

David French: **The Fake Campus-Rape Crisis**

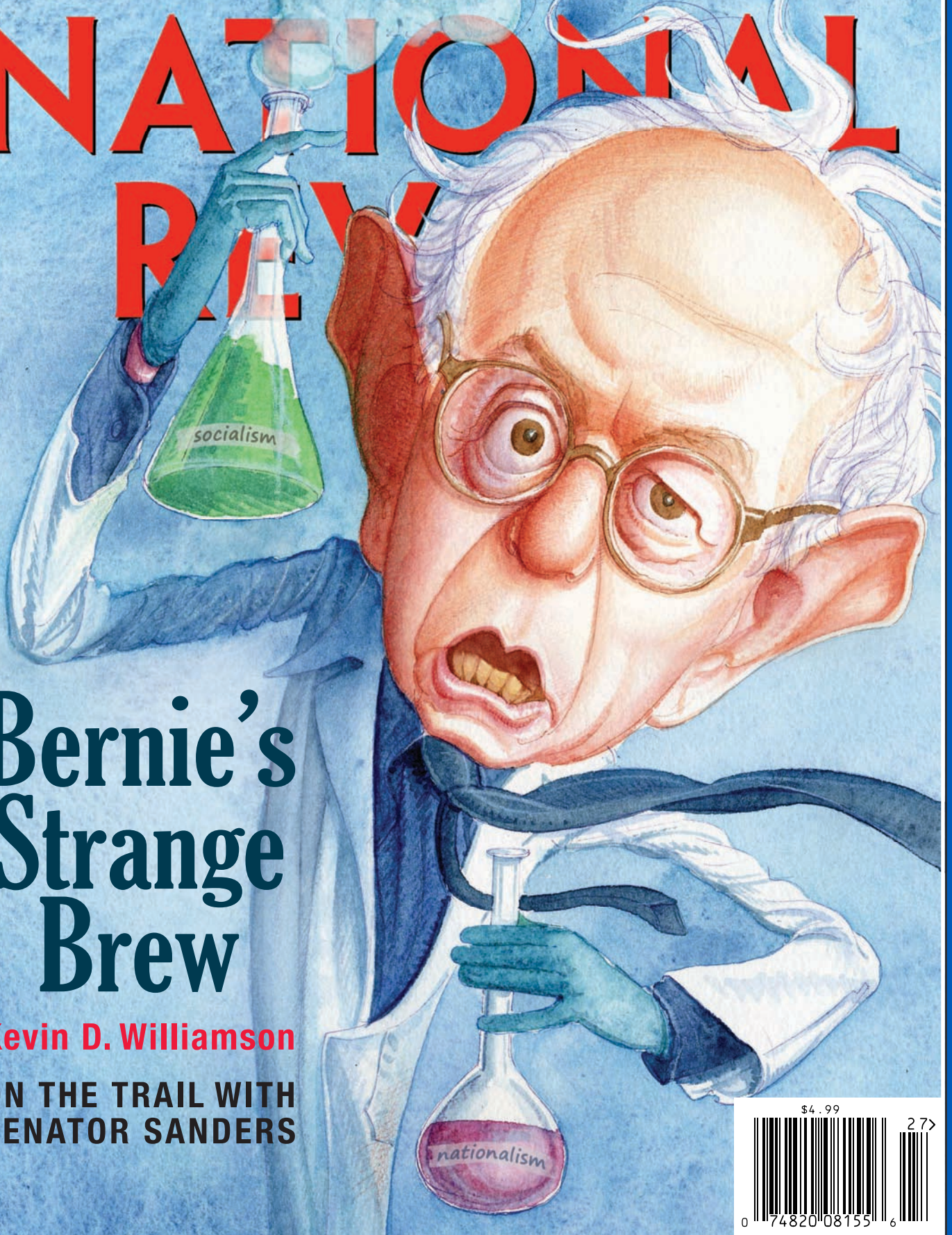
LONG on Caitlyn Jenner | COOKE on Magna Carta | NORDLINGER on Ann Coulter

NATIONAL REVIEW

Bernie's Strange Brew

Kevin D. Williamson

ON THE TRAIL WITH
SENATOR SANDERS





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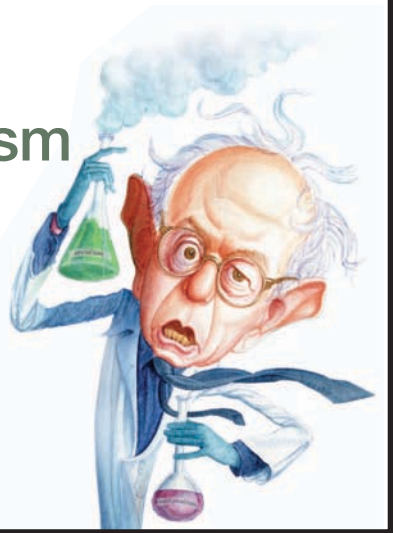
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In the Bernieverse, there's a whole lot of nationalism mixed up in the socialism. That economic interactions with foreigners are inherently hurtful and immoral is central to Sanders's view of how the world works. *Kevin D. Williamson*



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Cold Comfort

Ian Tuttle's article on a proposed road through congressionally designated wilderness in Alaska ("Deadly Environmentalism," June 22) omitted several salient facts.

While people on both sides of the issue respect the emergency-transportation concerns of the residents of King Cove, Alaska, a road through Izembek National Wildlife Refuge's wilderness is no solution. It is estimated that driving to the community of Cold Bay would take nearly two hours, if the route were passable. The severe weather Tuttle describes—thick fog, lashing rain, driving snow—would often render the road useless.

By comparison, planes, helicopters, and a hovercraft that was purchased with millions of federal tax dollars can transport people much more quickly. The hovercraft transported a full ambulance and crew to Cold Bay in about 20 minutes. Former Aleutians East Borough mayor Stanley Mack once called it "a life-saving machine." It successfully performed 32 medical evacuations from King Cove until the borough decided it was too expensive to operate.

Dr. Pete Mjos, former Eastern Aleutian medical director for the U.S. Public Health Service, has told the U.S. Department of the Interior that attempting to drive the road during extreme weather would jeopardize lives.

Supporters of the road proposal routinely cite long-ago aviation accidents as justification for a land route, but the fact remains that no one has died during a medical evacuation from King Cove during the past quarter century.

The U.S. Department of the Interior has repeatedly and exhaustively studied the road idea and consistently declined to approve it. Let us hope that all sides can move forward with finding a solution that solves King Cove's emergency-transport needs while keeping our national wildlife refuge intact.

*Nicole Whittington-Evans
Alaska Regional Director
The Wilderness Society*

IAN TUTTLE RESPONDS: I appreciate the work that the Wilderness Society and similar organizations do, but Ms. Whittington-Evans's response pointedly avoids the indisputable conclusion: that a road is not only the best, but the sole feasible option for getting injured or ill King Cove residents quickly to Cold Bay's all-weather airport. Ms. Whittington-Evans recommends aircraft—when the unreliability of air travel is precisely the problem. She recommends, too, the hovercraft that operated briefly between King Cove and Cold Bay—despite the fact that, as I wrote, it failed to operate 30 percent of the time and ultimately was too expensive to operate. She says the road will take two hours to travel—but doesn't mention that it would cut the average bad-weather travel time by two-thirds.

Ms. Whittington-Evans recommends solutions that have been shown to be infeasible, and argues against the sole remaining option. I am sympathetic to desires to protect flora and fauna, but despite her words about "finding a solution," Ms. Whittington-Evans has none to offer.

Letters may be submitted by e-mail to letters@nationalreview.com.



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The Week

■ Bruce Jenner is female, Rachel Dolezal is black, and Donald Trump is a presidential contender.

■ Just because she's an uninspiring figure doesn't mean she can't win. Hillary Clinton gave a pedestrian performance in her campaign relaunch on Roosevelt Island. She outlined liberal policies—paid-leave mandates for businesses, a higher minimum wage, universal preschool—and celebrated the liberal coalition. The theory seems to be that those policies are sufficiently popular, and that coalition sufficiently large, that together they can bring her victory no matter how meager her political talent or how suspect her character. That theory could be right. But it depends on a caricature of Republicans as having nothing to offer Americans who aren't rich. If they offer appealing policies of their own—free-market reforms of health insurance and higher education, for example—they can prove her wrong. The Republican party's would-be presidents should spend the next nine months competing over who can best do that job.

■ Jeb Bush announced that he will be one of those candidates. He was a highly effective and conservative governor of Florida from 1999 to 2007. But he has not yet been able to forge a connection with conservatives nationwide today. They worry that he is too eager to make a budget deal with Democrats; that he will not insist on enforcing the immigration laws before granting legal status to illegal immigrants; that he may have too grand a view of the federal role in education, as his brother did; and that he cannot offer Americans the prospect of a clean break with an unsatisfactory era in American politics. It is in his power to address, if not extinguish, each of those concerns, and we hope he takes full advantage of it.

■ In a speech delivered at historically black Texas Southern University, Clinton attacked the Republican party for its supposed desire to “disempower and disenfranchise people of color,” called for national automatic voter registration, and proposed extending federal control over the election process to a plainly unconstitutional degree. Reform is necessary, Clinton argued, to prevent the United States from backsliding into its ugly past. But voter-identification laws are widely popular in the United States, garnering majority support from all racial and ideological groups. Jim Crow this isn't, much as it might suit her presidential campaign to pretend otherwise.

■ The *New York Times*, reconnecting with its inner Puritan, has set upon Senator Marco Rubio's personal finances, arguing that the gentleman from Florida doesn't manage his money prudently and that this should be considered relevant to our evaluation of him as a potential president. But the gentlemen of the *Times* (the Rubios' finances are a two-reporter beat) produce little or no evidence that Rubio has been, as the headline put it, “bedeviled by financial struggles.” The article's leading example of his alleged



irresponsibility: His purchase of an \$80,000 boat—which came after he got an \$800,000 book advance. We should all be so bedeviled. The Rubios, like many political families, were obliged to set up housekeeping in two different cities—Miami, his legislative district, and Tallahassee, the state capital; one would think that the *Times*, with its snowbird-heavy readership, would appreciate that the 500 miles between the two cities is not commutable. The Rubios, who have four children in parochial schools and who no doubt expect with good reason to have a substantially higher income in the future, have not socked away as much for retirement as they might have; if the *Times* is truly worried about retirement savings, we are ready to talk Social Security reform when they are. Perhaps some presidential candidate will start that conversation.

■ The *Times* tut-tutted at Rubio for having student loans that he did not pay off until 2012 (he finished law school in 1996) hot on the heels of publishing an essay by writer Lee Siegel boasting that he has defaulted on his, and arguing that others should follow his example. Among our self-styled intellectuals, there is a great deal of sentimental banality on the subject of college, and Siegel's essay is full of it. He argues in effect that he is entitled to default on his loans because he comes from a lower-middle-class background and that he needed an Ivy League degree—three of them, in fact—to fulfill his dream of becoming a writer without

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having to worry about anything so quotidian as meeting his financial obligations. And, besides, bankers are nasty nasties. (He does not emphasize the fact that, given the way student loans are organized, we taxpayers are his bankers.) A great many writers more accomplished than Siegel have managed without triple certification from Columbia, and many of them kept day jobs to pay the bills. Siegel comes from a modest background, to be sure, but he is today an elite journalist (*Harper's*, *The New Yorker*, etc.) who has published five books: He can afford to meet his obligations. Borrowing money that you cannot repay is foolish; borrowing money that you do not intend to repay is theft.

■ You have to admire Donald Trump, the man who inherited a substantial real-estate empire and ended up presiding over a substantial real-estate empire with a casino and a New Jersey strip



club—and a string of bankruptcies. Given the sorry state of our national finances, President Trump would be much too apt. “Cometh the hour, cometh the reality-television star,” or, as Stephen Sondheim put it, “Send in the clowns.”

■ President Obama sent another 450 advisers to a base in Anbar Province in Iraq, in what is almost a parody of a Vietnam-style graduated escalation. They won’t operate near the front themselves, and very few of them will even be involved directly in training. The administration is also considering establishing other “lily pad” bases to advise and assist the Iraqis. None of this is likely to be, or even meant to be, decisive. Everything points to the president’s doing just enough not to make a real difference in Iraq and then handing the problem on to his successor.

■ Eric Casebolt is no longer a police officer in the city of McKinney, Texas. In early June, he was the first responder to reports that a local pool party had spiraled out of hand. His unjustifiably aggressive conduct—culminating in forcing to the ground a young black girl and pulling his weapon on a bystander—was caught on film and uploaded to YouTube. By the end of the week, he had resigned. But that was not sufficient for the mob. Benét Embry, a local talk-show host, posted to Facebook: “I LIVE in this community and this ENTIRE incident is NOT racial at all.” Calls poured into his Dallas broadcast station demanding that he be fired. Tracey Carver-Allbritton was placed on administrative leave from data firm CoreLogic Inc. after video surfaced of her trying to break up a fight between two girls, one white, one black, at the same party; her crime was striking the black girl in the head in an effort to pry them apart. And 1,300 miles away, in Miami,

Alberto Iber, principal of North Miami Senior High School, was removed from his position for posting in the comments section of a *Miami Herald* article: “He [Casebolt] did nothing wrong. He was afraid for his life. I commend him for his actions.” The Black Lives Matter crowd should modify its chant: No justice, no peace—no mercy.

■ The thing about provocateurs is, they provoke, and Pam Geller is in her chosen field a lass unparallel’d. Geller’s vocation is calling attention to jihadist savagery, and inevitably she has herself become a target of it. An ISIS Twitter account (there is such a thing) recently sent out her home address with orders to “go forth.” Three men have been arrested for plotting to murder her. And in May two jihadist gunmen were killed in Texas when they tried to ambush an event—a Mohammed-cartoon contest—organized by Geller in response to the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre. Naturally the Left, which is exquisitely sensitive to the feelings of every minority group so long as they’re not Jews, dribbles vitriol on Geller. The *New York Times* editorial board denounced her criticism of Islam as “hate speech,” and others argued that she herself was to blame for the bloodshed in Texas. Some years ago, Geller caused outrage with an advertising campaign paraphrasing Ayn Rand, with posters reading: “In any war between the civilized man and the savage, support the civilized man.” The fact that people rightly feared that there would be bloodshed in response to those posters only proves the truth of them. *Je suis Pam*.

■ Bruce Jenner is one of the outstanding athletes of our time: the gold medalist in the decathlon at the 1976 Olympics. He has now come out as a “trans woman,” and renamed himself “Caitlyn.” Obviously, Jenner is a profoundly troubled person. You wouldn’t wish his condition on anyone. But the American media culture has celebrated him as a hero—which is its own troubling condition.

■ Rachel Dolezal, an NAACP official in Spokane, was exposed to the world in June after her parents came forward and revealed that she has been presenting herself to the world as a black woman despite having been born to two white parents. Their daughter, they suggested, is a “master of disguise.” This did not prompt a mea culpa. “I identify as black,” Dolezal told Matt Lauer, before explaining that she didn’t expect the general public to comprehend the “complexity of my identity.” This contention provoked a backlash, and then a counter-backlash, as the Left struggled to make sense of the situation. We think we see the solution to which it’s headed: Everybody gets to say he’s a victim of oppression.



■ Republican senators Cory Gardner (Colo.) and Kelly Ayotte (N.H.) have introduced legislation with the goal of making

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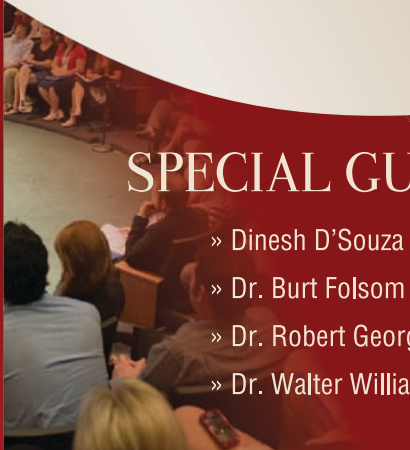
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birth-control pills available in drugstores without a prescription. It would require the FDA to give priority review to pharmaceutical companies applying to have such drugs approved for over-the-counter sale. Leftist groups who proclaim their support for greater access to contraception have nonetheless

denounced the bill. Planned Parenthood’s president called it “a sham and an insult to women,” and NARAL’s president claimed it was “nothing but political pandering to trick women and families.” They say it would undermine the HHS mandate requiring insurance policies to cover the full cost of birth con-

The Maximum Minimum

EVERY political season, Democrats argue for higher minimum wages. Republicans respond by citing all of the evidence that higher minimum wages are harmful. Democratic voters get charged up and swing voters conclude that Republicans are heartless. It is the gift that keeps on giving for Democrats, but the curse that keeps on afflicting those below the poverty line who lose their jobs because of it.

Though Hillary Clinton has made it clear that she is going to play this game, much of the action is coming from around the country, where America’s progressive mayors have taken this form of government price-setting to new heights. In Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti recently signed legislation that would raise the minimum wage in the city to \$15 by 2020. And this move in Los Angeles comes on the heels of Seattle’s and San Francisco’s adoption of the same policy.

The evidence is clear about whether raising the minimum wage is an effective way to help poor people: It is not. As Richard V. Burkhauser and T. Aldrich Finegan note in the *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, those living in poverty get such a vanishingly low fraction of the benefits of a minimum-wage increase that “it is not clear that increases in the minimum wage make good policy even if no jobs are lost as a result.”

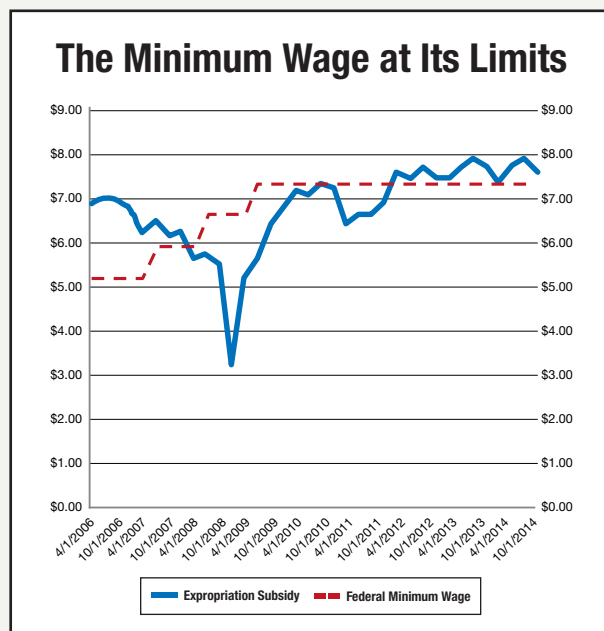
As we prepare for the umpteenth political season pitting Democratic populism against a preponderance of economic evidence, let us pause and pursue the deep and enduring wisdom obtainable only through abstraction. The nearby chart takes the argument of minimum-wage proponents to its logical extreme. Suppose we grant that corporations are evil. Suppose we also grant that the only way we can improve the welfare of the poor is to redistribute by taking all of the money from the evil corporations and giving it to the working masses.

This chart transports us to this redistributive nirvana, where the government has decided to seize all of the corporate profits in the land and give them to workers. Assume, contrary to sound economic thinking and common sense, that companies continue to operate exactly as they do today, suffering no negative effects from these confiscatory taxes. How large an increase in wages can this progressive utopia finance?

To answer this question, we gathered data on after-tax corporate profits from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. We then gathered data on average hours worked per week per nonfarm employee from the Bureau of Labor Statistics and transformed these weekly data into data on the aggregate number of yearly hours worked by all nonfarm employees. Finally, we divided quarterly corporate profits by the aggregate number of hours worked by nonfarm employees over the same period, labeling this value the “expropriation subsidy” on the chart. To get an idea of how much of a per-hour wage increase this policy could create, simply add the values of the two lines at a point in time.

As the chart shows, if every dollar of U.S. corporate profits were allocated to America’s employees, the effect would be to add a bit more than \$7 to the average wage. The chart adds interesting perspective to the new policy in Los Angeles. The difference between the \$15 Los Angeles target and the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 is \$7.75. At \$7.57, the current value of the expropriation subsidy is slightly lower. Mayor Garcetti’s minimum-wage legislation has, it seems, taken economic populism to its logical extreme—and beyond.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



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trol. But nothing in the bill would change that requirement or prevent insurance companies from covering non-prescription birth control. It would, however, save women from unnecessary doctor's visits and likely drive down the cost of the drugs. It also dramatically undercuts the Democratic case that Republicans are hell-bent on banning birth control, which seems to be the real objection.

■ It is being called “Cyber Pearl Harbor.” Sometime in early 2014 (or possibly earlier), Chinese hackers breached the information systems of the Office of Personnel Management, the federal government’s HR department. For more than a year they were able to peruse OPM’s systems undetected, collecting mountains of data—among which are SF-86 forms. The 127-page Standard Form 86 is the questionnaire filled out by anyone applying for a national-security clearance. Gambling habits? Trouble paying bills? Adulterous liaisons? It’s all in SF-86 forms—along with a whole lot of other precious data: Social Security numbers, health insurance, life insurance, pension information, address, etc. J. David Cox, president of the American Federation of Government Employees, suggests the magnitude of the hack: “We believe . . . that the hackers are now in possession of all personnel data for every federal employee, every federal retiree, and up to 1 million former federal employees.” And John Schindler, a former NSA intelligence analyst and counterintelligence officer, writes: “Whoever now holds OPM’s records possesses something like the Holy Grail from a counterintelligence perspective.” How has the White House responded to this unprecedented attack? Said President Obama, “We’re going to have to be much more aggressive, much more attentive than we have been.” The president, with his enthusiasm for centralization, has sometimes been compared to Franklin D. Roosevelt. In the wake of Cyber Pearl Harbor, the president would do well to be more like him.

