

PONNURU & LEVIN: THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY

JOHN R. BOLTON: OBAMA'S BAD IRAN DEAL

COOKE
ON THE BEATLES
LOWRY
ON *MOBY-DICK*

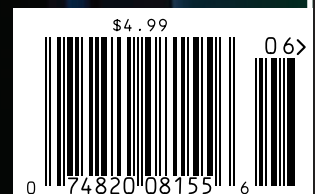
NATIONAL REVIEW



THE END OF SEX

IN AN AGE OF PORNOGRAPHY

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON





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Bateman's Losers

The annual awards ceremony hosted by *Adult Video News*, a.k.a. the “Porn Oscars,” is almost an afterthought on the agenda of this multi-day pornopalooza, which is one part serious insider trade show for the nation’s increasingly specialized pornographers and sex-toy peddlers and one part fan-fest for the world’s most dedicated consumers of smut. *Kevin D. Williamson*



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Racist Roll Call

Reading Kevin D. Williamson’s article “Racism! Squirrel!” (December 31 issue) brought back fond memories of roll call when we had a substitute teacher. As the teacher got to the “B”s, she would invariably pause, take a breath, and vainly attempt to pronounce “Brajkovich.” Her butchered version of my name would give much amusement to my classmates, as well as to myself. Little did I realize that I was the victim of subtle anti-Croatian racism. Thank you for enlightening me.

Joseph Brajkovich
Campbell, Calif.

Theism as Wonder

In his article on atheists, Nicholas Frankovich (“Do Atheists Exist?” December 31) seems guilty of doing something akin to what Kevin D. Williamson notes (“Racism! Squirrel!” December 31) among Democrats (who see racism as ubiquitous among Republicans) when he accuses atheists in general of resorting to straw-man arguments against the cartoonish childhood images of the Hebrew/Christian God. Frankovich suggests that “atheism is usually an assertion of disbelief in . . . the shadowy masculine presence at the center of the Hebrew Bible.” In fact, for many atheists, the whole God thing doesn’t stir such invective. Rather, it hardly warrants much more than a shrug of the shoulders. The existence or non-existence of entities that completely transcend the laws of our universe is simply unknowable. Frankovich says that atheists sidestep the question of how the universe came to be, but the reality is that atheists simply decline to kick that can down the road by postulating a creator, whose creation would be left, in turn, unexplained. As for his claim that the atheist seeking to answer the question “Why is there not nothing?” will, inescapably, affirm the most fundamental of theological precepts, which by definition must be “There exists God, creator of the universe,” I, for one, hereby decline to kick that can.

T. Rex Bodoia
Lakewood, Wash.

NICHOLAS FRANKOVICH RESPONDS: This letter illustrates my observation that dramatic declarations of atheism (not “atheists in general”) tend to start from the God of faith—an “entity” or “creator,” as T. Rex Bodoia writes. But you can’t refute theism unless you understand it first, and to understand it, you have to start at the logical beginning, with the so-called God of the philosophers. Clear your mind of preconceptions. No, the most fundamental theological precept is not that “there exists God, creator of the universe.” It’s that the mystery of being is irreducible, absolutely immune to attempts at demystification. Now stop right there. Dwell on that thought for a moment. Think slowly. The closest thing that the question “Why is there not nothing?” has to an answer is the wonder that it elicits in you when you ponder it. Then stop again. This is what theists mean by theism. Many avowed atheists accept it too, except when it comes with the label “God” attached to it. That’s all. Granted, if you’re anhedonic in these matters, you won’t experience that wonder. You’ll shrug where others marvel. That does not, however, prevent you from grasping classical theism at least intellectually. Unless it does.

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The Week

■ Little-known fact: François Hollande’s security is provided by Arkansas state troopers.

■ “What difference, at this point, does it make?” asked the presumed front-runner in the 2016 presidential race when questioned about the genesis of the September 11 terror attack in Benghazi that killed four Americans, including one of her ambassadors. But the State Department and the Senate Intelligence Committee think it makes enough difference to keep investigating the matter. Early in January the State Department listed two groups that took part in the Benghazi attack as terrorist organizations. Five days later the Senate committee report, while describing the attack as “opportunistic” and launched in “short order,” blamed it on “individuals affiliated with terrorist groups,” including Ansar al-Sharia and two al-Qaeda affiliates. It also faulted security at the Benghazi facility: The intelligence community had given “ample strategic warning” that U.S. personnel were “at risk.” But the front-runner and her colleagues did nothing to protect them, and claimed afterwards that the attacks were a spontaneous eruption of wrath against a low-budget American movie trailer. It makes a difference only if we expect foresight, realism, and honesty from our public servants.

■ An excerpt published in *Politico* from *HRC*, a forthcoming book on Hillary Clinton by reporters Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes, offered a revealing glimpse into the 2008 Clinton machine: Her aides kept a “hit list,” a detailed Excel spreadsheet tracking Clinton’s friends and enemies, to ensure that future favors or payback were meted out according to the level of loyalty or treachery exhibited during the campaign. In one draft of the list, Democratic congressmen were rated on a scale of one to seven, with “sevens” being the most traitorous. Among the latter: Senators John Kerry, Claire McCaskill, and Ted Kennedy, all of whom endorsed Obama despite past support from the Clintons. “I wouldn’t, of course, call it an enemies list,” one source told Allen and Parnes. “I don’t want to make her sound like Nixon in a pantsuit.” If only Clinton had kept as meticulous track of cables addressed to her at the State Department.

■ Both hard-core privacy advocates and the national-security Right were disappointed by President Obama’s speech about his proposed NSA reforms. In response to the political controversy created by Edward Snowden’s leaking information about nearly every aspect of American signal-intelligence work, Obama suggested marginal tweaks to the most controversial programs, while also defending their usefulness. Rather than decide whether the programs such as metadata gathering are worth their cost in personal privacy, the president left this decision to Congress and yet another panel of experts, pretending that some innovative solution might obviate the need to consider trade-offs. Worse, he promised new privacy protections to foreign governments and citizens. These reforms will probably not stop the



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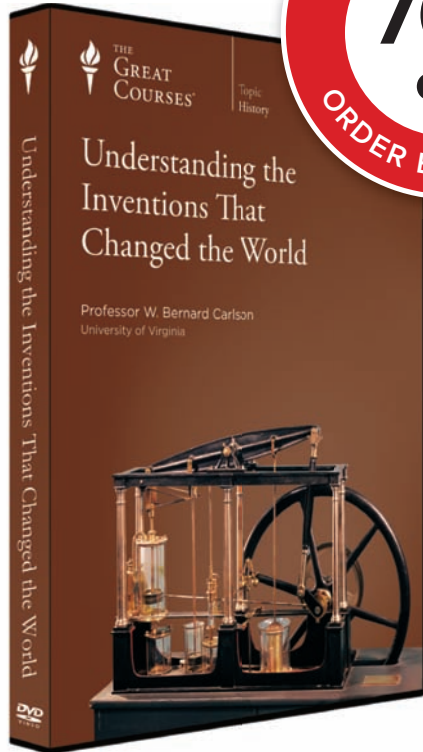
intelligence community from doing what it needs to keep America safe—even if its leaders are less resolute.

■ Apologists for Obamacare are saying that it has allowed 10 million people to gain health insurance. Don’t believe them. That number counts a lot of people who have simply re-enrolled in Medicaid. It counts everyone who is staying on his parent’s insurance until age 26, even people who were guaranteed that option by state law before Obamacare. It counts all the people who sign up for the exchanges as newly insured, even though McKinsey, a consultancy, has just estimated that only 11 percent of them lacked health insurance. It is entirely possible that Obamacare will not produce any net reduction in the number of uninsured Americans this year (and even more possible that it will produce no net reduction outside Medicaid). An administration official was quoted saying that Obamacare has achieved “preliminary sustainability.” Translation: We can’t say the law’s benefits are great, and we can’t say the costs are low, but we can say that the law is here. Watch for this argument—from-the-status quo to loom ever larger in liberal rhetoric.

■ Because of its nonsensical underlying assumptions, Obamacare has added instability to the insurance market—instability that it proposes to address with a built-in, preemptive bailout



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program for insurance companies. In theory, the so-called risk-corridor program in Obamacare is designed to force insurers to share costs: If one unlucky insurer operating in the exchange ends up with an unusually sick and expensive clientele, then the luckier ones subsidize the firm, paying 75 percent of its costs when they exceed 108 percent of premiums. The immediate problem is that the incompetent rollout of Obamacare and its perverse economic incentives mean that there may be nothing but unlucky firms in the exchanges, leaving taxpayers on the hook for those costs—without limit. Senator Marco Rubio (R., Fla.) and Representative Tim Griffin (R., Ark.) have introduced legislation to repeal the risk-corridor provision, and insurers have complained that this would force them to raise premiums. Higher premiums are of course an unpleasant prospect, but Americans are better off paying the costs of Obamacare upfront in a transparent manner than through a backdoor taxpayer bailout. If Americans do not like the cost of Obamacare, then they have a chance to do something about that come November.

■ When Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius told Congress it was “possible” Obamacare navigators could be convicted felons, NATIONAL REVIEW reporter Jillian Kay Melchior got curious. Unfortunately, Nevada’s Division of Insurance, which conducts the background checks for that state, has refused to disclose public records that would indicate whether any criminals are working as navigators. And its public-information officer, Jake Sunderland, was so put out by Melchior’s inquiries that he hung up on her. But consumers, who are being compelled to purchase health coverage, deserve to be informed of the risks before they hand over their Social Security numbers, financial records, health histories, and other confidential information to a known criminal. NATIONAL REVIEW, together with the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, filed a lawsuit on January 10, suing the Nevada Division of Insurance in an effort to obtain the records. We’re happy to duke it out in court, but Nevada’s petty bureaucrats are making themselves look awfully suspicious. Are they concerned about protecting consumers, or just about politically protecting themselves?

■ The rollout of HealthCare.gov having been such great fun, Americans will be pleased to know that we get to do it all over again—this time in another language. In January, the *Washington Post*’s Ezra Klein observed that the long-delayed Spanish-language incarnation of HealthCare.gov was experiencing some familiar problems, sometimes crashing completely. Native Spanish speakers were also confused by the language on the website, with some noting that it appeared to be a kind of “Spanglish”—a crude and unlovely combination of English and Spanish that, observers concluded, had almost certainly been pushed through Google Translate. Throughout, the word “premium” was translated into “prima,” which means “first cousin” in Spanish. Even the *name* of the site was wrong: “CuidadoDeSalud.gov,” which was evidently supposed to approximate “Health-Care.gov,” instead means “for the caution of health.” Fitting, all told.

■ Filomena is a popular Italian restaurant in Georgetown, D.C. It is said to be one of Bill Clinton’s favorite restaurants. Recently, Filomena announced that it was eliminating its Friday buffet. “We regret we had to make this decision,” said the restaurant on

its website, “but unfortunately we face new expenses as a result of the Healthcare reform and the Friday Buffet, though wonderful, was not profitable and required extra staff which we can no longer sustain.” The restaurant is trimming costs in anticipation of the “employer mandate.” To speak metaphorically, we fear there will be many buffets canceled across America in coming years.

■ After an uprising in East Germany, Bertolt Brecht wrote (tongue in cheek) that the government should “dissolve the people and elect another.” Andrew Cuomo appears to agree, for real. In a radio interview he said that “extreme conservatives, who are right-to-life, pro-assault-weapon, [and] anti-gay . . . have no place in the State of New York. Because that is not who New Yorkers are.” Cuomo’s website claimed later that he was talking only about politicians—a defense belied by his last sentence. And note Cuomo’s hierarchy of anti-New York thought: He tarred opponents of gay marriage and supporters of gun rights with sweeping or inflammatory epithets. But he called people who are pro-life “pro-life,” their preferred self-identification. That is because Cuomo believes his presidential ambitions require him to be the most pro-abortion politician in any room; and that is because his party is now a subsidiary, as Ramesh Ponnuru called it, of the Party of Death.

■ Senator Tom Coburn (R., Okla.) is going to step down two years early, following the elections later this year. He says that it is not his cancer diagnosis that prompted the decision. Coburn’s chief causes have been confronting the federal government’s long-term debt crisis, rooting out wasteful spending, and reforming health care the free-market way. (He is an obstetrician, and prefers “Doctor” to his other honorific.) His idealism and candor set him apart from most of his colleagues. We wish him well, and hope the voters of Oklahoma choose a successor as intent on protecting the public fisc.

■ Ed Gillespie has announced his campaign for the Virginia U.S. Senate seat held by Democrat Mark Warner. Gillespie, the ebullient former Republican National

Committee chairman, is hardly a political outsider, but his roots are in the right flank of the Republican Revolution of 1994, when he was a top aide to Dick Armey. He signed up as counselor to President George W. Bush, near the bitter end, out of a sense of service. We disagree with him on comprehensive immigration reform (he favors it), but have no doubt that he is a principled conservative and would make an excellent senator.



■ Wendy Davis, the ghoulishly energetic cheerleader for abortion who wishes to be governor of Texas, has a celebrated life story: Divorced at 19, a single mother living in a trailer, she

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scrappily pulled herself up by her bootstraps and put herself through Harvard Law. Plucky *and* modest: “I am the epitome of hard work and optimism,” she says. As the *Dallas Morning News* recently pointed out, that story is not quite true: Davis was still married for years after she sometimes claims to have been divorced—a lie of some special interest because she repeated it under oath as part of a federal lawsuit—but the more salient omitted details are the fact that the future feminist icon was soon remarried, to a wealthy older man, who moved her into a historic home in a tony Fort Worth neighborhood, finished putting her through college at Texas Christian University, and then put her through Harvard—a man whom she left the day after he made the last payment on her education. He ac-

Comparisons between the United States and such fundamentally different countries are of limited value, but the other leaders are similar countries, hailing from the Commonwealth: Australia (No. 3), New Zealand (No. 5), and Canada (No. 6). Like Gulliver among the Lilliputians, the U.S. economy is being held down by a swarm of tiny nuisances. Heritage reports that since reaching its peak in 2006, “it has suffered a dramatic decline of almost 6 points, with particularly large losses in property rights, freedom from corruption, and control of government spending. The U.S. is the only country to have recorded a loss of economic freedom each of the past seven years. The overall U.S. score decline from 1995 [the index’s debut] to 2014 is 1.2 points, the fourth worst drop

The federal government is almost literally encouraging schools to judge students on the color of their skin rather than the content of their character.

cusced her of adultery in the opening stages of their divorce proceedings and was awarded custody of their children: an unusual outcome, especially in Texas, but one she did not contest. The *Morning News* reports that “Davis acknowledged some chronological errors and incomplete details in what she and her aides have said about her life.” There is much that is admirable in Wendy Davis’s life story. There also is much that is admirable in *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

■ The most pleasant political news of 2014 so far is word from Representative Jim Moran (D., Va.) that he will retire at the end of this term. Moran’s reliably liberal voting record wasn’t surprising, considering his heavily Democratic district, and was far from the most repugnant aspect of him. In 2003, he said that the U.S. wouldn’t be invading Iraq “if it were not for the strong support of the Jewish community for this war.” Moran also had a history of violent outbursts that conveniently never amounted to legal trouble. Good riddance.

■ In the late 1960s, John Lennon wrote a song called “Give Peace a Chance,” and that phrase has been a staple of political rhetoric—especially left-wing political rhetoric—ever since. Discussing his latest diplomacy with Iran, President Obama said he wanted to “give peace a chance.” The important question here is whether Iran will give peace a chance; of the peaceful intentions of the United States, Israel, and other democracies, there is no doubt. The nuclearization of the mullahs’ Iran is a very serious business. There could not be a less appropriate occasion for hippie rhetoric.

■ When it comes to economic-freedom rankings, the United States no longer counts itself among the top ten. Never mind being the freest country on earth, the United States is no longer even the freest country in North America: Between Canada and Mexico is a fine location geographically, but not on the invaluable Heritage Index of Economic Freedom, where it scores a middling 75.5 out of a maximum possible 100. The top slots are dominated by city-states—Hong Kong and Singapore—along with perennial welterweight champion Switzerland.

among advanced economies.” The real cost is not to our pride, but to our prosperity. Strange that American admirers of foreign health-care and tax practices never learn to love Canadian fiscal probity or the Swiss approach to taxing investments.

■ President Obama’s Department of Education, led by the occasionally sensible Arne Duncan, and the Department of Justice, led by the consistently foolhardy Eric Holder, have not shied away from using dubious applications of civil-rights law to assert federal control and push their agendas. Their latest effort: advising schools that they have to reduce racially disparate discipline outcomes. In almost all American schools, black and Hispanic students are much more likely to be disciplined than white students, who get in much more trouble than Asian students. The evidence that this has anything to do with racial discrimination rather than the students’ differing backgrounds is laughably poor. Thus, the Obama administration is putting its favorite legal doctrine, disparate impact, to work, though without explicitly saying so. If their goal is to be reached, administrators and teachers will simply be moved to discipline everyone, especially the most unruly students, less. The hardest-hit by such a development? The dedicated students, many of them black and Hispanic, who want to learn free of the distractions of their troubled peers. The federal government is almost literally encouraging schools to judge students on the color of their skin rather than the content of their character.

■ The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out the Federal Communications Commission’s attempts to force “net neutrality” on Internet service providers. The regulation sought to block the providers from being able to favor some content providers over others. It’s a solution in search of a problem. Customers want full access to all sites, and so that’s what the companies have given them. The FCC should learn to live with its superfluity.

■ Senator Marco Rubio, influenced in large part by an article by Oren Cass in these pages, argued for a new approach to poverty. Federal aid to the working poor would be converted into wage subsidies, much like today’s earned-income tax credit but spread

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Like a picked flower cut from the source, we gradually wilt physically and mentally and become vulnerable to a host of degenerative diseases, that we simply weren't susceptible to in our early adult years.

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GHR is a natural releaser, has no known side effects, unlike the synthetic version and has no known drug interactions. Progressive doctors admit that this is the direction medicine is seeking to go, to get the body to heal itself instead of employing drugs. GHR is truly a revolutionary paradigm shift in medicine and, like any modern leap frog advance, many others will be left in the dust holding their limited, or useless drugs and remedies.

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out over every paycheck instead of coming once a year. Federal aid to the non-working poor would be parceled out to the states, which would have control over how they used the funds to ameliorate poverty. We are not, by and large, enthusiastic about having the federal government take money from individuals and businesses and then send it to state governments: That's not exactly Mr. Madison's federalism. But many of Rubio's instincts here are right, and we hope he follows up on his comments about ending the marriage penalties that federal assistance to the poor often involves. The nuclear family is still our best anti-poverty program.

■ Climate alarmists have long been accused of harboring the less-than-secret desire to circumvent the democratic process and rule for the “good” of the planet, and it was in this spirit that Michael Mann recently penned an ugly *New York Times* op-ed, titled “If You See Something, Say Something.” Without irony, Mann wrote that “our Department of Homeland Security has urged citizens to report anything dangerous they witness. . . . We scientists are citizens, too, and, in climate change, we see a clear and present danger.” There being “a debate where none should exist,” Mann was clear in explaining what sort of witness-sourced information he was after. The failure of his “hockey stick” to convince even some of his allies in the broader climate debate is presumably off limits. So, too, the recent slowdown of warming and the embarrassing refusal of ice at both ends of the earth to melt according to the script that alarmists have written. These should be clear and present dangers to Mann's reputation.

■ An estimated 160 to 200 million girls are missing in the world because of sex-selective abortion. Standard protocol in countries such as China and India, the heinous practice is beginning to seep into the West as well. A recent analysis of 2011 British census data by the *Independent*, a London newspaper, shows that sex-selective abortions, which are illegal in the U.K., are likely taking place in Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese, Nepalese, and similar communities in England and Wales—and that Great Britain has between 1,400 and 4,700 fewer girls because of them. There's a temptation to think that the United States is immune to such regressive practices. It's not: A Gallup poll conducted ten times since 1941 has consistently found that if Americans were limited to having only one child, there is a 10 to 15 percent higher preference for boys. Congress would be wise to put laws against sex selection into place. (House Republicans have tried, with the Prenatal Nondiscrimination Act.) The Left likes to talk of a metaphorical “war on women.” What needs to be talked about—and stopped—is the actual killing of unborn girls.

■ Homeschooling is verboten in Germany, a ban dating back to that country's totalitarian past, and German authorities have gone so far as to construct a new wall to enforce it: The Wunderlich family has lost custody of its children and is being held hostage in Germany by authorities who refuse—in the face of German law, European law, and civilized expectations—to let the family relocate to France, where homeschooling is legal. That is the environment into which the Obama administration is seeking to expel the Romeike family, who sought and were granted asylum in the United States after being similarly targeted by German authorities. The administration successfully had the family's asylum status revoked and now seeks to deport them.



The Romeike Family

The Romeikes, like the Wunderlichs, are evangelical Christians, who are counted near the very bottom of the Democrats' social totem pole. The U.S. has a great problem with disorderly immigration, but it does not primarily involve persecuted Germans whose religious and political preferences are at odds with Berlin's. To eject the Romeikes while rolling out the red carpet for millions upon millions of illegals is grotesque.

■ On the morning of January 9, Cuban political police beat the hell out of Juan Carlos González Leiva, a prominent democracy activist. He is a blind lawyer. He and some other activists were trying to distribute pro-democracy literature. The police tied González Leiva's hands behind his back and then pummeled him in the face with their fists. Then they choked him until he passed out. They beat up the others too, including González Leiva's wife, Tania Maceda Guerra, and the president of the Independent Association of the Deaf, Yoandy Quintana Sarría (who is deaf himself). Police states are unpleasant places. But few enjoy the support in America that the Castros' Cuba does. The recent New York mayoral inauguration began with a speech by Harry Belafonte, a longtime friend of Fidel Castro, and of his dictatorship. The mayor, Bill de Blasio, spent his honeymoon in Cuba (in 1994). The pop stars Jay-Z and Beyoncé celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary in Cuba last year—months after Beyoncé sang at President Obama's inauguration. She and her husband are friends of the Obamas, and fundraisers for the president. One wonders: Do such people ever think of a blind human-rights lawyer having his hands tied behind his back and being beaten in the face?

