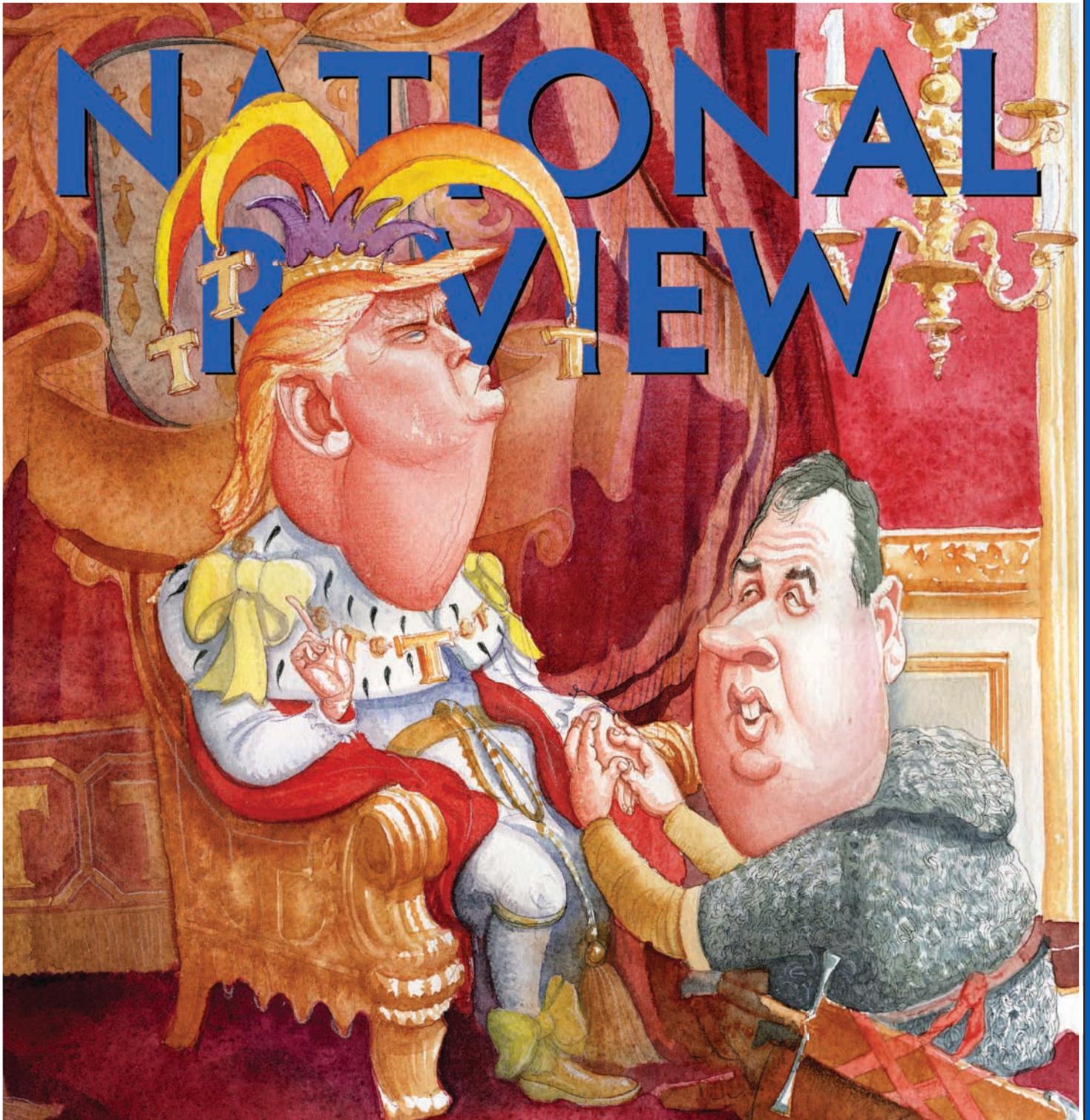


NATIONAL REVIEW



The Clown Prince

DONALD TRUMP & THE 2016 RACE

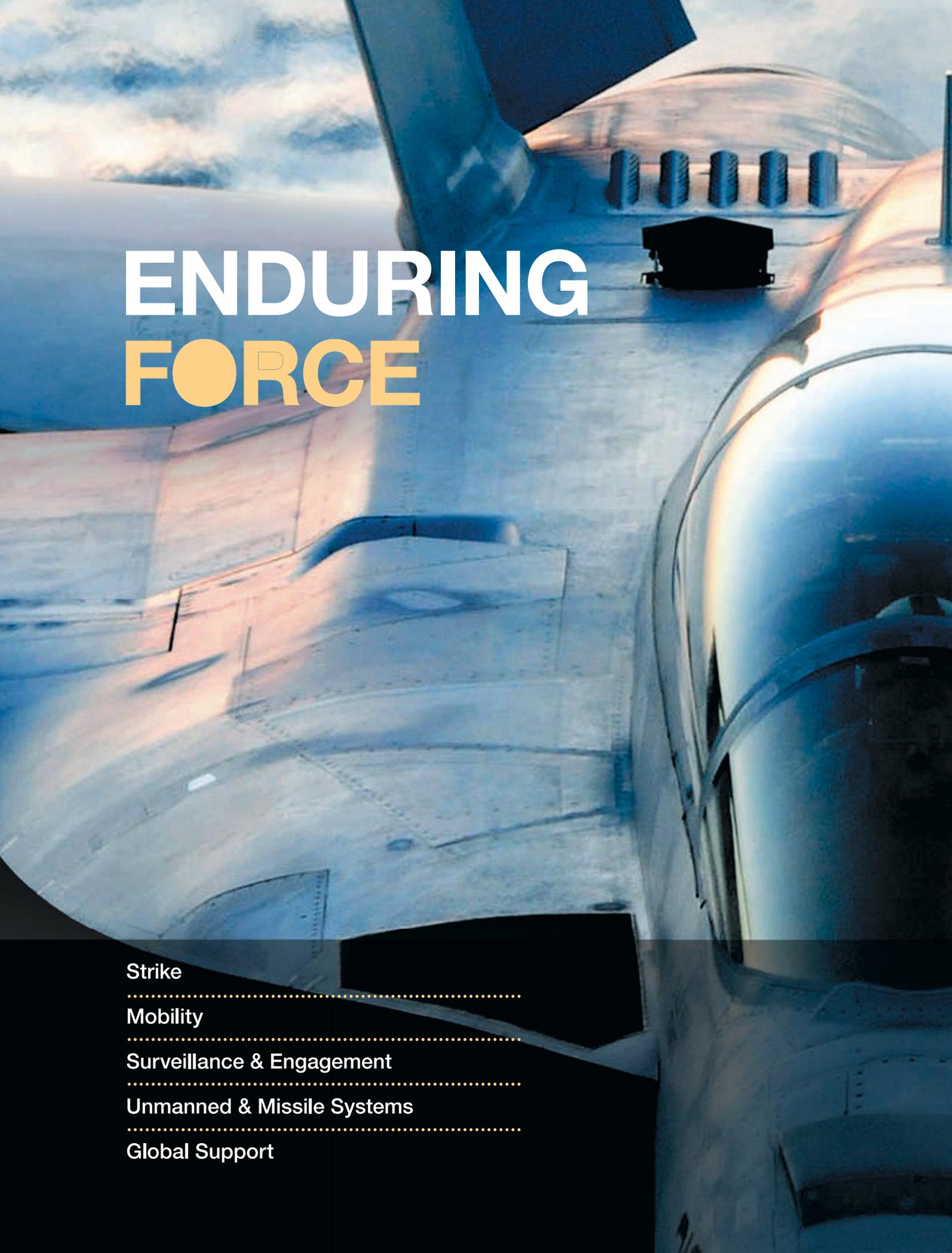
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The Father-Führer

The white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump's speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin. What they need isn't analgesics, literal or political. They need real opportunity, which means that they need real change, which means that they need U-Haul. *Kevin D. Williamson*



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NATIONAL REVIEW (ISSN: 0028-0038) is published bi-weekly, except for the first issue in January, by NATIONAL REVIEW, Inc., at 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and additional mailing offices. © National Review, Inc., 2016. Address all editorial mail, manuscripts, letters to the editor, etc., to Editorial Dept., NATIONAL REVIEW, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. Address all subscription mail orders, changes of address, undeliverable copies, etc., to NATIONAL REVIEW, Circulation Dept., P. O. Box 433015, Palm Coast, Fla. 32143-3015; phone, 386-246-0118, Monday-Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 10:30 P.M. Eastern time. Adjustment requests should be accompanied by a current mailing label or facsimile. Direct classified advertising inquiries to: Classifieds Dept., NATIONAL REVIEW, 215 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016 or call 212-679-7330. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to NATIONAL REVIEW, Circulation Dept., P. O. Box 433015, Palm Coast, Fla. 32143-3015. Printed in the U.S.A. RATES: \$59.00 a year (24 issues). Add \$21.50 for Canada and other foreign subscriptions, per year. (All payments in U.S. currency.) The editors cannot be responsible for unsolicited manuscripts or artwork unless return postage or, better, a stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed. Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the editors.

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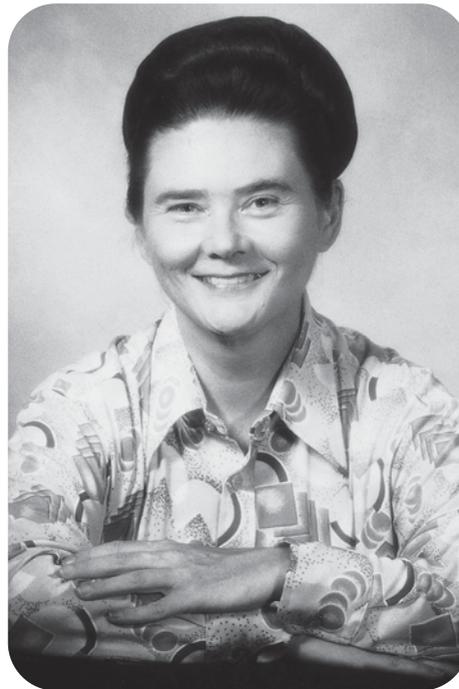
Brian and Deborah Murdock

Peter J. Travers



My Friend Florence

I'd like to express my thanks to John O'Sullivan for his honest and insightful tribute to my dear old friend Florence King, who died recently after a long and glorious career as a writer in varied genres ("More than a 'Misanthrope,'" February 15). Hard as it is to believe, Florence and I first met 60 years ago at the University of Mississippi, where she was studying history and I was working on a Ph.D. in English. Among a large percentage of graduate students who were radicals of one kind or another, Florence and I soon found each other and recognized a fellow conservative. That kinship of spirit served as the bond for our six-decade-long friendship.



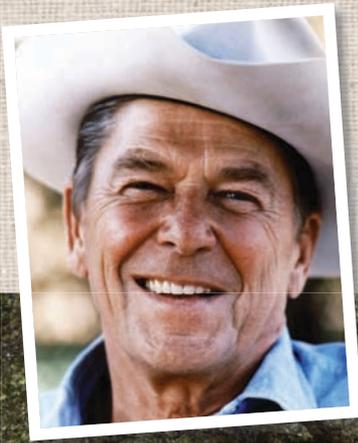
Florence Virginia King, 1936–2016

I delighted all those years in her books—hilarious, but also perceptive and truthful—and her NATIONAL REVIEW columns. Best of all, I cherish the many letters she wrote to me, all of which I have saved, reread often, and shared with like-minded conservative friends. In the last couple of years, we commiserated with each other on the pains and losses inherent in old age. Both of us were only children in our families who had chosen to spend our lives alone—without regret—depending upon ourselves for spiritual and emotional support.

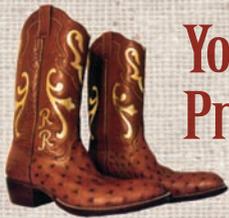
These letters were atypical, concerned as they were with morose topics, but even in the midst of discussing such problems, Florence's incomparable sense of humor never failed, and in the very last of those brilliant letters, she told me that she was ready to leave this life but hoped to remain long enough to "find out what is going to happen on *Downton Abbey*." I received notification of her death minutes before the first episode of the last season of that series began. Alas, Florence missed it. Rest in peace, my dear old friend. "When comes such another?"

*Kenneth Holditch
New Orleans, La.*

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



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The Week

■ We wish Trump talked this much about the size of his government.

■ Did the Founding Fathers talk about penises come election time? Pretty close, actually. Thomas Jefferson's 1804 reelection was enlivened by a print titled "A Philosophic Cock," which showed Jefferson as a rooster standing alongside a black hen representing his alleged slave mistress Sally Hemings. "Cock" then had the multiple meanings it has today. But of course Jefferson himself did not publicly promote or discuss this print. So Donald Trump has, where vulgarity is concerned, brought American politics to a new low. In other ways, however, our politics is still notably clean, hard though that may be to believe. No one is killed in duels (Alexander Hamilton), no one is beaten on the floor of the Senate (Charles Sumner), and no one is running from a jail cell (James Michael Curley). N.B. to Hillary: Curley won, so chin up.

■ Mitt Romney, the GOP's 2012 nominee, blasted Trump, the GOP's 2016 front-runner, in a jeremiad at the University of Utah that was mild and grave in manner, sulfurous in content. It began with Trump's policy shortfalls, domestic and foreign: his refusal to address the entitlement debt load, his reckless talk of trade wars, a fondness for Putin matched only by a contempt for George W. Bush. Romney then reviewed Trump's business failures—the eponymous "University," Airlines, Magazine, Vodka, and Steaks—and his failures of character: "the bullying, the greed, the showing off, the misogyny, the third-grade theatrics." (In a deft touch, Romney asked his listeners to watch how Trump "responds to my speech." Trump responded—like a third-grader.) Finally, Romney warned that Trump's tax returns, hitherto as secret as Masonic rituals, would if released produce "bombshells": "I predict that he doesn't give much, if anything, to the disabled and to our veterans." Romney courted Trump's support four years ago—before his recent egregious blunders (e.g., pretending ignorance of David Duke) but long after his pattern of bluster and failure was notorious. Romney acknowledged this in a tweet after his speech, but should have done so in the speech itself. That aside, it was a sterling performance: solid, impressive, selfless.

■ New Jersey governor Chris Christie began his presidential campaign in the spring of 2015 by proposing to tackle entitlements, including Social Security. "How can anyone have a serious national conversation about the future of our country," he asked radio host Hugh Hewitt, "and not discuss this issue?" Christie has ended his campaign, almost a year later, by endorsing Donald Trump, whose solution to our looming Social Security burden is to root out "waste, fraud, and abuse" (in other words, he has no solution at all). For every winner in politics there is at least one loser; and losers, from weariness or spite,



sometimes endorse unsatisfactory rivals. Yet to betray a signature issue so dramatically is rare. A sad finis for a politician who was once energetic, combative, and smart.

■ Jeff Sessions is the most high-profile and effective immigration hawk in Congress, and yet he has thrown in with a man whose hiring practices he should abhor. Trump uses H-2B visas to fill positions at his Mar-a-Lago Club with foreign workers and has justified it by saying there are jobs that Americans won't do (although a goodly proportion of the American population worked as waiters or waitresses at some point in their lives). Despite his reputation as an über-hawk on immigration, Trump supports what is in effect a "touch-back" amnesty on steroids (he'll deport every illegal immigrant, then bring the terrific ones back), and he has no idea what his position on legal immigration is supposed to be. Twice now during debates he has contradicted his written position by saying he supports more high-skilled visas, forcing his staff to clean it up afterwards. It isn't surprising that Trump is playing people on immigration; we just never expected Jeff Sessions to be among the gullible.

■ Since the mid Sixties, public figures have been considered libeled only when they can prove that they have been the victims of actual malice—falsehoods that were known to be untrue when they were published, or that were published with reckless disregard for their truth or falsity. Trump wants to change all that. At a rally in Fort Worth, he promised "to open up those libel laws." When the press "writes a hit piece, we can sue them and win money. . . . You see, with me, they [won't be] protected, because I'm not like other people. . . . We're

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going to have people sue you like you've never got sued before." Trump is such an Old Faithful of heedless promises and insults that this has gotten lost in the spume. But his vindictive nature—he still seethes over decades-old slights (cf. “short-fingered vulgarian”)—suggests that he spoke from the heart. President Trump could not “open up” libel law at will. But his tenure would be a saturnalia of bellowing, spite, and recrimination.

■ Unable to offer more than a sentence or two about health care at a debate, Trump was pressed on it, and repeated himself. Perhaps embarrassed by this performance, he had his campaign release a health-care plan a few days later. He shouldn't have. The plan suggests that someone around Trump knows only a bit more about health care than he does. It discusses creating tax-advantaged health savings accounts, betraying no knowledge that HSAs have been in the law since 2003. It says that people should be able to buy health policies across state lines only if those policies conform to their state's regulations—which, again, federal law already allows. If earlier Trump-campaign plans on taxes and immigration are any indication, this health-care plan will not affect what the candidate says on the stump or in interviews. In this case that might be a good thing.