■ The Environmental Protection Agency has spent years looking for a reason to throw a wet blanket over hydraulic fracturing, or “fracking,” the modern oil-and-gas-extraction technique that turned the United States into a net exporter of petroleum and fueled an energy renaissance in Texas, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, and everywhere else the business has been permitted to thrive. (New York, under the feckless government of Andrew Cuomo, has banned the technique.) But in its long-awaited report on the matter, the EPA came up with bupkis, concluding that fracking has “not led to widespread, systemic impacts on drinking water.” Other studies have found that fracking is in fact less likely to cause groundwater contamination than are conventionally drilled wells, which is not entirely surprising inasmuch as there is often a mile or so of rock between groundwater and fracked wells, which generally are quite deep. All petroleum extraction brings with it an environmental impact, but the main challenge of fracking—the disposal of contaminated wastewater—has little to do with drilling per se, and drilling companies have worked closely with regulators to address that issue through recycling. Reasonable adults—a set that excludes Governor Cuomo—understand that as an environmental question the choice is not between fracking and butterflies, but between

fracking and conventional petroleum drilling (and coal mining), in which case natural gas is an attractive option. As we have heard in another context: The debate is over, and the science is settled.

■ One week after the Supreme Court tightened the rules governing the prosecution of those who make threats online, the Department of Justice decided that it would be a swell idea to go after the commenters at Reason.com for having “threatened” a federal judge. Certainly the offending comments are unpleasant. “Its [*sic*] judges like these that should be taken out back and shot,” one example reads. Another, in response, asks, “Why waste ammunition? Wood chippers get the message across clearly. Especially if you feed them in feet first.” But unpleasant does not mean illegal, and the two should not be mistaken. Indeed, not only does existing “true threats” doctrine make it clear that hyperbole such as this is protected by the First Amendment, but, even if these remarks were deemed to cross the line, there would be no feasible way that the DOJ could demonstrate that their progenitors were serious. What the federal government can do, however, is to tie up everybody involved in months of legal discovery and hit anybody it dislikes with a series of grand-jury subpoenas. Once again, the process will serve as the punishment.

■ The College Board has established a new framework for Advanced Placement U.S. history—a framework grossly skewed to the left. A formidable roster of historians and other scholars have made clear their opposition to this shift. The roster includes those Harvard veterans Stephan Thernstrom and Harvey Mansfield. They want a “warts and all” presentation of U.S. history. The College Board is interested in warts only.

■ Until recently, aspiring schoolteachers in New York State took an exam called the Liberal Arts and Sciences Test (LAST). The first version of it, in use since the early 1990s, was deemed racially discriminatory, so a second one was introduced in 2004, and now that, too, has been ruled invalid. “Instead of beginning with ascertaining the job tasks of New York teachers,” a judge explained, “the two LAST examinations began with the premise that all New York teachers should be required to demonstrate an understanding of the liberal arts.” Who came up with such a crazy notion? The regulations on which this ruling is based not only assume that teaching skills can be specified precisely and measured with a test; they effectively assume that all demographic groups have these skills in equal measure, so any variation in scores between groups proves that the test is biased. The judge should reflect that condemning a test because the results are undesired is exactly what bad students do.

■ An FDA advisory panel recently voted, 18 to six, to recommend approval of Flibanserin, a drug designed to help women with chronically low libido. Flibanserin, which is made by Sprout Pharmaceuticals, Inc., has already been twice rejected. In 2010, an advisory committee unanimously vetoed the drug, and in 2013, the FDA, citing concerns about potentially dangerous side effects, asked Sprout to conduct

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further studies to ensure the drug's safety. Sprout acquiesced to these demands—and then it went the extra mile: In 2014, the pharmaceutical company helped launch a public-relations campaign, “Even the Score,” which seeks to “level the playing field when it comes to the treatment of women’s sexual dysfunction.” “Even the Score” notes that 26 drugs for male sexual dysfunction have been approved by the FDA, yet none have been approved for women. Its website calls upon women to sign a petition, which argues, among other things, that “gender equality should be the standard in access to sexual dysfunction treatments.” But that isn’t how science works. The FDA may be one of America’s last institutions to recognize that women’s bodies might just work differently than men’s.

■ Kafka doesn’t explicitly write in *The Trial* that Josef K. went to Amherst, but revelations of the college’s unjust approach to sexual-assault cases show that he’d be quite at home there. Last month, a male former student filed a lawsuit against the college on the basis of miscarriage of justice, two years after the college expelled him for rape, despite acknowledging that he was black-out drunk and it was the accuser who performed oral sex on him. The accuser’s reaction to her “rape” would be funny if it weren’t so pathetic: “Ohmygod I jus did something so f***ig stupid” (*sic*), she texted her dorm counselor, who advised her to frame the sex as rape to avoid the awkwardness of looking her roommate in the eye (inconveniently, her sex partner was her roommate’s boyfriend). “It’s pretty obvi [obvious] I wasn’t an innocent bystander,” she continued. No indeed: The label of “victim” is a better fit for the man who finds himself without a degree for no just reason.

■ The ongoing campus crackdown on the free-speech and due-process rights of young men depends on the media’s ability to whip up a public frenzy over the fake “crisis” of campus sexual assault. The latest contribution is a *Washington Post*/Kaiser Family Foundation survey that purports to show that 1 in 5 college women endure a “sexual assault” during their years on campus. Yet despite the *Post*’s alarmist reporting, its survey shows no such thing. The poll didn’t actually ask students if they had endured a “sexual assault” as the law defines sexual assault. Instead, the survey wording included references to “unwanted sexual contact,” and then defined that term so broadly as to include behavior that not only isn’t assault but isn’t unlawful at all. In fact, the poll undermines itself. Despite the alleged epidemic, only a minority of students believed that sexual assault was a problem on campus—far fewer than were concerned about drugs and alcohol. Unfortunately, however, while the poll is transparently flawed and internally contradictory, that won’t stop the campus Left from using it to fan the flames of “crisis.” The crackdown will continue, now partially empowered by one of the nation’s leading newspapers.

■ A New Jersey woman was stabbed to death in June while waiting for a gun permit. Carol Bowne, a 39-year-old hairdresser from Berlin Township, had become convinced that her ex-boyfriend was going to harm her, and so, having taken out a restraining order, purchased an alarm system, and

installed security cameras at her home, she started the interminable process of getting her home state to recognize her right to keep and bear arms. In most states, Bowne would have been able to walk into the nearest gun store, submit to a background check, and walk out with a firearm. In New Jersey, however, she was expected to go through a redundant permitting process before she ever set foot in a dealership. That process proved fatal. By state law, New Jersey is supposed to issue all permits within 30 days, but in reality petitioners tend to wait for up to seven months. According to the police chief who dealt with her case, Bowne was still waiting for her fingerprints to be processed when she was stabbed to death in her driveway. Sometimes the law is not merely an ass.

■ The transformation of secular Turkey into Islamist Turkey is the work of Recep Tayyip Erdogan, prime minister this last decade and president these last few months. Possession of absolute power is the one and only means of guaranteeing the Islamism that Erdogan has set his heart on. A general election was supposed to be the final step. In the event that he and his party were to win 330 seats in parliament, he would rewrite the constitution so that power passed from parliament to the president—to himself, that is to say, in effect a sultan and caliph remodeled to suit the times. Minority parties would not be represented in parliament unless they obtained 10 percent of the vote. In an atmosphere of general astonishment, Erdogan and his party won a mere 258 seats, not enough even for a parliamentary majority. Three opposition parties easily cleared the 10 percent hurdle. One of these is the Kurdish People’s Democratic party, a novelty in the Turkish parliament and evidence of the Kurdish path onward and upward in the Middle East. The talk is all of coming confusion and the making and unmaking of coalitions. Secular Turks, on the other hand, are sighing with relief at being spared the deathbed of democracy. “There seems to be no room for a worse-than-Putinesque rule by Erdogan” is how one of his most insistent critics put it.

■ Radek Sikorski is an old friend of NATIONAL REVIEW—a onetime writer for us. We have cheered him as he has advanced in a post-Communist Poland: defense minister, foreign minister. He has now been forced to resign as speaker of the Polish house. Last year, he was caught in a bugging scandal, saying terribly impolitic and true things. One of the subjects was the reliability of the United States as an ally. Radek said, in effect, “Don’t bet the ranch on the Americans”—a point we ourselves have made repeatedly over the decades. Radek Sikorski is a jewel of Polish political life, and of the West broadly speaking, and we look forward to the all-but-inevitable rebound.

■ Raif Badawi is a Saudi writer who advocates basic human rights in his country. Last year, he was sentenced to ten years in prison and a thousand lashes. He was subjected to the first 50 lashes last January. No more have been administered, apparently because of the prisoner’s failing health. The Saudi supreme court has just upheld his sentence of ten years and a thousand lashes. Badawi’s brother-in-law, Waleed Abulkhair, was his lawyer—but he too has been imprisoned. Badawi’s sister, and Abulkhair’s wife, Samar Badawi,



speaks for both of them—but she is under a travel ban. The importance of Saudi Arabia as an ally of Western democracies is clear. But, really, what a despicable system.

■ In Madrid, on an outdoor banner advertising its prenatal test for Down syndrome, a Swiss biotechnology company showed the face of a girl with . . . Down syndrome. About 95 percent of unborn children diagnosed with Down syndrome in Spain are aborted. The test is bought and used largely to identify Down syndrome in utero so that parents can know whether to terminate the pregnancy. Against that background, the clear message of the banner ad was “We can tell you whether the child you’re carrying is abortion material like this little girl.” The ad was obviously cold. It was coarse. The biotech company,

Genoma, used the girl’s photo without securing her parents’ permission. After suffering some well-deserved bad publicity on social media, Genoma took the ad down and apologized. It slipped up. Any abortion-friendly business could have told Genoma that the most elementary rule of advertising its product is not to put a human face on it.

■ The *Washington Post* has published a column that is depressing in the extreme. It’s by a high-school English teacher in Sacramento who is required by Common Core to teach Shakespeare. She objects to this requirement—because she dislikes Shakespeare and has a “personal disinterest” in him. Plus, there is “a WORLD of really exciting literature out there that better speaks to the needs of my very ethnically-diverse and wonderfully curious modern-day students.” She asks, “Why not teach the oral tradition out of Africa?” Why should students be bound to “a long-dead, British guy”? The teacher is “sad that so many of my colleagues teach a canon that some white people decided upon so long ago.” She says, “Shakespeare lived in a pretty small world.” Shakespeare’s world was so big that even the most capacious and imaginative of us can barely take it in. The late Maya Angelou once said that, when she was young, she thought that Shakespeare must have been a black girl, because how else could he understand her so well? As for the Sacramento English teacher, her students are some of the unluckiest in the world.

■ “On Leaving Islam” is the title of an op-ed piece on the website of the *Daily Californian*, an independent student-run newspaper



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put out on the UC Berkeley campus. Born in Pakistan, our author is torn between what she was taught to believe as a devout Muslim and her experience of the wider world. As a radical feminist, for instance, she couldn't accept the gender inequality of traditional Islamic society. "It's important to have an honest dialogue about religion" is her pacifying conclusion, but she does add that she's become an atheist. Not so fast: Apostasy from Islam traditionally carries the death penalty. The paper took down the story and withheld the author's name "because of personal safety concerns." Fear 1, honest dialogue 0.

■ At long last, the enforcers of political correctness are meeting some resistance—and from the left, no less. In the last six months, complaints have been heard from Jerry Seinfeld, Chris Rock, Bill Maher, Patton Oswalt, John Cleese, and a whole host of other funny men who have suggested that it is time to stand athwart hysteria yelling, "Stop!" "There's a creepy PC thing out there that really bothers me," Seinfeld told Seth Meyers in June. People today "just want to use these words: 'That's racist. That's sexist. That's prejudice.' They don't even know what they're talking about." Comedians are notorious for pushing back against authority. Could it be that America's left-wing censors have finally become the Man?

■ American Pharoah has won the Triple Crown, the first horse to do so since 1978, when Affirmed won it. American Pharoah is the twelfth horse to win the Triple Crown. Why did so many of us root for him in the third leg, the Belmont Stakes, instead of one of the underdogs? Must one horse grab all the glory? There is a natural thrill in seeing human excellence—or, in this case, equine excellence (to go with the human excellence of his trainers et al.). American Pharoah's only imperfection, it seems, is that he doesn't spell his name right.

■ Public-school students in Madison, Wis., are forbidden to wear "shirts, hats or other attire with Native American team names, logos or mascots that depict negative stereotypes," according to a rule recently enacted by the board of education there. Presumably positive stereotypes are fine. So when the board objects to Chief Wahoo, for example, the logo of the Cleveland Indians, let the young Tribe fan advertising his team up there in the Badger State explain that the chief is a brilliant specimen of mid-20th-century American commercial art. Are board members philistine? Or maybe they're only jealous of Wahoo's sunny good looks and thousand-watt smile. Negative stereotype, indeed.

■ Lincoln Chafee, the former Republican senator and independent governor from Rhode Island, is now running for president—as a Democrat, last we checked. His platform contains the least appealing campaign proposal since Walter Mondale's 1984 promise to raise taxes: He wants to switch America to the metric system. This might seem like just another bad idea best left in the 1970s, like Jimmy Carter or the 55-m.p.h. speed limit, but there's more: Chafee supports forced metrification not just for its nerd appeal, but as "a symbolic integration of ourselves in the international com-

munity after the mistakes" of the last ten to 15 years. Somehow that doesn't make it sound any better. Much like Chafee himself, metrification would be a pointless solution to a nonexistent problem.

■ Tim Hunt, a 72-year-old biochemist with positions at University College London and elsewhere, jokingly told a South Korean conference on women in science: "Let me tell you about my trouble with girls. Three things happen when they are in the lab. You fall in love with them, they fall in love with you, and when you criticize them, they cry." To be sure, most women would be justifiably annoyed or embarrassed



by Hunt's remarks, and for what it's worth, he is married (to a former student of his), so this was probably not the smartest thing he said all week. Still, it hardly seems a firing offense, especially for a Nobel laureate (2001); an honest apology (and Hunt offered many) should have sufficed. Instead, the objections were loud and bitter, and Hunt was summarily dismissed from several of his posts, effectively ending his career as a scientist. Does it seem contradictory that a group of extremely intelligent women, who have surmounted all sorts of hurdles to get into top research laboratories and routinely find ingenious solutions to difficult research problems, suddenly swoon in distress when their boss makes a clumsy attempt at humor? "They cry"? Wherever did he get that idea?

■ A notorious defect of the modern English language is its lack of a distinction between second person singular and second person plural. The South has its regional workaround, but Yankees usually have to make do with "you guys," since "friends" is often not accurate, and "folks" sounds like the chirpy woman who seats you at Olive Garden. All that will change, though, in the unlikely event that people start taking *Vox* seriously. The "explanatory" website explains that "feminist thinkers and people concerned with equality" now frown upon the use of "you guys" to address groups that are not all male. The reason given is that, despite widespread popular usage, the dictionary says "guy" is a masculine term, so it must not be applied to women for fear of damaging their psyches. It may be hard to believe now, but once upon a time the Left bitterly opposed prescriptivism in language.

Urgent: Special Summer Driving Notice

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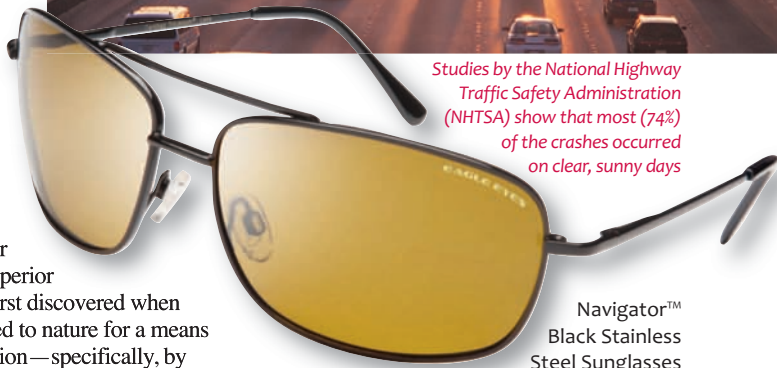
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■ John Marks Templeton Jr. was the son of one of the world's greatest investment wizards. Jack, as friends knew him, also was a pro-life pediatric surgeon who specialized in trauma relief and the separation of conjoined twins. In 1995, he retired from medicine to head the Templeton Foundation, started by his father. Under Jack's leadership, its endowment grew to more than \$3 billion. It now gives away more than \$100 million annually, and is best known for examining the intersection of faith and science. Its annual Templeton Prize, which honors spiritual life, has gone to the likes of Mother Teresa and Michael Novak; this year, the foundation conferred it upon Jean Vanier, a prominent philosopher who works with the mentally disabled. Although Templeton liked to call himself a "moderate," he used his own resources as well as the foundation's philanthropic program to advance free enterprise, religious freedom, national security, and a wide range of conservative causes. Dead at 75. R.I.P.



■ Touched by the muse, Vincent Musetto wrote eight golden syllables and then wrangled with the city editor, who questioned whether they were true. Musetto: They gotta be! They were beautiful (though macabre). A reporter was assigned to verify a fact, and it checked out. So Vinnie's gem was a go. The next morning, April 15, 1983, the front page of the *New York Post*, that edgy tabloid, greeted commuters with the banner headline "Headless Body in Topless Bar," a punchy yet elegant description of a gruesome local

news story. Headlines are a literary genre, at least at the *New York Post*, the city's oldest newspaper, founded by Alexander Hamilton in 1801. An editor, Musetto began working for it in the 1970s. "Headless Body" is indisputably his most memorable work. His favorite, though, he said, was a headline he wrote the following year: "Granny Executed in Her Pink Pajamas." Many admired his "Khadafy Goes Daffy." Dead at 74. R.I.P.

PUBLIC POLICY

Trading Down

IF a trade deal with Pacific Rim countries, the Trans-Pacific Partnership, is one of the top priorities President Obama has set for his legacy, he isn't acting like it.

In order to sign a deal—and any other trade deal a president might want to reach—Obama needs "trade-promotion authority," an agreement from Congress that during the next six years it will give trade deals up-or-down votes with no amendments. And yet the president's own party does not seem to want to give him that authority: Only 14 Democratic senators supported legislation to do so, and just 28 Democratic House members backed it during a recent symbolic vote.

Adding insult to injury, the stumbling block is now that Democrats voted against something they strongly support, trade-adjustment assistance, a job-training program for

workers who lose their jobs due to trade. The Senate passed it in conjunction with trade-promotion authority, so the House has to, as well. House Democrats voted no to sink trade-promotion authority.

If Republicans' voting to renew trade-adjustment assistance is what's necessary to get trade-promotion authority through, they should do it. (Indeed, some have.) The program, well liked by unions, is highly ineffective. But it is tiny—costing less than \$1 billion a year—and the benefits to any one of the three trade deals currently under consideration would be well worth that price.

Ideally, a president who says he is committed to free trade could persuade enough members of his own party to join him that this wouldn't be necessary. Obama should be making a forthright case for why trade-promotion authority makes sense, explaining that free trade is a boon for almost all Americans and offering evidence that his trade deals will be good ones. Instead, he has treated his Democratic opponents with clear contempt and resorted to arguments from personal authority—essentially, "If I'm for it, it must be a good idea." His lack of relationships on Capitol Hill, even with his fellow Democrats, has not helped.

Hillary Clinton has been AWOL. The presumptive Democratic nominee refuses to say what she thinks about trade-promotion authority, instead choosing to express skepticism about the potential Pacific deal, which she vociferously advocated as secretary of state.

Republicans have mostly done the right thing, although a minority has decided to pretend that the only question worth addressing is whether President Obama can be trusted. The answer to that question is usually no, but it is not at issue here: Congress will retain the ability to vote down any agreement he or his successor negotiates. Notwithstanding their confusion, more than three-quarters of House Republicans voted for trade-promotion authority. If President Obama's push ultimately fails, he will have only himself and his recalcitrant party to blame.





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Judging Lee-Rubio

A tax plan and supply-siders

BY RAMESH PONNURU

OF the top three candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, judging from the RealClearPolitics average of national polls, only one has released a detailed tax plan: Marco Rubio, the senator from Florida. Not surprisingly, then, his proposal—made along with Senator Mike Lee of Utah, who proposed an earlier version of it on his own—has become the focus of the party’s tax debate.

When New Jersey governor Chris Christie, currently in eighth place in that average, outlined his own plan, the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* praised it by saying it was better than Rubio’s. Stephen Moore, writing in favor of a flat tax in *The Weekly Standard*, included an aside blasting the Rubio plan.

This could be a useful debate for conservatives—if it is conducted on accurate premises. Judging from the press coverage, so far it has not been. The real flaws of the Lee-Rubio proposal are being obscured by misguided criticisms.

The *Los Angeles Times*, for example, reports that Rubio is trying to alter “party orthodoxy” on taxes by moving away from cutting the top income-tax rate: “Rubio’s plan tests whether Republican primary voters are willing to go beyond

that supply-side view.” *Politico* claims that Rubio is “running on a tax plan that tosses out decades of GOP allegiance to the idea of simply slashing rates across the board and expecting faster economic growth to follow.”

