

WILLIAMSON: Donald Trump, Political Grotesque

ABRAMS
on the Iran Deal
O'SULLIVAN
on the Euro

COOKE: The Agony of California's Central Valley

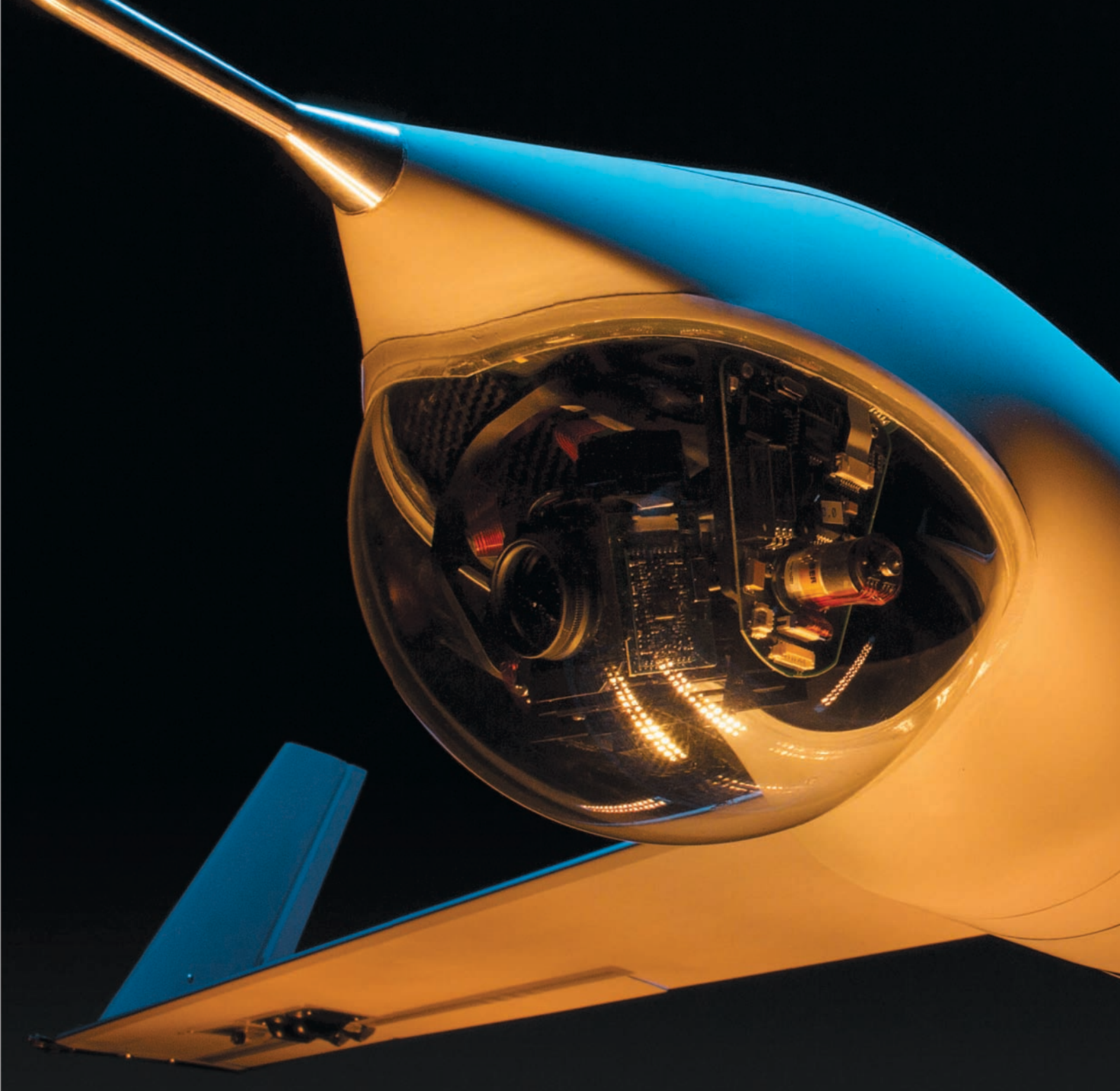
NATIONAL REVIEW

CARLY *the Communicator*

Jay Nordlinger

**ON THE STUMP
WITH FIORINA**





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Carly Campaigns

Carly Fiorina is running for president. This run seems quixotic to some, understandably, but Fiorina is making waves on the trail. She is drawing crowds and creating chatter. She is developing a particular reputation as an articulator of conservative ideas. *Jay Nordlinger*



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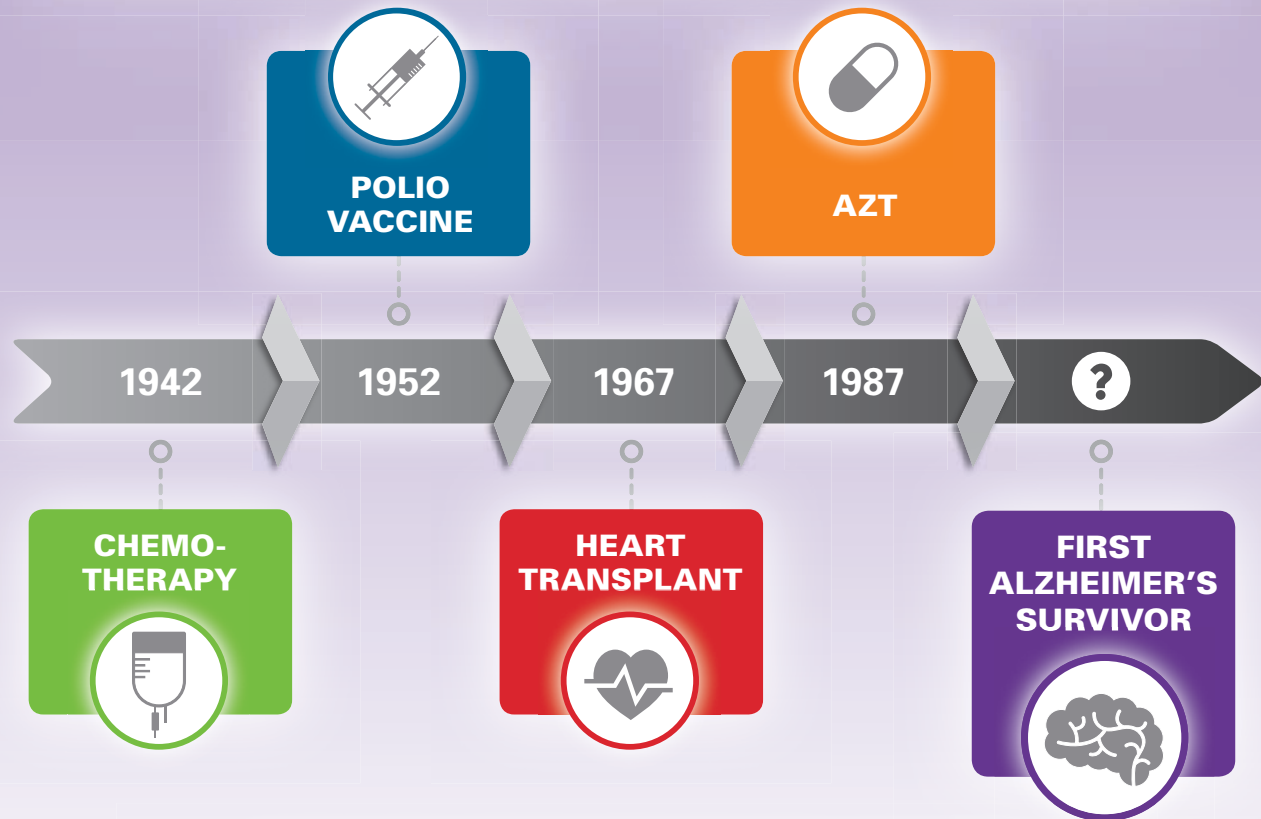
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Secession: **Treason or Divorce?**

Professor Allen Guelzo's assertion in "Take It Down" (NATIONAL REVIEW, July 20, 2015) that secession was treason overlooks the fact that there was no settled law about that at the time.

Secessionists believed that the United States was a compact of sovereign states that was voluntarily entered and could be left at will. Unionists believed that the Constitution did not allow for secession. It specified how new states could enter the Union but said nothing about how to leave it. With no defining law in place, both sides had legitimate arguments.

Robert E. Lee himself opposed secession but also believed, as did many people in both the North and the South, that his state was and should be the first object of his loyalty. When Jefferson spoke of his "country," he meant Virginia. So did Lee. When Virginia seceded, he resigned his U.S. Army commission.

If secession was illegal and unconstitutional, then seceding was treason. If not, it wasn't. And, again, there was no settled law on the subject at the time. It was not until *Texas v. White*, in 1869, that the Supreme Court declared secession to be illegal. That decision held that secession had been illegal in 1861, an assertion that smacks too much of ex post facto law—which is unconstitutional—to be taken seriously.

Secession may have been a truly stupid and self-destructive idea, but it could not have been treason. When Lee and other Army officers resigned, they were no longer obligated by their oaths to support and defend the Constitution. If, as they believed, secession was legal, then they were no longer citizens of the United States. How was it treason for them to fight against the United States, which was, in their view, a foreign country?

The key is the legal status of secession in 1860–61. And that status was unclear and unsettled. There was, and could have been, no treason—except, possibly, for those who served the Confederacy but who were from states that did not secede.

*James Morgan
Lovettsville, Va.*

ALLEN C. GUELZO RESPONDS: Far from there being no "settled law" concerning treason before the Civil War, the Constitution is quite clear that treason consists "in levying War against" the United States or in "adhering to their Enemies, giving them Aid and Comfort." The First Congress added statutory teeth with "An Act for the Punishment of Certain Crimes against the United States," and at least 28 cases were adjudicated before 1861. The only execution in a treason case, however, was that of John Brown.

The Constitution provides no mechanism by which secession may be achieved. Even Robert E. Lee acknowledged that "secession is nothing but revolution." In Lee's case, his resignation may have released him from the obligations of a U.S. Army officer, but not from his obligations as a U.S. citizen to desist from "levying War."

*Allen C. Guelzo
Director, Civil War–Era Studies Program
Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pa.*

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

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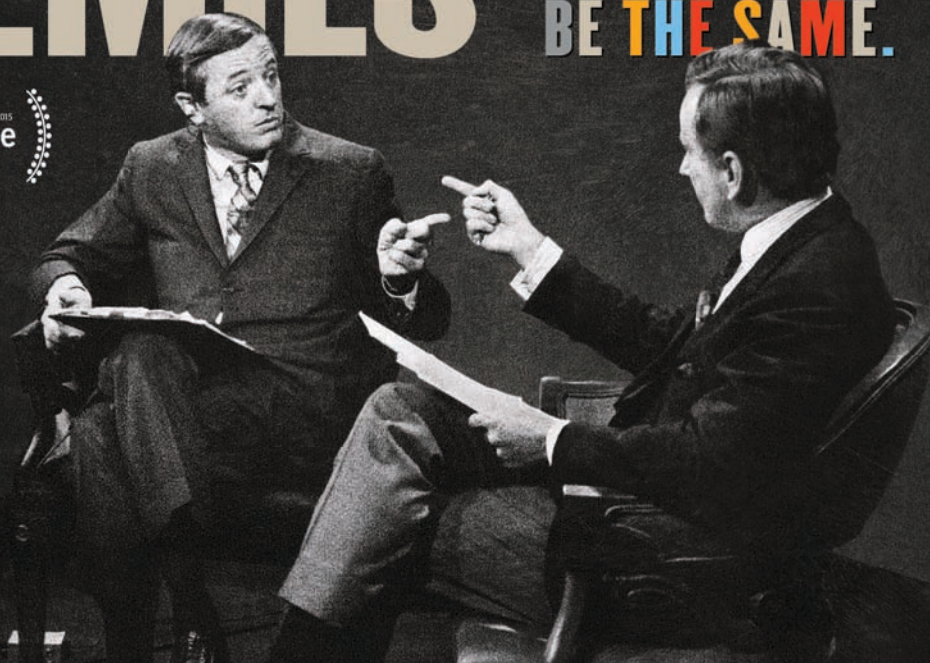
— NINA BURLEIGH, NEWSWEEK

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TO COME EARLY.**

— DAVID FEAR, ROLLING STONE

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ONLY IN THEATERS JULY 31

The Week

■ Knock knock. Who's there? Ayatollah. Ayatollah who? Ayatollah you I'm not gonna abide by any nuclear agreement.

■ The vacuum pump was invented in 1656. Donald Trump, born in 1946, is a pump that sucks the air out of political discourse. Latest instance: After John McCain called Trump's Arizona supporters "crazies," Trump said McCain was no war hero. Trump: "He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people that weren't captured." Whereupon broke loose all hell. To clear this up: John McCain is a war hero, and he is wrong about immigration. Many conservatives—those McCain called "crazies"—think Trump is right because he attacks criminal Mexican illegals as bumptiously as he attacked McCain. But since Trump has never held office, and since he has a record of contradictory pronouncements, there is no telling what he would actually do on this, or any other, issue. Trump will not be the GOP nominee or president (though he may run on his own third-party ticket). Conservatives must start casting real votes in seven months. Time to start listening and thinking, about real candidates and real views.

■ Scott Walker announced his long-expected presidential campaign in Waukesha, Wis. He cast himself as a fighter. "Healthy or sick, born or unborn, I will fight and win for you. Young or old—or anywhere in between—I will fight and win for you." A fighter he is, having taken on Wisconsin's public unions and won two elections for governor, plus a union-backed recall. But to win a presidential nomination, he must broaden that credential. So he has endorsed a constitutional amendment allowing the states to define marriage as it was until the day before yesterday, and pledged to sign a bill banning abortions after 20 weeks. In his announcement he promised to scuttle the Iran deal, stop Russian aggression toward "sovereign nations," and allow "absolutely no daylight" between the U.S. and Israel. Details, as they say, to follow—and follow they must. Conservatives should give Walker a respectful, and thorough, hearing.

■ In mid July, Walker signed a state-budget bill that included dramatic tenure reforms in the University of Wisconsin system. Under the new legislation, the board of regents, rather than the legislature, will set tenure policies, and regents will be able to terminate faculty in the event of a program's modification or cancellation, not just in the event of financial emergency. Inadvertently proving Walker's reforms long overdue was University of Wisconsin–Madison sociology professor Sara Goldrick-Rab, who took to Twitter to compare Scott Walker to Adolf Hitler. The inanity of that comparison was underscored when, a week later, Walker signed his state's ban on abortions after 20 weeks, making Wisconsin the 15th state with such a policy. Public-employee unions, UW-Madison professors, and Planned Parenthood: Heading into 2016, Walker is making all the right enemies.

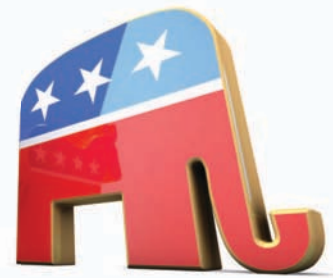


■ John Kasich, the Republican governor of Ohio, announced his own presidential run a week after Walker. The Cato Institute reports that his state government's spending increased by 18 percent between 2012 and 2015, and he has requested a further 11 percent increase. He went around the state legislature to get Ohio to participate in Obamacare's Medicaid expansion. He justifies this move by suggesting that opponents do not care about the poor; he has done nothing to get poor people into something better than the substandard insurance Medicaid provides. He has hired much of Jon Huntsman's team from the last presidential-primary season. All in all, we can expect a campaign that will be both sanctimonious and forlorn.

■ Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her fluffy economic-policy speech (more of an economic-mood speech, really), revealed herself to be something of a reactionary: The world has changed, markets have changed, the nature of work is changing, and she is in a panic. She indulged in sappy Nineties nostalgia, with no apparent appreciation of what drove the millennial economy or the stock bubble (quickly reincarnated as a real-estate bubble) that was such a prominent feature of it; attempted to display a bit of with-it-ness by talking about the "gig economy," only to meditate darkly on OSHA's diminished role in it ("hard questions about workplace protections and what a good job will look like in the future"); etc. She has been talking about profit-sharing and has outlined a tax credit to encourage it, and the mechanism is a typically Clintonian mess of narrow qualifications and hedges. The old Clintonian triangulation is at work, too: She calls her vision the "growth and fairness" economy, as though the Democrats' favored "fairness" measures—tax increases—will cease to inhibit economic growth simply because Mrs. Clinton insists that it be so. She has shown herself to be an intellectually weak candidate, and, perhaps, a more vulnerable one than had generally been thought.

■ Senator Bernie Sanders, Vermont socialist and Democratic presidential candidate, has been firing up the base in Iowa, draw-

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ing 2,500 to an event in Council Bluffs and getting “booming applause” (per the *New York Times*) for “full-throated attacks on Wall Street” at another event in Cedar Rapids. Poll cruncher Nate Silver thinks Sanders, now polling around 30 percent in both Iowa and New Hampshire, could win them both. What is going on? Demography, partly: The first caucus and primary states are like Sanders’s native Vermont: very white, and very liberal. His left populism (he boasts that he takes no money from Goldman Sachs) expresses what Democrats in their heart of hearts want, and what they are only 98 percent sure of getting from Hillary Clinton. Freud called the id “a cauldron full of seething excitations . . . filled with energy reaching it from the instincts.” Bernie Sanders, white mane flying, is the Democrats’ 73-year-old id.



■ Martin O'Malley, campaigning for the Democratic presidential nomination, made the mistake of telling a group of protesters “All lives matter.” Oh dear. How could O'Malley not have known that the formulation “Black lives matter” is utterly sacrosanct, especially after Hillary Clinton stepped into the same bear trap last month? The former Maryland governor was responding to several dozen demonstrators who interrupted his remarks at the liberal Netroots

Nation conference, shouting slogans and demanding action over several high-profile deaths of black Americans at the hands of police officers. O'Malley responded, “Black lives matter. White lives matter. All lives matter”—only to be booed and shouted down by the protesters. He quickly backtracked: “I meant no disrespect,” O'Malley told the podcast *This Week in Blackness*. “That was a mistake on my part and I meant no disrespect. I did not mean to be insensitive.” Further self-abasement, we suspect, will follow.

■ Planned Parenthood traffics in harvested organs and fetal tissues. That much was made clear by a sting video in which the organization’s director of medical services, Dr. Deborah Nucatola, discusses the trade with actors posing as buyers from a tissue-procurement outfit. Whether this constitutes criminal trafficking is unclear, though the federal law governing such commerce is very weak by design, and Planned Parenthood’s argument—that it doesn’t sell human body parts, but merely is reimbursed for the costs associated with harvesting them—may pass legal muster. The law should be strengthened, and Republicans should tamp down this trade by finally passing the ban on abortions after 20 weeks that has been idling in Congress for some months. But there is no mere statute that can address the horror at work here—“A lot of people want liver,” Nucatola says, nibbling salad and sipping wine, utterly blasé—because there is no act of legislation that can lift Nucatola, her employers, and their political enablers out of the spiritual gutter into which they have lowered themselves. For that, there is no reform, only revulsion.

■ Mohammad Abdulazeez, a 24-year-old born in Kuwait of Palestinian parents, shot up a military-recruiting office and a naval-reserve center in Chattanooga, killing four Marines and a Navy

petty officer. The only good news is that cops shot him dead. There followed the usual hem and haw: Was the killer a Muslim terrorist or a depressed young man (who took out his depression in Muslim terrorism)? His blog posts—Mohammad’s companions “fought jihad for the sake of Allah”—and papers—in which he wrote of becoming a “martyr”—define the radicalized lone wolf (or maybe not lone—authorities are looking into a seven-month trip he took to Jordan last year). How to forestall the next attack? Mass killers seek gun-free targets; our armed forces should be armed while on duty at home. But the great incentive for terrorists is the glamour of terror abroad. Crippling ISIS would dim that glamour—though that will be hard, since the U.S. has all but vacated the region.

■ The media consensus that the Chattanooga shootings were simply the deranged acts of a tragically troubled individual contrasted with the one that formed instantly about the Charleston church shooter. He was not just a hate-obsessed madman but the inevitable product of a society permeated with racism. His massacre occasioned peremptory demands from progressive critics for whites to apologize and undergo self-criticism, while the nation’s first black president called for renewed efforts to eradicate racism and enact his laundry list of liberal causes (e.g., gun control, relaxed voting laws, affirmative action), all of which, he said, had been given renewed urgency by the shooting. Never let a crisis, or a funeral, go to waste.

■ Those who seek to increase the number of regulations that hang around the neck of the Second Amendment have devised an ingenious two-step strategy that can be applied in the aftermath of all tragedies involving firearms. First, they claim confidently that new laws would have prevented the event from occurring in the first instance. Subsequently, if that proves to be false, they speak vaguely about “loopholes.” This pattern was followed to the letter in the aftermath of the shooting in Charleston, S.C., in June. Immediately upon hearing the news, President Obama and others suggested that if the shooter had been required to pass a background check, he might have been stopped. Later, when it was revealed that—as is usually the case with mass killers—he had in fact passed a background check, attention shifted to the supposed “weakness” of the rules. This was highly dishonest. Because he had been charged with drug possession, the killer should indeed have been flagged in the system; that he was not picked up was the product of a data-entry error. The government’s incompetence is not an argument for giving it more power.

■ Kathryn Steinle, the 32-year-old woman shot in San Francisco in July, was killed by a Mexican criminal, but she was a victim of American lawlessness. Her killer should never have been on the streets of San Francisco; Immigration and Customs Enforcement should have deported him (for the sixth time, as it happens). But they couldn’t, because San Francisco is a “sanctuary city,” meaning that its local law enforcement often doesn’t cooperate with federal immigration authorities trying to hold or deport aliens. In April the city’s sheriff released Steinle’s killer, Francisco Sanchez, without notifying ICE, which had a detainer order out for him, meaning the city should have held Sanchez until ICE took custody of him. Sanctuary states, counties, and cities add up to more than 300 jurisdictions across the country, and thousands of



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legal and illegal immigrants subject to deportation are released by local law enforcement every year—bolstered by Democrats, Hillary Clinton among them, who defend such policies. We should always remember that we are having an argument not just about what our immigration laws should be, but about whether to enforce immigration laws at all.

■ To much fanfare, President Obama recently visited the El Reno Federal Correction Institution, in Oklahoma, to underscore his commitment to criminal-justice reform. That same week, the president announced that he would grant clemency to 46 non-

violent drug offenders as part of a larger effort to rein in excessive punishment. There are many good arguments for rethinking America's approach to criminal sentencing. The fact that there are 2.2 million Americans behind bars really ought to give us pause, not least because there is a risk that excessive punishment does more harm than good. Yet there are only 215,000 federal prisoners, which greatly limits what any president can do about the phenomenon. It is conservative governors in states such as Georgia and Texas who have done the most so far to reform prison systems while maintaining public safety. The governors may know more than Obama about the subject. He continues to

Judging the Governors

As the presidential-election season kicks off, governors from all over America are seeking the Republican nomination. Historically, voters in presidential elections have tended to favor the executive experience of governors, and it seems more likely than not that the eventual Republican nominee will be one of these gentlemen.

A governor is different from other politicians in that he governs an identifiable state for an identifiable period of time, and thus can be empirically associated with an economic track record in a way that a senator or a heart surgeon cannot. Economics, however, remains an inexact science. Even if a million articles were written about the record of any single governor, consensus on whether the governor was good or bad for the economy would likely still prove elusive.

A hypothetical Governor Ponnuru could rescue a state from an abyss into which it threatened to fall yet still appear to have performed poorly when measured against a governor whose state had never come so close to catastrophe to begin with. Such a pattern might be especially relevant for Republicans who take over in historically blue states, where decades of Democratic malpractice may be difficult to undo in a term or two. Nonetheless, a governor who has a strong track record of job creation could well make the claim that he could deliver similar results to the nation as a whole. A governor without such a record would have to make a more difficult theoretical case that his policies have been conducive to job creation.