■ Trump was talking about the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, and negotiating a deal. “Let me be sort of a neutral guy,” he said. The instinct to be a neutral, or an honest broker, in a dispute may seem laudable. But Americans and others have learned something over a period of almost 70 years: When one side wants to coexist and the other wants to exist alone, neutrality is a fool's errand.

■ The front-runner has a three-point plan for winning the war against ISIS: murder, torture, and atrocities. For months, Trump has insisted that American soldiers should torture terrorists and kill terrorists' families. Moreover, he's repeatedly praised mythical American atrocities (that U.S. troops pacified the Philippines in part by dipping bullets in pig's blood before killing Muslim prisoners). Under fire, he has backed away from explicitly endorsing torture or murder. Instead he now says he wants to “increase the laws” to allow American soldiers to more closely mimic ISIS's tactics, believing that it's only “political correctness” that prevents us from beheading our enemies. Trump doesn't understand the American warrior. The American military would defy orders to target innocent women and children. Like the law, honor is a concept Trump can't comprehend.

■ Over the years, Trump has been consistent in his admiration of strength—strength of a certain kind. In 1990, he was interviewed by *Playboy*. He said he was worried about the Soviet Union—or, as he put it, “Russia is out of control, and the leadership knows it. That's my problem with Gorbachev. Not a firm enough hand.” His interviewer said, “You mean, ‘firm hand’ as in China?” Trump answered, “When the students poured into Tiananmen Square, the Chinese government almost blew it. Then they were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength. That shows you the power of strength. Our country is right now perceived as weak . . . as being spit on by the rest of the world.” Trump's admiration of Putin is no surprise.

■ David Duke is a Trump man. The erstwhile Grand Wizard told his followers that a vote for anyone but Trump is “really treason to your heritage.” Louis Farrakhan is not quite a Trump man, but “I like what I'm looking at,” he says. Jews control politics, he says, and Trump has stood up to them. As can be overheard at Trump rallies, *Les beaux esprits se rencontrent*.

■ Senator Ben Sasse of Nebraska has been attracting national conservative notice with thoughtful remarks about the dysfunction of the Senate, the need to restore the separation of powers, and the country's vulnerability to cyberattacks. All of that was praiseworthy, but none of it was risky. In recent months, though, he has also been taking on Donald Trump, even at the risk of losing some Republican support, and he has done so while remaining unaligned with any rival candidate. He argues that Trump has no commitment to constitutional conservatism. Trump has responded by saying that Sasse looks like “a gym rat.” Sasse is the first senator to announce that even if Trump wins the nomination, he will not vote for him in November—instead backing a third-party candidate or writing someone in. (Massachusetts governor Charlie Baker later said the same.) At a time when many Republicans are cozying up to Trump, Sasse deserves credit for taking a stand on principle instead.

■ Ben Carson rose from a difficult childhood to a distinguished career as a neurosurgeon and best-selling author. After a speech at the National Prayer Breakfast excited conservatives nationally, he thought he would try another career—politician—and start at the top, by running for president. But he did not know much about policy or politics, and did not find people to supply his lack. In the weeks before he dropped out, he was unable to answer whether his campaign had become a scam run for his



hangers-on. As a result of his campaign, he will be known by more people for running for a job he had no business seeking than for his genuine accomplishments. A lesson in hubris.

■ Hillary Clinton portrays the probe of her serial transmissions of classified information by private e-mail as a mere “security inquiry” focused on her private server, not on her. That story crumbled when the Justice Department conferred immunity from prosecution on the aide who set up the “home-brew” system. Longtime Clinton fixer Bryan Pagliano had asserted his Fifth Amendment privilege against self-incrimination to avoid testifying before the House Benghazi committee about enabling Clinton to conduct State Department business by private e-mail. The immunity grant is significant. It confirms that the probe is a criminal investigation to which the FBI has dedicated robust resources. It means there is Justice Department buy-in: Only its lawyers are au-

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thorized to confer immunity, so obviously the FBI is working in tandem with prosecutors. This is important because, no matter how strong a case the FBI assembles, only the Justice Department can convene a grand jury and propose an indictment. Federal law clearly prohibits the unauthorized storage and dissemination of classified information, and government officials (such as former CIA director David Petraeus) are prosecuted for violations. Over 2,000 e-mails containing

classified information passed through Clinton's non-secure server. The case is serious, as is the damage likely done to national security.

■ Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, the whitest red you'll ever see, declared during a Democratic debate: "When you're white. . . you don't know what it's like to be poor." This is an odd thing to hear from a senator from Vermont, which is 95 per-

We Ignore the Debt at Our Peril

WRITING in this space five years ago, I made the controversial prediction that the rating of U.S. government debt would soon be downgraded. In August of that year, Standard & Poor's duly obliged. I revisited the topic in November 2011 and argued that the U.S. would probably not regain its stain-free AAA rating anytime soon: The history of downgrades is that they endure. At this writing, the U.S. has yet to regain that rating.

Today, we are deep into a presidential election, and no candidate of either major party has made much of the national debt. Bernie Sanders has proposed perhaps \$20 trillion in new spending and Mrs. Clinton has suggested a good deal of her own, while the Republicans have tended to emphasize tax reductions. Chris Christie was the candidate who focused most on the debt, offering an ambitious Social Security reform.

Is it right to ignore the debt? Have the fiscal-policy developments of the past few years fixed the problem?

Not so long ago, the Greek economy was in free fall, Greeks were rioting in the streets, and Germans were ponying up billions to bail them out. We have seen what a debt crisis looks like. Our politicians assume that it can't happen here, and that debt reduction is not urgent. But this could be a big mistake.

Many accounts date the origins of the Greek debt crisis to December 2009. According to the World Bank, the ratio of Greek-government debt to GDP in 2009, the last year before the crisis unfolded, was 133.2. The Greeks could have handed over their entire GDP for the year to creditors and still been short. Let's take that 133 percent ratio as a cliff to avoid.

As the chart shows, the U.S. might be closer to the brink than mainstream forecasts tend to imply. It represents, under different economic scenarios, the ratio of U.S.-government debt held by the public to GDP.

Extrapolating from the Congressional Budget Office's long-term budget projections, which include many rosy-scenario assumptions, we won't look like Greece for about 40 years. That's not very comforting—yet it is also optimistic.

The CBO assumes that things will be smooth and pleasant. But what if there were another business-cycle contraction on par with the Great Recession? If, based on the debt-to-GDP increase experienced by the U.S.

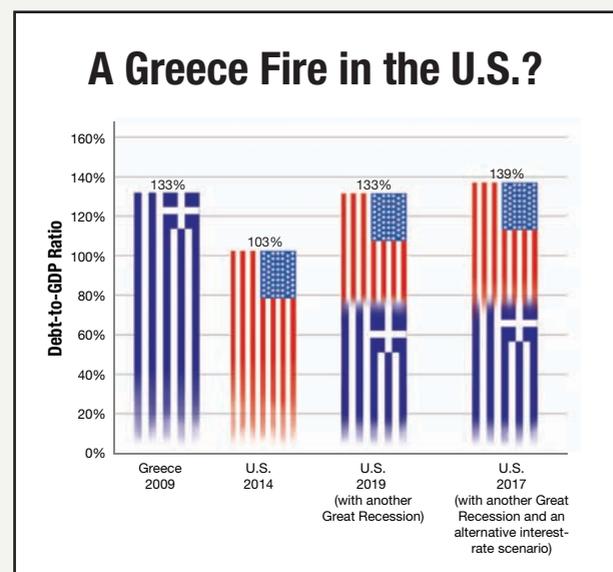
during that recession, one gauges the added increase in government debt that would occur under a similar downturn, then the ratio would reach the 133 percent threshold by 2019.

Imagine instead that there were a doubling of interest rates along with another Great Recession—a scenario that does not seem too unlikely, given that a rise in interest rates engineered by an inflation-wary Fed would probably precede a contraction in the business cycle. In that case, as the chart shows, the U.S. debt-to-GDP ratio would surpass 133 percent by 2017.

Many turn to the comfort of baseline forecasts such as the CBO's when assessing the fiscal future of the United States. But the possibility of another recession or an upward rise in interest rates certainly cannot be ruled out. Even the less rosy mainstream forecasts tend to assume that there will be no business-cycle shocks and no upward surges in interest rates.

If our banks are required to survive "stress tests" that envision reasonable downside scenarios, our government should have to survive them, too. Today's government fails, and that by a large margin.

—KEVIN A. HASSETT



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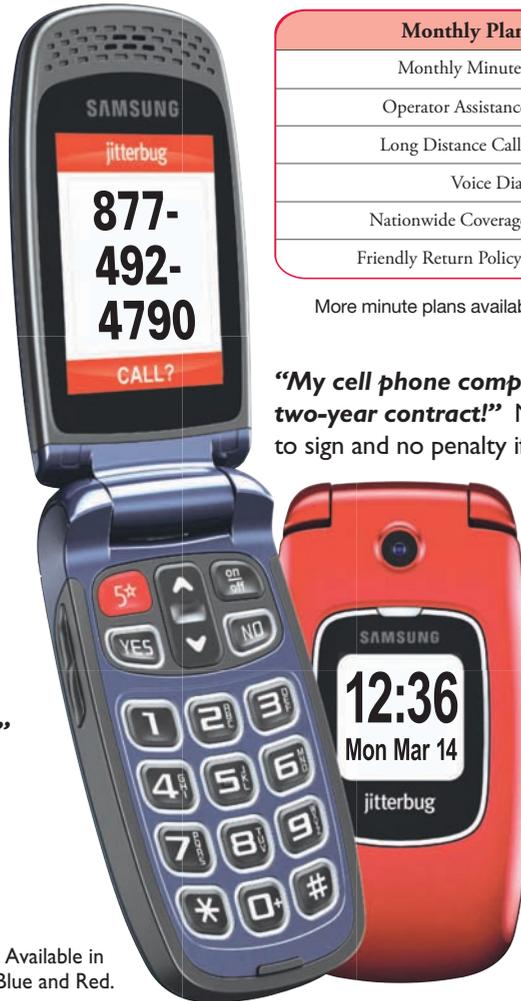
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cent white with a poverty rate of 12 percent. (In Vermont, you're ten times as likely to be poor as you are to be black.) Next door in Maine, the population is slightly whiter and even poorer. The poorest county in the United States, in eastern Kentucky, is almost exclusively white. White people don't know what it's like to be poor, Senator Sanders? They sure will when you're president.

■ In the Illinois senate in the 1990s, Barack Obama fought efforts to protect the right to life of infants who survived abortion. He carried his bone-chilling record on abortion with him to the White House. When the University of Notre Dame invited him to give its commencement address in 2009, its public-relations people tried to soften the offense by suggesting that he was being twinned with Mary Ann Glendon, the eloquently pro-life law professor to whom Notre Dame was presenting its annual Laetare Medal, "in recognition of outstanding service to the Church and society." Recognizing how she was being used, Glendon declined the award. This year, Notre Dame is making

say about the real-world consequences of a Trumpian trade policy: nothing to say about retaliatory tariffs on our exporters, or about the effect of our own tariffs on American manufacturers who buy inputs from China. It's most persuasive about the negative effect of trade on particular communities, which nobody had ever doubted. Free-traders sometimes sound unworldly, even utopian. But letting people buy and sell abroad without interference from the government is better than the available alternatives.

■ The city of Flint, Mich., was for generations ruled by an incompetent and often corrupt Democratic machine. When the city went into an extended financial crisis, a Democratic emergency manager was appointed to reform its finances. The city's Democratic leadership decided to build an expensive new water system as an economy-stimulating infrastructure project, which annoyed the Democrats in nearby Detroit, who had been earning a nice income providing Flint with Detroit's finest tap water. The Detroit Democrats retaliated against the Flint Democrats by

Letting people buy and sell abroad without interference from the government is better than the available alternatives.

a similar play, giving the Laetare Medal to that odd couple Joe Biden and John Boehner, a Democrat and a Republican. Both are Catholic, at least nominally. They have the same initials. One expressly opposes the Church's clear teaching on the sanctity of life. The other supports it. Here is a riddle: When is the recipient of an honor too honorable to accept it?

■ The Supreme Court heard arguments about abortion regulations in Texas. The abortion lobby is claiming that regulations ostensibly designed to protect patients' safety are imposing an "undue burden" on the right to abortion. The four most liberal justices are likely to vote against any abortion regulations, and Justice Kennedy might vote with them. Two considerations that may and should sway him the other way: States have wide latitude to make their own decisions concerning how to protect public health free of second-guessing from federal courts; and the record of the case does not even establish that the law has caused abortionists to close their businesses. The Court might well send this case back to lower courts for fact-finding. Ideally, what it would do is admit that the Constitution allows legislatures to burden the right to abortion or even refuse to agree that it exists.

■ Protectionists have been riding high in American politics, and in recent months they have acquired a tiny bit of intellectual respectability too. A much-discussed academic paper has concluded that trade with China has depressed many American labor markets without leading to net job growth overall. So should we impose 45 percent tariffs on China to make America great again? Not so fast. It's one paper; it lacks a plausible account of why trade would reduce employment on net; and it suggests that the shock to American markets created by Chinese trade is already over. Most important, it has nothing to

ending their aqueous relationship earlier than planned, and the Flint Democrats turned to an alternative source of water, the Flint River, as a temporary measure. The Democrats who run Flint's government consulted with the Democratic union men who run its city agencies and came up with a water-treatment process for that Flint River water, which turned out to be ineffective. The residents of Flint, including its vulnerable children, were exposed to high levels of lead in the water as a result. The Democrats who run Barack Obama's Environmental Protection Agency learned of this, and did nothing. This sent the Democrats running for that party's presidential nomination into a tizzy of moral intoxication, during which they called for the resignation of . . . the Republican governor of Michigan.

■ Residents of high-crime neighborhoods in New York City complain to police most about public disorder, not violent felonies. When he assumed office as police commissioner under Mayor Rudy Giuliani in 1994, William Bratton instituted "broken-windows" policing, to ensure public order and, in the process, also public safety, as the same criminal often commits offenses against both. Recently Manhattan district attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. announced that his office and the New York City Police Department will focus on "serious crimes"—that is, no longer will such offenses as drinking or urinating on the street lead to arrest and an appearance before a judge and prosecutor. At most, the offender will be handed a summons, but arrested criminals already have a high rate of evading warrants; they are less likely to comply with the law when it means paying fines for quality-of-life offenses. Mayor Bill de Blasio has said he envisions the other boroughs following Manhattan's lead and discontinuing broken-windows policing. The cost will be borne by the whole city, eventually, but by its poorest, highest-crime neighborhoods first.

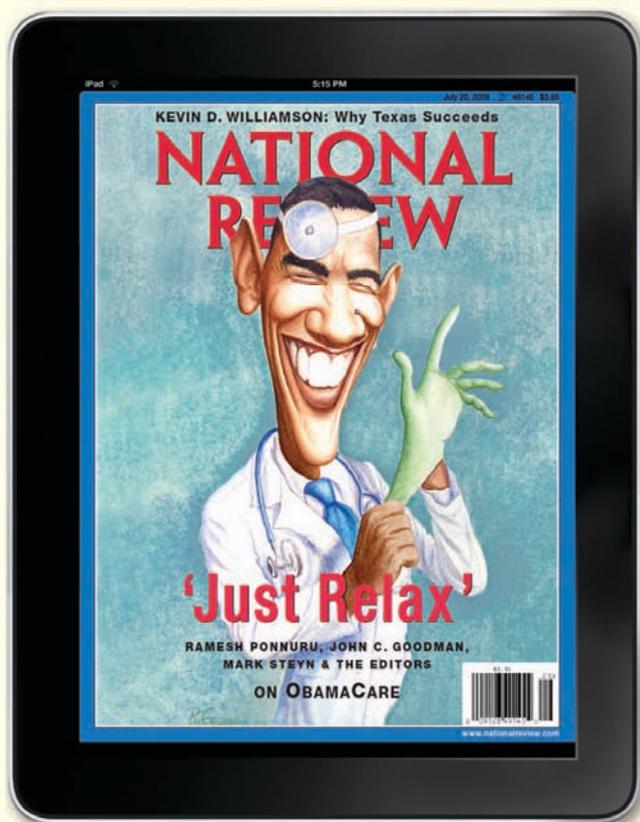
■ California’s remarkably partisan attorney general, Kamala Harris, is seeking a Senate seat. She wants to be the new Barbara Boxer, but she’s shaping up to be the new Lois Lerner, using the state’s tax law to harass conservative activist groups, in this case the Americans for Prosperity Foundation. IRS rules require some nonprofits, AFP Foundation among them, to disclose major donors; those disclosures are supposed to be kept private by the IRS, but Barack Obama’s politicized tax agency has failed on that count. Nonprofits also register with the state of California, and Harris has demanded that the AFP Foundation turn over its donor list. Why? Ask the people at the National Organization for Marriage, whose donor information was illegally leaked by the IRS to facilitate retribution against and harassment of its supporters. Harris is engaged in straight-up political bullying here, and should be stopped. The AFP Foundation has taken its case to court, and it deserves to prevail.