Such descriptions may hurt Rubio by making him look out of step with his party, or help him by making him look fresh and new. But they are false. Republican tax policy has never been purely about supply-side tax-rate cuts to spur economic growth. Especially when it has been politically successful—when it has actually changed tax policy—the GOP has combined supply-side tax-rate cuts with tax relief that puts money in middle-class families’ pockets. Rubio’s plan is squarely within that tradition.

Supply-side economics has often been criticized, unfairly, as a cover for plutocratic interests. That’s because a particular concern for the tax rate paid by the very highest earners is built into its logic. They pay the highest, and therefore the most distortionary, rate. They are the ones who are most responsive to changes in their incentives to work, save, and invest.

And there’s another feature of a progressive income tax that requires a little unpacking: The top rate is the only one

that acts as a marginal tax rate on every person who pays it. Let’s say you cut only the 15 percent tax rate that applies to married couples making between \$18,000 and \$74,000 in taxable income. Making it 10 percent would improve those couples’ incentives to work: Now instead of keeping 85 cents of every extra dollar they earn from the IRS, they would keep 90 cents, an increase of about 6 percent. But every couple that makes more than \$74,000 would get the benefit of that tax cut, too, pocketing an extra \$2,800—and their incentives to earn would not have changed at all, because all of their earnings above that threshold would continue to be taxed at the same rates as before.

That’s fine if the goal is to let people keep more of their money. But if the goal is to maximize the effect of a tax cut on incentives—if the tax cut is to be judged, that is, on supply-side terms—then the top rate is the one that most needs lowering.

All of this helps to explain why, when he evaluated the Reagan tax cuts in his book *The Growth Experiment*, Lawrence Lindsey concluded that the reduction of the highest income-tax rate—it went from 70 percent at the start of Reagan’s term to 28 percent at the end of it—had resulted in additional revenue, but the reduction of low-end tax rates had lost revenue. It’s why some supply-siders grouched that George W. Bush’s reduction of the lowest tax rate was a waste of money. And it’s a large part of the reason that many supply-siders are enthusiastic about flat-tax proposals that would bring the top tax rate down a lot while raising the lower tax rates.

But Republican presidential nominees have never run on such proposals. They have never taken the only goal of tax policy to be maximizing economic growth while yielding a targeted level of revenues. Reagan could have offered a tax cut as large as the one he did while cutting the top rate much more, if he had left the lower tax rates alone and let bracket creep (whereby inflation pushed people into higher tax brackets) continue. But he wanted to cut middle-class taxes, he wanted a plan that could be enacted, and he wanted to be elected and reelected. So he offered across-the-board reductions in tax rates and an end to bracket creep.

The Republicans running for Congress in 1994 again offered middle-class tax relief in their Contract with America: Its

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major tax proposal was the creation of a \$500 tax credit for children. In 1997 that proposal made it into law, paired with a capital-gains-tax cut. George W. Bush, running for president in 2000, also combined supply-side and middle-class tax cuts. He cut the capital-gains, dividend, and estate taxes and the top income-tax rate; he also cut most of the other income-tax rates and increased the tax credit for children to \$1,000.

The Lee-Rubio plan, too, has supply-side elements. It eliminates the taxes on capital gains, dividends, and estates, and the alternative minimum tax. It cuts the top income-tax rate. It cuts the tax rate on business income and allows businesses to write off the expense of investments

after-tax return on a dollar earned rose 67 percent. Cutting the top rate from 35 to 28 would raise it only 11 percent.

Second, Republicans have repeatedly overestimated the growth effects of income-tax rates—predicting a bust when Clinton raised taxes and a boom when George W. Bush lowered them. Neither occurred, and in fact growth rates were better under the higher Clinton income-tax rates than under the lower Bush ones. Any positive effect of lower tax rates on growth are small enough that other factors can overwhelm them.

Third, it's not clear that getting the rate on high earners so far down is politically realistic. A tax package that combined some reduction in the top rate with tax

more than \$150,000 a year would pay a 35 percent tax rate on income above that amount. These are high earners: The Census Bureau reports that in 2013, the median income for married couples was \$76,000. Many of these high earners are now in the 25, 28, and 33 percent brackets, so marginal tax rates would go up on them. A good many of them would, however, have lower *total* tax bills. Take a couple making \$200,000 a year. The new rate structure in Lee-Rubio would leave them ahead: They would save more from the lower taxes on income between \$75,000 and \$150,000 than they would pay from the higher taxes on income above that level. They would come out even farther ahead if they had children.

The problems with Lee-Rubio are that it pursues supply-side goals on investment taxation too avidly, and that it's too large.

immediately. But it also has two major middle-class-friendly features: It expands the child credit, adding \$2,500 to it and applying it against payroll taxes as well as income taxes. (The senators say the credit is necessary to correct for the way entitlements overtax parents, who contribute extra to the programs by raising children.) And it taxes a lot of income that now falls in the 25 percent bracket at 15 percent.

What isn't new in the plan, then, is that it includes tax cuts other than tax-rate cuts, that it is not just a list of supply-side priorities, and that it expands the child credit. *Politico* noted that lowering the top tax rate from 39.6 to 35, as Lee-Rubio does, still leaves it "far higher than many Republicans would like." That's true, but it also leaves it in the ballpark of previous Republican proposals. It's the rate George W. Bush and congressional Republicans enacted in 2001. We have had a top tax rate lower than 35 in only five of the last 80 years—and in those years, investment was taxed more heavily than it would be under Lee-Rubio.

Some supply-siders argue that Lee-Rubio should have proposed bringing the top tax rate still lower, which would do more to improve incentives to work, save, and invest, and thus encourage growth. The *Journal* prefers Christie's top rate of 28. But this lower rate would not be likely to have a large economic effect. First, we should expect diminishing returns. When Reagan cut the top rate from 70 to 50, the

cuts that directly benefitted the middle class would almost certainly stand a better chance of enactment. That is, after all, how such tax-rate reductions have been achieved before.

Lee-Rubio does not break precedents, then, in its approach to the top tax rate. But other aspects of the plan are genuinely new. Over the last generation the payroll tax has become a bigger burden for the middle class than the income tax, but Republicans have generally left the payroll tax alone. Mitt Romney, for example, offered an across-the-board reduction in income-tax rates, but middle-class income-tax liability is too low for it to have helped people as much as previous proposals in that vein. Lee-Rubio reduces payroll-tax liabilities for many people.

Lee-Rubio is also a bigger tax cut than most previous proposals: The Tax Foundation estimates that it would reduce federal revenues by \$4 trillion over a decade unless it raised economic growth. Some Republican-primary candidates have run on zeroing out taxes on capital gains and dividends, but no nominee has. The proposed treatment of business is new, too, and reflects an increased concern about competition among countries for capital investment. And the child-credit proposal is also much larger than previous candidates have suggested.

Finally, Lee-Rubio raises taxes on some people. Single people making more than \$75,000 and married people making

Republican tax reforms have sometimes proposed raising tax rates and tax bills for some people. Most flat taxes, for example, would raise taxes on many more people (and on people with lower incomes) than Lee-Rubio would. Republican nominees, though, have usually avoided proposing tax increases on anyone.

We don't yet know how the plan will play in the 2016 elections. Most Republican-primary voters have not been supply-side purists, which is why nominees have not been either. Voters might find the \$4 trillion impact on revenues too large. And the combination of raising taxes on some affluent households while also nearly eliminating income-tax bills for wealthy people who derive most of their income from investments seems politically problematic, to say the least. Proposing to end the capital-gains tax, as opposed to cut it, was unwise: If it was meant to buy supply-side support for the plan, it has not worked. (The *Journal* hardly mentions that feature of the plan when it denounces it.)

The problem with Lee-Rubio, in other words, isn't that it breaks with the Republican party's supply-side traditions; it doesn't. The problems are that it pursues supply-side goals on investment taxation too avidly, and that it's too large. Put the plan on a diet and both problems are solved. **NR**



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Reagan's Supply-Side Genius

It still matters today

BY EDWIN J. FEULNER & STEPHEN MOORE

AMONG his many talents, Ronald Reagan had a special gift for proving his critics wrong. Almost none of the leading economists of the late 1970s thought that his supply-side tax-cutting agenda, along with stable monetary policy and deregulation, could revive the economy from the malaise of that decade. But the prosperity of the 1980s—with growth rates higher than 6 percent—proved the Gipper correct. An economics major from Eureka College understood our free-market system better than the so-called experts at Harvard, Yale, and MIT.

As the 2016 presidential campaigns gear up, Reagan's policies are under assault again, this time even from some of our friends on the right. Several economists at conservative organizations such as the American Enterprise Institute and NATIONAL REVIEW are questioning the wisdom of cutting tax rates. This new group of economic conservatives, called "reformicons," says that supply-siders are obsessed with cutting tax rates for the richest Americans at a time when middle-class tax cuts and tax credits should take precedence.

Reagan's legacy has gotten tangled in this debate. Henry Olsen of the Ethics and Public Policy Center writes in the June 1 issue of NR:

Many claim [Reagan] today as the political father of supply-side tax policy, but his words and deeds show that it was not quite so. . . . By indexing standard deductions and tax brackets for inflation, he steered hundreds of millions of dollars to middle- and working-class families, money that theoretically could have been used to cut top rates even more. And his 1981 tax cut allowed all workers to contribute to tax-deductible IRAs, exactly

the sort of middle-class tax cut that today's supply-siders deride.

This is partly true. Reagan's 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act was an across-the-board 25 percent reduction in tax rates. Everyone got tax relief. Almost all supply-siders—from Jack Kemp to Art Laffer to Senator Bill Armstrong, the sponsor of the bill—supported indexing tax rates for inflation in order to end "bracket creep" and to prevent the government from profiting from inflation. And deductions for tax-free IRAs are supported by most supply-siders as a way to encourage saving by ending its double taxation.

The Tax Reform Act of 1986 was a quintessential Reagan idea. He saw efficiency gains to be had from closing loopholes and lowering rates. No one thought it could be done. All of the K Street lobbyists who benefited from the tax code's special-interest favors were against Reagan's ideas. But the legislation passed, reducing the number of tax brackets to two, 15 percent for the middle class and 28 percent for the wealthy. It cleared the Senate 97–3, with even liberals such as Ted Kennedy and Howard Metzenbaum voting yes. As a result, during Reagan's two terms in office, the highest income-tax rate fell from 70 percent to 28 percent—one of the biggest reductions in tax rates in American history. Reagan was a supply-sider—period.

He understood from personal experience that high tax rates discourage work, investment, and growth. He used to tell the story of making only a certain number of movies a year, because once he got pushed into the highest tax rates of 70 percent or more, there was no rational justification for continuing to work.

The Reagan tax-rate reductions increased tax revenues from \$500 billion to \$1 trillion by the end of the 1980s. A study by economist Larry Lindsey found that the rate cuts for the highest income brackets paid for themselves by encouraging work and investment. Supply-side economics was a fiscal success. As the Gipper used to put it with his customary wit, "I knew my ideas were working when the media stopped calling it Reaganomics."

Would Reagan have supported a flat tax that got rates down to 17 or 18 percent for all, with a generous deduction for families with children? All we can say for sure is that the idea is entirely consistent with his work to simplify the tax system and promote growth.

Mr. Olsen believes that successful Republican governors such as Scott Walker of Wisconsin have shunned cutting tax rates "for the rich." Actually, at least ten highly successful GOP governors have adopted the Reagan supply-side model to improve growth. These tax-cutters include Mike Pence of Indiana, Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, John Kasich of Ohio, and Pat McCrory of North Carolina. At least three Republican governors are devising strategies to eliminate their state income tax entirely, including Mr. Kasich, Doug Ducey of Arizona, and Paul LePage in Maine.

The state experiment proves that tax cutting is still very good politics. Republican governors who cut tax rates were reelected last year, many with towering majorities. Voter hostility to higher taxes was clearly evident earlier this year, when 80 percent of Michigan voters rejected a ballot initiative to hike the sales tax and the gas tax to pay for new roads.

Even Sam Brownback, the governor of Kansas, won reelection despite a multi-million-dollar campaign by union and other left-wing, out-of-state donors, assisted by the *New York Times* and local media, to oust him—and to make his political scalp an example of what happens when you cut taxes. Mr. Brownback cut income-tax rates and eliminated income taxes altogether for pass-through small businesses, the profits of which are claimed by the owners and had heretofore been taxed at individual rather than corporate rates. The economic effects have been positive. Kansas's rate of job creation has been one of the highest in the farm-state region. Job growth has especially surged on the Kansas side of Kansas City, where businesses have relocated from Missouri to take advantage of the new tax policy. It's true that the state has a big revenue hole to fill this year, but that is because the legislature never cut spending to offset the tax cuts.

If you want to see an amazing supply-side success story, look at North Carolina. Since Governor McCrory slashed the top income-tax rate in 2013, the state has had nearly the fastest decline in unemployment in the nation, and it just announced a \$400 million budget surplus. Supply-side ideas work.

What about Scott Walker's record on taxes? Mr. Walker's heroic economic and political success has consisted in winning collective-bargaining reforms and enact-

Mr. Feulner is the founder of the Heritage Foundation, of which Mr. Moore is a senior fellow.

ing right-to-work legislation—huge economic bonuses for his state. Walker’s tax cut reduced rates a little at the top and more for the middle class. But clearly the employment rebound in Wisconsin is due to the union and labor reforms.

The importance of Mr. Olsen’s argument is that it brings to the fore the debate among conservatives about whether supply-siders focus too much on cutting tax rates on the rich. That claim undoubtedly will be the refrain from the left for the next 18 months, so we’d better have good answers.

The economic case is simple. High corporate- and individual-income-tax rates make the U.S. tax system uncompetitive with the rest of the world and reduce investment and savings here. This hurts the middle class more than any other, and is one reason its wages aren’t growing. The federal income tax today is highly progressive, with two-thirds of taxes paid by the top 10 percent of earners. The main problem for the middle class today isn’t that it pays too much income tax—though it does—but that its take-home pay hasn’t risen, and has in fact fallen, for eight years.

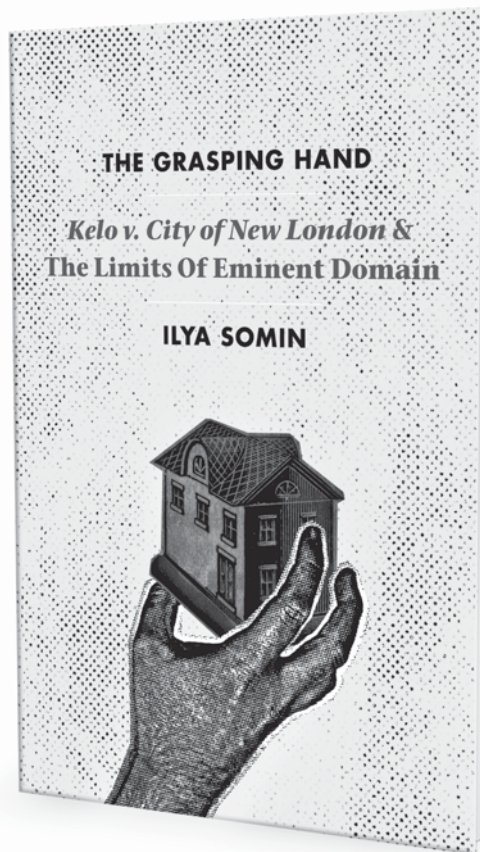
Tinkering with the tax code may not be a political or economic winner. The system needs to be rebuilt from scratch and made simple and pro-growth. Our polling at the Heritage Foundation finds that what Americans want most from the tax system is “fairness,” so shaping the popular definition of that term will be key to winning the policy debate. A fair tax system shouldn’t be understood as one that takes from the rich and gives to the poor. Rather, it should be one that requires everyone to play by the same set of rules. The 10,000-page tax code violates the American idea of fairness because it is crammed with special favors for the politically connected. It is not fair that some successful individuals and companies game the system to pay nothing while others pay the highest taxes in the developed world. A broad tax base with low rates would be good policy and politics. This was the simple elegance of the 1986 tax reform.

It is doubtful that adding new tax credits for the middle class, as reformicons advocate, is going to help the economy or excite voters much. We should take a lesson from Herman Cain, who in 2012 cap-

tured the attention of the nation and especially conservatives with his 9-9-9 plan, which called for a 9 percent national sales tax, a 9 percent business tax, and a 9 percent flat-rate income tax. It was popular because it was bold and simple.

The debate among conservatives and GOP presidential candidates about how to fix the tax system in a pro-growth and politically achievable way is a healthy one, and it’s critical that we get the answers right. The good news is that, so far, all of the GOP presidential contenders have said that they want to cut tax rates. We will see which among many approaches—including the flat tax and the national sales tax—voters prefer.

Ronald Reagan was a politician, of course, and we at Heritage sometimes disagreed with his compromises. But the Gipper understood that good policy is usually good politics. He was principled but not doctrinaire. We don’t know what Reagan would have considered the best tax plan today, but, having known him, we are pretty sure he would have loved this debate about how to overhaul a corrupt system that is slowing growth and hurting American workers. **NR**



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Magna Carta's Fruits, 800 Years On

America is one of them

BY CHARLES C. W. COOKE

NEVER in the field of human history has there been a clearer illustration of the maxim “Culture matters” than that which has been provided by the English-speaking peoples and their relationship with Magna Carta Libertatum. On June 15 of this year, we celebrated the 800th anniversary of the signing of the document, and all of the usual platitudes came out in force. The charter, Prime Minister David Cameron suggested in England, had “shaped the world for the best part of a millennium, helping to promote arguments for justice and for freedom” and to codify “the belief that there should be something called the rule of law, that there shouldn’t be imprisonment without trial.” A few feet away sat the queen of England, graciously nodding along. The principles contained within the treaty, her majesty observed without a trace of irony, were “significant and enduring.”

Watching from America, I could not help but feel a touch of pride. And yet I also couldn’t avoid reflecting that—uncomfortable as this might be for Cameron and his ilk to acknowledge—the values for which Magna Carta is supposed to stand are in much better shape in the United States than abroad. “Parchment barriers,” James Madison noted acridly, are often little use when set against “the encroaching spirit of power.” In Britain of late, that power has encroached mightily, and, in so doing, it has erased many of liberty’s red lines. One might ask, What good is our piece of paper now?

Indeed, one might ask what good it ever did, for despite the deeply held convictions of 16th- and 17th-century British Whigs, despite the easy platitudes of a David Cameron or a Queen Elizabeth, and despite the mawkish dis-

play of respect that has marked these anniversary celebrations, Magna Carta was neither a hard-and-fast protector of individual liberties nor the last remaining vestige of an ancient English constitution. Instead, it was a narrow guarantee of redress and of immunity that was demanded by and applied solely to those rebellious members of the nobility who were unhappy with the job that King John was doing and who wanted a parchment contract to which they might appeal should their influence be curtailed. The central ideological implication of the document—that kings must consent to see their power limited if they wish to remain in place—is indeed a radical one; perhaps even, as Lord Alfred Denning put it, “the foundation of the freedom of the individual against the arbitrary authority of the despot.” But foundations do not the whole house make, and one does not arrive at one’s destination simply by leaving for it. Freedom is an attitude, not a piece of paper, and the mists of time are powerful only when those staring into them do so reverently.

Which is to say that, attractive as their characterizations might be as historical shorthand, the romanticized vision of Magna Carta that was crystalized in England by Sir Edward Coke and in America by William Penn is spectacularly wide of the mark. Far from being a precipitous shot that was heard round the world, Magna Carta’s principal utility has in fact been as a seed from which other virtuous plants have been able to grow. *Pace* Cameron and Co., then, Magna Carta’s value lies not in what it incorpo-

rated into statute but in how it has been *perceived* throughout the ages—even, indeed especially, when it has been misunderstood.

The protracted fight against the divine right of kings raged in England throughout the latter days of the Stuart era, when little was more potent than the erroneous belief that both James I and Charles I were violating not only traditions of some centuries but principles that had obtained in one form or another since time immemorial. Being smart sorts, both James I and Charles I recognized the danger that this misun-



derstanding brought with it and sought to outlaw any mention of Magna Carta.

That the English parliament now rules supreme over the English monarchy is in some sense a testament to their failure. Ideas, as the old saying goes, have consequences.

In the United States, the consequences of this ersatz conception have been even more radical. Because the

Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States represent such precise articulations of principle, it can today seem peculiar to see as inchoate and ostensibly expedient a document as Magna Carta put on such a glorious pedestal. What, one might wonder, is this confusing antique doing hanging adjacent to America's founding documents in the Library of Congress? The simple answer is that it is taking a somewhat undeserved victory lap for having helped to foster a nation of rebels. Daniel Hannan, a member of the European Parliament, has noted that the pioneers of colonial British America left Britain "when the mania for Magna Carta was at its height." Over time, that "mania" spread and metastasized, and was left to fester by a British establishment that was content to leave America to Burke's "salutary neglect." Once again, the false idea did its damage to the powerful.

Because the constitutional indignities that the American revolutionaries eventually came to suffer seem so trivial when compared with the tyrannies of the 20th century, it has been tempting for modern storytellers to impute to the imperial British authorities a set of motivations and behaviors that they simply would not have recognized. It is thus that Mel Gibson has been able to get away with borrowing Nazi war crimes for his movie *The Patriot*, and that Paul Revere's famous cry has been so seamlessly transmuted from "The regulars are coming!" to the nonsensical "The British are coming!" The truth is a good deal more complex. Indeed, one can reasonably argue that the American Revolution was not a revolution in the classical sense of that word but rather a restoration that was predicated on the desire to resuscitate a set of ancient principles that had never actually existed in their presumed form.