■ The number of Christians killed for their faith increased two-fold in the past year. Open Doors International, a group that serves persecuted Christians in high-risk areas around the world, documented 2,123 Christian martyrs in 2013, compared with 1,201 in 2012. (These are low estimates; other organizations estimate that upwards of 8,000 Christians were martyred last year.) The main perpetrators of this increased persecution are Islamist extremists, according to Open Doors, with Syria, Pakistan, and Egypt leading the list. (North Korea is mentioned as well, but data and accurate media accounts are harder to come by there.) Yet the story of these martyrs goes largely untold or is brushed aside. Reuters and *Time*, writing on the Open Doors report, were unwilling to print the word “martyrs” without scare quotes. We should not shrink from facing the massacre of innocents because the manner of their death is not politically correct.

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■ Russia has declared David Satter, an accomplished journalist and an NR contributor, a persona non grata. When he attempted to return to the country from Ukraine in December, he was told that the “competent organs” of the Russian government were no longer willing to grant him a visa to return to Moscow, where he’d been working as a consultant to Radio Free Europe. This makes him the first American journalist to be kicked out of the country since the end of the Cold War. Vladimir Putin has never been a friend of the free press, but this sets a dangerous precedent for liberty in Russia. The State Department has complained publicly about the incident but made no moves to force its Russian counterpart to reconsider. With the Sochi Olympics about to turn the spotlight on Russia—its sordid history, its broken society, its hopelessly corrupt economy—enough pressure could persuade the Russians to reverse their decision. So far, the Russians are playing ice hockey while the Obama administration wants to figure-skate.

■ The crisis in Ukraine is acute. President Viktor Yanukovich has split the country by throwing its lot in with Russia rather than the European Union. For some months now, protesters have taken over the center of Kiev, the capital, with demonstrations against this decision. Yanukovich compounded his troubles by passing new legislation that restricts protest, banning shelters and stages, the use of loudspeakers, the wearing of helmets or face masks, and the dissemination of “extremist” information, with heavy jail sentences for offenders. This was too much for tens of thousands of protesters. Videos show clashes between them and the police; many police officers have been hospitalized. Viktor Klitschko, the heavyweight boxing champion who is also leader of the oppositional Democratic Alliance for Reform, has been out in the main square calling for peaceful demonstrations, but at the same time accusing Yanukovich of wanting to steal the country. Yanukovich is threatening to put an end to protest, and the Ukrainian prosecutor, General Viktor Pshonka, warns against what he calls “mass rioting.” At first the police used stun grenades and rubber bullets, but at press time they were accused of shooting two protesters, who died. Former president Viktor Yushchenko and Klitschko both say they don’t rule out the possibility of civil war. Putin’s casualties are mounting.

■ “An exception, not the ideal” is how one Vatican official has described the plan to uproot the U.S. embassy to the Holy See and relocate it to the compound of the U.S. embassy to Italy. In the view of many former U.S. diplomats, the move is plainly a downgrade. The State Department has been pushing the idea for about ten years. The initial explanation was that consolidation would cut costs, but now we hear mostly that it would enhance security. Congress finally approved funding for it last month. The spin that the issue has received from political commentators is impressive. You have to smile, for example, at the observation that, in its guesthouse on the grounds of Embassy Italy, Vatican Embassy would actually be closer to St. Peter’s Square—by one-tenth of a mile. Like it or not, the Vatican is a soft power of global consequence. For the U.S. to shrink its presence there by placing it in the shadow of the diplomatic mission to Italy would not be “the end of the world,” as the Vatican official correctly observed, but neither would it be in the interest of U.S. foreign policy.

■ French farce is a special theatrical amusement that turns on mistaken identity, unexpected appearances, and the kind of pickle that *amours* can land lovers in. President François Hollande of France appears to have contributed magnificently to the genre. He had lived for 20 years with Ségolène Royale, the mother of his children, without marrying her. Just as he was becoming president, he took into the official residence, the Elysée, as *maitresse en titre* Valerie Trierweiler. Georges Feydeau, the master of French farce, could hardly have bettered the next scene, in which Hollande, loosely disguised by a crash helmet for his ride on a moped, was caught visiting Julie Gayet, a most fetching actress who looks perfectly cast for her role. Gone into hiding, she is said to be suing for breach of privacy. Hollande admits to experiencing “a difficult moment” in his private life. The question about which he muses at press conferences is whether the Elysée needs a first lady. Seemingly he will come on a visit to Washington as a “bachelor president.” How the curtain will fall, and who will take the final bow, is not yet in the script.



■ Dennis Rodman’s latest gig as the Harlem Globetrotter of totalitarianism ended when he checked himself into rehab. Rodman, the former NBA forward, has been friends with Kim Jong Un, who likes basketball almost as much as he likes starving people or killing uncles. This year Rodman took some b-ball pals to North Korea for an exhibition game. He sang “Happy Birthday” to Kim, then attacked Kenneth Bae, an American evangelist serving 15 years of hard labor for imaginary crimes, at a press conference. After Rodman returned to the United States, a minion stepped forth to say that he was drying out, and that he was “embarrassed, saddened, and remorseful.” That should be, and we hope is, true. But it distracts, even as Rodman’s earlier antics did, from what should be the focus of our concern: the despot and his victims.

■ In his day Professor Eric Hobsbawm could be relied on to defend whatever the Soviet Union did. Red Army invasion of other countries, fake trials, the Gulag did not bother this diehard. Right to the end of his life, years after the Soviet Union had faded away, he declared that he would happily start the murderous experiment all over again. For him, capitalism was the real and only wickedness, and he wrote heavy-duty books to make that point. What a surprise, then, to learn from his recently published will that he left in trust £1,835,341, a sum just over \$3 million. He lived in a six-bedroom house in Hampstead, that part of London where champagne socialists flock, and he owned a cottage in Wales. To each according to his needs, Karl Marx had been sure to tell us.

■ Back when he had a show on MSNBC, Keith Olbermann regularly named “the Worst Person in the World”: some conservative who had drawn his attention that day. (Several NR employees were among the honorees.) Now, on ESPN, he chooses “the Worst Person in the Sports World.” He recently

named a hockey player, Tom Sestito, who serves as an “enforcer” for the Vancouver Canucks. (“Enforcer” is the polite word for “goon.”) Not taking kindly to this was Miss Victoria Sestito, the honoree’s 13-year-old sister. She tweeted Olby on Twitter. Olby tweeted back. And so it went. At one point, Victoria wrote, “the Sestito household enjoys your arrogant left-wing blurbs and we are looking forward to your next firing.” We’d say she held her own in barbs, and won on emotional maturity.

■ Maria Conchita Alonso is an unusual kind of actress: a conservative, an endorser of Republicans. You could blame her Cuban birth. In San Francisco, she was doing an unconservative thing: acting in *The Vagina Monologues*. But then she appeared in an ad for a Republican running for governor (of California). And that got her fired from the show. The producer explained, “Doing what she is doing is against what we believe.” Hey, they don’t call it a dialogue.

■ *LA Weekly*’s film critic, Amy Nicholson, set something of a firestorm off in January when she labeled the hit war movie *Lone Survivor* a “jingoistic snuff film” and contended that its protagonists are possessed of the “simple,” “hairy-chested” conviction that “brown people bad, American people good.” Among a certain subset of America’s self-appointed arbiters of taste, this rotten conceit carries weight. But the historical record tells a different story, showing a nation that has always been ready to deploy the military when it feels that it is threatened but that has little interest in the color, creed, or religion of what have always been temporary enemies. The contents of the movie, too, fail to tally with Nicholson’s characterization. Not only are the SEALs in the country to liberate some “brown people” from others, but the entire premise of the story rests upon those SEALs’ dealing with the consequences of having spared the lives of a handful of unarmed Afghans who accidentally cross their path. *Birth of a Nation*, this is not. Served up a series of hostile war movies in recent years, the American public finally has one that portrays virtue, sacrifice, and honor. It is no surprise that they have flocked to see it.

■ When Julia Louis-Dreyfus wielded a smokeless “e-cigarette” at the Golden Globe Awards, it was a harmless bit of business in a skit, meant to evoke Elizabeth Taylor’s glamour. But that means nothing to the four senators, by some coincidence all Democrats, who have asked the show’s producers to make sure that no “images of e-cigarettes” will appear in future broadcasts. The premise is that seeing celebrities “vape” could hook youths on smokeless cigarettes, and perhaps make them less resistant to trying real ones—though if a teenager in 2014 is watching the Golden Globe Awards, he probably is not very susceptible to peer pressure.

■ Ariel Sharon did battle for Israel all his life. His daring was legendary, and as he rose in command he also proved a brilliant tactician. His contribution to victory in the wars of 1967 and 1973 is studied in staff colleges everywhere. Strong and self-confident, he did what he thought had to be done in the interests of the country. He believed in crushing terrorism and he disobeyed orders that might hold him back. In the eyes of his supporters he was “Arik, King of Israel.” To his detractors, he was far too single-minded, far too controversial, far too right-wing. Entering poli-



tics and soon becoming a minister, he more than anyone encouraged settlements on Palestinian territory. Forming his own party, he became prime minister. He then gave orders to evacuate the Israeli settlements in Gaza, a painful process involving the use of force. He had decided to contradict everything he had stood for previously because he was, as usual, putting the interests of the country above his own convictions. That’s a great man when a great man was needed. R.I.P.

■ Jeffrey Hart once likened the conservative historian Stephen Tonsor to a pit bull, in tribute to his toughness as a thinker. Gregory Schneider, in an address honoring Tonsor at the Philadelphia Society several years ago, refined the metaphor: Tonsor, who enjoyed attending a German-language Mass in Detroit, was more of a Rottweiler. A native of Illinois, he was best known as a long-time professor at the University of Michigan, where he stood out as a traditionalist among the faculty’s left-wing lapdogs. He challenged conventional wisdom wherever he saw it, even among his fellow conservatives. He worried, for instance, that as the conservative movement became devoted to federal policymaking in Washington, it was drifting away from its animating, humanistic principles. Ever the teacher, he preferred the classroom to the think tank. Behind the occasionally irascible exterior resided a warm and generous man who welcomed students and other visitors into his home for meals and conversation. Dead at 90. R.I.P.

■ LeRoi Jones started writing as a would-be Beat, chum of Kerouac and Ginsberg, and his poems had the loose-limbed amble, sometimes engaging, sometimes slack, of that school. After he changed his name to Amiri Baraka, he became by turns a black nationalist and a Communist, and at all times unhinged. Post-9/11 he wrote that Israelis had stayed away from the World Trade Center that day because they were in on the job. That bit of vileness caused him to lose his post as poet laureate of New Jersey, but he was loaded with other honors throughout his life. Bad for him, bad for the muse. Dead at 79. R.I.P.

POVERTY

LBJ’s ‘War,’ at 50

THIS year marks the 50th anniversary of President Lyndon Baines Johnson’s proclamation of a “war on poverty,” and the progress in this theater has not been encouraging: Trillions of dollars have been spent, and the number of Americans living in poverty is higher today than it was in 1964, while the rate of poverty has held steady at just under one in five.

For all its shortcomings, and they are many, the New Deal was enacted in response to a genuine economic crisis: the Great Depression. LBJ’s ambitious imitation of it was launched under very different circumstances: Before LBJ’s declaration of war,

AP PHOTO/OLEG POPOV/POOL

the poverty rate had been crashing as the economy boomed. Between the end of World War II and Johnson's presidency, the real economic output of the United States had doubled. The post-war boom was not destined to last forever, and the real challenge of the Johnson years, tragically overlooked, was figuring out how to build upon that position and consolidate those gains. Unfortunately, what got consolidated was political power in the welfare bureaucracies.

The war on poverty has been conducted partly in earnest and partly self-servingly. No doubt programs such as Head Start were launched with a great deal of idealism, but as their ineffectiveness became apparent, it was not idealism that sustained them but political self-interest. Head Start today is a money-laundering program under which federal expenditures are transmitted to Democratic candidates through the Service Employees International Union, which represents many Head Start teachers. The National Treasury Employees Union, which represents, among others, the welfare bureaucrats at the Administration for Children and Families, is a large political donor that gives about 94 percent of its largesse to Democrats. This is not coincidental. The main beneficiaries of the war on poverty have not been and will not be the poor—the beneficiaries are the alleged poverty warriors themselves.

The result: a large and expensive welfare state that provides relatively little welfare, a destructive and ruinous war on poverty that has not done much to reduce poverty. It gives the poor some material succor, but leaves the root causes alone—at best.

Poverty is a difficult issue with few obvious remedies. And even such obvious remedies as we have are politically difficult. The most attractive of the low-hanging fruit before us is reform of our dysfunctional public-education system, particularly as it affects students in our dangerous and ineffective inner-city schools. But when it comes to education reform, Barack Obama stands in the schoolhouse door as pitilessly as any George Wallace. Republicans, for their part, have shown a remarkable inability to view issues such as immigration reform, and especially a large increase in low-skilled immigration, through the eyes of low-income workers rather than those of the Chamber of Commerce. Whatever the cure for poverty is, it is not the importation of poor people.

The Left has made a mess of the issue, and while we should not let them forget that it is their mess, conservatives are going to be by necessity the ones who clean it up. Economic thinkers such as Thomas Sowell have been making the case for a conservative approach to poverty for years, and recently conservative leaders such as Ralph Reed have been making a praiseworthy effort to ensure that the problems of the poor are front and center in the minds of a sometimes too-well-fed GOP. The campaign against poverty is not a war, and it is not the moral equivalent of war, but it is worth fighting for.

POLITICS

A Bridge Too Far

It's the biggest story out of New Jersey since the last episode of *The Sopranos*. A traffic-snarling closure of approach lanes to the George Washington Bridge in September was arranged by aides of Governor Chris Christie, as apparent retribution for a local mayor's failure to endorse his reelection bid. "Time for some traffic problems," Christie's

deputy chief of staff, Bridget Kelly, e-mailed a Christie appointee to the Port Authority, the agency that regulates transportation in and around the New York harbor. After the scandal broke, Christie fired Kelly and, in an almost two-hour press conference, expressed contrition for the snafu.

This story went national because Christie has national ambitions, but it became a mega-story because Christie is on the right (pro-life, anti-teachers' union). The lightning rod for coverage became a lightning rod for controversy—especially since the media are happy to clear the field for Hillary, or whichever Democrat they end up loving.

Christie's problems are unlikely to end soon. The general assembly, the lower house of the legislature, is investigating not only the lane closing but charges by Dawn Zimmer, mayor of



Hoboken, that the Christie administration threatened to withhold relief money for Hurricane Sandy until she approved a local development project. The assemblyman conducting the investigation is a Democrat, as is Zimmer; if her tale does not pan out, there will surely be others.

Christie was riding high because he is both aggressive and capable: He takes on his enemies and takes care of his constituents. But when does energy in the executive cross the line to bullying? When does it wrongly encourage the executive's underlings? A rebel commander in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* finds that his orders were being "carried out even before they were given, even before he thought of them." Christie's mea culpa was passionate and forthright, miles from the lawyerly evasions of most politicians caught in a crack. But is it a qualification for higher office that you know how to apologize well?

One point in the Christie story is intramural. Many on the right greeted his problems with glee. Christie is not a tea-party favorite; throw him to the dogs! This is short-sighted. We need all the talent we can find. If Christie can surmount the problems in his own backyard, he should be welcomed in the contest to lead nationwide.

AP PHOTO/JULIO CORTIZ

You deserve a factual look at . . .

Israel: A Light unto the Nations

Those who demonize Israel are either misinformed or malevolent

If that proverbial man from Mars came to visit and read the world's newspapers, especially those in the Arab and Muslim world, he would be convinced that Israel was the most evil nation in the world and the source of all of the world's strife.

What are the facts?

A nation to be emulated. The reality, of course, is that Israel is a nation, a society, that should be admired and emulated by many countries in the world. The very fact of how the State of Israel came into being is one of the most inspiring in history. Born out of the ashes of the Holocaust, it has emerged as one of the most advanced, productive and prosperous countries in the world.

The demonization of Israel, assiduously cultivated by the Muslim world, reached a crescendo following Israel's defensive actions in Gaza. Instead of being grateful to the hated Jews for having totally withdrawn, the Palestinian Gazans showed their "gratitude" by almost daily pounding of Israeli towns with thousands of rockets and bombs. After countless warnings, Israel ultimately decided to put an end to this travesty.

When Israel finally did invade Gaza it took the most elaborate precautions not to hurt civilians. As a first in the history of warfare, Israel dropped tens of thousands of leaflets, warning the population and urging it to abandon areas in which military action would take place. The Israeli military made thousands of phone calls urging people to leave areas that would come under attack. But fighting in a densely populated environment is difficult and loss of civilian life is hard to avoid. Hamas fighters wear no uniforms. It is impossible to tell them from civilians. Is a person who allows a rocket launcher in his backyard a civilian or a fighter? And how about using schools, hospitals and mosques as munitions depots and staff centers? The hue and cry of Israel's demonizers of using "disproportionate force" is totally absurd. The ultimate insult, comparing Israel to the Nazis, is freely bandied about by Israel's detractors.

Israel is not an "apartheid state." Another familiar tack of Israel's vilifiers is to call it an "apartheid state," on the model of former South Africa. But that is so ridiculous, so preposterous,

it is hard to believe that serious people can countenance it. The exact opposite is the case. Israel is the only country in its benighted neighborhood in which people of all colors and religions prosper and have equal rights. Israel, expending substantial effort, rescued tens of thousands of black Jews from Ethiopia. And it has given assistance and absorbed countless Christian expatriates from Sudan, who escaped from being slaughtered by their Muslim countrymen. Israel's over one million Arab citizens enjoy the same rights and privileges as their Jewish fellows. They are represented in the Knesset,

As the prophet Isaiah presaged: "Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations."

and are members of its bureaucracy, of its judiciary, and of its diplomatic service.

All over the world, Leftists, including in the United States and, sad to say, even in Israel itself, tirelessly condemn and vilify Israel. Why would they do that? First, of course, there is good old-fashioned anti-Semitism. Second, many of those who hate the United States vent their poison on Israel, which they consider being America's puppet in that area of the world. But Israel should certainly get top grades in all areas important to the Left. In contrast to all its enemies, Israel has the same democratic institutions as the United States. All religions thrive freely in Israel. Also, in contrast to all of its enemies, women have the same rights as men. Until quite recently the Chief Justice of Israel's Supreme Court was a woman. One-sixth of the Knesset are women. Compare that to Saudi Arabia, a medieval theocracy, where women are not even allowed to drive cars, where they cannot leave the country without permission of a male relative, and where they can be and often are condemned to up to 60 lashes if the "modesty police" deems them not to be properly dressed in public. Gays and lesbians are totally unmolested in Israel; in the surrounding Muslim countries they would be subjected to the death penalty.

In spite of demonization and vilification by so much of the world, Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations. The State of Israel is the foremost creation of the Jewish enterprise and Jewish intellect that has benefited every country in which Jews dwell, certainly our own country, the United States of America. Second only to the United States itself, Israel is the world's most important factor in science and technology, way out of proportion to the small size of its population. Israeli Jews are at the forefront of the arts, the sciences, law and medicine. They have brought all these sterling qualities to bear in building their own country: Israel. By necessity, they have also become outstanding in agriculture and, most surprisingly, in the military. What a shame that the Arabs opted not to participate in this progress and in this prosperity and chose instead the path of revenge, of Jihad and of martyrdom. As the prophet Isaiah presaged: Israel is indeed a Light unto the Nations.

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The Secret People

Working-class voters on both sides of the Atlantic have been forgotten

BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

“**W**HAT about the workers?” That was the traditional cry of Labour hecklers in Britain to disrupt a Tory orator and to imply that his policies ignored the interests of the working class. A fine specimen of the genre can be found in an early Peter Sellers sketch in which the suave-tongued Tory rides mellifluously over the interjection with, “What about the workers, *indeed*, sir,” before smoothly resuming his recital of inoffensive platitudes.

The phrase has been rarely heard in recent years, and almost never from Labour speakers. Even before the advent of Tony Blair and New Labour, Britain’s main party of the Left had become more a polytechnocracy than a workers’ collective. And the “workers by brain” had an attitude of suspicion toward ordinary working-class people:

They had heard in Sociology 101 that the latter were racist, sexist, and homophobic.

Some doubtless were, but most even of those were also relaxed and tolerant people. Or so I thought growing up among them. And they were once the bedrock of support for *both* major parties.

Almost everyone knows that working-class votes accounted for about three-quarters of Labour’s national total for the first 30 years after 1945. Less well known is that they also accounted for roughly half of the Tory vote. (Overall, the working-class vote split two to one in favor of Labour.)

Two people changed all that. First, Margaret Thatcher made further inroads into Labour’s “heartland” with her blend of patriotism and aspirational economics; second, Tony Blair encouraged indifference among those workers

still around by earnestly wooing the “progressive” middle class employed in the public sector, the media, and finance.

Class voting patterns fluctuate with every election, but some long-run trends are clear. Skilled working-class voters split their votes between the parties almost randomly; the Tories won the largest share in 2010 with 29 percent. The poorest voters still lean left but by a much smaller margin: A modest 40 percent of them voted Labour last time. The turnout rate among all working-class voters is about 20 points lower than among the middle class. And turnout in general seems to be falling. Britain’s workers are politically homeless and looking for somewhere new to cast their ballots.

Cross the Atlantic and the statistics tell a surprisingly similar story—one that the Democrats have already noticed. Statistics for the 2012 election show that working-class voters swung slightly to Governor Romney, that white working-class voters swung more heavily to him, that this latter group swung less heavily to him in the northern industrial Rust Belt states where the key electoral-college votes are, and that overall white turnout fell by 2 million votes. The overall result was that Romney got a larger percentage of a smaller vote—and a smaller percentage of that vote in the states where it mattered most—and so he lost by a modest margin.

