be underlined with confidence. This isn't the thing a man like me should have to do. That said, I rock at it.

But he doesn't even do it. He has someone else handle the wet work. There's not much he seems particularly good at, these days; all of the things his acolytes ascribed to His Most Awesomeness have fallen away. Post-partisan? He conflates opposition to his programs with a desire for poor people to die at the door of the emergency room. Great oratory? Endless expanses of ums and ahhs, stutter-stop harangues that thud like lead cymbals. He will leave ruins in his wake, congratulate himself for showing the nation that they deserved him, admit a few failings to a trusted biographer—the coal industry still exists, and I take personal responsibility for that—then Hoover up a few hundred million on the speaking circuit, just by showing up and being Obama.

He'll make a killing. He's really good at that.

NR

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.

Books, Arts & Manners

Camelot Revisited

JAMES ROSEN



The Kennedy Half-Century: The Presidency, Assassination, and Lasting Legacy of John F. Kennedy, by Larry J. Sabato (Bloomsbury, 603 pp., \$30)

End of Days: The Assassination of John F. Kennedy, by James L. Swanson (William Morrow, 416 pp., \$29.99)

The Interloper: Lee Harvey Oswald Inside the Soviet Union, by Peter Savodnik (Basic, 288 pp., \$27.99)

ON Sunday, November 22, 1964, some 40,000 Americans—a crowd greater than the capacity at Boston’s Fenway Park—visited Arlington National Cemetery to pay their respects on the first anniversary of the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Stung by the numbingly cold air of that crisp, sunny day, the mourners paused, one by one, to gaze upon the “eternal flame” that flickered, and still burns today, at the gravesite of our 35th president.

That same month, *Redbook* magazine, its stark white cover adorned with a charcoal sketch of JFK, carried a special 14-page tribute. Therein liberal literary critic Diana Trilling asked whether Americans glued to their television sets a year earlier hadn’t been

Mr. Rosen is the chief Washington correspondent for Fox News and the author of The Strong Man: John Mitchell and the Secrets of Watergate.

“indulging ourselves in our extreme of mourning . . . not from devotion to Kennedy himself but from the need to know the gratification of strong feeling . . . while again and again we rehearsed our emotions of devastation.” No, Trilling concluded; the outpouring of grief stemmed from a deep affinity with JFK himself, whom she described as “all romance . . . all romantic heroism.” While conceding that Kennedy was “a man of whom it was possible to guess that he could be ruthless,” Trilling nonetheless saw in the slain leader not just “a figure of political dominance and authority [but] also the fulfillment of our dream of what a human being can be”:

He demonstrated that it is possible to be concerned with power without capitulating to its brutalizing influences; to be intelligent without being disarmed for practical affairs; to be practical without being earthbound; to be earnest and yet at the same time humorous and high-spirited, dignified and yet relaxed, daring and yet cautious and responsible. By his own examples, that is, he promised us our full complex humanity.

In ways that Trilling never envisioned, the passage of five decades has served to acquaint us, in ever more granular detail, with the overwhelming complexity of JFK’s humanity, including perhaps especially his capacity, in and out of the political arena, for ruthlessness. To the estimated 40,000 volumes already written about JFK, the 50th anniversary of his murder reportedly brings us a few hundred more; and two of them—James L. Swanson’s *End of Days*, a concise tick-tock account, and Larry J. Sabato’s more ambitious *The Kennedy Half-Century*, a multidisciplinary effort that weighs in at 603 pages—bring into sharp relief once again these contradictory traits in mid-century America’s proudest son. Perhaps fittingly, the anniversary also brings us only one new book about the president’s killer—Peter Savodnik’s *The Interloper*—but it is an important work, for it illuminates, as never before, the complexity of humanity that also graces the most wretched assassin.

SABATO is the most prominent political scientist of our age. Virtually every Beltway reporter, including this one, has more than once quoted the plainspoken, nonpartisan purveyor of *Larry J. Sabato’s Crystal Ball*, the electoral-analysis website affiliated with the University of Virginia’s Center for Politics, where Sabato teaches. Five years in the making, *The Kennedy Half-Century* clearly reflects a long-held obsession. The author repeatedly quotes his father’s contemporaneous reactions to the televised horrors of November 1963, and provides 153 pages of dense footnotes that encompass thousands of old and new sources. And Sabato’s immersion in the subject enables him to reach a unique sort of meta-harmony with it, achieved through the unusual presence, in advance copies of the book, of blacked-out passages. It is as if Sabato felt he could not make an authentic contribution to the literature of the Kennedy assassination if his book did not physically resemble a redacted CIA document.

This precaution was taken to protect until publication what Sabato regards as his sexiest finding. Arrived at with the help of a Connecticut-based “sonar analysis” firm, this mini-bombshell concerns the scratchy Dictabelt recording made from the open microphone of a Dallas police officer’s motorcycle on the day of the assassination. Technicians retained by the House Select Committee on Assassinations (HSCA) in 1979 discerned from this piece of acoustical evidence that *four shots* were fired at the Kennedy motorcade, one more than Oswald could possibly have squeezed off with his World War II-era rifle in the time frame established by the Zapruder film.

The Dictabelt accordingly stood at the heart of the HSCA’s controversial conclusion that the assassination was likely the result of a conspiracy, a finding that directly challenged that of the Warren Commission, which determined in September 1964 that Oswald alone had shot and killed Kennedy and wounded Texas governor John Connally.

Ever since, dueling teams of American and European scientists and engineers, using every new technology as it came along, have alternately validated and

rebutted the HSCA's Dictabelt analysis. In a novel twist, Team Sabato concludes that the recording was in fact made from a police motorcycle positioned more than *two miles away* from Dealey Plaza when the shots rang out. "Therefore, the long-hoped-for Rosetta Stone of the Kennedy assassination is nothing of the sort," Sabato writes. "And the much publicized conclusion of proven conspiracy by the [HSCA] was deeply flawed and demonstrably wrong."

Yet *The Kennedy Half-Century* hardly dismisses the possibility of a conspiracy. "I do not presume to know for certain what happened on November 22, 1963,"

honest investigators," Sabato writes. "A smoking gun for conspiracy has never emerged. . . . But the chance of some sort of conspiracy involving Oswald is not insubstantial. . . . There remains the possibility of a second gunman in the grassy-knoll area."

Even as he discounts the prospect that CIA vaults, when opened, will disgorge anything of determinative value, Sabato still nourishes certain notions that "may prove true with time," and that can only be categorized as: conspiracy theories. Assaying the many disparate facts that never added up—the photograph the CIA released of the "Oswald" who visited the

(almost) impossibly unlikely—is that a second shooter fired at the same time as Oswald *without knowing* the 24-year-old ex-Marine was firing, too.