The role that Magna Carta played in this process was incalculable. Convinced that they were being denied their venerable English rights, the colonial dissenters' initial messages were filled not with a Jacobinesque disdain for the past but with warm expressions of kinship and with appeals to shared ideals. When, on November 3, 1764, the Massachusetts

House of Representatives wrote to the House of Commons to complain about the Sugar Act, the signatories protested that they were being deprived of their established "English liberties." Four years later, in 1768, the Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting would proclaim all attendees to be "British subjects by birthright" and therefore entitled to all of the "rights, liberties, and privileges . . . and immunities" enjoyed by any "free and natural subject" who was "born within the realm of England." Protesting the Stamp Act in 1773, the New York Sons of Liberty claimed the "undoubted right of Englishmen" that their "ancestors had handed down" to them across the ages. A year later, as separation seemed increasingly likely, the Association of the Virginia Convention convened with one stated aim: to "preserve the rights and liberties in British America," and in Philadelphia the first Continental Congress considered "statutes impolitic, unjust and cruel," but—most crucially—"unconstitutional."

As one might expect, the Glorious Revolution and the English Bill of Rights weighed heavily in the colonists' assertions of right. And yet to delve into their contemporary missives is to discover a great deal more than appeals to existing law. When Patrick Henry took to the floor of the Virginia Ratifying Convention in 1788, he made sure to praise the "glorious forefathers of Great Britain" who "made liberty the foundation of every thing." In so doing, Henry was recruiting to his side not only Henry Sydney and the other "Immortal" six but a long line of men who had aspired to check the power of the monarchy and to declare certain rights unalienable. It is hard not to detect in his words an echo of *The American Claim of Rights* (1774), a pamphlet in which Chief Justice William Drayton made the claim that, simply by virtue of their connection to the British Isles, the colonists were "entitled to the common law of England formed by their common ancestors; and to all and singular the benefits, rights, liberties and claims specified in Magna Charta, in the petition of Rights, in the Bill of Rights, and in the Act of Settlement."

Some seed. Some imagination. NR



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Not Me

*Try as we might, we cannot
escape ourselves*

BY ROB LONG

RIGHT now, two-thirds of all Americans own a smartphone. By the end of 2016, there will be 2 billion smartphones in use worldwide.

That means 2 billion smartphone cameras in constant daily use, all snapping candid, taking selfies, documenting moments of forced happiness. And that means at least 2 billion daily posts to social-media sites, with tags and comments and retweets and shares.

So it's safe to say that in 2016, 2 billion times a day, people will be looking at pictures of themselves and thinking, "My God, I look fat. Do I look this fat all the time? Am I *this* fat?"

Or maybe not fat. Maybe old, or tired, or just unexpectedly unattractive. Maybe a certain shot taken by a fellow party-goer—probably using that most cruel and unforgiving flash function—will reveal the bald spot we hadn't noticed or the eyes too close-set or the sudden appearance (and perhaps here I'm revealing too much about myself) of what can only be described as *jowls*.

Two billion times a day, starting in late 2016, we will all feel really bad about ourselves and the way we look.

Just as the technological revolution has scaled up our interactions with friends via Facebook and our meaningless chatter via Twitter, it will also increase the number of times we encounter our own faces—once limited to chance gazes at our reflections in a window, or passing a hallway mirror without reflexively turning away—and suddenly see ourselves as others see us, in the most unflattering way possible, which is the way we *actually* look.

There is—you knew this was coming, didn't you?—an app for that. If you download something called "Facetune"—available for iOS and Android—you will have a suite of tools, some of which work automatically, to slim down your cheeks, fill in your hair, lift up your eyes, and get rid of those jowls. What once required expert

use of airbrushing and digital-photography software now comes ready to download and easy to use for the rest of us. Full disclosure: I have used this product. Fuller disclosure: *Damn*, I looked good.

Well, not really. I looked, scientifically speaking, exactly the same. But now I have the technology to adjust my photographic image to be in closer alignment with my self-image. Those of you who encounter me in real life out there on the street are stuck looking at my old and jowly face. But when it comes to my tagged, shared, tweeted, and Instagrammed appearance—which is, let's face it, probably a lot more significant—I look just the way I look when I close my eyes and imagine my current face and body, which are based on a photograph taken of me on a sailboat in June 1987. And I looked good.

Thanks to Facetune, I still do, because I look great to myself and I look great in the Internet cloud and it doesn't matter how I look to you in real life because two against one.

So despite our natural discomfort when we think about the most recent *Vanity Fair* cover girl, Caitlyn Jenner—and when I say "discomfort" I mean it in the most supportive way possible—what she must have felt walking past mirrors and window reflections during the years in which she answered to "Bruce" can't be all that different from the way many of us feel when we see ourselves in a photograph and think, "Is that me? That isn't me!"

Caitlyn has told us about her long conviction that something about her old self, Olympic gold medalist Bruce Jenner, wasn't really true. Winning races, getting awards, appearing on cereal boxes, starring on television shows—whatever it was that Bruce was doing, it wasn't right because he wasn't doing it in a dress, as a woman.

Caitlyn Jenner didn't want to look like Bruce Jenner, and lucky for her, there is an app for that. Well, more than an app—a suite of surgical, cosmetic, and hormone-therapy tools to help align her self-image with the one everyone else sees on the street. Caitlyn Jenner is now, according to her, a lot more "comfortable" with the image she presents to the world. It's a lot truer to how she sees herself when she closes her eyes. Cynics may point out that there's a whiff of a career move here—Jenner's reality-television show, chronicling her journey from Bruce to Caitlyn, has already resulted in a multimillion-dollar payday. But listening to Bruce Jenner

talk to Diane Sawyer, and then reading her words later in *Vanity Fair*—and, yeah, the pronouns shift with the verb tense—it's hard not to wish her the very best.

Which isn't to deny that some transformations are good for the career. Rachel Dolezal, the former president of the Spokane, Wash., chapter of the NAACP, had a similar problem. Born white, to white parents, from an entirely white family tree, she passed herself off as black because, as she recently told Matt Lauer on the *Today* show, she "identifies" as black. Rachel Dolezal would pass mirrors and reflective surfaces and catch sight of this plump-cheeked white woman and think, "That's not me. That can't be me."

And (you knew this was coming) there's an app for that, too: a collection of hair and skin products that alter the appearance, a judiciously vague appropriation of African-American symbols and designations, a careful editing of the life story. Rachel Dolezal, unrepentant and at peace, presents herself to employers and television interviewers as black and proud.

The problem with Facetuning or Sex-tuning or Racetuning, though, is that there's still the messy and unmanageable business of real life to contend with. When you knock on your date's door and reveal your true face—not the one you've carefully tended and tuned and uploaded to the popular dating app Tinder—you'll know in an instant by the crestfallen and disappointed look on your intended's face whether you've gone a little too far with the tuning.

Rachel Dolezal may identify as black, but she lost her job as head of the Spokane chapter of the NAACP, and with it the ability to convince anyone, anywhere, that she's African-American. She will always be a white girl who acted black.

And try as she might—and she is trying, mightily—to have us forget the athletic exploits and superstardom of Bruce, Caitlyn isn't ever going to be just Caitlyn. She'll always be Formerly Bruce. That's the price she pays for Bruce's fame.

There isn't, in the end, much you can really do about your true self. That fleeting glimpse we get in the mirror or in a candid shot on Facebook, the one that looks too fat or old or white or male, the one that makes us say, "That isn't me! That can't be me!"—well, it is.

It's you. It's me. It's us. And though we wish it were not so, there is no app for that. **NR**



Adventures in National Socialism

Notes from a weekend with Bernie

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

Marshalltown, Iowa

ALL FOREIGN-MADE VEHICLES PARK IN DESIGNATED AREA IN REAR OF BUILDING.” So reads the sign in front of United Auto Workers Local 893 in Marshalltown, Iowa, though nobody is bothered much about the CNN satellite truck out front, a Daimler-AG Freightliner proudly declaring itself “Powered by Mercedes-Benz,” nor about the guys doggedly and earnestly unpacking yard signs and \$15 T-shirts and rolls of giveaway stickers from a newish Subaru, all that swag bearing the face and/or logo of Senator Bernie Sanders, the confessing socialist from Brooklyn representing Vermont in the Senate who is, in his half-assed and almost endearingly low-rent way, challenging Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic presidential nomination. The bumper stickers on the mainly foreign-made cars of his followers tell the story: One of those “PEACE” (not the more popular “COEXIST”) slogans made of various world religious symbols, “CLEAN WATER IS FOR LIFE!” and “THE WARREN WING OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY,” sundry half-literate denunciations of “CORPORATE OLIGARCHY” . . . “NOT JUST GAY—ECSTATIC!”

The union hall, like the strangely church-like auditorium at Drake University the night before, was chosen with calculation. Bernie—he’s “Bernie,” not Senator Sanders or Mr. Sanders or that weirdo socialist from Soviet Beninjerristan, just lovable, cuddly “Bernie,” like a grumpy Muppet who spent too much time around the Workers World party back in the day—our Bernie may not be the slickest practitioner of the black arts of electioneering, but he’s got some smart people on his small team, and

they are smart enough to book him in rooms with capacities that are about 85 percent of the modest crowds they are expecting, thereby creating the illusion of overflow audiences. They do all the usual tedious stuff, such as planting volunteers in the audience to shout on cue, “Yes, yes!” and the occasional Deanesque “Yeaaaaaaah!” It’s all very familiar. Sanders, as stiff a member as Congress has to offer, repeatedly refers to the audience as “brothers and sisters,” and the union bosses greet one another as “brother,” and you get the feeling that after a beer or three one of these characters is going to slip up and let out a “comrade.”

If it’s anybody, it’s probably going to be the grandmotherly lady in the hammer-and-sickle T-shirt. She’s well inclined toward Bernie, she says, though she distrusts his affiliation with the Democratic party. “He’s part of . . . *them*,” she says, grimacing. “Yeah,” says her friend, who stops to think for a moment. “He’s a senator, right?”

Aside from Grandma Stalin there, there’s not a lot of overtly Soviet iconography on display around the Bernieverse, but the word “socialism” is on a great many lips. Not Bernie’s lips, for heaven’s sake: The guy’s running for president. But Tara Monson, a young mother who has come out to the UAW hall to support her candidate, is pretty straightforward about her issues: “Socialism,” she says. “My husband’s been trying to get me to move to a socialist country for years—but now, maybe, we’ll get it here.” The socialist country she has in mind is Norway, which of course isn’t a socialist country at all: It’s an oil emirate. Monson is a classic American radical, which is to say, a wounded

teenager in an adult's body: Asked what drew her to socialism and Bernie, she says that she is "very atheist," and that her Catholic parents were not accepting of this. She goes on to cite her "social views," and by the time she gets around to the economic questions, she's not Helle Thorning-Schmidt—she's Pat Buchanan, complaining about "sending our jobs overseas."

L'Internationale, my patootie. This is *national* socialism.

IN the Bernieverse, there's a whole lot of nationalism mixed up in the socialism. He is, in fact, leading a national-socialist movement, which is a queasy and uncomfortable thing to write about a man who is the son of Jewish immigrants from Poland and whose family was largely wiped out in the Holocaust. But there is no other way to characterize his views and his politics. The incessant reliance on xenophobic (and largely untrue) tropes holding that the current economic woes of the United States are the result of scheming foreigners, especially the wicked Chinese, "stealing our jobs" and victimizing his class allies is nothing more than an updated version of Kaiser Wilhelm II's "yellow peril" rhetoric, and though the kaiser had a more poetical imagination—he said he had a vision of the Buddha riding a dragon across Europe, laying waste to all—Bernie's take is substantially similar. He describes the normalization of trade relations with China as "catastrophic"—Sanders and Jesse Helms both voted against the Clinton-backed China-trade legislation—and heaps scorn on every other trade-liberalization pact. That economic interactions with foreigners are inherently hurtful and immoral is central to his view of how the world works.

Bernie bellows that he remembers a time when you could walk into a department store and "buy things made in the U.S.A." Before the "Made in China" panic, there was the "Made in Japan" panic of the 1950s and 1960s, and the products that provoked that panic naturally went on to be objects of nostalgia. (A quarter century ago, the artist Roger Handy published a book of photographs titled "Made in Japan: Transistor Radios of the 1950s and 1960s.") Like most of these advocates of "economic patriotism" (Barack Obama's favored phrase) Bernie worries a great deal about trade with brown people—Asians, Latin Americans—but has never, so far as public records show, made so much as a peep about our very large trade deficit with Sweden, which as a share of bilateral trade volume is about the same as our trade deficit with China, or about the size of our trade deficit with Canada, our largest trading partner. Sanders doesn't rail about the Canadians stealing our jobs—his ire is reserved almost exclusively for the Chinese and the Mexicans, as when he demanded of Hillary Rodham Clinton, in the words of the old protest song, "Which side are you on?" The bad guys, or American workers "seeing their jobs go to China or Mexico?"

But for the emerging national socialist, dusky people abroad are not the only problem. I speak with Bernie volunteer McKinly Springer, an earnest young man whose father worked for the UAW local hosting the rally. He's very interested in policies that interpose the government between employers and employees—for example, mandatory paid maternity and paternity leave. He lived for a time in Germany, first studying abroad and then working for Bosch, an automotive-parts company. He is a great admirer of the German welfare state, saying: "I ask myself: Why do they have these nice things, and we can't?" I ask him to answer his own question, and his answer is at once familiar and frighten-

ing: "Germany is very homogeneous. They have lots of white people. We're very diverse. We have the melting pot, and that's a big struggle."

That the relative success of the Western European welfare states, and particularly of the Scandinavian states, is rooted in cultural and ethnic homogeneity is a longstanding conservative criticism of Bernie-style schemes to re-create the Danish model in New Jersey and Texas and Mississippi. The conservative take-away is: Don't build a Scandinavian welfare state in Florida. But if you understand the challenges of diversity and you still want to build a Scandinavian welfare state, or at least a German one, that points to some uncomfortable conclusions. Indeed, one very worked-up young man confronts Bernie angrily about his apparent unwillingness to speak up more robustly about his liberal views on illegal immigration. Springer gets a few sentences into a disquisition on ethnic homogeneity when a shadow crosses his face, as though he is for the first time thinking through the ugly implications of what he believes in light of what he knows. He trails off, looking troubled.

Bernie, who represents the second-whitest state in the union, may not have thought too hard about this. But the Left is thinking about it: T. A. Frank, writing in *The New Republic*, argues that progressives should oppose Obama's immigration-reform plans because poor foreigners flooding our labor markets will undercut the wages of low-income Americans. Cheap foreign cars, cheap foreign labor—you can see the argument.

CONSERVATIVES can identify each other by smell—did you know that? He's an older gentleman, neatly dressed in a pink button-down shirt, his slightly unruly white hair and cracked demeanor calling to mind the presidential candidate he is here to evaluate. He's dead serious, too, and it's not just Republicans' sniffing one another's butts that's on his mind. He goes on a good-humored tirade about how one can identify conservatives' and progressives' homes simply by walking down the street and observing the landscaping. Conservatives, he insists, "torture" the flowers and shrubbery, imposing strict order and conformity on their yards, whereas progressives just let things bloom as nature directs. I am tempted to ask him which other areas in life he thinks might benefit from that kind of unregulated, spontaneous order, but I think better of it. One of Sanders's workers, a young Occupy veteran, shoots me an eye-rolling look: Crazy goes with the territory.

Here in a dreary, rundown, hideous little corner of Des Moines dotted with dodgy-looking bars and dilapidated groceries advertising their willingness to accept EBT payments sits Drake University, where Bernie is speaking at Sheslow Auditorium, a kind of mock church—spire, stained glass, double staircase leading down to the podium for communion—that is the perfect setting for the mock-religious fervor that the senator brings to the stump. He is a clumsy speaker, pronouncing "oligarchy"—a word he uses in every speech—as though he were starting to say "à la mode." He's one of those rhetorical oafs whose only dynamic modulations are sudden shifts in volume—he's the oratorical equivalent of every Nirvana song ever written—and he is undisciplined, speaking for an hour and then pressing right through, on and on, feeling the need to check off every progressive box, as though new orbiters in the Bernieverse might think him a Rick Santorum-level pro-lifer if he didn't lay his pro-choice creden-

tials out on the table at least once during every speech. “Brothers and sisters, . . .” repeatedly: global warming, \$15 minimum wage, putting an end to free trade, gays, gays, abortion, gays, lies about women making only 78 cents on the male dollar, mass transit, gays and abortion and gays, KOCHS AND WALTONS AND HEDGE-FUND MANAGERS!

He does not suggest that conservatives can literally sniff one another out pheromonally, but the idea that his political opponents are a tribe apart is central to his platform, which can be summarized in three words: “Us and Them.” And, contra the hammer-and-sickle lady, Bernie is pretty emphatic that he is not one of the hated Them.

And this is where the Bernieverse is really off-kilter, where the intellectual shallowness of the man and his followers is as impossible to miss as a winter bonfire. The Scandinavian welfare states they so admire are very different from the United States in many ways, and one of the most important is that their politics are consensus-driven. That has some significant downsides, prominent among them the crushing conformity that is ruthlessly enforced on practically every aspect of life. (The Danish-Norwegian novelist Aksel Sandemose called it “Jante law,” after

“moral imperative,” “moral disaster,” “moral crisis”—and those who see the world differently are not, in his estimate, guilty of misunderstanding, or ignorance, or bad judgment: They are guilty of “crimes.”

And criminalizing things is very much on Bernie’s agenda, beginning with the criminalization of political dissent. At every event he swears to introduce a constitutional amendment reversing Supreme Court decisions that affirmed the free-speech protections of people and organizations filming documentaries, organizing Web campaigns, and airing television commercials in the hopes of influencing elections or public attitudes toward public issues. That this would amount to a repeal of the First Amendment does not trouble Bernie at all. If the First Amendment enables Them, then the First Amendment has got to go.

F. A. HAYEK’s *Road to Serfdom* notwithstanding, corraling off foreign-made cars does not lead inevitably to corraling off foreign-born people, or members of ethnic minorities, although the Asians-and-Latinos-with-their-

Bernie Sanders isn’t driven by racial hatred; he’s driven by political hatred. And that’s bad enough.

the petty and bullying social milieu of the fictional village Jante in *A Fugitive Crosses His Tracks*.) But it is also a stabilizing and moderating force in politics, allowing for the emergence of a subtle and sophisticated and remarkably broad social agreement that contains political disputes. Bernie’s politics, on the other hand, are the polar opposite of Scandinavian: He promises not just confrontation but hostile, theatrical confrontation, demonizing not only his actual opponents but his perceived enemies as well, including the Walton family, whose members are not particularly active in politics these days, and some of whom are notably liberal. That doesn’t matter: If they have a great deal of wealth, they are the enemy. (What about Tom Steyer and George Soros? “False equivalency,” Bernie scoffs.) He knows who Them is: The Koch brothers, who make repeated appearances in every speech; scheming foreigners who are stealing our jobs; bankers, the traditional bogeymen of conspiracy theorists ranging from Father Coughlin and Henry Ford to Louis Farrakhan; Wall Street; etc.

He is steeped in this stuff, having begun his political career with the radical Liberty Union party in the 1970s. Liberty Union sometimes ran its own candidates but generally endorsed candidates from other parties, most often the Socialist Party USA, making a few exceptions: twice for Lenora Fulani’s New Alliance party and once for the Workers World party, a Communist party that split with Henry Wallace’s Progressives over its view of Mao Zedong’s murderous rule and the Soviet Union’s invasion of Hungary—both of which it supported. The radical political language of the 1970s and 1980s spoke of a capitalist conspiracy or a conspiracy of bankers (a conspiracy of Jewish bankers, in the ugliest versions), a notion to which Sanders pays ongoing tribute with the phrase “rigged economy.”

His pose is not the traditional progressive managerial-empiricist posture but a moral one. He is very fond of the word “moral”—

filthy-cheap-goods rhetoric in and around the Bernieverse is troubling. There are many kinds of Us-and-Them politics, and Bernie Sanders, to be sure, is not a national socialist in the mode of Alfred Rosenberg or Julius Streicher.

He is a national socialist in the mode of Hugo Chávez. He isn’t driven by racial hatred; he’s driven by political hatred. And that’s bad enough.

“This is not about me,” Bernie is fond of saying. Instead, he insists, it’s about building a grassroots movement that will be in a permanent state of “political revolution”—his words—against the people he identifies as class enemies: Kochs, Waltons, Republicans, bankers, Wall Street, Them—the numerically inferior Them. His views are totalitarian inasmuch as there is no aspect of life that he believes to be beyond the reach of the state, and they are deeply illiberal inasmuch as he is willing to jettison a great deal of American liberalism—including freedom of speech—if doing so means that he can stifle his enemies’ ability to participate in the political process. He rejects John F. Kennedy’s insistence that “a rising tide lifts all boats”—and he is willing to sink as many boats as is necessary in his crusade against the reality that some people make more money than others.

Part of this is just a parting sentimental gesture from a daft old man (Occupy Geritol!)—soupy feel-good identity politics for aging McGovernites and dopey youngsters in Grateful Dead T-shirts. That an outlier of a senator from Vermont wants to organize American politics as a permanent domestic war on unpopular minorities is, while distasteful, probably not that important.

That Hillary Rodham Clinton made the same speech in Des Moines a day later, on the other hand, is significant, and terrifying.