We attempted to identify the “governor effect” by comparing how state employment growth changed while a governor was in office with both national employment growth and the state's employment growth under other governors. Those comparisons allow us to estimate the impact that a particular governor had on growth in the employment rate in his state, distinguishing that effect from the overall economy's employment fluctuations and from the typical trajectory of employment fluctuations in the state.

Suppose, for example, that Texas employment typically goes up twice as fast as U.S. employment when the economy is expanding, and suppose further that we are considering a Texas governor who presided during an expansion. Our method would credit him with a positive effect on employment only if Texas employment went up more than twice as fast as U.S. employment while he was governor.

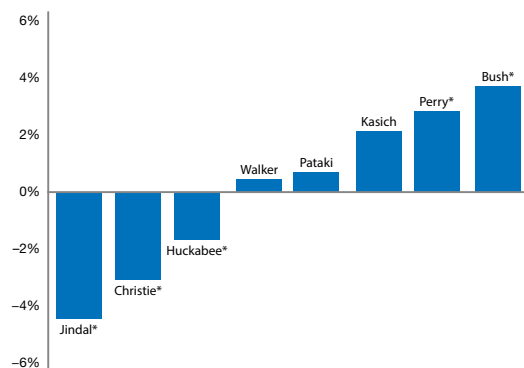
As one can see, there is considerable variation in the “governor effect” on state employment levels. Not every governor generates results in the direction that he would have hoped; others enjoy bright track records. Employment growth when Governor Jeb Bush was in office, for instance, tended to be about 4 percent higher per year than one would have predicted if the average Florida governor had been in office. Governor Perry has a similarly impressive record. (An asterisk on the chart next to a candidate's name means that our result has passed a standard test of statistical significance: We are 95 percent sure that it was not a matter of chance.)

Those with negative effects should not be too dismayed. No single statistical analysis can provide a complete picture of a candidate's record as governor. New Jersey was a basket case long before Chris Christie took over, and was on a fiscal path similar to that of Greece. He probably did more for the state than this picture shows, because what would have happened without him would have been so terrible.

As with investments, past results do not guarantee future performance. But past results, analyzed well, certainly seem like a better guide to the future than mere speculation.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT

The ‘Governor’ Effect
Average Year-Over-Year Change in
Employment Rate While in Office



imply that harsh sentences for non-violent drug offenders are responsible for our high incarceration figures. Actually, non-violent drug offenders represent no more than 16 percent of the entire state-prison population. Over 54 percent, in contrast, are serving time for violent crimes. President Obama shrinks from identifying the real problem elected officials should be addressing. Our prison population is unusually high because America's rate of violent crime is unusually high.

■ The Tenth Circuit Court of Appeals denied the Little Sisters of the Poor relief from the Obama administration's contraceptive mandate. Under the "accommodation" the administration devised for religious nonprofits, the Little Sisters can execute a form that allows third parties to use their insurance network to provide contraceptive coverage. The Little Sisters want instead to be fully exempt from the mandate, as churches are. The administration says that this would make it harder for it to provide the contraceptive coverage it considers so important—which rather makes the nuns' point for them: The administration is demanding that they facilitate something they oppose. They do not wish to be complicit in what they consider to be immoral. Judge Scott Matheson ruled that the nuns are mistaken: The accommodation relieves them of complicity. (We believe that in other contexts feminists call this "mansplaining.") Our law of religious liberty has never given the government the job of second-guessing religious groups on such moral questions, and it should not start now.

■ When the Obama administration cannot marginalize religious groups openly, it will do so covertly. Hence a new guideline from the Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement, quietly published in June, prohibiting federal grants to religious groups that refuse to provide trafficking victims "the full range of legally permissible gynecological and obstetric care"—read: abortion and contraception—or to refer them to third parties that do. This situation is familiar. In 2009, the American Civil Liberties Union sued HHS for contracting with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to provide help to victims of human trafficking, on the grounds that the USCCB would not provide abortion or contraceptive services. Before the suit could be resolved, the Obama administration refused to renew the USCCB's contract—even though none of the victims had complained about the USCCB's services. (The case was then dismissed as moot.) The new HHS rule will not affect any current grantees, but it could exclude potential applicants, and it might, according to March for Life president Jeanne Mancini, violate any of a number of federal laws meant to protect the freedom of conscience of health-care providers. The current administration seems to believe that victims of trafficking and exploitation are better left untended if the alternative is their being helped by pro-lifers.

■ For years, Congress has been debating whether to forbid discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. On July 15, just a few weeks after the Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell*, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission decided that Congress had actually forbidden it back in 1964 without anyone's noticing it. The Civil Rights Act of that year forbade discrimination based on sex, and the EEOC's 3–2 ruling read the ban to cover cases involving sexual orientation. A similar 3–2 ruling earlier this year used the same logic to force the

Department of the Army to allow a transgender employee to shower in the women's locker room. Both rulings apply only to federal employees—for now. Who knows what Lyndon Johnson will be discovered to have done next?



■ In Wisconsin, a nightmare has ended. The state's supreme court has ruled that Democratic district attorney John Chisholm's massive, multi-county "John Doe" investigation of Wisconsin's leading conservatives—an investigation that featured pre-dawn paramilitary-style raids of private homes and sweeping subpoenas that explored every aspect of the raid targets' private lives—violated the Constitution. Chisholm and his Democratic allies were investigating "crimes" that were not crimes at all. Launched in October 2013, the raids were designed to discover whether

Wisconsin conservative activists had "coordinated" their issue advocacy with the Scott Walker gubernatorial campaign. The Wisconsin court notes that even if this coordination occurred, it was protected by the First Amendment. Citizens have broad rights to engage in issue advocacy without concern for such election regulations as disclosure rules or expenditure limits. The court's ruling halts the John Doe investigation, but the issue is not fully resolved. One raid victim has already filed a civil-rights suit, and more lawsuits are expected. Justice demands accountability, and only time will tell whether the courts will deliver the next necessary message to Chisholm and his allies.

■ In July, Maine joined Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Kansas, Vermont, and Wyoming by nixing its firearms-permitting system entirely. Before the law was passed, Mainers had been able to openly carry guns without a permit but needed permission if they wished to conceal them on their person. Since there is no evidence that people carrying concealed weapons are more dangerous than people carrying weapons openly, the debate effectively revolved around whether arms-bearing citizens should require special permission to put on a coat—a difficult case to make in a state as cold as Maine. The reform should serve as a reminder that gun politics in the United States does not reside within the traditional ideological and geographical tram lines. In Paul LePage, Maine has a reliably conservative governor. But its legislature is split between Republicans and Democrats, and its voting population is famous for electing moderates who do not rock the boat. That the bill passed so easily over solid opposition from the state's newspapers, the local police, and an array of outside advocacy groups should concern the gun-control movement. When you can't win in New England . . .

■ In Oregon, a lesbian couple, Laurel Bowman and Rachel Cryer, asked a bakery called Sweet Cakes by Melissa to bake them a

wedding cake. The owners, Aaron and Melissa Klein, said no. They said they were happy to sell items to anyone—but would not bake wedding cakes for same-sex couples, because same-sex marriage goes against their religious beliefs. The lesbian couple filed a complaint with the state. They bought their cake from another baker, Pastrygirl. They also accepted a free cake from Duff Goldman, star of the TV show *Ace of Cakes*. (Goldman had heard about the Oregon controversy.) Gay-marriage activists began the usual campaign against the Kleins: boycotts, death threats on their children, etc. They were forced to close their shop, of course. And now they have been ordered to pay the lesbian couple \$135,000 for the emotional distress they allegedly inflicted on them. For once, a clichéd and mockable line is urgently appropriate: This is America?

■ An ex-con on parole, carrying a gun, accosted Lynne Russell at a Motel 6 in Albuquerque. Russell is the famed CNN anchor of yore. The gunman picked on the wrong woman, and the wrong man, too: Russell's husband, Chuck de Caro, was present. Both husband and wife have concealed-carry permits. De Caro happens to be ex-Special Forces. The gunman hit him with three bullets, and de Caro hit him with more. De Caro survived, and the assailant did not. Afterward, Russell said that the guns she and her husband carried had “absolutely” saved their lives. The debate over gun ownership is “just ridiculous,” she said. “As Americans, we have the right to bear arms, and as humans the right to protect ourselves. I’m sure that the man who shot my husband did not have a gun permit. Criminals will always have guns. The rest of us legally obtain our gun permits.” She added, “If you don’t want to carry, please don’t. Then shut the f*** up about it.” CNN was different when the stunning Lynne Russell was around.

■ Greece having been “saved” by “Europe,” the ordinary Greek citizen is allowed to withdraw \$460 per week for all the purposes of life. The value-added tax (on almost everything) has risen from 13 percent to 23 percent, which will increase the cost of living for Greeks and reduce the tourism that is now the main prop of the Greek economy. On the bright side, the European Central Bank has released enough emergency funding for Greece to repay \$2 billion—which is how much it was in arrears to the International Monetary Fund. But that amounts to little more than a technical maneuver to allow the Greeks to borrow more. In mid July, total Greek debt stood at well over \$300 billion, and the European bailout will add something short of \$86 billion to it. How can an economy that is flat on its back generate the revenue needed to repay this level of debt? It can’t. Not even the IMF expects it to do so—as it admitted in a report released conveniently just after the bailout had been agreed. So why lend? Continued lending is meant not to revive the Greek economy but to keep Greece within the euro zone, in order to preserve the fiction that membership is irrevocable. Though the Greeks refuse to face the fact, this means continued stagnation for Greece. For northern Europeans, it means endless bailouts—with the intervals between bailouts getting progressively shorter. That’s not kicking the can down the road, but kicking the can uphill and watching it roll back down again.

■ So, it is done: President Obama has completed his normalization of relations with the Castro dictatorship in Cuba. There will be embassies and, apparently, the exchange of ambassadors.

What did the Castros have to give up for this long-sought recognition? Were they forced to liberalize? To avoid cracking heads? To grant, say, Internet access to their subjects? No. They gave up nothing at all. There was no strategic imperative to normalize with the Castros. Obama granted the Castros recognition for free—out of sheer ideological preference, it seems. We suspect that Obama, like others on the left, regards the Castros as being on the “right side of history.” And bad old yanquis such as Eisenhower, JFK, and Reagan, not so much. The Castros’ persecution of democrats and liberals has increased since Obama announced his rapprochement. Berta Soler, the leader of Cuba’s Ladies in White, said that Obama had given “a green light to the Cuban government to crush civil society.” There is virtually nothing that the rest of us can do to offset Obama’s action. As a gesture—a gesture to decency, and American honor—the Senate might decline to confirm an ambassador, until such time as the Castros crack fewer heads.

■ During his trip to Latin America last month, Pope Francis received a Communist-themed crucifix from Bolivian president Evo Morales. The design—the corpus was nailed to a hammer, a sickle attached at the bottom—was originally fashioned by Luis Espinal, a Jesuit priest, missionary, and political activist who was assassinated by right-wing paramilitaries in La Paz in 1980. “I understand this piece and I did not find it offensive,” Francis said later, ending speculation about whether he disapproved of it. “I carry it with me,” he added. He took it back with him to Rome, where only yesterday, as the Vatican keeps time, Communism was recognized for what it is, an enemy of the Church and of humanity. Bolivian bishop Gonzalo del Castillo called the pope’s new crucifix “a provocation, a joke.” In addition, Morales presented Francis with two medallions, one of which displays Espinal’s provocation in miniature; those he transferred to Bolivia’s national shrine of Our Lady of Copacabana. We doubt she was pleased.

■ In an underreported development at the United Nations, advocates of the traditional role of the family, “the natural and fundamental group unit of society,” scored a quiet victory last month. The Human Rights Council, meeting in Geneva, adopted “Protection of the Family,” a 3,000-word resolution that includes, among other refreshing assertions of common sense, the statement that “the family has the primary responsibility for the nurturing and protection of children.” The vote was 29–14, with four abstentions. The yeas were largely from developing nations, many of them African, many Muslim; China, Russia, and India voted with them. Japan, Korea, South Africa, the United Kingdom, other European nations, and the United States voted no. In a joint statement issued by the delegations from the U.S., Canada, and Australia, the resolution was faulted for failing to celebrate “the diversity of families.” The American Left believes that socially conservative values are incompatible with liberal democracy. American social conservatives know that such values are its prerequisite. In the culture war here at home, they have their work cut out for them.

■ Cranes have been busy lifting statues from the Green Bridge, which spans the river running through Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. What might look like a regular example of urban renewal or maintenance is in fact a courageous political

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- » Roughly 75% of Americans are still living paycheck to paycheck, with essentially zero savings?
- » Or when the "Too Big To Fail" banks are now 37% larger than they were in 2007?
- » Do you really think everything can be back to normal when an incredible 49% of Americans are receiving benefits from at least one government program EVERY SINGLE month?

If you are skeptical about our politicians' claims that the U.S. economy has been "fixed," and everything is "back to normal," **you are not alone.**

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America is in for some major changes to our economy, our country, and our very way of life over the next five years.

The way you live, work, travel, retire, invest... everything is going to change. Some of it in ways most people would never expect.

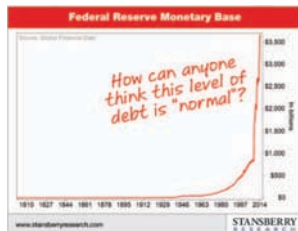
Believe me, I don't take these predictions lightly—and I have no interest in trying to scare you.

I'm simply following my research to its logical conclusion.

I did the same thing when I accurately predicted the demise of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and the once great American Institution, GM.

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This is why I recently put together a 107-page Blueprint, detailing the exact steps I'm taking to prepare for this inevitable crisis. I

strongly encourage you to take these simple steps, too.

My new work is called: **America 2020—The Survival Blueprint.**

In **America 2020** you'll learn:

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This is a handbook, a blueprint, and an owner's manual for how to protect yourself and your family over the next five years.

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Founder, Stansberry research
July 2015

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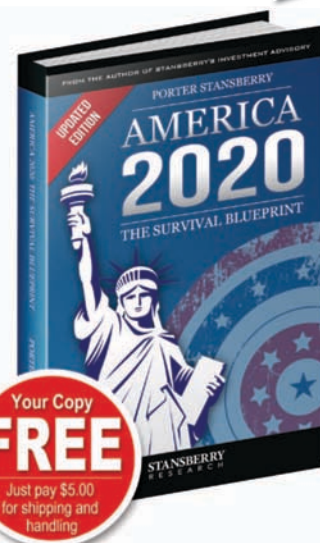
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- ★ The only five things you absolutely, positively must have to ensure you and your family can safely survive just about any crisis. (page 70)

How to get real, hold-in-your-hand silver for less than \$3. This is the absolute best way to buy silver in the world. And it's important to remember: Silver is the ultimate currency in a real financial crisis—probably even better than gold. One investor I respect says silver will ultimately reach more than \$150... that's more than 700% higher than today's price. (page 41)



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move. Larger than life, the statues were put up to emphasize that the Soviet Union would do as it pleased with this puny Baltic country. Four pairs of bronze statues were installed in 1952, when Stalin still had a year to live. In the socialist-realist mode of Bolshevism triumphant, they represent larger-than-life soldiers, workers, students, and collectivized farmers. In truth, according to Remigijus Simasius, mayor of Vilnius, “They represent a lie.” Soviet oppressors were made to look heroic, and the people who lived under them were mocked openly, if not persecuted outright. In the Kremlin, Vladimir Putin is doing whatever he can to fashion a Russia once more able to do as it pleases. The mayor of Vilnius promises to dump the statues somewhere out of sight. The percentage of Russians living in Lithuania is high, and many of them regret the passing of the Soviet Union. Should Putin succeed in redrawing the map of Ukraine, Lithuania may be next and the mayor of Vilnius will seem to have been too hopeful.

■ A group of tourists from various democratic countries were having a leisurely trip through China, exploring ancient sites. They watched a BBC documentary on Genghis Khan, to further their understanding of that long-ago brute. They were then arrested and detained by the Chinese, for watching “terrorist propaganda.” After an international campaign, they were released and deported. Imagine if they had been watching a documentary on the fate of human-rights activists in China.

■ Joaquín “El Chapo” Guzmán, the head of Mexico’s Sinaloa drug cartel, escaped from a “maximum-security” Mexican prison through a mile-long tunnel that had been built from scratch for his escape. The tunnel was equipped with lights, ventilation, a custom-made motorcycle with tracks to run on—everything but a toll collector. Clearly El Chapo has come up in the world since his first prison break, 13 years earlier, when he snuck out in much less elaborate fashion by hiding in a laundry cart. The ease of his escape comes as no great surprise, since Mexico’s prisons and law enforcement are thoroughly infiltrated with cartel operatives. That’s why observers were disappointed when the U.S. failed to negotiate El Chapo’s extradition and incarceration in a federal supermax prison after he was caught and imprisoned last year. Reasonable conservatives can disagree on the wisdom of the fight against drugs, but if you are going to ban them, you should at least take the attempt seriously—something Mexico’s government seems chronically unable to do.

■ Franklin Albert Jones, born a New Yorker, has been dead these past seven years, but his soul goes marching on. Giving himself a string of names such as “Bubba Free John” and “Da-Love Anand,” he finally settled on “Adi Da Samraj.” Photographs show him dressed up—or sometimes down—to play the part of an Indian fakir. He also had his Scientology period. He assembled a group of followers, and disillusioned acolytes were soon charging him with false imprisonment, brainwashing, and sexual abuse. With legal proceedings against him under way, he slipped off to Fiji. Now, in an act of brilliant marketing, the surviving Samrajists have gotten the historic Bargello museum of sculpture, in Florence, to mount an exhibition of some 60 paintings by him, all of them abstract and predominantly red in color. Supposedly there’s a theme to do with

Orpheus, who, in classical mythology, returned from the underworld. The repeated motif of a circle apparently stands for a bicycle wheel, something not available to Orpheus. Among its treasures, the Bargello has world-famous pieces by Michelangelo and Donatello’s equally world-famous bronze of David. The Samraj exhibition could be laughed off, except that it associates the greatest works of the High Renaissance with modern spoof.

■ An outfit called Affirmative Consent has devised a simple way to clarify whether both parties to an amorous encounter have consented: the sex contract. It’s a sheet of paper emblazoned with the romantic words “YES! We agree to have SEX!” The parties involved either sign the agreement or take a photo of themselves holding it. Like the casual hook-ups it’s designed for, this contract may seem simple and fun but can easily get quite complicated. First of all, its unlimited and unconditional blanket approval seems contrary to the spirit of “Yes Means Yes,” which in its most orthodox form requires separate consent to undo each button. And there are numerous potential pitfalls: Can the parties change their minds? When will the agreement expire? Does it permit unlimited renewals? Even the word “sex” is famously nebulous in its possible meanings. The larger problem, of course, is that misunderstandings and hurt feelings are all but inevitable when you rush into the most intimate of situations with someone you barely know—and no amount of contractual language, whether six words or 60 pages, can change that.

■ Madeline Stuart, 18, of Brisbane, Australia, wanted to be a model. First she had to lose 45 pounds. So she did. She created a Facebook page last spring and after ten days had 100,000 followers. Manifesta, an athletic-wear company, offered her a modeling contract. She signed. Soon after, a Guatemalan handbag company, everMaya, expressed interest too. She signed. Maddy, as she is known, has Down syndrome and joins a recent wavelet: The actress Jamie Brewer, who has Down syndrome, walked the runway during New York Fashion Week back in February, and in the past year Target and the kids’-fashion company Freshly Picked have featured children with Down syndrome in their advertising. The example of the models and of the companies that have hired them is encouraging in the face of this horrifying statistic: An estimated 90 percent of unborn children with Down syndrome are aborted. While they remain unprotected in law, may the sight of their being welcomed in life prove contagious.



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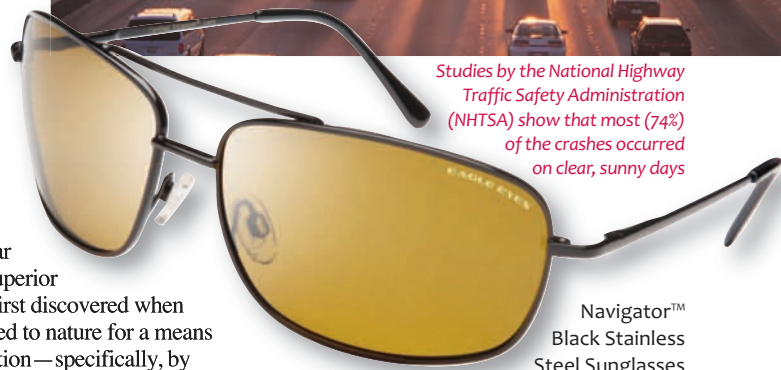
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■ Harper Lee has consented to the publication of a new book: *Go Set a Watchman*. It is the publishing event of the year, of the decade, and perhaps of the still-young century. Lee's 1960 novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, is possibly the most beloved novel in English, and certainly in American literature. It and the new novel contain many of the same characters, including Atticus Finch. *Watchman* was finished before *Mockingbird*, though *Watchman*'s action takes

place well after the action in *Mockingbird*. Therefore, it is a sequel—and it casts an unflattering light on the iconic and ideal Atticus Finch, which has upset some readers. The big question is: Was Lee mentally competent to give her consent to the publication of this long-buried novel? The answer, apparently, is yes. Lee's one-book career seemed perfect enough, and to upset it at this late date seems odd. But a lady has a right to publish.

THE MIDDLE EAST

The Abysmal Iran Deal

AFTER years of broken promises, missed deadlines, and ready concessions, President Obama got what he wants: a deal with Iran. He doesn't care that it is dangerous and unenforceable, and, of course, neither does the U.N., where he brought the deal in July and got a unanimous endorsement, meaning that the international sanctions regime is effectively over. Congress, however, retains the right to reject the agreement, keeping its sanctions on Iran and saving the U.S. from complicity in this corrupt bargain. Accomplishing that should be just about all Congress thinks about for the next two months.

President Obama has compared the deal to past agreements with another adversary, the Soviet Union. But the agreements bear almost no resemblance to each other. First, the Soviet treaties were, well, treaties—approved by two-thirds of the Senate. Second, Reagan entered into them when he judged, correctly, that the U.S. campaign of military, economic, and moral pressure had brought about a fundamental change of attitude in the Soviet regime. Finally, the treaties involved reductions in and limits on arms from both sides. If the Soviets stopped complying, we could too.

Under this deal, we give money to an unreconstructed Iranian regime in return for its promise to limit its nuclear program. But if it doesn't limit its nuclear work, we can't take the money back. The U.S. and other countries will be handing Iran more than \$100 billion in freed-up assets and eliminating all sanctions long before we have much evidence of compliance. For instance, the money will probably arrive in Iran's hands before the deadline for the country to disclose its past nuclear work, a deadline of a sort it has simply ignored in the past.

If the U.S. can at some point persuade the other Western parties that Iran has broken the rules, sanctions can be reimposed—but only U.N. Security Council sanctions, and their reimposition will dissolve the deal. Further, violations can be uncovered only via a tortuous process of controlled inspections, not the “anytime, anywhere” regime the Obama administration had promised. A serious sanctions regime cannot be rebuilt quickly or automatically, so if Iran wants to cheat, or exit the deal altogether, the costs will be low.

Ten years from now, even that weak enforcement mechanism will expire. Five years from now, an embargo on conventional-arms exports to Iran will expire. In eight years, an embargo on ballistic-missile technology expires. We wouldn't bet that Iran's regional rivals will wait until then to begin arming themselves.

The Obama administration risibly maintains that the only alternative to the agreement would be war. No, the alternative would have been tightening the screws on Iran until it came to the table willing to sign a reasonable deal and forswear its terrorist activities across the globe. Other powers may be itching to undo the sanctions regime now, but the Bush and Obama administrations had managed to get them on board, pushing Iran close to economic collapse in 2013—before President Obama let the mullahs off the hook with an interim deal.