The Kennedy Half-Century is really three viable short books aggregated into a single unwieldy one. The first third, a concise account of JFK's presidency, is a sound but tedious prologue to the more probing material that follows. The second, Sabato's exhaustive and even-handed treatment of the evidence surrounding JFK's murder, anchored by the author's original and penetrating analysis of critical audio recordings, constitutes a valuable contribution to the

Even as he discounts the prospect that CIA vaults, when opened, will disgorge anything of determinative value, Sabato **still nourishes certain notions** that "may prove true with time."

Sabato concedes. Indeed, he writes of how Oswald "*may have undertaken the assassination*" and makes jarring reference to "the shooter(s)." Yes, Sabato acknowledges the "mountain of evidence" that establishes that Oswald was "at least one of John F. Kennedy's assassins," but the author, having mastered the primary and secondary sources and conducted noteworthy interviews and correspondence with surviving figures, cannot rule out a broader plot. Sabato remains troubled by credible eyewitness testimony asserting that shots emanated from the famous grassy-knoll/picket-fence area, and by similarly credible testimony, from independent witnesses, asserting that men in that same area were flashing Secret Service credentials and confiscating eyewitnesses' camera film, at a time when the president's motorcade was arriving at Parkland Hospital and no Secret Service officers had yet returned to the crime scene.

Sabato also wrestles with the "slapdash" and highly politicized work of the Warren Commission, and with the outright deception and obstruction the CIA exhibited in its dealings with the Warren Commission and the HSCA—manifest even today in the agency's continued withholding of up to 50,000 related documents. "Maybe these questions, and others that we have posed, have innocent explanations, but they have eluded

Soviet and Cuban embassies in Mexico City two months before the assassination, but who looked nothing like Oswald; the pro-Castro leaflets Oswald distributed in New Orleans, with an address that housed CIA fronts and other dubious tenants; Oswald's extraordinary travel—Sabato can sound like a writer for *High Times* in the 1970s:

The more one studies the possible relationship of Oswald to the CIA, the more legitimate doubts spring forth. . . . The pieces of the Oswald puzzle stamped CIA may be ill-fitting, but they could reasonably create a portrait of covert action. CIA headquarters might have found a good use for Oswald. . . . This reasonable interpretation of the evidence does not require a belief that a "rogue element" near the top of the CIA was preparing Oswald to assassinate Kennedy. It is more likely that the agency could have viewed Oswald as a malleable potential low-level operative with an unusual combination of background experiences and contacts. . . . It is [also] impossible to rule out the possibility that a small, secret cabal of CIA hardliners, angry about Kennedy's handling of Cuba and sensing a leftward turn on negotiations with the Soviets and the prosecution of the war in Vietnam, took matters into their own hands.

Still another theory—relegated by Sabato to the footnotes and there deemed

literature of the assassination. The final third offers a keen survey, deeply sourced in archival materials and original interviews, of how the nine men who have succeeded Kennedy have sought, with varying success and often at their peril, to tap into the JFK mystique. Here, Sabato is more in his element: a shrewd political scientist assessing the modern presidents, judiciously weighing their successes and shortcomings with polling data and fresh insights from the likes of Ted Sorensen, Harry McPherson, and Jimmy Carter.

TALENTED though he is, James Swanson in his wildest dreams probably never imagined that *Manhunt: The Twelve-Day Chase for Lincoln's Killers* (2006) would be the smash hit it became. The book logged 13 weeks on the *New York Times* best-seller list and spawned traveling museum exhibits, several spinoff books (including a children's version), and an HBO series. Now Swanson, an erudite lawyer and historian affiliated with the Heritage Foundation, has sought, with a certain unassailable logic of conceptualization and marketing, to apply the minute-by-minute style of *Manhunt* to the 20th-century event that most forcefully evoked Americans' institutional memory of the Lincoln assassination.

The result is predictable: Powered by spare prose and skillful plotting, Swanson's narrative gifts inject fresh suspense into the story of JFK's slaying, the apprehension of his killer, and the assassin's own murder on live television. With his keen eye for detail, Swanson makes smart use of Warren Commission testimony and less familiar sources, such as Oswald's radio interviews and jailhouse interrogations. Younger generations seeking an authoritative yet digestible account of the events will find it in *End of Days*.

What readers will not find in Swanson's book is any new research or evidence, which distinguishes it from Sabato's effort. At times Swanson also expresses a contempt for his subject that is unbecoming of the dispassionate chronicler. He describes Oswald as "a classic wife beater," a "compulsive criminal," "a fool who has no idea what he is talking about," "[a man of] corrosive obsessions [and] long-simmering resentments, frustrations, and grievances" with a "murderous heart"—all before the Kennedys arrive at Love Field and, by Swanson's own determination, Oswald has even decided to kill the president. Swanson also ridicules Oswald for mangling large words and dismisses his attempted assassination of retired general Edwin Walker, in April 1963, as "an absurd failure," even though—having opened the book with the episode, to demonstrate early on Oswald's capacity for political violence—he has already told us that Oswald "missed Walker's head by less than an inch." Even less engaging is Swanson's snap summary of JFK's presidency, so simply written as to resemble schoolbook prose: After quoting the famous "ask not" refrain, Swanson helpfully explains, "It was a patriotic call to the people of the United States to be civic-minded and politically active."

The hero in *End of Days* is the first lady, whose Gothic suffering is touchingly evoked. Swanson captures Jacqueline Kennedy's extraordinary stamina and savvy, showing how swiftly and surely she moved, amid intense shock and grief, to chart her husband's funeral and then, immediately thereafter, to frame the historical view of the Kennedy presidency, with the aid of fawning journalists, in the noble and romantic vision

of "Camelot." Even here, however, Swanson (like Sabato) perpetuates the myth that after the tragic death of the Kennedys' two-day-old son, Patrick, in August 1963, the first couple "might have been more in love with each other this November than they had been since the year they married. Once they returned from Texas, they could begin again."

This account ignores the revelations of *Once upon a Secret* (2012), the well-documented and well-received memoir of Mimi Alford (née Beardsley), the former White House intern whose lurid two-year affair with Kennedy had included his deflowering of the 19-year-old girl on Mrs. Kennedy's White House bed and, in an even more grotesque scene, the president's watching as Beardsley, at his instruction, performed oral sex on one of his Irish-mafia buddies in the White House swimming pool. The affair ended on November 15, 1963, in a rendezvous at the Carlyle Hotel in Manhattan. There, JFK told her, in a final embrace: "I wish you were coming with me to Texas. I'll call you when I get back." When Beardsley noted that she was about to marry her college sweetheart, the president replied: "I know that. But I'll call you anyway."