NR

The Campus-Rape Lie

Bad statistics, shoddy journalism, leftist power grabs, and a crisis that isn't

BY DAVID FRENCH

THERE is a lie that is sweeping American higher education—a lie so compelling that it is motivating the systematic violation of constitutional rights, transforming the most intimate of personal relationships, and spawning a parallel “justice” system of amateur kangaroo courts. It’s a lie that the president, the vice president, the Department of Education, key members of the House and Senate, and virtually every significant Left-liberal publication have told. This lie is teaching a generation of young women that they’re victims—dependent on the state (and their university) for protection—and a generation of young men that they’re all potential predators. It’s a lie that’s been debunked time and again—yet keeps being repeated until it once again swallows the truth.

And what is that lie? That campus life is so dangerous for women that one in five of them will be victims of sexual assault before they leave college. In other words, there is a fully 20 percent chance that, between the moment a young woman starts freshman orientation and the moment she walks in the graduation line, she’ll become a victim of one of the worst crimes that can be visited upon the human body. This terrible number is buttressed by other numbers—that only 1 percent of assailants are ever arrested, charged, and convicted; that only 4 percent of victims ever report their attack to police or campus security; and that only between 2 and 8 percent of rape reports are false. In other words, for hundreds of thousands of women, the university experience is a nightmare combination of physical assault, indifferent or hostile administrators, and justice denied.

The very thought is horrifying, and the horror has been compounded by heart-wrenching individual stories. Women have come forward to tell of terrible attacks and brutal physical violence. Those who follow contemporary American policymaking know that statistics—by themselves—are never enough. Lawmakers and the public have to see the human cost of sex crimes. It’s the individual stories that bring the documentaries, the magazine essays, and the rallies to life. It’s the individual stories that communicate better than anything else the fundamental narrative of the campus-rape crisis: Women’s bodies are under attack, with rates of rape approaching those seen in conflict zones, where rape is used as a weapon of terror.

But even without close analysis, something seems off. Common sense rebels. Why, if there is such a wave of rape, do women flock to colleges in ever-increasing numbers,

with far more women at school than men? Why, if there is such a wave of rape, are parents—including a generation of parents known for “helicoptering” over their kids’ lives, monitoring their classes and their relationships with hour-by-hour text messages—unaware of their daughters’ ordeals? And where did this generation of predatory young men come from? The college-educated are not known to constitute the bulk of America’s criminal underclass, and even if there were “super-predators” on campus, they would have to be super indeed to victimize hundreds of thousands of women—all while enjoying a 99 percent chance of evading law enforcement.

Strangely enough, at the same time that they proclaimed this national crisis, campus activists worked mightily to restrict the means for protecting women. When conservatives suggested allowing women to arm themselves to defend against physical attack, the Left scoffed. When, in October 2013, *Slate* writer Emily Yoffe suggested that women could protect themselves by not drinking to excess, the radical Left pounced, accusing her of fostering “rape culture.” To some feminists, the notion that a woman could or should do anything to protect herself was an act of capitulation to male predators. A similar fate befell a group of young men who invented a nail polish that can reveal the presence of a common “date rape” drug if a woman discreetly dips her finger in a drink. “Rape culture!” the Left cried, once again claiming that adopting self-protective measures somehow implied that rape was “the woman’s fault.”

So, if women weren’t supposed to protect themselves, what *could* be done? The Left turned to its standard playbook: reject self-reliance and launch a government crackdown. In April 2011, the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) skipped through statutory processes—which at the very least require binding federal rules to go through a stage that allows for public notice and comment—to unilaterally issue a “Dear Colleague” letter that immediately and dramatically threatened core constitutional rights. Allegedly empowered by a blanket prohibition in Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 against gender discrimination in educational programs or activities, the letter mandated that colleges apply a “preponderance of the evidence” standard in campus sexual-assault hearings.

This meant that students could be convicted in campus tribunals—often conducted without the benefit of rigorous rules of evidence and in front of barely trained, highly ideological adjudicators—on a mere finding of a 50.01 percent chance of guilt. The threat to due process is obvious. The Department of Education’s letter allows for draconian and career-ruining punishments on the lowest possible standard of proof, without the rules of evidence and of discovery that render even civil litigation (which shares the “preponderance of the evidence” standard) a rigorous, transparent process in which each side can test and probe the other side’s case.

Further, the “Dear Colleague” letter failed to account for the First Amendment. Much of what colleges and universities label “sexual harassment” creating a “hostile environment” is actually constitutionally protected speech. According to the Supreme Court, true “hostile environment” sexual harassment on campus exists only when the unwelcome speech or

conduct is “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim’s access to an educational opportunity or benefit.” In other words, mere “offensiveness” can’t constitute harassment. Nor is a person harassed merely because sexualized words or conduct are “unwelcome.” Yet universities have consistently adopted sweeping rules that allow angry students to file charges on the basis of nothing more than hurt feelings or ideological anger. A classic recent example occurred at Northwestern University, where professor Laura Kipnis found herself fighting off a Title IX complaint because of an essay, published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, in which she decried campus sensitivities over sexual relationships. When Northwestern’s president published a defense of academic freedom in the *Wall Street Journal*, students filed yet another Title IX complaint. When a professor discussed the Kipnis complaint at a faculty meeting, students filed yet again.

In its crackdown, the Obama administration found a willing ally in campus administrators and even some state legis-

researchers who ran the study noted that response rates were low and warned against drawing sweeping conclusions on the basis of their research. Their words were clear: “Although we used the best methodology available to us at the time, there are caveats that make it inappropriate to use the 1-in-5 number in the way it’s being used today, as a baseline or the only statistic when discussing our country’s problem with rape and sexual assault on campus.” The 2014 DOJ report, by contrast, studied sexual assault over time, wasn’t limited to a mere two colleges, was tailored to discover the prevalence of actual crimes, and had a much higher response rate than other surveys.

What about research showing that only a tiny minority of women make false rape complaints and only 1 percent of assailants are ever convicted? Turns out these studies can’t withstand scrutiny either. For example, as Jason Richwine recently noted, one popular study counted as “false” only the 5.9 percent of allegations that were deemed “provably false,” and did not consider false any of the 44.9 percent of cases that

Universities have consistently adopted sweeping rules that allow angry students to file charges on the basis of nothing more than hurt feelings or ideological anger.

latures. California passed an “affirmative consent” law that required college students to obtain ongoing, unambiguous consent at each stage of a sexual encounter. Multiple universities outside California followed suit, and Governor Andrew Cuomo proposed an affirmative-consent law for New York. Yet affirmative-consent laws utterly fail to account for the realities of human interactions. In journalist Cathy Young’s words, such a bill “essentially redefines some 95 percent of human sexual encounters as rape.” Since the existence of prior sexual relations “creates no presumption of consent,” even most marital sex would become rape.

YET just as the crackdown reached its apex, the crisis passed. Or, more precisely, the case for the nonexistent crisis collapsed. Research and reality caught up with common sense.

First, the research. In December 2014, the Department of Justice’s Bureau of Justice Statistics released a report showing that the true incidence of campus rape wasn’t one in five but rather 6.1 per 1,000. Moreover, women are actually safer on campus than off. The “rate of sexual assault was 1.2 times higher for nonstudents.” Critically, the rate of sexual assault has been trending downward since 1997. So when the OCR issued its “Dear Colleague” letter in 2011, it was doing so after a 14-year decline in campus rapes.

The 2014 Department of Justice report was far more rigorous than the study that indicated that one in five college women were raped. The one-in-five study was based on nothing more than an online survey of women at two colleges who were given a \$10 Amazon gift card for completing the questionnaire. Yet even with that inducement, the

“did not proceed” because of lack of evidence or other reasons. In other words, in the logic of the rape-crisis lobby, all rape claims are true unless they are “provably false”—yet our criminal-justice system doesn’t adjudicate claims as “false.” It merely determines whether the state has met its burden of proof. We simply can’t know the percentage of false rape claims, and without knowing the number of actual rapes, we can’t even begin to know the number of actual rapists, much less the percentage who are tried and convicted.

But it wasn’t just the research supporting claims of crisis that collapsed. Some of the most prominent rape “survivors,” put forward after national searches for appropriate victims, were caught telling considerably less than the whole truth. The most famous such incident is of course the collapse of *Rolling Stone*’s story about “Jackie,” a woman allegedly gang-raped at a fraternity party at the University of Virginia. Virtually nothing about her lurid tale proved to be true, and it’s now an open question whether “Jackie” suffered an assault of any kind while at UVA. *Rolling Stone* retracted the story, and the Columbia Journalism School, after a lengthy investigation, declared the story to be a “journalistic failure.”

But that’s not the only case of journalistic failure. A recent documentary, *The Hunting Ground*, has made the rounds of elite campuses and onto Capitol Hill, where it’s been called “terrifyingly true” and an “unblinking look at sexual assaults on campus.” Yet not only does the documentary rely on debunked statistics (the one-in-five number, for example), it also features student victims whose stories fall apart under scrutiny.

On June 1, *Slate*’s Emily Yoffe examined one featured case—that of Kamilah Willingham, a Harvard Law student who claimed that she was drugged and then assaulted (along

with another woman) in her own apartment. She said that university officials were indifferent to her assault, and the film ominously notes that the alleged assailant had previously been charged with sex crimes. As Yoffe explains, while it is true that the young man had been charged, the film fails to tell viewers anything about the defendant's side of the story, fails to refer to the "voluminous" investigatory record, and then—ultimately—fails to tell the viewer that the defendant was actually acquitted of all sex crimes and convicted only of one count of misdemeanor nonsexual touching. Rather than serving as a terrifying example of justice denied, Willingham's case was, in Yoffe's words, "precisely the kind of spontaneous, drunken encounter that administrators who deal with campus sexual-assault accusations say is typical."

But Willingham's story is not the only one that raises questions. In March, Stuart Taylor Jr. wrote on NATIONAL REVIEW's website about the problems with another case featured in *The Hunting Ground*: Erica Kinsman's tale of alleged rape at the hands of star Florida State University (now Tampa Bay Buccaneers) quarterback Jameis Winston. While the film tells Kinsman's side of the story, it neglects to explain that she was found less than credible in two separate proceedings—a criminal investigation led by State Attorney William Meggs, and campus hearings conducted by former Florida supreme-court justice Major Harding. Meggs went so far as to say that Kinsman was not "a witness that we believed we could put on the stand and vouch for."

But for sheer strangeness, it's hard to top the "mattress girl," recent Columbia University graduate Emma Sulkowicz. Upset that a campus court failed to punish her alleged rapist (and glossing over the fact that New York City police also declined to bring charges), she began carrying her mattress around campus as a work of performance art. She instantly became a symbol of the rape "crisis" and even attended the most recent State of the Union address at the invitation of New York Democratic senator Kirsten Gillibrand—the Senate's leading campus-rape alarmist.

Yet her story also fell apart under scrutiny. Her alleged rapist, a young German student, filed suit against Columbia, alleging that the university had violated his rights by essentially conspiring with Sulkowicz to harm an innocent man. As part of that lawsuit, he published voluminous communications with Sulkowicz that complicated and contradicted her narrative. With her story unraveling, she completed her college career with one last piece of "performance art"—a pornographic film that appeared to reenact the alleged assault, a film so graphic and strange that it left even many of her supporters shocked.

While the collapse of the stories of "Jackie," Willingham, Kinsman, and Sulkowicz doesn't prove the absence of crisis—four stories don't prove much of anything in a nation of more than 300 million souls—it's important to remember that these cases were handpicked after nationwide searches. *Rolling Stone* and the producers of *The Hunting Ground* labored mightily to find the most emblematic victims, the people who could tell just the right tale of horrific assault, indifferent universities, and justice denied. If one in five women are assaulted on campus and only 1 percent of assailants convicted, why are true stories so hard to find?



"Mattress girl" Emma Sulkowicz

THESE is no question that campus rapes do occur. While a rate of six per 1,000 is nowhere close to one in five, each rape is a terrible crime, one deserving of not just expulsion from school but prosecution to the full extent of the law. Indeed, sex crimes are too serious to be left to campus tribunals, and it is absurd that the Department of Education is requiring universities to adjudicate what are, in essence, criminal complaints. Crimes should be adjudicated in court, with universities responding to legal findings, not conducting their own tribunals. If a student is found guilty in a criminal proceeding or liable in a civil proceeding—in which both sides are represented by counsel and defendants receive due process—then the university should take punitive action. And while cases proceed, no-contact orders are appropriate and prudent. But the essential narrative of the campus Left is demonstrably false: There is no epidemic of rape, and in fact its incidence is declining. Nor are universities and law enforcement systematically indifferent—indeed, rape is often vigorously prosecuted.

It is that vigorous prosecution that breeds the newest class of campus victims: innocent men. A man accused of sexual assault often enters into a bewildering world of secret

charges, barely trained tribunals, and bizarre rules of evidence, often without a lawyer. His future hangs by a thread.

Former Yale student Patrick Witt—a potential Rhodes scholar and NFL draft pick—saw his future altered by an “informal” sexual-misconduct complaint. An “informal” complaint does not trigger a full investigation or hearing but rather pushes the accused student into a dispute-resolution process. Finding himself compelled to participate in a “mediation,” Witt was unable to determine the charges against him, unable to engage in any fact-finding, and unable even to initiate a “formal” sexual-misconduct proceeding that would have led to an actual hearing and adjudication of the complaint. Instead, he was forced to live with an unresolved complaint—a complaint that was soon enough leaked not just to the Rhodes Trust but also to the *New York Times*. Confidentiality, intended as a shield against embarrassment, was used as a sword to wound a man who could not formally defend himself.

At Amherst, a male student was expelled for sexual assault even though he was “blacked out” at the time of the alleged attack, with the university adjudicators finding that “being intoxicated or impaired by drugs or alcohol is never an excuse.” The “assault” consisted of a woman performing oral sex while he was “blacked out.” When text messages were later discovered that (further) exonerated the expelled student, Amherst refused to reopen the case.

Increasing numbers of men are filing suit, challenging campus procedures and seeking damages for the considerable harm to careers and reputations. At the same time, however, the Department of Education presses on, investigating dozens of campuses for allegedly mishandling sexual-assault cases or failing to protect women from harassment. Yet some of these investigations, such as a Department of Education investigation of Yale, are based on the thinnest of legal reeds. Recall that the legal standard for sexual harassment requires conduct that is “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it *effectively bars the victim’s access to an educational opportunity or benefit*” (emphasis added). But the complaint that led to the investigation of Yale was triggered by a select few offensive incidents that had occurred years apart (including a grand total of three incidents of obscene chants in five years).

While one is tempted to feel sympathy for college administrators who are stuck between the rock of Department of Education investigations and the hard place of an increasing number of lawsuits by aggrieved men, it’s worth noting that they have a way out that they’ve deliberately not taken—filing a legal challenge to the Department of Education’s lawless “Dear Colleague” letter. The letter, issued without the proper rulemaking process, is probably invalid. Colleges are no strangers to legal challenges of federal rules. A coalition of universities challenged the Solomon Amendment—which required universities to allow military recruiters on campus—all the way to the Supreme Court. But the Solomon Amendment case (though legally without merit) was ideologically easy, applauded by campus radicals from coast to coast. Any challenge to the “Dear Colleague” letter would be the exact reverse: legally much stronger but ideologically volatile. The campus Left would explode, accusing any challenging university of endorsing “rape culture.”

So colleges just muddle through, violating students’ First Amendment rights, ignoring students’ rights to due process, and casting about for public sympathy when they still face intense criticism for “not doing enough” to stop sexual assault. Indeed, universities face the possibility of additional federal legislation. Senator Gillibrand and Senator Claire McCaskill (D., Mo.) are sponsoring the bipartisan Campus Accountability and Safety Act, a bill that would expand campus bureaucracy, further undermine due process by providing significant financial incentives for universities to expand their crackdown on accused students, and provide unjustified immunities for students who report alleged sexual crimes—for example, by prohibiting universities from punishing alleged victims for other campus rules violations, such as underage drinking, when they file a complaint against a fellow student.

To criticize the hysteria surrounding campus sexual assault is not to deny the existence of rape and sexual misconduct on campus. Recently, the city of Nashville was shocked by the story of four Vanderbilt football players carrying a drunk and unconscious young woman to a dorm room, laughing at her, and then assaulting her—on camera. It took a jury just three hours to convict the first two defendants to face trial. (The remaining defendants await a trial date.) Rape has always been present in human society. It is simply less common on campus and, thankfully, decreasing in frequency.

There is sexual misconduct in our colleges and universities, but it has little to do with an epidemic of sexual assault and a lot to do with the toxic combination of excess alcohol and a libertine ideology. The sexual revolution has triumphed nowhere more completely than in America’s colleges and universities, yet college is no sexual utopia. Instead, a combination of binge drinking, the ambiguity and confusion that’s often inherent in “casual” sexual encounters, and the differing natures of men and women is creating an atmosphere of hurt, anxiety, and depression. The American Psychological Association has called campus mental-health statistics “grim” and has noted that the number of students seeking help for mental-health issues “has reached increasingly higher levels.” In a 2010 survey, 45.6 percent of respondents reported “feeling things were hopeless,” and 30.7 percent reported “feeling so depressed that it was difficult to function,” during the past twelve months.

While no one should claim that the state of sexual relations on campus is solely responsible for these alarming statistics, matters of the heart cannot be underestimated as a cause. Binge drinking and an alarmingly widespread hookup culture are not proving conducive to human flourishing. Yet the proper response to this wave of sexual regret and confusion is not a government crackdown on intimate relationships, nor is it found in the suppression of free speech or the denial of due process.

The campus-rape crisis is over. In fact, it never even existed. But the last people to acknowledge this reality will be the people who most benefited from the hysteria—radical leftists, who now wield enormous power over speech, justice, and even intimate relationships. They will not yield this power easily, nor will they go quietly. While the crisis never existed, the “crisis” is yet to pass, and it will not pass before more lives are ruined, more rights are trampled, and more lies are told.

NR

California's Balkanized Democrats

Identity politics may splinter the liberal coalition

BY TROY SENIK

BY any reasonable measure, Loretta Sanchez's May entrance into California's U.S. Senate race shouldn't have made for especially compelling news. Sanchez, a ten-term Democratic congresswoman from Orange County, has always been a somewhat comic figure, known more for scheduling ill-advised fundraisers at the Playboy Mansion and sending out eccentric Christmas cards featuring her cat than for any substantive accomplishments. Cementing that image, she even managed to bollix her campaign announcement, accidentally e-mailing out a rough draft to supporters days before she was set to make it official.

Given her marginal status, no one expects Sanchez to pose much of a threat to California attorney general Kamala Harris, the prohibitive favorite in the race to succeed retiring senator Barbara Boxer. But while Sanchez's candidacy might not alter the dynamics of the general-election race in this deep-blue state, it does mark a turning point in California politics: the moment when long-simmering ethnic and racial tensions within the Democratic party spill out into the open.

California has undergone a dramatic demographic transformation in recent decades, with non-whites now making up close to 50 percent of likely Democratic voters in the state, according to research released last year by the Public Policy Institute of California. One might imagine this is good news for the Democratic party, but the downside is that these voters are increasingly divided along racial lines. The showdown between Harris, who is half black and half Tamil Indian, and Sanchez, who is Hispanic, is part of this trend. Many states are projected to undergo similar population shifts in the decades ahead, so California's experience bears observing; it might point to stresses that could one day strain the national Democratic coalition to the breaking point.

CALIFORNIA'S transformation has been a long time coming. Next year's Senate election will mark the first time that the state has had an open seat in the upper chamber since 1992. In the intervening quarter century, the state has become, in demographic terms, an entirely different place. In the 1990 census, California was 57 percent white, 26 percent Hispanic, 9 percent Asian American, and 7 percent black. In 2013,

the Census Bureau estimated those numbers at 39 percent white, 38.4 percent Hispanic, 14.1 percent Asian American, and 6.6 percent black. Most demographers agree that at some point last year, California became the second state in the nation with a Latino plurality (New Mexico was the first).

If these changes were evenly distributed between the two major parties, the political implications might not be so striking. But with non-white California voters disproportionately flocking to Democrats, the result is a wildly different coalition on the left than the one that first elected Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein in 1992. That creates an implicit tension: While California Democrats are increasingly banking on young, racially diverse voters, the party is helmed by a collection of elderly white people who have dominated the state's politics for decades.

Governor Jerry Brown turned 77 in April. He won his first statewide election nearly 45 years ago, when he was elected California's secretary of state in 1970. Boxer, 74, won her first race (for a seat on the Marin County Board of Supervisors) nearly four decades ago. Feinstein, who will turn 82 this month, began her electoral career in 1969. Next year, Boxer will retire. Two years later, Brown will be termed out and Feinstein will probably call it a career. At that point, a new generation of Democratic politicians will take center stage. The odds that three more white candidates will win those offices approach zero. In fact, the chances are better that none will.

While it's too early to get a good handle on the races to succeed Brown and Feinstein, the campaign for Boxer's seat is emblematic of the new dynamic. Within days of the senator's January decision to retire, Harris had thrown her hat into the ring, quickly rolling out a string of high-profile endorsements from Senator Elizabeth Warren, the activist group EMILY's List, and other influential leftists. It was a bit of shock-and-awe campaigning clearly designed to freeze out competitors. And it worked insofar as it dissuaded Harris's most prominent potential rival, Lieutenant Governor Gavin Newsom. One group of Democrats, however, would not be so easily deterred: the party's growing cohort of Hispanics.

Why, Latino Democrats wondered aloud (often to the press), were party elders flocking to Harris without so much as pausing to consider a Hispanic alternative? Why was Governor Brown publicly suggesting that former Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa—widely considered the Hispanic candidate best positioned to make a senatorial run—ought to defer to the attorney general? Why were Hispanics, whose ranks dwarfed the combined totals of the black and Asian-American populations, being told to sit down, shut up, and go along for the ride?