Once this deal is in place, there are few good options. A number of Republican presidential hopefuls have said they would terminate U.S. participation in the deal on entering office. That would extricate us from this sham but barely weaken an Iran restored to good standing in the international community.

That is why Congress needs to do its best to block the deal, in hopes of unraveling it. Under the imperfect legislation Congress passed, it has 60 days to muster a veto-proof majority against the agreement. That is a very tall order, and effectively reverses the usual process of approving treaties, but it is not an impossible one. Key congressional Democrats have so far withheld judgment and might be persuadable.

The president believes in this agreement because he thinks extending our hand to an implacably anti-Western regime with the blood of more than a thousand American servicemen on its hands will turn it into a reputable regional power, even a partner.

This is folly. The president clearly considers it the capstone of his foreign policy, and, unfortunately, he's right.



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Tehran Triumphant

The nuclear deal is Iran's win and the world's loss

BY ELLIOTT ABRAMS

WITH the signing of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) by Iran, the United States, Russia, China, and three European countries (France, the U.K., and Germany), the action shifts to Capitol Hill. Congress will now devote part of its summer (though not the August recess, which is sacrosanct) to debating the 150-page agreement, and the big question facing elected representatives of both parties is: What is in this document before them? Is it a diplomatic achievement or a disgrace, a technical fix or a fundamental policy shift?

When conscientious legislators sigh, do their duty, and actually pick up the 150-page agreement, they will find that it takes them less time to read than they feared it might. Roughly 60 of those 150 pages comprise lists of all the Iranian entities—firms, companies, ports, ships, banks, individuals, and on and on—that will have sanctions on them lifted. As they peruse those lists, members of Congress should stop and reflect for a moment. It has taken decades for them to craft and entrench the current international sanctions against Iran. To believe that these sanctions can or will “snap back” into

place if Iran violates the agreement is foolish. As Robert Satloff of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy has put it:

There is only one penalty for any infraction, big or small—taking Iran to the U.N. Security Council for the “snapback” of international sanctions. That is like saying that for any crime—whether a misdemeanor or a felony—the punishment is the death penalty. In the real world, that means there will be no punishments for anything less than a capital crime. . . . But the problem with snapback gets worse. The agreement includes a statement that Iran considers a reimposition of sanctions as freeing it from all commitments and restrictions under the deal. In other words, the violation would have to be really big for the Security Council to blow up the agreement and reimpose sanctions. That effectively gives Iran a free pass on all manner of small to mid-level violations.

Quite right, but it gets worse still: All of the above proceeds from the assumption that the Obama administration will actually try to use the agreement’s elaborate procedures, take disputes to the Security Council, and re-sanction Iran in the event that it violates its commitments. That seems a dubious bet, given that the administration has lately acted as Iran’s advocate, attacking the press for suggesting that the Islamic Republic had in-

creased its stockpile of nuclear fuel in violation of existing agreements.

Satloff noted another remarkable aspect of the agreement. It seems that “all contracts signed by Iran up until [sanctions are reimposed] are grandfathered in and immune from sanctions. That means one can expect a stampede of state-to-state and private-sector contracts—some real, many hypothetical—all designed to shield Iran from the impact of possible reimposition of sanctions, thereby weakening the impact of the punishment.” That’s my reading as well. And let’s be realistic: Soon enough, the EU will have a huge economic investment in Iran, and its companies and trade unions will strongly resist any sanctions that could jeopardize profits or employment. EU politicians will listen to their constituents and protect those constituents’ economic interests before all else. The idea of restoring the sanctions regime is a fantasy.

About half of the American states have Iran-sanctions laws of their own on the books, so their congressional representatives may take an interest in paragraph 25 of the JCPOA:

If a law at the state or local level in the United States is preventing the implementation of the sanctions lifting as specified in this JCPOA, the United States will take appropriate steps, taking into account all available authorities, with a view to achieving such implementation. The United States will actively encourage officials at the state or local level to take into account the changes in the U.S. policy reflected in the lifting of sanctions under this JCPOA and to refrain from actions inconsistent with this change in policy.

Think about that: Obama has agreed that the federal government will fight any move by any state or locality to impose or maintain sanctions on Iran, for human-rights violations, support of terrorism, aggression in the region, holding American hostages, or any other reason. State sanctions of any kind, interfering with finance or commerce in any way, are surely “inconsistent with this change in policy.”

And what a change in policy it is. Under previous presidents, the U.S. had always aimed at a “zero” option: Iran zeroes out its nuclear program, and we zero out our sanctions. Satloff neatly summarized what happened once Obama took office: “The United States conceded to Iran the right to have its own nuclear reactors but not to

Mr. Abrams is a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations.

DOCTOR'S MEMORY BREAKTHROUGH

New Discovery for People with Failing Memory

World's Leading Brain Expert and Winner of the Prestigious Kennedy Award, Unveils Exciting News For the Scattered, Unfocused and Forgetful

By Steven Wuzubia
Health Correspondent;

Clearwater, Florida: Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D., is a former visiting professor at Duke University, recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize and author of more than 200 international scientific papers on human body cells. But now he's come up with what the medical world considers his greatest accomplishment — A vital compound, so powerful, it's reported to repair... even regrow damaged brain cells. In layman's terms — Bring back your memory power. And leave you feeling more focused and clear-headed than you have in years!

Dr. Shinitzky explains this phenomenon in simple terms; "Science has shown when your brain nutrient levels drop, you can start to experience memory problems and overall mental fatigue. Your ability to concentrate and stay focused becomes compromised. And gradually, a "mental fog" sets in. It can damage every aspect of your life". Not only do brain cells die but they become dysfunctional as if they begin to fade away as we age. This affects our ability to have mental clarity and focus and impacts our ability to remember things that were easy for us to do in our 20's and 30's.

Scientists think the biggest cause of brain deterioration in older people is the decreased functioning of membranes and molecules that surround the brain cells. These really are the transmitters that connect the tissues or the brain cells to one another that help us with our sharp memory, clear thinking and mental focus, even our powers to reason well. "When we are in our 20's" according to Dr. Shinitzky "our body produces key substances like phosphatidylserine and phosphatidic acid"...unfortunately they are believed to be critical essential nutrients that just fade away with age, much like our memories often do leading to further mental deterioration.

As we get older it becomes more frustrating as there is little comfort when you forget names... misplace your keys...or just feel "a little confused". And even though your foggy memory gets laughed off as just another "senior moment," it's not very funny when it keeps happening to you.

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- Ethel Macagnoney



Dr. Meir Shinitzky, Ph.D. a former visiting professor at Duke University and a recipient of the prestigious J.F. Kennedy Prize

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develop indigenous capacity to enrich nuclear fuel, which doubles as the core element of nuclear weapons. Then, the United States conceded to Iran the right to enrich but under strict limitations. Then, the United States conceded to Iran that the strict limitations on enrichment would expire at a certain point in the future.”

Iran has been arguing for years that it has the right to enrich uranium under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The United States has always said “No way”—until now. The George W. Bush administration insisted that before Jordan and the United Arab Emirates, our allies, could sign a civil nuclear-cooperation agreement with us, they had to agree not to enrich *any* uranium—they weren’t permitted to spin even a single centrifuge. Now we allow

from future oil sales, gas development, and trade and investment. And worst of all, the arms embargo ends in five years, and the embargo on helping Iran build ballistic missiles ends in eight.

From Iran’s point of view, the JCPOA is neatly sequenced. At five years it can begin rearming without any limits; at eight years it can start modernizing and enlarging its ballistic missiles; and after ten years the nuclear limits start falling away entirely. That is, it can then develop warheads, and it will have the missiles on which to put them. The intervening years of Iranian conventional military buildup will make any Israeli or (under a future administration) U.S. strike on Iran’s nuclear-weapons program much harder and more dangerous.

recently Sana’a, in Yemen—and continues to be the largest state supporter of terrorism in the world.

What does the JCPOA say about those ugly facts? Not a word. The agreement treats Iran as if it were Switzerland or Singapore. It is obvious to officials in other Middle Eastern states, and to many Europeans as well, that the JCPOA strengthens Iran, and in fact represents America’s recognition and acceptance of Iranian power—if not hegemony—in the region.

Why did the administration accept this deal, which essentially gives the world’s blessing to the ayatollahs’ view of Iran and its role? Did the president actually believe that such an agreement would curb the regime’s dangerous misbehav-

It is obvious to officials in other Middle Eastern states, and to many Europeans as well, that **the agreement strengthens Iran.**

Iran 6,000 centrifuges and legitimization as a nuclear state. Decades of American nonproliferation policy are undone.

What has Iran gained in this agreement? The reaction of Iranian president Hassan Rouhani, as tweeted by the *New York Times*’ Thomas Erdbrink, makes it plain:

Our objective was to have the nuclear program and have sanctions lifted. At first they wanted us to have 100 centrifuges now we will have 6,000. They wanted restrictions of 25 years now its [sic] 8. First they said we could only have IR1 centrifuges, now we can have IR6, 7, and 8, advanced centrifuges. Heavy water plant at Arak had to be dismantled but now it will remain with heavy water under conditions. Fordo had to be closed now we will have 1,000 centrifuges there.

There are of course other ways to measure Iran’s achievement. Iran is holding four Americans hostage, and apparently it will keep all four; Secretary of State John Kerry has adamantly rejected the idea that he should have insisted on the hostages’ freedom before signing a deal. Iran has always argued that its nuclear program was legal, and we have always argued it was illegal; now, we give that up. Iran does not have to disclose previous work on nuclear warheads to the IAEA. It will get an immense influx of cash from the deal, perhaps \$150 billion, plus the profits

All of this represents a complete abandonment of the policy toward Iran that the United States has pursued since the hostage crisis of 1979, through administrations of both parties and with the support of congressional majorities from both parties. On its very first page, the document says that the deal “will mark a fundamental shift” in how we approach Iran and its nuclear program. The agreement is certainly right about that. Once upon a time, faced with an implacable enemy, Ronald Reagan said we would do what Truman and Kennedy had aimed to do with the Soviet Union: persevere until we had won, until there was a fundamental shift in Soviet conduct or an end to the USSR. Obama is instead throwing in the towel: The fundamental shift in behavior he has engineered comes from the United States, not Iran.

The Islamic Republic remains an implacable enemy, holding hostages and supporting terror. It organized “Death to America” marches even as its negotiators sat in Vienna and Lausanne, smiling at John Kerry across the table. Ten years ago, the president and bipartisan majorities in Congress would not have tolerated Iranian expeditionary forces’ roaming in the Middle East, but here we are, with Iranian troops fighting in Syria and Iraq. Iran now controls four Arab capitals—Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, and most

ior? Obama has a theory, of course: that the main problems in world politics come from American militarism, aggression, and bullying, and that if we open our “clenched fists” and embrace hostile regimes, they will respond in kind. We’ve seen the results of such policies in Russia, in North Korea, and most recently in Cuba. Obama’s Iran deal is in fact based on his “Cuba model”: hand a lifeline to a regime in deep economic trouble, ignore its people’s long quest for human rights and decent government, and call the resulting deal a historic achievement, without bothering to bargain all that hard for recompense.

People who do not live in and bicycle around Lausanne or Vienna but must instead try to survive in Israel and the Persian Gulf countries understand all of this. Iran has won a great victory: Despite a seemingly weak bargaining position, it has outmaneuvered and outnegotiated the United States and the EU. Kerry and Mohammad Zarif, the lead Iranian negotiator, will probably share a Nobel Peace Prize, which is disgraceful, but Zarif does deserve recognition for producing a far better deal for Iran than he had any right to expect. He owes a huge debt of gratitude to Barack Obama and his view of the world. For the rest of us, this deal, and the rise of Iran, mean great danger ahead.

NR

'Can't Pay, Won't Pay'

*Greece dares Germany
and the EU*

BY JOHN O'SULLIVAN

IN the recent debate over whether to bail out Greece, Wolfgang Schäuble, Germany's conservative finance minister, and Alexis Tsipras, Greece's radical-Left prime minister, were at opposite ends of the spectrum. Schäuble designed the rejected "temporary Grexit" option with up-front debt relief, while Tsipras argued for a bailout within the euro with debt relief prudently postponed. Tsipras seemingly won this debate, but both men left the field wounded.

So why do both now say the bailout will fail?

One reason is that it will fail. The deal assumes that the Greeks will deliver on tax hikes, spending cuts, and privatization receipts. They won't. They didn't deliver on previous occasions, and this time almost every Greek will conspire to outwit the regulations that Brussels imposes.

The deal also assumes that the Germans will ignore Greek backsliding and underwrite Athens's debt come what may. They won't. Opinion polls show narrow German support for the latest bailout. It won't survive a fourth demand from Athens.

But the bailout's falsest assumption is that Greece's main problem is its debts. It isn't. Greece's membership in the euro zone would impose an indefinite recession on the country even if all its debts were canceled tomorrow, because it locks the economy into an overvalued exchange rate. For as long as Greece remains in the euro zone, it will need regular infusions of cash from other members, as the post-crisis report from the International Monetary Fund candidly, if belatedly, acknowledged.

Schäuble's solution recognized that reality and proposed a humane solution—Greece would leave the euro, receive generous debt relief to stabilize and grow its economy, allow the drachma to find its natural level, and reenter the euro zone in due course (if it chose). For this he was denounced as a brutal thug, his proposal was disavowed by Chancellor Angela Merkel ("unworkable"), and a bailout that really is unworkable was unanimously approved.

The mystery of why both Schäuble and Tsipras have predicted the bailout's failure is thus solved: They are positioning themselves as far-sighted leaders for the crisis that follows the forthcoming bailout failure. So what *will* follow? And what do the various parties want?

Since the euro crisis has opened up new political territory, the various contenders for power are not quite sure what they *do* want. As things develop, however, the far-left parties across Europe—Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain, and Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement in Italy—will almost certainly coalesce around the case for a "transfer union." That's not been a common term in recent euro debates except in Germany, where parents use it to frighten children. But Milton Friedman would recognize it as one of the three conditions needed to make a common currency workable—the other two being cross-border labor migration (done) and a common fiscal policy, mutualization of debts, a common budget, etc. (still under discussion).

Transfers in the Greek bailout have been not merely regressive but perverse; poorer countries such as Latvia and Slovenia have been taxed to finance subsidies to the richer Greeks. But the *idea* of a transfer union is naturally attractive to



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old-style socialists and hard leftists because it elevates income redistribution from domestic to international (or intra-European) politics. That's why Tsipras swallowed tough fiscal medicine in order to remain in the euro. Whether or not he delivers on his promises, he calculates that they will be enough to keep German money coming, maybe indefinitely. Greece's being outside the euro would have limited any euro cash to that one-off "goodbye" settlement.

Other Left parties will be quick to see where this logic takes them: Yes, the euro might impose a permanent recession on their countries, but the transfer union needed to make it work would guarantee them subsidies from prosperous euro-zone members and a very favorable political environment. So their ideologies would gradually morph into an international version of "Can't Pay, Won't Pay"—the fun-anarchist slogan that began life as the title of a play by Dario Fo, the Nobel Prize-winning playwright and (not coincidentally) the informal ideologist of Italy's Five Star Movement.

It is this developing ideology that alarms Germans, especially the center Right, since their country would be its principal financier and victim. In addition to believing that the bailout would fail, Schäuble—who is a tough pro-Brussels federalist and no kind of Euro-skeptic—wanted to protect the euro against both Mediterranean fecklessness and German Euroskepticism. He wanted a fiscal union to discipline the budgetary policies of weaker euro members and thereby limit the risks of a transfer union. But he thought that such disciplines might not work in a pre-modern state like Greece. And he probably reckoned that the euro would be both more stable and more saleable to German voters if Greece were to depart.

None of these are foolish opinions. But he was outvoted by Merkel, the social-democratic half of the German government, French president François Hollande, Jean-Claude Juncker and the European Commission, et al., who clung to the superstition that any departure from the euro would doom not only the single cur-



Wolfgang Schäuble



Alexis Tsipras

rency but the European Union itself. That is almost certainly the opposite of the truth. "Europe" is more threatened by failed bailouts than by the exit from the euro, temporary or otherwise, of countries it has plunged into recession. But superstition, orthodoxy, and French pressure carried the day. All then compromised on a bailout in which the terms were made painful—to signal to Greece, Syriza, and the Mediterranean Left that any transfer union, if one formed, would be accompanied by a fiscal union so tough that nations would go to the lengths of balancing their budgets and paying their debts to avoid it.

Even while the bailout was being celebrated, however, there was a reaction to its harshness. Soft-Left, progressive, and bien-pensant opinion was shocked to discover that a fiscal union might limit national sovereignty, override national democratic decisions, and treat debtor nations as sub-colonial units. That was odd, and it should have been baffling, because for the past half decade leading euro-zone figures have been saying plainly that it was necessary for these very purposes. Once the progressives saw the undemocratic imposition of austerity in action, however, they balked—with *Guardian* columnists in Britain even talking wildly of voting against EU membership. (Don't panic; the mood will pass.)

Syriza and the hard Left were probably surprised too, but pleasantly so. They will be happier to accept harsh punishments on paper in return for hard cash because they now know that Europe's vast soft-Left lumpen-intelligentsia will protest if any serious attempt is made to collect. Thus the IMF discovered that the Greeks needed more money to survive than the

IMF itself had calculated *the previous day*. Merkel now describes the "temporary Grexit" as unworkable. And early opinion polls showed most Germans favored the bailout.

But will that mood persist? Or survive the failure of Greece to meet its bailout obligations? Early opinion polls were taken at a time of national anxiety, when the media were reporting hostility across

Europe to a Germany seen as cruel and tyrannical. More-recent polls already show that a narrow majority of the electorate *opposes* the bailout.

Conservative opinion is shifting even more interestingly, as I found at a conference in Lisbon three weeks ago. A German Christian Democrat, unapologetically Euro-federalist, surprised the conference with the argument that forthcoming Brexit (British-exit) talks were less a danger than an opportunity to reform Europe on less regulated and less centralized lines. From the center left, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's former aide Wolfgang Nowack seconded this argument in a *Telegraph* article. Media commentary has now dropped last year's "good riddance" line on Brexit. German conservatives are talking of a Merkel-Cameron alliance.

Do they include Merkel? Probably not. She is looking more and more like an empty pantsuit. She is cautious to the point of immobility, preoccupied with her defense of the unreformed euro as a crucial element in her "legacy." In a negative way, it is—along with her reversal of Schröder's free-market reforms, her dithering in the face of Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and her loss of the center-right Bundestag majority.

If she were to show unaccustomed boldness, however, would she find a partner? David Cameron, faced with an opportunity for revamping Europe that earlier Tory leaders would have killed for, is astonishing the Continent by the modesty of his proposed reforms. Keeping Britain inside any kind of European Union seems to be a higher priority for him than reforming the dysfunctional EU across the table.

Maybe the Tories should ask Schäuble for advice.

NR

After the Wedding Day

*Looking back at the
same-sex-marriage debate*

BY RAMESH PONNURU

REPUBLICAN politicians' reactions to the Supreme Court's ruling on same-sex marriage went a long way toward explaining why their side lost. Their press releases were generally defensive, palpably eager to change the subject, a testament to the fact that most Americans now support same-sex marriage, judging from most polls over the last few years. Even more telling, though, was the nearly uniform failure of the Republicans to state a rationale for rejecting same-sex marriage.

They said that the Court should have left this matter for the people to decide, and that they themselves believe marriage is the union of a man and a woman. To the extent that they offered a justification at all, they said their faith entails this view. That invocation of faith was itself a defensive move: Don't blame me, blame my church. But it was also in keeping with the pattern of the debate over same-sex marriage even when it was unpopular: Opposing politicians rested their case on their faith, on tradition, and on majority sentiment.

"I believe that marriage is the union of a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian—for me—for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union. God's in the mix." Asserting a position, and then invoking faith: That was Barack Obama in 2008; but it was not much different from the way politicians who actually believed what they were saying talked.

The invocation of faith was not compelling to people who do not share that faith, and it raised—still raises, for the Republicans who still lean on this rhetoric—the uncomfortable question of how they decide which aspects of their faiths they want public policy to reflect. Majority support for traditional marriage was not an obstacle for people who concluded that the tradition and majority view should change.

Sherif Girgis, Ryan Anderson, and Robert P. George put forth an actual argument for the view that marriage law should concern the union of a man and a woman. The argument was that marriage originated, both as a social institution and as a legal category, to deal with the facts that sex between a man and a woman often generates children and that these children are most likely to flourish when their father and mother are united for the long run. Marriage exists, that is, to regulate the behavior that can produce children, to channel that behavior toward the best interests of children.

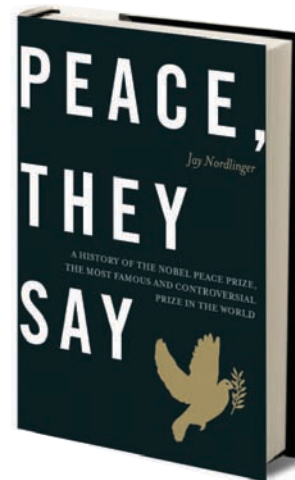
That argument was not made up to exclude gays and lesbians from marriage. Something very like it lay beneath family law long before anyone had the idea that two women should be able to marry. It's worth noting that the argument is *not* that same-sex marriage is impermissible because gay sex is wrong. If anything, the related traditionalist argument would run the other way around: Gay sex is wrong because it can't be marital.

The social-conservative argument is that same-sex marriage is both wrong in principle and likely to have negative consequences of uncertain magnitude. It would teach people that marriage was primarily about the emotional needs of adults; it would make it harder to argue the case that children need a mother and father committed to them and to each other. The norms linking sex, marriage, and procreation, already weakened over the last several decades, would grow weaker still.

This argument had only a spectral presence in the popular debate over same-sex marriage. Politicians were generally unfamiliar with it and unwilling to make it. In these respects they represented the broader public, which no longer agreed with or understood the premises underlying the old norms. That's why I argued in these pages twelve years ago that same-sex marriage was likely to prevail, notwithstanding the polls that showed that most people disagreed with it. The fundamental concern of same-sex-marriage opponents was that the public would lose the old understanding of marriage. But that battle had largely been lost before the debate over same-sex marriage even began.

The public policy of marriage did not aim to promote either liberty or the general welfare directly, but only by shaping social morality. When the debate over same-sex marriage began, we hardly even

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had a vocabulary to discuss such a policy. One of the most potent arguments for same-sex marriage was that it “would not hurt you,” or anyone else’s marriage. The implication was that people opposed it more for its symbolism than for its concrete effects—something that could just as rightly be said of its supporters.

It was also a libertarian, you-can-swing-your-fist-until-it-hits-my-nose way of talking about the issue. But such terms do not fit marriage well, because the logic of libertarianism tends to cut against the state’s recognizing marriage at all. (As does the logic of same-sex marriage: Why would the government have an interest in romance as such?)

All that was left was for the public to begin to see homosexuality in terms of identity rather than behavior. Once that happened, insisting on the old definition of marriage—a definition no longer deeply rooted in popular understandings of marriage—started to look like excluding a minority group out of ill will.

And it must be admitted that there was plenty of ill will. Eve Tushnet, herself an opponent of same-sex marriage, noted some years ago that

the ways in which homosexuality is stigmatized in our culture look nothing like the ways we treat many other things Scripture calls vices. Kids on the playground taunt each other for being gay, even disparaging other kids’ backpacks or pencil cases as “so gay.” People get beaten up or harassed on the street for their real or perceived homosexuality. Parents reject their children for coming out. . . . This isn’t how we treat the acts we really consider sinful. It’s how we treat scapegoats.

To the considerable extent that these attitudes and practices are declining, we are well rid of them.