HALFWAY through *The Interloper*, we find the American defector, a mostly unimpressive character whose unusual background makes him a novelty in the USSR, chatting up a young woman at a cello recital in his adopted city of Minsk in the fall of 1960. With the girl looking straight into Oswald's eyes and "earnestly considering what Lee was saying," a Russian friend of Oswald's suddenly approaches to tell him something—but the American slyly wiggles his right foot, without the girl's noticing, and the Russian friend, taking the hint, backs off.

That Oswald hit on girls, knew how to handle pesky wingmen, had friends in the USSR who cared to tell him things: The accumulation of quotidian detail in *The Interloper* will startle even hard-core assassination buffs. The rendering of Oswald as a real man, a fathomable character with grandiose thoughts and primal urges, favorite

books and private hurts, a tragic childhood and a diffident personality, is Peter Savodnik's great accomplishment. If there existed between Oswald and the Belorussians he met during his nearly three years in Minsk what one of them described as "a strange film," an impermeable layer of emotional distance, Savodnik's exquisite prose and command of the evidence, including Oswald's diaries, allow the reader to peer through it and see the doomed killer as he was: "fascinating," as Savodnik writes, but also "grotesque, pitiful, and self-involved."

It is untrue, as Savodnik claims, that writers have heretofore "avoided delving deeply into Oswald the man." To Priscilla Johnson McMillan, the Moscow-based reporter who interviewed Oswald shortly after his arrival there, in October 1959, he confided that "he had never in all his life talked to anyone so long about himself." In 1977, McMillan published the groundbreaking *Marina and Lee*, the paperback edition of which accurately stated: "For the first time, the assassin's wife reveals the innermost secrets of her life with the man who shot JFK." The following year brought Edward Jay Epstein's meticulous *Legend: The Secret World of Lee Harvey Oswald*, based on 10,000 classified documents and 400 original interviews. And Norman Mailer would eventually give us *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery* (1995), a deeply researched nonfiction novel plumbing the assassin's interior psychology (and dismissed here, by Savodnik, as "jarring" in its "veiled respect for the assassin as rebel and seeker").

The particular prism employed by Savodnik, a magazine writer, is geography: We are reminded that Oswald, whose father died two months before he was born, moved with his disturbed mother 20 times before he turned 17, averaging 10.2 months per address. Indeed, the 32 months Oswald spent in the USSR—where, among other things, he tried to kill himself, worked at a factory, dated multiple women, proposed to a Jewish girl who turned him down, met and married the mysterious and beautiful Marina Prusakova, and fathered the first of his two daughters with her—marked his longest stretch of residency anywhere save for a four-year

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SAT / May 17	Cape Liberty, NJ		5:00 PM	evening cocktail reception
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MON / May 19	King's Wharf (Bermuda)	9:00 AM	(overnight)	afternoon seminar “Night Owl” session
TUE / May 20	King's Wharf (Bermuda)		5:00 PM	afternoon seminar
WED / May 21	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
THU / May 22	Cape Liberty, NJ	7:00 AM		Debarck

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stint in Fort Worth, in his teens, that his diaries largely skip.

In the end, however, even Oswald, the self-taught Marxist, recognized the moral corrosion of the Soviet state. When the defector returned to the United States, his traitorous bid for selfhood having failed, he was more adrift than ever. “I was really the naïve American who believed in Communism,” he wrote. “I shall never sell myself intentionally or unintentionally to anyone again.” The 17 months between Oswald’s return to U.S. soil, in June 1962, and JFK’s assassination saw the interloping reach a new frenzy: nine addresses, conservatively counted, less than two months per address.

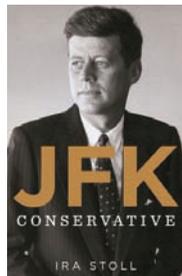
Only late in the narrative, as an aside, does Savodnik note that Oswald “voiced no interest in religion [and] appeared to have no spiritual aspect.” Yet the author does not posit this as a contributing factor in Oswald’s rootlessness, nor see it as decisive in his ultimate turn to violence; he should have. The ultimate failing of *The Interloper* is its careful avoidance of the last stepping-stone between Oswald’s belated recognition of his problem—he wrote that his father’s premature death “left [in me] a mean streak of independence brought on by neglect”—and his targeting of JFK. It hardly connects the dots between a rootless and fractured existence and the killing of the president to say: “Something calamitous was almost inevitable.” Oswald’s only known reference to the man he killed was, as Oswald’s aunt told the FBI, “something in praise of President Kennedy”; so how could the assassination have been “inevitable”?

The Interloper will likely be the last large-scale, well-organized effort to conduct original interviews with people who knew Oswald personally. At all points, this book elicits admiration for the author’s global research effort and sadness for the subject’s personal misery. The most touching scene comes in April 1963, when Oswald, again fleeing his family, takes a Greyhound to New Orleans, city of his birth, to visit—for the first and only time—his father’s grave. Then he consults a phone book to dial any Oswalds he can find. Never has one man’s failed search for identity and community had such a profound impact on history, or plunged so many others into loneliness.

NR

The Right JFK

JAMES PIERESON



JFK, Conservative, by Ira Stoll (Houghton Mifflin, 288 pp., \$27)

AFTER President Kennedy’s assassination in 1963, his supporters portrayed him as a liberal hero and a martyr for liberal causes. Kennedy loyalists Theodore Sorensen and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. soon published histories of the New Frontier in which they highlighted JFK’s liberal accomplishments and lamented all that was left undone with his premature death. Some maintained that he should be honored next to Abraham Lincoln as one of the nation’s great champions of racial equality. Mrs. Kennedy took the case still further by suggesting that the Kennedy White House should be remembered, like King Arthur’s Camelot, as a near-magical place guided by the highest ideals of peace and justice. “Grief nourishes myth,” as the saying goes, and nowhere does it more aptly apply than to the crafting of the Kennedy legend in the wake of his assassination.

These images of the late president have had a remarkable staying power in American culture over the past five decades. In a Gallup poll taken a few years ago, American adults ranked JFK second among all former presidents, behind only Abraham Lincoln. There have been other polls in which Kennedy was ranked as the greatest of all American presidents. Democratic presidential candidates since the 1960s have tried to outdo one another in associating their campaigns with JFK’s liberal legacy.

Mr. Piereson is the president of the William E. Simon Foundation and the author of Camelot and the Cultural Revolution.