There were, of course, short-term factors: As a venture capitalist who had closed failing enterprises and was effectively caricatured as an industrial vampire, Romney was not the ideal candidate to win over the working-class “Reagan Democrats.” But that short term is over. Recent polls show that support for President Obama, in addition to falling overall, has fallen sharply among low-income voters and those without college degrees. And that fall has been precipitous among white voters with those characteristics that are a reasonable proxy for working-class status. America’s blue-collar voters, like Britain’s, are no longer tied to their traditional party. They are in play.

More than anything else, the reason for this is a set of policies that alienate them. Last year the leftist *New Statesman* drew its readers’ attention to this:

AP PHOTO

“As the authors of the 2012 British Social Attitudes survey put it: ‘[In recent years] economically comfortable and culturally more cosmopolitan groups show little change in their assessments of economic impacts [of immigration], but economically and socially insecure groups have become dramatically more hostile.’” To immigration one should also add welfare and “Europe.”

With minor translations into American English—“Europe” becomes “national sovereignty”—the same holds true for

More and more, wealthy and powerful Americans will never meet their working-class neighbors except as waiters and doormen.

the U.S. *All* of the proposed immigration reforms are damaging to the interests of America’s blue-collar workers (black and white) and deeply alienating to them. It is a minor mystery why the GOP, riding a wave of hostility toward Obamacare, threatens its success by seeking to support another massive government “reform”—and one, moreover, that actively undermines the economic interests of the one substantial voting group leaning in its direction. Only Senator Jeff Sessions has grasped this point clearly—and argued it eloquently.

The absence of blue-collar workers from Tory/Republican calculations and their deliberate ejection from Labour/Democratic hopes are symptoms of a wider exclusion from public life. Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, a distinguished constitutional scholar, recently published a study, “Reforming Public Appointments,” in which he pointed out that British “equalities” legislation making ethnicity, gender, and disability justifications for “protected” status and its compensations had no reference to social class. Partly as a result, the share of working-class MPs in Britain has fallen to 4 percent, and the official panels that select public appointees (for judgeships, etc.) do not contain a single blue-collar or manual worker. Affirmative action in the U.S. has a similar impact on blue-collar whites. It presents an increasingly

severe obstacle to their advancement and social mobility as immigrants swell the ranks of protected groups.

More and more, wealthy and powerful Americans will never meet their working-class neighbors except as waiters and doormen. Brit though I am, I believe that’s downright un-American.

This exclusion leads to an ignorance of what these individuals are like. Self-conscious “progressives” on both sides of the Atlantic begin to see them as

hopelessly reactionary, xenophobic, nativist, etc. Tories and country-club Republicans see them as economically backward and lazy compared with their low-wage immigrant competitors. Earlier in the Conservative modernization campaign, the Cameronians seriously discussed “dissing” their traditional supporters in order to show centrist voters that their hearts were pure and cleansed of “nastiness” on matters such as immigration.

Both parties in Britain got their message across all too well, but, alas for them, not to centrist herbivores but to the supposedly carnivore workers. As a result, they are leaving Labour but not joining the Tories. Instead they are now joining more traditional Tories in voting for the United Kingdom Independence party. UKIP is now seen as likely to win Tory votes in the southeast and Labour votes in the north. (A forthcoming special election in the north will test this theory.)

It is hard not to see this as a punishment for snobbery in England—and as a timely warning to the GOP.

In short, the attitude shown all too often by Republican and Tory leaders reminds one of the upper-class Guards officer who, being asked at a cocktail party what the experience of the Dunkirk retreat had been like, replied:

“My dear, the noise! And the *people!*”

But at least he wasn’t asking for their votes.

Poor Like Whom?

Personal and literary reflections on the concept of poverty

BY THEODORE DALRYMPLE

WHEN I was a student I lived in poverty, though I didn’t know it. The conditions in which I lived would now be regarded as abject and intolerable, good enough reason for emergency public assistance. The house in which I lived was unheated and so cold that in winter it seemed colder inside than out. I had to jump into bed quickly if I did not want to freeze, and, once I was in, I used to observe the cloud of vapor emerging from my mouth. Ice formed on the inside of the windows by morning.

I lived in bohemian squalor. Housework was not a priority of mine (it was beneath me) and when I had money I bought champagne and smoked salmon. The rest of the time I lived on bread or the like. Why did I not think of myself as poor?

There were three reasons. The first is that all my friends lived the same way. If this was hardship, it was hardship shared. The second is that I had a rich social and intellectual life, and it was fashionable to disdain material comfort. The third is that I knew I should not be living this way for the rest of my life. I had confidence, justified as it turned out, that a more prosperous future awaited me even if I did not actively seek wealth. Moreover, my parents would at all times have prevented me from actually starving.

Was I poor or not? Certainly I had little money and, if I had been 50 rather than 20, I think the answer would undoubtedly have been “Yes.” But, both from my standpoint when I was 20 and from my present standpoint in my 60s, I have difficulty in believing that I was ever really poor. I have always regarded poverty as a healthy man regards illness: something that happens to other people.

Reflecting on my own experience, therefore, I am skeptical when I read a

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headline such as this one, from CBS in July 2013: “80 Percent of U.S. Adults Face Near Poverty, Unemployment, Survey Finds.”

What can the word “poverty” possibly mean if used in this way, as it often is, defying common sense? If four out of five American adults “face near-poverty,” how are we to describe the situation of the adults of the Central African Republic? One hundred percent of them “face poverty”—is the United States “near” four-fifths of the way to the situation of the Central African Republic?

Poverty is one of the many subjects about which it is easier to convey emotion, or perhaps I should say to arouse sentimentality, than to speak the truth. Often, for example, we read that the inhabitants of such-and-such an impoverished country are living on an income equivalent to less than a dollar (or, with the erosion of the value of the dollar, \$1.50 or \$2) a day. That this must be meaningless nonsense is apparent only to people who have not been grossly overeducated. If you gave a person in New York City a dollar a day to live on and prevented him from obtaining anything of economic or survival value from any other source than his dollar, how long would he survive? Yet the problem of countries where the inhabitants allegedly live on less than a dollar a day, we are frequently told, is not that they fail to survive, but that they reproduce too fast—all on their miserable 80 cents a day. This is about as silly as saying that the United States must be six or eight times as powerful as China because its defense budget is six or eight times larger, when in fact a dollar spent in China on the military buys more firepower than it would buy in the U.S.

In thinking about poverty, we ought to avoid the Scylla of sentimentality and the Charybdis of callousness. Dr. Johnson, who had known the humiliations of poverty, was severe on the comfortable and well-fed who underestimated or discounted the sufferings of the poor. Among these was Soame Jenyns, an amiable, clubbable man who never had a day’s economic anxiety in his life and fancied himself a *littérateur*. In his *Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil*, Jenyns wrote: “Poverty, or the want of riches, is generally compensated by having more hopes, and fewer fears, by a greater share of health, and a more exquisite relish of the smallest enjoyments, than those who

possess them are usually blessed with.” To this rather unctuous passage, Doctor Johnson wrote in his famously ferocious review (from the effects of which Jenyns never really recovered):

Poverty is very gently paraphrased by want of riches. In that sense, almost every man may, in his own opinion, be poor. But there is another poverty, which is want of competence of all that can soften the miseries of life, of all that can diversify attention, or delight imagination. There is yet another poverty, which is want of necessaries, a species of poverty which no care of the publick, no charity of particulars, can preserve many from feeling openly, and many secretly. . . . The milder degrees of poverty are, sometimes, supported by hope; but the more severe often sink down in motionless despondence. Life must be seen, before it can be known. This author . . . , perhaps, never saw the miseries which he imagines thus easy to be borne. The poor, indeed, are insensible of many little vexations, which sometimes imbitter the possessions, and pollute the enjoyments, of the rich. They are not pained by casual incivility, or mortified by the mutilation of a compliment; but this happiness is like that of a malefactor, who ceases to feel the cords that bind him, when the pincers are tearing his flesh.

Doctor Johnson does not take Jenyns to task for the empirically false proposition that the rich suffer more illness than the poor (precisely the opposite is the case, of course, but at that time—1757—epidemiology was an undeveloped science); and I think Johnson was wrong to say that the poor are not pained by casual incivility, indeed it is their proneness to such that makes their condition especially hard to bear; but otherwise this passage contains all the difficulties we have in thinking about the nature and origins of poverty.

Is poverty relative or absolute? Does it, or should it, matter to the Baltimore slumdweller that he is unimaginably rich by the standards of a Malian peasant, or indeed by those of his own grandparents? Is it not expecting too much of the contemporary impoverished to thank their lucky stars that their infant-mortality rate has declined by 95 percent since a century ago and their life expectancy has nearly doubled?

What precisely is a necessity and what a superfluity, at least when subsistence itself is guaranteed? The American way of measuring poverty is to count the number of people living below a basic income, independent of any government pay-

ments, that will secure them the socially accepted minimum of goods and services (if, that is, those in receipt of that income spend it right). It is therefore both an absolute and a relative measure; the sum is fixed in dollars, but the socially accepted minimum is a moving target, dependent on the supposed exigencies of modern life: for modern necessities create modern demands on income. I remember, for example, those ancient times when the portable telephone was the accessory of the rich and powerful rather than the sine qua non of social existence—to which, of course, everyone has an inalienable right.

In Europe, by contrast, poverty tends to be measured by a purely relative measure: that of members of households in receipt of an income less than 60 percent of the median household income. This means that inequality and poverty amount to the same thing, for, in a society of billionaires, a millionaire would be poor, irrespective of his actual standard of living. The ratio of Bill Gates’s wealth to mine is greater than that of mine to the wealth of a person in the poorest 1 percent of the British population; but it would be ludicrous to describe me as poor.

What are the things spoken of by Doctor Johnson that “soften the miseries of life, diversify the attention, or delight the imagination,” the absence of the economic opportunity to enjoy which is, according to him, one kind of poverty, probably now the most prevalent kind in the Western world?

The answer leads to an endless and insoluble dispute between psychology and sociology. What will delight the imagination depends entirely on the imagination to be delighted. The sociologist will say that the imagination is formed and determined by social conditions, the psychologist by personal characteristics, for example self-discipline. For myself, I am grateful that, for the most part, what delights my imagination is within my economic reach; and I consciously discipline my imagination. I wouldn’t mind a Vermeer, but I won’t make my lack of one a cause for unhappiness. In the end, I think that great economic thinker, Mr. Micawber, got it right: “Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen and six, result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds nought and six, result misery.”

As for this principle, I am like Mrs. Micawber: I never will desert Mr. Micawber.

NR

A Dangerous Deal

Iran's triumph in Geneva

BY JOHN R. BOLTON

FOR nearly three decades, Iran's ayatollahs have outfoxed and outmaneuvered Western counter-proliferation efforts. Tehran has repeatedly bested our diplomats, our spies, and, most especially, our gullible political leaders. In the Joint Plan of Action, reached in Geneva this November, the mullahs did it again, worsening the already-grim prospects for stopping or even slowing Iran's nuclear program.

This "interim agreement" with the U.N. Security Council's five permanent members and Germany, and its recent implementation protocol (effective January 20, although its precise terms are still not public), should win Iran a prize for fantasy fiction. Worse, Secretary of State John Kerry, under a thick rhetorical fog, is blithely pursuing a "comprehensive solution," despite the certainty that Iran will never agree to anything precluding it from possessing nuclear weapons.

The Joint Plan has two key facets: relaxing international economic sanctions against Iran and treating with its ongoing nuclear activities. On its face, the interim agreement is woefully inadequate to stop Tehran's march to becoming a nuclear-weapons state. But rather than analyze the text further, let's consider how the deal is already playing out and predict what comes next. If the implementation of even the interim agreement fails, that will be compelling evidence against any purported "comprehensive solution."

On sanctions, Geneva afforded Iran an enormous psychological breakthrough, reversing the prevailing momentum and

making it extremely difficult politically to restore sanctions in the unlikely event President Obama wakes up to his mistakes. In fact, so rapidly are sanctions disintegrating that there is already much to report and less to prophesy. What can confidently be predicted is that the initial problems with the agreement will simply metastasize until sanctions (and sanctions enforcement) all but disappear.

Obama-administration estimates that the interim deal's economic boost to Iran will be only approximately \$6–7 billion understate the immediate benefits and completely ignore the future cascade of consequences. For example, if Iran can now purchase for \$500 a previously forbidden automotive spare part, the administration calculates that as a \$500 benefit to Iran. But if the spare part allows a non-functioning truck to resume operating, the economic upside is manifestly greater than just the part's purchase price. Multiply this example appropriately and the real impact becomes obvious. And don't think Tehran hasn't done the math on this.

Even more important than defining what has become "permissible" under reduced sanctions is the new psychology that foreign businesses will bring to potential trade with Iran. What was once plainly illegal or prohibitively risky economically now becomes at least thinkable. What was once questionable or dicey now looks entirely legitimate and even attractive. According to Western advocates of sanctions, sanctions were extremely effective before Geneva. If so, the impact of the Geneva deal will be enormous, moving large numbers of deals out of a forbidden or dark-gray zone into one where the gray is much lighter. Moreover, while U.S. enforcers may try to hold the line, don't expect Europe to be so punctilious.

French automakers and energy executives are already racing to Tehran to secure lucrative contracts once sanctions are formally suspended. Dubai's Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al-Maktoum signaled in a recent BBC interview that he will not be left behind in the rush for commercial opportunity in Iran. Although a supposed adversary of the mullahs, al-Maktoum of course merely sounds like an Arab version of John

Kerry. Weakness and opportunism often go hand in hand.

(There are also disturbing reports that Oman has granted Iran a key observation spot near the critical Strait of Hormuz, and that the United Arab Emirates has agreed with Iran on the status of long-disputed islands in that strategic waterway. While not directly caused by the collapse of sanctions, these politico-military accompaniments to Geneva are extremely dangerous.)

Not surprisingly, Russia, which for years resolutely resisted efforts to increase sanctions against Iran, is now plunging into the gap left by their collapse. Press reports highlight a possible oil-for-goods swap with Russia amounting to \$18 billion annually, which alone would lift "officially reported" Iranian oil exports by 50 percent. Russian energy minister Alexander Novak said candidly that "we don't have any restrictions here and, of course, we are looking at ways to widening trade volumes."

"Lawfare" will also be an important element in Iran's campaign to dismantle sanctions. Reuters reports that Bank Mellat, an important Iranian financial institution, is bringing suit in Britain, seeking over \$800 million in damages because the U.K. supreme court ruled last year that the bank was improperly sanctioned. According to Bank Mellat's lawyer, this is only the first of eight to ten cases of private Iranian firms' taking legal action. Government entities may bring lawsuits as well, pressuring Western politicians to ease back on sanctions and enforcement by putting taxpayer dollars at risk.

The collapse of sanctions strikingly highlights their weakness as a tool of coercion. They have not simply been less effective than some believe, both in their economic impact and in their unarguable failure to slow, let alone cripple, Iran's nuclear-weapons program. U.S. sanctions advocates made a far more basic miscalculation: They forgot that they are not in charge. Obama is. A policy that a strong U.S. president might (underline "might") have seen through is, as we now observe, useless in the hands of a weak and feckless president. Policy abstractions without leadership can accomplish little.

Iran's nuclear "concessions" at Geneva were minor and are easily reversible. As Tehran's chief nuclear negotiator,

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Abbas Araghchi, said in a January interview, “we can return again to 20 percent enrichment in less than one day and we can convert the [nuclear] material again. Therefore the structure of our nuclear program is preserved. . . . I can say definitively that the structure of our nuclear program will be exactly preserved. Nothing will be put aside, dismantled, or halted. Everything will continue, enrichment will continue.” Even given Iran’s notorious propensity to exaggerate and deceive, Araghchi is unfortunately correct.

The notion that the Geneva agreement effectively constrains Iran’s nuclear-weapons program is undoubtedly the most disingenuous and even dishonest aspect of the whole Obama charade.

Tehran played on the West’s mistaken obsessive belief that uranium enriched to 20 percent of the U-235 isotope was materially more threatening than uranium enriched to the typical reactor grade of 3 to 5 percent. (U-235 makes up only 0.7 percent of uranium in nature, but is the isotope necessary for chain reactions in both reactors and nuclear weapons.) This was always wrong. Nonetheless, Obama’s diplomacy continues to trumpet halting enrichment to 20 percent, diluting half the existing stockpile, and converting the rest to an oxidized compound as if these measures were significant. They are not. Further enrichment not merely to 20 percent but to 90-plus percent (the typical weapons-grade level) can be done quickly, dilution is easily reversed, and what is converted to oxide can easily be reconverted to uranium hexafluoride for more enrichment.

Iran will undoubtedly slow-roll implementing its commitments on the 20 percent-enriched uranium while working assiduously to evade its vague and ambiguous “commitments” not to do certain things. Tehran’s officials have already argued, for instance, that they are not required to slow in any way research and development on enhancing the quality and magnitude of Iran’s enrichment program. Make no mistake, given the limitations inherent in

International Atomic Energy Agency inspections, much will be missed. And the role foreseen for the IAEA contains not a particle of enhanced monitoring or inspection of Iran’s continuing weaponization activity, which Iran still robustly denies, and about which the Obama administration is now remarkably silent.

Tehran will also cheat. It will cheat inside Iran, where the IAEA is not present, and it will cheat by cooperating with North Korea and other proliferation enablers. U.S. and Israeli intelligence

agencies may or may not detect such cheating, and the risks of successful Iranian evasion are enormous. The notion that the Geneva agreement effectively constrains Iran’s nuclear-weapons program is undoubtedly the most disingenuous and even dishonest aspect of the whole Obama charade. Those who believe in and defend it will bear a full measure of the blame for whatever tragedy ensues when Iran ultimately goes nuclear.

As for the much-touted negotiations toward a “comprehensive solution,” Iran will arrange the pace of this diplomacy to suit its own interests. America and Europe are following Iran’s lead into a potentially endless “process” that will take on a meaning of its own quite independent from the putative objective of rendering Iran’s nuclear-weapons program harmless. This is the way of Western foreign ministries, and it will be the way here in spades.

We can only hope that skeptics in Congress and the public will take Obama’s measure on Iran, because under whatever metrics one can imagine, we are on a course toward failure, a failure with potentially mortal consequences for Israel and other U.S. friends, and ultimately even for America itself. If the Geneva Joint Plan of Action does not yet quite measure up to Munich 1938, it will soon be a close second. **NR**

Meet the Beatles

Their American debut remembered half a century on

BY CHARLES C. W. COOKE

THE runaway success that the Beatles enjoyed in the United States seems all but inevitable in hindsight. By February 1964, when they finally “turned left at Greenland” and embarked nervously on a whirlwind tour of America’s East Coast, John, Paul, George, and Ringo had already taken Britain by storm—racking up a series of No. 1 singles, bringing an end to the dismal and austere 1950s, and giving voice to an embryonic “teen” culture that was searching in vain for idols at whom to scream. They had even played for the Queen.

And yet, even as the group was inciting hysteria and breaking countless hearts at home, EMI’s obstinate U.S. imprint, the then-minor-league Capitol Records, remained unimpressed. Bemused by the stories of screaming girls and befuddled policemen across the pond, the label’s powers concurred with a skeptical press corps that they were simply witnessing the Brits’ late and eccentric arrival to the charms of popular music. After all, America had already had Beatlemania. It was called Elvis.

Wrongheaded as this proved to be, it was by no means an unreasonable illation. While the early Beatles records had their own eccentric spin on things, their mode was, at root, a cheerful and self-conscious bastardization of the Memphis sound, replete with blues harp, close harmonies, and affected plaint. The group idolized Buddy Holly, Smokey Robinson, Roy Orbison, Ray Charles, Elvis Presley, and Chuck Berry, and they filled their sets with American standards: the Isley Brothers’ raucous “Twist and Shout,” Leiber and Stoller’s rasping Kansas City, and Carl Perkins’s jangling, staccato “Everybody’s Trying to Be My Baby.”

Which is to say that, in their second year of fame, the supernova days of *Sgt. Pepper* and the White Album were a long, long way off—the future soundtrack to a future era that, although it would come



just three years after the innocent, bopping beats of “I Feel Fine” and “Can’t Buy Me Love,” would feel nonetheless like a different century. Later, the group would make a name for themselves as composers and arrangers par excellence; but when they first touched down in America, the flacks charged with writing their records’ effusive liner notes were still explaining to prospective buyers that the deal was “eight of their original compositions alongside a batch of ‘personal choice’ pieces selected from the recorded repertoires of the American R. & B. artists they admire most.”

In the short term, at least, the accidental success of their single “I Want to Hold Your Hand” (extensive airplay on American radio forced Capitol to release the record early) and a campaign announcing that “THE BEATLES ARE COMING” had rendered moot any fears that the first tour would be met with complete indifference. And yet when Paul McCartney worried aloud on the plane between London and New York, “What are we going to give them that they don’t already have?” he had a point. As Mumford and Sons do today, the Beatles were effectively selling back to its inventors the music that they had stolen from them and adapted. Sure, this might work for a while. But what would happen when the fad wore off?

This question occurred to some from the start. “Why does [your music] excite them so much?” the American press asked after the group landed at Kennedy Airport, prompting John Lennon to quip that if they knew, they’d “form another group and be managers.” But, truth be told, nobody had a clue. It *just did*. As with obscenity, human beings have a knack of knowing greatness when they see it. And the Beatles were obviously,

unmistakably, palpably *great*.

Indeed, it is worth pausing for a moment to reflect on just how extraordinarily exciting those early records are. The naysayers may have fairly seen the original owners’ tags hanging from the staves, and the veterans may have recognized correctly that teenage rebellion was not new to America’s shores. But they had chronically underestimated the power of charisma and ignored, too, the miraculous speed at which the Beatles were evolving. By the time that the group released *A Hard Day’s Night* in late 1964, the music and the lyrics had become cleverer than the average—not just the folksy titles but the imagery, too: “I’ve got a chip on my shoulder that’s bigger than my feet,” Lennon sneered on “I’ll Cry Instead.” But, even before the dexterous wordplays, aeolian cadences, and trailblazing production started to creep into the equation, the records bristled with an energy that has arguably never been matched. Fresh and uncontainable, the sound slams through the speakers and directly into the listener’s heart. Effervescent, amusing, and—when they thought nobody was listening, at least—downright insubordinate; for all their influences, they were just *different*.