■ The University of Missouri has fired Melissa Click—finally. The professor of communications in the school’s prestigious journalism school earned national attention, ironically, for clamping down on student journalists trying to record protests at the university in November. Click was caught on camera requesting that protesters employ “muscle” against their peer, and she pushed a reporter herself. Academia has its perks, though: For criminally assaulting a student, Click received a few hours of community service—not to mention the full-throated support of 115 colleagues, who signed a letter on her behalf. Whether the administration suddenly grew a spine or is operating out of self-interest—applications and donations to the school have plummeted—is unclear, but we’ll soon find

out: The American Association of University Professors has announced a formal investigation into Click’s firing, citing “academic freedom” concerns. Nonsense. Neither the First Amendment nor the most expansive interpretation of academic freedom grants professors the right to assault students. There used to be schools that taught such things.

■ Calling “participation in academic and athletic competitions” at public schools a “privilege,” Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe vetoed a bill that would have let home-schooled families take part. Privilege? They paid for that soccer field, Mr. McAuliffe.

■ “Cessation of hostilities” is the agreed phrase for the momentary suspension of the all-in political wrestling in Syria, and it is not to be confused with “truce,” even less with “cease-fire.” An outright winner from the protracted civil war, Russian president Vladimir Putin has taken control of the agenda by rescuing Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and in return obtaining new and better bases in the country. He can now afford to be magnanimous, while also continuing sporadically to bomb the Islamists. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan works to extend hostilities and overthrow Assad, but lacks the means and is further distracted by the migration crisis in the neighborhood. An international diplomatic meeting is on the horizon, with the purpose of extending the cessation of hostilities. President Obama has already signposted its likely failure, saying, “There’s no alternative to a managed transition away from Assad.” Who is to do this managing and transitioning must be a White House secret. Secretary of State John Kerry



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whistles even louder in the wind: “The potential is there that Syria will be utterly destroyed.” But it is already, and so utterly that it will not be restored for many years, if ever.

■ The Dutch have discovered a cure for autism: murder. Dutch law first was changed to accommodate “physician-assisted suicide”—i.e., medical euthanasia—for patients with severe conditions some years ago, and, as it turns out, some slopes are slippery: The Dutch soon decided that those suffering from psychiatric problems could be put down like unwanted pets, too, and now are eliminating those who have no diagnosed medical condition whatsoever save autism. Dutch law requires that patients seeking to be put to death do so after sober and careful consideration—a condition that people suffering serious mental problems cannot reasonably be said to have met. Now unhappy people from abroad are traveling to the Netherlands to be killed. Canada is on the same decline, its supreme court having “discovered” a new right, as our own so often does, this time to physician-inflicted death. When a mentally ill person says that he wants to die, the proper response is treatment, not “Does your insurance cover hemlock?”

■ Chris Rock, the host of this year’s Academy Awards broadcast, faced a nearly impossible task: Don’t ignore the dearth of black nominees, and the resulting boycott, but don’t focus on it exclusively; be edgy but don’t alienate whites, blacks, or anyone else; be political in a safe, NPR-ish way; and, of course, be funny in the bargain. He almost succeeded. The only real false note, which seemed tacked on as a nod to #BlackLivesMatter, was: “This year, in the In Memoriam package, it’s just going to be black people that were shot by the cops on their way to the movies.” As it happened, the day before Rock hosted the Oscars, Woodbridge, Va., police officer Ashley Guindon was shot dead on her first day on the force, ambushed while responding to a domestic dispute. This is the reality that police officers face every day, and one that the dominant rhetoric of our era obscures.

■ Melissa Harris-Perry and MSNBC, the network that hosted her weekend race-talk show, parted ways with a vengeance in February. Harris-Perry became enraged after she was preempted multiple times for election coverage. She penned and made public an e-mail to her staff declaring that she refused to be a “token, mammy, or little brown bobble head,” that she had been “silenced,” and that her show had been effectively canceled. MSNBC executives responded that it had not been, but that her public tantrum ensured that it would be. Perry, who is also a professor at Wake Forest University, declared that her treatment had been “evil” and “cruel” and had “strong racial implications.” (One of Perry’s more notable contributions to discussions of race in America was a 2013 segment in which she and her guests mocked Mitt Romney for having an adopted black grandchild.) The show had “deserved a proper burial,” Harris-Perry complained to the *New York Times* in a post-mortem interview. We’d say it got one.

■ Whole Foods Market is an upscale grocery chain scrupulous about ensuring that the goods it offers are organic, sustainably grown, locally sourced, and otherwise unexceptionable to its Prius-driving customers, who can be quite exacting. The latest controversy occurred when the company began selling peeled

oranges in plastic containers. An environment-minded shopper sent out a photograph of one with a sarcastic tweet (“if only nature would find a way to cover these oranges”); the arugula-is-political crowd erupted in predictable fury; and the company instantly caved, vowing never to violate Mother Nature so brutally again. Never mind that Whole Foods composts its orange peels, while an orange peeled in someone’s office is likely to become solid waste; never mind that Whole Foods, like most stores, routinely sells other fruits in plastic containers; and never mind that some people genuinely prize the convenience of naked oranges, or may not even be physically able to peel them. The forces of virtue have won another battle, and Whole Foods oranges will stay forever green.

■ After 18 NFL seasons, Denver Broncos quarterback Peyton Manning is hanging it up. Fresh off his second Super Bowl championship (he won with the Indianapolis Colts in 2006–07), “The Sheriff” finishes as the only quarterback with more than 200 wins, a five-time NFL MVP, and the league’s all-time leader in passing yards (71,940) and touchdown passes (539). Manning’s career, marred by injury and disappointment at the turn of the decade, culminated in a final ride to the top—this time as his team’s wily veteran and supporting second banana to the Broncos’ championship-caliber defense. He will be remembered as the consummate professional, for his iconic “Omaha!” audible calls, and for his epic, 15-year-long rivalry with Tom Brady’s Patriots. “I’ve fought a good fight. I’ve finished my football race, and after 18 years, it’s time,” Manning said as he retired. “God bless all of you, and God bless football.”



■ They called it “the gaze,” the look of adoration that Nancy Reagan invariably cast on Ronald when they were together in public. She cast it because she felt it. Her 52-year marriage was devoted to her charismatic husband, and to smoothing, however possible, his passage from Hollywood to the White House. Ronald Reagan was not the easiest person in the world to live with: genial, humorous, curious, he was also private to the point of inaccessibility. Nancy took his measure, and took him to her heart. Occasionally she became a target for his enemies. Liberals harped on her taste, as first lady, for fine clothes and fine things, although after the studied poor-mouthing of the Carter years, the White House badly need an injection of glamour. And journalists jeered when it came out that she consulted an astrologer about scheduling presidential trips. Her husband had been shot two months after his first inauguration; she would leave nothing to chance. But America’s judgment of her, as of him, became in time universally positive. “We were fortunate,” said Barack Obama, “to benefit from her proud example and her warm and generous advice.” Dead at 94. R.I.P.

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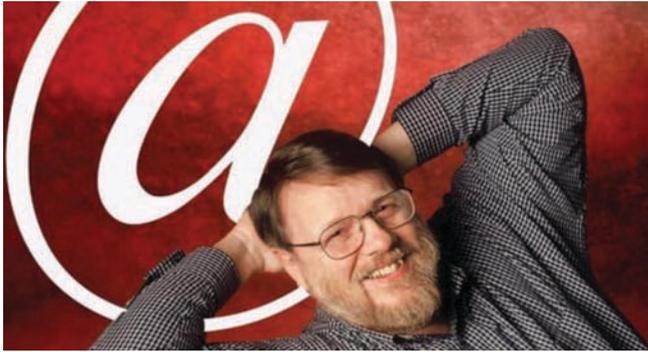
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■ In contrast to the conditions in today’s mayfly-like software industry, after Ray Tomlinson invented our modern system of email in 1971, it was little used except by scientists for two decades. Then it progressed from must-have to taken-for-



granted to *passé* for anyone under 30, raised on texts and clouds and social media. (Now we can wait for 2030s hipsters to revive it.) Tomlinson is sometimes referred to as the inventor of the @ sign, which is an exaggeration; but that sinuous symbol, chosen because it wasn’t being used anywhere else, turned out to be very powerful, allowing not just users sharing time on the same computer to exchange messages, but users of any two computers connected to ARPANET (the Defense Department’s research-sharing network that developed into the Internet). Tomlinson once said that he preferred spelling “email” without the hyphen, and while that is the all-but-universal style today, NR has continued its mission of standing athwart by hyphenating the word—except in this obituary, where we omit the hyphen as a typographical tribute to Raymond Tomlinson, the inventor of email, dead @ 74. R.I.P.

■ One day in 1937, Delmer Berg, then 21, was on his way to work as a dishwasher in a Los Angeles hotel when he spotted a billboard and so found his place in the age of dictators. Having enlisted in the Young Communist League, he was one of the 3,000 or so Americans who volunteered to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fight for the Republic—that is to say, the Left—in the Spanish Civil War. In reality Stalin’s useful idiots, they turned the story of the Brigade into a legend of heroic anti-fascism and idealism. “I didn’t know a damn thing politically, we were just kids,” he was to sum up. In action in some of the major battles, he was wounded and sent home when an Italian bomber hit the building he had been in. The wound persisted for the rest of his life, and so did the mindset: He joined the Communist Party in 1943 and always remained proud to call himself “an unreconstructed Communist.” The last known survivor of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, and truly legendary in this respect, he has died aged 100 in his native California. R.I.P.

2016

Yes, a **Contested Convention** Is Legitimate

FOR the first time in four decades, Republicans face the real possibility of a contested convention. If this came to pass, it would be an unusual circumstance, but the process of selecting a candidate at the convention would be a completely legitimate one, even if the candidate

with a plurality of delegates did not win the nomination at the end of it.

The best way to defeat Donald Trump is for someone to beat him outright and earn a majority of delegates. Especially after his wins in Mississippi and Michigan, that seems unlikely. If Trump is definitely going to be held below 1,237, it probably means John Kasich winning Ohio or Marco Rubio winning Florida or both, in which case the field will stay fractured for the duration.

Even if he falls short of the magic number, Trump will probably enter the convention with a delegate lead and the largest share of the popular vote. That should not cow anyone. The role of the convention is to secure for the party a nominee whom most of the delegates can support. Trump’s failure to arrive with a majority of delegates would reflect the lack of a consensus for his nomination. The delegates will be fulfilling their function if they try to find a candidate most of them can support.

Provided a deal is not struck prior to the first vote, delegates would be free to negotiate toward that end following that vote (and a majority of delegates would work its will by means of voting on the rules governing the convention). What those negotiations would look like is anyone’s guess.

Trump’s backers are sure to cry foul if he does not receive the nomination, and there are, of course, prudential concerns about whether refraining from handing the nomination to the plurality choice will alienate his supporters. But that result would not mean that the nomination had been stolen—merely that Trump had failed to secure it under the rules. It is certainly true that some Trump supporters are deeply committed to him, but not all are. Surely, many are likely to cast their ballots for a non-Trump Republican to avoid ceding the White House to the Democrats.

For now, this is but speculation. If Trump rolls through the winner-take-all states, talk of a contested convention will all be academic, and the real thing will be dramatic for another reason: its spectacle of a badly fractured party hitching its fortunes to a badly flawed nominee who could set the conservative cause back decades.



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Never Trump

Politics and principle alike provide reasons to oppose him

BY RAMESH PONNURU

DONALD TRUMP'S defenders have taken to arguing that his critics are endangering the Republican party. "I'm used to being the moral scold," Bill Bennett told the *Washington Post*, "but Trump is winning fair and square, so why should the nomination be grabbed from him? We've been trying to get white working-class people into the party for a long time. Now they're here in huge numbers because of Trump and we're going to alienate them? I don't get it. Too many people are on their high horse."

Rush Limbaugh, on *Fox News Sunday*, made a similar point:

For the longest time, the Republican party has told us that they can't win with just Republican votes. . . . Donald Trump has put together a coalition. Whether he knows it or not, whether he intended to or not, he's put together a coalition that's exactly what the Republican party says that it needs to win, and yet look [at] what they're

doing. They're trying to get Trump out of the race, because they're not in charge of it.

Bennett's comment blurs the distinction between being on the way to winning the nomination and actually having won it. But the rest of what he's saying, and what Limbaugh is saying, amounts to an argument about electability. The claim is that Trump is bringing many new people into the Republican party, and that rejecting him will drive those people away and thus endanger the Republicans' ability to win the election (and maybe even future elections).

It is a very bold argument, considering that it is made on behalf of the Republican candidate who polls worst against Hillary Clinton. Trump has consistently trailed Clinton in poll averages, while Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, and John Kasich have all come out ahead of her. About three-fifths of

voters tell pollsters that they have an unfavorable view of Trump: another measure suggesting he is significantly less popular than the other Republicans. If Trump is attracting working-class white voters, in other words, apparently he is also repelling more voters of other kinds.

Record levels of voter participation in the Republican contests appear to have impressed some of Trump's fans as evidence of voter enthusiasm for him. Reviewing primary turnout in recent elections, Sean Trende of *RealClearPolitics* concludes that it tends to correlate with close contests among several candidates. It doesn't correlate with a strong performance in the fall: Sometimes low-turnout primaries yield a winning presidential candidate, and sometimes high-turnout ones yield a losing one. The polling tells us more about Trump's potential strength than turnout does.

And Trump has reached this level of unpopularity while enjoying an advantage that he would lack in the fall as the Republican nominee. Until quite recently, he has not been subjected to many attack ads: The other candidates have mostly gone after one another on the air. In the absence of such ads, most voters have, surveys have also shown, been unaware of such controversies as the accusations of fraud against Trump "University."

If Trump were the nominee, the Democrats would spend tens of millions of dollars making sure that everyone knew about this story, and others. And Trump is, again, already unpopular before such an ad campaign.

Many conservatives who oppose Trump have felt it morally imperative to declare that they will never vote for him, even if he wins the Republican nomination. They will vote instead for Hillary Clinton, or for a third-party candidate, or a write-in candidate, or no one at all. In one respect, those declarations have played into Trump's hands. They put the focus on the anti-Trump Republicans' willingness, under the hypothetical condition of a Trump nomination, to take an action that would help Clinton win the presidency. But it's Trump's supporters who are taking actions, real ones in the here and now, that make Clinton's election more likely.

If Trump wins the nomination, the Democrats will likely start running

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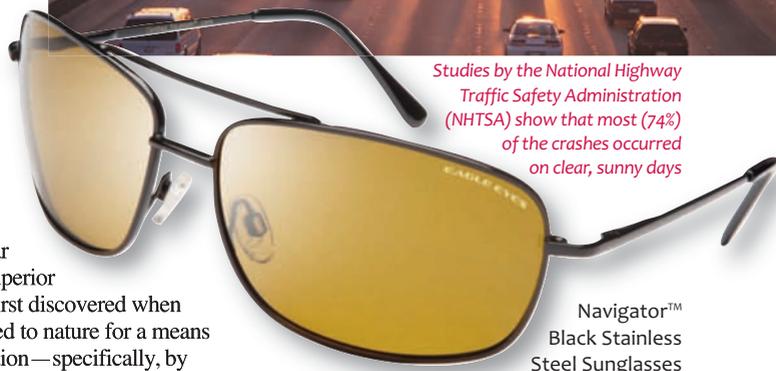
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their ads early in an attempt to put the race away months before November. If Clinton has a durable advantage in the polls for much of the year, Republican turnout will be depressed. And it will be depressed even if Mitt Romney or Erick Erickson or any number of other anti-Trump conservatives announce that in the end they have decided to hold their noses and vote for him.

Trump has said that in the general election he would solicit donations, which he would need to counter the Democratic ads. The less competitive he looks, though, the less likely he will be to get those funds. Maybe it won't be a Goldwater- or McGovern-style wipeout: America may be too polarized for that.

If fighting Trump at the convention fails, then conservative opponents of him will have to consider mounting a **third-party campaign** for president.

But Republicans could lose badly enough to lose races for many other offices too.

Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell has reportedly said that if Trump were the nominee, his colleagues would “drop him like a hot rock” as they campaigned for their own seats—a prospective strategy that assumes that Trump would be as weak in a general election as he appears to be. Senate Republicans might help themselves a little by distancing themselves from a faltering Trump. But they are defending seats in many swing states and mildly Democratic states: Florida, Illinois, New Hampshire, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. A big Republican loss in the presidential election would surely cost them the Senate. It is even possible that Republicans on the ballot in future years will suffer because of a Trump nomination: It could cause many voters to think less of the Republican party even after this election is over.