Barack Obama’s campaign received an early boost in 2008 when the Kennedy family endorsed him as the candidate most likely to carry forward that legacy.

Those who knew or served in government with Kennedy, and scholars who have studied his life and career, have tried to deflate the overblown image of JFK as an idealistic liberal. Kennedy, they point out, was in reality a moderate or pragmatic liberal, a conventional representative of the post-war consensus that emphasized economic growth at home and fighting the Cold War abroad. He was never on good terms with Hubert Humphrey, Adlai Stevenson, and other leaders of the liberal wing of the Democratic party. JFK, far from being a bold and innovative leader, was a cautious politician who never wanted to get too far out in front of public opinion. He was slow to embrace the cause of civil rights and did so only in 1963, when events in the South forced his hand. He saw the Cold War abroad as a more important struggle than the campaign for civil rights at home.

Now Ira Stoll comes along to make the startling case that JFK was not a liberal at all, but in reality a conservative who (had he lived) might have endorsed Ronald Reagan for president and today might be comfortably at home writing editorials for *NATIONAL REVIEW*. Most readers will be skeptical of this thesis and are likely to think that the author has taken revisionist history a bit too far. Yet Stoll, author of a fine biography of Samuel Adams and former managing editor of the *New York Sun*, makes a strong case that conservatives should stake a claim to President Kennedy as one of their own. *JFK, Conservative* is a finely crafted brief for this interpretation—and it comes close to winning the case.

Stoll reminds us that Kennedy rose to power at a time when both major parties had liberal and conservative wings and when it was far from clear which one was the liberal and which the conservative party. Rising politicians did not move into one party or the other for ideological reasons but rather for a mix of cultural, religious, or historical factors. Kennedy said that the main reason he was a Democrat was that he was “born one.” JFK disdained the liberals of his era because, as he said, they preferred to posture and take positions rather than to get things done. Kennedy went out of his way to correct anyone who called him a liberal. He ran to

the right of Henry Cabot Lodge in the senatorial election of 1952 by courting the supporters of the conservative senator Robert Taft. He positioned himself similarly against Richard Nixon in the 1960 campaign, when he accused the Eisenhower administration of allowing the Soviet Union to gain an advantage in the arms race. According to Stoll, Nixon was the liberal in that race and JFK the conservative.

Stoll emphasizes one theme that has never been widely appreciated: Kennedy was a devout Catholic who prayed and attended Mass regularly. He grew up in a Catholic family guided by a religiously devout mother. Stoll recounts many occasions in which JFK interrupted official trips or campaign tours to attend church. In the heat of the Cuban Missile Crisis, he pulled aides aside to accompany him to church for prayer. He spoke frequently about the religious foundations of America's political institutions. The apparent conflict between the devout Catholic and the promiscuous husband is one that Stoll is unable to resolve.

Kennedy's religious faith was the foundation for his generally conservative outlook. It is well known that JFK was an ardent Cold Warrior and a dedicated foe of Communism. Less well known is that he grounded his opposition to Communism in religious principles and viewed the Cold War as a spiritual contest between two irreconcilable views of man and society. Sounding very much like a conservative, Kennedy declared during the 1960 campaign that the Cold War "is not a struggle for supremacy of arms alone—it is also a struggle for supremacy between two conflicting ideologies: freedom under God versus ruthless, Godless tyranny." Kennedy believed the Cold War might be won through a confrontation of ideas, and by sustained focus on the achievements of the free world in comparison with those of the Soviet bloc. That, as Stoll argues, was the point of his speech in 1963 in Berlin, where he challenged Communists and fellow travelers to compare the quality of life in the two sectors of the city: "There are those who say that Communism is the wave of the future. Let them come to Berlin." Kennedy's policy as president was to confront and not merely to contain Communism. Stoll rejects the claim that Kennedy softened his opposition to Communism

in the last year of his life following the dangerous confrontation over nuclear missiles in Cuba.

JFK's brief presidency is notable in retrospect as a time when Cold War tensions reached their most dangerous point. Kennedy meant it when he declared in his inaugural address that he would challenge Soviet ambitions in Europe, Latin America, and Southeast Asia. As Stoll puts it, "Kennedy . . . felt encircled, embattled, under siege by a menacing, expansionist, subversive Communist empire. Fighting back was the top priority." Kennedy supported a build-up of American arms in a policy of "peace through strength."

JFK was not only a conservative Cold Warrior but also a fiscal conservative and a tax cutter. He believed in efficiency in government and in cutting wasteful spending. He came to office pledging to balance the federal budget over the life of the business cycle. His top domestic priority in 1963 was a general reduction in personal and corporate income taxes to spur consumer spending and to promote faster economic growth. He proposed to cut the top marginal tax rate from 91 to 65 percent and the lowest rate from 20 to 14 percent, and also to reduce long-term capital-gains taxes from 25 to 19.5 percent. He pushed this proposal (a version of which was passed into law in 1964) against the opposition of such liberals as John Kenneth Galbraith, who called for more government spending to stimulate growth. The payoff from JFK's policy came in the mid 1960s, when the U.S. economy grew at an average rate of more than 6 percent per year.

Many of Kennedy's central ideas were later picked up by Ronald Reagan and other conservatives, but they were generally abandoned by the liberal Democrats who came along in the 1970s and 1980s. "Peace through strength," the belief that the Cold War might eventually be won through a policy of confrontation, and the conviction that tax cuts rather than government spending are the best means to promote economic growth became anathema to Democrats. Kennedy was also optimistic about America's future, an outlook he shared with President Reagan, though not with some of his dour successors in the Democratic party, most notably Jimmy Carter.

Stoll makes a strong case that JFK was neither the idealistic liberal of legend nor

even the pragmatic liberal that the historical consensus suggests he was. Does that make him a conservative? That is a much harder case to make.

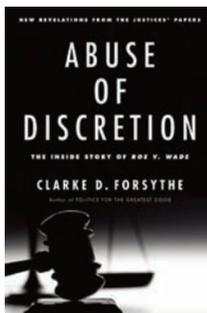
Stoll does not explain why, if JFK was a conservative, he sought to extend the New Deal, courted labor unions, supported a system of health insurance for seniors (later passed as Medicare), blasted business leaders who raised prices beyond his administration's wage-and-price guidelines, endorsed a federal agency to support the arts, supported an expansion of welfare payments, and, in short, promoted many policies that conservatives opposed then and continue to oppose now. The surviving Kennedy brothers, Robert and Edward, had few doubts as to where President Kennedy belonged on the left-to-right spectrum. Both did their best to extend JFK's legacy by identifying it with the leftward drift of liberal culture in the late 1960s. If their brother was a conservative, it was not obvious to them.