For whatever reason, Americans noticed. Within hours of their arrival in the country, and without their having sung a single note, all hell broke loose. Settling into the limousine that took him from the airport to a locked-down Plaza Hotel, a flabbergasted Paul McCartney turned on the radio and heard the announcer describing the movements of his car. Skimming the channels, he discovered that some of the other stations were playing his records on repeat, and that the ones that weren’t were broadcasting interviews with wailing fans. When, two

nights later, Ed Sullivan announced breathlessly that “tonight, the whole country is waiting to hear England’s Beatles,” he wasn’t exaggerating. It was. It had heard about little else since they had landed.

Contrary to lore, it is not in fact true that no crimes were reported while the group was playing for Sullivan. (“Even the criminals took a break,” George Harrison laughed in 1995, repeating a familiar line.) But that the idea is so believable illustrates well the astronomical impact that the appearance had. Roughly 40 percent of the entire U.S. population—around 73 million viewers—tuned in, with 60 percent of all television watchers choosing the band’s inaugural performance. My father-in-law-to-be confessed to me recently that he didn’t see it live but, having spent the whole day at school without finding a single other person who had missed out, eventually took to pretending that he had. Where were you when the Beatles played “From Me to You”?

From behind the stage, their ever-faithful manager, Brian Epstein, must have smiled. Older Americans may have disapproved of the group’s shaggy hairstyle, but they were confused and impressed by the polite manner and matching Edwardian suits on which he had early on insisted. They were seduced, too, by a cleverly contrived set list. Determined to show off their musicianship and versatility—and taking a cue from their successful appearance at Britain’s Royal Variety Performance a year earlier—the group saved the raucous hits for the end of their show, starting with the country-and-western-tinged “All My Loving” and then delivering an acoustic performance of a reworked show tune, “Till There Was You,” from *The Music Man*. By the time the audience was finally treated to the untrammelled mania of “She Loves You,” even initially dubious parents were tapping their feet in admiration, glancing nervously around the room, and remarking to one other, with a wry smile forming at the mouth, that these boys could really play.

“The thing is, in America, it just seemed ridiculous,” John Lennon later admitted. “I mean, the idea of having a hit record *over there*.” It was ridiculous, I suppose. The whole thing was ridiculous. Until one day it wasn’t. And, after that, nothing was ever the same again. **NR**



Bateman's Losers

The market for post-human sex at the 'Porn Oscars'

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

Vegas, Baby

'EGGs are expensive, sperm are cheap." That's the plain-English approximation of Bateman's principle, which holds that in a species with two sexes, the members of the sex that invests less biologically in reproduction will end up competing, sometimes ferociously, over the members of the sex that invests more. Because healthy men can in theory reproduce almost without limit while women are constrained by the number of pregnancies that they can take to term in a lifetime, women have a very strong incentive to be more selective about their sexual partners. In a 2004 paper under the forthright title "Sexual Economics: Sex as Female Resource for Social Exchange in Heterosexual Interactions," two scholars from the University of British Columbia and Florida State took that insight and examined mating behavior through the lens of market competition. And if you doubt for one second that the pitiless laws of supply and demand provide an excellent explanation of human sexual behavior, then by all means make a reservation at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino for the annual awards ceremony hosted by *Adult Video News*, a.k.a. the "Porn Oscars," the most mercilessly Darwinian sexual marketplace you will find this side of Recife.

The awards show itself is almost an afterthought on the agenda of this multi-day pornopalooza, which is one part serious insider trade show for the nation's increasingly specialized pornographers and sex-toy peddlers—Doctor Clockwork's Home for Electrical and Medical Oddities draws a curious crowd, as do the live product demonstrations—and one part fan-fest for the world's most dedicated consumers of smut, men who travel great distances and shell out hundreds of dollars in order to pack sweatily into crowded rooms and wait in line for autographs from their favorite performers, representing such powerhouses of porn as Evil Angel, Morally Corrupt, Brazzers, and dozens of others, while manufacturers of sundry sexual devices and what one entrepreneur refers to bluntly as "d**k pills" hawk their latest wares and potions at cheery display booths. It is raw consumerism, and there's a kind of eerie symmetry at work: sex toys laid out in glass cases like jewelry at Tiffany's, women displayed like flank steaks at Safeway. Bateman's principle predicts that among primates like us, males will have a more lopsided distribution of sexual outcomes than will females: Basically all of the healthy females who survive to adulthood will have the opportunity to mate, but many of the males will be crowded out of the marketplace by a relatively

ROMAN GENN

small number of highly successful competitors—they just don't have the biological capital to compete in the Hobbesian sexual war of all against all. The guys buying VIP passes here at the Porn Oscars, sitting slack-jawed at Sapphires Gentlemen's Club as the performers swan through the crowd performing what is no doubt contractually required fan stroking, and then perhaps making a furtive or not-so-furtive trip down the highway to one of Nevada's legal brothels: These frustrated, cow-eyed men are Bateman's losers, and they are legion. The unkind industry term for them: trenchcoats.

ON Day 1, the line of trenchcoats waiting to hand over \$80 to \$120 for a one-day pass to the event stretches from the box office well inside the Hard Rock across much of the length of the enormous casino past the bell desk and to the front door. Some of them are normal-guy Vegas, Baby tourists, and even couples, out on a lark, but some of them aren't simply stopping by this circus on their way to Circus Circus: For them, this is the main event. They speculate among themselves about which of their favorites will be here this year, and debate which performers and which events should take priority—like the Smithsonian, you can't see it all in one day and probably would invite some sort of retinal-glandular damage if you tried. One gentleman talks wistfully about Lisa Ann, a performer in the "mature" segment of the market whose career was revived by a timely impersonation of Sarah Palin—she's the Tina Fey of porn. The trenchcoats are young and old—a few old enough and deconditioned enough to require mobility scooters—and mostly white, though not exclusively so, their troglafaunal complexions suggesting a great deal of time spent awake in the dark. The contrast between the bearded, roly-poly trenchcoats and the performers—many of them tiny and fragile-looking, their massive surgical enhancements slung on remarkably slight avian frames in many cases barely five feet tall—calls to mind H. G. Wells: The Morlocks are here to consume the Eloi.

What's remarkable about the expo is just how square and corporate and conventional a trade show it is. Sure, there are a lot more impossibly pneumatic bare breasts displayed on the show floor than at your typical laundry-detergent convention, but that's just trenchcoat bait, and such lewdness as there is is dearly predictable. (Everybody sniggers in unison when an elevator emblazoned with the seriously curvaceous image of one Stormy Daniels announces: "Going down." Everybody, that is, except for one Rxxxx Holz of Decadent D Digital, who is off in his own little apparently Stoic world.) Inside, in the sessions the gawkers are kept carefully out of, there's a great deal of concern about whether the FDA—"three little letters with a whole s**tstorm of stuff behind them," as the moderator puts it—is going to intervene in the herbal male-enhancement market, about inconsistent overseas regulation of benzocaine levels in penis desensitizers, about the high cost—up to \$20,000—of getting FDA sign-off on particular blends of personal lubricants, etc. Craig—he's just Craig, no surname, like Madonna or Sting but a known player in the sexual-products market—complains that he could "rebuild a rain forest with all the paperwork I have," an observation met with general commiseration by the other panels in the regulation session. "We definitely don't have a sex-positive agent at the FDA, to say the least," complains one, while another declares: "The FDA has two jobs. One is to protect the consumer, and the

other to protect Big Pharma." They mirthfully deride FDA communiqués that quote Wikipedia articles on the subject of penis diameter, missives received in the course of the agency's leaning on them about certain vascular-constriction devices that the industry insists are "novelties" but the FDA considers "medical devices." While the trenchcoats are busy with the titillating displays outside, the industry operators are hearing pitches from logistics companies, legal advisers, cosmetic dentists, and bankers specializing in the unique challenges of the skin trade.

Las Vegas is the perfect venue for the porn industry, which until the day before yesterday was dominated by California. Smut isn't the only business fleeing the politico-economic orbit of Sacramento, but its shift has been especially dramatic. After California passed a law mandating the use of condoms in pornographic films, applications for permits to produce them crashed by 95 percent—an industry group ran a series of humorous advertisements offering performers in full haz-mat gear as a glimpse of the porn future—and with the San Fernando Valley sidelined, Vegas is picking up the slack. Like gambling, porn has its roots in the shadowy, semi-legal-to-outright-outlaw enterprises that still intersected with the edges of organized crime long after the high-water mark of the traditional criminal syndicates. And like slot machines and poker, porn has gone mainstream and corporate. The men conducting business on the sidelines of the AVN trade show are not in the main of the gold-chains-on-hairy-chest variety, but your classic California entertainment-industry types, sandy-haired and looking like they have a lot invested in egg whites, personal trainers, and depilatory treatments. The corporate-speak—"monetize," "brand-building," etc.—is relentless.

"The days of just churning out product and selling DVDs are long gone," says director Miles Long, a two-time AVN award-winner with some 50 AVN nominations on his curriculum vitae—an honest-to-God official member of the AVN Hall of Fame. (I do not ask whether "Miles Long" is a nom de porn or an aptonym or what.) "Most of the revenue streams are Internet-based, and we have to have multiple revenue streams: overseas, broadcast, DVD distribution, selling toys. The industry really failed to see the relevance of the Internet, and it cost them." Mr. Long sounds positively Republican on the subject of California and Los Angeles County—"They are making it difficult for people to do business, with the insane taxes and regulations"—and on the virtues of his newly adopted hometown of Las Vegas: "It's Second Amendment-friendly, and there's no state income tax." Poor feckless California: It can't even do porn right.

Elsewhere, a young entrepreneur speaks admiringly of Walmart's famous inventory-and-logistics systems, which put before customers products that they are likely to want but not know that they want (the classic example being to stock bananas in the dairy aisle, since cereal buyers are likely to be banana buyers as well). "People on the Internet are very focused when it comes to their masturbation," he says. "They know exactly what they want to be looking at." Pornographers have responded by carefully tracking what customers watch and what they search for, in order to connect them with ever more finely tailored content. Porn has of course long been a driver of technology. Two young webcam performers speak admiringly about a particularly considerate host company's IP-blocking technology. "If you have family in Texas, you can block anybody from Texas from logging in and seeing you," one says. It's a way to keep her career

“private.” People talk a great deal about privacy in this business; nobody talks about shame.

The market for porn is necessarily as unpredictable as the human sexual urge, and the near-uniformity of the performers is broken up by the occasional outlier: a 300-pound woman in a fishnet top lounges near the pool. The possibility for finer and finer slicing of the market is being explored by Customs4U, a firm whose name and logo encircle my neck, being helpfully printed on the lanyards for press badges. Rather than having customers seek out the images they desire, this service allows them to go to the site, choose the performers they want and the scenarios they want, and have a bespoke porn clip sent to them for a fee that varies according to the length and unique demands of the film. “Girls with webcams do live shows, and there are clips for sale,” says Kelly Shibari, who is manning the

Vegas, though as everywhere the rise of the Internet and mobile communication has made policing it practically impossible. But legal prostitution is just an hour away and a county over, and the enterprising brothel owners of Nevada are more than happy to dispatch a limousine to any Las Vegas destination and ferry clients across the relevant county lines.

I don’t even bother putting the coordinates of the Chicken Ranch into my maps program; I assume—incorrectly, as it turns out—that when I cross into Pahrump, Nev.—unofficial municipal motto: “Where Things Go Pah-RUMP in the Night!”—I will be greeted by billboards, if not a thicket of flashing neon signs, reading “Whores This Way!” Instead, there’s the usual southwestern sprawl, the fifty-shades-of-beige Nevada landscape punctuated by little rectangles of Pantone 342 green giving way to Carl’s Jr. and Walmart. You take a left at the local

The Las Vegas sex trade remains an unholy trinity of porn, strip clubs, and the studiously not-talked-about legal brothels down the road.

Customs4U booth. “What we do is we make the process efficient. They don’t shoot a video until there has been an order.” Customers can choose from a menu of scenarios, she explains, “or submit a script of their own. If you want a five-minute trampoline clip, that’s what you get.” (Given the alacrity with which the word “trampoline” enters the conversation, my impression is that this is not merely a hypothetical.) A relatively new enterprise, only three months in, Customs4U has 500 models doing as many as five to ten bespoke porn videos per week.

As specific as that tailored porn can be, the sex business still wants to come off the screen and into the world, a fact that comes into very sharp focus as A-list porn star Kaylani Lei totters past a life-sized Kaylani Lei sex surrogate manufactured by Realdoll, the Rolls-Royce of inflatable girlfriends. A normal human being generally cannot walk past a mirror without taking a subconscious glance at it, but Miss Lei is, judging by outward appearances, not a normal human being. I briefly consider pressing her about what it is like to be cast in high-quality plastic as a recreational masturbation aid, until I realize that the question is based on a rapidly vanishing distinction. With her surgical augmentations jutting out perpendicularly, as though resting on an invisible shelf, the main physical difference between Miss Lei and the sex-doll version of her is the percentage of artificial filler. These trenchcoats are not here for reality—the aftermarket parts are the point. Porn is no longer an ersatz, last-option sexual substitute—it is an end unto itself. The AVN spectacle turns out to be a perverse vindication of the theories of Jacques Lacan: The signifier here has indeed taken precedence over the thing signified.

But technology has not yet brought us to the place where digital pornography is entirely immersive, and so the Las Vegas sex trade remains an unholy trinity of porn, strip clubs, and the studiously not-talked-about (at least at AVN) legal brothels down the road. Prostitution remains formally illegal in Las

strip club, drive down Homestead Road past the Heritage Bible Church and the Second Missionary Baptist Church, cross the unambitiously named Thousandaire Boulevard, upon which sits a combination casino and RV park, pass the Ten Commandments plaque affixed to a utility pole, and only then do you see two discreet signs, each no more than 18 inches across, one advertising the famous Chicken Ranch, the other advertising its next-door competitor, Sheri’s Ranch. You are right on top of them before there’s significant signage.

The two establishments are quite similar, though Sheri’s has a reputation as the slightly upscale member of the pair. The Chicken Ranch is faux Wild West Victorian, while Sheri’s appears to be a converted motel. Both are decorated in a combination of old-fashioned men’s club and modern suburban sports bar. Sheri’s has overnight accommodations available, for those so inclined. You can go in, order a drink, mingle with such commodities as are available, or call for a “line-up,” which is exactly what it sounds like. Fees are charged by specific service, not by time, and negotiations can be excruciatingly detailed. The shy can make these arrangements by telephone or e-mail in advance, which forecloses the embarrassing possibility of making a request that even a prostitute is unwilling to fulfill.

What’s interesting is this: Prices are pretty high at these establishments—you can spend more than \$1,000 easily—but they are less than what you’re going to spend for three nights at the Hard Rock Hotel and three days’ worth of VIP passes for the porno expo. And there’s actual sex to be had. Not only sex, but sex with porn stars—J. R. Carrington, who appeared in more than 100 porn films, is listed on the current Chicken Ranch roster. (Irony alert: She once appeared in a film called “Whorehouse.”) For porn fans considering a brothel trip, there’s some ugly statistics-and-probability work to do: Nevada’s legal prostitutes are screened for HIV and other venereal diseases every 30 days; the current best practices in the porn business is to screen performers every 14 days. Like California’s porn performers, Nevada’s prostitutes are legally required to use condoms. But the thought of sex with somebody professionally

obliged to undergo HIV screening 12 or 26 times a year is a powerful dysaphrodisiac. I notice that the housekeeper tidying up the overflowing ashtrays in the lobby at the hotel this week is wearing black hygienic gloves that match her uniform.

BACK at the Hard Rock, things are pulsing. A middle-aged Asian man looking for all the world like he's going to a costume party as Ken Jeong's character in *The Hangover*—shiny red suit over a tacky print shirt, the checkerboard pattern on his Louis Vuitton loafers matching his man-purse—bobs and snaps to music heard only by himself while he waits for the valet. The AVN line is back out to the door again, and go-go dancers have been stationed at the venue entrance as trenchcoat appetizers. Ron Jeremy, who is basically Clint Eastwood in this milieu, chats quietly in the hallway with a small knot of men, his pop-eyed hypertensive face seemingly lit from within by some unwholesome radiance. Down the hall, a tired, middle-aged exhibitor sits in the pop-up café sponsored by Wicked Pictures, counting out the day's medication from prescription-drug bottles lined up neatly on the table in front of him. There are, milling about, representatives of the XXX Church, a seriously mixed-message outfit whose porn-mustache-and-palm-trees logo and glib messaging—"Jesus Loves Porn Stars"—belies its serious concern about porn addiction. Its porn-and-pancakes breakfast discussion is wedded to a 30-days-porn-free challenge.

I am introduced to Nikki Phoenix—the number of "X"s in her surname is variable; I've seen as many as three—who is a nominee this year in the category of best "crossover" performer. "Crossover" denotes a performer who does "mainstream" work as well as porn, and Miss Phoenix—who has family in Phoenix—has appeared in non-porn offerings from billboard campaigns to not-quite-porn men's magazines to the immediately forgotten comedy *21 and Over*, with IMDb listing her as "Topless Chick, Uncredited."

As Miss Phoenix tells it, porn—and not just the porn but the billboards and the lad mags and the lingerie modeling—has been an exercise in living well as the best revenge. She is not planning to title her memoir "Topless Chick, Uncredited"—from her point of view, hers is a story of triumph in the face of adversity. An early bloomer who developed breasts well before most of her peers and then became seriously overweight, Miss Phoenix was tormented by bullies whose abuse ran the entire gamut from mean-girl insults—she was nicknamed "Sandwich"—and social exclusion to more serious stuff, including outright violence. Being relegated to remedial reading classes did not help. (For all you former tormented nerds out there, remember what high school was like and then add to that the humiliation and hopelessness of being an academic underperformer.) There were even darker experiences outside of school. She eventually completed a vocational course and dropped out of high school to work in a veterinarian's office, and life began slowly to improve. Eventually, she lost 120 pounds and began posting photos of her newly slender self on Facebook, and was in time approached by a porn producer. After her first scene, she says, she was "hooked." Doing porn was "the epitome of everything I wasn't." Her parents have been supportive of her career. "My family is very liberal," she says. "My mom says she'd do it if she could. My dad just says that I've ruined Google for him." The Goldwater-country branch of her family, which she describes as "Republican and conservative," is less enthusiastic, and the operative *modus vivendi* is an agreement not to talk about it.

She is writing a diet book under the working title "Fit as Phoenix." In fact, every performer here seems to be writing a book: Porn actress Asa Akira advertises her forthcoming memoir, *Porn: A Love Story*, to be brought out by the same house that publishes P. J. O'Rourke: "The world has seen every fold of my most private parts, and yet I feel this book is my most exposing venture yet." Such are the demands of maintaining multiple revenue streams.

Having transformed herself from fat to merely buxom and garnered an AVN nomination, Miss Phoenix projects confidence about her future, which in the near term includes the launch of a lingerie line. The unhappy high-school chubby duckling has indeed become the epitome of everything she was not. But the world of porn is at least as cruel as the world of high school: Search for Nikki Phoenix's body of work

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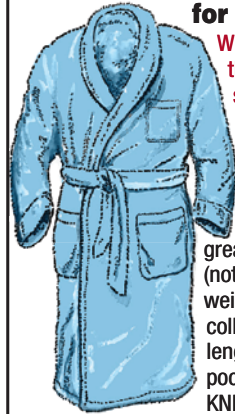
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on any of the commercial websites that specialize in that sort of thing and the merciless algorithms that select Internet advertisements will bring up the following offer: “F**k a fat girl tonight.”

THE little borough of Vegas, Baby is practically hermetically sealed. It is surrounded by the city of Las Vegas, wherein dwell hundreds of thousands of ordinary people who go about their business only vaguely aware, if they are aware at all, of the specific day-to-day operations of the industries at the core of the city’s economy. The two municipalities are formally coincidental, but they are two very different places. I have dinner with some old friends who are the very picture of a happy, healthy family, the sort of enviable people who make it look easy even though it almost certainly isn’t. He is a respected man in his field, she a full-time wife and mother, the two of them steady and cheerful hands on the tillers of the lives of their two engaging and energetic children, practically a Mozart duet of wavering encouragement and gentle discipline. They hold hands around the dinner table and say grace with no sense of self-consciousness. They live in Las Vegas but they have, as you might imagine, a complicated relationship with the borough of Vegas, Baby, plotting out routes to social activities that do not necessitate driving their little ones past 40-foot billboards advertising the annual porn convention.

Back when the porn industry’s main concern was censorship, there was a great deal of talk about things done “in the privacy of your own home.” But porn has long ago been liberated from the constraints of domestic privacy: The AVN expo is advertised by larger-than-life images of porn stars, and a towering billboard for Stripper Circus promises “The Dirtiest Show on Earth.” Down at the grimy sidewalk level the city is dotted with vending machines offering such titles as *Smut Club* and *Homo Guide*, the covers of which are more or less what the titles would lead you to expect. There are markets for everything, and this market is growing—and growing more vicious.