The electability argument for Trump, even if it were a strong one, would not overcome the man's manifest unfitness for the presidency. But it is not strong at all. His opponents therefore have good moral and political reasons to do what

they can to keep him from winning a plurality of delegates, especially by persuading some of his supporters to leave him.

Failing that, they should try to keep him from converting that plurality into a majority at the Republican convention. Fighting him at the convention would run the risk of alienating many of his supporters, probably to an even greater extent than fighting him in the primaries does. But it would be a risk worth taking. The alternative, giving him the nomination, would run two risks of its own. A defeat pulling down other Republicans would be the most likely outcome; the less likely but still very undesirable one would be the election of a man who, among other things,

casually promises to order troops to commit war crimes.

If fighting Trump at the convention also fails, then conservative opponents of him will have to consider mounting a third-party campaign for president. This would be a more drastic option than a convention fight: It would do even more to increase the likelihood that Clinton would win, and it might sunder the Republican party for good. Trump supporters would feel that they had had a chance to win but had been stabbed in the back.

Then again, they might feel that way even in the absence of a third-party campaign, if enough Republican officials refused to support their party's nominee. And a third-party conservative campaign could help Republican candidates for the House, Senate, and other offices, by giving anti-Trump Republicans a reason to show up to vote.

In the end, though, the most important reason to back a conservative third-party run if Trump gets the nomination is not to affect the outcome of the November elections. It's to demonstrate that conservatism stands for something better than Trump. Which is also a reason to strive to keep him from getting the nomination in the first place. **NR**

Trump's Tent Revival

Evangelicals are supporting the mogul, but far from monolithically

BY DAVID FRENCH

To enter the world of conservative Evangelical pastors and leaders is to enter the world of the shell-shocked. It is the land of the thousand-yard stare. In one election cycle—indeed in two brutal weeks—it appeared as if a substantial segment of Evangelical Christianity had decisively rejected the cultural work of an entire generation. Donald Trump swept the Deep South, including many of America's most religious states—and Evangelicals led the way.

The American population with one of the lowest divorce rates—churchgoing Christians—appeared to endorse a twice-divorced philanderer who openly bragged about his serial adulteries. America's most pro-life citizens gave a plurality of their votes to a man who loudly declares that Planned Parenthood—the nation's largest abortion provider—does “wonderful” things for women.

Evangelical churches have been working hard on racial reconciliation, and their embrace of adoption means that even the most historically white congregations feature many racially blended families. Yet Evangelical voters pulled the lever for a man who has flip-flopped on condemning the Ku Klux Klan, retweets white supremacists, and attracts a flock of vicious online racists as some of his most loyal and vocal supporters.

Moreover, a plurality chose Trump over two men—Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio—who are not only thoughtful Christians themselves but have fought for life and religious liberty throughout their political careers. And they've spent years cultivating contacts in the Christian community. Is the Evangelical community cracking up? Is it—as *Five-ThirtyEight's* Nate Silver asserts—refusing to vote its faith?

The reality is more complex. It turns out that millions of “Evangelical” voters aren't Evangelical at all, and some Evangelicals don't vote as “Evangelical



Liberty University students sing and pray as they wait for Donald Trump to speak.

voters.” Meanwhile, those who do are in the middle of a stylistic and cultural clash that until recently prevented the non-Trump majority from uniting behind either Rubio or Cruz.

Caucus entrance polls and primary exit polls are blunt instruments, largely incapable of measuring voters’ actual beliefs and conduct. When asked by a pollster whether they identify as Evangelical, many voters simply interpret the question as asking whether they’re some form of conservative, believing Christian. The exit-poll questions don’t measure church attendance, and they certainly don’t delve into the nuances of Christian theology. Thus, in states with large numbers of conservative Christians, such as South Carolina, exit polls record astounding percentages of “Evangelical” participation. In 2016, for example, almost three-quarters of Republican-primary voters reported that they were Evangelical.

But this number is almost certainly inflated—and dramatically. The Barna Group is one of the nation’s premier research organizations dedicated to examining faith and culture, and it has consistently found dramatic disparities between the number of people who identify as Evangelical and the number of people who actually believe the traditional elements of Evangelical theology.

For example, in 2007, while 38 percent of Americans self-identified as Evangelical, only 8 percent expressed a belief—among other things—that Satan exists, that salvation is gained through grace, not works, that Jesus lived a sinless life, and that the Bible is accurate in all its teachings. In other words, 84 million Americans self-report as Evangelicals, but only 18 million pass through Barna’s theological filter.

And while exit pollsters aren’t asking self-identified Evangelicals to take a theological test, there is one measure that helps filter out the casual from the more committed believer: church attendance. Reuters has found that, throughout the South, Trump fares worse among those who attend church more frequently.

This reality may help account for the rampant incredulity among Evangelical activists. Again and again, one hears from an Evangelical that he “has never met” a Trump supporter at church. Indeed, I attend an Evangelical church in the heart of Trump country. Tennessee went for Trump in a landslide: 39 percent to 25 percent for Cruz and 21 percent for Rubio. My home county went for Trump by a margin of 40 percent to 30 percent for Cruz and 17 percent for Rubio. Yet I have never had a conversation with a single person at my church who professed support for Trump.

Yet it’s hardly correct or sufficient to say that Trump’s Evangelical supporters aren’t truly Evangelical. He does draw a significant amount of support from orthodox, churchgoing Christians. But the explanation is rather simple: Many Evangelical voters don’t see themselves as “Evangelical voters” in a political sense. They are not disproportionately concerned with traditional Evangelical issues such as life, religious liberty, religious persecution, or the fate of Israel. Instead, they’re simply voters who happen to be Evangelical, and as with many voters, their primary concerns are immigration and the economy.

Nor are Evangelicals immune from Republican anger at the political class or frustration with oppressive political correctness. Many Christians are *especially* frustrated with political correctness. There are indications that some Evangelicals are voting for Trump with eyes wide open—under no illusion that he shares their values—because they want to see a border wall, or to “burn down” the GOP establishment, or to defy a social-justice Left that takes every opportunity to deride or suppress conservative values. In other words, Christians can be populists, too.

This minority of non-churchgoing Christians and angry populists might be expected to lose to a united majority of committed activists, churchgoers, and

constitutional conservatives. Yet Evangelicals are every bit as divided as the broader Republican electorate. Cruz and Rubio have split the Evangelical majority, and they appeal to different sectors of that movement, revealing profound cultural and tactical differences within it.

At the risk of oversimplifying, we could say that Cruz attracts the old-school-style Christian activists—those who’ve been fighting the good fight, sometimes for decades—along with those who often share their style and dedication to principle over more ephemeral qualities such as electability or charisma. In December, the Family Research Council’s Tony Perkins led dozens of Evangelical activists in an effort to unite behind a single candidate (a similar effort in 2012 yielded an endorsement of Rick

The result isn’t just disagreement but, often, tension—a tension that Donald Trump has been able to exploit. And that tension has been compounded by the same kinds of disbelief and denial about Trump’s rise that have plagued the Republican political class. Cruz’s and Rubio’s Evangelical supporters, too, nursed their grievances in the naïve belief that their candidate would be the one to capitalize on Trump’s inevitable fall.

The consequences have been enormously damaging. Evangelicals have long struggled against charges of hypocrisy—and southern Evangelicals, especially, have struggled to shed the burden of slavery and Jim Crow. Yet now the headline is that *Evangelicals* helped propel a vulgar demagogue to the top of the Republican field, and that

Evangelicals are every bit as **divided** as the broader Republican electorate.

Santorum). After months of an agonizing and sometimes contentious process, they coalesced around Cruz, securing for him endorsements from many of Evangelical Christianity’s biggest names.

At the same time, however, *World Magazine*—an influential, Christian news journal—was conducting a monthly survey of 103 Evangelical “leaders and influencers” (I should disclose that I participated in the poll), and Rubio was dominant, winning the poll over Cruz every month for seven months straight. I know many of the participants, and they appreciated not only Rubio’s obvious faith but also his ability to speak winsomely and hopefully, even when engaging skeptics and critics.

Cruz’s Evangelical supporters tend to want to rally the faithful. Rubio’s Evangelical supporters want to appeal beyond the faithful. Cruz’s supporters are more doctrinaire constitutional conservatives. Rubio’s supporters are conservative but often less concerned with down-the-line conformity and often supportive of amnesty. Cruz’s supporters are proud that he defies Washington and has earned the enmity of his colleagues. Rubio’s supporters are alarmed by this penchant for conflict and prefer a candidate with a reputation for peacemaking who can reach across the aisle.

Evangelicals are overlooking, ignoring, or perhaps even enjoying his obscene personal insults, his flirtation with racists, and his erratic, unlawful, and brutal policy proposals.

This is a double failure. It represents a failure of leadership—of the activists who scoffed at Trump’s rise, pursued their own agendas, and proved that they didn’t understand the complexities and divisions within their own movement. And it also represents an individual failure on the part of the hundreds of thousands of Evangelicals who’ve cast their votes for a man who flaunts his religious ignorance and glories in his public sinfulness.

But all is not lost. Romans 8:28 says, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.” Perhaps the good in this colossal error is a necessary rediscovery of humility and a necessary chastening. Evangelicals are not as good or wise as perhaps we thought we were. In other words, there is great virtue in seeing ourselves as we truly are—warts and all. But now it’s time to shake off the shell shock, repent of foolishness and pride, and get to work. Evangelical leaders have a movement to educate and unite, a nation to protect, and a dime-store Caesar to stop. **NR**

Beyond The Wall

On immigration from Mexico, Trump is not entirely wrong

BY REIHAN SALAM

MEXICO has been at the heart of Donald J. Trump’s presidential campaign from the very start. When Trump first announced that he would be seeking the Republican presidential nomination, in June of last year, he warned that the Mexican government was “laughing at us, at our stupidity.” Though Mexico’s GDP per capita is roughly one third of that of the United States when adjusted for purchasing power, Trump insisted that Mexico was “beating us economically.” One of his more provocative claims was that Mexico was, in effect, using the U.S. as a “dumping ground,” sending not its best and brightest across the border, but rather its drug dealers and its rapists.

Trump’s anti-Mexican remarks have not exactly been warmly embraced across the political spectrum. Liberals maintain that Trump’s Mexico-bashing is designed to appeal to a dangerous ethnic chauvinism that has hitherto lain dormant. Many conservatives who favor more-vigorous border enforcement have also objected to Trump’s language, on the grounds that it is needlessly inflammatory. Mitt Romney was just as committed to combating illegal immigration as Trump, and he paid a political price for it. Yet no serious person could accuse Romney of bigotry, since his objections to illegal immigration were so clearly rooted in respect for the rule of law. The same cannot be said of Trump.

In the months since his announcement, Trump has been notably inconsistent in his stance on immigration, with some anti-immigration advocates, including Roy Beck of NumbersUSA, suggesting that he favors a so-called “touchback” amnesty, in which the vast majority of illegal immigrants would be granted legal status, provided that they first make a brief return to their native countries. But Trump has never wavered in calling for a border wall designed to deter future



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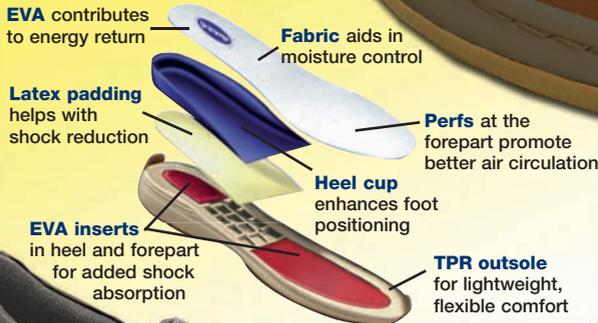
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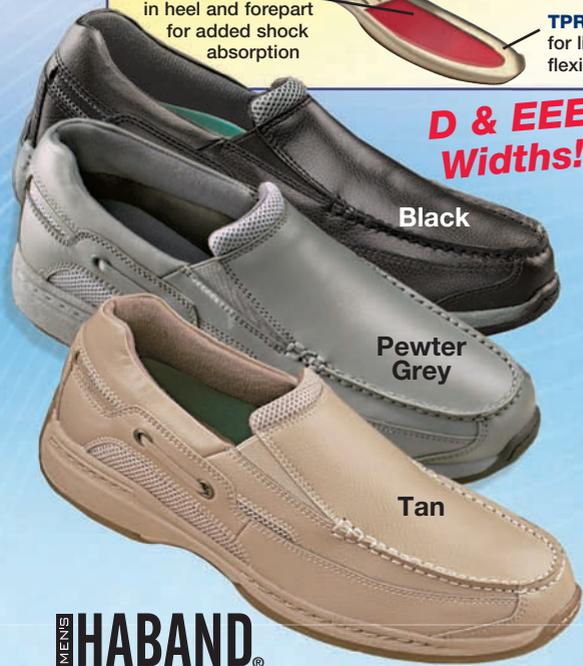
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illegal immigration, a wall that he would somehow compel the Mexican government to finance. Of all the powerful applause lines in a presidential campaign that's been full of them, this is the one he has returned to time and again.

Regardless of what one thinks of Trump's qualifications to be president—my own view is that he isn't qualified to serve as America's dogcatcher—there is no question that his fixation on Mexico has touched a nerve. The reason is that Trump has the germ of a point. Mexico may not be "beating us economically," but it really is true that the U.S. has served as a kind of economic escape valve for Mexico, in ways that have ill served not just the U.S. but also, in the long run, Mexico itself. Trump's Mexico-bashing notwithstanding, there is potentially a great deal of common ground between Americans on the political right who want to put an end to illegal immigration and Mexicans on the political left who want to make their country more egalitarian and inclusive.

From 2009 to 2014, the net flow of migration from Mexico to the U.S. was negative, according to the Pew Research Center. While 870,000 Mexican nationals settled in the U.S., 1 million of them returned to Mexico, a figure that includes those who returned voluntarily as well as 140,000 who were deported. Had there been no deportations, the net flow would have been slightly positive, and of course the threat of removal may have led at least some Mexican nationals to "self-deport." By way of comparison, between 1995 and 2000, when labor-market conditions for less-skilled workers in the U.S. were far stronger and the Mexican economy was in worse shape, 2.94 million Mexican nationals settled in the U.S., while only 670,000 returned home.

Some observers claim that because net migration from Mexico is now negative, there is no longer any need for concern. This is nonsense. There are still roughly 5.6 million Mexican immigrants illegally in the U.S., and to meaningfully reduce the size of this population, we'd need far more Mexicans to return to their native country, and far fewer to enter the U.S., every year. Had the Obama administration been more aggressive about immigration enforcement, the number of illegal immigrants in the U.S. would almost certainly be considerably smaller.

One straightforward step the federal government could take would be to aid state-level efforts to curb illegal immigration. In February, Bob Davis of the *Wall Street Journal* reported that the passage of a series of immigration-enforcement measures in Arizona had contributed to a steep 40 percent decline in that state's unauthorized-immigrant population between 2007 and 2012. There were other factors, to be sure, most importantly the housing bust and the subsequent recession. But the outflow of illegal immigrants from Arizona proved far greater than that from other states that were similarly hard hit—in part, it seems, because Arizona endeavored to make it more difficult for employers to hire illegal immigrants. Other states, however, have moved in the opposite direction by extending more legal protections to illegal immigrants, and the Obama administration has badly undermined state-level immigration-enforcement efforts by issuing executive orders that shield roughly half of the illegal immigrants currently residing in the U.S. from deportation.

If more-vigorous immigration enforcement can do so much to curb illegal immigration, why should Americans, least of all American conservatives, care about economic conditions in Mexico? The reason is that Mexico's poverty is the ultimate source of the migration challenge. Economic development is the only reliable way to reduce migrant outflows. Once a country's income per capita passes \$8,000 or so, its residents become far less inclined to leave the country as their incomes rise. Before this threshold is reached, rising income can actually spur more migration, presumably because it gives truly impoverished people the means to pack up and leave.

If poor Mexicans had better prospects for advancement at home, far fewer of them would choose to settle in the United States. Indeed, the most important reason migration from Mexico to the United States has slowed in recent years is not more-aggressive border enforcement. Rather, it is the fact that Mexico's GDP per capita (adjusted for purchasing-power parity) has reached \$18,500, which places it in roughly the same ballpark as moderately well-off countries such as Russia, Malaysia, and Turkey. This is still substantially lower than U.S. per capita income (\$56,300),

though, and the gap remains big enough to tempt Mexican workers northwards. Yet as Mexico's standard of living has improved, its people are less eager to leave their families and neighborhoods behind. The problem we face is that while Mexicans are better-off on average, Mexico remains a highly unequal society. Until life improves for the poorest Mexicans, migration will remain at attractive option.