If you accept the logic of identity politics, that argument has some merit. In the years since Boxer was first elected to the Senate, Hispanics have become one of the most influential forces in the Golden State. From 2000 to 2010, they were responsible for 90 percent of the state's population growth. And that growth has overwhelmingly worked to the Left's benefit—59 percent of Hispanic likely voters are registered Democrats, compared with 18 percent who are registered Republicans.

These gains have had electoral effects down-ballot: The 120-seat state legislature has 22 members in the Latino Legislative Caucus, and ten of the state's 53 seats in the U.S. House are held by Latinos (13 if you count members of Portuguese descent).

Mr. Senik, a former speechwriter for George W. Bush, is the editor-in-chief of Ricochet and a columnist for the Orange County Register.



U.S. representative Loretta Sanchez



California attorney general Kamala Harris

Nonetheless, no Latino Democrat has risen to the commanding heights of the Senate or the governor's office.

Racial fault lines are clearly emerging within the party. When Brown suggested that Villaraigosa step aside (which he did in February), former assembly speaker Fabian Núñez told the *Los Angeles Times*, "We ought to be more politically mature than to simply dismiss a potential Latino candidate as someone who has to await his turn." San Diego assemblywoman Lorena Gonzales added, "There was a feeling we were being discounted and discarded."

The anger wasn't trained only on the white liberal gentry, however. It also focused on black Democrats such as legendary former assembly speaker Willie Brown and L.A. city-council president Herb Wesson, both of whom rushed to support Harris in the hopes of seeing California elect its first black senator. That didn't go down well with Hispanics. When Willie Brown joined the chorus of those asking Villaraigosa to step aside, the *Sacramento Bee's* editorial board lamented, "Surely someone realizes that dismissing the state's politically and demographically ascendant Latinos . . . is the wrong way to achieve Democratic party unity."

THE operative question going forward is whether anything will be sufficient to achieve that unity, given the roiling racial tensions within the party. The basic dynamics are as follows: Whites and African Americans are both on the decline as a percentage of the state population, but both punch above their weight within the Democratic party. By contrast, Hispanics and Asian Americans (the latter of whom constitute the state's fastest-growing demographic group) are ascendant, but both struggle to get their voters to the polls (in the case of Hispanics, dramatically so). That's a recipe for unhappiness across the board.

In the African-American community, the primary anxiety is that blacks will be marginalized as Hispanic and Asian-American power grows. In San Francisco—the city where Willie Brown once exercised near-monarchical power as mayor—African Americans have seen their percentage of the population decline by more than half since 1970. After the 2010 election, there was only one black member on the eleven-person San Francisco board of supervisors, Malia Cohen—and, with an eye on the changing demographics of her district, she was taking lessons in Cantonese. Shortly after Cohen's inauguration, the *San Francisco Chronicle* speculated that she might be the last African American ever to hold a seat on the board. (That proved premature—another black member, London Breed, would join her in 2012.)

Blacks in Los Angeles have similar fears. From 1990 to 2013, the African-American share of L.A.'s population dropped from 14 percent to 9.5 percent. In 2013, L.A. city councilman Bernard Parks, noting that newly minted mayor Eric Garcetti had been elected by a coalition of whites and Latinos, told local public radio: "Our population numbers and our participation are diminishing. What's worrisome is you could become a non-issue in a city of 4 million people."

At the same time that African Americans are seeing their political fortunes flag in Los Angeles, the city's Asian-American population is demonstrating its rising power. That became clear in May, when the Korean American David Ryu—a relative political outsider—became only the second Asian American elected to the city council since 1850. He probably won't be the last.

From 2000 to 2010, the Asian-American population in Los Angeles County grew twice as fast as the Hispanic population—and more than five times as fast as the general population. By 2013, nearly 15 percent of Los Angeles County was Asian. And that kind of growth isn't limited to Los Angeles or San Francisco

SANCHEZ: SCOTT J. FERRELL/CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERLY/GETTY IMAGES; HARRIS: KEVORK DJANSEZIAN/GETTY IMAGES

(where Asian Americans make up more than one-third of the population). Statewide, the Asian contingent is nearly 5.5 million strong—there are more Asian Americans in California than there are people in Colorado—and it's projected to make up around 20 percent of the state's population within two decades.

The Asian-American population represents the wild card in California's game of demographic poker. For one thing, it's hard to generalize about a cohort that's so heterogeneous, including vast numbers of Filipinos, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indians, Koreans, and Japanese, in addition to many smaller groups. For another, it's not clear that Asians are even firmly in the Democratic camp. The 2012 National Asian-American Survey found that most Asians in California (52 percent) did not identify with either major political party, though far more leaned Democratic than Republican.

While most of the state's prominent Asian-American politicians are Democrats, there are exceptions. In Orange County, Asians hold a majority on the county board of supervisors. All three Asian members—one Vietnamese, one Japanese, and one Korean—are Republicans. In November, of the handful of state-legislative seats that the California GOP picked up, three were won by Asian-American women from the southern part of the state.

MARGINAL GOP gains aside, this demographic revolution theoretically ought to be a boon for the “diversity is our strength” Democratic party. In reality, however, the party's emphasis on identity politics—the notion that these blocs (excepting whites) should self-consciously identify on the basis of race—is making the big tent feel a little cramped. Rather than coming together as a real-life rainbow coalition, these groups are learning that the logic of identity politics is zero-sum: For one group to win, another has to lose.

The black-Hispanic feud over the upcoming U.S. Senate race therefore isn't an anomaly. Last year, it was Asian-American Democrats in the state senate who blocked black and Hispanic efforts to undo California's prohibition on affirmative action in higher education; they feared that racial quotas would negatively affect the admission rates of Asian-American students. During the redistricting that followed the 2010 census, Wesson (the African-American president of the Los Angeles city council) provoked an uprising among Korean Americans when he attempted to keep L.A.'s Koreatown neighborhood outside the boundaries of a new district being constructed with an eye toward putting an Asian American on the council. And during Loretta Sanchez's 2010 congressional race, in which she ran against an Asian-American Republican whose family came to the United States shortly before the fall of Saigon, the congresswoman declared in a Univision interview that “the Vietnamese and the Republicans are, with an intensity, trying to take this seat.” Her intended target was a member of the GOP, but the remark earned her the contempt of plenty of Asians in her own party.

Black and Hispanic Democrats—many of whom come from communities that are home to some of the state's worst public schools—have also bucked the white liberal establishment's support for teachers' unions (the largest source of campaign cash for California Democrats), aggressively pushing for education reform up to and including the broader use of charter

schools. When Marshall Tuck, a former executive at the L.A. charter firm Green Dot, challenged union-backed state superintendent of public education Tom Torlakson last year, the strength of this trend became apparent. Tuck couldn't overcome Torlakson's support from big labor, but some curious data showed up in the final polling before the election. Tuck—by any reasonable measure the more conservative candidate in the field (albeit still a Democrat)—led by double digits among Latinos and African Americans (he also held a lead with Asian Americans, though it was smaller). Given a few more years of demographic churn, elections like that one could start to go the other way.

So far, these are only fault lines in California's Democratic coalition. But, as residents of this seismically active state well know, you can never anticipate the moment when a major earthquake will arrive. What happens if Hispanics continue to feel that they're being forced to ride in coach in a state where they're on pace to one day constitute a majority of the population? What happens if the dwindling percentage of African Americans feels increasingly marginalized by the ascendant Asian and Hispanic populations? What happens when Asian Americans—often considered more moderate and pro-business than other members of the Democratic coalition—start taking notice of how much success many of their leaders are having within the GOP?

A gloomy Republican (there's no other kind in California) might predict that Democrats will somehow find a way to make all these groups cohere. They've been at this business for a while, after all. That could well be true, but it underestimates just how big the task will be. Large political coalitions are, almost by definition, unstable. And while it may have been relatively easy to patronize minority groups when they were small segments of the electorate, those days are coming to an end in California. According to “States of Change,” an exhaustive demographic analysis done by scholars at the American Enterprise Institute, the Center for American Progress, and the Brookings Institution, California will be 68 percent non-white within 20 years. The political battles that this change engenders will almost certainly make today's dust-ups look insignificant.

For the sake of the national party, California Democrats need to demonstrate how to effectively manage the transition—because, as is often the case, what's occurring in the Golden State today will spread throughout the country in short order. According to “States of Change,” within the next 30 years, eleven other states will also see whites shrink to a minority of eligible voters (if they aren't already): Alaska, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, and Texas. By 2060, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Virginia are projected to join their ranks.

In recent years, a cottage industry has developed on the progressive left to peddle the notion that America's changing complexion will all but guarantee Democratic political dominance in the decades ahead. The most striking feature of this analysis is that it unquestioningly assumes non-white voters' party loyalty in perpetuity. Is it a mistake to take the loyalty of Asian Americans, Hispanics, and African Americans for granted? In California, we're about to find out. **NR**

She Said She Said

HILLARY'S speeches are like Roman candles that blurb out wet clods of sawdust—a flash, perhaps, but no sparkle, no light. In her Roosevelt Island rebooted reset retooled relaunch, there were lines like this: Republicans “turn their backs on gay people who love each other.”

Well, if they happen to be doing so at the time, that's only decent; give them some privacy. As for the rest of her campaign preview, it was pledge-o-rama. She pledged to fight for the working people, of course. She will work for the fighting people. She will work and fight against those evil men who pick their teeth with whittled-down finger bones of orphans after a meal of polar-bear steak. She pledged to float bonds for infrastructure, which never means “useful roads people want to take” but does mean trains that go from one liberal enclave to another at 87 m.p.h. and make everyone aboard feel all European 'n' stuff. When you get to your destination, you take the light rail to the streetcar to the bike-rental place, then pedal to your meeting in bike lanes paid for with infrastructure bonds. To encourage this behavior, major roadways will be regularly strewn with nails.

She pledged to support a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*, because if there's nothing that bespeaks an Olympian temperament far from the base clay of personal agendas, it's rewriting the Constitution to overturn a case about a mean movie someone made about her.

She pledged to close the income gap. Her husband said he would stop taking money for speeches if she won, so that might help, but she probably has something more in mind. Given the rich diversity of ideas on the left, you're hard pressed to figure what she might do, but you suspect it would involve taking money away from Group A and creating 39,945 programs designed to spend 47 percent of the money on administrative costs while figuring out whether the program should be called Action for Communities or Communities for Action.

As the *New York Times* put it: “Mrs. Clinton [said] her candidacy is for ‘factory workers and food servers who stand on their feet all day, for the nurses who work the night shift, for the truckers who drive for hours.’” Yes, nothing captures the Dickensian depredations of the modern economy like the thought of truckers *driving for hours*. And nothing would enliven their lonely hours like the thought of Hillary Clinton fighting for them, possibly by calling in the CEO of a satellite-radio company and punching him repeatedly in the jaw until he agrees to play more Willie Nelson.

But what of the interns? The *Guardian* reports that the Clinton campaign relies on unpaid interns to do the “grassroots” work. Lots of unpaid people. The income-inequality gap between them and the Clintons is equal to the space between the bottom of the Mariana Trench and the far side of Pluto, but perhaps Mrs. Clinton tells herself that

there's no income gap in this situation because the interns don't have an income at all.

She pledged to fix the tax code to ensure that it fulfills its true purpose: reconfiguring economic activity so that it does not offend the moral sensibilities of college sophomores.

It's odd: After six years of progressive government, things sound bad. Things even sound worse.

Well, nothing another eight years of twice as much government can't fix. The failure of a trillion dollars to solve a problem is only proof you should have spent two.

You can't just give people policy, though. You need to thread your remarks with pop-culture references so that people think you waste your time on anodyne twaddle like everyone else. Hillary's speech contained this up-to-the-minute note:

There may be some new voices in the presidential Republican choir, but they're all singing the same old song. A song called “Yesterday.” They believe in yesterday.

Well, some yesterdays. And for good reasons. Yesterday is full of useful lessons. The part about forgetting the past and being doomed to repeat it comes to mind when contemplating the reinstallation of a Clinton in the White House, for starters.

It depends which yesterday you're talking about. The Bush economy after the tax cut? The Reagan boom that filled the nation's coffers after the specter of Carter was extirpated? The productive and culturally cohesive Ike years? The years of patriotism and determination during that unpleasantness in the early '40s? It's one thing to say that America's best days are ahead of us and a new century requires new perspectives. But if one wishes to portray the opposition as sad, frightened people clinging to the withered efflorescence of another era, maybe quoting Beatles lyrics isn't the best way.

The Clintons used Fleetwood Mac's “Don't Stop Thinkin' about Tomorrow” in their 1992 convention finale, and they danced. In front of everyone. (Imagine JFK doing the Mashed Potato after making his acceptance speech.) That song told everyone that “yesterday's gone,” a piece of piercing pop insight echoed by Mrs. Clinton in her Beatles reference this time around. It's true. But yesterday left something behind: cities, symphonies, paintings, skyscrapers, highways, flags on the moon. Without the accomplishments of yesterday, there would be no today for the progressives to despise, no tomorrow for them to worship. It would seem wise to believe not just in yesterday, but in all those yesterdays, since they left such magnificent evidence of their existence. You may not believe in yesterday, but yesterday had the foresight to believe in you.

You'd think she knew this. The only reason she has for running is who she used to be.

NR



The Long View BY ROB LONG

From the Twitter feed of @donaldjtrump-potus

The USA turnaround starts tomorrow as soon as I take the oath of office and attend to a few personal duties such as negotiating a deal for a Tanger Outlet mall. My business is USA's business as I said many times during the campaign.

I keep forgetting that I have a son named Eric. Need to remember that. Help me out, tweeps!

Have decided it's more of an ultra premium experience for me to chopper onto the podium for the swearing in etc. Walking and the limo thing is everything that's wrong with America. Chopper, whoosh, swear in, speech, whoosh, chopper. #makeamericagreatagain

I'd like to thank the literally millions of people who witnessed my amazing inauguration in person and also the billions of viewers who made it the number one show this week in prime time.

Have just turned in the manuscript to my new book "The Trump Turnaround" chronicling my turnaround miracle of the USA country and economy which will take place in the next few years. Pre order on Amazon now!

Here's the thing: if the Chinese continue to devalue their currency which is the sole reason they're currently on top from an economic basis then we have no choice but to

Sorry! Last tweet got cut off!

Air Force One needs to be taken to a whole nother level. We are going to

make America great again, starting with leather seats and better fixtures. #makeamericagreatagain

Let me tell you something. People say, Mr. Trump are you really going to build a wall between us and Mexico? And I say, I am not a dummy. I am not going to build a wall. I am going to license a wall.

To the haters and the losers and the dummies who thought I wouldn't make it here, enjoy this pic of me in the Oval Office. Warning: NSFW twitpic/456hs/90oi

Hey @helenmirren, I know you're married etc. but I think you'd be a sexy and superb first lady. Let me know if there's interest on your side. I'll handle @melaniatrump. #makeamericagreatagain

First call I got as president? From Bill Clinton. Classy guy. Problems at home, of course, but a classy move on his part to call me up and offer his help. Can't have been an easy few months for him since November.

You know what the first thing is that you notice when you walk into the White House from the basis of being a resident? Tacky, old, smelly. Need some pizzazz. Job one.

Here's the thing: if the Chinese continue to devalue their currency which is the sole reason they're currently on top from an economic basis then we have no choice but to

Sorry! Last tweet got cut off!

Getting totally unacceptable push-back from the usual places about my idea to replace current old White House staff with runners-up in the Miss USA pageants, of which I am the sole owner via an LLC.

@vladimirputin my net worth is con-

siderably larger than yours and so therefore I think it imperative upon you to make the first move in terms of communication with me. This tweet doesn't count.

I have directed my attorneys at the Trump Organization to register copyright and trade dress claims for Trump Isis. Next will sue Isis org wherever they are for intellectual property infringement. THIS IS HOW IT BEGINS!

I thought @kanyewest did a superb job with the invocation at the inaugural and I don't understand all the fuss about the topless lady. This is America. THIS IS AMERICA!

Because I understand the concept of luxury style apartment townhome living, it's easy for me to see how the entire second floor of this residence could be upgraded and optimized.

I don't want to get into a whole constitutional thing but not crazy about the hygienic cleanliness of many senators and congress people. Lots of handshaking and touching which is maybe the reason the country is in such a mess. #purell #ebola #makeamericagreatagain

Negotiating with Isis is a piece of cake. Have traded licensing rights for parts of Iraq and Syria. #winwin #makeamericagreatagain

The USA turnaround hits full speed starting tomorrow just as soon as I get back from my book launch party at an exclusive high net worth event at Trump International Hotel.

Here's the thing: if the Chinese continue to devalue their currency which is the sole reason they're currently on top from an economic basis then we have no choice but to

Sorry! Last tweet got cut off! #makeamericagreatagain

Books, Arts & Manners

¿Se Habla Coulter?

JAY NORDLINGER



¡Adios, America! *The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hellhole*, by Ann Coulter (Regnery, 400 pp., \$27.99)

ANN COULTER is bold, brash, provocative, talented, fearless, witty, and outrageous. If she were on the left, she'd be lionized. (Lionessized?) She'd be widely regarded as an adornment to society. But she is not on the left.

She is on the right, and a darling of the Right. But she does not fear to depart from the Right. (She seems not to fear anything.) For instance, she is an avid fan of Mitt Romney. (It may surprise liberals to know, but he's a *bête noire* of the Right.) And in a column last year, she blasted right-wing critics of Senator Mitch McConnell for "groupthink" and "mob behavior."

Clearly, this is a woman who thinks for herself.

She has written a string of bestsellers, which typically feature her picture on the cover and a one-word title: "Treason," "Godless," "Mugged," etc. Her latest book has her picture on the cover but not a one-word title. It's a two-word title, complete with upside-down exclamation point: "¡Adios, America!" The subtitle is "The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hellhole."

From the subtitle, a person might think this book is a crazy rant, and there are crazy-rant touches, for Coulter writes

flamboyantly. But this is a serious book making serious points.

"America's suicidal immigration policies," writes Coulter, "are the single biggest threat facing the nation." Every other issue, she says, pales in comparison with immigration. If immigration is not reckoned with, we will lose the country, she believes.

Her contention is that the people, or People, have long wanted a clampdown on immigration, but the elites, or Elites, have thwarted them. I'm skeptical of such arguments. I'm afraid that, in a democracy, people get what they want, or at least a majority do. But Coulter has a case.

For one thing, as she notes, it's hard to get an "honest debate" on immigration. Question our current policies and practices, and you're apt to be called a bigot, a

portable to break the law. Perhaps illegal aliens should have considered that before coming.

Who else says that? Either in print or in private?

Day in, day out, we Americans talk about our problems: child poverty, teen pregnancy, illiteracy, crime, and so on. What we don't do, usually, is link those problems to mass immigration. And they *are* linked, Coulter argues. She has been watching these issues for a long time. In the 1990s, she worked for the Senate Judiciary Committee, specializing in problems of crime and immigration.

She says what others shrink from saying—including about the character of national culture. The melting pot has been broken apart, angrily and proudly, by the multiculturalists. Years ago, I heard my

If immigration is not reckoned with, we will lose the country, Ann Coulter believes.

xenophobe, and a racist. "If only our borders were policed as well as our speech," writes Coulter. That is a prime example of her style.

The Associated Press has banned the term "illegal immigrant." Senator Rand Paul has spoken of "undocumented citizens" (perhaps inadvertently).

Coulter points out that when a gang of illegals commits a terrible crime—rape, let's say—the media are mum about the particulars of the criminals. Their ethnicity, nationality, or immigration status, for example. But when Duke lacrosse players or University of Virginia frat boys are accused of rape—falsely—there is no reticence about the particulars. Quite the opposite.

She's good at that: making interesting or unusual points. I'll cite you another one:

I don't mean to be obtuse, but why is it a crisis that illegal aliens are "living in the shadows"? . . . It is not a crisis for Americans that other people have come into their country illegally and now find it uncomfortable to be living here breaking the law. It's *supposed* to be uncom-

colleague Ramesh Ponnuru say something striking: It's not so much that we have an immigration problem as that we have a problem of mass illegal immigration from one country, Mexico.

Coulter pleads that she has nothing against Mexico. "Love the food!" But she has concerns (to put it mildly) about lopsided immigration from our southern neighbor.

Incidentally, Jay Leno was complaining earlier this year about the absurd political correctness of young people. He gave an illustration. When Leno was host of *The Tonight Show*, an intern said to him, "I'm getting lunch, Mr. Leno. What would you like?" Leno said, "I don't know. Where are you going?" The intern said, "We're getting Mexican." Leno said he didn't like Mexican all that much. The intern said, "Whoa, that's kind of racist." Leno was, and remains, stunned.

The demographic transformation of California is stunning (and cautionary). It has important political implications, among others. Does anyone think that Ronald Reagan, for all his skills, could get

within a mile of the governorship in today's California?

Some Democrats have been open—gleefully open—about what mass immigration means for their party's fortunes. Coulter cites a few of them, including one who exults in “McGovern's revenge.” (Senator George McGovern, the 1972 Democratic presidential nominee, lost 49 states to Nixon.) (It occurs to me that Watergate should have been revenge enough.)

Reading Coulter, I thought of a Briton named Andrew Neather, who worked as an aide to Tony Blair and other Labour ministers. In 2009, he made an amazing admission: that Labour's policy of mass immigration was intended “to make the U.K. truly multicultural,” and “to rub the Right's nose in diversity.”

Coulter says, with characteristic aplomb—or outrageousness—“Immigration is how the Left decided to punish America.”