The libido is the engine of human history, but for that period of time that we refer to as “civilization” it has been tempered and yoked. My friends’ happy family is not a viable option for an increasing number of men, especially those outside of conservative religious communities. In the metropolitan areas where they congregate, young men are in almost every case outearned by the young women in the same cohort, and under current law a marriage is far easier to walk away from than is a student loan. As the French novelist Michel Houellebecq put it in his own vision of sex after humanity: The future is female. With the institution of marriage in decadence, the family in chaos, and men’s traditional role as providers and protectors rendered marginal by economic reality, only the ruthless simian sexual market remains, stripped naked of such traditional mediating forces as have customarily wedded male sexual energy to sociable purposes. More than that: As porn becomes less of a substitute for sexual relationships and more of an end unto itself, we are entering an era in which sex is, at least for some section of the population, post-human. To condemn what the porn expo is offering is to miss the point: It is an inevitability. “If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out,” the gospelist advises, but short of taking that radical and irreversible step, the eye is commanded, willingly or not. We are all trenchcoats now. **NR**

Unequal to the Challenge

The parties confront inequality

**BY RAMESH PONNURU
& YUVAL LEVIN**

AMERICA these days faces a daunting array of economic challenges. Still in the midst of a weak recovery from a recession that technically ended more than four years ago, the economy continues to suffer from high unemployment and weak income growth. Americans are anxious about their own and their children’s economic prospects, and they are unsatisfied with what their political leaders have offered them.

The Democrats think they know how to address these problems and anxieties. To hear them tell it, income inequality is at the core of what ails us. “Income inequality is a threat to the strength of our middle class, the health of our businesses, the security of our workers, and the growth of our economy,” Nancy Pelosi argued last spring. President Obama has repeatedly called rising inequality “the defining challenge of our time.” Liberal commentators insist on a tight link between increasing inequality, declining growth, and slowing social mobility. And for the Left, the centrality of inequality among our economic woes demands an agenda of redistribution: higher taxes, higher spending on our existing assortment of social-welfare programs, new programs (such as universal preschool), and, most prominently just now, a higher minimum wage.

That agenda has repeatedly put Republicans on the defensive on economic issues, as the Democrats have frequently succeeded in portraying themselves as standing with the poor and middle class while Republicans are associated in the public mind with the rich and are assumed not to care about most people’s economic troubles and worries. But this success has had more to do with Republicans’ lack of understanding of (and at times discomfort with) the public’s economic concerns than with the strengths of the Democrats’ arguments.

The truth is that neither party’s existing agenda is well suited to addressing today’s economic challenges or voters’ concerns. The Democrats don’t have much of an alternative to attempting to harness public anxiety for their own longstanding priorities, since their electoral coalition does not leave them much room to maneuver. But Republicans could do better: If they took better account of what worries Americans today and why, they would see that the Democrats’ obsession with inequality could leave the GOP with a great opportunity to offer the public an appealing, constructive, conservative economic agenda.

The Left’s argument about inequality begins with a largely accurate observation about economic trends but proceeds to economic assertions and political judgments that are much less well founded. Inequality, liberals correctly note, has been rising in recent decades. That trend can be seen throughout the developed

world, not just in the United States, and its causes are not clear. Over the past three decades, a growing portion of Americans' total income has gone to the wealthy. The top fifth of earners saw their share of pre-tax income rise from 45 percent in 1979 to 52 percent in 2010. Much of that gain went to the much discussed top 1 percent, whose share increased from 9 percent to 15 percent over that period, according to the Congressional Budget Office's latest figures, released in December 2013. The poorest fifth, meanwhile, received just 5.1 percent of all pre-tax income in 2010, down from 6.2 percent in 1979, while the income share of the second-poorest fifth dropped from 11.2 percent to 9.6 percent over that time.

Accounting for the effects of taxes and government benefits tempers those figures some but does not change the basic pattern. Between 1979 and 2007, the CBO found, after-tax income grew by 314 percent for the top 1 percent of households, by 73

Inequality has been rising in recent decades. That trend can be seen throughout the developed world, not just in the United States, and its causes are not clear.

percent for the remainder of the top fifth, by 42 percent for the next three-fifths of households, and by 45 percent for the bottom fifth. Everyone's incomes grew, but those of the wealthy grew more, leaving America's wealth more concentrated at the top.

The causes of this concentration are varied and much in dispute. The combination of advancing technology and freer global trade has meant that jobs in America have become more skill-intensive while much lower-skill work has been exported, leaving Americans who are at the bottom of the income distribution (and generally also with lower levels of education) at a growing disadvantage. Changing marriage patterns have also increased inequality among households, as high earners marry each other. Pay at the very top of some professions (such as finance, sports, and entertainment) has risen dramatically more quickly than pay in the rest of the economy. And the lowering of top marginal income-tax rates starting in the 1980s has given those at the top of the income distribution much stronger incentives to work and invest than they previously had.

The Left is of course ideologically committed to the view that rising inequality of income and wealth is in itself a terrible wrong. Conservatives incline instead to the view that poverty and social immobility are distinct from economic inequality (even if all three can sometimes result from the same causes) and are much more important problems to address. The Left has attempted to overcome this disagreement by arguing that inequality is a cause of economic problems that even non-leftists agree demand public action. It is a cause, that is, of poor growth, diminished standards of living, and poor economic mobility and opportunity. That leap is not well supported by the economic data.

It is not hard to imagine possible mechanisms by which inequality might hinder growth, but it is quite hard to find compelling evidence that it has done so. While rising inequality sometimes correlates with slower growth, it also sometimes correlates with faster growth, both here and abroad. In one 2011 study, Harvard's Christopher Jencks and his team found that there was no relationship between changes in inequality and

changes in economic growth in the United States or abroad over the past century.

Similarly, rising inequality does not appear to have caused the stagnation of wages or purchasing power among the poor and middle class, even if at some times (but not others) it has coincided with it. And what may be the most prominent plank of the Left's inequality argument—the notion that inequality has been the cause of diminishing upward mobility—also lacks clear evidence.

Upward mobility has indeed been declining. The case that rising inequality is to blame for this phenomenon was prominently made in a 2012 speech by Alan Krueger, the Princeton economist who was at the time the chairman of President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. Krueger looked at levels of inequality and the relationships between the incomes of fathers and those of their sons in the United States and several

other developed countries. Plotting the two on different axes of the same chart, he found that higher levels of inequality corresponded to lower levels of intergenerational mobility, and he famously called the line showing that relationship the "Great Gatsby Curve."

But as the Manhattan Institute's Scott Winship, among others, has shown, there is nothing approaching a sufficient foundation for asserting that the relationship shown on Krueger's chart is a case of causation rather than just correlation. And more recent data regarding inequality in different regions of the United States also cast doubt on that claim. Other assertions about the doleful effects of inequality—notably that it contributes to financial instability and political dysfunction—are even more speculative, piling one contestable assertion atop another.

The Left has thus not come close to proving its case. As Winship has put it in *National Affairs*: "The evidence behind the liberal narrative of inequality as a driver of our social and economic woes is not nearly firm enough to support the political and policy arguments now often built upon it. One can be concerned about economic growth, financial stability, and economic mobility regardless of whether income inequality harms any of them."

THE Left's political analysis, like its economic analysis, begins on solid ground but does not remain there. There is plenty of evidence that Americans think that rising inequality is a problem. A Harris poll in October found that 80 percent of the public believed that "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer." Last April, Gallup found that 59 percent of people thought "the money and wealth in this country should be more evenly distributed among a larger percentage of the people." Many other polls have found similar results over the years. Specific policies often associated with egalitarianism, such as a higher minimum wage and higher taxes on the rich, also usually command majority support.

Rising inequality does not, however, seem to have led to rising public concern about it. Harris found that 82 percent of the

public held the same rich-getting-richer view in 1990. The number has bounced around without much alignment with actual trends in inequality. The number of people who agreed with the statement fell during the 1990s, for example, when we had a strong economy but inequality was rising. Polling from multiple sources finds no increase over the last 15 years in rates of belief that the country is divided between “haves” and “have-nots,” with a majority rejecting that idea.

Polling also consistently finds that inequality is a low-priority issue for voters. When Gallup asked voters to volunteer “the most important problem facing this country today” in January, only 4 percent mentioned the gap between rich and poor—compared with 16 percent who mentioned health care; 8 percent, the deficit; and 5 percent, moral decline.

In May, Gallup studied voter priorities in a different way, listing several issues and asking respondents whether they considered them important. A majority thought “reducing poverty and inequality” was important (since the question lumped the two together, it does not shed light on how people thought they were related)—but significantly larger majorities felt that way about creating jobs, helping the economy grow, making the government work more efficiently, improving education, and fixing Social Security and Medicare. Pew, in 2013, asked people whether governments should “first address” jobs, public debt, inequality, or rising prices. Only 17 percent of Americans picked inequality, with larger percentages choosing both jobs and debt.

Overall, the polls find deep and in some respects growing economic anxiety, but anxiety that Americans do not appear to view mainly in terms of inequality. The polls on inequality have not changed much; the ones on whether “today’s youth will have a better life than their parents,” on the other hand, have. In 2003, Gallup found people optimistic about this question by a margin of 66 to 31 percent. Ten years later, the numbers were nearly tied.

THE path would seem to be open, then, for Republicans to address popular concerns about our economic future without using opposition to income inequality as an organizing principle; without, that is, treating the rising fortunes of the wealthy as a cause of those concerns. The public does not seem to share the Democrats’ intense emphasis on that issue. But to seize their opportunity, conservatives must avoid making their own version of the liberal mistake: confusing their ideological commitments for the public’s concerns.

Just as many Democrats contemplate public unease and imagine it offers an opportunity to pursue an agenda of higher taxes and more spending, so many Republicans look at the same attitudes and assume that voters just want comprehensive tax reform or regulatory rollback, or perhaps an anti-cronyism campaign or reforms to keep financial institutions from ever being bailed out again. All of that is surely worth doing, and Republicans should lay it out clearly for voters as part of their broader agenda, but (just as taxing and spending is for the Democrats) it is more a description of what Republicans could do if they won the favor and trust of the public than of how they might win that favor and trust.

The public may respond favorably, for example, to a Republican campaign against federal subsidies that flow to corporations, ranging from agribusinesses that benefit from food aid to insurance companies that profit from Obamacare. But people are

probably more interested in hearing about policies that will help them improve their economic condition. These may sometimes even be the same policies, described in different ways.

Voters are worried about stagnating wages, diminished mobility out of poverty and through the middle class, weak growth, and the high costs of raising a family. They are right to be worried, and right also to reject the Democrats’ insistence that all of these problems are caused by inequality. But if Republicans are to speak to these worries, they must be careful not to appear to dismiss them as they dismiss the Democrats’ inequality arguments. That means that rather than minimize the nation’s economic challenges, conservatives must offer the public an agenda that addresses people’s actual concerns in a way that liberals, because of their ideology and their electoral coalition, will be hard pressed to do.

Health care, in part because of its importance in our politics over the last few years, offers a good example of the conservative opportunity. The public is, of course, highly skeptical of Obamacare, and rightly so. But it also, rightly, has concerns related to the health-care system that predated Obamacare. Above all, people worry that the cost of health insurance is too high, putting coverage out of reach for too many and depressing wages. Obamacare does not offer a plausible answer to many of these concerns. Liberals have constructed various arguments that it will reduce costs, for example, but these tend to be more striking for their ingenuity than their credibility, and very few people have been persuaded.

There are promising conservative solutions to these problems, involving the intelligent deployment of the same forces—competition, cost-conscious and empowered consumers—that spur innovation and improve value in other sectors of the economy. Liberals cannot embrace these solutions, because of both their specific commitment to Obamacare and their general skepticism about the potential for markets in health care. Republicans need to forthrightly advance these ideas and show the public how they could help reduce costs and make working families more secure.

Higher education is another source of great anxiety in American life: Will we be able to afford it for our kids, and will it leave them with an unbearable debt burden? A degree from a college or university seems to be, at least under our present arrangements, a prerequisite to economic success. But only a minority of people are able to get one, and even those who do are finding that the ratio of costs to benefits is often not what they had expected. The area would seem to be ripe for reforms that create and expand alternatives to a traditional college education, open opportunities for people who follow these alternative routes, and in other ways put competitive pressure on colleges to restrain costs. Some liberals are interested in these reforms. For reasons of coalition politics and general outlook, however, they seem like a much better fit for conservatives.

The cost of raising a family—and, particularly for women, the difficulty of balancing work and family life—is another issue where conservatives can offer potentially popular reforms. Liberals are drawn to policies such as requiring companies to offer paid leave for their employees. Conservatives have in the past instead offered tax relief for families, especially by creating and then expanding the child tax credit. That policy benefits a larger group of parents and offers them greater flexibility in how to use the benefit than what the Left proposes. The conservative approach reduces inequality only incidentally, and Senator Mike Lee did not sell his recent proposal to expand the child tax

credit on that basis. But it would certainly address some key public worries about our economy.

HEALTH care, higher education, and the costs of raising children are some of the most pressing concerns of middle-class families, but the case for conservative reforms in these areas applies in others that also matter to many such families. This suggests the possibility of a broad conservative agenda that would lift burdens off the shoulders of parents and workers, strengthen the market economy while making its benefits accessible to more Americans, and better enable the poor to rise.

That agenda would include more than policies to reduce the cost of living for working families; such policies would be part of a broader growth agenda consisting of sensible tax, regulatory, monetary, and infrastructure reforms. Conservatives have increasingly proposed such a growth agenda in recent years, but if they stop with those broader and more familiar economic goals—or, worse, stop short of them—they run a dangerous risk. The reach and the character of economic growth do matter. We don't, for example, want to repeat the performance of the Bush years, when economic growth coincided with stagnant wages for most people because the rising cost of health care ate up raises. To stand a chance of being enacted, the agenda conservatives offer must speak directly to the needs and wishes of middle-class voters.

Such an agenda, one of broad-based prosperity, might meaningfully lower inequality, or it might not. It would, however, undermine the damaging perception that the Republican party is interested in helping only the rich and big business. It would move the economic and political center of gravity of American life markedly to the right. And it would be in keeping with the actual state of public opinion. The case for economic growth, opportunity, mobility, family, and reform of our governing institutions would almost certainly be far more appealing to voters than a case for just narrowing gaps. If everyone is rising swiftly, it matters less who rises fastest of all.

In advancing their economic agenda, the Democrats have chosen to emphasize a theme—income inequality—that unites their activists but does not speak powerfully to voters. Some of the policies they pursue under that banner, such as increasing the minimum wage, may be reasonably popular (even if they hardly seem like solutions adequate to “the defining challenge of our time”). Republicans may pay a price for opposing them. But that price will be mitigated by the fact that while voters might think a higher minimum wage is fair, they do not think that it represents a sturdy basis for economic progress or that they themselves would benefit from it. It is a price Republicans can afford to pay so long as they offer voters their own understanding of what today's economic challenge really is and how it might be addressed.

That challenge is not that some have grown too rich too quickly in our country but that the American dream may be falling out of reach for too many Americans. The Democrats' crusade against inequality thus offers Republicans a chance to reconceive their public arguments and their policy agenda by applying conservative principles to the problems that face working families. If they are up to that challenge, they may become America's governing party again.

NR

Enforcement, Then Amnesty

*Grand-bargain immigration proposals
tend to get the order backward*

BY MARK KRIKORIAN

THE House Republican leadership's principles for “immigration reform” have been revealed in general form. The substance, as reported in *Politico*, is what anyone might have guessed: enhanced border security and interior enforcement, systems for verifying workers and tracking legal entrants, visa-program reforms, and a path to legal status for current illegal immigrants.

The Schumer-Rubio amnesty bill passed in June by the Senate would bring about all these things, at least nominally. House members' protestations that they reject the Senate bill mean nothing if the House simply proposes to pass all the Senate bill's constituent parts in separately numbered measures. This is what President Obama and other amnesty supporters mean when they express support for the House's piecemeal or “step by step” approach.

The release of their principles for reform clearly suggests that Boehner, Cantor, and the rest of the Republican leadership are going to try to trick their members and supporters into permitting passage of something like the Senate bill. With Obama as chief executive and Harry Reid as Senate majority leader, the only defensible reaction from conservatives is “No”: no bill that empowers Obama to amnesty illegals, however strong the enforcement promises might be, since they will be ignored. But while “No” is the necessary short-term answer, conservatives also need a plan to manage the transition from our current unsettled politics of immigration to a more stable and sustainable situation.

The basic outline would be this: enforcement first, without preconditions or trade-offs, but targeted mainly at the prevention of new illegal immigration. Once that's fully in place, we can move on to the grand bargain: amnesty for remaining long-established, non-violent illegals in exchange for an end to mass legal immigration.

PROponents of amnesty say that the demand for “enforcement first” is a ruse, and that immigration hawks keep moving the goalposts as a way of avoiding amnesty. There are no doubt some amnesty opponents who fit that description, but the broad accusation ignores the fact that basic, decades-old demands regarding enforcement, such as for the implementation of employment-verification and exit-tracking systems, still have not been satisfied. The public has good reason

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not to believe promises of future enforcement, having heard them all before.

The Schumer-Rubio attempt to reduce this mistrust by amnestying illegals up front but making their upgrade to full green-card status contingent on future enforcement benchmarks is a fraud. None of the amnestied illegals, however “provisional” their status is said to be, would ever revert to illegal status, whether or not the enforcement goals were met. (In the past, groups who have been granted temporary status have routinely had it extended, and there will be tremendous political pressure to treat the current illegal population similarly.) And once that population has legal status, immigration hawks lose the only leverage they have: No pro-amnesty official, Republican or Democrat, who now professes his undying support for future enforcement will have any incentive to follow through at that point.

Immigration-reform skeptics trusted lawmakers in 1986 and got burned: Amnesty was granted, but enforcement did not happen. This time, they’re going to have to trust us. Once the first part of this new deal is in place (the necessary enforcement tools), there will still be significant political pressure to follow through with the second part (amnesty plus immigration curbs). In this it differs from the amnesty-before-enforcement approach of 1986, which is also the basis of the Senate bill.

At the same time, any enforcement arrangement that throws millions of illegal aliens out of work all at once (as certain enforcement tools would do) would be unacceptable to the public, not to mention un-Burkean. For that reason, the enforcement efforts that must precede any discussion of amnesty should focus chiefly on preventing, and punishing, *new* illegal settlement. This would still induce significant numbers of illegal immigrants, mainly more recent arrivals with fewer attachments here, to return voluntarily to their country of origin, by, for example, making it more difficult for them to seek new jobs.

That doesn’t mean that no illegals already here would be deported or encouraged to leave. In fact, because of the Secure Communities program (which checks the fingerprints of arrestees against Department of Homeland Security databases, as well as those of the FBI), Immigration and Customs Enforcement is aware of a much larger number of illegal-alien criminals than ever before, which means deportations should be increasing; instead, overall “removals” dropped 10 percent last year, and genuine deportations (of illegals in the interior of the country rather than those caught at the border) have declined 40 percent since 2009. Right now, because of policies euphemistically called “prosecutorial discretion,” Immigration and Customs Enforcement is releasing more illegal-alien criminals than it is deporting. To restore public confidence that the government is serious about enforcement, ICE agents should be given discretion to do their job, and local police and sheriffs ought to be allowed to help them, especially in cases that affect public safety. As it stands now, directives from ICE management instruct agents not to take action against illegal immigrants in many cases, even when they have been apprehended by local law enforcement for other reasons.

Nonetheless, the procedures that most need to be put in place would focus mainly on new illegals. For instance, making E-Verify a universal part of the hiring process—to make it hard for illegal aliens to get jobs—would not affect

illegal aliens already in jobs, since it would be used only for new hires (although it’s true that established illegals who leave their current jobs would have trouble finding new ones).

The same focus on new illegals would apply in visa-tracking. Since 1996, Congress on eight separate occasions has mandated the creation of an electronic system to track the entry and exit of foreign visitors, and we still don’t have one. Such a system is essential for immigration control, since between one-third and one-half of the 12 million current illegal aliens entered the country legally—as tourists, students, business travelers, etc.—but never left. Granting any sort of legal status to yesterday’s visa overstayers before ensuring new visitors can’t overstay is absurd.

THE executive must also show a good-faith commitment to muscular, unapologetic enforcement of immigration laws going forward. Our experience since the 1986 amnesty shows that this is necessary regardless of the party in power. Among such confidence-building measures would be criminal prosecution of every new border infiltrator and every new visa overstayer. Border prosecutions are already under way in certain limited areas, but with apprehensions down 70 percent from 2005, it is now practical to adopt a zero-tolerance strategy along the entire border. Congress would have to make overstaying a visa a criminal offense like border-jumping (it’s now simply a civil infraction), but in both cases the goal is not to stuff the prisons with illegal aliens but rather to send the message that this time, we mean business.

We haven’t yet mentioned building more border fencing or hiring more Border Patrol agents. Both of those changes are probably called for—only about 2 percent of the border has double fencing, and the Border Patrol, though bigger than it used to be, has to keep an eye on 8,000 miles of frontier with fewer officers than the New York Police Department. But the border is better controlled nowadays, largely because beefing up border security has been politically easier than other enforcement priorities.

Even though they focus on preventing new illegal settlement, these measures would result in significant attrition of the current illegal population. The Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project has estimated that from 2005 to 2010, 1.4 million Mexicans (or “Mexicans,” since 20 percent were U.S.-born children) left the United States. Some of this migration was due to the recession, some to grudging increases in enforcement late in the Bush administration, and some to the many other reasons a person might return home from abroad—retirement, injury, homesickness, the desire to protect children from the gang culture of the *barrio*. Unfortunately, during that same period 1.4 million *new* Mexicans entered the U.S. (most of them illegally), resulting in net migration of roughly zero. The slightly better economy and Obama’s gutting of enforcement have caused the number of illegal immigrants to start increasing again, but the recent churn in the illegal population suggests that even measures devoted mainly to preventing new immigration can result in a shrinkage of the existing illegal population. For example, one study found that implementation of Arizona’s 2007 E-Verify law caused the illegal working-age population in the state to fall by 17 percent in one year.

The enforcement measures we have discussed are not suffi-

cient. While their full implementation would establish a new approach to immigration management, additional changes would need to be included in any future immigration grand bargain in order to identify and remove future illegal immigrants, as well as those who are already here but don't qualify for amnesty. Such additional measures would include retroactive application of E-Verify to non-amnestied illegals, and institutionalized cooperation between ICE, IRS, and the Social Security Administration to locate and apprehend identity thieves, including new offices within the SSA and the IRS specifically devoted to identifying illegal aliens for ICE.