When conservatives rail against illegal immigration from Mexico, they should also rail against the Mexican government for failing to provide for its own people. Illegal immigrants are at fault for violating U.S. immigration laws, but so are their home governments that have failed to create safe and prosperous environments in which they can raise their children. To lose sight of that is a mistake. The good news is that Mexico has made strides in reducing extreme poverty, thanks in part to the increased social spending that accompanied Mexico's political democratization. Two major anti-poverty programs in particular, *Progres*a and *Oportunidades*, have greatly increased household incomes among Mexico's poorest families. But social spending is not enough. Further reductions in poverty will depend on job creation for Mexicans with modest skills. One of the ironies of Donald Trump's embrace of protectionism is that if our goal is to reduce migration from Mexico, we ought to welcome the offshoring of industries that depend heavily on less-skilled immigrant labor. Why fight to keep low-wage jobs in meatpacking, general assembly, and furniture manufacturing in the U.S. if these jobs tend to be held by less-skilled immigrants, who need subsidies from U.S. taxpayers to lead decent lives?

In a similar vein, the U.S. ought to consider encouraging U.S. retirees to settle in Mexico. As the U.S. population ages, demand for home health aides and other low-wage service workers who can provide for the elderly is increasing, and this rising demand is often cited by advocates of higher immigration levels. But instead of admitting more less-skilled immigrants, the U.S. could allow U.S. retirees to make use of Medicare in Mexico, a simple measure that would address a number of problems at once: It would generate employment opportuni-

ties for less-skilled workers in Mexico; it would reduce the demand for less-skilled immigrant workers in the U.S.; and it might even reduce Medicare expenditures, since the cost of offering benefits would be substantially lower in Mexico than in the U.S. If this seems unrealistic, consider that U.S. retirees have already settled in regions such as Jalisco, Guanajuato, Baja Sur, and the Mexican Caribbean in large numbers. More older Americans would join them in seeking a lower cost of living in Mexico if their Medicare benefits traveled with them.

Whether we like it or not, the fates of the U.S. and Mexico are intertwined, and securing Mexico's cooperation in curbing illegal immigration will likely require giving the Mexican government something it wants. Keep in mind that Mexico is not just a source of migrants to the U.S.—it also separates us from Guatemala (\$7,900), Honduras (\$5,000), and El Salvador (\$8,300), all of which are much poorer than Mexico, and where migration pressures are still building. These countries are the biggest new sources of illegal immigration, and to stem the tide of illegal immigration from Central America, we must convince the Mexican government to stop turning a blind eye when Central Americans pass through its territory en route to the U.S.

The Mexican government, for all its weaknesses, is fully capable of halting Central American migrants. In 2001, for example, President Vicente Fox deployed the armed forces to prevent migrants from passing through the Sonoran Desert, out of fear that they might die of thirst in a severe heat wave. Instead of focusing solely on securing America's southern border, we would do well to secure Mexico's cooperation in halting migrants long before they reach it.

Winning over the Mexican government by helping it create employment opportunities at home might be less emotionally satisfying than trying to bully Mexico into doing our bidding, as Donald Trump would prefer. But while a bullying approach would almost certainly drive the Mexicans into taking a more adversarial stance, appealing to Mexico's self-interest would have a far greater chance of success. If we really hope to put a stop to illegal immigration, we'd be foolish not to do so.

NR

Sovereignty Assaulted

Will the Constitution be cast aside in favor of international law?

BY JOHN R. BOLTON & JOHN YOO

FROM his first days on the Supreme Court in 1986, Justice Antonin Scalia insisted that judges read the Constitution as it was understood when drafted and ratified. He also demanded that they resist the temptation to substitute their own political views for those of our elected representatives. As the battle over his seat on the Court begins, these critical insights about the Constitution and the judicial role should occupy the very center of the fight.

One crucial issue facing the Supreme Court has been and will continue to be American national sovereignty. On this question, Scalia was stalwart in rejecting the idea that foreign law could be used to interpret the Constitution. Unbeknownst to most Americans, foreign countries (most of them European), international organizations, and international-law professors, lawyers, and activists regularly appear before the Court and press the justices to adopt foreign norms. Justice Scalia publicly worried that this phenomenon could be “the wave of the future.”

He had good reason for concern. The outcome of the 2016 presidential election, in which national security will figure prominently, could well decide the matter for decades. We are not going out on a limb to predict that a Hillary Clinton administration would only accelerate the Obama administration's foreign-policy mistakes, including its withdrawal of American leadership from world affairs and its deference to foreign governments and international institutions.

Before it resonated throughout the Obama administration's foreign policy, the idea of deferring to international and

Mr. Bolton is a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. Mr. Yoo is a law professor at the University of California, Berkeley, and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

foreign law got its start on the Supreme Court. In cases ranging from the death penalty to gay rights, several justices have resorted to foreign law as a tool to interpret the Constitution. In *Atkins v. Virginia*, for example, the Court required states to consider the intelligence level of defendants before imposing capital punishment. “Within the world community,” the majority wrote, “the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed by mentally retarded offenders is overwhelmingly disapproved.” Never mind that most countries in the world also don't impose the death penalty. In *Lawrence v. Texas*, the majority struck down state laws banning homosexual conduct by relying, in part, on recent British legislation and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. Liberal opponents of the Court's halting steps in defense of federalism have sought support from European and other countries' weaker protections for state sovereignty.

Justice Scalia criticized this tendency with his signature verve and wit. “If there was any thought absolutely foreign to the founders of our country, surely it was the notion that we Americans should be governed the way Europeans are governed.” Why, then, would American judges seek to adopt foreign legal practices? Because it is part of the fundamental struggle over constitutional interpretation. Once judges believe they should “update” the Constitution in line with contemporary opinions, they are writing a new constitution, not interpreting the old one. Foreign law ultimately increases the power of judges—which Scalia consistently opposed—because it gives them a bigger tool kit with which to reach their desired results. Criticizing the growth of judicial activism abroad, Scalia declared, “If you are a living constitutionalist, you are almost certainly an international living constitutionalist.”

Justice Scalia diagnosed this problem early, but the temptation to cede U.S. sovereignty in favor of foreign and international law has spread well beyond the courts. The Obama administration has gone to unprecedented lengths in its eagerness to concede U.S. military and political leadership to international organizations and international law.

Take the U.S.–Iran nuclear agreement. Rather than seek approval for it as a treaty (which requires approval by two-thirds of the Senate) or as a congressional–executive

agreement (with consent of both houses of Congress), President Obama acted unilaterally to make the deal. Obama-administration supporters claimed the agreement was binding because of a U.N. Security Council resolution, and the State Department did little to dispel the notion while Congress debated whether to disapprove the Iran deal. On global warming, the administration seeks to participate in the Paris agreement without going through the constitutional process for protecting our sovereignty required by the treaty clause. Instead, the administration claims the U.S. must reach pollution targets given meaning only by international law, but it will no doubt use the Paris agreement to justify ever more burdensome EPA regulations on industry. Even some hawks challenging China's territorial claims in the South China Sea hope that the parchment barriers of the Law of the Sea Treaty, rather than a rejuvenated U.S. Navy, will protect our interests. The Obama administration would not intervene in Syria, where the death toll now measures in the hundreds of thousands, without some form of international approval. Similar arguments are made that the United States should limit the use of land mines, cyber weapons, drones, or its operations in outer space, relying on the promises of international law rather than the U.S. military to guard our security.

International law represents a threat to U.S. sovereignty not just because of the activist effort to constrain American freedom of action within a straitjacket of international rules. International law today is fundamentally different from traditional international law, which took the form of agreements between nations or at least universal rules that had received unanimous consent from all states. For hundreds of years, international law represented the agreement of states pursuing their own self-interest, and so states not only benefited from it but also had a high likelihood of complying with it.

Today, however, an elite group of activists, lawyers, and international officials drives international law. They identify their preferred policies first, and then seek to pressure states to adopt them. Consider the 1996 Ottawa convention banning land mines. The apparent success of the treaty, which now includes about 80 percent of the world's nations, did not result from the agreement of nations at war. Indeed, many nations with the most at stake—

such as the United States, Israel, and India—refused to join. Rather, the Ottawa convention was the work of international activists, representing no states, who were eventually awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their efforts. Ottawa “spawned a new politics, new partnerships, new ways of thinking about the international environment. It was the forerunner of a clear notion of global citizenship,” writes Lloyd Axworthy, a former Canadian foreign minister and currently president of the World Federalist Movement. “It challenged conventional notions of sovereignty and set in motion a form of coalition politics at the global level that could be used to shift power and political relationships.”

Relying on foreign law threatens American sovereignty not just by restricting American foreign policy. It also would bring about significant changes in domestic policy. Some critics of the Second Amendment—which Scalia, writing for the Court's majority, definitively found to guarantee an individual right to bear arms in *District of Columbia v. Heller*—seek to limit the sale of guns by urging that America join the Arms Trade Treaty. Critics of the death penalty point to its dwindling use internationally, arguing that this foreign consensus should help establish that capital punishment has become cruel and unusual.

Justice Scalia correctly saw the use of foreign law as boosting judicial activism. By giving judges freer rein to read their policies into the Constitution, looking abroad helps short-circuit Madisonian representative government and the very concept of separation of powers. Interest groups lobby international organizations in forums that are anything but democratic: In most international bodies, each nation, regardless of population, political system, or economy, has an equal vote. Transnational advocacy groups then try to impose these global norms down from the international organizations upon the United States. How much easier it is to enact gun control, for example, when advocacy groups can simply bypass the states, Congress, and the U.S. political process to do so.

If Hillary Clinton wins the presidency this November, we can only expect more efforts at evading the Constitution. In a sign of the importance of these ideas to the Democratic-party worldview, President Obama appointed Yale Law School pro-

fessor Harold Koh to serve as legal adviser to the State Department, where he was a member of Clinton's inner circle. Koh is the very model of the modern American lawyer who wants to bring international law, without democratic process, into the U.S. political system. He clerked for Justice Harry Blackmun, worked as a young lawyer in the Reagan Justice Department, and became a professor of law at Yale before serving as a political appointee in Bill Clinton's State Department. In his scholarly work, Koh has only praise for what he calls “transnational legal process,” and he has supported lawsuits seeking to have courts enforce international law against the U.S. government and American corporations, even though Congress had never enacted legislation on the issues involved.

In several articles and speeches, Koh has defended the work of “transnational norm entrepreneurs, governmental norm sponsors, transnational issue networks, and interpretive communities”—anyone, it seems, other than an official democratically elected to represent the people—to “internalize international legal norms into domestic law.” Koh has described this process as “downloading” international law into U.S. law, as if the former were higher wisdom and America a sort of primitive tablet computer. Koh returned to Yale Law School after Clinton left the State Department, but in a Clinton presidency, his star would likely rise even higher in the executive branch or even on the Supreme Court. The contrast could not be sharper between traditional understandings of American sovereignty and Koh's new world of “transnational legal process.” So strong are his views about the binding nature of international law that in 2004 he linked Iraq, North Korea, and the United States as “the axis of disobedience.”

To protect individual liberty, the Constitution's framers created a political system sharply at odds with Europe. They believed American sovereignty was precious precisely because it preserved our right to govern ourselves contrary to the prevailing wisdom. “The men who founded our republic did not aspire to emulating Europeans, much less the rest of the world,” Scalia wrote. With the passing of Justice Scalia, our nation not only lost one of its greatest defenders of American sovereignty, but also received a clear reminder of what is at stake this November. **NR**

Freedom U

*A unicorn of a university in
Central America*

BY JAY NORDLINGER

Guatemala City

FOR years, people have said to me, “It’s too good to be true. But it is true. It actually exists.” These people are classical liberals, or Reagan conservatives, or in that general camp. And the thing they are talking about is Francisco Marroquín University, here in the Guatemalan capital. It is a classical-liberal university.

And it is virtually the only one in the entire world. A similar institution can be found in Montenegro, and it was inspired by UFM (to use the Guatemalan university’s Spanish initials). But UFM stands pretty much alone.

UFM’s mission statement, or mission sentence, is known by heart on this campus, at least by some: “. . . to teach and disseminate the ethical, legal, and economic principles of a society of free and responsible persons.” (A teacher says to me, “Notice that ‘ethical’ comes first.”)

On campus, you see Adam Smith Plaza. And the Ludwig von Mises Library. And the Friedrich Hayek Auditorium. And, for good measure, the Milton Friedman Auditorium. UFM has not forgotten Milton’s better half: in the form of a Rose Friedman Terrace.

The university was founded in 1971 by Manuel Ayau and a group of like-minded partners. They were Guatemalan entrepreneurs, and they called themselves “rebel improvisers.” They were fed up with the persistent socialism and poverty in their part of the world. They wanted to create at least an island of liberalism (for which Americans, with our peculiar vocabulary, can read “conservatism,” or “Reaganism”).

They named their university after Francisco Marroquín, who lived in the first half of the 16th century. He was the first bishop of Guatemala, and a pioneer in education. He was especially interested in the education of colonial girls and Indians. He was also interested in free trade and other elements of what would be known as classical liberalism.

Inaugurating the university, Ayau gave a simple, thoughtful, and profound address. At the end, he said, “May God help us and show us the road to the truth.”

These were terrible times for Guatemala: civil-war times. One of the founders was kidnapped and murdered, by Communist guerrillas. So were other early participants in UFM. Evidently, the Communists did not appreciate diversity in education.

Today, UFM is flourishing, and true to its founding mission. There are nearly 3,000 students, and around 500 teachers (most of whom are part-time, and none of whom have tenure). Many of the teachers are alumni of the university.

UFM offers bachelor’s degrees, master’s degrees, and doctoral degrees. The subjects range from architecture to dentistry to psychology to law. A recent addition is a film program. But everyone takes fundamental courses, a core, in liberal economics and philosophy.

Workers on campus may take a colloquium in liberalism, free of charge. I’m talking about janitors, gardeners, everyone. They don’t have to, because they are “free to choose” (in the Friedmans’ phrase). But if they want to know what their employer is about, they may.

The place is beautiful—lush. Academic grove as tropical paradise. UFM is set in a ravine, and the buildings blend into the hills. I think of a statement by Frank Lloyd Wright: “A building should be a grace to its environment, not a disgrace.”

Guatemala City has a reputation for crime, and I ask UFM’s secretary-general, Ricardo Castillo, about the campus: Is it safe? Yes, he says, very. The biggest danger is that an avocado will fall from a tree and crack a windshield. It happened to a student recently, and she was quite upset.

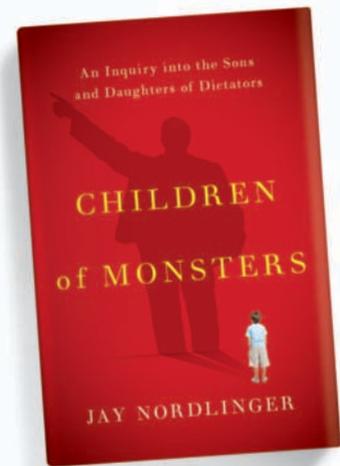
The campus is dotted with art, including a sculpture of Atlas (as in “shrugged”). There is also a modern number called “Infinite Relationships.” It seems to me a bunch of coils or tubes. I’m told it represents the market.

Where the core courses are given is the Henry Hazlitt Center—named after the American journalist who wrote the iconic volume *Economics in One Lesson*. There is also a room named for Leonard Read, the American educator who wrote the iconic essay “I, Pencil.” Next to one another, I see rooms named for Hannah Arendt, Lao-Tze, and Booker T. Washington.

Booker T. Washington? This especially warms my heart—for when I was growing up, he was often portrayed as a kind of Tom, an embarrassment, in contrast with the proud W. E. B. Du Bois.

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The campus of Francisco Marroquín University

Even the levels of the parking garage are named after worthies: specifically, members of the School of Salamanca (in 16th-century Spain). The idea is that car-driving students will eventually learn about these people, almost without trying.

Throughout campus—in virtually every corner—there are quotations and slogans. This bothers me a little at first, because I associate the ubiquity of quotations and slogans with the Left. But if you’re going to have quotations and slogans—they might as well be true and salutary.

The rector, or president, of this university is Gabriel Calzada, an economist from Spain—from the Canary Islands, specifically. I ask him, “How did you become a liberal? Why are you not a socialist, as so many are?” In fact, I put this question to many of the faculty and administration. Everyone has a story, and it’s interesting.

Calzada’s is something like this: When he was in high school, he liked freedom—but he was on the left. He started a trade union of students. He read the usual: Hegel, Marx, Engels—even Bakunin. They didn’t satisfy him.

When he got to college, he had a right-leaning (or liberal-leaning) professor. The young man argued with him in class. One day, the professor said, “Mr. Calzada, would you like to know more?” The young man said, “Yes, please give me more.” The professor then invited him to come to his house weekly, for debate.

He gave young Calzada a variety of readings: left, right, and center. Calzada was drawn to the classical liberals. The first book that made a deep impression on him was by Jean-François Revel: *Useless Knowledge* (also known in English as *The Flight from Truth*). Then came Karl Popper, Hayek, others . . .