None of this means that social conservatives were wrong to resist same-sex marriage. They are sometimes chided because they did less to resist, say, no-fault divorce; but that issue might have played out very differently if it had come to America through court decrees, and if opponents had been given reason to worry that the law and culture would start treating them as bigots.

Justice Kennedy’s opinion in the same-sex-marriage case was more responsive to trends in the culture than to any legal argument. It does a better job of explain-

ing why he wants the law to recognize same-sex marriage than of explaining why the Constitution commands this policy. The liberal justices, more interested in the result than in the reasoning, joined the opinion without adding any argument of their own.

He dwells on one of his favorite themes, “dignity,” which has under his influence become as handy a judicial tool for policymaking as the “right to privacy” once was. By keeping the government from treating people in certain ways—not letting it quarter troops in their homes, for instance—the Constitution genuinely does protect both dignity and privacy. It does not follow that judges have a free-floating authority to nullify laws that they consider in conflict with those goods.

Kennedy’s emphasis on dignity suggests that what he is concerned with is the symbolic content of marriage policy: what it expresses. For him, what it should express, above all, is the value of romantic commitment. His decision was celebrated on social media with the apt slogan “Love wins.” Marriage, Kennedy authoritatively muses, has been “strengthened” by our changed understanding of it. You wouldn’t know it from marriage rates. The romantic conception of marriage has something going for it, which is why it has been triumphing for centuries, but it does seem to have made the institution more fragile.

Many Americans, tired of contention over same-sex marriage, have hoped that the Court would bring the argument to a close. That seems unlikely. We will now argue over how free opponents will remain to act on their beliefs. May the Knights of Columbus refuse to rent a wedding hall to a same-sex couple? Many liberals, gay and straight, will say no.

The argument that even bigots deserve tolerance has some force, but probably not enough, in our culture, to prevail. To preserve their freedom, traditionalists will need safety in numbers. The more religious groups soften their opposition to same-sex marriage, the more marginal the remaining opposition will be. The opponents will also have to guard the perception that they have a reasonable point of view.

Social conservatives will therefore have to keep making the argument against same-sex marriage—indeed, they will have to make it more forcefully than they have so far done. **NR**

The Cool Vote

Republicans should acknowledge the power of cultural arbiters

BY JAMES POULOS

FROM the rainbow flag to the Confederate battle flag, one basic lesson reinforced this summer is that some political positions are cool and others are not. Something similar goes for presidential contenders.

What makes a would-be POTUS cool? For a party intent on laying claim to a larger share of “the selfie vote,” as pollster Kristen Soltis Anderson calls it, that’s an important question. And for the Republican party, it’s also a fraught one. Ever since the first televised presidential debate, when viewers deemed Kennedy the victor over Nixon, the GOP has struggled with issues of charisma. Reagan’s magnetic presence was all too fleeting, as conservative critics of the officious first President Bush would sigh.

Of course, in 2008, voters were captivated by Candidate Obama’s mix of self-conscious bravado and above-it-all composure. Obama himself hinted at aspirations to become the Democrats’ Reagan. Both leaders were charismatic. But in the eyes of many, only Obama was cool.

This time around, several powerful forces have aligned for the GOP. Without an incumbent or the prospect of a quick and easy primary, some Republicans have a chance to freshen up their image. Unlike the last two Democrats in the Oval Office, if there’s one thing Hillary Clinton is not, it’s cool. An edge among the culture’s arbiters of coolness could actually make a small but significant impact in the run-up to Election Day.

The party faithful can and will argue about which of their would-be champions has a legitimate claim to being cool. But at this juncture, it seems clear that the most significant case study is Marco Rubio. Whatever the charms displayed

Mr. Poulos writes for the Daily Beast, The Week, and other publications. He lives in Los Angeles.

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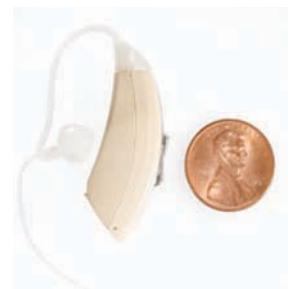
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by his competition, Rubio has a clear advantage. A young Cuban American at home with pop culture, he's got three legs up over much of the field. As a straight-faced establishmentarian with some staunchly conservative views, he can expect his bid for coolness to encounter some obstacles. But more than any other candidate, Rubio represents what a "new kind of Republican" might look like without ceasing to look Republican.

What of the competition? Carly Fiorina looks sharp, leans in, and has survived breast cancer—all very cool. But her uneven track record in corporate America centers on one of the relatively few uncool tech companies, HP. (Today, although craftsman-like retro monikers are catching on, no California startup would be caught dead with a name like "Hewlett-Packard.")

backstory, the even zanier dad, and the satellite office in Silicon Valley. His tousled look strikes a contrast with the schoolboy haircut covering Rubio's dome. And on the issues, from curbing surveillance to reforming criminal justice, he's the man most responsible for riding libertarian hobbyhorses into the conservative mainstream.

Paul's coolness, however, has become a victim of his success. The less marginal he becomes, the harder it is for him to attract the affinity of the creative and the tech-savvy, many of whom self-identify politically (and not just politically) as outsiders. That Paul must increase his appeal among traditional conservatives if he wishes to win the nomination will only make matters worse.

The rest of the field shakes out pretty quickly. Scott Walker lacks a college

Salon, for its part, called the episode Rubio's "Sarah Palin moment." Certainly, that site's overt political leanings played a role in its unfriendly judgment. But the verdict raises a difficult question for conservatives: Is there any conservative arbiter of coolness? It's hard to name an organization of pop critics that breaks the apparent rule. Exceptional individuals can hardly compensate. Even a celebrity Republican as trendy and broadly admired as Caitlyn Jenner hasn't managed to rub off on the rest of the GOP.

For all its merciless treatment of Republicans, the pop-industrial complex can be remarkably forgiving to members of a different political party. President Obama himself has done legendarily uncool things, such as wearing mom jeans and authorizing drone strikes. He

Is there any conservative arbiter of coolness? It's hard to name an organization of pop critics that breaks the apparent rule.

Doubtless, Rick Perry boasts the coolest glasses in the race. And his telegenic—but not too telegenic—looks are far cooler than the Wonder Bread visage of a Mitt Romney. Then again, Perry's a Texan, and not the kind you find in Austin.

In the rulebook of coolness, that's just about a deal-breaker, as Ted Cruz can also attest. Cruz can't seem to catch a break from the pop-cultural clerisy even when he goes out on a limb to do so. Perhaps reasoning that President Obama did fairly well goofing around with a self-stick for *BuzzFeed*, Cruz allowed that cool news website to record his impressions of various *Simpsons* characters—quite a leap from the Winston Churchill impression Cruz deployed to surprise diners at his most recent appearance before the Claremont Institute.

The result, according to the impeccably credentialed A.V. Club, was "*fremdscham*, the cringing secondhand embarrassment you feel when someone is obliviously making a fool of himself." According to the writer, "Ted Cruz has revealed himself to be a natural at generating it" with "the worst *Simpsons* impressions you've ever heard." Cool points: zero.

Then there's Rand Paul, the Republican with the most hipsters in his corner. He is the candidate with the zany college

degree yet failed to start a band or join a sit-in. Chris Christie doesn't shout at Muslims, but he sometimes yells at teachers. Jeb Bush? Don't make the cool laugh.

Back, then, to Rubio. He's less corporate than Fiorina, and less Texan than Perry. He's less awkward than Cruz, and less conflicted than Paul. Unlike Walker, he's not accused, as was W., of uncool anti-intellectualism. Unlike Christie, he's warm and personable. And unlike his fellow Floridian, Bush, he's got that new-candidate smell. He is, in short, the most viably cool candidate the Republican party has to offer.

But the early signs suggest that's still not enough for our cultural deciders. In the relatively safe venue of Fox News, Rubio declined to name his favorite member of the hip-hop group Wu-Tang Clan. It's perhaps doubtful that any canny politician would step into that trap, but Rubio was swiftly punished anyway by a wide cross section of cool news websites and social-media users. *Gawker* snarked: "Did you go to a fratty mid-Atlantic college in the late '90s, have a Bob Marley blackout poster, and squee to *MTV Party to Go Platinum Remix* while drinking Red Stripe at parties? Congratulations, Dawson! You know as much about rap as Marco Rubio, Fox News rap correspondent."

has even lectured African-American men on morals. That adds up to a lot of minus points. Yet Obama's coolness remains intact.

It's hard to be entirely sure how much of Obama's resilience should be chalked up to his ideology and how much to his generational distance from the Republicans he replaced and defeated. Theoretically, Rubio's youthfulness in comparison with Hillary Clinton enhances his potential cool factor. And yet Clinton's most popular intra-party challenger is the septuagenarian Bernie Sanders. Some supporters see coolness in the Sanders of the early 1970s, who, indeed, held policy views remarkably consistent with those of the present-day candidate.

Perhaps a better guide for Republicans can be found in how coolness helped Obama as a candidate. His 2008 campaign was about more than politics. It was a cultural phenomenon—in part because of the historic significance of his being the first black presidential nominee, but in part because a critical mass of creative types rallied to his cause. Iconic posters and pop anthems cracked the public consciousness not because of a celebrity-driven PR campaign, but because leading artists openly shared their infectious enthusiasm for

him. Today, many Americans instinctively trust popular art even more than they trust popular artists. Very few people have a personal connection to Shepard Fairey, but millions of people felt a personal connection to the hopeful portrait of Obama he created.

Barring a surprise cultural counter-revolution, Rubio—or any other Republican, for that matter—will not receive a rapturous reception among America’s top creators. And without them in one’s corner, the path to certifiable coolness narrows. But a certain kind of niche approval can carry its own hip cachet. Republicans might not have to worry very much about failing whatever litmus test pop critics impose if they attract the enthusiasm of a few key creators who can suggest that their candidate’s campaign isn’t at odds with the basic artistic spirit that fuels popular culture.

More broadly, Republicans should rediscover the virtues of the creative class instead of doubling down on resentment toward the critics who want to decide which creators are celebrated and which aren’t. Some conservatives are already beginning to orient the party more toward this approach. AEI president Arthur Brooks—whose career included about a decade as a professional musician—is helping Republicans understand how a long experience of discipline and community in the arts can supply the foundation and flexibility to flourish. In this and future elections, the GOP would advance its quest for coolness by doing more to build up its own culture creators.

Ironically, the GOP struggles to be cool because the critics’ class has managed to place so much of art under political judgment. Some Republicans may be tempted to field a “cool candidate” by trying to turn that tide, politicizing creative culture in a more conservative way. Unfortunately, in addition to a high risk of failure, this fight-fire-with-fire strategy would further destabilize the delicate balance between politics and culture. Embracing the potent cultural power of artistry probably won’t make a cool candidate descend from the heavens or leap out of the crowd. But it will help Republicans tap into Americans’ sense that the art of freedom has a special relationship with the freedom of art.

NR

The Politic Fool

Stand-up comedy is colliding with progressivism

BY IAN TUTTLE

THAT, of course, is the great secret of the successful fool,” wrote Isaac Asimov in his *Guide to Shakespeare*: “that he is no fool at all.” The days of Shakespeare are past, but the fool, to our good fortune, remains. You’ll find him not at the king’s court, but at the comedy club.

But as Shakespeare knew, the comedian—whose jokes are never without a bit of truth—is forever precariously situated. As King Lear’s fool laments: “They’ll have me whipp’d for speaking true; thou’lt have me whipp’d for lying; and sometimes I am whipp’d for holding my peace.”

Today’s fools are experiencing the same problem, because, as has been copiously documented, no human beings in history have ever been as aggressively hypersensitive as the cohort currently coming of age. Jerry Seinfeld sparked renewed conversation about the encroachment of political correctness recently when he told ESPN’s Colin Cowherd, “I don’t play colleges, but I hear a lot of people tell me, ‘Don’t go near colleges. They’re so PC.’ . . . They just want to use these words. ‘That’s racist. That’s sexist. That’s prejudiced.’ They don’t know what the hell they’re talking about.” Several offended college students responded in print, proving his point.

The same eager offense-taking has infected what used to be real “safe spaces.” “Comedy clubs aren’t the safe havens they once were,” wrote comedian Gilbert Gottfried in a 2014 essay in *Playboy*. “It used to be, if you went to a club, there was an expectation that anything could happen. . . . It was all okay, and that’s what made it exciting.” But now? “Imagine if the most brilliant comedians in history were working today. They’d never stop



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apologizing. Charlie Chaplin would have to apologize to all the homeless people he belittled with his Little Tramp character. W. C. Fields and Dean Martin would both have to apologize to alcoholics. The Marx brothers would have to apologize to Italians, mutes, and uptight British ladies.”

Yet Americans are still filling up comedy clubs. In January, comedian Louis C. K. sold out three shows at Madison Square Garden—capacity: 20,000. C. K., for the record, is not delivering wilted, PC fare: “You should never rape anyone,” he announces in his 2007 special (appropriately titled) *Shameless*. “Unless you have a reason! Like, you want to [have sex with] somebody and they won’t let you! In which case, what other option do you have?”

Stand-up comics have been touring the country apparently slaying other sacred cows. Mike Birbiglia, who is white, refuses to let black people call him a “cracker”—“You can call me a ‘crack-uh,’” he allows—while Ralphie May sprinkles “extra gay” into his Venti mocha and Amy Schumer jokes about her “black friend, T’membe or whatever.”

None of these are minor comics. Each has filmed multiple specials in front of sizable crowds. C. K.—“arguably the best stand-up of his generation,” says *Rolling Stone*—has won a Peabody Award, a Grammy, and five Emmys, most of them for *Louie*, the television series he writes, directs, and stars in. He was on *Time* magazine’s list of the 100 most influential people of 2012, deservedly.

How does one explain the success of these and so many other jokesters in the age of “trigger warnings” and “hate speech”?

Writing at the unwaveringly charmless feminist website *Jezebel* in 2012, Lindy West resolved this apparent paradox in a post titled “How to Make a Rape Joke,” in which she defended the Louis C. K. joke above on the grounds that “Louis C. K. has spent 20 years making it very publicly clear that he is on the side of making things better. The oppressors never win at the end of his jokes.” Writing about the same subject for *Time* in January, novelist Sarah Miller cautioned: “If you’re going to make a rape joke, you’re going to also have to prove that you care.”

The same thing is true of other subjects. For instance, May—who is white, and who estimates that he uses the N-word around 50 times during an hour-long set—is not a target of the NAACP. Kim Brown, a black talk-show host who interviewed May in 2012, wrote of her interviewee: “I like white comics who can make GOOD black jokes. Ralphie May is one of those comics.”

West, Miller, and Brown are explicating the Left’s theory of humor: A “good” black joke or a “good” rape joke is one that—in the vernacular—“punches up.” It has an “oppressed” and an “oppressor,” and it takes the correct side. The merit of the joke depends on the (ideological) merit of the joke-teller.

Many comics’ material falls nicely into this paradigm. Take May, for example: In his 2012 special *Too Big to Ignore*, his joke about Muslims—“The Muslim is gonna get you!” sung to Gloria Estefan’s “Rhythm Is Gonna Get You”—makes fun not of Muslims but of “racist” Americans. Six years earlier, May’s joke about an Islamist terrorist attack on St. Louis, the home of Anheuser-Busch, made fun, predictably, of white southerners, who would rise up in a “fury of mullets” if their preferred beer’s distribution were disrupted.

A distinction ought to be drawn between political correctness and good taste. Gottfried, in his *Playboy* article, complains that audiences in late 2001 took umbrage at his jokes about the September 11 attacks, and as examples of tyranny in comedy clubs he cites two well-known incidents at West Hollywood’s Laugh Factory: In 2006, Michael Richards (*Seinfeld*’s inimitable Cosmo Kramer) issued a public apology after shouting racial slurs at a group of black audience members. (Not unrelatedly, he formally retired from stand-up the next year.) And in 2012, when an audience member yelled “Rape jokes are never funny!” at Daniel Tosh, the comedian responded: “Wouldn’t it be funny if that girl got raped by, like, five guys, right now? Like, right now?” He, too, apologized. These episodes are reminders that cultures can form a moral consensus about certain subjects; in fact, a culture that never does so is morally barren. Holocaust jokes don’t play well in Israel, and rightly so.

But the political correctness menacing comedy is not interested in the con-

sensus of fair-minded persons acting in community; it is an effort to conflate what is funny with what is acceptable to laugh at.

For the comedian, rigid adherence to the doctrinaire is the death knell of his art, because comedy is drawn from, and draws on audiences’ experiences of, everyday life. “Only the truth is funny,” comedian Rick Reynolds observed in the 1990s. The comedian, in his role as fool, can never stray beyond what is true, or he will have trouble making it funny.

In his May 2014 *GQ* feature about Louis C. K., Andrew Corsello identified a willingness to tell the truth about what people do and think as part of C. K.’s brilliance: “He’s always striking through the mask, Louis C. K. It’s not just a matter of braying aloud what the rest of us only dare to think; he says things we aren’t even aware we’re thinking until we hear them from C. K. That’s his genius.”

It is, to a greater or lesser degree, the genius of every comedian. Political correctness is antithetical to the exercise of that genius, because it seeks to impose on everyone the same opinions, the same way of looking at the world—one informed less by consideration of human nature than by pious aspirations. If the comedian’s ultimate responsibility is to laughter, which balances point and punchline, he will be required to stand forever athwart the moral busybodies.

This seems to be what comedians are discovering of late. Although many vigorously support the policies and prescriptions of progressivism, they are realizing that the internal logic of that movement will eventually silence them.

Comedians walk a tightrope, both speaking truth to power and “just telling jokes.” They want it both ways, and so do audiences. But our contemporary comedy cops are both demanding certain truths and objecting to humor that does not bolster their ideology. That is why comedians, of whatever political stripe, have a unique role to play in turning back the Left’s speech policing. Political correctness is not just constricting and controlling; it is deeply unfunny. Those who embrace it are a grave and cheerless lot who would share their misery like flu. And in the throes of this cultural grippe, laughter may well be the best medicine.

NR



Carly Campaigns

'I get why she's hot out there'

BY JAY NORDLINGER

Manchester, N.H.

ACCORDING to the longstanding cliché, presidential candidates campaign in “the snows of New Hampshire.” But they also campaign the summer before, and even the spring before. Carly Fiorina is logging some serious New Hampshire time here in early July.

She has never held office before, but has run before: She won the Republican Senate nomination in California in 2010. She had been CEO of Hewlett-Packard, the technology giant. And a surrogate for John McCain in the 2008 presidential campaign. In 2010, she lost her general election to the longtime senator Barbara Boxer. Evidently, Fiorina was just too conservative for today’s California. She is pro-life, for example. Before Election Day, one Democratic political pro said, “The issue of abortion alone is sufficient to sink Fiorina.” Being against abortion in California, he said, is like being against oil in Texas.

Now 60, Fiorina is running for a bigger office: president. This run seems quixotic to some, understandably, but Fiorina is making waves on the trail. She is drawing crowds and creating chat-

ter. She is developing a particular reputation as an articulator of conservative ideas. Recently, she appeared on *The View*, mixing it up with Whoopi Goldberg and other non-Republicans. As video clips were passed around the Internet, many conservatives said, “That’s the way it should be done.”

On a Wednesday in New Hampshire, there are three events on her calendar: an early-morning coffee with small-business owners in Concord; a noontime meeting with the Chamber of Commerce in Salem; and an evening gathering in Hampstead. This last event is a townhall-style affair held at the Old Meeting House, built in 1745. The place could serve as the set of a Disney movie about New England democracy.

The candidate is dressed in a smart short jacket and a skirt, two different shades of beige (as far as I can tell). Seeing a crowd, or even a few people milling around, she wades right in, eager and assured. She looks at people intently and gives them a firm handshake. When they say their name, she says it back to them: “Good to meet you, Ed”; “Thanks for com-

ing, Marjorie.” Women seem to identify with her. Men seem to dig her.

And one and all call her “Carly” (which is what her signs and bumper stickers say: “Carly for America”). It used to be, when you said “Carly” in America, you meant Carly Simon, the singer-songwriter. Fiorina may be catching up or even beyond her.

In presenting herself as an anti-politician, Fiorina says that politicians “just talk and talk and talk,” without doing anything. Whatever the case, Fiorina is a very good talker herself: natural and unstumbling. Her usual tone is warm, though she can summon an edge. At the early-morning coffee, she speaks in a quiet and determined voice, mic-less. I think of a phrase once applied to George Stephanopoulos, when he was a (Bill) Clinton aide: a “power whisper.” Later in the day, she gets a little sassy, talking about a contentious interview she had with Katie Couric: “According to some people, *I ate her lunch*.”

As a rule, she talks fast and uncondescendingly. She does not put on a Mr. Rogers voice, as many politicians do. (I speak of the late Fred Rogers, the genial host of the children’s show *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*.) She knows how to manage applause. She does not permit it to disrupt her flow. Her grammar is exceptionally sound, though she has picked up the modern habit of using “impact” as a verb—we all will, someday. Also, like a good conservative, she uses “Democrat” as an adjective: “the Democrat nominee.” She does not shy from using words that aren’t everyday: “nascent,” for example, or “oligopoly.” The health-insurance industry has been “a cozy little oligopoly.”

Fiorina has a love of language, as she has confirmed to me in two interviews now. Besides which, it shows. She tells a crowd that, because of public anger, President Obama signed a Veterans Affairs bill “without a peep.” She likes the word “crush,” and “crushed,” and “crushing.” People’s opportunities are being *crushed*. The federal government is *crushing* small business. Wrongheaded policies are combining to *crush* the American Dream. This word “crush” leaves an almost physical effect.

Back in February, Fiorina told me that, while serving as a McCain surrogate, “I learned that I love to campaign. I love the challenge of boiling down very complicated things into language that will land in people’s lives.” I recall this when, here on the stump, she says the following about tax reform: “Lower every rate, close every loophole.” To reinforce it, she says it again: “Lower every rate, close every loophole.”

Regularly, she says things that don’t normally come out of politicians’ mouths. For instance, she describes wind power as the pet of “ideologues in the environmental movement.” Those turbines are “slicing up hundreds of thousands of birds every year.” True, but who says it, among politicians? At the end of one talk, she invites people to support her campaign, “if you’re so inclined.” If you’re so inclined? That is a graceful touch, to my ears.

On this Wednesday in New Hampshire, I hear her talk for about four hours, and tomorrow I’ll hear her for another two. In all this time, she makes just one factual mistake, as far as I’m aware: She says that President Reagan succeeded in repealing the 55-mile-per-hour national speed limit. That was the new Republican Congress in 1995. Also, she says

“Balkans” once when she means “Baltics,” as many of us have done—although it’s possible I’ve misheard her.

SHE tends to begin her talks with her life story, introducing herself. She says lines she has said many, many times before, as politicians do: Repetition is a feature and imperative of this business. Yet Fiorina has the knack of saying the lines naturally, sometimes as though they were just occurring to her.

When she was a little girl, her mother told her, “What you are is God’s gift to you. What you make of yourself is your gift to God.” Carly went to Stanford, majoring in medieval history and philosophy. “I was well educated but not very employable. All dressed up and nowhere to go.” She went to law school (UCLA), hated it, and dropped out after just a semester. Then she went to work at a little nine-person real-estate firm, as a secretary. After six months, the guys running the shop said to her, “We’ve been watching you, and know you’re capable of more. Would you like to learn what we do?” Fiorina stresses that she has been given helping hands throughout her life, and that all people need helping hands.

Eventually, she obtained graduate degrees—at Maryland and MIT—and became CEO of Hewlett-Packard, which was the largest technology company in the world. She presents herself as an only-in-America story, from secretary to CEO. “Human potential is the only limitless resource we have,” she says. And she quotes a man she met on the campaign trail, who told her, “We don’t have the sense of limitless potential anymore.” This, Fiorina pledges to antidote.