No prominent conservative at the time saw JFK as a potential friend or ally. Barry Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*, published in 1960, took issue with virtually all of JFK's positions, and Goldwater looked forward to challenging Kennedy in the 1964 election. Conservatives viewed Kennedy as a hopeless representative of the post-war consensus that called for the preservation of the New Deal at home and the containment of Communism abroad. William F. Buckley Jr. launched the conservative movement in the 1950s in opposition to that consensus, calling instead for a "rollback" of both Communism and the New Deal.

JFK appears more conservative to us today than he appeared to his contemporaries because liberalism moved so far to the left in the years after he was killed. As it did so, some liberals of the old school broke away from the Democratic party and established a new tendency in national politics that endorsed the New Deal and a tough line against Communism but was skeptical of the Great Society and opposed to the new cultural politics of the 1960s. The neoconservatives shared many principles with JFK, especially in the areas emphasized in Stoll's excellent study. *JFK, Conservative* adds still another dimension to JFK's tangled legacy, though not in proving that Kennedy was a conservative, but in suggesting something quite different: that he may have been "the first neoconservative." **NR**

The Road To Roe

RAMESH PONNURU



Abuse of Discretion: The Inside Story of Roe v. Wade, by Clarke D. Forsythe
(Encounter, 496 pp., \$27.99)

ROE V. WADE was a “reasoned statement, elaborated with great care.” So the Supreme Court claimed in 1992, when it reaffirmed its 1973 ruling that all states had to allow abortion for any reason and at any stage of pregnancy. It is a boast that cannot withstand the scrutiny that Clark Forsythe applies.

A longtime legal strategist for the pro-life movement, Forsythe has gone deep into the archives to shed new light on *Roe* and its companion case, *Doe v. Bolton*. Even people who have studied the issue will learn something new.

Above all, Forsythe explains the significance of a fact we have known at least since *The Brethren*, the 1979 book on the Court by Bob Woodward and Scott Armstrong. They reported that the Court took up these cases “to determine whether to expand a series of recent rulings limiting the intervention of federal courts in state court proceedings.”

As Forsythe points out, the Court did not need to have a detailed factual record from the lower courts to settle the procedural issue. The thinness of the record became a bigger problem when the justices decided to use the cases to determine the acceptable range of abortion regulation—or, to look at it a bit differently than Forsythe presents it, a bigger opportunity for policymaking untethered to anything

but the justices’ opinions.

By looking through the justices’ papers, Forsythe is able to document how the standard of “viability” came to pervade the Court’s abortion jurisprudence, at least rhetorically. *Roe* says that states cannot prohibit abortion until the fetus is viable, and *Doe* says they cannot prohibit it after viability without an extremely broad exception for the mother’s health, including her emotional health. Yet viability was not mentioned in the lower courts, in the briefs from parties to the case, or in oral arguments at the Supreme Court.

The draft of *Roe* that Justice Harry Blackmun sent to his colleagues on November 21, 1972, set the dividing line at the end of the first trimester. That’s when an unqualified right to abortion would give way to a theoretical power of states to restrict it. By December 15, he had settled on the considerably later line of viability. (The decisions were released on January 22, 1973.) As For-

sythe shows, Blackmun was reflecting the sentiment among several justices that pregnant women needed more than three months to make the decision to abort their children—that sentiment, and nothing more.

The lack of a trial record also enabled the justices’ many false assumptions about abortion and abortion law to go unchallenged. Forsythe demonstrates that the justices simply misunderstood the common law’s “born alive” rule, which required that the child be injured in utero, delivered alive, and then die of the injuries before a homicide prosecution could take place. Justice Potter Stewart believed that the rule implied that humanity began at birth, and lawyer Sarah Weddington, challenging the anti-abortion law of Texas at issue in *Roe*, said that it meant that the right to life began after 40 weeks’ gestation.

In fact, the common law followed the rule for evidentiary reasons: Given the state of medical knowledge at the time, the live infant had to be observed to determine whether the injury had caused the death, and therefore to rule out a natural stillbirth. The law never distinguished between births at term and births before term, because the rule had nothing to do with the stage of gestation; and the rule itself presupposed, contrary to Justice Stewart, that unborn children could suffer punishable injuries.

The justices also relied uncritically on the activist scholarship of Cyril Means Jr., who claimed that abortion had been a common-law liberty at the time of the American Founding and had been restricted by later legislators purely to protect maternal safety. Modern abortion being much safer for women, the argument went, the laws should now be discarded. Means’s work has by now been thoroughly discredited: Abortion was not a common-law liberty, and the laws were tightened in the 19th century primarily to protect unborn children.

The movement to liberalize abortion laws, as it pressed its case in the 1960s and 1970s, vastly exaggerated the extent of illegal abortion and its death toll for pregnant women. The actual number of deaths from illegal abortions, as far as we can tell, plummeted in the decades before any state had liberalized its laws, thanks to the development

BOCA RATON

In the rat’s mouth
of wealth
one learns to accept
opulence
as a perk of life
dazed by the depth
and breadth of it
spread on the hyaline
sea sparkle & sky
cluttered with yachts
cutting cream swaths
in a diamond day
without flaw

Everyone is rich
or ought to be
crowned with the plenitude
of bloom & palm
the visionary flesh
of the earth Ponce
de León found so
elusive the fountain
of summer singing
in the blood bright
paeans of praise
for the majestic
lavish price of all life

—RICHARD O’CONNELL

of antibiotics. The justices nonetheless appear to have accepted the mythology. They were also wrong, in Forsythe's view, to read the available evidence as indicating that abortion was safer for women than carrying a pregnancy.

The result of the Court's evidence-free foray into lawmaking was one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world, a fact that the justices in the majority and their like-minded successors have gone to great lengths to obscure. Forsythe notes that Justice Sandra Day O'Connor claimed, in a book she wrote while on the Court, that *Roe* had made abortion a constitutional right "in the first three months of pregnancy." Justice Stephen Breyer wrote similarly in his own book. Their own decisions in abortion cases show that they know the claim is misleading.

The justices have often been portrayed as having merely ratified a social trend that would have triumphed even without their help. But few of the states that had liberalized their abortion laws had gone as far as *Roe* and *Doe*, the latter of which struck down Georgia's liberalized law for its restrictions. (One of the minor services Forsythe performs is to recover the record of how ably Dorothy Beasley defended the Georgia law in oral argument before the Supreme Court, and how thoroughly the justices ignored her cautions, questions, and corrections.) And the political momentum for liberalizing the abortion laws had stalled in the early 1970s. No liberalizing legislation passed any state in 1971 or 1972, and two states rejected the idea by large margins in referenda while Blackmun was working on his drafts.