At UFM, there are plenty of left-leaning students, resisting and quarreling with the reigning ethos, of course. Students are exposed to a wide range of thought. They are free to explore, think, and argue as they will. Most of the time, they gravitate to classical liberalism—either before they graduate or after.

UFM has had an influence on Guatemala. This influence is seen in the liberalization of the telecommunications industry, for example. In the last presidential election, two of the three leading candidates mentioned Mises! (Including the eventual winner.)

Guy Wyld, the president of the university’s board of trustees, tells me a somewhat touching story. Last year, he got a hold of an index of economic freedom worldwide. He looked from the middle of the list down, for Guatemala. He couldn’t find it—for it was in the top-most quartile.

While other universities in Guatemala and the rest of the region may not like UFM, they have to respect it. UFM has been called “the Harvard of Central America.” Not long ago, President Calzada was at a meeting of university officials and associated others. One of the university officials lit into him as a tool of Big Business, a defender of privilege, etc. Later, the official asked to speak to him privately.

“Listen,” he said, “my son is approaching college age, and there is of course no other place for him to go but UFM. Do you think you can get him in? Also, how about a scholarship?”

One of the most sparkling personalities at UFM is Carla Hess, who, appropriately, leads a program called “Spark.” It seeks to encourage the entrepreneurial spark in human beings. She herself grew up during the civil war and was taught by Maryknoll nuns. They preached Communist revolu-

tion to the girls in their charge. Most of these girls came from wealthy families. Some of them ran off with the rebels. But Carla did not. Why?

For one thing, her father had always impressed on her a respect for life: “Thou shalt not kill.” Also a respect for private property: “Thou shalt not steal.” You never take what’s not yours—even a rubber band at school or work. This girl could not join the rebels.

She tells her students that they can be victims or achievers—their choice. They may say, “I was born in Guatemala, so how can I be or do anything in the world?” That is a mentality that UFM seeks to erase.

Carla Hess also leads rope courses and other physical activities up in the hills. They teach lessons such as, “What is the difference between central planning and spontaneous order?” In creative ways, students learn that one is a lot more effective than the other.

To speak personally: I like a campus without any intellectual or political slant. But if our universities—thousands and thousands of them—are going to be dominated by the Left, what’s so bad about one classical-liberal university in all the world? Even ten or 20?

I realize I’ve sounded like a cheerleader in this article. But readers will forgive me because there’s so much to cheer.

One of the things I notice at UFM is a strong, strong contrast with the trend of things in America. I notice no sense of entitlement. Quite the opposite. I notice eagerness, curiosity, and gratitude. At home, we have safe spaces and trigger warnings. These things would be laughable here—even incomprehensible. Last fall, I did a report from Brown University, where students had started a secret Facebook group so that they could discuss things freely. There is no such need at UFM. Everything is open and on the table.

I meet a student from rural Guatemala who won a scholarship here. In previous times, he picked beans on a coffee farm to support his family. A sense of entitlement would be utterly foreign to him.

A final thought: When I was growing up, I think I was led to believe that the capitalists, classical liberals, or free-marketeters were selfish, materialistic, greedy. They preached a gospel of dog-eat-dog. In due course, I realized that they were among the most caring people on earth. They want people to be prosperous, free, and well. **NR**

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The Father-Führer

Chaos in the family, chaos in the state

BY KEVIN D. WILLIAMSON

MICHAEL BRENDAN DOUGHERTY is bitter. I think that I can write that in both truth and charity. (I think you might even say that he and I are friends.) Dougherty is a conservative of the sort sometimes advertised as “paleo” and served as national correspondent for *The American Conservative*. Like many conservative writers with those associations, Dougherty spends a great deal of time lambasting the conservative movement and its organs, from which he feels, for whatever reason, estranged—an alienation that carries with it more than a little to suggest that it is somewhat personal.

In 2013, he announced that he planned to set aside political writing to concentrate on the relatively sane world of professional baseball, saying: “National politics has most of the vices of ‘bread and circuses.’ And if that’s the case, pro sports is a better circus.” But it is difficult for a politics man to give up politics—look at all the political crap that ESPN viewers and *Sports Illustrated* readers have to endure—and he has taken it upon himself in this election cycle to serve as Apostle to the Cathedral, “the Cathedral” being a favorite metaphor of the so-called alt-right for the “distributed conspiracy” (in

the words of Curtis Yarvin, a.k.a. Mencius Moldbug) that might in less riled-up times be described as “polite society,” the conventional wisdom among people who live in places such as Washington, D.C., and New York City and work in fields such as politics and media.

You know: THEM.

Donald Trump is the headline, and explaining the benighted white working class to THEM is the main matter. Sanctimony is the literary mode, for Dougherty and for many others doing the same work with less literary facility.

Dougherty invites us to think about Mike, an imaginary member of the white working class who is getting by on Social Security disability fraud in unfashionable Garbutt, N.Y. Conservatives, in Dougherty’s view, don’t give a damn about Mike. They care a great deal about Jeffrey, “a typical coke-sniffer in Westport, Conn.” Jeffrey pays a lot of taxes, both directly in the form of the capital-gains tax and indirectly through the corporate tax, and tax cuts “intersect with his interests at several points.” Republicans want to encourage private retirement investments, which might send some business toward Jeffrey’s

“fund-manager in-law, who works in nearby Darien.” (For those of you unfamiliar with the econogeography of Fairfield County, Conn., going from Westport to Darien is moving up in the world. Next stop: Greenwich.) “If the conservative movement has any advice for Mike, it’s to move out of Garbutt and maybe ‘learn computers,’” Dougherty writes in the magazine *The Week*. “Any investments he made in himself previously are for naught. People rooted in their hometowns? That sentimentalism is for effete readers of Edmund Burke. Join the hyper-mobile world.” The piece is headlined “How Conservative Elites Disdain Working-Class Republicans,” and I suppose I should mention that my own writing on the white working class’s infatuation with Donald Trump is Exhibit A in Dougherty’s case.

NEVER mind the petty sneering (as though the conservative movement were populated by septuagenarians who say things like “learn computers”) and the rhetorical need to invent moral debasement (tax cuts are

GARBUTT is Trump Country, and Dougherty, while not a wild-eyed Trumppkin, is generally sympathetic to Trump’s critique of current American economic policy, namely that international trade and immigration are dispossessing the white working class. There is not, in fact, very much evidence for those claims: Immigration does put some downward pressure on wages, but it also puts downward pressure on prices. Native-born low-skilled workers’ money income may have stagnated, but their real income—what they can buy with the money they earn—has continued to improve modestly. The main effect of new immigrants’ wage competition is felt in the wages of earlier immigrants. But the effects of immigration overall are tiny compared with the effects of factors such as health-care expenses. In many lower-end occupations, overall compensation in fact has gone up over the years, but the additional compensation has come largely or entirely in the form of medical benefits. In some cases, the expense of medical benefits has gone up so much that total compensation has increased even while money wages have gone down. That’s the worst of all possible worlds: It costs more to employ those low-

What, really, is the case for staying in Garbutt?

good for the rich people in Connecticut who don’t use cocaine, too) and Dougherty’s ignoring out of existence those capital-driven parts of the economy that are outside of the Manhattan–Connecticut finance corridor. And never mind the math, too: It is really quite difficult to design federal tax cuts that benefit people who do not pay much in the way of federal taxes. Set all that aside: What, really, is the case for staying in Garbutt?

There was no Garbutt, N.Y., until 1804, when Zachariah Garbutt and his son John settled there. They built a grist mill, and, in the course of digging its foundations, they discovered a rich vein of gypsum, at that time used as a fertilizer. A gypsum industry sprang up and ran its course. Then Garbutt died. “As the years passed away, a change came over the spirit of their dream,” wrote local historian George E. Slocum. “Their church was demolished and its timber put to an ignoble use; their schools were reduced to one, and that a primary; their hotels were converted into dwelling houses; their workshops, one by one, slowly and silently sank from sight until there was but little left to the burg except its name.”

Slocum wrote that in . . . 1908.

The emergence of the gypsum-hungry wallboard industry gave Garbutt a little bump at the beginning of the 20th century, but it wasn’t enough. The U.S. Census Bureau doesn’t even keep data on Garbutt. To invoke Burkean conservatism in the service of preserving a community that was exnihilated into existence around a single commodity and lasted barely a century is the indulgence of absurd sentimentality. Yes, young men of Garbutt—get off your asses and go find a job: You’re a four-hour bus ride away from the gas fields of Pennsylvania.

Stonehenge didn’t work out, either: Good luck.

skilled American workers, but they don’t feel any richer—and if their employers are paying more for the same benefits (or paying more for inferior benefits under the so-called Affordable Care Act), they aren’t any richer, practically speaking.

On the trade front, American manufacturing continues to expand and thrive—an absolute economic fact that is, perversely, unknown to the great majority of Americans, who believe precisely the opposite to be the case. Americans have false beliefs about manufacturing for a few reasons: One is that while our factories produce much more than in the past, they employ fewer people; another is that we tend to produce capital goods and import consumer goods—you won’t see much labeled “MADE IN THE USA” at Walmart, but you’ll see it on everything from the aircraft flown by foreign airlines to the robotics in automobile factories overseas. Another factor, particularly relevant to the question of manufacturing and trade, is that a large (but declining) share of those imported consumer goods comes from China, a country with which we have a large trade deficit. That isn’t because the Chinese are clever, but because they are poor: With an average annual income of less than \$9,000, the typical Chinese household is not well positioned to buy American-made goods, which are generally expensive. (China is a large consumer of U.S. agricultural products, especially soybeans.) Add to that poorly informed and sentimental ideas about what those old Rust Belt factory jobs actually paid—you can have a 1957 standard of living, if you really want it, quite cheap—and you get a holistic critique of U.S. economic policy that is wholly bunk.

Which isn’t to say that the Mikes of Dougherty’s world have it good—they don’t. But they aren’t victims of the wily Chinese, scheming to make them poor: In the story of the white

working class's descent into dysfunction, they are the victims and the villains both.

The *Washington Post's* "Wonkbook" newsletter compared the counties Trump won in the so-called Super Tuesday primaries with the demographic data and found trends that will surprise no one who has been paying attention (and certainly no one, I hope, who has been reading this magazine). The life expectancies among non-college-educated white Americans have been plummeting in an almost unprecedented fashion, a trend not seen on such a large scale since the collapse of the Soviet Union and the social anarchy that prevailed in Russia afterward. Trump counties had proportionally fewer people with college degrees. Trump counties had fewer people working. And the white people in Trump counties were likely to die younger. The causes of death were "increased rates of disease and ill health, increased drug overdose and abuse, and suicide," the *Post's* Wonkblog website reported.

This is horrifyingly consistent with other findings.

The manufacturing numbers—and the entire gloriously complex tale of globalization—go in fits and starts: a little improvement here, a little improvement there, and a radically better world in raw material terms (and let's not sniff at those) every couple of decades. Go back and read the novels of the 1980s or watch *The Brady Bunch* and ask yourself why well-to-do suburban families living in large, comfortable homes and holding down prestigious jobs were worried about the price of butter and meat, and then ask yourself when was the last time you heard someone complain that he couldn't afford a stick of butter. That change happened a little at a time, here and there.

The family-life numbers, on the other hand, came down on us like a meteor. Before the war, divorce had been such an alien phenomenon that it animated such shaggy-dog stories as *The Gay Divorcee*, a play in which a fictitious act of adultery had to be invented to move the plot forward.

Divorce in 1960 was so rare as to carry a hint of scandalous glamour, which it kept throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with women's magazines writing lifestyle pieces about informal weekday dinner parties for divorcees (the word itself is today faintly ludicrous) and men's magazines celebrating divorce as a second adolescence.

The divorce rate doubled over the span of a few decades—even as the marriage rate was declining. Add to that the violence of abortion, which fundamentally alters the relationship between men, women, and children, and what exactly "family" means to those of us born around the time *Roe v. Wade* was decided becomes a very difficult question.

THE concept of the nation as an extended family is the notion that separates American-style conservatism, with its roots in the classical-liberal ideas that informed the American founding, from blood-and-soil, throne-and-altar European nationalism. In Europe, this is an idea popular with the Right: It is entirely unsurprising that Trump has enjoyed the endorsement of, among other European rightists, Jean-Marie Le Pen. In the United States, it is an idea—and an error—popular on both sides of the political divide: The distastefully squishy progressive writer George Lakoff argues that the American Right prefers a strict patriarchal model of the family and, therefore, a similar model of political life, while

the Left is inclined toward the maternal and the nurturing. (Right-wing critics of free trade and free enterprise in the English-speaking world often speak of "nurturing" economic policies, because they do not wish to write the word "socialism.") But it is an idea that fits at best uneasily with the aspirations of American conservatism.

One of the worst errors in public life is the common one of mistaking the metaphor for the thing itself. In reality—and reality is not optional—the president isn't the national dad (Governor John Kasich's insistence notwithstanding), and government is neither paternal nor maternal. The nation isn't your family. Your family is your family.

The metaphor points both ways: Nationalism may speak to a longing for lost national greatness, but in our own time, it speaks at least as strongly to the longing after—the great howling lamentation for—the ideal family that never was lost, because it never was formed. The Mikes of the world may be struggling to make it in the global economy, but what they really are shut out of is the traditional family. The current social regime of illegitimacy, serial monogamy, abortion, and liberal divorce has rendered traditional families optional, at best—the great majority of divorces are initiated by wives, not by husbands—and the welfare state has at least in part supplanted the Mikes in their role as providers, assuming that they have the wherewithal to fill that role in the first place. Traditional avenues for achieving respect, status, and permanence are lost to them.

Milo Yiannopoulos of *Breitbart London* has done more to put homosexual camp in the service of right-wing authoritarianism than any man has since the fellows at Hugo Boss sewed all those nifty SS uniforms. He refers to Trump—this will not surprise you—as "Daddy," capital-D.

It is easy to imagine a generation of young men being raised without fathers and looking out the window like a kid in an after-school special, waiting for Daddy to come home. Many of them slip into harmless Clark Griswold-ism, trying to provide for their own children the ideal families they themselves never had. But some of them end up grown men still staring out that window, waiting for the father-führer figure they have spent their lives imagining, the protector and vindicator who will protect them, provide for them, and set things in order.

Dougherty cites the work of the conservative polemicist Sam Francis, one of those old capitalism-hating conservatives who very much embraced the paterfamilias model of government. His analysis, like mine, finds emotional and policy links between the Trump movement and its earlier incarnation, the Pat Buchanan movement. For Dougherty, Francis provides the philosophical link. He also provides the stylistic link: He was a kook. "Francis eventually turned into something resembling an all-out white nationalist," Dougherty writes, "penning his most racist material under a pen name. Buchanan didn't take Francis's advice in 1996, not entirely. But 20 years later, [Francis's book] *From Household to Nation* reads like a political manifesto from which the Trump campaign springs." *From Household to Nation* is typical in that it is based on a category error, asking economics to do what economics doesn't: to provide the means "not simply to gain material satisfaction but to support families and the social institutions and identities that evolve from families as the fundamental units of human society and human action." Economics is about

satisfying human wants, not *defining* them. The problem isn't that Americans cannot sustain families, but that they do not wish to.

It is therefore strange to me that Dougherty so fundamentally misdiagnoses the conservative reaction to Trump: "A Trump win," he writes in another piece, "at least temporarily threatens the conservative movement, because it threatens to expose how inessential its ideas are to holding together the party." (Dougherty also equates the fundraising engaged in by conservative organizations with the Social Security fraud that sustains his fictional Mike, a characterization that indicates the emotional temperament at work here.) Of course there is careerism in the conservative movement, but to proceed as though it were impossible to imagine that conservatives oppose a man running (knowingly or not) on a Sam Francis platform because we oppose the loopy crackpot racist ideas of Sam Francis is to perform an intellectual disservice.

It is also immoral.

It is immoral because it perpetuates a lie: that the white working class that finds itself attracted to Trump has been victimized by outside forces. It hasn't. The white middle class may like the idea of Trump as a giant pulsing humanoid middle finger held up in the face of the Cathedral, they may sing hymns to Trump the destroyer and whisper darkly about "globalists" and—odious, stupid term—"the Establishment," but nobody did this to them. They failed themselves.

If you spend time in hardscrabble, white upstate New York, or eastern Kentucky, or my own native West Texas, and you take an honest look at the welfare dependency, the drug and alcohol addiction, the family anarchy—which is to say, the whelping of human children with all the respect and wisdom of a stray dog—you will come to an awful realization. It wasn't Beijing. It wasn't even Washington, as bad as Washington can be. It wasn't immigrants from Mexico, excessive and problematic as our current immigration levels are. It wasn't any of that.