Her tenure at HP was a controversial one, as she discusses. “I was fired in a boardroom brawl that played out over two weeks.” I have not heard a candidate discuss the experience of being fired since 1988, when Al Haig said, “The president fired me” (as secretary of state). I was struck by Haig’s lack of euphemism. Fiorina’s line is that, when you lead, you have to challenge the status quo, and when you challenge the status quo, you make enemies—which is what happened to her. Anyone can just go along to get along; a leader is something else.

She mentions trials in her life, early and fairly often. “We lost a daughter to the demons of addiction.” Lori Ann Fiorina struggled with alcohol and drugs and died in her mid thirties. Carly herself battled breast cancer six years ago. (She tells me, in a sitdown, that her health is good.)

IN this peculiar presidential cycle, there are three candidates who have never held office before: Ben Carson, Donald Trump, and Fiorina. I think of an observation by my colleague Rick Brookhiser, the historian: “The presidency is not an entry-level political job, unless you’ve won a world war.” The allusion is to Eisenhower, of course, but we think of Grant, too, who had won a civil war.

Fiorina addresses this question head-on, as well she should. At one stop, she says, “I am not a neophyte,” when it comes to politics. She ran for the Senate and has campaigned for a number of others. Also, she has advised a number of people in government. But this is what she emphasizes, to audiences at large: We’re supposed to have a citizen government, right? Of, by, and

for the people. If she were president, she would occasionally ask people to whip out their smartphones, to participate in insta-polls. Bearing a phone aloft, she says, “This is the greatest tool for democratization we know.”

She habitually cites a poll that said 82 percent of people believe there is a professional political class, “more interested in its position, power, and perks than in doing the work.” (Note those “p”s: *position*, *power*, and *perks*, inherent in a *professional political* class.) There are fine men and women in politics, she says, and she does not mean to “disparage” them all. But, as a class, politicians have an interest in preserving the status quo. Members of both parties are guilty, she says.

I’m reminded of another candidate, Senator Ted Cruz, who says that “career politicians in both parties” have failed America, and that, together, they form “the Washington cartel.”

Fiorina presents herself as less a politician than a leader and problem-solver. I smile at the memory of a candidate in 2012, a businessman from the South who introduced himself by saying,

Critics say that, as CEO, she outsourced jobs to China. She informs audiences of this charge, and rebuts it. She goes on to make a devilish point, and a good point: It would be more accurate to say that she “outsourced” jobs from California to Texas, which had much more sensible government than that golden state, ruled by the Left. I believe that one of her rivals for the Republican nomination, Rick Perry, the former governor of Texas, would smile to hear her say this.

For the federal government, Fiorina suggests zero-based budgeting—the method by which you start with zero for a departmental budget, instead of assuming last year’s budget and talking about increases. Unless I’m mistaken, I haven’t heard about zero-based budgeting in politics since Jimmy Carter, who took it very seriously. (We forget how the Left despised Carter for his conservatism, especially his fiscal conservatism. Ted Kennedy challenged him for the 1980 nomination, after all.)

In her very fluent spiel on health care, she says, “The one thing we haven’t tried is the free market.” On immigration, she

Carly Fiorina **promises to act, not merely talk.** ‘This is not rocket science,’ she likes to say. These problems are readily solvable. All it takes is political will. She cites the Nike slogan, ‘Just do it.’

“I’m Herman Cain, and I solve problems for a livin’.” Fiorina says that, in business, she “*ran* to problems. They didn’t scare me. They interested me, and challenged me.” Defending her credentials as a potential president, she says that she understands the economy, technology, and bureaucracies. The federal government now, she says, is essentially “a big, bloated, inept bureaucracy.” She also knows leadership, the *sine qua non*. “I know how to make a tough call at a tough time and take responsibility for it.”

No matter who is in power, she says, the government gets bigger and bigger, though Obama has been especially guilty. Problems live on, decade after decade. How long have we been talking about securing the border? How long have we been talking about reforming Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac? How long have we been talking about fixing the VA, this “stain on our national honor”? Fiorina promises to act, not merely talk. “This is not rocket science,” she likes to say. These problems are readily solvable. All it takes is political will. She cites the Nike slogan, “Just do it.”

Not to condescend, but I think of Truman, and what he said about the newly elected Ike: He was used to barking at armies, and they moved—but he would find the federal government something else altogether.

FIORINA inveighs against “crony capitalism,” which is a far cry from real capitalism. She also inveighs against the tax code, which is 70,000 pages long. Who can cope with that behemoth? She could cope with it at HP, she says, because she had a 90-billion-dollar company and could hire fleets of accountants, lawyers, and lobbyists. But how about the average person or business?

is hawkish—i.e., robustly restrictionist—though sympathetic to smart immigration, or her conception of it. We let in the dubious relatives of those already here, in “chain migration,” and send home newly minted grads of Caltech.

Hawk she may be, on immigration and other issues, but she expresses a good deal of “compassionate conservatism,” as we said in the bad old days of George W. Bush. Fiorina abides by the adage “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” On the stump, she talks about “strugglers,” the down and out, who have “God-given potential” that has yet to be tapped, or freed. “We tangle up their lives in webs of dependence,” she says. Talking about welfare, she sounds like Charles Murray, who wrote the landmark *Losing Ground* 30 years ago. Fiorina says she is not interested in saving money—though that would be welcome—but in saving lives. Misguided welfare, she believes, smothers lives.

Eager to establish her bona fides in foreign policy, she says she has done business, or charity work, on every continent, and in nearly every country. “I know more world leaders than anyone else in the field,” she says, “with the possible exception of Hillary Clinton,” who was secretary of state, after all. “But I had substantive conversations with these people, not photo ops.” She tells people, “I sat *this close* to Vladimir Putin.” And “I could have told you he would not be impressed by some gimmicky red reset button.”

Her first phone call from the Oval Office, she says, would be to the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, an old friend. (Of what Republican is Bibi not an old friend?) She would assure him of her country’s support—because other countries are watching the American relationship with Israel, and taking cues from it. The next call she would place would be

to the Iranian “supreme leader,” Khamenei—who would probably not take the call. But he would get the message. “I don’t care what John Kerry or Barack Obama agreed to. Unless you allow us unfettered inspections of your nuclear facilities, anytime, anywhere, we will make it as difficult as possible for you to move money around the world. We can do that, and we don’t need anyone’s permission.”

She is an American Greatness candidate, whether the subject at hand is foreign or domestic. She quotes Margaret Thatcher, whom she describes as a hero of hers. Thatcher told those around her, “We did not seek election and win in order to manage the decline of a great nation.” Fiorina has no interest in managing decline. “Every one of our problems has a solution,” she says. “Every one of our wounds is self-inflicted.”

HER stump speech comes with a dose of humor. Earlier this year, someone asked her whether a woman’s hormones could prevent her—any woman—from serving as president. From acting rationally. Hearing about this, the audience groans and laughs. Fiorina says, “Ladies, here’s a test.” (Anticipatory laughter.) “Can you think of a time when *men’s* judgment was clouded by hormones?” (Laughter.) “Including in the Oval Office?” (Considerable laughter.)

Which brings us to the Clintons, and, in particular, to Mrs. Clinton, the presumptive Democratic nominee. Fiorina says, or implies, that she would be the most effective candidate against Hillary: How could the Democrat play her first-woman-president card? Also, she mocks Hillary’s inability, or seeming inability, to use simple technology: In the wake of State Department scandals, she pleaded ignorance of the ABCs of e-mail. “Don’t you think a president should know something about technology?” asks the ex-CEO of HP.

Furthermore, she talks of hitting Hillary with everything in the Republican arsenal (which is obviously bulging). She says that the previous Republican nominee, Mitt Romney, is a fine man who would have made a fine president. But, a gentleman to a fault, he pulled punches. “I will not leave our punches pulled,” says Fiorina. “I’ll throw every punch we’ve got.”

After a speech, she of course does Q&A, at which she is smooth. Passing over a person with his hand up, she’ll say, “I’ll get to you next.” Once finishing a question, she’s apt to say, “Does that make sense? Did I answer your question?”

One New Hampshireite asks her what kind of judges she would appoint. That’s an easy one for Fiorina. She smiles warmly and says, with great affection, “Judges like my dad.” Joseph Sneed was a law professor, a law dean (Duke), a deputy attorney general (under Nixon), and, for 14 years, a judge on the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Sitting in San Francisco, this court is notoriously left-wing, and Sneed was the lone conservative on it, says his daughter. He never wavered from conservative or constitutionalist principles. And he took pleasure in the Supreme Court’s overturn of Ninth Circuit decisions—especially when the justices cited his dissents.

Before she says goodbye to an audience, Fiorina makes a frank pitch. (Always ask ’em for their vote, said Tip O’Neill.) She pleads that, unlike “professional politicians,” she does not have years of donor lists or e-mail lists. “I gotta do this from a standing start.” She asks people to do as little as tell their friends, “Pay attention to her.”

She gets standing ovations, sometimes on introduction, reliably on closure. In between, people nod, and look at one another, impressed. Afterward, they say things like “Breath of fresh air,” and “I could see voting for her.”

FIORINA is “relatable,” to use a ghastly new word: People relate to her, and she relates to them. I have seen her in front of conservative, and therefore friendly, audiences. But Democrats aren’t immune to her charm either. At an event in Nashua, Fiorina is introduced by a veteran Republican politico, Paul Clark. He says that he accompanied the candidate on a walk through town. And the Democrats, to say nothing of the Republicans, were “enraptured by her.” He then introduces her in a classic New England voice: “Cahly Fiorina, the next president of the United States!”

That is a long, long shot. During the midterm elections of 2010, I wrote a piece for this magazine in which I said, “If Fiorina makes it to the Senate, she’ll be a big star—a big Republican national star. She is bright, personable, articulate, and different. She is a connector with crowds and individuals. But don’t bet the ranch on her making it.” She did not. And you would be doubly foolish—triply foolish, quadruply foolish—to bet the ranch on her in 2016.

She has raised relatively little money, and she is far down in the polls. Yet she is inching up, and, as I’ve said, making waves. Winning plaudits. In September 2008, when Governor Sarah Palin was first campaigning as a vice-presidential nominee, and attracting throngs, Bill Clinton said, “I get why she’s hot out there.” I get why Fiorina is hot, or at least admired, too.

You often hear that what Fiorina is really doing is auditioning for a vice-presidential nomination, or a cabinet post. Frankly, it doesn’t seem that way to me (and she of course denies it, when I sit down with her). She says things like “in my presidency,” as all presidential candidates do. That is boilerplate. But she seems perfectly serious. I have a theory, by the way, about why she’s running: She’s really good at it. And people generally like doing what they’re good at.

But enough of my theories. I ask the candidate, point blank, why she’s doing this. I try not to be too insulting, but I mean, really: Why? She answers in her quiet, determined way:

“I’m used to being underestimated in my life. I really am. I started as a secretary. I am increasingly offended by the idea that only a politician can be president. Politicians are some of the most mendacious—not all of them, but a lot of them are some of the most mendacious, mediocre, self-serving people I’ve ever met. Really? This is the best we can do? . . .

“I have been through some hard things in my life, and having been through those hard things, I really think that life is measured in love, moments of grace, and positive contribution. This is a positive contribution I can make. I can win this job. I can do this job. I can change the conversation this nation has. I can change how people think about their politics. This is a contribution I can make. And I’m willing to make it.

“And having been through hard things, I’m not afraid of anything anymore. I’m not afraid of what people are going to say. I’m not afraid of what people are going to dig up. I’m not afraid of working hard. I’m not afraid.

“So, to me, this is—honestly, it is hard work, but it is joyful work, and I feel as though it is the work I’m supposed to be doing now. So I’m happy to do it.”

NR

The Art of The Grotesque

Donald Trump and the American id

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

OH, you're *goddamn*ed right this is VEGAS, BABY! because the Planet Hollywood Las Vegas Resort and Casino is the only truly appropriate venue for a show like the one we have right here. For your consideration: the carefully coiffed golden mane, the vast inherited fortune, the splendid real-estate portfolio, the family name on buildings from Manhattan to the Strip, the reality-television superstardom, the room-temperature-on-a-brisk-November-day IQ. The only thing distinguishing that great spackled misshapen lump of unredeemed American id known as Donald Trump from his spiritual soul mate, that slender lightning rod of unredeemed American id known as Paris Hilton, is—angels and ministers of grace, defend us!—a sex tape. The gross thing is, you can kind of imagine a Trump sex tape: the gilt pineapples on the four-poster bed, the scarlet silk-jacquard sheets, the glowing “T” in the background, the self-assured promises that this will be the classiest sex tape the world has ever seen—that it's *yuuuuuuuge!*—the cracked

raving 69-year-old Babbitt analogue barking inchoate instructions . . . no, no more, that way madness lies.

The awful, horrifying, despair-and-tinge-inducing real-talk truth that is causing the more mobile and proactive among us to start downloading those teach-yourself-Swiss German apps onto our iPhones and to read up on the finer points of immigration law is that the Donald Trump presidential campaign *is* the Donald Trump sex tape, an act of theater performing precisely the same functions as Paris Hilton's amateur porn-o-vision escapade: exhibitionism, theatrical self-aggrandizement, titillation, etc., all of it composing a documentation of transient potency to be shorn up against the inevitable passing of that potency. Trump is a post-erotic pornographer, and his daft followers are engaged in the political version of masturbation: sterile, fruitless self-indulgence.

Spend any time around the Trumpkins—the intellectually and morally stunted Oompa Loompas who have rallied to the candidacy of this grotesque charlatan—and you will hear purportedly heterosexual men working up freestyle paeans to Trump's alleged virility—those “pussies in Washington” aren't ready for “a real man like Trump,” as one put it—and cataloguing his praises in exuberant gonadal terms, with special attention paid to calculating the heaviness of the Trumpian scrotum relative to the equipment being packed by, e.g., Jeb Bush or Marco Rubio. One says: “He is the only one that has the balls to tell the truth and to stand up for America.” “Trump's got the balls,” proclaims the headline in a right-wing blog. “Donald Trump is a perfect example of an alpha male,” declares a commenter at (ahem!) Bodybuilding.com. “Alpha males lead for a reason,” retorted a Trump admirer when NATIONAL REVIEW's Jonah Goldberg called for an “intervention” for the Trumpkins. Members of the GOP establishment, says another, “don't know how to handle an extro-



FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

verted alpha male personality like Trump”—ritualistic prostration of the faithful before Trump’s presumptive “alpha” social status being fundamental to the Trumpkin liturgy. Sensing the emergent theme, the left-wing columnist Michael Tomasky declared in the *Daily Beast*: “Trump’s got the GOP by the balls.”

Speaking in Vegas, his blood-flushed face a hypertensive moon rising against the background of a much larger photographic version of that same violet face, Trump declared: “I’m much, much richer than what they say,” one of the few complete sentences he managed to utter over the course of a performance that inspired *Reason*’s Matt Welch to observe: “This isn’t a speech, it’s a seizure.”

How the hell did this happen?

I’M really rich,” Trump said during the announcement of his presidential candidacy. The scene was—what else could it have been?—Trump Tower in Manhattan, a real-estate development built in part by illegal immigrants, which embarrassing fact obliged one of Trump’s subcontracting minions to take a plea deal including jail time. (But not to worry,

Donald Trump is not the source of the Trump family fortune. That would be Frederick Christ Trump, Donald Trump’s father, the self-made real-estate mogul who had controlled more than 27,000 New York City properties by the time of his death in 1999. Fred Trump was in many ways the cultural and financial inverse of his son: He didn’t build gold-hued towers with his name on the front, but built, managed, and developed thousands of modest apartment buildings (some of them exceedingly modest; the line between “low-income developer” and “slumlord” is not a bright and straight one) and row-house blocks, mainly in unglamorous sections of Brooklyn and Queens. Unlike his son, he never put the family name on a strip joint—cum—casino in Atlantic City and never was a party to a series of high-profile bankruptcies. But by the end of his life he had amassed a portfolio worth about \$400 million in 2015 dollars.

In his most recent financial disclosures, Trump claimed to have about \$300 million in cash and marketable securities. The rest of the vast Trump fortune is . . . vague. *Forbes*, which has been on the Trump-net-worth beat for a few decades, estimates that his actual worth is about half what he claims. Fred Trump set his son up in business, buying him a decrepit housing devel-

In his most recent financial disclosures, Trump claimed to have about \$300 million in cash and marketable securities. The rest of the vast Trump fortune is . . . vague.

Trumpkins—they were Polish illegals, not abominable Mexicans!) Riding an escalator down to the lobby with his chin cocked up like Barack Obama’s or Benito Mussolini’s, Trump entered to the tired sounds of “Rockin’ in the Free World,” by Neil Young, who immediately demanded that Trump stop using his song. That created a typical Trumpian controversy: Trump responded by saying that Neil Young, a Canadian and a Bernie Sanders enthusiast, was looking for a payday. He tweeted (because that’s how we litigate political disputes these days) a message: “For the non-believer, here is a photo of @Neilyoung in my office and his \$\$ request—total hypocrite.” There was indeed a picture of a decrepit Neil Young shaking hands with a decrepit Donald Trump, but the accompanying document wasn’t a request for compensation for the use of Young’s music: It was just the signature page of a preferred-stock purchase agreement, which could indicate anything. Trump later said in sour-grapes mode that the song was just one of many on his playlist (“Music of the Night,” from *Phantom of the Opera*, and “Memories,” from *Cats*, are in the rotation, too, because that’s totally appropriate and not at all weird) and went on to disparage the songwriter. That’s the signature Trump move, right there: make a lot of noise, and, when possible, make that noise about money.

“I’m rich,” Trump says, endlessly. How rich? “Very rich.” *Very?* “I mean my net worth is many, many times Mitt Romney,” as he put it some time back. “Much, much richer.” Critics and opponents? Not rich. “Can’t buy a pair of pants,” he said about Goldberg. That’s most of Trump’s argument, and practically the entirety of the Trumpkins’ argument: How could a guy with that much money—so much more money than a nobody like you, loser!—not have something going on?

About that . . .

opment in Cincinnati (what was *your* college-graduation gift?) and financing its redevelopment. The project went well, and Trump eventually was hired to run the family business. How well he has run that business is not clear. Trump companies have been through a number of headline-grabbing bankruptcies, prominent among them the Atlantic City casino–hotel–strip joint bearing the Trump name. Trump’s inept and debt-happy management resulted in the watering down of his stake in the casino group to about 5 percent, and he no longer serves on its board of directors or in any official capacity. These properties are TINO—Trump’s in Name Only—so don’t expect him to lose any sleep over the recently declared bankruptcy of the Trump International Golf Club or the probable backsliding into bankruptcy of the Trump Taj Mahal, once his pet project and now mostly somebody else’s problem. Trump doesn’t want much to do with these Trump properties.

That’s the odd thing. Trump is always going on and on and on about how rich he is, but his largest asset is an asset only from a certain point of view: He values the Trump brand at more than \$3 billion, more than any building, resort, golf club, or financial instrument in his possession. There are more than a few financial analysts who scoff at the notion that he could actually sell the brand for anything near that amount of money. Maybe Trump, or at least his people, understands this on some level: A previous valuation had the brand worth more than \$4 billion. And it’s not entirely clear who wants the Trump brand on his merchandise just now, other than Trump.

Macy’s dumped Trump—the store had sold a selection of hideously tacky Donald J. Trump–branded shirts and ties, inevitably made in China and Mexico—when the candidate started bellowing that the Mexican government is intentionally

flooding the United States with rapists, a proposition for which there is, unsurprisingly, no evidence. Trump is not very much interested in the world outside the narrow confines of his skull. When Macy's announced that it was severing its relationship with Trump, Trump had a full-on chimp-out, proclaiming that "Macy's stores suck and they are bad for U.S.A." and calling for a boycott. The Trumpkins began circulating claims that tens of thousands of people were boycotting Macy's and cutting up their Macy's cards, another claim for which there is—unsurprisingly—no evidence. "Now, Macy's hurts, because the head of Macy's I thought was a great friend of mine, Terry Lundgren," Trump said, falling into his familiar, nearly monosyllabic rhythm. "Now this is a man I played golf with. I was with him all the time. He really was, was, was—you understand, because I don't forget things." His response to the CEO's concerns about the fact that Hispanics are not very keen at the moment on buying stuff labeled "TRUMP"? "Terry, be tough! They'll be gone one day."

That's Trump's big idea on the immigration problem: They'll be gone one day.

MACY'S wasn't alone in the dump-Trump movement. Trump just announced a \$500 million lawsuit against Univision, because the television network, not wanting to be associated with Trump and the horde of Mexican rapists that lives in his head, has decided not to carry the Spanish-language broadcast of the annual parade of Trump-owned vulgarity known as the Miss USA pageant. A bewildered Trump protested that "nothing that I stated was any different from what I have been saying for years." (Yeah.) Univision dismissed the lawsuit as "factually false and legally ridiculous." Trump is just paranoid enough to believe that his opponents aren't political critics, good sense, and decency, but rather a nation-state, namely Mexico: He has said—in public, with a straight face—that Univision, which is based in midtown Manhattan, dropped Miss USA on orders from the Mexican government. "Mexico put the clamps on Univision. Mexico has a lot of power over them." When an audience member in Las Vegas criticized Trump's dopey immigration rhetoric, Trump demanded: "Did the government of Mexico ask you to come here?"

Univision, of course, is not alone. NBC followed suit and dropped the English-language Miss USA broadcast. More important, NBC gave Trump the heave-ho from *The Celebrity Apprentice*, the reality-television show that, unlike Trump-branded casinos in Atlantic City and Trump-branded golf resorts in Puerto Rico, makes a lot of money. Trump was already going to miss one season—running for president is a full-time job, as it turns out—but NBC made it very clear that he is not welcome back. Trump had been contemplating a return to the show—"They wanted me to do *The Apprentice*," he says, though who knows whether that is true—but later slipped into his usual wet-diaper-rage thing, proclaiming that NBC could not see the wisdom of Trumpism because its executives are "so weak and so foolish."

Failing casinos and golf courses, no Univision, no *Apprentice*, no ugly Macy's shirts. And still Trump insists his name constitutes a \$3 billion brand. Brand of what? Canned tuna?

Nothing succeeds like success—and nothing fails like failure. Trump knows this, which is why Donald J. Trump feels the

need to lie a great deal about Donald J. Trump's success. Example: He has claimed, repeatedly, that his *Art of the Deal* is the best-selling business book of all time. It has been very successful, selling around 1 million copies since its publication in 1987. But it hasn't sold a quarter of the books that the relatively recent *Good to Great* and *Rich Dad, Poor Dad* have sold, and its sales are barely a rounding error on those of such perennials as *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Walter Isaacson's recent biography of Steve Jobs has sold three times as many copies at *The Art of the Deal*. Selling 1 million books is no mean feat, but where Trump is concerned, Trump deals exclusively in superlatives: the biggest, the best, the classiest, etc.

None of that is ever true, of course. Trump-branded shirts and ties at Macy's weren't the best, finest, classiest, most stylish shirts and ties to be had; they weren't even the best shirts you could get at Macy's. Trump-branded casinos and hotels are not the best, most luxurious, most high-end accommodations in the world—they're embarrassing, and the people sipping cocktails at the Sky Lobby bar at the Mandarin Oriental in Vegas are not secretly wishing they were at the Trump. Trump Tower is far from the nicest residential building in its neighborhood, much less in all of New York City. Trump-branded golf courses are not the greatest golf courses in the world. *The Apprentice* isn't the top-rated reality-television show.

This is what rich-kid's disease looks like when the rich kid is pushing 70.