In a 1983 case, Justice Lewis Powell, part of the *Roe* majority, considered writing a decision that acknowledged "that abortion mills do exist, and are operated to the great profit of unethical physicians who care little about their patients." Justices Blackmun and William Brennan (who had also voted for *Roe*) persuaded him to refrain. Brennan said any such reference would give "aid and comfort" to pro-lifers. Forsythe does not render harsh judgments on any of the justices he discusses, but the reader has sufficient evidence to conclude that some of the justices were politicians in robes, and shifty politicians at that. **NR**

Essential Ellington

THOMAS S. HIBBS



Duke: A Life of Duke Ellington, by Terry Teachout (Gotham, 496 pp., \$30)

IN a passage quoted by Terry Teachout in this new book, T. S. Eliot writes: "Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different. The good poet welds his theft into a whole of feeling which is unique, utterly different from that from which it was torn." That is an apt description of the artistry of Duke Ellington, whose peculiar mode of composition typically involved weaving together solos from various members of his band into a cohesive whole.

Nor is that the only way in which Ellington took existing music and constructed something better and unique. Perhaps nowhere in 20th-century music do the varied strands—from classical to jazz and big band—come together in a more compelling way than in the compositions of Duke Ellington, whose career spanned six decades of that century. Exhibiting a mastery of all things Ellington and writing in always accessible and lively prose, Teachout narrates the unlikely story of an African American with no formal musical training who became one of the great composers of his era.

Like many who receive the label of genius, Ellington achieved success as the result not just of native ability but also of relentless work. He was known to compose at all hours and in every setting, fre-

quently isolating himself in a hotel room to write for hours on end. If he did much of his composing in solitude, his mode of composition was thoroughly communal. He relied on the work of the soloists in his band for much of his material.

The unusual mode of composition led some to denigrate Ellington as a mere compiler, while others, more justly, criticized him for failing to acknowledge the contribution of co-writers and band members to his work. Perhaps nowhere is this injustice more evident than in his lengthy collaboration with Billy Strayhorn, the truly great composer who penned the Ellington band's signature song, "Take the 'A' Train." Only rarely and somewhat belatedly did Ellington acknowledge the extent of their collaboration. Strayhorn, who had a more natural sense of organic composition than Ellington and thus was a perfect complement to his more diffusive style, bristled privately, but only privately, at the lack of recognition. He was gay and thus felt the need to keep out of the public eye. One observer of their relationship offered a rather harsh assessment of Ellington's treatment of Strayhorn, toward whom he was simultaneously "protective and controlling," as he was toward the women in his life.

Ellington's peculiar role made him a novelty in the music world. An early manager, Jack Mills, had the shrewd insight to see that Ellington should be marketed as both a bandleader and a composer. If Ellington profited from the talent of his band members, he was also burdened with the nearly impossible task of managing the individual performances and group cohesiveness of a large number of musicians, many of whom were addicted to alcohol and/or drugs or were simply lazy and moody. He once quipped that trying to lead such a group on a daily basis was akin to the work of a "scientist in a mental institution." Ellington himself cut back on, and eventually gave up, alcohol because he saw the damage it wrought. As for the band, he had a penchant for punishing the unprepared by forcing them to perform lengthy solos.

For those who are not aficionados, music criticism can be tedious. Going to the opposite extreme in the hope of accessibility, some writers focus on the life and offer only glancing attention to the music. Or they simply fawn over their musical heroes. Teachout avoids all these potential vices of the music biographer. Descrip-

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tively rich, the book is not so much a scholarly tome as it is a delightful and entertaining read. Teachout writes with clarity and verve, presenting an astonishing amount of detail in a flowing narrative that brings to life not just Ellington and his music, but much of American culture of the period. And Ellington's life is testimony to W. E. B. Du Bois's claim that the problem of the American century was the "problem of the color line."

An award-winning biographer of Louis Armstrong, Teachout here offers occasional comparisons of the two great African-American musicians. Along with a certain level of respect, Ellington harbored some resentment toward Armstrong for what he, like many other black performers, saw as Armstrong's clownish presentation of himself before white audiences. Yet, beneath the surface contrast, Teachout detects deeper sympathies and similarities. Both embody the aspirational code of Booker T. Washington, the notion that it was primarily through effort and good will that the lot of African Americans would improve. Ellington was skeptical of civil-rights protests and somewhat dismissive of the March on

Washington even as he held Martin Luther King Jr. in very high regard. Like Armstrong, although in quite different ways, Ellington was a bridge between black and white culture. The decision in the 1920s by CBS radio to broadcast nationally the Ellington band's Cotton Club performances meant that black music was reaching a white audience for the first time.

Although he resisted the term "jazz" as a description of his music, he never objected to seeing it as African and American, even going so far as to embrace the seemingly disparaging comment of George Gershwin that Ellington's band played "jungle music." He movingly described what he called "the music of my race" as "the result of our transplantation to American soil, and . . . our reaction in the plantation days to the tyranny we endured. What we could not say openly we expressed in music. . . . The characteristic melancholy music of my race has been forged from the very white heat of our sorrows."

For all his ability to capture the cultural context of Ellington's work, it is the music itself to which Teachout repeatedly

returns. Deft and balanced judgments, such as that concerning the "Second Sacred Concert," which combines some of Ellington's "best music with his worst lyrics," characterize the entire book. I highly suggest listening to some select pieces as you read. You will appreciate the strengths and weaknesses, the range and the novelty of Ellington's work, even as you gain a sense of the wide variety of Ellington's composition, from the long, symphonic, and often dissonant works (such as "Black, Brown, and Beige," a jazz symphony performed at Ellington's famous Carnegie Hall appearance in 1943, and "Diminuendo and Crescendo in Blue") to the short, snappy dance numbers (such as "Ko-Ko" and "Cotton Tail").

For all his aspiration to large-scale, symphonic music, that was not where Ellington's greatness lay. "He was," Teachout concludes, "like Paul Klee, Jorge Luis Borges, and Flannery O'Connor, a disciplined lyric miniaturist who knew how to express the grandest of emotions on the smallest of scales and who needed no more room in which to suggest his immortal longings." **NR**



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Film

Into the Inferno

ROSS DOUTHAT

TWELVE YEARS A SLAVE, the first non-Tarantino major motion picture in years to offer a slave's-eye view of the antebellum South, would probably have been guaranteed admiring reviews and a Best Picture nomination even if it had turned out to be ponderous, turgid, and pedantic. Fortunately, it's artful enough, moving enough, and sometimes ravaging enough to mostly justify the critical reception. Some of the reviews are promising too much: This is not a work of unmatched cinematic greatness, and its unflinching portrait of the mechanics of slavery sometimes gives the human side of things short shrift. But given the historical burden *12 Years* carries, it's still a film that acquits itself impressively and deserves to be admired.