To most of us conservatives, it's plain that a social-welfare state is incompatible with mass immigration. Coulter has penned a formula: “Third World immigration + massive welfare state + political correctness = *The End of America*.” She adds that “we no longer ask anything of immigrants in terms of assimilation. We can't. That would be ‘racist.’”

So, what to do? Coulter wants to secure the border, period. She wants to cut off illegal immigration. Only then will she entertain what to do about the millions of illegals already here. I consider this a bit of a dodge, but it's useful, particularly to political candidates. In any event, Coulter also wants a total moratorium on immigration.

You know who else did, once upon a time? In 1995, to be exact? Arianna Huffington, who went on to great fame as the founder of the (liberal) *Huffington Post*. Twenty years ago, she was on William F. Buckley Jr.'s team in a *Firing Line* debate on immigration. She argued for a moratorium, or a “pause,” as she and her teammates called it, to allow the pot to do some melting.

Some reasonable-sounding people on Capitol Hill and elsewhere say, “Let's do a deal: both border security and amnesty. A nice balance.” Coulter says, “Don't make me laugh.” She's been around too long to buy that one. She knows that, as with spending cuts and tax hikes, you get one and not the other—i.e., neither the

border security nor the spending cuts. Just the amnesty and the tax hikes.

In one of her closing flourishes, Coulter writes, “Americans love to mock the French for rolling over for Hitler, but at least they had Panzers rolling through Paris. America has chosen to do nothing as our country is taken away from us without a shot fired.”

As you have seen, she is entertaining and over-the-top. I have a high tolerance for hyperbole (especially coming from an ally). But Coulter can abuse the privilege of exaggerating, stereotyping, and insulting.

She has occasion to recall Amadou Diallo, the 22-year-old immigrant from Guinea whom police in New York shot dead in 1999. It was a tragic misunderstanding. Coulter says that Diallo “got himself killed for not speaking the language”—he did not understand that he was supposed to put his hands up. It was “death-by-lack-of-English-skills.” I hated the political use that the Left made of the shooting, and Diallo *did* lie, flagrantly, as Coulter points out, on his asylum application. But he *is* dead.

Like Coulter, I'm an immigration restrictionist, but sometimes wincingly so. Yesterday, I was in a bank, because I needed to order new checks. The teller was a young Latina immigrant, meltingly beautiful—plus kind, winsome, and competent. “To eat,” as my grandmother would say. I thought, “I wish I could trade 20 million native-born for 20 million of her.” But such thinking is unrigorous (to be gentle with myself).

In 2003, Bill Buckley reviewed a Coulter book, deploring its excesses. But he also praised it for its “fun and shrewdness,” and even for its “mischief.” Yes. You will want to hear out Jeb Bush and the *Wall Street Journal* on immigration—they are conservatives on the other side. But you'll want to hear out Ann, too, and you'll enjoy doing so, I bet.

Like the guy in the movie, she's “mad as hell” and “not going to take this anymore.” But she's merrily mad.

Her book is dedicated to M. Stanton Evans, the beloved conservative journalist, and mentor to many, who died earlier this year. And in the acknowledgments, where an author absolves those he thanks from responsibility for his views, she writes, “Everyone mentioned here agrees with every single word in the book. Don't let them tell you otherwise.” **NR**

Great Creators

RICHARD BROOKHISER



The Fellowship: The Literary Lives of the Inklings, by Philip Zaleski and Carol Zaleski (Farrar, Straus, 656 pp., \$30)

THE Inklings were a mid-century club of writers and talkers who met twice a week in Oxford, Thursday nights in the Magdalen College rooms of C. S. Lewis, Tuesday mornings at a pub, the Eagle and Child (known to regulars as the Bird and Baby). All were interested in the power of words, stories, and myths; most were Christians. They saw the two interests as related (in the beginning was the Word). *The Fellowship* focuses on four of them—Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Owen Barfield, and Charles Williams.

The Inklings were a productive group, and so are those who have written about them. The bibliography of *The Fellowship* devotes two pages to a discussion of other bibliographies, and 22 pages to individual titles. What are my credentials for adding my mite to this hoard?

When I was ten or eleven, an older boy at Scout camp recounted the story of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings*. I was enthralled. I bought the paperback of the first volume; I have it still, held together by tape. Over the years I read the complete trilogy 30 times, the last time aloud to my wife, and read other works by Tolkien, none of which I liked (when *The Silmarillion* came out I said I liked it in my review for NR, but loyalty made me a liar). I came to Lewis in college, too late for the Narnia stories, but I read various apologetic and critical works. Barfield and Williams were no more than names to me.

They seem not much more in *The Fellowship*, partly because they spend



J. R. R. Tolkien, C. S. Lewis, Owen Barfield, Charles Williams

so much time offstage. Williams, who joined the Inklings when he was employed by Oxford University Press, died suddenly at age 59. Barfield, an early friend of Lewis, spent arid years working as a solicitor, enjoying little success until a late-life move to the United States. Both men were also more than a little nuts. Early on Barfield developed an intriguing theory of language: Words are miniature histories of consciousness, retaining all the meanings that those who used them have given them over time. But he was also a devotee of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian crackpot with a Theory-of-Everything. (Sample: There were two Jesuses in Bethlehem, one a reincarnation of Zarathustra, the other of Buddha; when they were twelve, they became the same person.) Williams was a charismatic talker who impressed W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot, and Dylan Thomas as well as the Inklings. He was both a devout Anglican and a believer in Christian magic. At the recommendation of friends (and Eliot, who wrote the introduction to it), I read one of his novels, *All Hallows' Eve*. It has an arresting heroine and moments of wisdom and sorrow, but the villain is preposterous, a sinister Jewish magician who wants to take over the world. You had to be there. So *The Fellowship* is in effect an enriched double biography of its two most famous subjects, Tolkien and Lewis.

John Ronald Reuel Tolkien was born to English parents in the Orange Free State, but was taken by his mother to England when he was an infant. His father died and his mother converted to Catholicism, incurring the wrath of her chapel-going relatives. Even as a boy he made up languages and myths. One of his first jobs was with the OED; he worked on w-words, including “waggle”

and “walrus.” In 1925 he landed a professorship of Anglo-Saxon at Oxford.

Tolkien was a slow worker. One anecdote in *The Fellowship* describes him helping out in the garden of a friend; he did a splendid job, but it took forever. The tortoise produced two seminal works. His 1936 lecture “Beowulf: The Monsters and the Critics” rescued the poem from antiquarians; Tolkien argued that it was a great tale of heroism in a hostile world. In private he labored on a body of legend about Middle Earth, a world he had made up. He wrote a child’s book about some of its inhabitants, *The Hobbit*, published in 1937, then spun the longer, darker story that became *The Lord of the Rings*, which was not published until 1954–55.

Clive Staples Lewis (“Jack” to friends) was born and raised in Belfast. He looked, the Zaleskis write, like “the neighborhood butcher.” He once said that there had been a break in Western civilization after *Persuasion* and the Waverley novels; he seemed to have read everything written before that break, and could recite long swatches at will. He was combative, generous, and a great lecturer; Magdalen College made him a tutor and a fellow in 1925, the year of Tolkien’s professorship.

Tolkien and Lewis met soon after. Early in the Thirties they became the leading lights in the Inklings, a discussion group founded by an undergraduate. Members met to read works in progress and to talk. About what? “Torture, Tertullian, bores, the contractual theory of medieval kingship, and odd place-names,” reads one account. They also talked about Christianity. Tolkien helped lead Lewis, who had been a young-adult rationalist, back to belief. A key moment was an all-night walk in 1931 with Hugo Dyson, a third academic friend. Tolkien argued that the life of Jesus was a myth

that was true. Lewis was convinced—though Tolkien was always irked that he became an Anglican, not a Catholic.

Lewis had the more versatile mind. His Christian work switch-hits between argument and storytelling. His polemical style was straightforward and earnest, without the dancing-elephant levity of Chesterton. He relied heavily on two arguments: *aut Deus, aut malus homo* (a man who said of himself what Jesus said must either be God or be evil); and the self-contradiction of naturalism (if reason is only an evolved process, it can have no validity). The Zaleskis suggest a problem with the first argument: We do find truth in people whom we do not credit entirely (e.g., the Dalai Lama). Elizabeth Anscombe, a Catholic convert and a student of Wittgenstein, poked at Lewis’s second argument in a debate with him at Oxford in 1948: Reason has internal consistency, which does not depend on the limitations of those who reason.

Lewis’s stories rely on their charm or force, which can both be considerable. *The Screwtape Letters*, a devil’s correspondence with his nephew, is keen: Hell, it turns out, is a bureaucracy. *The Great Divorce* (souls in hell can take a bus to heaven), *Out of the Silent Planet* (set on Mars), and *Perelandra* (on Venus) have scenes of wonder and strangeness. Lewis’s large and never-abating sales make him one of the most prominent Christians of the 20th century. John Paul II probably tops him, but popes have many divisions. Billy Sunday? Billy Graham? Arguable.

Tolkien’s mind was more limited, but more powerful. Middle Earth is an astonishing creation. Step back, and it is full of gaps: no worship, no eros, no money, no farming (Hobbits smoke tobacco, but what does everybody eat?).

The reader never steps back, though, because the languages and proper names that Tolkien devised for his characters imply (as Barfield might have said) entire cultures. Not only is each language internally consistent; they play off each other in a way that suggests different civilizations: rustic, barbaric, imperial, savage, otherworldly. For fanboys the trilogy's appendices lay out a political backstory of wars and rulers, as credible as textbook lists of Egyptian dynasties or Roman emperors.

The final reason *The Lord of the Rings* persuades is that it is a war story—something the Inklings knew firsthand. Lewis and Tolkien served in World War I, Tolkien at the Somme. In World War II, Tolkien served as an air-raid warden and had a son in the RAF; Lewis joined the Home Guard and gave talks to chaplains. Tolkien's Enemy, Sauron, is Satan, or at least Moloch, which makes skeptical readers balk. But Hitler was a good human equivalent, and Wilhelmine Germany—even discounting British propaganda—was worse than we now often acknowledge.

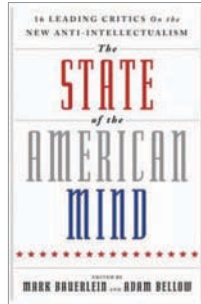
Early in *Don Quixote* the priest burns the books of romance that have addled the hero. It is Cervantes's way of clearing the decks of decadent Arthurian crapola and making way for real people. It's not just that the Don and Sancho encounter shepherds, students, noblemen, and hussies rather than giants and wizards; it is that they think and talk just as you and I do. In England, at the same time, Shakespeare was writing to similar effect. Western lit rolled on for three centuries, performing variations on these feats. It is odd that Lewis admired *Persuasion*; the walk-ons in Jane Austen have more individuality than everyone in his oeuvre put together.

Yet even in realism's heyday, writers looked over the edges, for bigger shapes and primary colors: demon lovers (Heathcliff), strange places (Lilliput, Innsmouth), larger-than-life characters (Leatherstocking, Fagin). Even Cervantes took the Don into the Cave of Montesinos to learn about death.

The Inklings made an open march back to myth. Now new-made myths overwhelm us, most of them telling garbage (*Star Wars*), some of them telling (*Star Trek* the TV series, J. K. Rowling). Lewis died in 1963, the same day as JFK; Tolkien lived ten years longer (I wrote him a fan letter, which he graciously answered). Their books march on. **NR**

The Way We Teach Today

M. D. AESCHLIMAN



The State of the American Mind: 16 Leading Critics on the New Anti-Intellectualism, edited by Mark Bauerlein and Adam Bellow (Templeton, 280 pp., \$27.95)

“THE effect of Dewey’s philosophy on the design of curricular systems was devastating,” Richard Hofstadter wrote over 50 years ago in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Mark Bauerlein and Adam Bellow have edited a superb collection of essays on different aspects of American culture and life that extends, deepens, and updates Hofstadter’s critique of the naïve and feckless naturalism of John Dewey that now pervades and eviscerates our culture.

The editors rightly give pride of place in their volume to a lead essay by the literary theorist and educational reformer E. D. Hirsch Jr., of the University of Virginia, one of the most distinguished scholars and thinkers in the past half century. Hirsch’s *Validity in Interpretation* (1967) remains a fundamental work in the defense of decent norms of rationality and interpretation that have been engulfed since then in the tide of French-Nietzschean irrationalism and know-nothing naturalism now so well established in our universities. Hirsch early caught the attention and approval of

Mr. Aeschliman is the author of The Restitution of Man: C. S. Lewis and the Case against Scientism, a professor of Anglophone culture at the University of Italian Switzerland, and a professor emeritus of education at Boston University.

C. S. Lewis, who nevertheless predicted to him that his defense of objectivity would fail in the face of the onslaught of subjectivism, irrationalism, and neophilia. His prediction was prophetic.

Hirsch’s essay is central to the book, because it documents the precipitous decline of American literacy that took place from 1963 to 1979, and from which we have never recovered—a decline that had nothing to do with the inclusion of lower-class, immigrant, or black students in the test-taking population. The decline was a direct result, rather, of the retirement of older, decently educated K–12 schoolteachers and their replacement by teachers trained in “Progressive” curricular and pedagogical approaches in the teachers’ colleges and education schools that Dewey and his disciples had taken over en masse in the 1920s and ’30s, despite the noble protests of such articulate critics as William C. Bagley and Isaac Kandel. Hofstadter’s prophetic 1963 book was written on the cusp of the decline that subsequently took place.

The 15 later essays in this book provide excellent, if depressing, documentation of the other particular means and effects of this decline. Editor and university professor Mark Bauerlein’s “The Troubling Trend of Cultural IQ” documents “an intelligence breakdown” from the 1950s onward that has brought us a permanently “adolescent society” (James Coleman)—one in which, writes Bauerlein, “teenage-speak” has gradually replaced “adult-speak,” bringing about a low, nightmarish egalitarianism in which “it is cool to be dumb.” “How can mentors curtail [this] youth culture,” he asks, “when the goods and styles of it form a mega-industry that showers kids with marketing and plays upon status and consumer competition?” He concludes ominously: “I know of no way to slow this hazardous social experiment except to broadcast as widely as possible the intellectual damage it has done and will continue to do.”

Scholar Daniel Dreisbach gives us an essay called “Why Biblical Literacy Matters,” documenting the Bible’s decline from being the common book of the English-speaking peoples, especially the Americans, to its having become in effect the one systematically prohibited book in American K–12 public schooling—a proof if ever there was one of the ironic, paradoxical character of human history. If

Democrat Howard Dean, beneficiary of elite education at once-Christian institutions such as St. George's School and Yale, thinks the Book of Job is in the New Testament, we can only imagine the complacent ignorance of the Bible in intolerantly secularized public institutions. Exactly 60 years ago, in 1955, the distinguished educational philosopher Philip H. Phenix wrote, "It seems unfortunately to be the case that what has been presented as a means for preserving religious peace and freedom through secularization has to some extent become a method of propagating a particular dogmatic faith, namely, scientific naturalism or . . . naturalistic humanism."

In "How Colleges Create the 'Expectation of Confirmation,'" attorney Greg Lukianoff, president of the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), shows how monolithically "politically correct" the contemporary college campus is—despite the Supreme Court's noble 1995 decision, in *Rosenberger v. University of Virginia*, against "viewpoint discrimination" that muzzled Christians on college campuses. (The situation would of course be far worse without the efforts of FIRE, and of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute.)

NYU sociologist Richard Arum summarizes, in "College Graduates: Satisfied but Adrift," some of his own research that shows how little measurable learning actually takes place on American college campuses. "Recent research suggests that not only are students working fewer hours, but they are considerably more likely to report plagiarizing and cheating on exams than in prior decades."

Literary critic and former Modern Language Association president Gerald Graff contributes a useful, nuts-and-bolts essay titled "Why Johnny and Joanie Can't Write, Revisited" arguing that elaborate and fashionable K-12 and college approaches to teaching writing often "induce cognitive overload" that prevents even the simplest appropriation of the age-old tools of literacy. As against the massive underlying subjectivism of the culture and its lieutenants (what C. S. Lewis called "a world of incessant autobiography"), the patient Graff argues for a basically Aristotelian, commonsense, dialogical approach: "the need for writers to respond to others."

In "The Rise of the Self and the Decline of Intellectual and Civic Interest," psy-

chology professor Jean Twenge writes ominously about the emergence of what Christopher Lasch called the "culture of narcissism." People "born after 1980," she writes, have "never known a world that emphasizes anything over the self—for instance, putting duty before self." Not only does this narcissism have deleterious ethical and civic consequences, it has occupational and economic effects: Naïvely vain belief in self undermines "actual performance" of tasks and jobs. Grade inflation and massive remediation efforts at the college level go together. The effects of the 1963-79 decline documented by Hirsch have become endemic in the United States.

In Robert Whitaker's stunning essay "Anatomy of an Epidemic," the medicalization and anaesthetization of America by the unnecessary and harmful reliance on and administration of psychotropic medications over the past 30 years are documented to devastating effect. Whitaker does not fail to make the philosophical inference: This terrible development "has reshaped Americans' thinking about 'free will' and the capacity of humans to be responsible for their emotional states and for their actions." This essay deserves the widest possible readership.

Political scientist Nicholas Eberstadt also documents the decline of personal responsibility, in "Dependency in

America: American Exceptionalism and the Entitlement State," drawing attention, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan did 50 years ago, to the rapid decline of the American family: "Between the launch of [President Johnson's] 'War on Poverty' in 1964 and 2012, the percentage of U.S. children born out of marriage has gone from 7 percent to nearly 41 percent—with nearly a quarter of all American children under 18 living with a lone mother." Regarding the democratic-republican need for self-regulation and virtuous habits in the citizenry, Eberstadt writes: "The qualities celebrated under the banner of American exceptionalism are [today] in poorer repair than at any time in our nation's history."

Along the same lines, in "Political Ignorance in America," law professor Ilya Somin, drawing on the research of Eric Hanushek, argues that "the failure of public education to increase political knowledge may be connected with its failure to achieve improvements in student achievement in other subjects such as English, science, and mathematics, despite massive increases in per-pupil expenditures over the last 40 years." We are returned to Hirsch's documentation of the continuing failure of Dewey's disciples and descendants, now fortified in our educational institutions.

Hirsch's Core Knowledge elementary curriculum is now successfully used in a thousand American schools—one of the few promising signs educationally in the

SEX IN THE ENGLISH GARDEN

Light, feathery Astilbe
Sways gently in the breeze,
Afraid she always will be
Faint fluff beneath the trees

Concealing dear Sweet William,
Who rings each foxglove's bell
Mid coreopsis ruffles,
White lily, like a shell

With deeper inner meaning,
Disdains to join with them;
Spends all the time just leaning
Upon her silver stem,

And hopes to rearrange a
Great sunflower's golden eye—
She'll see that when Hydrangea
Drops snowballs in July.

—SALLY COOK

past 25 years—and underlying it is a fundamental loyalty to the best world, Western, and American educational traditions. In his essay, “In Defense of Difficulty: How the Decline of the Ideal of Seriousness Has Dulled Democracy in the Name of a Phony Populism,” long-time editor Steve Wasserman defends the Arnoldian tradition that Deweyite “Progressivism” replaced: the tradition of trying to get into the K–12 curriculum “the best that has been thought and said and done” in the world of culture as a resource for children and young people. Snobs have sneered at the Hutchins-Adler “Great Books” movement as “middlebrow”; Wasserman praises it.

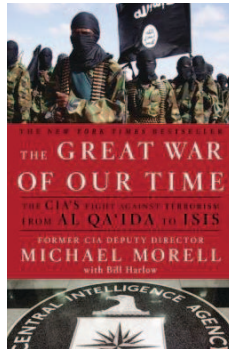
There are two particularly powerful essays toward the end of the book, Dennis Prager’s “We Live in the Age of Feelings” and R. R. Reno’s “The New Antinomian Attitude.” Brief summary cannot do justice to Prager’s impassioned essay. Defending the Judeo-Christian tradition and the idea of objective ethics, he rightly quotes the title of John Erskine’s famous essay, written exactly 100 years ago: “The Moral Obligation to Be Intelligent.” Reno’s essay has an apocalyptic edge, seeing the pervasive, increasing de-sublimation of Western culture as moving rapidly toward barbarism, giving us a world of what C. S. Lewis called “trousered apes.”

If any criticism is to be made of this outstanding book of essays, it is of their not drawing more clearly the line of intellectual genesis from Rousseau, through Whitman, to the infantilism of John Dewey and his now institutionalized descendants, a development critiqued by scholars such as Irving Babbitt, P. E. More, Yvor Winters, Randall Stewart, Richard Hofstadter, Lionel Trilling, Quentin Anderson, Russell Kirk, and Christopher Lasch.

And critiqued by E. D. Hirsch: The American founding fathers’ “stress on cultivating an aristocracy of talent and virtue, as well as the stringent rules for moral education, does not disclose a confidence that human nature should be encouraged to follow its natural development. The study of history (not nature) was to be the main subject of education for the people,” Hirsch wrote in 1996. “The Constitution [the Founding Fathers] framed does not imply trust in the innate goodness of human nature when allowed to follow its bliss.” **NR**

Trained Analytic Incompetence

BING WEST



The Great War of Our Time: The CIA's Fight against Terrorism from al-Qaeda to ISIS, by Michael Morell (Twelve, 384 pp., \$28)

IN this self-righteous book, Mr. Morell, a former director of the CIA, employs his advanced degree in economics to display convincingly why an economist can never reach a conclusion.