TRUMP's admirers believe that they have found in their champion a man who tells it like it is, but he is the opposite. A literal Republican in Name Only, Trump holds political views that were, until the day before yesterday, up-and-down-the-line progressive: pro-abortion, pro-*Kelo* and supportive of other tools of crony capitalism, and, if the words of Donald J. Trump himself are to be believed, pro-amnesty for illegal immigrants, too—not for 11 million, but for the fictitious 30 million he discussed with Bill O'Reilly:

You have to give them a path. You have 20 million, 30 million, nobody knows what it is. It used to be 11 million. Now, today I hear it's 11, but I don't think it's 11. I actually heard you probably have 30 million. You have to give them a path, and you have to make it possible for them to succeed. You have to do that.

Trump has switched between the Republican and Democratic parties more times than he has switched wives (you think his ex-wives would call him a truth-teller?) and is a longtime political and financial patron of Charles Schumer, Nancy Pelosi, Harry Reid, and Hillary Rodham Clinton, the woman against whom he presumably would be running if the Republican party were to lose its damned mind and nominate him.

That Trump for a hot minute is leading in the GOP-primary polls may tell us something useful about the Right, its constituents, and its internal politics, namely that the problem with populist conservatism is that it is populist but not conservative. But what it mainly tells us is that P. T. Barnum was right, and that he has not been forgotten. If Planet Hollywood is booked next time, Trump can always go down the road to Circus Circus.

NR

Golden State Dust Bowl

*How environmental extremism is destroying
California's Central Valley*

BY CHARLES C. W. COOKE

Central Valley, Calif.

THE road to Fresno is flanked by missed opportunities. Just ten years ago, to drive across this extraordinary valley was to be blinded by miles upon miles of burgeoning green life. Now, the fields that run alongside State Route 180 resemble the squares on a giant, schizophrenic checkerboard. On one block there are pistachios, almonds, tomatoes, and grapes, stretching as far as you can see; on the next all is brown and fallow, and the dust swirls upward toward the heavens. On the edge of the small farm town of Mendota, an abandoned sugar plant stands defiantly against the sky. It is beautiful, in a peculiar way—a fading Hopper sketch for an unsure world. This was a resolute place, once.

That was before the decline; before the worst drought in 1,200 years turned some of America's most fertile ground into a Dust Bowl; before soft-handed politicians in a faraway city took a look at an economic miracle and concluded that it was expendable. There is no question that God has played His role in bringing about this crisis: It has not rained consistently in the Central Valley for half a decade now, and the reservoirs in the northern part of the state are dangerously low. But Caesar must share in the blame. Because the valley is liable to become parched in rainless times, California has constructed a complex system of pipes and pumps that funnel lifesaving water southward from the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. Since 2007, that system has been deliberately crippled. In that year, the Natural Resources Defense Council convinced a judge that, by operating the pumps at high capacity, California was killing too many smelts—a small fish that is explicitly protected within the Endangered Species Act. In consequence, the throughput was severely curtailed, and the farmers, who under the state's "seniority" system have the last claim on the water, were all but cut off. Two years later the drought began, and a blow was struck upon a bruise.

On the edge of a field on the outskirts of Mendota, unemployed farmworkers have built a tattered town. In another era it would have been described as a "Hooverville"; today, it bears no appellation at all. These are forgotten people, and their hamlet is veiled by indifference.

I meet Frederico, a Guatemalan farmhand who has lived here for six years. He has only a few dollars to his name—kept in cash, of course—but he considers himself "one of the lucky ones" nevertheless. "I could have nothing," he tells me, gesturing toward a hut that he has built from abandoned sheets of wood and a stretch of discarded canvas. "But I have a house."

Frederico is one of the many workers in California's Central Valley who have seen their livelihoods all but destroyed by the Great Drought. "I manage to work a little here and there," he explains, "but the water . . . the water. Often I have to go 20 miles to find work."

Above all else, he misses the shade. "In 2008 and 2009, they started to cut my hours," he says. "Eventually, I couldn't pay rent." So he moved here, to a dusty pasture by the side of a highway, and he built his tumbledown shack. "I went to the recycling place and found the bits for my house," he recalls. "There were trees here. But they burned down. It is so hot."

Frederico's neighbor, a new arrival to the camp, is burning trash in a hole. He, too, has come from Mendota. "I was living in an apartment building," he tells me, declining to give his name. "But when I lost my job, I didn't have money for rent." His landlord wanted a long-term lease, and he couldn't pay. Since moving out here, he has gained occasional employment. But it is barely enough to provide food and water. "If somebody finds a job," he tells me, "they communicate it to the whole camp. That person becomes a hero."

He does not expect to move out anytime soon. "I am working on a garden," he says, with a proud smile. He has started to decorate, too, putting on a wooden front door and hanging a painted sign from the roof. There is a bank of dirt behind the first row of homes, and he has planted seeds into it—some oak, some pine. Eventually—in decades—they will accord him some relief from the sun.

I meet the town's self-appointed leader, a Salvadoran immigrant who has been here for six years. "I felt super when I was able to work," he tells me. "Now I can't buy medicine; I can't buy food. I used to work 40 hours a week. Now I work eight." Compared with the elderly workers, who cannot compete in this market, he has it good. "The older people are getting into drugs and alcohol," he says. "I resolve any conflict here. People have started to respect and look up to me."

Happily, he has little to do as peacemaker. Generally, the camp's 50 or so residents look out for one another, sharing skills and food and news of job openings. When things become especially dire, some ride broken bicycles around the fields, in search of bottles that might carry a small recycling value. And then they wait: for work, for the food bank, for a sign from above.

Some of these people are in the United States illegally; others are citizens who have fallen on hard times. The cynic will wonder whether it is America's problem that a group of lawbreakers cannot find work. I caught myself wondering precisely this when touring the camps. And yet, wherever one's sympathies lie on that thorny question, to look at the tents in isolation is a mistake. Mendota's unfortunates are symptomatic of a much, much broader problem—a canary in the coal mine. A decade ago, the Central Valley was a wonder of the world—a place where anybody could find work. Today, it is playing host to a humanitarian disaster.

IN the parking lot outside a gas station in nearby San Joaquin, Mayor Amarpreet Dhaliwal runs me through the decline. An immigrant from Punjab, in India, Dhaliwal has seen the region at its best and worst. "I've been here since 1983," he says. "I worked in the fields for my first year and a half. I did everything that the farmworkers do. The picture has been slowly changing."



The scene that Dhaliwal paints is best described as one of trickle-down poverty. “I’ve been running a small business here since 1991,” he says. “There aren’t so many customers these days. I also run an agricultural-hardware business here in town—and a small farm. We have seen the same trend. I have the numbers for the last 14 or 15 years, and there’s a downward trend. We’re just waiting for the rain.”

As we chat, a couple of older men amble slowly and unsurely down the fading railway lines that run through the city. One of them is wearing a ripped vest and a faded New York Yankees cap; the other is in a filthy Dickies shirt and a tattered Puma hat. Neither man has many teeth left, and those that do remain are rotten and brown. The heavy green stains on the pair’s jeans and sneakers reveal that they are returning from a shift in the tomato fields. This has been a good day.

Such days are few and far between. “They used to come and drag us out of the house,” one of the men tells me. Now, “they rotate people around to give us all a chance.”

“Sometimes people bring them food or clothes,” Mayor Dhaliwal says. “The charities have stepped up to the plate. We have a kitchen that comes two days a week. We also have a food bank. And that’s great. But these men want to earn their bucks. They don’t want handouts. This is about dignity. I want real jobs out there. I want people lining up around the block, not handouts.”

As we leave, the taller of the men clasps his hand around Mayor Dhaliwal’s arm and speaks quickly in Spanish. He is clearly nervous. “He is saying that he sleeps poorly because he lives next to the railway line,” Dhaliwal tells me. “He is worried that the gas tanks behind his home are going to explode and kill him.”

“I got this mark from a snake,” the mayor tells me, pointing to the long scar that runs along his elbow. He looks at up at the sky. “I could have died, but God saved me.”

In Huron, I meet with a peer of Dhaliwal’s, Mayor Sylvia Chavez. Home to 7,000 people, Huron is the fourth-poorest municipality in all of California. “Look outside,” Chavez urges me. “It’s *June*, and the town is empty—as if it were a winter day! Usually, we’d have trucks and buses coming through. Usually,

there would be traffic lines at the four-way stop. Usually, there would be lots of new faces.”

Not anymore. Huron, which has a population that is 98 percent Hispanic, has an unemployment rate of 35 percent. “The guy at the gas station across the street no longer sells gas, because there’s nobody to sell it to,” Chavez tells me. “He just does contract work now.” This, it seems, is a fairly common story. Ten years ago, Huron Tire Service Inc. was in such demand that the owner was running out of space in which to keep his inventory. “There were piles of tires all over the place,” Chavez says. Today, he orders his supplies ad hoc.

The decline in commercial activity has hit the city’s government hard. Sales-tax and gasoline-tax receipts are down dramatically. Courtesy of harsh spending cuts, 2015 was the first year in five that the city was in the black. “We’re just holding on,” Chavez tells me. “We’ve had to cut a lot. It’s difficult to know what to do.”

The human cost is real. “People used to leave their doors open at night,” Chavez recalls. “Now they can’t leave anything outside. We have a lot of stealing now. There are break-ins at homes; there is theft from farms and stores. I don’t walk around late at night anymore.” Domestic violence and child abuse have become “big problems,” as has substance addiction. Chavez cannot work out why the decline of the area hasn’t become a bigger story. Why isn’t it leading the national news?

Even locally, there is a good amount of shoulder-shrugging. “I went to a meeting in Fresno,” she says, rolling her eyes, “and they were talking about putting together a new committee to regulate the supply of groundwater. I sat there listening to them and I thought, *Another agency: That’s exactly what we need!*”

HURON serves as a particularly extreme example of the Central Valley’s predicament. But the challenges that it is facing are by no means unique. In her downtown office, the sheriff of Fresno County, Margaret Mims, lays out the numbers. “Back in 2010,” she explains, “we just didn’t have the sales or property taxes. So we had to lay a whole lot of people off.”

“A whole lot” is no exaggeration. In the space of a few months, the county had to let 77 people go. “We lost deputy-

sheriff positions. We lost correctional-officer positions. It affected everybody.” Things are improving—slowly. But, Mims sighs, the department is “still about 70 deputies short of where we were in ‘09.”

“The unemployment rate has made the gangs worse,” Mims tells me, “especially if there is violence in the home. The kids look outside, and they see the gangs. They move from a dysfunctional family to a functional one.” Such behavior makes the economic picture considerably worse, contributing to a disastrous spiral that is going to be extremely difficult to break. A piece of copper from an automated pump may be worth around \$10 to a criminal, but it costs around \$2,000 to replace. Even worse, if farmers do not initially notice the theft, they may have to wait for replacement parts and end up losing their crops. This results in fewer opportunities for work, which leads more people to crime, which . . .

“In the ‘09–’10 budget year, we closed down three floors of our county jail,” Mims recalls with a grimace. “We just couldn’t hold people who needed to be held. That was a horrible time to live through.” It was not just petty thieves who benefited from the absence of jail space. “There are 442 inmates per floor. We had to let 1,326 people go,” Mims says. “We couldn’t afford the staff that it took to guard them. I just *hated* the message that it sent. The feeling out there was, ‘We can do whatever we want because they don’t have jail space.’” Eventually, Mims had to draw a line—at murderers.

Todd Suntrapak, the CEO of Valley Children’s Hospital, knows all about such tough choices. The drought, he tells me, is “not a very sexy issue.” In consequence, the coverage of its ruinous fallout has been “limited to this valley.” “That this is not a bigger issue in Sacramento—or even nationally,” he submits, is “unimaginable.”

For the facility he manages, the drought has been little short of a disaster. Valley Children’s is the only pediatric hospital between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and it was short of doctors when times were good. Now, it simply cannot cope with the demand. “We have seen double-digit increases in volume to our ER for the last four years,” he records. “Thirty-three percent of kids in the area are living in poverty, and that number is likely to increase.”

Newly unemployed workers continue to stream in, mostly “coming for the primary care that they were unable to get in their communities.” By the time they get here, they’re invariably sicker. Because so many fields are fallow, the amount of particulate matter in the air has increased considerably. This has led to an increase in chronic respiratory diseases, and it has provoked lethal complications among those who are already ill. “The dust can be a death sentence,” Suntrapak concludes. “If you have a weak immune system, it’s catastrophic.” And it’s not just the environment. The “child-abuse-prevention team is busier than it’s ever been.”

This year, Suntrapak’s staff is already 20 percent over its budget assumptions. The state is paying, too. Eighty-two percent of the patients at Valley Children’s are on Medi-Cal, California’s version of Medicaid. Six years ago, that number was 70 percent. For many, it is no mean feat just to get here. “They use up whatever gas money they have for the month just to reach us,” he tells me. “And then they can’t pay for the medication they need.”

At an emergency meeting run by El Agua Es Asunto de Todos, attendees are tearing their hair out. El Agua was formed by a former consul to Mexico, Martha Elvia

Rosas, in the hope that sustained action would draw attention to the water crisis and force the federal government to act.

The speakers are schoolteachers, charity workers, medical professionals, university professors, family farmers, and local politicians—not your typical critics of runaway environmentalism. But, having watched their communities crumble, they have been moved to act. “There has to be a compromise,” one woman tells me before the meeting starts. “People are suffering.”

“People go to the grocery store,” says a teacher from the city of Firebaugh, “and they see melons, they see lettuce, they see tomatoes—and they think it’s all okay. In San Francisco, they turn on the faucet and they see water. It’s all taken care of. Nobody cares. People haven’t seen the devastation that’s going on here.”

When I ask for information, the visitors surround me and share their stories of decline. A once “vibrant school system with lots of parent support” has been turned into a nightmare, in which families “starve and scrape together to survive”; there is abundant “domestic violence,” and “kids need constant counseling”; single-family homes are now “hovels for multiple families,” while “garages are shelters for out-of-luck workers”; the food banks have “gone from assistance to subsistence”—so necessary, perhaps, that “in 70 or 80 percent of communities, they are indispensable.”

One gentleman, a soft-spoken local politician whose constituents have been hit hard, strikes a desperate tone. “We’re losing hope,” he laments. “Is anybody out there listening to us?”

He is unsure that they are. “We’re starting to think of extreme ideas,” he says. Those ideas? Blocking the freeway; limiting the flow of produce to market—*anything* that will force people to pay attention.

It is clear that he is just blowing off steam with such talk. Even the most passionate of my interlocutors—a middle-aged Hispanic man who talks in fiery, urgent language—is aware that such courses of action would be counterproductive. “This is a population that wants to work, not cause trouble,” he tells me. “If they had their way, you would only see them early in the dawn hours of the morning, when they are going into the fields. Then you would see their shadows when they leave the fields at night. They are not going to do anything sensational. They don’t want to ruffle feathers.”

He will be setting no fires. But his anger is real, and it is palpable. “I love the environment,” he says. “I fought to protect the majestic redwoods. But when our group invited the EPA to meet with the farmworkers and families here, they declined.” So, disgracefully, have California’s elected representatives. Time and time again I hear it said that politicians outside California are more interested in finding a solution than those within. “Where is Barbara Boxer? Where is Nancy Pelosi?” Noting caustically that Hispanics are being disproportionately affected, some go so far as to suggest that there is racism at play.

There is not—just environmental zealotry and an arrogant indifference to its human cost, borne by these people suffering under the sun. People who walked into the fields looking for the American dream but found it dammed at the source. If it so wished, Congress could amend the Endangered Species Act tomorrow, and the valley could enjoy a little more of the water that it needs to raise its daily bread. But, for now at least, Congress will not do so—not, one suspects, until breakfasting grandstanders in Washington, D.C., come to ask in irritation why the orange-juice jugs are empty and there are no longer any melons in the fruit bowl. **NR**

The Iran Nuclear Deal: Excerpts

THE announcement of the Iran deal made many people wonder whether it's just too dense and technical to be understood. Not at all! Here are some highlights, including some behind-the-scenes revisions that show how this historic agreement was reached.

1.46: The Framework for Agreement Version 3.14 states, with absolute clarity, that Iran shall not pursue a nuclear weapon. "Pursue" shall hereafter mean running after a nuclear weapon because it started to roll down a hill. In addition, Iran shall not build a nuclear weapon or purchase a nuclear weapon even if there is a sale at Costco and it can't resist stocking up. Iran also shall not research the creation of a nuclear weapon unless the supreme leader's son is doing a school project for the science fair, in which case the full resources of the International Atomic Energy Agency shall be made available to it.

If, however, one Iranian scientist is walking down the hall with some plutonium and runs into a scientist who is carrying a triggering mechanism and the collision results in a comical argument—*You got plutonium in my bomb trigger! No, you got your bomb trigger in my plutonium!*—everyone shall have a good laugh and agree that it was an accident, not unlike the ones that led to the discovery of penicillin and vulcanized rubber, and this wholly unexpected, fully functional nuclear weapon shall not result in any sanctions.

2.23: If Iran is discovered to have willfully constructed a nuclear weapon, and a commission duly appointed by the U.N. and sent to investigate concludes, after 16 months of interviews and inspections, that the device did not arrive as the result of a "Secret Santa" exchange with North Korea, the international community may approve a robust set of sanctions, including scrambling HBO for the senior leadership for up to an hour every day.

AMENDED: Instead of scrambling HBO, Cinemax broadcasts will be degraded from HD to standard definition.

5.99 (c): The Iranian leadership agrees to drop sponsorship of "Death to America" rallies, replacing the phrase with "a long, lingering, debilitating chronic joint pain to America, one that can be alleviated with simple anti-inflammatory drugs whose side effects are cumulative and whose impact on the liver is a matter of concern. Ask your doctor whether Flobinaze is right for you." The phrase "Death to Israel" shall be replaced with "Over time, may there be an actuarial analysis that shows a contraction in the average Jewish life span."

AMENDED: Crowds may continue to chant the original phrases, but the CNN translation will use the less incendiary language.

AMENDED: 5.99 (c) is dropped entirely, and the U.S. promises to withdraw its Navy from the Strait of Hor-

muz for having the gall to request such a thing in the first place.

13.934 (f): Acceptance of this deal shall trigger immediate cessation of sanctions and the release of all Iranian moneys held in U.S. banks. The moneys shall be delivered in the form of gold bars stuffed into fatted calves dragged on pallets through the streets of Tehran by U.S. Marines wearing Ronald Reagan masks. Onlookers will be permitted to whip the Marines with wetted leather straps.

AMENDED: Whipping shall be replaced with spitting. In exchange for this concession, Iran shall be given the code to disable Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system at will. HOWEVER: Iran is hereby warned that if the code is entered incorrectly three times, the system will lock it out for 24 hours.

44.36: To secure the approval of sybaritic nihilists writing for predictable leftist websites, Iran shall be permitted to export pistachios to Western markets, and Western journalists shall be expected to write things such as: "I have no idea how many Americans will rush out to buy Iranian caviar or carpets—I'm guessing it's a small number. But who doesn't love a good pistachio? So I wondered: Is Tuesday's news a big deal for the average American nut consumer? I reached out to Nuts.com CEO Jeff Braverman, whom I once sat next to at a wedding, to get his take."

AMENDED: That pistachio report already ran in *Slate* on July 14. The paragraph above shall now read: "To ensure the acceptance of Iranian pistachios in certain campuses and municipalities, Iran shall be permitted to advertise its wares as 'Made in Zionist-Free Zones' and claim that 'no Palestinians were hurt in the making of these nuts.'"

56.3: Iranian-government officials may request the use of Air Force One to fly to Venezuela at any time.

AMENDED: On the insistence of President Obama, this condition was soundly rejected. Replace "Air Force One" with "Air Force Two."

62.1: INSPECTIONS. The international community reserves the right to ask for inspections of any facility at any time.

AMENDED: Inspectors who desire access to peaceful research centers will dial 1-800-PND-SAND and listen carefully to the options, as the menu has changed. They will press 8 to request inspections and then listen to hold music periodically interrupted by a voice that says their inspection request is very important to us, and please hold on, but did you know you can submit your request online? Any request for an inspection will be processed within two weeks, after which there will be a meeting to discuss the composition of the international panel that will decide the format for the committee that will issue a recommendation on the name of the hotel where the parties will meet to discuss the inspection request, and could you please repeat the request? The message cut off before you finished.

66.6: Iran shall, at its discretion, do whatever the bloody hell it wants. Up to and including create a bloody hell. **NR**

Mr. Lileks blogs at www.lileks.com.



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

<https://wikileaks.org/clinton-emailserver/recovered-emails/index>

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz
TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com
BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae
RE: e-mail address and security

Hey Donald: Thanks for using this e-mail address for all of our further communication. I don't need to tell someone of your amazing achievement and success how important it is to maintain security when working on a deal like this. To that end, we're wondering if maybe you'd like to set up a separate server for the next set of messages? Just a thought.

Bill

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com
TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

Bill: I'm not trying to brag or anything, but as a successful individual with a net worth in EXCESS of TEN BILLION DOLLARS I can assure you that my e-mail security is the very best in the world. It's superb. People in the cyber-security business are amazed at the level of luxurious privacy that I enjoy. I could have child pornography and nuclear-weapons information on these servers and it'd be like nothing, totally secure. Not that I would because I don't happen to have those interests, you're getting me wrong, I'm saying that my entire computer and Web operation is so much better than yours or anyone's that I really don't waste my time worrying about it.

So, you know what? Here's the thing: I'm secure. Let's talk.

Donald J. Trump
President, CEO, COO, CMO
The Trump Organization

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz
TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com
BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae

Dear Donald: Totally get it! You're an incredible person! You'd be surprised how many times someone from my team, back when I was president,

would say, "Hey, is there any way we could get Donald J. Trump on our team, to lend us his expertise?" and I'd say, "I wish, Sidney! But for my money, a man like Donald J. Trump wants to sit in the big chair. A Donald J. Trump is a CEO, not an SVP!" And boy oh boy was I right.

Anyway, let's talk. You're doing great in the polls. You're saying things that need to be said. I've been in the politics game a long time, Donald, and I know when I'm looking at a champion, and I'm looking at a champion.

But if you'll permit me, what with this latest flap with the McCain thing—and believe me! I hear ya!—or what have you, the Republican party isn't going to let you get very far. Let me see if I can put it in the language of a person like you, who has built so many magnificent edifices: The Republican party is the neighborhood zoning council keeping you from putting in that up-scale mall. The Republican party is the jealous husband keeping you from making a little time with his hot wife.

Are you getting me?

Bill

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com
TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

Dear Bill: What you say makes a lot of sense, especially in re: my success and immense wealth. You are correct when you say that I am, in fact, one of the richest men in the world and that people naturally gravitate to my leadership and charisma.

The rest I'm not entirely clear on. Could explain it to me in a short (5-slide MAX!) ppt deck?

Donald

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz
TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com
BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae

Donald: Let me sketch it out for you: The Republicans are going to do whatever they can to stop you, probably sometime before Labor Day. They write the rules, so they'll be able to do it. So no matter what, we're looking at a third-party kind of run.

I can hear what you're saying! Third parties are for losers! Only losers run that way! I am not a loser!

No, Donald, you're not. You're a winner. A winner who has captured the hearts of American voters all over the country. So here's what I'm proposing.

Keep running for the Republican nomination. And when they pull whatever it is they're going to pull, declare a third-party candidacy and announce your running mate. Wait for it:

Trump/Clinton 2016! That's a winning ticket, Donald. Tell me that's not a winning ticket!

Bill

P.S. So. Much. Tail. You have literally no idea.

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com

TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

Dear Bill: Third parties are for losers! Only losers run that way! I am not a loser!

Donald

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com

BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae

Donald: Please finish reading my previous email before responding.

Thanks,

Bill

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com

TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

Just did. Interesting. Human question: What about your wife?

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com

BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae

Donald, why don't you let me handle her, okay?

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com

TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

We may have the makings of a deal.