The story is a true (or mostly true) one, based on a narrative written by Solomon Northup, a free black man and accomplished violinist from Saratoga who was kidnapped while on a visit to Washington, D.C., drugged, and shipped southward into bondage. With no one to trust, no one with any incentive to believe his story, and no legal or practical means of communicating with the North, the movie's Northup passes from the comforts of middle-class respectability into the concentric circles of peculiar-institution hell: first the vicious efficiency of a slave trader (Paul Giamatti), then the hapless rule of a half-decent, would-be-Christian plantation owner (Benedict Cumberbatch), and then finally the infernal grip of the story's Simon Legree figure, the ruthless alcoholic Edwin Epps.

Epps is played by Michael Fassbender, who starred—or, perhaps more aptly, whose body starred—in the two previous films from the *12 Years* director, Steve McQueen: the political-prison drama *Hunger* and the sex-addiction movie *Shame*. Here, though, the flesh that matters belongs to Chiwetel Ejiofor as Northup, who is stripped and lashed and sold, stripped and lashed and sold again,



Chiwetel Ejiofor in *12 Years a Slave*

and whose astonishingly expressive face seems to wear the scars of his story as openly as his torn and crisscrossed back. And McQueen, to his credit, recognizes what he has in his star and keeps the focus on that ravaged, anguished, bewildered visage rather than succumbing (as his earlier movies did) to a kind of fetishization of bodies in extremis, an aestheticization of inhumanity.

I do not agree, in other words, with the few contrarians (including the high king of contrariness, the critic Armond White) who have indicted *12 Years a Slave* for trafficking in a kind of Historically Important torture porn. The torture is there, but in ways that feel true and necessary rather than exploitative. There is one truly bloody flogging in the movie, and one extended, hard-to-watch scene in which Northup is suspended from a noose with his toes just touching the ground while the life of the plantation goes on around him, uninterrupted and barely faded. But this is a long film about an outsider's induction into a culture founded on cruelty and violence, and in that context neither sequence feels pornographic or unnecessary.

What I think the contrarians are correct in discerning, however, is an inattention to psychology in the film, a failure to burrow *that* far below the surface and get at the mental structures that made it possible to live as a master and to survive as a slave. The cast is excellent, and the characters believable, but they do not really change or come into sharper focus over the course of the movie. Ejiofor stares and gasps and endures, Cumberbatch smiles and temporizes, Epps snarls and raves and occasionally charms, and the supporting cast—including Lupita Nyong'o as the

luckless object of Epps's affection, Sarah Paulson as Epps's monstrous wife, and (in the movie's one egregiously false note) Brad Pitt as a sympathetic itinerant carpenter—has a similar consistency: To meet them is to know them.

The two exceptions are the smallest ones: Garret Dillahunt as a former overseer fallen on hard times, who takes a job picking cotton alongside Epps's slaves and temporarily befriends Northup, and Alfre Woodard as a slave-turned-mistress at a neighboring plantation, who sips tea on a veranda while she murmurs about the damnation awaiting her lover and his class. In these blink-and-you'll-miss-them roles, you get a real hint of the twisting complexity of antebellum life, the varied ways in which both whites and blacks made their way within the system, the strange gradations and hierarchies it created, and the varying sources of emotional resilience that its worst-used inhabitants discovered for themselves.

Because Ejiofor's Northup is ultimately an outsider, and because, for all his suffering, he still functions more like Dante in this Inferno than like the truly damned—not least because we know from the title that he'll eventually get out—his character does not give us enough on this score, and neither do most of the people with whom he interacts, slaves and masters alike.

Twelve Years a Slave opens a necessary window into the world of slavery, but it doesn't quite let us see the system, the culture, from the inside out. For that, we need more movies that take up this necessary subject, and more filmmakers to follow where McQueen and his cast have bravely trod. **NR**

Those Who Can't, Govern

FOR much of last year, a standard trope of President Obama's speechwriters was that there were certain things only government could do. "That's how we built this country—together," he declared. "We constructed railroads and highways, the Hoover Dam and the Golden Gate Bridge. We did those things together." As some of us pointed out, for the cost of Obama's 2009 stimulus bill alone, you could have built 1,567 Golden Gate Bridges—or one mega-Golden Gate Bridge stretching from Boston to just off the coast of Ireland. Yet there isn't a single bridge, or a single dam ("You will never see another federal dam," his assistant secretary of the interior assured an audience of environmentalists). Across the land, there was not a thing for dotting network correspondents in hard hats to stand in front of and say, "Obama built this."

Until now, that is. Obamacare is as close to a Hoover Dam as latter-day Big Government gets. Which is why its catastrophic launch is sobering even for those of us who've been saying for five years it would be a disaster. It's as if at the ribbon-cutting the Hoover Dam cracked open and washed away the dignitaries; as if the Golden Gate Bridge was opened to traffic with its central span missing; as if *Apollo 11* had taken off for the moon but landed on Newfoundland. Obama didn't have to build a dam or a bridge or a spaceship, just a database and a website. This is his world, the guys he hangs with, the zeitgeist he surfs so dazzlingly, Apple and Google, apps and downloads. But his website's a sclerotic dump, and the database is a hacker's heaven, and all that's left is the remorseless snail mail of millions and millions of cancellation letters.

For the last half-century, Obama has simply had to be. Just being Obama was enough to waft him onwards and upwards: He was the *Harvard Law Review* president who never published a word, the community organizer who never organized a thing, the state legislator who voted present. And then one day came the day when it wasn't enough simply to be. For the first time in his life, he had to do. And it turns out he can't. He's not Steve Jobs or Bill Gates or Jeff Bezos. And Healthcare.gov is about what you'd expect if you nationalized a sixth of the economy and gave it to the Assistant Deputy Commissar of the Department of Paperwork and the Under-Regulator-General of the Bureau of Compliance.