Nothing happened to them. There wasn't some awful disaster. There wasn't a war or a famine or a plague or a foreign occupation. Even the economic changes of the past few decades do very little to explain the dysfunction and negligence—and the incomprehensible *malice*—of poor white America. So the gypsum business in Garbutt ain't what it used to be. There is more to life in the 21st century than wallboard and cheap sentimentality about how the Man closed the factories down.

The truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally, they are indefensible. Forget all your cheap theatrical Bruce Springsteen crap. Forget your sanctimony about struggling Rust Belt factory towns and your conspiracy theories about the wily Orientals stealing our jobs. Forget your goddamned gypsum, and, if he has a problem with that, forget Ed Burke, too. The white American underclass is in thrall to a vicious, selfish culture whose main products are misery and used heroin needles. Donald Trump's speeches make them feel good. So does OxyContin. What they need isn't analgesics, literal or political. They need real opportunity, which means that they need real change, which means that they need U-Haul.

If you want to live, get out of Garbutt.

NR

Black Voters, Too, Want a Choice, Not An Echo

The GOP and conservative principles can supply the lack

BY THEODORE JOHNSON

SABINA LOVING dreamed of owning a business and becoming her own boss. A black single mother living on Chicago's South Side and working full time, she decided to make the leap into entrepreneurship by turning her tax-preparation side gig, which she operated out of her home, into a full-fledged business. With a little luck and a lot of perseverance, she opened up Loving Tax Services and served the local clientele, who were mostly black and working-class.

In June 2011, the IRS passed a regulation that mandated a new tax-preparer license, which totaled about \$1,000 per preparer once all exams, fees, and costs for continuing education were aggregated. This regulation would effectively put Loving out of business because she wouldn't be able to afford to hire enough preparers. So she sued the government, claiming that the IRS was overstepping its authority. And she won.

In a congressional hearing last October, presidential candidate Senator Ted Cruz held Loving's misfortune up as an example of the harmful effects of intrusive government. He has recounted her story a few times on the campaign trail. But for Loving, this was not just about standing up to an expanding regulatory state. She saw herself as battling yet another in a long list of injustices that obstruct the path to opportunity, success, and self-determination for some people and communities much more than for others.

Consider Loving's situation holistically. She lives in a city where gun violence is shamefully high and its victims are disproportionately black. The *Chicago Reporter* reports that the seven Chicago neighborhoods with the highest percentages of residents living in deep poverty (an annual income of \$5,885 or less for an individual, \$12,125 for a family of four) are predominantly black and that so are nearly two-thirds of the neighborhoods with above-average poverty rates. Under-resourced and under-performing, Chicago public schools are being closed, leaving parents with few suitable, affordable

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options for their children. *Crain's Chicago Business* reported that the South Side has lost 2,000 hospital beds in recent decades, has no trauma centers, and suffers excessively long ambulance-response times. It is one of the most under-served health-care markets in the world. Furthermore, banks, insurance companies, and even the Small Business Administration are increasingly less likely to invest the capital that entrepreneurial black Americans need. A great deal of economic malady is concentrated in black communities and effectively cordoned off from the rest of the population.

Loving's particular predicament is an issue of racial justice. Though the factors contributing to the economic disadvantage faced by black Americans belong to a variety of policy areas and are not necessarily drawn up with race in mind, their confluence places a specific, crushing burden on some segments of the population. Racial justice is concerned with removing such conditions and impediments to social mobility.

To acknowledge that economic inequality overlaps with racial inequality is consonant with conservative principles. So is the understanding that government programs designed to provide citizens a hand up should be effective. But the Republican party has been reluctant to address race head-on, contributing to the narrative that conservatives are out of touch and apathetic about the plight of black Americans.

THERE could be, however, a Republican racial-justice platform. It would include business deregulation that especially helps small businesses, school-choice programs that give parents more control over their children's education, and criminal-justice reform that gives more Americans a chance at redemption and opportunity instead of wasting people's lives and taxpayer dollars on mass incarceration. It would include the increased involvement of community and faith-based organizations in the administration of local services to those in need. These sorts of conservative measures are not race-specific. Frankly, they don't need to be. As I explain below, their cumulative effect can be oriented to remedy racial injustice. A Republican racial-justice platform would redefine the party as exceptionally inclusive and welcoming to all those who simply want to be law-abiding citizens making better lives for themselves and their families.

No Republican presidential candidate has attempted to explain how the conservative principle of less regulation could benefit black small-business owners such as Sabina Loving and the communities they employ and serve. This issue could be discussed as part of a web of issues that affect black Americans differently in different parts of the country.

Neither the party leaders nor the candidates have put the pieces of the puzzle together. The racial-justice platform has not yet been assembled from the numerous distinct policy aims the party is already pursuing. If Republicans want to communicate their principled commitment to equality and give black Americans a clear choice at the ballot box, they must call the amalgamation of the various policy ideas by its name. Just as the party has been quick to criticize the president for not uttering the words "radical Islamic terrorism," so too must it own up to its own reticence on race, justice, and the America that many blacks experience. Republicans should not be afraid of uttering the words "racial justice."

THE Republican racial-justice platform should begin with House speaker Paul Ryan's anti-poverty plan, which Ryan first introduced in 2014 at the American Enterprise Institute. He addresses poverty by proposing reforms of aspects of America's economic, education, criminal-justice, and regulatory systems.

For example, one element of Ryan's proposal that was supported by most of the Republican presidential candidates at the recent Jack Kemp Forum on Expanding Opportunity is the Opportunity Grant, which would consolidate several federal means-tested safety-net programs, such as SNAP, child care, and housing assistance, into a single allocation to the states and give them more flexibility to apply those resources to the particular challenges they face in combating poverty. The grant would require able-bodied recipients to work, encourage states to develop new approaches to overcoming poverty, and require periodic evaluation of the state's administration to ensure proper stewardship of taxpayer dollars. It is appropriate to return decision-making authority to the states because poverty is not uniform across regions. Addressing poverty in New York City is a different challenge from addressing it in rural Mississippi.

Another major component of Ryan's plan is an expansion of the earned-income tax credit (EITC). The EITC is an effective federal program that provides a tax credit to low-income families with at least one working member. Often a family is penalized with a reduction in benefits when a member starts working. For poor families, this serves as a disincentive to work, so the EITC eliminates it and instead ensures that work is rewarded. Governors Chris Christie and John Kasich and former governor Jeb Bush have all spoken about the success of EITC expansion in their states.

As part of the racial-justice platform, reform of the social safety net must be coupled with education reform. To that end, Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina has introduced the Creating Hope and Opportunity for Individuals and Communities through Education Act, a.k.a. the Choice Act. It would encourage school choice for students with disabilities, expand options for low-income students in the nation's capital, and create a school-choice pilot program for military families. The bill is limited in scope but can illustrate best practices for school choice and be expanded once it is judged to be effective in helping families improve their education outcomes.

School-choice programs and home-schooling have proven popular with black families that suffer from bad public schools and charter-school lotteries that leave their children's education to chance. The consistent theme in the conservative education agenda is an increase in options for parents to decide what is best for their children. Republican proposals to allow more education block grants to states for elementary and secondary education, update and simplify the student-loan process, and expand federal work-study programs offer substantial contrasts with Democratic proposals, which are usually characterized by the complex bureaucracy that attends centralization of power in Washington.

Criminal-justice reform is an obvious plank of any racial-justice platform. Republicans should waste no time in developing policies to return over-punished and rehabilitated Americans to the work force. In 2012, incarceration cost the nation well over \$40 billion. And that figure doesn't begin to account for the millions of potentially taxpaying wage earners whom incarceration removes from the economy. Reform entails not only the reduction

of sentences for nonviolent offenses but also the reintegration of former prisoners into communities to reduce recidivism and increase productivity. The Republican agenda focuses on state and local programs that have demonstrated success and shares those models across the nation. Even the ultra-left *Mother Jones* magazine recognized Nebraska, Utah, Illinois, Alabama, and Georgia as states that have Republican governors and legislatures and are leading on criminal-justice reform. As with the EITC and education, this is an issue on which conservatives have led and gained bipartisan support.

On health care, Republicans should seek to amend the Affordable Care Act not just to reduce costs and provide more choice but also to increase access to health care in terribly underserved areas. They should also explore ways to incentivize private investors to help meet health-care costs through such mechanisms as encouraging more private-equity investments in health care, encouraging the growth of health-savings accounts, and expanding public-private ventures that increase the number of doctors and facilities in the neediest areas. Giving people health insurance but without ensuring timely and reliable access to doctors would hurt minorities and the poor the most.

Conservatives should couple their proposals for regulatory reform and small-business growth to enable more black Americans such as Sabina Loving to prosper. Taking this approach can reduce the employment-rate gap between whites and blacks, as black businesses in black communities will likely hire black employees and serve black clientele. Money will circulate in these communities for a longer period and thereby improve their economic vitality. Small businesses represent an enormous share of the job creation that has occurred in recent years.

Racial justice based on conservative principles also means that a community will partner with police to increase patrols in high-crime areas and empower citizens with some measure of oversight. It means abandoning legislation that imposes obstacles to political participation by poor and minority citizens, such as frivolous laws that prohibit former convicts who have paid their debt to society from voting. It means ensuring that federal funding doesn't unintentionally exclude some citizens and that it isn't used as payment for political support. It means ensuring that poor communities are not exploited by predatory financial practices and are not drained of public resources that have been allotted to aid them. And it means doing all of the above through a federal government whose primary purpose is to protect citizens from discriminatory practices while giving them more power to make decisions about what works best for their states and localities.

FOR black voters, the biggest problem with the candidates' discussion of racial justice is the lack of alternative approaches. As such a voter, I can say without equivocation that giving the federal government more money to do what it should already be doing is not an attractive solution. I can also say that it is highly preferable to doing nothing.

Taken as a whole, the Republican agenda should offer a stark alternative to the racial-justice plans offered up by the Democratic presidential candidates. It is smart politics, and policy, for Republicans to package their initiatives together to help every American have a better chance at achieving his God-given potential. **NR**

NASCAR Nation

*Americans love the speedway,
even if elites don't*

BY CHARLES C. W. COOKE

I WAS still in New York City when the sputtering began. "You?" a friend of mine asked, earnestly. "*You* are going to do *that*?"

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Well, y'know. I wouldn't have thought you'd be interested in that."

"Why not?"

"Well, it's not really *you*, is it?"

"Why not?"

And so forth.

I get this a lot. Because I am English and I sound a little clipped, strangers tend to assume that I share my fellow countrymen's disdain for America's more traditional pastimes. By now, the friends I left at home have come to terms with my apostasy, as a parent learns to accept his child's foibles. But those friends I have made stateside remain perplexed and irritated. On questions such as guns, football, trucks, and, well, pretty much all of politics, the East Coasters of my acquaintance tend to remain stubbornly puzzled. Unlike other immigrants, it is frequently implied, I haven't yet received the message: That Americana stuff? That's *fluff*.

And so it was with my first foray into NASCAR, after being invited to a race by a friend down South: "You?" "That?" "*Really*?"

"Yes."

In all honesty, I was unsure whether "it" was, in fact, "me." And so, with a fully open mind, I set out to Daytona Beach, Fla., to see what all the fuss was about.

And what a fuss there was! This, after all, is a sport in which all is muscle and brawn and the American Spirit dial is turned proudly up to eleven. Here, before a quarter of a million fans, a host of hi-tech daredevils update the classic horse race for the modern world. As the Montgolfier brothers were eventually upstaged by the Saturn V, so has Secretariat met his piston-powered match. Whatever it is about the human condition that leads otherwise relaxed people to strap themselves into roller coasters or jump willingly out of airplanes is also on happy display at the Daytona International Speedway. If you ain't seen a muscle car slam into a wall at 200 miles per hour, you ain't seen nothing yet.

In search of such thrills, the crowds pour in. Miles outside the stadium, the ticket scalpers line the roads, offering to buy and sell any spare stock. Inside the gates, the vendors stack their trucks as far as the eye can see; today, if they play their

cards right, will pad their bottom lines for the year. There's even a handful of determined religious activists hanging around the periphery, the better to accost dawdling stragglers and shout wildly at them about the end times.

And why not? Good preachers go where the converts are most likely to be, and they are more than likely to be here at the races. For all the hype about the scale of college football, it is NASCAR, not NCAA gridiron, that draws the biggest crowds: 300,000 in Indianapolis; 250,000 in Florida; 170,000 in Texas; 160,000 in Alabama—the numbers add up when you're having fun. But here's the strange part: Outside what the denizens of America's teeming coastal cities derisively term "flyover country," few people so much as know that these events *exist*. Sitting in northern Florida watching the fighter jets scream through the show-opening flyover and hearing the announcers run excitedly through their prayers, a peculiar thought pops into my head: What would it look like if the Super Bowl were invisible to at least half of the country?

This, I imagine. This is what it would look like. All told, NASCAR is held in the sort of place that the smart set

and my head rolling slowly around the track, I feel almost light-headed by the time the 50th lap is complete.

Perhaps it's the beer?

Speaking of which, you'll find little price-gouging inside the stadium, which, given the event's humble origins, is fitting. Those stereotypes of toothless bubbas with Confederate-flag hats and sleeveless Lynyrd Skynyrd T-shirts are, in 2016, long, long out of date. And yet the outlaw spirit lives on in their stead. All sports have their creation stories—it is, perhaps, an unwritten part of their legitimacy—but NASCAR's has the benefit of actually being true.

That story? Back in the Temperance days, a host of good-ol'-boy Southerners took the souped-up cars that the moonshine-and-illegal-whiskey game had rendered invaluable and began to race them for kicks. At first, their competitions were informal, held on whatever highway or mud track was temporarily at their disposal. Before long, however, some of the more talented racers started looking for a more organized affair. They didn't get it—at least not straightaway—for, without an established set of rules or any official imprimaturs, the spectacle quickly became a hotbed of malleable conventions and

NASCAR is the No. 1 spectator sport in the United States, with 75 million Americans calling themselves fans.

abhors—Phoenix, the Milwaukee Mile, Michigan's Belle Isle, the Speedway at Nazareth—and, even on its red-letter days, it remains there. Examining cultural segregation a century or so hence, the anthropologists of the future will wonder at the scale of the divide. On one sunny day in February, as many Americans as live in Baton Rouge packed themselves into a small space to watch a beloved sporting event. And the nation's trendsetters just yawned.

Perhaps this should be no surprise, for the Kentucky Derby this is most definitely not. Here, the fans prefer beer to champagne; hot dogs to canapés; and T-shirts-and-ball-caps to Milan's lavish *haute couture*. There are few pretensions on this southern tarmac; no Veuve Clicquot galas or Byronic airs. There is just family and tradition and the unique roar of jagged American grit.

FOR uninitiated sorts such as myself, it is difficult to prepare for just how primeval the experience can be. On television, the cars seem almost majestic; but, from 20 feet away, they are jungle animals. When, time and time again, they come screaming past the bleachers, all of those forgotten impulses are reactivated upon the instant: the fight-or-flight instinct that an overwhelming bass yields; the medieval fear of speed and witchcraft; the adrenaline that comes with knowing that someone close may get hurt.

Gradually, lap by lap, the hypnosis begins. Round, and round, and round they go, their positions changing at first imperceptibly, and then, occasionally, in modest fits and starts that prompt knowing nods from the veterans. With my hearing protection dulling my contact with the outside world,

crooked promoters. Eventually, a local auto-repair impresario named William France called a conference that resulted in the creation of a governing body tasked with overseeing the races. On February 21, 1948, the National Association for Stock Car Racing was born.

Since then, it has only grown. Today, NASCAR is the No. 1 spectator sport in the United States, with 75 million Americans calling themselves fans. Each year, the sponsors bring \$3 billion into the fold, while TV contracts add \$560 million to the pot. Is that money all from "rednecks"? Not on your life. As of 2014, one in five fans was non-white, and two in five were women—facts that apparently surprise some.

Back in 2006, the producers of NBC's *Dateline* attempted to provoke an altercation at a NASCAR event by "planting" a couple of Muslim men at a race and filming the reaction that they received while walking around. The show's producers claimed that they were "intrigued by the results of a recent *Washington Post*/ABC News poll and other articles regarding increasing anti-Muslim sentiments in the United States," and that they hoped only to discover how real the animus was. Evidently, the answer shocked them, for nothing at all happened. Per Ramsey Poston, who was the managing director of corporate communications for NASCAR at the time, the men "walked around, and no one bothered them." Well, then.

Coming from a culture in which it is considered normal for a game to last 25 days and still end up a tie (that, quite seriously, is how test cricket works), I found the all-or-nothing nature of NASCAR jarring. In almost every sport I know, even a bad mistake can be overcome given a little time: Fumble the ball in football and you have a while to fix it;



A race at Daytona International Speedway, February 12, 2009

lose your serve in tennis and the flub can be canceled out; strike out with the bases loaded in the eighth inning and your team can make amends in the ninth. At the speedway, by contrast, even the slightest of blunders is catastrophic.