FROM: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

TO: ultimatemagnificence@thetrump-organization.com

BCC: sidblume@sbloompartnersllc.ae

You're a consummate dealmaker, sir! I'm in awe!

FROM: ultimatemagnificence@thetrumporganization.com

TO: bubbalicious@otherclintone-mailserver.biz

Everyone says that.

Books, Arts & Manners

Literature, Patriarchy, And Plath

SARAH RUDEN

PERHAPS the best-known literary feminist cri de coeur is Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929), which lamented women's dependent state and projected that female writers, granted education, personal space, and independent income, would give the men a run for their money. In thousands of fem-lit and women's-studies classes, Woolf's hindsight dramatization of what would have happened to Shakespeare's equally talented sister has overshadowed the essay's utter failure as prophecy.

Jane Austen, who died in 1817, would likely poll as the greatest woman writer. In *A Room*, Woolf cites Austen's self-effacing secretiveness while writing, though in the parlor amid callers and servants coming and going. In another extended essay, *Three Guineas* (1938), Woolf lists the desiderata for the nurture of women's minds as "travel, society, solitude, a lodging apart from the family house."

But the spread of traditional (and, by the way, elite) masculine prerogatives to millions of women, though it has produced many social goods, has not yet resulted in feminine literary achievement of Austen's quality. This is a hugely interesting fact to look at as it tosses among the various waves of feminism, a movement that barely existed in the England of Austen's lifetime; the French Revolution had hyped but in practice discredited feminism, and the drive for women's legal and political rights that grew up as a little sister to Abolitionism (in religious rather than artsy circles, and primarily in America) wasn't dreamed of in the Steventon rectory.

But there Austen's expressiveness flourished, hardly choked off by ignorance and frustration, but rather a model of balance and humanity. Call me an outrageous partisan, but I don't think that any man, whatever his practical advantages, ever wrote more perfectly.

I wonder whether Austen sprang up in a historical sweet spot, after a female literary calling stopped being an absurdity but before social and financial support from male relatives stopped being a moral obligation. If so, what does that say of the tornado of changing women's roles that hit Sylvia Plath, perhaps the most talented 20th-century woman poet?

Most of Plath's work played frantically to literary fashions, and she exhausted herself with efforts at elaborate private and public women's roles: submissive good-girl student, Seven Sisters candidate for Ivy League chatelaine, glamour-mag fiction impresario, glamour puss and seductress—but most strenuously, nurturing wife and mother, and supportive daughter of an ailing, overstressed widow. Her truest voice was one of despair, in the months before her suicide at only 30. To me, what seems to have been most tragically lacking for her was not freedom or opportunity, but patriar-

chal "oppression" and "condescension."

With her schedule under fatherly supervision, she would have felt more in control of her energy's uses, in the usual way of the well brought up. Restricted in dating, she would not have marketed herself through sex, a ludicrous strategy (but apparently the best she could come up with) for a woman on her own seeking a marriage that would, effectively, sponsor her writing. Doing the dishes and being polite to family friends, she would not have run back and forth between self-mythologizing and self-hatred.

Her contemporary Flannery O'Connor, a shockingly good fiction writer, got the better of isolation and confinement (illness kept her living at home with her widowed mother for her last 14 years) because she was a devout Catholic. Her life's social and emotional possibilities being well defined from the start, she didn't have to invent *them*, but could concentrate on exploring new kinds of writing.

In my experience, women are tough cookies. I have no basis for suspecting that they're more feeble at life-invention than men would be; but certainly during the last century most women were left with an outrageous amount of life-



Sylvia Plath

Sarah Ruden is a visiting scholar at Brown University.

invention to do, which could well have reduced psychic resources for literary invention. Sylvia Plath's life and work seem to exemplify this rather pathetically.

Plath was born in 1932 and lost her professor father—who had been immensely proud of her precocity—in 1940. Her mother's entry into the work force was part of a nationwide movement: Vast numbers of women with children, in the absence of their men, took industrial jobs in support of the war.

That work didn't entail all the exhilaration today's media like to depict shows in their reaction when the war ended: Hardly any fought to keep "men's" jobs. Most bought into the religion of domesticity and the female image: a smiling, slim, beautifully coiffed, brightly clad woman, mopping or baking daintily, was the surety for the world being under control, the good life being possible.

This was the attitude that greeted Plath post-war, during her teens. A few professional women, however, would-be mentors, were there, too, reacting against this attitude and demanding a brilliant girl's deference; Plath was irritated at them and nervous about the suburbs by turns. She struggled with questions of vocation and romance to the degree that her first suicide attempt came *after* her prize guest-editorship at *Mademoiselle* magazine and her emergence from scholarship-girl awkwardness into beauty and charisma that made dozens of conventionally eligible men available to her.

It's fascinating to speculate about what Virginia Woolf would have thought of *The Bell Jar* (1963), Plath's lightly fictionalized account of her breakdown in the fast lane. The book suggests the kind of "novel of silence" Woolf herself wrote, drawing on the typical inwardness of female experience. Plath's first-person protagonist is poor, provincial, and naïve, and must struggle within a narrow space—mostly an internal one.

But far from the polite hush of the drawing room, *The Bell Jar*'s Esther Greenwood is out there, her future constantly and indifferently at play, like a lottery ball ricocheting among countless others in a glass box in a TV studio. The surface of the novel is bright and shallow, like the Technicolor football romance Esther watches among the

other guest editors, while an attack of ptomaine poisoning starts (the germs having been hidden in the ravishing-looking crab salad of a gala lunch). But every image is memorable, attached as it is to the relentless grief of the intuitive speaker. She has no father to guide her through the treasures and the trash, and no religion to turn to; her mother pooh-poohs her draw toward Catholicism.

Toward the end of Plath's life, in her loneliness and fear as her marriage and professional contacts deteriorated, her words centered on the exalted meaninglessness of the world into which she had been thrown—or, rather, the world that could be given meaning only through her own words. She was like a lynx hunting, her achievement a sort of apotheosis of nature writing. These lines are from her poem "Elm," in the posthumously published collection *Ariel*:

Love is a shadow.
How you lie and cry after it.
Listen: these are its hooves: it has gone
off, like a horse.

All night I shall gallop thus, impetuously,
Till your head is a stone, your pillow a
little turf,
Echoing, echoing.

Ariel exists because Plath's husband, the poet Ted Hughes, his rights over Plath's literary estate still intact (because they were not yet divorced at the time of her death), and his appreciation of Plath's genius (and its earning potential) undiminished by an excruciating breakup, published intelligently from her hoard of manuscripts. He also selectively destroyed and edited to save himself and the children embarrassment.

The Second Wave, equal-opportunity feminism of the Sixties and Seventies was both a magical chance and a curse for Plath's reputation. Hordes of us young women were feeling stifled and unappreciated despite our supposed giftedness, and so identified manically with her. I once found that a previous reader—female, I'm certain—had, in a transgressively Plathian manner, annotated a library copy of *The Bell Jar*. For example, in the margin beside the place where Esther meets a marriage proposal worded "How would you like to be Mrs. Buddy Willard?" with "an awful

impulse to laugh," my predecessor had written, "Me too."

Plath's poems, however, were relatively unpopular. We could sort of imagine writing something like *The Bell Jar*. (Lots of us tried.) But the poetry was another matter. I think it didn't appeal to us because it was too good, beyond any conceivable aspirations of our own. *The Bell Jar* itself testifies to the bell curve. There are very few women geniuses, which is one reason society doesn't easily accommodate them.

The Third Wave of feminism was perhaps less about male backlash than about female backtracking, out of embarrassment at the Second Wave's unrealizable projections. Women weren't, as a class, achieving on a professional level with men, and the excuses of disadvantage wore away as opportunities grew. So why not just glorify the ordinariness of women, as lovers, mothers, quilters, gardeners, authors in search of their mothers' gardens, etc.?

For a striking female achiever like Plath, the cost to status was pitiful. From the late Seventies, the thrust of her treatment turned from excoriation of Ted Hughes as an envious "killer" of his intimate literary rival to, on the one hand, the celebration of Plath as earth mother or girl next door (virtually ourselves!), and on the other, the scarifying of her as an evil, unnatural woman (so that it was better for us to be ordinary).

Trapped in the most reductive terms of her gender, used like any fantasy-laden image for easy ego-gratification, she made Jane Austen look like a free spirit. The radical politics of envy, forcible leveling, and arbitrary redistribution had effected a terrible irony: Plath's *work*, evincing unique insight and eloquence, was neglected, but her ordinary virtues were smarmily commended and her ordinary failings haughtily sniffed at, like those of an absent neighbor by a merciless coffee klatch.

I encountered the Plath memory wars in literary magazines in the mid Nineties, and I documented several major skirmishes at the end of the decade for a Johns Hopkins Writing Seminars biography course. Plath was the ideal daughter; she was spoiled from the get-go. Plath was a saintly wife; she was an impossible, self-immolating wife. Plath was a lunatic;

she was as normal as they come. Plath was a delightful guest/host/roommate/friend; she was infuriating.

Jane Austen's memory has enjoyed one of the sublime gifts of patriarchy: her family's insistence on guarding her personal reputation. Her sister destroyed all the letters Austen would have minded posterity's seeing. Other relatives wrote warmhearted memoirs. Now, the data age brings extremes of prying into and trivializing writers. It's worse for a significant woman writer, her less familiar public presence being confused and mashed up with her private life. That shows contempt, of course, for her intricate toil in creating a special persona for the public. Once considered her legitimate job, or even her decorous duty, now this is supposed to be a withhold-ing, a sham, like prissy chastity.

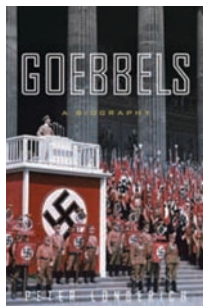
Over time, what are essentially attempts to compete with Plath in telling her story have become rather surreal. Chroniclers must think their own sheer insistent presence—as if on personal blogs—has to win out. Elizabeth Winder's *Pain, Parties, Work: Sylvia Plath in New York, Summer 1953* (2013) redepicts the single month Plath spent at *Mademoiselle*, as if *The Bell Jar*'s opening chapters were inadequate. Elizabeth Sigmund's *Sylvia Plath in Devon: A Year's Turning* (2015) reminisces about a period—deemed vital because Sigmund was present?—of work on *The Bell Jar* and the *Ariel* poems. Shut up and read *those* books, Plath shouts from the grave.

Andrew Wilson's *Mad Girl's Love Song: Sylvia Plath and Life before Ted* (2013) rebels against Hughes's influence on her reputation, only to hand her over to (among countless others) a simultaneous interpreter complaining that she failed to admire his costly vicuña bedspread on her single, uneventful visit to his apartment, and a female acquaintance professing to have lost interest in Plath when first meeting her owing to a breach of table manners.

Is one lesson of Plath's reception that we lack the detachment, the contemplative capacity even to read significant literary work on its own? And are we, under a thin political gloss of sympathy with the struggles of talented women, too mean-spirited and narcissistic to either support and commend them or let them alone? **NR**

Narcissus And Echo

ANDREW STUTTAFORD



Goebbels: A Biography, by Peter Longerich
(Random House, 992 pp., \$40)

WHEN the established order collapses, those who live among the ruins often take comfort from the hope that someone will turn up to tell them what comes next. With a dysfunctional and humiliated Germany struggling to come to terms with a military defeat that it still did not understand, there was nothing very remarkable about the views of the young, down-at-heel Ph.D. who, in early 1922, complained in an article for his hometown newspaper that “salvation cannot come from Berlin,” the shamed and shameful symbol of old Reich and new Weimar. But all was not lost: “Sometimes it looks as though a new sun is about to rise in the south.”

Joseph Goebbels was referring to Munich, then a bastion of the nationalist far right, a lair of fantasists, the furious, the lost, and the dangerously sane, including the nascent Nazi party, a movement that included all those and more poison still. And it was there that this believer in search of a creed, a lapsed Catholic who lost Christ but not his sense of the divine, was to discover what he was looking for. “Germany,” he wrote in July 1924, “yearns for the One.” In Hitler, Goebbels found him.

At the core of this new biography of Hitler's propaganda chief by the London-based German historian Peter Longerich, well known for his studies of the Holocaust and of Himmler, is the relationship between Goebbels and Hit-

ler, a bizarre entanglement that was a blend of evangelist/Messiah and weirdly intense bromance: “Those large blue eyes. Like stars. He is pleased to see me. I'm very happy.”

Adding a further twist to this dance was Goebbels's future wife, Magda, who caught Hitler's eye at a time when she was already Joseph's girl. Magda was ambitious, happy to flirt and enjoy long tête-à-têtes with the future Führer, but in the end she opted for Goebbels, news that Hitler took in good grace with, Goebbels noted in *Harlequin* prose, “tears in his big astonished eyes.” Hitler was a witness at their wedding, a compliment Goebbels returned for the Führer's bunker nuptials a decade and a half later. But Hitler did not retreat too far. He remained close to Magda, and in some respects used the Goebbels household as a proxy for the domesticity he was unwilling or unable to secure for himself. Longerich does not reveal what Eva Braun thought about this arrangement.

Hitler was a frequent visitor, “Uncle Adolf” to the couple's children, and, when the Goebbels marriage hit one of its many rough patches, an umpire: not least on the occasion he insisted that Goebbels should break with his lover, the Czech actress Lída Baarová, rather than leave Magda, herself no model of monogamy.

Goebbels submitted yet again to his Führer. Hitler was fond of his propaganda minister, but also manipulated him emotionally and politically, keeping him perpetually on edge as to where he stood in his affections and, for that matter, in the regime's hierarchy. Why he did the former is not something that Longerich really explains. This is a book in which Hitler is seen mainly in shadow or reflection.

The politics, however, were more straightforward: Hitler did not relish the notion of over-mighty subordinates building empires of their own. All power ultimately had to flow from him. Thus Goebbels was never given quite the dominance over German cultural life that he wanted. And it is surprising to learn how much he was excluded from decisions that counted, particularly when it came to the war and the running of the foreign policy that paved the way to it. Informed that Germany would be supporting Franco's rebellion in Spain,

Goebbels writes, a little plaintively, in his diary: “So we’re getting a bit involved in Spain. Planes etc. Not obvious. Who knows what the point is.” It was only in July 1944 that Goebbels was appointed “Reich Plenipotentiary” for a “total war” that was already lost.

But if Goebbels was kept at a distance from some of the key moments in the Third Reich’s trajectory, so, in a way, are Longerich’s readers. This book is not (nor does it purport to be) a general history of Nazi Germany. It will be heavy sledding for those less familiar with this topic. And they will not be helped by a prose style that is dense, dry, and unnecessarily austere. Thus in a

thinking (“the essence of propaganda is to keep it simple and use constant repetition”), some of it subtler and more pragmatic than might be imagined. But the whole picture is never quite filled in.

And, despite the length of this exhaustively researched book (a good bit of it is based on the diaries that Goebbels kept between 1923 and 1945), the same is true of Longerich’s overall depiction of Goebbels, a depiction that is, under the circumstances, oddly one dimensional. Longerich sees Goebbels primarily as a narcissist, forever craving recognition—from his fellows, from the crowd, from (tellingly) his diary, to which he

The sources of Goebbels’s anti-Semitic fury will never be fully identified. Anti-Semitism already hung in the air during the troubled period after World War I, although Goebbels did not breathe in enough of it to deter him from an early affair with a half-Jewish schoolteacher (although when she disclosed her ancestry, the “first enchantment” was “ruined”). But the infection worsened, sharpened by social resentments that festered in his hardscrabble years. And as Goebbels’s German nationalism deepened, so did the anti-Semitism that served, as Longerich puts it, as its “kind of negative pole.” The Jews were a convenient scapegoat

Longerich is out to chip away at Goebbels’s reputation as the master publicist who bent Germany to his Führer’s will, a reputation that was, he argues, overstated—and still is.

passage relating how the Nazis took over the public sphere, Longerich notes that the diarist Victor Klemperer, an acute observer of Hitler’s rule, described the infiltration of Nazi terminology into everyday speech, but he omits the examples that would make that (fascinating) observation live.

The story of Goebbels’s propaganda work is itself only partially told. Longerich is out to chip away at Goebbels’s reputation as the master publicist who bent Germany to his Führer’s will, a reputation that was, he argues, overstated—and still is. He has a point: The *Volk* was rather less enthusiastic about the coming thousand years, not to speak of the prospect of war, than all those outstretched arms might suggest. That said, there was *something* about Goebbels’s dark magic that worked. A product of the dislocations of his age, Goebbels was nevertheless intellectually, if not psychologically, detached enough from them to understand how they could be exploited. This was more than a matter of Goebbels’s considerable speechmaking skills (neatly dissected in this book). Longerich offers a useful introduction to Goebbels’s techniques, some of them, interestingly, derived from new American ideas about advertising, as well as to his broader

would not infrequently lie, and, above all, from his Führer. In searching for the roots of that narcissism, a fair enough diagnosis, Longerich looks to the failure of the infant Goebbels “to develop independence at the ages of two and three”—a development, Longerich emphasizes, that *predated* his club foot, and is evidenced by Goebbels’s lifelong “dependence on his mother.”

This explanation is too psychiatrically glib to be altogether satisfying, and (as Longerich would not deny) too limited to tell the whole story. It doesn’t explain the rage, the rhetorical violence that Goebbels could switch off when he wanted but that runs throughout his oratory and his writing, especially, of course, when it came to the Jews. Sneering, jeering, and demonization were followed by the threat and then the promise of annihilation, a “thoroughly justified” slaughter for which he did so much to set the stage. His was an obsessive, unhinged hatred that plunged into paranoid delusion and was no kind of act. Writing in his diary on March 21, 1927, Goebbels reports how “our brave lads pull a Jew down out of a bus.” Brave lads, *our* brave lads: So boasted this small, lame, ugly Ph.D., an unlikely *Übermensch* trying to prove to himself that he was on the team, one of the hard men.

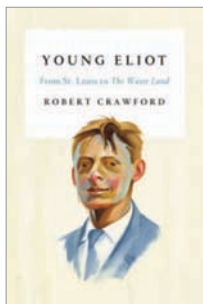
for Germany’s woes and, as eternal outsiders, an obstacle to the construction of the “national community” that was another consistent feature in Goebbels’s generally inchoate political agenda. It was an agenda that eventually degenerated into little more than an echo of the ideas of the Führer, whom Goebbels worshipped (it’s not too strong a word), an echo within which hatred fed on itself.

Millennial cults rarely end well for the faithful. In the months leading up to the fall of Berlin, Goebbels made it clear that he had no wish to outlive the doomed Reich, a decision that was both practical (he had nothing to look forward to) and philosophical. Without Hitler, what was there? Magda was of the same mind. The day after Hitler’s death, the pair murdered their six young children, a decision, Goebbels claimed, with which their offspring would have agreed had “they been [old enough to be] able to express themselves.” The oldest was twelve. This last atrocity behind them, husband and wife committed suicide. The Red Army found the bodies the next day, the parents’ corpses badly charred, the children still lifelike in their pale clothing, final sacrifices to another god that had failed.

NR

Against My Ruins

KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON



Young Eliot: From St. Louis to "The Waste Land," by Robert Crawford (Farrar, Straus, 512 pp., \$35)

IF we learn anything about living, rather than about literature, from the life of T. S. Eliot, it is this: If at some point in early middle age you find yourself desperately seeking the advice of madman Ezra Pound regarding the delicate health of your madwoman wife, you have taken a wrong turn down one of those certain half-deserted streets.

Thomas Stearns Eliot did not have an exciting life. There was abundant drama in it, even excessive drama, but the effect of it was not excitement—it was anxiety. The anxiety was particularly intense in the first half of his life, “from St. Louis to *The Waste Land*,” as the subtitle of Robert Crawford’s excellent new half-biography, *Young Eliot*, has it. There is, so far as I am aware, no other Eliot chronicle quite like it. Frank Kermode wrote incisively about Eliot’s literary mind, and Peter Ackroyd wrote a sensitive biography under nearly impossible conditions (the Eliot family limited his quoting from Eliot’s published work and forbade his quoting from unpublished work and correspondence). But Crawford has an unusual sense of the man himself, of his intellectual milieu, and of the material condition of the times—which is indispensable in accounting for the life of a poet who believed that “the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an ‘objective correlative’; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that

when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.” *Young Eliot* may be half a life, but it is a fascinating and whole portrait, if you can bear it.

T. S. Eliot is “Tom” throughout the book, which is what he was before he was T. Stearns-Eliot and then T.S., and which is incongruously informal in light of the knowledge that he once was disciplined by his parents for using a vulgar expression inappropriate to the Eliots’ station in life—that expression being “okay.” Crawford’s book is packed with illuminating little details such as that, the accumulated weight of which escalates from the fascinating to the uncomfortable to the nearly unbearable as Eliot’s personal anguish contrasts ever more dramatically with his literary success.

Tom’s early life in St. Louis was physically comfortable, even cosseted, though that comfort was bound up in restriction that went well beyond even what might have been expected for the youngest son of a well-to-do family of Republican reformers (his father was a Civil War veteran) and passionate Unitarians (there used to be such a thing as Unitarian fervor) with one foot in industrial St. Louis, where his Eliot *père* was an executive at a brick company, and the other in Puritan New England, where his family summered and rejoiced in their connections to everyone from Harvard president Charles William Eliot (famous for trying to ban football) to the Adamses, Herman Melville, and John Greenleaf Whittier. The bridge between Boston and St. Louis was William Greenleaf Eliot, the poet’s grandfather, a Harvard Divinity School graduate who founded the first Unitarian church in St. Louis, and who might have been scandalized by young Tom’s interest in the Catholic church to which his Irish nanny brought him from time to time.

There is little sign of T. S. Eliot in modern St. Louis—a plaque in front of one of his childhood homes, a recently installed bust in front of a bookstore—and there is little in Eliot’s life to suggest that this would have troubled him. He seems to have taken the advice offered in the Gospel according to Matthew: “Whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.” Eliot renounced St. Louis—

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PRAGUE While the cruise has Budapest as its origination point, for many the experience begins with an optional stay in Prague, which includes accommodations at the InterContinental Hotel, and exceptional city tours of one of Europe's most beautiful capitals.

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BRATISLAVA The *AmaSonata* arrives in Slovakia's charming capital early on the 11th. There will be a delightful walking tour of the city's top sites (including the Old Town Hall, Mirbach Palace and St. Martin's Cathedral), and an alternative “Communist History” tour.

VIENNA While the third *NR* seminar takes place, the *AmaSonata* departs for Vienna, arriving in the evening during dinner. Post-dessert: a traditional “Viennese Wine and Music” venture to a rustic wine tavern outside the city (where you'll enjoy newly pressed vino and Austrian music and hospitality). On the 12th you'll experience a panoramic

morning city tour that includes visits to the Opera House, St. Stephen's Cathedral, and the Ringstrasse. There will be an optional afternoon excursion to the Schönbrunn Palace, and opportunities to attend Mozart and Strauss concerts. We cap your visit to Austria's capital with a late-night top-deck smoker.