Politics, the late Christopher Hitchens used to say, is show business for ugly people. But it's also ugly business for show people. Thatcherism is a political philoso-

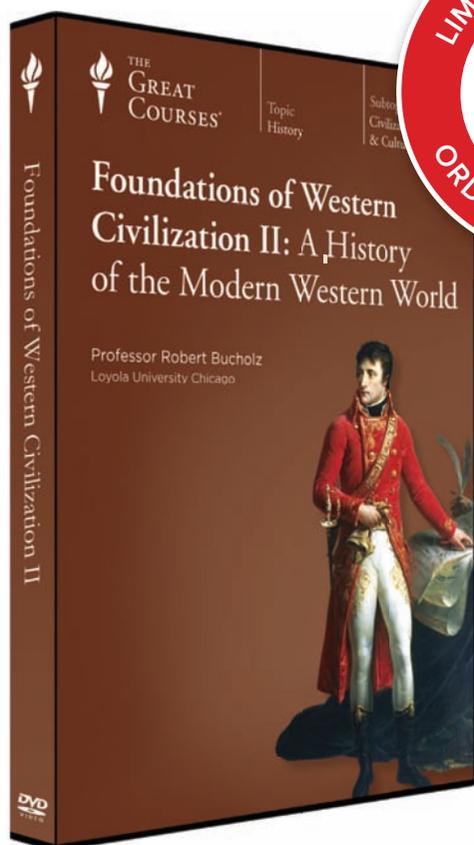
phy; Obamaism is a vibe, a groove, a pose, an aesthetic. When his speechwriters are cooking, he'll get them to work up a little riff about how it's not about Big Government vs. Small Government, it's about "smarter" government. A few months ago, he even gave it a hashtag! #SmarterGov. How cool is that? "Smart" refers less to the product than to the guys pitching it. "He's probably the smartest guy ever to become president," said the historian Michael Beschloss the day after Obama's election. In an embarrassing effusion even by his own standards, another smart guy, the *New York Times*' house conservative David Brooks, noted the incoming administration's narrow range of almae matres and cooed: "If a foreign enemy attacks the United States during the Harvard-Yale game anytime over the next four years, we're screwed." Obama and his courtiers were the smartest guys in town, so naturally their government would be smarter than all previous governments. A few weeks before Obamacare's launch, one of the smart set, Dan Pfeiffer, promised it would be "a consumer experience unmatched by anything in government, but also in the private sector." And he was right, kind of.

What does Dan Pfeiffer know of this thing called "the private sector"? To say there is less private-sector experience in the Obama administration than in any other of the last century hardly begins to convey the particular pool of smarts on which this president has drawn. Nearly 60 percent of Eisenhower's cabinet appointments had private-sector experience; Nixon, Reagan, and both Bushes scored well over 50; FDR and Truman smack on 50/50; in Obama's cabinet, fewer than 10 percent have real-world business experience. None of Obamacare's begetters have ever created anything—certainly not a dime of real wealth.

Instead, we have government by people who read Thomas L. Friedman and use words like "interconnectedness" and give commencement addresses where they rave about how our world is changing so fast—and assume that just being glibly au courant is a substitute for being able to do, make, build. There are lessons here beyond the abysmal failure of one misconceived government program, lessons about what our esteemed (if not terminally self-esteeming) elites value as "smart," and about the perils of rule by a poseur technocracy. As for Obama, he's not Jay-Z, nor even Justin Bieber: He can't sing, or dance, or create a government bureaucracy that functions any more efficiently than a Soviet supermarket. He broke the lifelong rule that had served him so well—"Don't just do something. Stand there"—and for the first time in his life did something, terribly. It will bear his name forever.

NR





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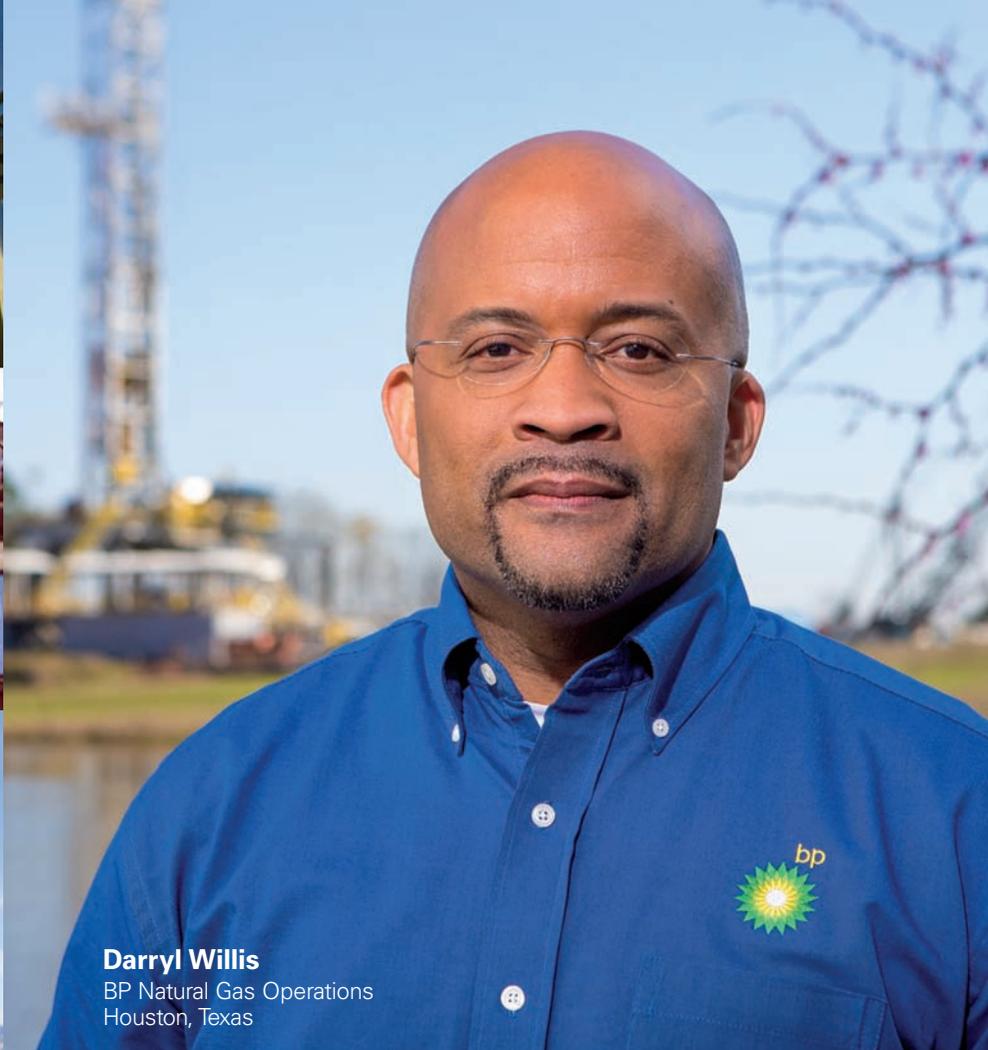
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