Finally, any future deal would have to include an end to the anachronistic practice of automatically conferring citizenship on children born to foreign tourists, foreign students, and illegal aliens. Automatic citizenship at birth should be restricted to children of citizens or permanent residents (with, perhaps, a sort of statute of limitations as in Australia, where a child born to illegals can become a citizen if he spends his entire first ten years in the country).

ALL this having been fully implemented and any legal challenges overcome, what's the next step? The enforcement-first or attrition-through-enforcement approach lays the groundwork for a legislative bargain that would, one hopes, establish a new equilibrium. Such a package would include, in addition to the last pieces of enforcement mentioned above, amnesty for established illegals in exchange for a more moderate level of legal immigration in the future.

Amnesty is, of course, the most controversial part of any immigration plan. It rewards liars and scofflaws. It mocks those who obeyed the law. It permits illegal immigrants to keep positions that could be filled by Americans looking for full-time work. It creates large future costs for taxpayers. It can serve as a catalyst for future illegal and chain immigration. It is likely to be plagued by significant fraud.

Nevertheless, once the enforcement agenda outlined above has been completed, which is likely to take several years, amnesty would be a risk worth taking. And the combination of a new enforcement paradigm plus reduced legal immigration would address many (though not all) of the potential problems with it.

First, a word about terminology. In the immigration context an amnesty is anything that permits illegal aliens to remain legally. In other words, legalization *is* amnesty. Politicians and activists have obfuscated this point for years in an attempt to deceive voters. In 2000, the National Council of La Raza did focus-group testing in preparation for the Bush amnesty push and advised the Mexican and American governments to avoid the word "amnesty" at all costs because people disliked it so much. Any politician arguing that his legalization plan du jour is not really an amnesty simply cannot be trusted. If we're going to let some illegal aliens stay, let us call it amnesty.

Who should benefit from such an amnesty? The bulk should be people without criminal convictions who have U.S.-born chil-

dren or U.S.-citizen or legal-resident spouses, plus those who came before age ten and have grown up here. Recent estimates suggest that as of three years ago, there were 4.4 million illegal aliens with U.S.-born children, and perhaps 600,000 with citizen or legal-resident spouses (but without U.S.-born children). Add to that adult illegals who came here before age ten, who might number another 500,000, plus the illegal-alien spouses and minor children of these various groups, and you're at perhaps 6 million people, or half the current illegal population of about 12 million (though the total will have shrunk somewhat before the amnesty owing to deportation, voluntary departure, or death).

In addition, it would be prudent, given their long residence, to amnesty those who've lived here for more than a decade but don't qualify under other categories. DHS estimated that as of three years ago, about 10 million of the 12 million illegal aliens had entered before 2004. Even a relatively lenient amnesty, however, would exclude a significant number of people for criminality, gang membership, and other reasons; the Congressional Budget Office has estimated that 30 percent of the illegal population would not receive amnesty under the terms of the Schumer-Rubio bill for these reasons.

It would be fair to estimate, then, that out of an illegal population shrunk by attrition to 10 million people, some 6 or 7 million would qualify for amnesty.



The form of the amnesty should be relatively straightforward. Fees should be modest; requirements should be few and clear, but scrupulously enforced (by an immigration bureaucracy that is given sufficient time and resources to do the job properly). Amnesty beneficiaries should get green cards—i.e., become regular legal immigrants who can, if they qualify, become citizens (though if the experience of the 1986 amnesty is any indication, a large share will choose not to pursue citizenship).

Requirements in other amnesty proposals, including the Schumer-Rubio bill, for large fines or permanent non-citizen status are punitive window dressing, designed exclusively to help get legislation passed. The fines will be waived, the permanent non-citizen status upgraded to full green cards after a few years. The real goal should in any case not be punishment but confession and absolution. All amnesty beneficiaries should have to participate in public ceremonies where they read aloud a confes-

sion (preferably in their native tongue) along the lines of: “I acknowledge that I showed disrespect to America’s laws and have no right to remain in the United States. But having put down roots here, I humbly ask the American people to forgive my trespasses and accept me as a legal resident of their country. If accepted, I will strive to be worthy of this generosity, so help me God.” Such a secular sacrament of confession should close the book on their illegal status.

The corollary to amnestying certain illegal aliens is that all those who do not qualify must be removed. No amnesty applicant should be notified by mail as to the disposition of his case; rather, he must appear in person, and if rejected, immediately be taken into custody and sent home. Any encounter with the authorities, no matter how minor, that reveals the illegal status of one of the much-reduced number of remaining (or new) illegals must result in deportation. Amnesty can be justified only as a transition to meticulous and aggressive enforcement.

THE other half of the bargain is reduced future immigration. This is the precise opposite of current proposals. When the House GOP leadership talks of “reforms to visa programs,” what it means is increases in “temporary” worker programs for farmers, tech companies, and other special interests. The Schumer-Rubio bill would double legal immigration and nearly double admissions of guest workers.

Such increases are essentially pork-barrel measures; businesses get cheap, controllable labor, and ethnic-chauvinist groups get a never-ending supply of people through family immigration that they can claim to speak for. But the principled argument offered for these huge increases in legal immigration is that they’re the only way to end illegal immigration. Advocates claim that there’s nothing that can be done to stop foreigners from moving here, so by letting in everyone who wants to come, we—by definition—no longer have to worry about illegal immigration. As New York University professor Jorge Castañeda put it to me during a recent television appearance, we must not only amnesty past immigrants but *future* ones as well.

If you accept the premise that immigration control is impossible, then numerical or category limits are indeed irrelevant. But if you accept that immigration can be controlled, then it’s necessary to decide whom and how many to admit. We currently take in 1.1 million legal immigrants each year, the large majority simply because they have relatives here. This number should be reduced, for several reasons.

Most immediately, cuts to legal immigration are called for to offset the amnesty. Cutting immigration in half, to roughly 500,000 a year, would mean it would take twelve years to offset the legalization of 6 million illegal aliens. Offsets like this have been used in immigration law before; the unskilled-worker category was reduced in 1997 for as long as it took to offset an amnesty for various Central American illegal aliens.

But a simple offset concedes that the existing immigration level of 1 million—plus per year is acceptable. On the contrary, high levels of legal immigration in themselves create high levels of illegal immigration. The two figures have risen together, and for immigrants from the same countries, because legal immigration creates the networks and connections that make illegal immigration possible. What’s more, in our system a huge number of relatives of immigrants qualify on paper to immigrate but

are put on waiting lists because of numerical caps in various immigration categories; many of them just come anyway and wait for their number to come up. This is especially important in the wake of an amnesty. It’s bad enough to have rewarded illegal aliens, but to reward their *relatives* with legal-immigration slots is galling and indefensible.

The more fundamental problem with mass legal immigration, however, is that it’s an anachronism, something we’ve outgrown. As a young nation settling the land and later industrializing, we could successfully make use of a large number of new workers from abroad, though even in the past immigration created great social turmoil. But we are today a very different, more mature, nation. Our post-industrial, knowledge-based economy offers fewer opportunities for advancement to legal newcomers with little education, at the same time that our own less-educated are under great stress. A modern welfare state means that less-skilled legal workers, who necessarily earn low wages, create huge costs to taxpayers. Modern transportation and communications, combined with a post-national American elite, mean that immigrants—even skilled immigrants—have less need to assimilate and join the American people emotionally rather than just on paper. In short, mass immigration is incompatible with contemporary society.

Many of the concerns people express regarding illegal immigration are actually about immigration as a whole, most of which is legal. Most illegal immigrants work on the books for more than minimum wage—so job competition faced by less-skilled Americans has less to do with legal status and more to do with simple numbers. Likewise with welfare; illegals collect benefits on behalf of their U.S.-born children but are ineligible themselves, whereas legal immigrants use a much wider array of taxpayer-funded services. The same dynamic is true with the increase in poverty, in economic inequality, in the growth in the uninsured—legal immigration has a much larger impact than illegal.

A lower level of overall immigration would tighten the labor market, ease pressure on welfare and the health and education systems, and promote assimilation—goals that are all important in themselves, but especially important to the absorption of the amnestied illegal population. In addition to the benefits to the country, curbing immigration would help the political prospects of conservatism, given the mountain of data showing that immigrants are overwhelmingly big-government liberals.

To summarize, in exchange for amnesty, the following legal-immigration reforms—which together would cut legal immigration by about one-half—are called for: Family immigration should be limited to the spouses and unmarried minor children of U.S. citizens; skilled immigration should be limited to the top talent in the world; humanitarian immigration—refugees and asylum seekers—should be limited to the truly desperate who have nowhere else to go, as is not the case with the bulk of the current flow; the visa lottery should be ended; and guest-worker programs should be eliminated—they not only exploit workers and undercut Americans, but are vehicles of illegal immigration, as the Congressional Budget Office report on the Senate bill acknowledged.

If House Republicans want to offer a choice rather than an echo, they’d do well to consider the alternative to the Senate plan sketched here: enforcement first, followed by a combination of amnesty and greatly reduced immigration. **NR**

Arise Ye Media

Over at *Salon* there's an excerpt from the book *Imagine: Living in a Socialist USA*. The title, you suspect, comes from John Lennon's limp hymn to a happy hippie hand-holding utopia. But once socialist control has been gloriously achieved thanks to the tireless work of people who think the "have a penny, take a penny" dish at the café is proof America yearns for the leveling blade of egalitarian revolution, what will the media look like? The author explains.

"The articles in newspapers and magazines and online will not be filler between ads for teeth whiteners and weight-loss pills. There won't be TV commercials for Coke, cars, or million-dollar condos." So the new citizens will have stained teeth and drink Citizen's Cola, apparently. There will still be cars, but there won't be ads, because ads flood your rational brain with option-lust and make you buy the car you "think" you "want" as opposed to the one whose assembly line has no robots and pays everyone \$463 an hour, whether he's designing the engine or putting knobs on the radio. (Which, by the way, plays only Workers Stations.)

Since there won't be ads for these things, they presumably will have been banned by unanimous consent of the unshackled multitudes, or forbidden by the state on behalf of the People's Will. Doesn't matter, does it? What counts is releasing the media from the iron fist of corporate control.

Sounds great, but who pays for journalism? Well, the state, of course, because if there's one historical model for media truth-telling, it's government press. "Neighborhood associations" will gather the crime news, but you can bet the news will have the right attitude:

Citizen Bernard Johnson was the victim of an unfortunate residue of capitalism's lingering violence when he was approached by two historically undervalued members of society and instructed at gunpoint to surrender his ration cards. Authorities are looking for anyone connected with the Smith & Wesson Company who made the weapons before the plant was confiscated, razed, and converted into a beet farm. Johnson, who works at the beet farm, expressed full confidence that this year's quota would still be met.

If you think this may substitute one bias for another, the author is ready: "Will *Autoworkers News and Views* on TV have a regular segment devoted to union members' criticisms? Why not?"

Ta da! People will be free to speak out. Encouraged. It will be anti-social not to: "Social justice committees will be elected by the union membership to look into complaints and to dig up and root out capitalist, racist, and sexist weeds that continue to grow." Your neighbor complains to the Block Captain about sexist weeds (she overheard you through the thin wall, praising the way your

wife looked in her gray jumpsuit) and the results of the trial get posted in the paper. Utopia!

No more Wall Street news, because there will be no Wall Street. But "there will be no shortage of economic news in a socialist society. Some news will still come from local and national governments that set product-distribution quotas or help to negotiate them."

At this point the good socialist has to stop for a cold shower, because this kind of talk leads to heady images of sturdy peasant women on tractors wearing scarves AND NOTHING ELSE.

Aside from riveting economic reports ("Rivet Production Up 145 Percent; Spontaneous Declarations of Joy Fill Lungs of All"), here's the author's suggestion for light 'n' bright news in the socialist USA: "There could also be reports of school poetry slams, neighborhood art shows, music festivals, rival baseball teams cooking contests [*sic*], and dance parties."

Since the author's connection to reality makes dental floss look like the cable needed to tug the USS *Nimitz*, he doesn't realize that the Internet abounds with websites that offer these things for people who care. No, strike that; he's heard of these "Tweeters" and "blogs" and such, and believes they will be a Vital Force in the new socialist media. But if the old days before media concentration were great, and we had three TV networks, how is it bad that we have so many options now, including the dang-near-infinite proliferation of online voices?

Because Fox News exists and people watch it with drool running down their chins, their heads as empty as rotten molars, waiting for Sean Hannity to pour an amalgam into the aching void. Only socialism can help them. Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains. Like at Applebee's, eating ribs. Something must be done.

The page has a link at the bottom for anyone who wishes to advertise on the site, and it goes to a page that says: "For more information on how we can assist in developing a customized program that will help you meet your marketing needs and objectives, please contact."

No doubt there's a flip-flop maker who's totally cool with nationalizing the footwear industry and wouldn't do the whole "profit" thing if it weren't for the way Big Shoe rigged the market, but it's hard to sustain a website payroll with such clients.

One more precious detail. *Imagine* is published by HarperCollins, which is owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. In other words, a subsidiary of the company that owns Fox News is publishing a book that demands the nationalization of Fox News, and this is supposed to make you think capitalism stifles dissent. You could say it's an example of capitalists' selling them the rope with which they will be hanged, but that assumes the buyers can figure out how to tie a hangman's noose. Let alone their shoes.

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.

NR



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

DOCUMENT EXTRACTS

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FEDERAL
WIRETAP TRANSCRIPT
NEW JERSEY STATE GOVERNMENT
INVESTIGATION
[PLEASE NOTE, AS PER DIRECTOR,
THIS INFORMATION IS CLOSE-HOLD.]

Begin Extract #1

10:23:02

[static]

Unidentified Male Voice: “. . . and we make them hurt, and like that. We drop the hammer on them. We teach them that the Garden State has rules, right Mr. Governor?”

Governor Chris Christie: “I don’t want no rough stuff, okay?”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Course not. Those guys and them? Won’t even show a scratch. Will be like, in and then out. Message delivered.”

Governor Chris Christie: “I just gotta make it clear, right? What choice do I have?”

Unidentified Male Voice: “The way we see it, Governor, they made you make this choice.”

Governor Chris Christie: “Is that the way you fellas see it?”

Unidentified Voices: “Yeah . . . sure . . . you know it, boss.”

Governor Chris Christie: “Then do it.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Rudy?”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “Yeah?”

Unidentified Male Voice: “You heard the governor. Time to make a little noise over in Paterson. Thursday, the people over at the reference section of the public library there are going to discover that the whole large-print section is . . . closed. Closed indefinitely.”

Governor Chris Christie: “In - definitely? Hey, look, there’s no need to go crazy here. We just want to make a point, is all.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Governor, do you trust me? You trust me, don’t you? Out in Paterson, do you know what

they’re doing now? They’re laughing at you. They’re saying, hey, big fat governor man can’t enforce a little discipline. Fat boy don’t have the muscle no more. He’s too busy eating crumb cakes and meatball grinders and cheeseballs dipped in butter and those chocolate-crunch things, what are those things called?”

Governor Chris Christie: “I get the picture.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “They’re saying, Mr. Type 2 Diabetes Governor doesn’t have the juice. Mr. Coronary Occlusion Christie is—”

Governor Chris Christie: “I said, I GET THE PICTURE.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Oh. Right. No disrespect.”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “So I should go ahead and put the squeeze on the reference librarian there? I mean, it’ll take some grease, but whatever.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Rudy, the guys in Paterson and them? They didn’t ‘like’ the governor’s Facebook page. So, yeah, if it takes some grease it takes some grease. You understanding me?”

End Extract #1

Begin Extract #2

15:06:43

[static, traffic noise]

Unidentified Male Voice: “. . . it was a nice arrangement but not a nice NICE arrangement, you know?”

Governor Chris Christie: “They were nice flowers, okay? Mary Pat and I appreciated them.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “I felt the bouquet lacked stature. It lacked grandeur. It was basically an insult. You send somebody a bouquet like that, you’re asking for a response.”

Governor Chris Christie: “I don’t want to get into this now, okay? Look, we’re in enough trouble as it is. People are starting to think I’m some kind of vindictive New Jersey politician. Some Tony Soprano kind of thing. You think that’s going to go over well in Iowa? In New Hampshire? I need to dial it down, okay?”

Unidentified Male Voice: “So we just let this go? We let it go? Someone sends you a piddly bunch of flowers for

your inauguration—a petunia here or something, I don’t know flowers, I’m not a flower guy, but, what? A hundred bucks? Whatever! An insult! We go back to the retired-nurses group and we HURT them for this. We HURT them, governor.”

Governor Chris Christie: “I think we need to let this one go.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “What am I hearing? Am I hearing right? Are my ears working? We’re going to back DOWN? Rudy, are you hearing this?”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “Yeah, yeah, I’m hearing this. Thing is, I agree with the boss. Time to let it go.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “No. No.”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “Pick your battles. Pick your battles. Was you taught me that.”

Governor Chris Christie: “Driver, can you stop here?”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Why are we stopping? This isn’t where we’re going.”

Governor Chris Christie: “This is where I’m getting off. Got another ride to the thing.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “Oh. Okay. Well then me and Rudy will ride with you.”

Governor Chris Christie: “Uh, no. Why don’t you and Rudy ride in this car together, okay? You and Rudy take a ride together.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “What?”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “Yeah. You and me are going to take a ride together.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “What? WHAT?”

Governor Chris Christie: “See you around.”

[car door opening]

Unidentified Male Voice: “This isn’t right! This ISN’T RIGHT!”

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “C’mon. Let’s keep it upscale.”

Unidentified Male Voice: “After all I done for him? After all I done?”

[car door closing]

Unidentified Second Male Voice: “Whadd’I tell you? Our thing don’t play in Iowa.”

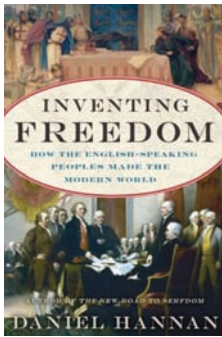
[static]

End Extract #2

Books, Arts & Manners

Anglosphere Attitudes

CHARLES C. W. COOKE



Inventing Freedom: How the English-Speaking Peoples Made the Modern World, by Daniel Hannan (Broadside, 416 pp., \$26.99)

GEORGE ORWELL, who spent his short career fighting the coupled perils of censorship and propaganda, famously accorded to the fictional ruling party of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*'s England the aphorism “He who controls the past controls the future.” But it was his contemporary, the less frequently quoted Aldous Huxley, who more presciently sketched out the threat to the free.

In Huxley's dismal estimation, the primary hazard wasn't so much the suppression of truth as it was apathy, nonsense, and disconnection from tradition. And the salient question for those who were protective of English liberty was not what would happen if their past were erased or replaced by force, but what would become of their countries if the citizenry became so distracted that it didn't know anything about the past *at all*—if, that is, the people became “concerned in the main neither with the true nor the false, but with the unreal, the more or less totally irrelevant.” Cynics such as myself might look around and ask, “Are we there yet?”

That the usually sunny Daniel Hannan, a prominent British member of the European Parliament, has felt the need

to issue a reminder of his country's cultural and political development suggests that the answer might, at least in a limited sense, be “Yes.” Secure in our movement, our trade, and our prosperity, Westerners are nonetheless marred by a clement amnesia—unsure where they came from, confused by conflicting accounts of their heritage, and corrupted in their inquiries by the deliberate conflation of race and culture.

It was “once uncontroversial to see the spread of liberty as bound up with

to favor the underdog in all circumstances, History's winners are unlikely to be much loved.

Popularity, power, and truth have a difficult relationship, but Hannan is admirably happy to risk the first two in order to advance the third. What we call “the West,” he notes delicately, is really just a “polite” way of referring to nations that have picked up those exceptional libertarian ideals that were developed initially in Britain and then spread through the New World and,

Hannan shows an **admirable willingness to offer judgments that will inevitably be misunderstood, misquoted, and, eventually, portrayed as something sinister.**

the rise of the ‘Anglosphere,’” Hannan writes. Now, “it takes a major effort of will to imagine how revolutionary” are ideas such as individual rights, private property, and personal liberty—expressed in English-speaking lands through common law, religious freedom, presumption of innocence, trial by jury, and free markets—and how offbeat they “must have seemed when first proposed.” To the extent that we think about these things at all, many of us are likely simply to believe that it all just *is*. But if we don't know that liberty is a contingent reality, with a specific historical development, that needs to be defended if it is to continue to exist, how can we be expected to defend it?

Its thesis is by no means new, but this is a brave and countercultural book nonetheless. In a world in which even the most innocuous observations can get one labeled a “racist” or a “hater,” Hannan—who is manifestly neither of those things—shows an admirable willingness to offer judgments that will inevitably be misunderstood, misquoted, and, eventually, portrayed as something sinister. There are, he notes correctly, “few scenarios in which the Anglo-sphere peoples can be cast as the underdogs”—and in a culture that has come

eventually, across the globe. Likewise, when we refer to “free” nations, we mean those that have adopted, fought for, or had imposed upon them the “Ancient English cause,” thus joining what Lord Macaulay memorably described as “the imperishable empire of our arts and our morals, our literature and our laws.”

While Hannan's view is that Britain would “have been better off running trading posts and informal protectorates than assuming responsibility for vast tracts of land”—one suspects that he would have been philosophically of a piece with the 18th-century liberal reformers who held that the greatest day for the Empire would be when it could be dissolved, leaving liberty and order in its wake—he nevertheless has an important question for Britain's critics: What was the alternative? Taking a cue from Dinesh D'Souza, who articulated this view well in *What's So Great About America*, Hannan remembers that “what distinguished the English-speaking nations was not that they practiced slavery but that they crushed it,” and he channels Niall Ferguson in contending that, for many subjugated peoples, the alternative to British rule was not liberty but conquest by someone less enlightened.