DURNSTEIN/GREIN At midnight the *AmaSonata* will depart for Durnstein. On the 13th you'll take part in a walking tour along its cobblestone streets, and then a visit to the Stiftskirche with its magnificent blue tower (you'll also have a chance to see castle ruins where Richard the Lionheart was once held for ransom). There's an afternoon seminar in store,

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SUN/May 8	Prague, Czech Republic	Optional		Half Day Tour; Lunch/Dinner on your own
MON/May 9	Bratislava, Slovakia Budapest, Hungary	12:00PM 2:00PM		Transfer to <i>AMASonata</i> Afternoon seminar Evening sail and reception
TUES/May 10	Budapest, Hungary		5:00 PM	City tour; afternoon seminar “Night Owl” session
WED/May 11	Bratislava, Slovakia Vienna, Austria	9:00 AM 8:30 PM	1:00 PM Overnight	City tour; afternoon seminar “Wine & Music” tour
THUR/May 12	Vienna, Austria		11:59 PM	Panoramic City tour late-night smoker reception
FRI/May 13	Durnstein, Austria Grein, Austria	8:30 AM 7:00 PM	12:00 PM 11:59 PM	walking tour afternoon seminar evening cocktail reception
SAT/May 14	Linz, Austria	7:00 AM	11:59 PM	half-day tour options afternoon seminar
SUN/May 15	Passau, Germany Vilshofen, Germany	8:00 AM 3:00 PM	12:00 PM	City tour afternoon seminar “Oktoberfest” celebration evening cocktail reception
MON/May 16	Vilshofen, Germany	7:00 AM		Debark <i>AMASonata</i>



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VILSHOFEN It ends in this lovely medieval town, where you will thrill to a festive "Oktoberfest" celebration with local food, beer and Bavarian folk music and dancing. Today you'll enjoy one final seminar, and our third and "farewell" cocktail reception.

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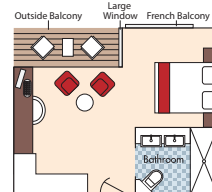
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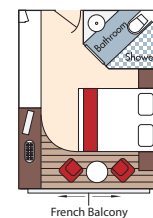
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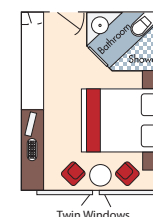
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170 sq. ft.
Offers an outside balcony and a French balcony, bathroom includes a shower.



DOUBLE OCCUPANCY RATE: \$ 4,799 P/P

Categories D / SN (Piano Deck)
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SINGLE OCCUPANCY RATE: \$ 7,999



he sometimes described himself as being from New England—and ultimately renounced his American citizenship as well, acquiring a British passport and a labored accent to go along with it.

His parents were intellectuals and encouraged intellectual tendencies in their children—within limits: Tom's older brother published a novel and served as a research fellow in Mesopotamian archeology for the Peabody Museum, but also took up the family business, as was expected of him. Both of Tom's parents wrote verse, and his father had been, for a season, something of an aspiring artist before settling into the metaphorical and literal solidity of a professional life dedicated to bricks. His mother continued to write, not only verse but also books, including a biography of her father-in-law. She wrote hundreds of poems and hymns, with a particular interest in martyrdom, thereby setting the psychological stage for her son's disastrous first marriage.

Tom's unhappy marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot is in many ways the anchor of the story. The marriage strained his relationship with his family and his finances, drained his health, and may very well have ruined him as a human being. Mrs. Eliot—she was Mrs. Stearns-Eliot for a while, VS-E to his TS-E—was genuinely sick, having suffered from a bone infection as a child and, as an adult, a menstrual disorder that was almost uniquely suited for spoiling her marriage to the queasy and fastidious Tom. She was by almost all accounts perfectly unbearable: She began an affair with Bertrand Russell practically the hour she returned from her predictably disastrous honeymoon, and the adultery was rendered especially distasteful by the fact that Russell was the young couple's main financial benefactor, whose more than avuncular interest reduced Eliot to the condition of cuckold and his wife to something not entirely distinct from the condition of prostitute. She conspired to keep her husband from taking a much-coveted position dangled in front of him by Harvard, indulged in dramatic scenes, and generally functioned as, in Virginia Woolf's evocative description, a “bag of ferrets Tom wears round his neck.” She was destined to be sexually unhappy—Russell described spending a night with her as “utter hell,” adding: “There was a



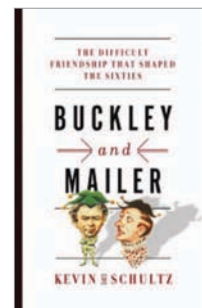
quality of loathsomeness about it which I cannot describe.”

Crawford's account is unparalleled in its deft connection of the dreariness and difficulty of Eliot's life—his financial difficulties and the necessity of making a living beyond poetry and criticism, the incarceration of an unhappy marriage, the complications of sex, his sense that there existed between him and the world a shadow line that he could not manage to cross—and the persistence of these themes in his work. His account of Eliot's far-reaching intellectual interests, from Eastern religions to Elizabethan drama, is intelligent; and he does not engage in a great deal of literary criticism as such, which is probably for the best—Eliot's poetry does not want explanation so much as it wants annotation, and the latter half of *Young Eliot* is full of useful and interesting detail.

There is an undeniable gift in being able to tell the story of so much frustration and anxiety without producing a book that is itself a source of frustration and anxiety. It is the most enjoyable and interesting piece of writing about Eliot that I can recall since Frank Lentricchia's *Modernist Quartet*, a study of Eliot, Frost, Stevens, and Pound published more than 20 years ago. For those with an interest in Eliot and his circle, it is necessary reading, and a great delight. **NR**

The Decathlete And the Pugilist

PETER TONGUETTE



Buckley and Mailer: The Difficult Friendship That Shaped the Sixties, by Kevin M. Schultz
(Norton, 400 pp., \$28.95)

IMAGINE, if you can, Ted Kennedy tipping his hat to Allan Bloom. Or Tip O'Neill honoring the legacy of Lionel Trilling. Or Norman Thomas being an avid reader of Ayn Rand.

Impossible, isn't it? At times, the notion of those among the dyed-in-the-wool Left acknowledging merit in conservative standard-bearers is almost comic in its implausibility.

But there are exceptions. For example, if you look hard enough, you will find that more than a few of the last century's leading liberal writers expressed sympathy—or, at least, tolerance—for the other side. “People who really write about America often are not of the hard left,” said historian Douglas Brinkley—referring to the “pro-Vietnam War” stances of none other than Ralph Ellison, James T. Farrell, Jack Kerouac, and John Steinbeck—in an interview. “That became a fantasy of the New Left in the Sixties when if you didn't agree with their view on politics then suddenly you were out to lunch.”

So, Joan Didion could write in the foreword to *Political Fictions* (2001) that she

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cast a vote, “ardently,” for Barry Goldwater in 1964. “Had Goldwater remained the same age and continued running,” Didion wrote, “I would have voted for him in every election thereafter.” Meanwhile, John Updike—himself a true believer in the Vietnam War—bemoaned the triteness of the anti-war brigade in a 1989 essay in *Commentary*. “Where, indeed, was the intellectual interest of saying that Johnson and Nixon were simply dreadful Presidents?” Updike asked. “Truth had to have more nooks and crannies, more qualifications, than that.” More recently—and famously—Christopher Hitchens became a sincere adherent of George W. Bush’s foreign policy. And Renata Adler did not let her opposition to the outcome of *Bush v. Gore* stop her from acknowledging Justice Antonin Scalia—“for whom,” Adler said in 2004, “sometimes I have the highest respect.”

Thus we come to the friendship of William F. Buckley Jr. and Norman Mailer, which is the focus of this absorbing, though tangent-prone, new book by Kevin M. Schultz. They were, to be sure, an improbable pair; nothing could be farther from Buckley’s exemplary personal life (a single, joyously happy marriage) than Mailer’s chaotic one (a sextet of marriages). Schultz rather weakly seeks connections in such things as the decade in which they were born (the 1920s), their having penned career-defining first books (*God and Man at Yale* and *The Naked and the Dead*, respectively—there’s a two-some for you), and their having contributed—“within weeks of each other in the fall of 1955”—to the founding of “lasting journals that reflected their unique per-

spectives on American life” (a rather bland description of periodicals as *sui generis* as *NATIONAL REVIEW* and the *Village Voice*).

The bottom line, however, remains that Buckley and Mailer diverged sharply—even in their literary careers. Buckley was never stronger than in a pithy, forceful column, while Mailer reliably produced pages of prolix prose. One of the most unintentionally funny moments in *Buckley and Mailer* comes when *Harper’s* editor Willie Morris commissions a 20,000-word article from Mailer concerning the March on the Pentagon. “Three weeks later, Morris visited Mailer to check on his progress,” Schultz writes. “Mailer had an amazing ninety thousand words.” And that is how Mailer’s Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Armies of the Night* (1968) began.

Yet Schultz argues that, when it came to worrying over the state of their country, Buckley and Mailer were not completely at loggerheads. “It turned out the two men’s ideas actually [sprang] from a similar frustration, a joint disgust at the central assumptions that dominated post-war America from the 1940s to the mid 1960s,” Schultz writes, adding that each was after a kind of emancipation “from the stale Cold War pieties and the invidious presence of corporate capitalism.”

Their initial encounter, though, hardly had the makings of a Left–Right peace accord. On September 22, 1962, Buckley and Mailer partook in a debate arranged by promoter John Golden, and publicity for the bout emphasized their opposing visions: “The Conservative Mind clashes with the Hip Mind for the first time, at a no-holds-barred discussion.” They did indeed spar about the

evening’s announced subject (“What Is the Real Nature of the Right Wing in America?”), but they had the same target in their crosshairs. In his remarks, Buckley assigned blame to the “Liberal Establishment” for, as Schultz puts it, “the rise of Communism in Russia and the Eastern Bloc of Europe and China, as well as the expansion of the bureaucratic state in America with its high taxes and probing regulations.” But Mailer, lo and behold, concurred with Buckley that liberalism was responsible for a litany of troubling “symptoms,” including such Maileresque formulations as “the insubstantiality of money” and “the impoverishment of food.”

From Schultz’s perspective, Buckley and Mailer strove to enlarge human freedom, but with caveats—or, as he calls them, “anchors.” While Buckley tethered his vision of freedom to “foundations in a Christian heritage or walls imposed by laissez-faire capitalism,” Mailer did no such thing, tethering his to the supposed security offered by a “libertarian” strand of socialism. Yet these (and other) not-insignificant differences seem, finally, incidental to what makes the relationship between Buckley and Mailer appealing: the unfaked approbation they gave each other. “Buckley is very able and I have my work cut out for me,” Mailer wrote to a correspondent prior to the 1962 debate, and afterwards, he described Buckley as, among other things, “a charming guy” and “a dirty fighter.”

Schultz is far more persuasive in outlining the two men’s friendship than in proving substantive points of agreement between them. For Mailer, the charm of



Norman Mailer, Iris Love, and William F. Buckley Jr.

Buckley was, in large part, nonpolitical. Not even a month after their debate, Mailer found himself with his third wife, Lady Jeanne Campbell, at the Buckleys' Stamford, Conn., residence, and the evening concluded with a ride on Buckley's sailboat. "Buckley . . . may have wanted to introduce, or even seduce, Mailer to the fruits of conservatism," Schultz writes. "It wouldn't have been the first time Buckley won a convert by dangling the allures of aristocratic living in front of them." Soon enough, Mailer and Pat Buckley were trading nicknames: "Slugger" for her, "Chooky Bah Lamb" for him. As Mailer put it in *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968), in a perception (quoted here by Schultz) indicative of the author's bracing forbearance of other perspectives: "A revolutionary with taste in wine has come already half the distance from Marx to Burke."

But, if Buckley's politics never wore off on Mailer, it is nonetheless striking the degree to which the two men shared a certain *joie de vivre*, a puckish delight

in politics. Consider, for example, what Schultz calls the "crazy, creative solutions designed to reawaken the country" proffered in Mailer's essay collection *The Presidential Papers* (1963). Among the highlights: a two-year deadline for cancer researchers to "make progress" or they would face "mortal combat," and a one-way ticket to the Soviet Union for ad men. There was a similar note of whimsy in several of the ideas Buckley put forth as a candidate for mayor of New York City in 1965, such as the construction of a "huge aerial bike lane, 20 feet above the ground and 20 feet wide," and the transformation of Flushing Meadows fairgrounds from the setting of the World's Fair to "Disneyland East." "Watching the election from the wings, Mailer loved Buckley's campaign," Schultz writes. "Buckley was performing exactly the kind of existential politics Mailer had been hoping for." Of course, in 1969, Mailer had his own impractical mayoral campaign, having casually mentioned the idea to Buckley when passing up

another sailing adventure. "It looks as tho I'll be running for mayor," Mailer wrote to Buckley. "I must, I fear, decline your splendid invitation—unless of course you'd consider coming out for me." Neither man would move to Gracie Mansion.

For the most part, Buckley returned Mailer's esteem. In the late 1960s, Mailer tried to get Buckley to make an appearance in his woebegone feature film *Maidstone*; Mailer's overture is less surprising than the fact that Buckley seems to have seriously pondered the possibility. "I have thought and thought about it and decided against it," Buckley wrote to Mailer, somewhat ambiguously. In 1979, Buckley introduced Mailer on *Firing Line* by judging the book under discussion—Mailer's great *The Executioner's Song*—to be "remarkable," invoking Dashiell Hammett and Ernest Hemingway in describing its prose. And Buckley's obituary of Mailer—who died first, in 2007—is friendly, fair, and quite funny.

Alas, this book has considerable longueurs—stretches in which the careers of Buckley and Mailer do not converge, or converge only slightly, as when the two had an unpleasant interaction (in which Mailer semi-seriously tried to pick a fight with Buckley over the Vietnam War) at Truman Capote's 1966 Black and White Ball—which, though elegantly described, is a digression. Schultz is the sort of author who, in introducing a "City of the Future" Mailer constructed in his living room out of Legos, offers a history of the toy bricks.

One wonders whether the book's length is necessary to explicate its theme. Kurt Vonnegut—another writer of progressive politics who nonetheless possessed a relatively open mind—wrote a wisp of an article in 1979 (collected in his book *Palm Sunday*) in which he surmised that Buckley was the one "truly happy" person in America. After enumerating Buckley's attributes, Vonnegut concluded, "So whenever I see Mr. Buckley, I think this, and, word of honor, without an atom of irony: 'There is a man who has won the decathlon of human existence.'" In a way, Vonnegut's sketch says, in short order, what Schultz draws out over several hundred pages: that only the most intractable of liberals would be immune to the drawing power of a decathlete like William F. Buckley. **NR**

ALLINGER'S

Six blocks from City Hall the old Fire-Chief's
Headquarters has granite gargoyles smiling
Over the garage doors, perhaps the last
They ever carved in Philadelphia.
They wear stone fire-fighters' hats and one blows
Foam from a stone mug. The sculptor saw his
Work and did it. Did *Allinger's* have gargoyles?
The old poolroom could have used two or three.
The ornate building is gone, but the old
Pool shooters have second-storey memories
Of stone creatures staring down Market Street,
Protecting the green-felt-covered tables
Lighted by lamps in a chalk-dust haze
Conducive to tales of Atlantic City.
You sat in high-chairs made for men watching
Nine-ball, a game starting in a diamond
Configuration's shattered positions,
Ending with the solid tap of cue to ball
Then a secondary click, the nine-ball
Rolling white-gold-white over the green table
Toward the pocket; and in the last sound
Of the ball draining from pocket to bin
Was summarized all the dissipation
Of despair, the exaltation of hope.
The cardinal dimension was head
Over heart. I think gargoyles *were* watching
Outside. The place is a parking lot now,
The Fire-Chief's headquarters comes down next year.

—LAWRENCE DUGAN

Film

Is Sex Necessary?

ROSS DOUTHAT

OF all the possible career moves for a rising movie star, or the possible critical-commercial sweet spots for a filmmaker, I'm not sure that "male-stripper movie" would have occurred to many people before 2012, when Channing Tatum and Steven Soderbergh delivered *Magic Mike*. But once they did, the idea seemed so obvious: In one fell swoop, they breathed new life into Hollywood's ancient "stripper with a heart of . . ." clichés, offered female moviegoers the chance to experience the fun of a male revue with a bigger hunk in a far less seedy venue, and let the critics speckle their reviews with commentary about masculinity, class, gender roles, capitalism, the body, the whole Left-academic list.

Of course, to pull off this trifecta the movie itself had to be at least okay, which is pretty much how I'd describe the original *Magic Mike*. Based loosely on Tatum's own college-age experience as an exotic dancer, it had the novelty of shirtless-male dance moves, a gleeful echt-Matthew McConaughey performance that helped launch the larger McConnaissance, and a plausible seediness to its Tampa locale, which Soderbergh amplified by filming the outdoors through an orange-ish lens, like a spray-tan on the world.

It also had a fairly conventional arc, in which the stripping world was presented as fun initially but ultimately a twilit, gonowhere, drug-rife trap. Tatum's Mike, the king of the McConaughey-managed Kings of Tampa, spends the movie saving to start his own designer-furniture business and wooing the sister of his stage-mate Adam (Alex Pettyfer), whom he's initiated into the business. The sister likes Mike but not his work, and particularly hates that he's gotten her brother mixed up in it. When Adam lands in drug-related trouble and Mike has to save him, it's clear that she was right, and that we should be rooting for our protagonist to leave the stage behind.



The cast of *Magic Mike XXL*

That ending seemed to make a sequel tricky, but this summer's *Magic Mike XXL*, which brings back Tatum but not McConaughey or Pettyfer, has an interesting solution: It deliberately rejects the (very) soft moralism of the first film, devoting itself instead to celebrating the sheer awesomeness of male exotic dancing and the great gift to women that—if he dances authentically and truthfully—a male stripper can provide.

When the movie picks up, Mike has his furniture business but Adam's sister has dumped him, the work is grinding, and he finds himself doing dance moves in his workshop. So when his old stage buddies summon him for One Last Trip—to a stripper convention in Charleston, where else?—he naturally goes along for the ride.

And that ride is all there is to the film—with stops at a drag-queen show, a beach party (where Mike meets a kind of soulmate, played by Amber Heard, who's trying to trade "the pole" for photography), a swanky "ladies' club" run by Mike's old flame Rome (Jada Pinkett Smith), and a suburban mansion where a gaggle of southern divorcees, led by Andie MacDowell, get soused, dish about sex in marriage (guess what: *it's terrible*), and then avail themselves of certain services from their gentlemen callers.

Then, the climax: a show in Charleston, emceed by Rome, in which our men finally perform acts that they've dreamed up themselves—no longer imprisoned by boring cops-and-firemen tropes, and finally free to be not just strippers but *male entertainers*.

From this description it will not surprise you to learn that *Magic Mike XXL* is not particularly good. Tatum mails it in, Heard's character is a drip, and only the comic pathos of Joe Manganiello's studly stripper Richie, well-endowed and insecure, provides any kind of human drama amid all the preens and pelvic thrusts.

But the sequel has its fans; the reviews have been weaker than for *Magic Mike* but

not half bad, and if you read the two films as competing ideological statements about sex, the praise for the latter is somewhat understandable. The sequel is a more "sex-positive" movie than its predecessor, with more emphasis on pleasure for pleasure's sake and fewer strings attached: As *Slate*'s Aisha Harris argues, *XXL* caters more directly than the original to female lust, with stripping scenes that are more lascivious and lingered-over and with a narrative (such as it is) that spends a lot more time emphasizing what the "queens" in the audience are getting out of these performances.

And though there is still a darkness lurking in the background, it comes to the fore only once—when the oldest male stripper, a hulk played by Kevin Nash, tells MacDowell's bitter divorcée that he envies her the chance to even have a family, one that's passed him by. But that's a note the movie never strikes again; indeed, *XXL* deliberately eschews any kind of coda, lest we start thinking too hard about where its "male entertainers" go from here.

In this sense, the *Magic Mike* franchise represents an interesting case study in a permissive culture's ongoing wrestle with what limits, if any, the pursuit of pleasure ought to have. In the original movie's vision, pure hedonism is a temporary state, fun when you're young but dangerous if you linger there too long. But in the vision of *XXL*, it's something less risky and more essential, an oxygen that needs to be available to everyone at every time, irrespective of age or sex or situation.

Lots of modern entertainments flip back and forth between these perspectives (*Sex and the City* was a good example), because the modern mind flips back and forth between them—unable to decide whether Mike's magic is just a glamour to be flirted with, or a dream to be chased your whole life long.

NR

Trump the Temp

“LIKE people that weren’t captured.” That’s what Donald Trump had to say about John McCain in the course of telling Iowans that he didn’t consider the Arizona senator—and Platinum Club Card holder at the Hanoi Hilton—to be a war hero.

Klutzy McCain, puttering around the skies over Hanoi in his A-4 Skyhawk, managed to get his dumb ass shot down by a Soviet-made surface-to-air missile in October 1967. The bozo landed in a lake downtown, and would you believe he couldn’t even use his one non-broken limb to hop away from the NVA irregulars who dragged him out of the water, beat and bayoneted him, and sent him to die in a cage?

Trump, wily Trump, wise Trump, would never let himself be taken alive by Victor Charlie.

Oh, sure, there were a few close calls. We’ve all heard the story of how Trump, after his fourth deferment, came within 8,000 miles of enemy fire before his dad’s limo swerved at the last moment into the office of the doctor who would declare Trump unfit for military service. A chronic follicular condition, you see, the ravages of which Trump wears to this day. Unlike McCain, Trump made it through the fall of Saigon with the physical ability to lift his arms high enough above his head to comb his hair. But at what price? At what price?

Seriously, folks. Quicker than you can say “gilded toilet,” Trump is sucking the most talented GOP presidential field in a generation down the gaping event horizon that is his *yuge* mouth. As I type these words, he’s on TV delivering an extended improvisational jag against fellow Republican Lindsey Graham—in South Carolina, no less—and what’s that? Oh, yes! Trump just read Graham’s cellphone number aloud to the crowd! I repeat, he just read Graham’s personal cellphone number aloud to the crowd! Now *that’s* television.

What explains Trump’s comfortable spot (for now) atop just about every GOP-primary poll?

It ain’t his positions on the issues. As has been reported by the right-leaning press—hoarsely and to no avail—Trump was (is?) a universal-health-care-backing, pro-choice, eminent-domain-abusing admirer of Nancy Pelosi, and should he and Hillary Clinton win their respective primaries, it would mark the first time the nominee of one party was a major campaign contributor to the nominee of the other.

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But to a corpuscular core of voters, Trump’s appeal is all but information-proof. And don’t I know it. Back in my days at NR, junior staff had to draw straws to determine who’d write that year’s “FOR THE LOVE OF GOD, TRUMP IS NOT A CONSERVATIVE, PEOPLE” piece, and I drew short more than once. Those pieces usually mustered equal measures of relief and indignity from readers, as I’m sure this one will.

And yes, there’s something to the idea that Trump is drawing from the same restless, grumpy, populist well that the spittle-flecked Bernie Sanders is. Trump’s campaign is only slightly less *ressentiment*-driven than Sanders’s, and only slightly more xenophobic. On the latter, it’s true that Trump’s moment began in earnest when, because he is a bumbling buffoon, he let the nub of a good point about the nexus between crime and illegal immigration spiral into an overbroad condemnation of Mexicans as rapists and hoods. Doubling down on that in the face of significant pushback from sponsors and business associates has earned Trump the loyalty not only of hard-line restrictionists but also of anyone sufficiently fed up with politicians’ ducking and weaving on immigration.

The cheers for Trump for saying things other politicians won’t say—even when they’re also things politicians *shouldn’t* say—gets me to my pet theory about the deep roots of Trump’s (probably, pretty much almost certainly, I’m mostly convinced) temporary moment in the sun: His supporters are just effing with us.

Seriously. There has always been an element of what the kids call “trolling” in early GOP-primary polls, a sense that voters are expressing not just disgust with particular “establishment” darlings or “next man up” candidates but also with the political process itself. I won’t name the one-time front-running GOP candidates who are unfit to run an Arby’s, because you know who they are and I don’t want to pick any more fights than I have to. But surely you felt at the time, as I did, that their supporters were keying in answers to robo-dialed telephone polls with their middle fingers.

Again, this is to be distinguished from the well-worn idea that GOP primary voters support fringy candidates to spook Reince Priebus and his merry band of RINOs into funding True Conservatives. No, my idea is that Trump voters are telling us that the government in Washington has become so lurid, imperious, and absurd that only a lurid, imperious, and absurd candidate will do.

Come to think of it, Trump’s mastery of bankruptcy proceedings doesn’t hurt his cause, either.

NR

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