Morell’s narrative darts back and forth among four themes: his personal advancement up the ranks, defense of the CIA as an institution, defense of his role in the Benghazi imbroglio, and the great war of our time.

First, his personal journey: It suggests that the surest way to the top is to be, as Morell was, a professional aide, more grandly labeled an “executive assistant.” The author is comfortable in this role, offering sound advice about managing the overflow of data to the top echelons and sprinkling in a soupçon of encomiums about present-day national-security leaders. His essayistic tone marks him as a man of discretion and good will.

Second, he launches a robust defense of the CIA, skewering both Edward Snowden, for his treason, and

Mr. West served as a combat Marine and as an assistant secretary of defense. He has written ten books on combat, including six about our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Senator Dianne Feinstein (D., Calif.), for her denunciation of waterboarding ten years after she had offered no objection when she was briefed about the technique. Morell is fiercely loyal to his organization, a fine trait in any bureaucrat. There are scathing condemnations of detractors, as well as flattery of Presidents Bush and Obama and Secretary of State Clinton.

Third, he is obsessed with justifying his role in the 2012 Benghazi tragedy. He ends up demonstrating why he and other intelligence analysts deserve to be distrusted, especially by the operational side of the CIA and by operators in general. His description of the CIA decision-making process turns common sense on its head.

On September 12, 2012, the Defense Intelligence Agency concluded that the attack the previous day on the American consulate in Benghazi was planned and executed by “‘the Brigades of the Captive Omar Abdul Rahman.’ . . . It was established by Abdul Baset Azuz, a violent radical sent by al-Qaeda. . . . The intent was to kill as many Americans as possible.”

Morell, then the CIA’s deputy director for analysis, strongly disagreed. He was the central actor behind the Obama administration’s assertion that the attack was a spontaneous mob escalation. In the book, he invokes the full weight of the CIA decision-making process to justify that assertion.

He writes that, after the attack, the CIA station chief in Libya did send in two reports that, like the DIA, pointed to a deliberate terrorist attack. The station chief insisted that the attack was “not an escalation of protests.” But Morell concluded that “neither of the chief’s two explanations in the e-mail was compelling”: “It was inconsistent with what the analysts thought.” He therefore rejected what the senior person on the ground believed, based on the second opinions of analysts 4,000 miles away. Morell writes that *he* personally did not second-guess and overrule the station chief: The “analysts” did. And how did the analysts decide that the station chief was in error? They looked at a video from an unmanned aerial vehicle.

“When you assess the information from the video,” Morell writes, “there are few signs of a well-thought-out plan. . . . They

[the attackers] did not appear to be looking for Americans to harm.”

Deducing from a video the mental intent of shadowy figures is more mystic than analytic. I’ve been in three wars. I would have been dead decades ago had I based decisions to fire or to get under cover on this kind of guesswork after the shooting had begun.

As for the two Americans killed by mortar shells on the roof of the CIA annex, that, too, Morell dismisses as a random, unplanned attack. “Why did the attackers use only five mortar rounds?” Morell writes. “The logical answer to me is clear—they had only five mortars. If this had been an assault with days, weeks, or months of planning, the terrorists would have been much better armed.”

I commanded a mortar platoon. The odds are 1,000 to 1 against Morell’s “logical answer” of five mortars, each firing a single shell. Most likely, it was the work of one mortar accurately laid in at night, a feat that requires meticulous mechanics and the careful measuring of distances during daylight.

Morell and his analysts exhibit no experience or understanding of combat. In his ethereal world, operators are mere mortals, and real decisions are made above them, by a digital swarm called “analysts.”

“Our operations officers collect intelligence and our analysts produce the assessments,” he writes. “Analysts have access to all the available information; our officers in the field do not.” But our nation’s military doctrine is the opposite: It stresses that assessments during combat should rest on those closest to the action. Senior staffs far from the battlefield should be in support, not in contradiction. Admittedly, this decentralized doctrine is occasionally violated by generals. But they would not defend their interference, as does Morell, by insisting that centralization is the proper norm. To deny facts on the ground in favor of theory at headquarters manifests trained analytic incompetence.

Fourth, Morell addresses what he calls “the great war of our time.” He writes that ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) “is effectively al-Qaeda,” threatening Middle East stability, recruiting “vulnerable young men” on a global basis, and determined to attack America

and to acquire weapons of mass destruction. In February 2013, Morell briefed President Obama on the mortal threat posed by ISIS. Yet, in a magazine interview in January 2014, Obama dismissed ISIS as a “JV team . . . engaged in various local power struggles” that “doesn’t lead us to think . . . an extremist Islamic ideology is a direct threat to us or something we have to wade into.”

And how does Morell explain the president’s rejection of “the great war”? He doesn’t. Instead, he lavishes praise. “I admired the president,” he writes. “He was brilliant and deeply attentive in any substantive briefing.” Morell was so enthralled, he writes, that he once whispered to the White House chief of staff, “So that’s why he is the president of the United States.” One hundred pages later, he offers this analysis of the commander-in-chief: “To me, this signaled that Obama was willing to listen to the views of others, and to create an environment where his subordinates felt they were welcome to speak—incredibly important traits, I believe, in any decision-maker.”

This is a weird book, more a harmonica tweet than a trumpet call to arms. Morell reserves his ringing declaration to support for a decision-making process: “At CIA, directors and deputy directors . . . do not determine the analytic line of the Agency. The analysts do.”

This is astonishing: Morell presents himself—and all other CIA directors—as puppets controlled by an amorphous, anointed body of experts in cyberspace. How can we repose trust in an institution when its director elides—nay, *argues against*—personal responsibility?

Read this book if you want to know why you should be concerned about the CIA’s analytical products. Successive sentences contradict one another, and none leads to a conclusion. Our Islamist enemies in “the great war” pose “a threat to the stability of the entire Middle East . . . with intentions to attack us.” But while discounting those Islamists as a “JV team,” Mr. Obama deserves praise as commander-in-chief. Why? Because he listens to others and was extensively briefed by Mr. Morell on the looming threat. This is a baffling book without a consistent narrative or a compelling logic. **NR**

Under the Sign of the Navel

ELIZABETH POWERS



The Festival of Insignificance, by Milan Kundera (Harper, 128 pp., \$23.99)

EVEN before he left his native Czechoslovakia in 1975 and emigrated to France, there was always something French about Milan Kundera. Like the father of modern aphorists, the Duke de La Rochefoucauld (died 1680), Kundera took pleasure in distilling higher truths about mankind into pithy, proverb-like maxims. If La Rochefoucauld wrote that “passion makes idiots of the cleverest men, and makes the biggest idiots clever,” eroticism and its discontents similarly obsessed Kundera’s male characters. Thus, from the novel *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting* (1979): “Oh lovers! Be careful in those dangerous first days! Once you’ve brought breakfast in bed you’ll have to bring it forever, unless you want to be accused of lovelessness and betrayal.”

It is with reflections concerning the eroticism of the navel that *The Festival of Insignificance* begins. Alain, one of the novel’s characters, is prompted to such reflections on an afternoon in June while walking through the Luxembourg Gardens, where he is captivated, “even disturbed,” by the sight of young girls who “showed [their] naked navel between trousers belted very low and a T-shirt cut very short.” What does it mean, he asks, when erotic orientation no

Elizabeth Powers is writing a book about contemporary liberalism.

longer resides in the thighs, buttocks, or breasts of the female body?

Like La Rochefoucauld, Kundera drew for his anatomizing of human behavior on personal experience of a brutal century. His “Czech” novels brought news of the fate of hundreds of millions of humans subject to a vast experiment designed to turn them into angels, without navels, without individuality. For Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the result was hell. For Kundera, life under Communism was a big bureaucratic joke gone wrong. (So, here is another literary forefather, Franz Kafka, likewise a native of Kundera’s “homeland.”) Unlike left-wing intellectuals of the Cold War era, he was never seduced by utopian visions. Instead, his Czech novels made the case for the idiocy of the Communist system. *The Joke*, *The Farewell Party*, *Life Is Elsewhere*, *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, and *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* were written by 1984, in a time when few of us imagined that the entire structure would self-destruct anytime soon. Kundera was probably as surprised as anyone by the events of 1989. The last novel he wrote in Czech was *Immortality*, published in France in 1990.

The above is by way of a long preface to this very short novel, and to indicate the difference represented by it and by Kundera’s French novels generally: *Slowness* (1995), *Identity* (1998), and *Ignorance* (2000). By “French” I refer not only to language. The thinness of these novels, with *The Festival of Insignificance* the thinnest of the lot, suggests what happens when we live unburdened by the weight of ideological struggle. Are we at the end of history? Events still occur, we go through the motions of living, but does it matter? It would be more accurate and fitting with the previous three novels if this one were titled simply “Insignificance.”

Kundera’s novels, French or Czech, can be enjoyed for the sheer pleasure of the author’s literary and intellectual wit. And that wit is exercised in this novel, as in all of his works, on several levels.

First, the present-day story (narrated in the past tense) portrays in short chapters the encounters of four friends (from oldest to youngest): Ramon, Alain, Charles, and Caliban. Caliban, an unemployed actor, is the only one who is married, but occupational details and other

aspects of the physical world that fill out the Czech novels are absent. Still, with hardly any specificity about Paris, aside from the Luxembourg Gardens, we recognize the advanced state of life in Western society in the 21st century. The different ages of the friends are important, as they represent different perspectives on recent history. Thus, says Ramon, whose grandfather signed with other intellectuals a petition in support of Stalin: “People meet in the course of life, they talk together, they discuss, they quarrel, without realizing that they’re talking to one another across a distance, each from an observatory standing in a different place in time.” Soviet Communism occupied intellectuals for almost a century; Caliban does not even know who Khrushchev was.

Alternating with the present-day story is a second story line that takes place in the past but is narrated in the present tense. It too consists of short chapters, in which Stalin in Joker manifestation terrorizes his Politburo associates as they sit around a large table listening to his interminable and oft-repeated stories. They never know whether his menacing stories are jokes and so sit rigidly, their bladders close to exploding, unable to relieve themselves at the ceramic urinals supplied for their benefit, “of all colors, decorated with flower motifs, each . . . created and signed by a different artist.”

The two story lines come together at the end, with Stalin and faithful henchman Mikhail Kalinin escaping from history and traveling to the present world of the Luxembourg Gardens, where they are mistaken by the summer crowds for performance artists. Stalin, wielding a hunting rifle, blows off the nose of one of the statues of French queens, behind which Kalinin has hidden in his search for a spot in which to unload his bladder. Kundera seems to have decided to give substance to Karl Marx’s maxim: “History repeats itself, first as tragedy, then as farce.”

It is adding too much ballast to this slight confection to mention the meta-level that unites the two story lines. It occurs in the musings of the four friends about Stalin and his comrades as subjects for a marionette theater, an allusion to a philosophical essay by Heinrich von Kleist: Kleist wrote of the spontaneous harmony of the movement

of marionettes, harmonious because their “existence” is guided by a master hand. Similarly, angels, a favorite Kundera trope, make their appearance here as well, at least a feather from one, in the middle of a cocktail party. Unlike angels or marionettes, humans are inharmonious, an inheritance of our break from the divine hand that created us. Attempts have been made throughout history to correct the imbalance. Success required only one thing, as Stalin tells Andrei Zhdanov, one of the puppets with whom he surrounds himself: “There are as many different representations of the world as there are individuals on the planet; and inevitably that makes for chaos; how to bring about order in this chaos? The answer is clear: by imposing one single representation on everyone. And the only way to impose it is through one will, one single enormous will, a will that surpasses all other wills. Which I have done, as far as my powers have allowed me.”

Stalin’s dream is dead, of course, and Communism was unsuccessful in transforming men into angels, into navel-less beings, which returns us to the beginning. The buttocks, the breasts, the thighs individualize a woman, according to Alain; not so the navel. The fashion for exposed navels, appearing with the new century, has raised the blinds “that, for centuries, had kept men from seeing the essential thing: that individuality is an illusion.” Such pessimism is complemented by the weary wisdom of Ramon, just before the prankish appearance of Stalin and Kalinin in the Luxembourg Gardens: “Insignificance, my friend, is the essence of existence. It is all around us, and everywhere and always. It is present even when no one wants to see it: in atrocities, in bloody battles, in the worst disasters. It often takes courage to acknowledge it in such dramatic situations, and to call it by name.”

This sounds very much like the cynicism of an aphorist. By a strange accident of literary history, however, the current stage of the ideological struggle between the West and the Islamic world began with Salman Rushdie’s angel. It turns out that we are not at the end of history at all. And, more than ever, joke-telling remains powerful as well as deadly in the fight against idiocy. **NR**

Film

The Essence of Stardom

ROSS DOUTHAT

MELISSA MCCARTHY, the star of the new espionage parody *Spy*, has distinguished herself of late in ways that fewer and fewer Hollywood actors seem capable of matching. First, her movies really are *her* movies; second, they make money even when they simply aren't very good.

These are, of course, very traditional ways to tell who exactly is a movie star. If your movies make money when you're playing Spiderman or Captain Kirk or headlining *Jurassic Universe*, the jury should be out on whether you, personally, are actually bringing anyone to the theater. But if your movies open big without a pre-sold concept, it's a sign that people might actually be coming to see *you*. And if they open big even in the teeth of negative reviews—well, then it's fair to suggest that a star is being born.

McCarthy's ascent to stardom began in 2011, when she was the funniest thing in the (very funny) *Bridesmaids*, in a supporting part that nicely blended her talents for the ingenuous and the profane. She had a solid television career at that point: years in the cast of *Gilmore Girls*, and then a sitcom of her own, *Mike and Molly*. But you might have assumed that her turn in *Bridesmaids* would have just won her more supporting roles—the kooky friend, the fat girl in the gaggle.

Instead, she swiftly vaulted up a level, co-starring with Sandra Bullock in the lady-cop comedy *The Heat* and then headlining (with Jason Bateman and Susan Sarandon as her seconds) in 2013's *Identity Thief* and 2014's *Tammy*. Her collaboration with Bullock was intermittently funny, but I defy you to find a moviegoer who genuinely liked either of the other two movies: They were coarse, gross, dim, beneath her talents, beneath the audience that watched them. Yet they made over \$200 million combined.



Melissa McCarthy in *Spy*

People just really like Melissa McCarthy, it would seem—and that apparently includes her fellow thespians, because an impressively long list of them shows up in the cast of *Spy*. Jude Law, Jason Statham, Rose Byrne, Allison Janney, and Bobby Cannavale are all in on the comic action, as are Miranda Hart and Peter Serafinowicz, names more familiar (for now) in the United Kingdom than they are on this side of the pond. And their presence, one and all, is a big reason this McCarthy vehicle actually deserves its box-office success.

Not that the star herself doesn't earn it, too. It's just that, like most comedians (with rare one-man-show exceptions such as Jim Carrey), McCarthy is funniest when she has somebody to play off and play with. When she's asked to do all the comic work, she tends to overdo things, to flail and founder and reach for the cheapest laughs. What she needs isn't just a straight man or woman; it's somebody who can do comic ping-pong at her level, match her insult for insult, or just change the tempo of a scene and swipe a laugh along the way.

She finally has that in almost every scene of *Spy*, because just about all her co-stars can deliver it. The list starts with Law, playing a James Bond wannabe named Bradley Fine who derailed the once-promising career of McCarthy's CIA agent, Susan Cooper, by persuading her that she should be his desk jockey, checking satellite images and talking in his earpiece while he carves his way through bad guys overseas. She was persuaded because she's in love with him, of course, a reality that he blithely ignores . . . until the day that a mission goes wrong, and not

only he but every other field agent ends up having his cover blown.

Under such circumstances, *somebody* has to go track down the loose nuke that the Bulgarian arms dealer Rayna Boyanov (Rose Byrne, haughty and hilarious) is peddling all over Europe. So a reluctant CIA chief (Janney) sends Susan on her first real mission—with the cover identity, naturally, of a midwestern cat lady on a rare European getaway.

Once on the ground, she's shadowed by Statham's rogue agent, who quit in protest when Susan was tapped for the job instead of him, and who delivers endless macho monologues about his absurd feats in the field. And she's "aided" by the tall, stumbling Nancy (Hart), her gawky agency pal, and by Aldo (Serafinowicz), a motor-mouthed Italian lothario who gives Susan all the sexual attention (and then some) that her old boss denied her.

Eventually, inevitably, Susan sheds both the cat-lady disguise and the mild manners of a desk jockey, and starts dishing out both the necessary physical punishment and the insults (with Byrne's Rayna hurling them right back) that McCarthy always sells so well.

They don't all land, and some of the jokes and running gags fall flat. This is, in the end, a spy-movie parody, and the novelty of having a pleasantly plump, cheerfully profane woman as the fish-out-of-water lead doesn't change the essential predictability of the form.

But that's why they call them star *vehicles*. They don't have to be flawless or groundbreaking; they just have to do right by their lead. And for McCarthy, a still-unlikely-seeming movie star, *Spy* does exactly that. **NR**

Not Avid for Ovid

NOT long ago, four members of the Columbia University Multicultural Affairs Advisory Board wrote a letter of complaint to the university alleging that the study of classic works of Western civilization—specifically, the *Metamorphoses*—was insensitive and made many of the students feel “unsafe.” So please add reading Ovid to the growing list of potential triggers, -isms, and phobias that could rattle the brittle psyche of a college student. Even the act of grading—sometimes known as “grade shaming”—can leave young people feeling distressed.

The news that there are students unable to handle the Western canon at one of the leading universities in the country sparked a new round of think pieces contemplating the question: Is this the most sensitive—and least intellectually curious—generation ever? And if so, what does it mean?

For years, I’ve suppressed the impulse to attack the supposed laziness, narcissism, and puerile views of many Millennials. I imagined that as they grew older, they’d find spouses, have children, water lawns, and pay unreasonable property taxes just like their parents. And just like their parents and grandparents, they’d grumble about how the country was being bankrupted by a new generation of obnoxious upstarts. But an entire generation does not share a collective aspiration or a single worldview. Certainly, I reasoned, we can’t hold everyone born between the years 1981 and 2000 responsible for an entire generation’s failures.

Until, that is, I learned more about emoji.

Emoji, a conflation of the words “picture” and “character” in Japanese, are an amazingly popular form of communication that relies on a visual system of cartoon smiley faces, hearts, and hundreds of other ideograms that are substituted for the antiquated words that once represented speech. Surely you’ve seen them. Emoji are, according to Professor Vyv Evans, a linguist at Bangor University in Wales, not only a new way for young people to convey their feelings in electronic communications but also the world’s fastest-growing language. Millennials, the first generation to own cellphones as children and the first to have unlimited access to a global system of interconnected computer networks, have trouble interacting with mere English. They have given us lemonhead hieroglyphics. They must all shoulder the blame.

And then I heard about Kim Kardashian’s most recent book.

If there’s one person who represents the pampered, entitled Millennial, it’s Kardashian, a star whose talents include being endowed with an ample posterior, performing in a homemade sex video, and existing on a reality show. Millions of young people punish the rest of us by wearing ill-fitting clothing meant to imitate her look. Her book, *Selfish*, consists entirely of selfies. Yes, that’s 445 pages of selfies, arranged chronologically over three decades, telling the story of Kim Kardashian one self-glorifying picture at a time. It was a

huge bestseller. Not all Millennials bought it. But many did. This can’t be forgiven.

There are more serious criticisms to be made of Millennials, of course. As the most ethnically diverse generation ever, they claim to be more tolerant of differences in our culture. But in reality, they have a growing aversion to the institutions and ideas that protect legitimate ideological and philosophical diversity. The younger you are, the more likely you are to support hate-speech laws and laws that undermine religious freedom and political speech.

A fifth of Americans claim to be atheist, agnostic, or religiously unaffiliated, according to a 2012 Pew Research Center survey—which categorizes that demographic as the “nones.” Young adults are less devout than any other age bracket polled. Almost a third of them are religiously unaffiliated. They are also less religious than previous generations were at the same point in their lives, and describe “Christianity”—every denomination, apparently—as “hypocritical” and “judgmental.” One doesn’t need to be a theological authority to understand that judgment is an important aspect of faith. Millennials don’t want to be judged.

Unhitched from these traditional belief systems, Millennials drift elsewhere. A Reason Foundation poll in 2014 found that although Millennials claim to have an aversion to both political parties, 42 percent favored socialism over capitalism.

Most polls find that presumptive Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton will easily capture most of the Millennials’ vote in 2016. If anything, the former first lady may not be liberal enough for them. The real preference of Millennials, according to a Fusion poll, is Stephen Colbert. Nineteen percent say that they’d like to see him as president, versus 17 percent each for Jon Stewart and Tina Fey. They will not rest until we have a clown as president.

Study after study finds that Millennials are less likely to own a home or a car, have a full-time job, or use a credit card than the American generations that directly preceded them. American Millennials are also the worst, or nearly the worst, at a host of vocational skills when compared with people the same age in more than 20 other countries. “Millennials are often portrayed as being on track to be our best educated generation ever, but their skill levels are comparatively weak,” a researcher from Educational Testing Service has said. This American unexceptionalism isn’t limited to those who need more education. Millennials with a master’s degree or better are also near the bottom.

So what is it about Millennials that makes them the way they are? Do they possess a toxic mix of superficiality, entitlement, and self-absorption that threatens the uniqueness and morality of American life? When Pew Research Center pollsters asked different generations what made them unique, Baby Boomers had enough sense to respond with qualities like “work ethic.” One of the most popular answers from Millennials was “clothes.” Something is wrong. And maybe we can’t blame all of you. But we can certainly blame most of you. **NR**

Mr. Harsanyi is a senior editor of the Federalist.

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