Which is to say that Hannan is a Whig, in the best sense of that word. He is understandably proud that the core five Anglosphere nations have demonstrated such a pronounced tendency to resist tyranny—Communist parties never elected a single MP in Australia or New Zealand, managed to get just one into office in Canada, and elected only six in Britain—but he is keen to establish that this has been the product of ideas that can be adopted by anyone. Not only does Hannan soundly reject the racial arguments that can sometimes accompany claims of exceptionalism, but he also takes on that strain of conservative thought that holds that only certain cultures and races are suited to liberty. As India demonstrates, Hannan claims, what people need is a framework or “meme”—not the right set of genes. And the framework that they need is one that has been slowly developed by the British. This is why “Bermuda is not Haiti, why Singapore is not Indonesia, why Hong Kong is not China (and, for that matter, not Macau).”

For a culturist and champion of the Anglosphere such as myself, this is all catnip. But funnily enough, I found the most interesting part of the book to be its discussion of an idea that cannot be so easily attributed to the English-speaking peoples and with which I have no strong personal connection: Protestantism. I have long argued in vague terms that America is a fundamentally “Protestant” society, by which I have absolutely not meant that only Protestants can be good citizens, but rather that the Founders were the product of not just a religiously Protestant inheritance but also of a *politically* Protestant worldview—and, too, that the two are historically inextricable.

This is to say that once a people becomes accustomed to cutting out the middlemen from their path to God, absolution, and salvation, it becomes easier for them to countenance cutting out the middlemen from their path to liberty and the pursuit of happiness as well. Cultures in which the layman has been encouraged to have direct access to Scripture—as opposed to being forced to take the word of the clergy—are cultures in which men will defend parliaments against kings, and individuals against authorities. Yeoman farmers and lay preachers are, if you’ll forgive the

pun, cut from the same cloth—independent, self-reliant, and with a direct line between themselves and their well-being.

In a fascinating passage, Hannan explains that Protestantism did not merely help forge the philosophy of individual liberty but came to be seen in “political rather than theological terms, as *guarantor* of free speech, free conscience, and free parliament.” The most effective of the grievances listed in the Declaration, Hannan writes, was the complaint about the Quebec Act, by which Thomas Jefferson transmuted a restoration of French civil law and Catholic tithing in British Canada into the accusation that the King had abolished “the free System of English Laws in a neighboring Province, establishing therein an Arbitrary government.” In 1936, the historian Charles H. Metzger would write that, to many colonists, “the ‘Church of Rome’ was little less than the incarnation of evil; its adherents were thought capable of any crime; its creed was believed to be perverse and destructive of the very foundations of the social order.” How astonishing that, just a few years later, the new country ratified the First Amendment.

Books such as this are usually designed to set contemporary questions in their proper context. As the ancients were quoted liberally by the architects of the Enlightenment, so are the luminaries of the Age of Reason now deployed as bulwarks against radical change. Indeed, much of the final chapter is spent warning readers that they are at risk of squandering a beautiful and rare inheritance—the product of 1,100 years’ work, no less. As one might imagine, the European Union comes in for some choice words, as does Barack Obama, whose agenda Hannan regards as an existential threat to American liberty, and whose worldview belittles the “Anglo-Saxon values [that] made possible the transformation of our planet over the past three centuries.” (The author’s last book, remember, was called “The New Road to Serfdom: A Letter of Warning to America.”)

“An autopsy of history would show that all great nations commit suicide,” Arnold Toynbee once wrote. A few more Hannans manning the crisis lines and we might have a chance at survival. **NR**

Moby-Dick, Again

RICHARD LOWRY

I’M an aspirational reader—meaning that my shelves are full of books I intend to read . . . some day. It is only with great reluctance that I am willing to admit defeat after years of gazing at their spines, and place some of them, unread, on the shelf in our office reserved for tomes destined to be sold off in bulk to the second-hand bookstore The Strand.

It was in this spirit that I bought a used copy of *Moby-Dick* a long time ago, hoping to read it again. I had it on a shelf in my bachelor-pad apartment for a while and then when I got married and my wife demanded a domestic book purge, it was removed to a shelf in my office. There it sat for a couple of years. Finally, over the holidays, the mood struck and time allowed, so I picked it up and reread *Moby-Dick* (skipping, I must confess, the most technically cetological parts).

I was stunned. *Moby-Dick* is a byword for literary greatness with an off-putting capital “G,” the kind of book you *should* read and the kind of book you probably *have* to read somewhere along the line during your education. None of this makes for a very appealing image for Melville’s masterpiece, but *Moby-Dick* outstrips its ponderous reputation in almost every way.

Outside the occasional treatises on marine biology, it is a crackling good read. I marveled at the wit and whimsy; the lush descriptive language; the Shakespearean soliloquies; the haunting sense of foreboding that builds from the first pages, when our narrator, Ishmael, tells us he decided to go to sea again after lingering around coffin warehouses, toward the finale that is no less crushing for its inevitability.

I last read it in high school and was amazed how much of it stuck with me. I read *Remembrance of Things Past* a few years ago and can’t recall a thing about it, except that the sentences are pretty. The major—and many of the not-so-major—episodes of *Moby-Dick* had

stuck with me for a couple of decades, such is their vividness and power.

Melville published it when he was 32. Famously, its first edition never sold out and many copies were destroyed in a New York City fire, before the book's reputation built after Melville's death. It is, of course, a very odd book—part novel, part philosophical meditation, part play, part encyclopedia entry. E. M. Forster characterizes it as "Prophecy," a select category of profound, world-encompassing fiction in which he also includes the works of Dostoevsky.

From my 21st-century, landlubbing perspective, the book is almost a brief against whaling. Although Ishmael extols the whaling business, there's no glossing over its cruelty. As the whales are hunted down, they feel fear, rage, pain, and despair. At one point, Ishmael's boat is becalmed in the midst of a circle of maternal whales visible beneath the surface. Nursing and pregnant, they "serenely revelled in dalliance and delight."

But the blissful idyll is disturbed when a wounded whale, entangled in a harpoon line, is "tormented to madness." The beast was "churning through the water, violently flailing with his flexible tail, and tossing the keen spade about him, wound-

ing and murdering his own comrades." Yes, that's whaling. Ishmael notes, in one of his explanations of the finer points of the craft, that if a whaler accidentally lances a mother's breast, "milk and blood rivally discolor the sea for rods."

When the *Pequod* kills its first whale, it is almost night and the crew can't carve it up until daybreak. Hanging off the side of the ship, it is food for a frenzy of sharks. One unaccustomed to the sight "would have almost thought the whole round sea was one huge cheese, and those sharks the maggots in it." Ishmael's friend, the harpooner Queequeg, stabs as many sharks as he can so the whale won't be reduced to a skeleton by morning, and when he merely injures one it is feasted on by its voracious brethren, in a grotesquerie of viciousness.

While the sharks feast below, Stubb eats a steak carved from the whale on deck and "were you to turn the whole affair upside down, it would still be pretty much the same thing, that is to say, a shocking sharkish business enough for all parties." Just so.

The particulars of whaling aside, *Moby-Dick* is obviously as weighted with symbolism as a T. S. Eliot poem. D. H. Lawrence wrote of the "White

Whale": "Of course he is a symbol. Of what? I doubt even Melville knew exactly. That's the best of it." For my part, I consider the book a tale of the fanaticism of a proto-totalitarian.

Ahab uses the same means, pursues the same purpose, and effects the same heedless destruction as history's dictatorial monsters. In a demagogic speech near the beginning of the *Pequod's* voyage, he whips the crew up into sharing the hateful urgency of his monomania. By the end, his control is total: "Alike, joy and sorrow, hope and fear, seemed ground to finest dust, and powdered, for the time, in the clamped mortar of Ahab's iron soul."

Ahab, this "proud, sad king," this "grand, ungodly, god-like man," is revolting against God and against nature. He honors only his own unyielding purpose. "What I've dared," he declares, "I've willed, and what I've willed, I'll do!" For him, "right worship is defiance." Ahab rebukes his chief mate, Starbuck, who calls his obsessive quest for Moby Dick a form of blasphemy: "Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me. . . . Who's over me? Truth hath no confines."

Ahab is a twisted utopian. His pursuit of the whale is a gesture toward, as we put



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it around here, immanentizing the eschaton. “All evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*.” The whale is the kulaks, the Jews, the intellectuals—whatever force in the world is falsely presumed to be the locus of its malevolence.

Such a project always makes elemental human sympathy impossible. In an affecting passage, the *Pequod* meets another ship, the *Rachel*, whose captain is distraught. In his own chase after Moby



Whaleboat and Crew Tossed into the Sea, by Rockwell Kent, for *Moby Dick*, c. 1929

Dick, he has lost his twelve-year-old son, adrift somewhere at sea in a missing boat. He wants Ahab's help in the search. Ahab will have none of it: “Even now I lose time.”

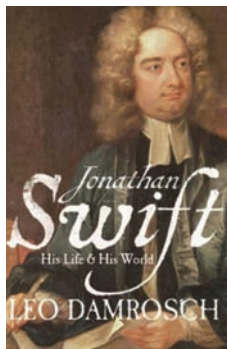
When he catches up to *Moby Dick*, the climactic three-day chase ensues, with repeated opportunities to turn back as the danger becomes ever clearer, and yet Ahab persists, even unto death for him and his crew. He is willing to sacrifice all the world, as represented by the *Pequod*, to his vision, raging at the whale, “From hell's heart I stab at thee; for hate's sake I spit my last breath at thee.”

The failure of Ahab's quest brings a blessed relapse into normality. The sharks and the birds, whipped to a frenzy during the final chase, are quiet. Ishmael is the sole survivor, eventually picked up by the *Rachel*, “that in her retracing search after her missing children, only found another orphan.”

And with that, back *Moby Dick* goes on the shelf, with awe and enduring admiration. **NR**

The Dean's Delight

JOHN J. MILLER



Jonathan Swift: His Life and His World, by Leo Damrosch (Yale, 592 pp., \$35)

WHEN Peter O'Toole died in December, the obituaries dutifully mentioned his starring role in *Lawrence of Arabia* as well as his other achievements on screen and stage. Most overlooked one of the stranger episodes in his career. In 1984, he read “A Modest Proposal,” the famous essay by Jonathan Swift, at the Gaiety Theatre in Dublin. The performance startled many in the audience, as O'Toole urged them to solve the problem of Irish poverty by eating the children of the poor. A few dozen listeners walked out. More heckled. They didn't know they were hearing a satire.

Swift would have laughed at the confusion, partly because he held a low opinion of the Irish but mostly because he held a low opinion of everyone. He was also a comic genius who made a career of puzzling people. In this excellent new biography, Leo Damrosch calls him a “man of mystery.” It's amazing how much we don't know about Swift, who lived from 1667 to 1745. His father may have shared his name and died before he was born (the official story), or he may have been a prominent British politician who sired a son out of wedlock (a persuasive theory). Swift may have married a lifelong friend in secret, or perhaps not. He may have romanced a different woman, with whom he maintained a coded correspondence that has perplexed

everyone who has tried to peek into his private affairs. Swift didn't even like to put his own name on his writings: Most of his work appeared in print anonymously or with aliases. He was so determined to hide his authorship of *Gulliver's Travels* that he had the manuscript tossed to the printer from a hackney coach in the dark. Among the personal facts that we know for certain about Swift is that, as a friend put it, he had “blue eyes very piercing.” Just like Peter O'Toole!

He was a conservative as well—another certainty. Applying modern political labels to figures from the past can be tricky. With Swift, however, it's a cinch: Damrosch describes him as “sternly conservative” in his prologue. That's fair, though Swift was more irreverent than stern, and he drew from a set of bedrock beliefs that most of today's conservatives would recognize and appreciate. He regarded human nature with pessimism, viewed the idea of moral progress with suspicion, and preferred the tried and true to the new and untested. One of his early forays into the culture wars of his time was “The Battle of the Books,” a humorous essay on why classical writers such as Homer were better than modern writers like Milton, offered in response to prideful contemporaries who insisted on the reverse. Damrosch says “The Battle of the Books” displays “a reactionary commitment to an idealized past,” but it might also be called a creative manifesto on the importance of tradition.

Healthy traditions constantly replenish themselves, and Swift both honored the traditions he inherited and carried them forward with his unique contributions. His poems, essays, and satires shaped the way we speak. The word “yahoo” is his invention, and the phrase “blood and treasure” probably is as well. The feminine name “Vanessa” would not exist but for him. Teachers and professors continue to assign *Gulliver's Travels* and “A Modest Proposal,” but Swift's accomplishments run much deeper. *A Tale of a Tub*, his first major work, is “the most powerful prose work in the language,” claims Harold Bloom. His essays on behalf of Ireland made him a national hero. “The Lady's Dressing Room” contains the best poop joke in all of English literature.

Swift's Tory political writings have their admirers, too: “Nobody could buy

his services; everybody feared his pen,” wrote Virginia Woolf. He pumped out pamphlets and periodicals in a time of great turbulence, with wars abroad and intrigue at home. In 1712, Robert Harley, the chancellor of the exchequer, received a suspicious package. Swift asked to examine it and discovered a booby trap: a pair of loaded pocket pistols, ready to fire. He disarmed the device. “I wonder how I came to have so much presence of mind, which is usually not my talent,” Swift wrote. “But so it

all warn against intellectual abstraction and the delusions of human perfection.

Soon after the publication of *Gulliver's Travels*, Swift wrote the other piece of work that today's readers are most likely to have encountered: “A Modest Proposal.” Its subject remains fresh, as the poor are still with us. Its notorious solution to the dilemma of poverty achieves a kind of hybrid vigor through the violation of two taboos, infanticide and cannibalism. Swift meant

The Road to Monetary Stability

DAVID BECKWORTH

Jonathan Swift pumped out pamphlets and periodicals in a time of great turbulence, with wars abroad and intrigue at home.

pleased God, and I saved myself and him, for there was a bullet apiece.”

As an Anglican priest, Swift always yearned for a prominent church appointment in England, but the best post he could attain was dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in his native Dublin. This was mainly an administrative job, and apparently he was quite good at it. Yet his true vocation was as a writer, and he would compose his most enduring works in Ireland, during the final phases of his career. His years as a polemicist in London had sharpened his wit, and at last he had the freedom to devote it to something other than partisan skirmishes between Tories and Whigs.

His great triumph, written in the 1720s, was *Gulliver's Travels*—a tale so well known that even non-readers are familiar with its most celebrated scene, in which the tiny Lilliputians rope down the shipwrecked Lemuel Gulliver. Damrosch proposes that Swift borrowed his narrator's surname from an innkeeper he knew, but Swift scholar Dutton Kearney has offered a more compelling explanation: In the 18th century, “‘Gulliver’ would have been pronounced with a long *e*, making the Latinized version of the name ‘to trick (gull) by means of the truth (vere).’” Whatever the case, the book blends fantasy, travelogue, and satire in what might be described as the world's first science-fiction dystopia. Its dwarves, giants, floating cities, and talking horses

to shock his readers from their apathy as well as to mock the “projectors” (social engineers) who thought societies could plan their way out of any problem. Its humor is dark and unsettling: “We should soon see an honest emulation among the married women, which of them could bring the fattest child to the market.”

Lines like these earned Swift a reputation for misanthropy and, as Damrosch writes, “he didn't altogether disagree.” Yet it would be a mistake to leave it at that. “I hate and detest that animal called man, although I heartily love John, Peter, Thomas, and so forth,” he wrote in 1725. Swift was generous in his private dealings and opposed slavery at a time when few people did. After witnessing the horrors of London's Bethlehem Hospital—popularly known as Bedlam—he resolved to devote his fortune to the humane treatment of the mentally ill in Ireland. Swift rarely could resist a good joke, and in a poem that imagines his own death, he turned his bequest into a taunt at the expense of the Irish: “He gave the little Wealth he had / To build a House for Fools and Mad / And shew'd by one satiric Touch / No Nation wanted it so much.” Yet in the next two lines—the poem's final words—Swift aimed his humor at himself and revealed his true humility: “That Kingdom he hath left his Debtor / I wish it soon may have a Better.”

NR



Money, Gold, and History,
by Lewis E. Lehrman (Lehrman Institute,
251 pp., \$9.95)

IN 2013, the Federal Reserve celebrated its 100th anniversary. During that century, the U.S. economy was subjected to numerous boom-and-bust cycles, the sharpest economic contractions in its history, and one decade of record-high inflation. Since these developments occurred on the Federal Reserve's watch, many observers conclude that the Federal Reserve is to blame. Lewis E. Lehrman, however, says: Not so fast. In his latest book, Lehrman argues that the culprit was not the central bank, but the gradual decline of the gold standard. The slow shift from the hard constraint of an international gold standard to a world of floating exchange rates is, in his view, the real source of the macroeconomic instability. This is not a new argument for Lehrman: He has been making this point since the 1970s, when the United States left the gold standard. This new book is a compilation of his work since then.

Mr. Beckworth, formerly an economist with the U.S. Department of the Treasury, is an assistant professor of economics at Western Kentucky University and the editor of Boom and Bust Banking: The Causes and Cures of the Great Recession.

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TUE/Nov. 11	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars
WED/Nov. 12	St. Thomas (USVI)	9:00AM	6:00PM	afternoon seminar evening cocktail reception
THU/Nov. 13	St. Maarten (NA)	8:00AM	5:00PM	afternoon seminar late-night Smoker
FRI/Nov. 14	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars "Night Owl" session
SAT/Nov. 15	AT SEA			morning/afternoon seminars evening cocktail reception
SUN/Nov. 16	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	6:30AM		Debark

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Lehrman argues that not only is the gold standard the best way to maintain monetary stability, but it was pivotal to the formation of modern civilization. He argues that the British and American industrial revolution could not have happened without it. Its widespread adoption, he holds, was crucial to the first wave of globalization in the latter half of the 19th century. It created an environment of price stability that facilitated trade and made it easier for firms and households to make long-run economic plans. This monetary system

world of floating exchange rates and reserve currencies. Consequently, he wants the U.S. to call a major international conference that would establish gold convertibility for the major currencies. He even wants the U.S. to go it alone on the gold standard, if necessary.

So is Lehrman right? Is an international gold standard the correct path to improved monetary stability and increased global economic growth? I wish I could say yes and share Lehrman's certainty. The reason I cannot is that the

United States, whose bills were backed by silver. There was nothing market-driven or natural about this switch from a silver standard to a gold standard. It was pure politics.

That gold was an accident of history is further evident in the contentious debate over a gold standard versus a bimetallic standard after the Civil War. Convertibility of dollars into metals had ended with the Civil War, and Congress had set 1879 as the year it would resume. Congress, however, failed to authorize the further coinage of sil-

For Lewis E. Lehrman, the current system of floating exchange rates and reserve currencies is a serious malady, and the cure is the gold standard.

reached its pinnacle with the international gold standard of 1879–1913. World War I shattered it, and since then the international monetary system has been on a downward trend toward greater instability.

For Lehrman, the current system of floating exchange rates and reserve currencies is a serious malady, and the cure is the gold standard—which would impose fixed exchange rates on countries that adopted it. Lehrman likes this approach because, if followed properly, it has a natural equilibrating process. Imagine the U.S. and the U.K. on the gold standard: Dollars and pounds would both be defined in terms of a certain amount of gold. If the U.S. money supply grew too rapidly and pushed up U.S. prices, Americans would start buying more of the cheaper U.K. goods. This shift to U.K. goods would require buying more pounds, since U.K. goods are priced in pounds; this would involve converting dollars into gold and sending the gold to the U.K. for the pounds. The flow of gold from the U.S. to the U.K. would decrease the money supply and price level in the U.S. but increase them in the U.K. The excessive U.S. money growth, therefore, would be automatically corrected, and prices between the two countries would converge. This process is called the “price-specie flow mechanism.”

Lehrman does not see a similar adjusting mechanism in the current

history of the gold standard, the reason it worked, and the world we live in all seem far more complicated to me than their portrayal in *Money, Gold, and History*.

Consider, first, the history of the gold standard. Though Lehrman claims that the gold standard is “the historic common currency of civilization” and the “proven guarantor of one hundred years of price stability,” the history of gold is much more nuanced. Silver actually was the dominant metallic standard for hundreds of years before gold. The main reason it was displaced by gold is not that gold was inherently better, but that important countries, including the U.K. and the U.S., introduced bimetallism—legally minting silver *and* gold into money—and did so at exchange rates that inadvertently led to the undervaluation of silver. This undervaluation eventually drove silver out of circulation as money. Gold became the money standard largely by accident.

In the U.S., bimetallism was introduced in 1792. Soon afterward, changing market prices led to an overvaluation of silver at the mint and a de facto silver standard that lasted until 1834. Congress then changed the mint ratio and, in an instant, gold became overvalued, and it would serve as the monetary standard from 1834 to 1861. This change was part of President Andrew Jackson's famous war on the Second Bank of the

ver. This meant that dollars would be convertible only into gold. Had silver still been coined at the mint, it would have become, by 1879, the de facto money standard, given market prices. This shift to gold irritated many, particularly those who thought gold was too deflationary; this was such a concern that it became the defining issue of the 1896 presidential election. Only with the Gold Standard Act of 1900 was the possibility of monetizing silver permanently put to rest. If gold was the “currency of civilization” for centuries, as Lehrman claims, why was its success an accident, and why has the U.S. money standard always been so contentious?

Lehrman also claims that politicians cannot manipulate a gold standard as they can fiat currency, because the gold supply depends on real-world gold production. But the above examples and others (such as the suspension of convertibility during the Civil War and FDR's confiscation of gold in 1933) clearly show that even the gold standard is susceptible to manipulation.

That the U.S. gold standard was an accident of history and that its longest unchallenged, continuous run was only a quarter of a century suggests the question: Was it the gold standard, per se, that created the long-run price stability of the 18th and 19th centuries, or was it a deeper political and institutional commitment to price stability?

Lehrman attributes the price stability to the price-specie flow mechanism, but the mechanism's success was dependent on the commitment of the government to allow the gold standard to work.

The same is true for the current international monetary system. Though Lehrman sees it as fundamentally flawed, it too has an adjustment mechanism that can work reasonably well if managed properly. While the gold standard kept exchange rates fixed and forced adjustment through changes in the price level, the current system allows the exchange rates to bear most of the adjustment. That adjustment, if allowed to work (in conjunction with a central bank's aiming at price stability), should not be any more destabilizing than the gold standard.

If anything, one could argue that the current international monetary system could be *more* stabilizing, since it forces the adjustment on one price—the exchange rate—rather than on thousands of prices, as is the case with the gold standard. The euro-zone crisis offers a good example of how this might work. The euro-zone effectively sets up fixed exchange rates among countries in the currency union. While they have deep structural problems, the severe business cycle they are now experiencing is being worked out by painful deflation in the periphery countries. An alternative approach would be to abandon the euro, adopt domestic currencies, and let their exchange rates bear some of the adjustment.

The key point is that both fixed- and floating-exchange-rate regimes have adjustment mechanisms that work if used correctly. The interesting question, then, is: Why have these mechanisms *not* worked properly over the past century?

The answer, in my view, is that governments have become increasingly concerned with stabilizing their domestic economies and, consequently, more interventionist in monetary matters. The breakdown of the inter-war gold exchange standard, the end of the Bretton Woods system, and the high inflation of the 1970s were all the result of U.S. officials' attempting—and failing—to manage the business cycle. Prior to this era, there was less concern about swings in economic activity, and the sometimes painful discipline of the

gold standard could therefore be tolerated.

Barry Eichengreen, in his 1992 book *Golden Fetters*, argued that indifference to the business cycle began to wane in the 20th century because people started demanding more from their elected officials. This meant more government intervention in the economy, and therefore an increase in monetary instability. The gradual abandonment of the gold standard over the 20th century was a symptom of these developments, not their cause.

There is no turning back the clock on this changed political dynamic—and that's why it's unlikely that any country will ever go back to the gold standard. Moreover, there is a better path to restoring monetary stability. As Lehrman notes, the key to restoring stability is to create an environment where money supply equals money demand. The supply of money is created mostly by banks and other financial firms. The demand for money is shaped by the needs of households and firms. Both are difficult to measure and individually beyond the direct control of the Federal Reserve. The product of the two, however, can be meaningfully influenced by the central bank. It is called total dollar spending, and its stabilization should be the objective of monetary policy.

The Federal Reserve can do this by managing expectations of *future* total-dollar-spending growth. Here's how: The Federal Reserve credibly commits to doing whatever it takes to keep total dollar spending growing at a constant rate over time. The public would come to understand that, if total dollar spending went above or below this target growth rate, the Fed would correct it. This belief would become a self-fulfilling expectation, requiring minimal action by the central bank.

The key issue is whether there will ever be enough political support to adopt a monetary regime such as this. Though the history of the 20th century does not offer much hope, Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker showed us that it is not impossible for policymakers to make tough choices. My hope is that, one day, all policymakers will come to see the importance of monetary stability. Implementing a total-dollar-spending target for the Federal Reserve would be a great start. **NR**

The Twain, Meeting

JAY NORDLINGER

ABOUT ten, fifteen years ago, a phrase occurred to me: “the Sinification of music.” This refers to the ever-growing influence of Chinese musicians on Western classical music. Has this influence been positive or negative? It's hard to think of it as anything but positive. Westerners are letting music go, some people say. If that's true, others are eagerly picking it up. In 2009, I interviewed Lorin Maazel, the veteran conductor, and asked him about the future of classical music. (A standard question, usually posed nervously.) The first words out of his mouth were, “Thank God for China.”

Time was, Chinese or Chinese Americans were string players or pianists. The kid practicing the violin in the back room of his parents' laundry may be a stereotype—but it's perfectly true. I saw it with my own eyes, or heard it with my own ears. Asians and Asian Americans (if I may broaden our categories) are still string players (and pianists). About half the violinists in the New York Philharmonic—a not atypical American orchestra—are Asian. So are about half the cellists. Asian Americans face quotas at universities—ceilings. But the beauty of blind auditions, which are the rule in music, is that no one can be discriminated against, except musically.

Over time, Asians branched out from the piano and the string instruments—into the woodwinds, for example. The Philharmonic's principal oboe is Chinese (and its English-horn player is Japanese). I have not seen many Asians in brass sections, I must say. (Should I mention that the English horn, somewhat misleadingly, is a big oboe?) But I met a young woman a couple of weeks ago—Chinese-American, I believe—whose instrument is the trumpet.

There came a time—about ten years ago—when I was seeing Chinese sopranos. Not in Chinese opera, but in Handel, Mozart, Verdi, and the rest. This was something new under the sun. In 2007, I saw a Chinese Pamina at the Met. (Ying Huan sang the role of Pamina in



Hao Jiang Tian and 'I Sing Beijing'

Mozart's *Magic Flute* at the Metropolitan Opera.) Not long after, I saw a Chinese Tosca—Hui He. She was markedly Italianate, too. And Chinese conductors in the pit, or on the symphonic podium, are increasingly commonplace.

Most important, probably, are the composers: the Chinese and Chinese-American composers. For the last many years, the accent of much contemporary classical music has been Chinese. Typically, the Chinese-born American composer was born in the mid-1950s. He was an adolescent, or younger, when the Cultural Revolution hit. He was made to do hard labor. He was lucky to survive. When the schools reopened, he attended the conservatory in Beijing or Shanghai. Then, in the mid-1980s, he came to America, to complete his studies and have his career. Often the school he came to was Columbia University, where Chou Wen-chung taught. Chou, who is now in his early 90s, immigrated to the U.S. in the brief years after World War II and before Communism.

One of the most prominent Chinese-American composers is Tan Dun, who wrote the score to *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. (And an opera for the Met: *The First Emperor*, which starred Plácido Domingo.) Another prominent composer has the wonderful name of Bright Sheng—he teaches at the University of Michigan. Then there is Chen Yi and her husband, Zhou Long.

Recently, Xuefei Yang played a piece by Chen in a New York recital.

Yang is a guitarist, and therefore an honorary Spaniard—all guitarists are Spaniards, in a way, because Spanish music is the heart of their repertoire. In 2008, Yang made an album called “40 Degrees North,” a title that refers to the line of latitude connecting Madrid and Beijing. One of her life ambitions has been to forge a Chinese repertoire for the guitar. The piece she played in New York was commissioned for her, from Chen, by London’s Wigmore Hall.

Many cities have Chinese New Year’s concerts, and New York has one in store. The Philharmonic will present a program featuring a typical mix of East and West. The Chinese pieces have such titles as “Soaring Song of Miaoling” and “Flying Song of the Earth.” (There seems to be a lot of airborne motion in China.) Then there are Western staples from Dvorak, Tchaikovsky, and Rachmaninoff. Among the soloists is Yuja Wang, the sensational young pianist, born in 1987. She attended the Central Conservatory in Beijing and then made her way to Philadelphia, where she studied with Gary Graffman at the Curtis Institute. That’s exactly what Lang Lang did, a few years earlier. (He is another sensational pianist.)

At American conservatories, we see a pattern: a pattern of Jewish teachers and Asian students. The same pattern is evident in orchestras—in string sections, that is. Gray and white heads are apt to be Jewish, and black heads are apt to be Asian. It is a cliché to say that Asians are

the “new Jews,” but there is merit to the cliché. America became the center of the musical universe for a reason: The Jews were hunted out of Europe (if they were lucky enough to be hunted out rather than murdered). There are other reasons, but that is a big one.

In mid December, Hao Jiang Tian gave a recital in a New York hall, Zankel (the downstairs venue in the building known generically as “Carnegie Hall”). Tian is a basso long associated with the Metropolitan Opera. Born in 1954, he was just about the first of the Chinese singers on Western stages. He has a one-man show, which was made into a television special: *From Mao to the Met*. This sort of alliteration is apparently irresistible. When Isaac Stern traveled to China in 1979, the resulting documentary was called “From Mao to Mozart.”

On December 17, 1983, Tian landed at JFK Airport with \$35 in his pocket, a handful of English words, a guitar on his back, and two opera arias in his repertoire. He went right to the Met, where he bought a standing-room ticket for \$8. The opera was *Ernani* (Verdi), starring Luciano Pavarotti. Tian was to make his Met debut in 1991.

His recital in Zankel Hall took place exactly 30 years after his landing in New York, December 17, 2013. The place was jam-packed, mainly with well-wishers, it seemed. The program notes were in both English and Chinese. The audience was that kind of blend—and included white parents with their adopted Chinese-born

kids. As for the program that Tian sang, it must have been the strangest mélange I have ever encountered in a concert hall. Tian sang music that was meaningful to him, and it was beyond diverse.

He began with Chinese art songs, composed in the early part of the 20th century. These were written by composers under the influence of the West. Then he sang the two arias he arrived in America with: “Ella giammai m’amò,” which is King Philip’s monologue from *Don Carlo* (Verdi), and “Non più andrai,” from Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro*. The latter aria, he knew half in Italian, half in Chinese, when he got here.

How did he sing, by the way? Through - out the evening, he was up and down, but he was always personable, professional, and completely sincere. He is the kind of performer you warm to and root for. In the Chinese music, he sounded completely idiomatic (so far as I could judge). And he made the following announcement, at one point in the proceedings: “Ladies and gentlemen, forgive me: I have laryngitis. I’ll do my best. If one note is weak, the next note will be stronger.”

He sang “revolutionary” songs—Party songs—and “unhealthy” songs. Those

“unhealthy” songs were ones judged by the Party to be corrupting. They were love songs, mainly. Then Tian sang “Danny Boy”—yes, “Danny Boy,” which he learned from an Irish friend in Colorado. Following that was “The Impossible Dream,” from *Man of La Mancha*. Tian rose from the Beijing Boiler Factory, where he was a sheet-metal worker, to an international opera career—so he believes in impossible dreams.

In this song, he was surrounded by young people, singing with him. Where had they come from? They belong to a program called “I Sing Beijing.” For a variety of songs, Tian had onstage with him members of this program. He is the artistic director of it. The program’s aim, according to its literature, is to instill Mandarin as “a lyric language.” It was somewhat startling to hear young white singers, and young black singers, sing in Chinese. When one of them started speaking to the audience, in Chinese, the audience broke into applause. Several of the students paid tribute to Tian’s wife, Martha (as Tian himself did). She seems to be a kind of den mother to all of them. Seldom have I seen a concert hall filled with so much warmth, goodwill, and, indeed, love.

The final piece on the printed program was a weird one (in keeping with the evening at large): a combination of a Chinese folk song and the tenor aria from Puccini’s *Turandot*, “Nessun dorma.” (*Turandot*, note, is set in Beijing, or “Pechino.”) I thought of a corny lyric from Cole Porter: “It’s friendship, friendship / Just a perfect blendship.” This Hao Jiang Tian evening was corny too—and also touching, moving.

It would get more so in the two encores. The first was “America the Beautiful.” The second was “O Holy Night” (in this week or so before Christmas). Tian’s appreciation for the United States is obvious. And of all the Christmas carols in the world—many of them having to do with Santa Claus, reindeer, and snowmen—why did he have to pick just about the Christ-iest?

The global influence of the Chinese government is not benign, to put it mildly. For 65 years, China has been ruled by a one-party dictatorship with a gulag (*laogai*). There is no end in sight, despite regular predictions of that end. But the influence of the Chinese people in music is something else. Regardless, it is a fact of life. **NR**

WORLD

An edgeless bird
Made of words
Passes above the yard.

Dense as a hoof,
Skids from the roof
A block of numbers, falling, striking hard.

In the water tank
Stirs, with a clank,
A serpent, gorged on images, and sleeping.

Thy will, Thy will be done,
Though this administration of the sun
Sees Rachel once more weeping

But now for comfort turning
To electric vermin burning
Through her Comforter—

I loved You through it all.
I love You, yet I wait
Inside the slick, the quicksand plasma gate.

—SARAH RUDEN

Film

A Different Kind of War

ROSS DOUTHAT

THE cliché is that American war films fall into two categories: movies about World War II, which are patriotic, heroic, celebratory, and confident in both the mission and the men, and movies about Vietnam, which are pessimistic, brutal, critical of the mission, and inclined to portray the men as victims, lunatics, or both. And the many exceptions notwithstanding, the cliché gets something right: There is a paradigmatic World War II movie (*The Longest Day*, *The Guns of Navarone*) and a paradigmatic Vietnam movie (*Platoon*, *Casualties of War*), and everyone can recognize the difference.

As of now, I think it's fair to say we have a paradigmatic movie for our post-Cold War wars as well—for the age of Somalia and Bosnia, Afghanistan and Iraq.

There have been war movies in this era that tried to imitate the World War II model—straightforward paeans to the righteousness of American hegemony, like *Tears of the Sun* and *Behind Enemy Lines*. There have been films that tried to give our post-9/11 wars the Vietnam treatment: Paul Haggis's *In the Valley of Elah*, Robert Redford's *Lions for Lambs*. But the truest-seeming movies have been the ones that have taken a third way: They have embraced the soldiers, taking their side nearly absolutely, while remaining studiously agnostic about the wars themselves.

There are no characters in these movies like Tom Berenger's vicious Sergeant Barnes in *Platoon*, no screaming *Full Metal Jacket* drill instructors or napalm-smelling Kilgores. Instead, the culture of the military is treated generously, the sol-

dier's vocation is portrayed positively, and the specific missions depicted tend to have a morally admirable purpose. But at the same time there's an air of pessimism and skepticism hanging over the stories—a sense that while we're watching good people do their best for righteous ends, the wars themselves may be futile.

I have in mind here a film like Ridley Scott's *Black Hawk Down*, a true post-9/11 movie (no matter that it was filmed just before the 9/11 attacks), with its Army Rangers fighting their way out of a humanitarian mission gone awry. Or a film like *The Hurt Locker*, the only war movie to win Best Picture in this era, with its Iraq War bomb squad—battered, traumatized, complicated, war-addicted, but still obviously on the side of right.

Or, now, a film like *Lone Survivor*, about a Navy SEAL team ambushed in the Afghan mountains in 2005—another case of extraordinary heroism in a mission gone awry.

Peter Berg's movie is, in many ways, a straightforward tribute to the troops, heartfelt and uncomplicated. It opens with real-life footage of SEAL training, closes with candid shots of the real-life dead, and in between gives us America's elite soldiers as we want them to be: a band of brothers, a crew of happy warriors, lethal and decent all at once.

The crucial figures are played by Mark Wahlberg, Taylor Kitsch (late of the Berg-produced *Friday Night Lights*), Emile Hirsch, and Ben Foster. They make up the reconnaissance team that infiltrates an isolated Afghan valley in search of the Taliban warlord Ahmad Shah, with a larger U.S. force, under a lieutenant commander played by Eric Bana, waiting to swoop in once Shah is located.

Shah is there, but the SEALs are out of communication range by the time they spot him, and, before the four-man team can summon support, a group of local goatherders stumbles on their hiding place. The Americans hold them at gunpoint, a brief debate about the rules of

engagement ensues, and then the mission is aborted and the goatherders are sent one way while the SEALs head in the other. But the moral choice is not rewarded: Before they can reach safety, a swarm of Taliban fighters pin our heroes down, and the subsequent firefight and attempted rescue mission both go as badly as the movie's title would lead one to expect.

Survivor is not quite on the same artistic level as *Black Hawk* or *Hurt Locker*—less subtle than the latter, less visually remarkable than the former—mostly because Berg isn't quite on the same level as Ridley Scott and Kathryn Bigelow. But it's a very solid movie (“very solid” is basically Mark Wahlberg's middle name at this point), and it leaves you with the same mix of feelings that those earlier films did: an appreciation for the courage and skill of America's fighting men, a sense that what they do is harrowing and honorable—and an anxiety that there's no real strategy here, and that the larger missions are being undertaken more or less in vain.

The reaction to *Lone Survivor* suggests that some people have trouble with this ambiguity. A few reviewers on the left have blasted the movie for being too hagiographic and nationalistic (a “jingoistic snuff film,” an *LA Weekly* writer called it)—as though Berg and Co. were supposed to pretend that Ahmad Shah was a morally complicated bloke whose henchmen deserved as much celebration as the men who died trying to put him out of business.

Meanwhile, on the right there was a mini-controversy when CNN's Jake Tapper, interviewing Marcus Luttrell, the mission's real-life lone survivor, remarked that the movie left him with a sense of “hopelessness,” and a “torn” feeling about the war itself. Luttrell objected, accusing his interviewer—who has reported extensively and sympathetically on U.S. troops in Afghanistan—of suggesting that his fellow SEALs had “died for nothing,” and an online chorus quickly echoed him, casting Tapper as a critic of the troops.

But that wasn't really Tapper's point. There's no question the men in *Lone Survivor* died for something real—for a morally upright mission, for their country, for each other.

Nine long years of conflict later, though, it takes nothing away from their heroism to recognize—with the best war movies of this era—the potentially Sisyphean context of their task.



Taylor Kitsch, Mark Wahlberg, Ben Foster, and Emile Hirsch in *Lone Survivor*.

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Yes, We Can (Say That)

I've always been in favor of freedom of expression, but lately I've become a free-speech absolutist. It takes all sorts to make a world and I've met a lot of them over the years, and I can stand pretty much anything anyone says about anything—until someone says to me, “You can't say that.” At which point my inclination is to punch his lights out. I do this not just because I'm a violent psychopath with a hair-trigger temper, but to make the important point that in societies where you're not free to speak your mind—to argue and debate—the only way to express disagreement is through violence.

But the Shut-up-he-explained Party is making great strides in the free world, too. The Latina actress Maria Conchita Alonso was recently fired from a San Francisco production of *The Vagina Monologues* because she made the mistake of appearing in a commercial for a Tea Party political candidate. “We really can't have her in the show,” the producer Eliana Lopez told KPIX-TV. Which would be an Oscar-winning line if she were appearing in a George Clooney movie about blacklisted screenwriters in the 1950s. But in the 2010s is just business. Jonathan Kay, my former editor at Canada's *National Post* (I seem to be having a lot of disagreements with my editors these days), felt that Daniel Korobkin should not have been in the party that accompanied Prime Minister Stephen Harper to Israel. Rabbi Korobkin's sin was to have “praised” Pamela Geller, the “controversial” New York blogger and anti-jihad crusader. Actually, he didn't praise her. A year or so back, he gave a masterly demonstration of “moral turpitude and pharisaical narcissism” (as David Solway put it) all about how spiffingly marvelous Islam is and what splendid chaps his two Muslim teachers at UCLA had been—and, after 15 minutes of oleaginous multiculti boosterism, said, “And now here's Pamela Geller.” But Korobkin committed the crime of being in the same room as Pamela Geller, and, therefore, the prime minister of Canada should not be permitted to be in the same room as him.

I don't care for all this beyond-the-pale stuff, because the pale is already way too shrunk. And, aside from anything else, once you get into the habit of banning and proscribing, your critical thinking goes all to hell. Many of us have seen one or two of those ill-advised shows on al-Arabiya or al-Jazeera in which some fire-breathing imam invites on a despised, Westernized, apostate woman in order to crush her like a bug, only to have her run rings round him. The Syrian émigré Wafa Sultan famously did it to Faisal al-Qassem and Ibrahim al-Khouli. It's hardly surprising that a culture that puts so much of life beyond discussion renders its inmates literally speechless—to the point where, faced with, say, a school teddy bear innocently named Mohammed, the default opening gambit at the local

debating society is to shriek “Allahu Akbar!” and start killing.

We're not at that point yet. But, raised in the cocoon of conformity that is American academe, the Left is increasingly showing all the critical-thinking skills of your average dimestore mullah. The other day, in between its ongoing complaints about Michael Douglas's “homophobic” awards acceptance speeches, *Salon* ran a story by one of its many pajama boys headlined “Ted Nugent Writes Insanely Racist Op-Ed.” Apparently, Ted had written a “vile rant” at “the batshit insane right-wing fever swamp of a site known as WorldNetDaily.” “Even for Ted Nugent,” cautioned Elias Isquith in his opening sentence, “this is bad.” Alas, poor old Ted couldn't quite live up to his batshit-insane billing: There followed a few unexceptional observations about black crime and broken families maybe a smidgeonette more heated than one might hear from, say, Bill Cosby or Juan Williams. More to the point, the hapless pajama boy didn't even attempt to explain what was so objectionable about Nugent's “rant.” As the Canadian blogger Kathy Shaidle put it, “Salon calls out Ted Nugent's ‘racist’ MLK Day column—without refuting his points. Must be Friday.” All Mr. Isquith can do is reprise Ted Nugent's words and then shriek “Batshit insane!” and “Insanely batshit!” over and over, like Lady Bracknell with Tourette's.

Which brings us to Michael Mann, the fake Nobel laureate currently suing NATIONAL REVIEW for mocking his global-warming “hockey stick.” Of the recent congressional hearings, Dr. Mann tweeted that it was “#Science”—i.e., the guy who agrees with him—vs. “#AntiScience”—i.e., Dr. Judith Curry, chair of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology. That's to say, she is by profession a scientist, but because she has the impertinence to dissent from Dr. Mann's view she is “#AntiScience.” Mann is the climatological equivalent of those bozo imams on al-Arabiya raging about infidel whores: He can't refute Dr. Curry, he can only label her.

He explains his aversion to appearing with anyone other than fawning groupies thus: “Getting on a debate stage signals that, while you might disagree, you respect the position of your opponent. #WhyWeDontDebateScienceDeniers.” But the reality is that he's too insecure and dull-witted to argue. That's why he's suing me over a pun (“tree-ring circus”), why he threatened legal action in Minnesota over a song parody, and why he's in court in Vancouver objecting to a bit of wordplay. “You can't say that!” is the refrain of those who can't hold their own. Michael Mann is seeking massive damages from me and this magazine. Nuts to that. But I would be willing to buy him a course in debating technique—because in free societies that's how you win. I'd also like to buy the wee thin-skinned chap a sense of humor, but I don't think there's a course for that.

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Mr. Steyn blogs at SteynOnline (www.steynonline.com).



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