Much to my chagrin, I would find this out firsthand. Shortly after the engines started up, a member of my party leaned over to me and offered me a plastic sandwich bag filled with torn-up pieces of newspaper. I looked at him quizzically.

“Ten dollar buy-in,” he said. “Winner takes all.”

Obliging, I reached into the bag, pulled out the first strip my fingers touched, and read the name that had been written on it: “Dale Earnhardt Jr.”

Everyone around me reacted. “He got Dale Jr.! He got Dale Jr.!” Eyes met eyes. Some rolled in frustration.

I looked at the friend who had brought me to the race. “Is that good?”

“Very good.”

From that moment on, I was hooked. Now, I had a rooting interest to go alongside my adrenaline. “If Dale Jr. wins,” the lady in front of me turned and told me, “you’ll walk away with about \$400.”

Alas, it was not to be. For most of the race, “Dale Jr.” hung back, sometimes pushing, sometimes lagging, but never taking himself out of the running. And then, 30 laps from the end, he began to make his move. In the space of five minutes, he went from ninth to eighth, eighth to seventh, seventh to sixth. Suddenly, he moved from fifth to fourth. And then, as the crowd began to purr, he made a risky play for glory and . . . crashed disastrously out of the race.

Busy as I was pre-spending my winnings, I didn’t immediately grasp what had happened. And then, slowly regain-

ing my bearings, I realized: This was *it*. “Dale Jr.” had lost, and so had I. There could be no comeback.

In this regard, NASCAR is less akin to a hyped-up form of old-fashioned horse racing than to the Roman Colosseum at the height of its pomp. *Pace* the insistences of our more progressive friends, human beings do not change with the times—not really. We may adjust here and there, and we may be cowed by institutions and social pressure or improved by ideas and culture, but we are all animals at heart, and, in the safety of our modern world, we seek the thrills that we have lost. It is no accident that the two most popular sports in America are, by any objective standard, entirely brutal. Football, per George Will, is “violence punctuated by committee meetings”; NASCAR is a merry-go-round interrupted by the occasional explosion. The jet fighters and fireworks that we saw before the flags had been lowered were not the warm-up show so much as they were the overture to the opera. Pleasant or not, danger is endlessly fascinating, and people enjoy the vicarious thrill of involving oneself in it at a distance.

As it happened, we were in for quite the finish even without Dale Jr. in the race—the closest finish in Daytona’s history, in fact. By one-hundredth of a second, Denny Hamlin squeaked past Martin Truex Jr. and took the prize for himself. In the stands, there was a brief moment of confusion, followed by a swift photo call, followed by some of the loudest cheering I’ve heard outside a rock concert.

For the quarter million or so of us who were there, it was quite a thrill, a fact that I had trouble conveying to anybody when I got back to New York City.

“You? Really? *You liked that?*”

NR



The Long View

BY ROB LONG

Dear Mrs. Reagan:

We were delighted to welcome you to the Heavenly Paradise Above, and we hope that the past few days have been an easy transition for you. Your reunion with your beloved husband, President Ronald Reagan, was deeply moving, and I say that as someone who sees this sort of thing daily.

In addition, the spontaneous welcome musical performance by Mr. Frank Sinatra was enjoyed by a large portion of our residents—it's hard to please everyone, as I'm sure you know—and though I must confess to some initial discomfort at the lyrics to the reworded "Lady Is a Tramp," it was nice to see Mr. Sinatra being so social and approachable. His admittance here was not without some controversy, so please accept my thanks and gratitude for your good influence on him.

And of course it goes without saying that President Reagan has never seemed happier.

That said, Mrs. Reagan, I was hoping there were a few things—small details, really, nothing to be concerned about—that we could review as you settle in and get comfortable for what I hope—what we all hope—will be a stress-free and pleasant eternity.

At this time—and there are no plans to alter or amend this in the future—there is no "governor" of Heaven, much less a "president." So it's a puzzler to us why you seem, after (let's face it) barely a week here, to be suggesting to your husband that he might be effective in either role.

We don't have "elections" or "campaigns" in the Great Reward,

Mrs. Reagan—and judging from how those seem to be unfolding below, I should think this was what the kids call "a feature, not a bug." And while everyone here enjoys hearing your husband speak spontaneously on a wide variety of topics—I confess that until he sat down with me recently and explained his objections in rational and inarguable terms, I was mildly supportive of single-payer—those conversations are more along the lines of casual, social, spur-of-the-moment-type deals.

On Tuesday, you were observed rearranging the lounge chairs in the Sun Room so as to create an after-dinner-style speaker's set-up, which was not only inappropriate but unprecedented. Everyone enjoyed President Reagan's subsequent remarks, and yes, to answer your question, it was much easier and more efficient with the chairs all facing your husband, and, yes, to answer your following question, he did look better when the lighting was adjusted—still, it's a question of what, exactly, he's running *for*.

You should know that until your arrival—and again, Mrs. Reagan, we're all thrilled to have you here—but until your arrival, your husband was, needless to say, peacefully enjoying himself, reading, napping, catching up with old friends, occasionally performing in amateur theatricals, in a word, *relaxing* from what was, clearly, the eventful and highly interesting life you two shared.

And then, suddenly: *Boom!* You arrive and start whispering and he's running for "governor of Heaven" on what is, quite frankly, an insulting platform. The Heavenly Choir of Angels does not need to be "smaller." It is supposed to be large. The administration of Paradise—of which, let's be clear, you have only

the tiniest understanding—is not filled with "waste, fraud, and abuse," and I assure you that Heaven would not be more heavenly if we just "got the Dominions, Virtues, and Powers out of the way." Do we need all Three Spheres of Angelic Hierarchy? Yes, Mrs. Reagan, we do. All three. And more besides. And I really don't appreciate the tone your husband takes—the *new* tone, may I add—when he talks about my personal work in the Heavenly Realm.

There I go again? Yes, Mrs. Reagan, *there I go again, and again and again and again*. That's sort of the whole point of Heaven, actually. And despite your husband's poll numbers (!!!) and his clear popularity with our residents, I have no intention of holding an election or a referendum or whatever it is you have in mind, and I am asking you directly to please stop encouraging your husband in this matter. There is and will be no "governor" or "president" of Heaven, and if you think I don't see what's behind your enigmatic smile and your wide, innocent eyes, you've got another think coming.

But please, Mrs. Reagan, don't take this note as anything but a friendly and encouraging—though firm—welcome. And as a gesture of friendship, I've arranged to have your husband, should he wish, serve as the president of the Residents Union. He can serve as union president as long as he likes. There's zero chance, frankly, that he'll get any farther.

Oh, and I went to the mat and got your red robes approved.

Let's agree, then, to stop all of this political nonsense and just be happy with what we have?

Yours in welcome,
Peter

Trump's Golden Ticket

DON'T worry, this won't be as dorky as it sounds. Nerdy, perhaps, but not so dorky. In the fifth Star Trek movie—

Hey, come back! Sit down, don't worry. This will be painless. In the movie, the USS *Enterprise* is hijacked for the 493rd time and driven to a remote planet where God lives. (Don't ask.) God wants a ride to another star system and requests the use of Captain Kirk's spacecraft. Kirk, detecting the work of some unfathomably vast con artist, asks, "Why does God need a spaceship?" Good question. Here's another:

Why does a billionaire need to sell vitamin supplements?

Donald Trump did. One hesitates to detail the story of the Trump Network, lest the libel laws be "opened up" by a Supreme Court "bill" (signed by Trump's sister) and critics of Trump find themselves in *So Much Trouble, So Much, I Guarantee It*. (This is worse than *A Lotta Trouble, I Tell You*.) But the details were described by the *Boston Globe's* Stat News website, which covers health and science topics, and so far the *Globe* hasn't been sued into penury.

It's like the Trump U story, except you didn't pay \$35,000 to learn secret business tricks like "Buy low, sell high." The Trump Network sold vitamins, which isn't unusual—turn on the radio and you will hear someone offering mega-beet super-bee-pollen açai-kiwi extract with pure cuttlebone-and-fish-oil beta-blocking antioxidant joint relief, packed in a pill as big as a lumberjack's toe. The Trump difference, however, was his network's uncanny ability to discern which vitamins you needed. Of course, they couldn't diagnose you from a distance. You had to give them something.

You had to ship your urine to the Trump Network.

Don't worry, they provided the vials. No one was expected to FedEx a sponge.

Is this not how all great fortunes are maintained? Pre-paid urine mailers?

It did not end happily, according to Stat News:

"The Trump Network had gotten in trouble financially," said Bonnie Futrell, a former marketer and "diamond director"—one of the top-tier marketers in the company. "They weren't being able to pay [the lab]. They weren't paying vendors. They weren't paying us."

Of course, this says nothing about Trump's business acumen; he just lent his name. (And his crest, which is your guarantee of genuine total Trumposity.) It says nothing about his huge fortune, because lots of billionaires decide that a sideline in multi-level marketing might be the ticket to the next pot of gold—in this case, given what people sent in for analysis, literally a pot of gold. We all know the story of Andrew Carnegie telling his board of directors it was time they branch out from steel into selling small battery-

operated shock collars for cats, because "thae be verra, verra disobedient." (He died, raving, the next day.) And of course there's the famous story about Bill Gates, riding high on Windows money, deciding to diversify into ever-sharp knives sold at 3 A.M. on TV. This computer thing could go south any day now, but people need knives. Visionaries, all.

So it didn't work out? It's not like he was personally involved in the project—well, aside from speaking at the launch in Miami in 2009, where he told a roaring crowd that the product was tremendous and he was tremendous and they were going to be tremendous and you know what tremendous people who were successful had in common? They were tremendously successful. Thank you. He also made a personal testimonial on the Trump Network site, which had links to other great products, like Snazzle Snaxx. These were nutritional snacks for kids. *Tremendous snacks, really something, I'm telling you*. Not available in stores, as commercials used to say, as if that meant the product was too good for mere retail. You had to buy them from the most trusted source you knew: your sister-in-law, who signed up for this furshlugginer multi-level marketing thing, and now everyone had to buy the stupid snacks to humor her. Before this, it was cayenne colonics.

Wannabe presidents Huckabee and Ben Carson aren't exactly strangers to the Miracle Supplement game, either. But neither was involved in a multi-level marketing scheme to sell video phones, another Trump-endorsed business that was tremendous and really, really fantastic. Successful? Well, in some dimension, you can use your video phone to order Trump Steaks, Trump Vodka, and a seat on the Trump Shuttle, but not this one.

None of this matters, because Trump is strong and smart and will build a wall and activate the anti-Muslim force field and take oil. Mark his words, the oil, it's going to be taken, okay? So much oil, you won't believe it. But it is odd to see someone whose brand relies on towering financial success—it would make J. P. Morgan's testicles wither in shame if he were alive, I'm telling you—be connected to these penny-ante rinky-dink huckster schemes.

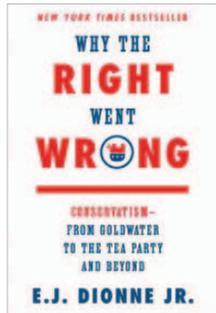
On the other hand, if you learned that Bernie Sanders had come out with a line of black support-hose socks to be worn with sandals, you'd almost be relieved: At least he had some knowledge of the business world. At least he'd have learned a thing or two about the effect of high labor costs on the domestic sock industry. He might have realized that a country with 35 types of deodorant is a better place than a country that makes one type, and doesn't have any, because the government nationalized the factory.

At least Trump tried! Anyway, it all answers the question Kirk posed: Why would God need to hitch a ride to some place? Because someone else paid for the gas, that's why.

NR

A Turning Point for Conservatives

HENRY OLSEN



Why the Right Went Wrong: Conservatism from Goldwater to the Tea Party and Beyond, by E. J. Dionne Jr. (Simon & Schuster, 544 pp., \$30)

It would be easy for conservatives to dismiss E. J. Dionne's latest book as a book on the Right by a man of the Left, and one that therefore suffers from the usual sins of omission and commission.

Easy, but wrong. Dionne's treatment is neither thorough nor wholly accurate, but he correctly identifies why conservatives either fail to win power or, when we do, do not use that power to transform America. Conservatives who want to win and effectively use political power must, then, come to grips with the central question Dionne poses: Does the intellectual legacy of Barry Goldwater prevent conservatism from being an effective governing movement?

Dionne argues that it does. He starts by correctly noting that 1950s-era American conservatism arose to oppose Republicans who were not dedicated to overturning the New Deal. He tells with persuasive detail the story of an early movement that found Dwight Eisenhower's "Modern Republicanism" seriously wanting. One William F. Buckley Jr. quote nicely summarizes

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this critique. The "Eisenhower program," he wrote, is "an attitude, which goes by the name of a program, undirected by principle, unchained to any coherent idea as to the nature of man and society." Early conservatism meant to provide that principle, and it did so, in the pages of *NATIONAL REVIEW* and, most important, in Barry Goldwater's epochal and bestselling book, *The Conscience of a Conservative* (1960).

Conscience grounded conservatism firmly in the Constitution and liberty and opposed virtually everything that had been built in Washington since 1932. Not just opposed, but committed to its repeal. Early conservatism debated whether to "contain" Soviet Communism or "roll it back"; *Conscience* applied the rollback philosophy to Washington, D.C. Goldwater told America: "I have little interest in streamlining government or making it more efficient, for I mean to reduce its size. I do not undertake to promote welfare, for I propose to extend freedom. My aim is not to pass laws, but to repeal them. It is not to inaugurate new programs, but to cancel old ones that do violence to the Constitution, or that impose on the people an unwarranted financial burden."

The rest of *Conscience* shows that a Goldwateresque state would indeed, as Grover Norquist pithily says, be "small enough to drown in a bathtub."

Dionne also shows that many of the arguments made by today's Tea Party are substantially identical to those put forward by the early conservatives. The theory that low tax rates for the top brackets would lead to greater economic activity was not original to the 1970s supply-siders: It was made by the American Liberty League in the 1930s. The idea that conservatives lose elections because the elites running the Republican party won't put forth a true conservative, thereby leading millions of people not to vote, was not made up out of thin air by Ted Cruz after 2012: The early conservatives said the same thing. Betrayal by GOP leaders was also central to the original conservative argument. Before there was a John Boehner and a "corrupt, crony capitalist class" to castigate, there was Dwight Eisenhower's "dime-store New Deal"

and a shadowy Eastern Establishment that supposedly forced "liberal" nominees on an unwilling Republican party. For this strain of conservatism, there is truly nothing new under the sun.

After this strong start, the book falters as Dionne labors to make the case that conservatism has remained inherently Goldwaterite in the five decades after Goldwater's massive defeat. He correctly notes that Frank Meyer, father of long-time Federalist Society president Gene Meyer, created the theory of fusionism after 1964 to allow all different strains of conservatism to coexist peacefully. He fails, however, to note that this means there *are* different strains of conservatism and that this peaceful coexistence, not suppressed Goldwaterism, has been modern conservatism's defining feature ever since. Dionne also passes over Bill Buckley's conversion from the unrepentant opponent of Ike to a man who, post-1964, adopted the mantra that the Right must always support the most conservative electable candidate. Incrementalism, not revolution, became the Right's approach after Goldwater's defeat.

Dionne treats the Bush presidencies fairly, noting how each took issue in practice with the Goldwaterite strain of conservatism without mounting a political or intellectual challenge to it. By neither vanquishing neo-Goldwaterites nor converting them to their cause, both Bushes set themselves up for disappointment and challenge from those elements when events inevitably conspired to make each man politically vulnerable. But both Bushes were able to rise precisely because they could draw on fusionism and support from non-Goldwaterite conservatism in intra-party battles.

Dionne's treatment of the Tea Party and the current administration is the weakest part of the book. If conservatives can be rightly accused of sometimes seeing the world through rose-colored glasses, Dionne's view of the last decade is clearly a case of seeing the world through deep-blue spectacles. Obama is presented as a conciliator whose apostasies against his left fail only because of Republican intransigence fueled by the GOP's partisanship and a hyper-Goldwaterite core. Any conservative or Republican who has

been remotely involved in negotiations and disputes with Obama would find this retelling laughable. With the passage of time, a more balanced rendering of these events might be possible. But Dionne's account is not that.

Indicative of this is his resurrection of the progressive refrain that conservatism is, at its heart, at worst racist and at best racially tinged. He presents this argument throughout, and it is true that pre-1964 conservatism *was* at worst racist and at best racially insensitive. But to think that nothing whatsoever has changed in the ensuing 50 years flies in the face of the facts. The very white southerners in Tennessee, for example, who moved from Kerry to McCain in 2008—often touted on the left as proof of conservative racialism—backed a black moderate Democrat,

If Goldwaterism is at heart a love of liberty, it seems that today it is a love that dare not speak its name.

Nevertheless, conservatism remains a movement that defines itself largely by what it is against rather than what it is for. This was fusionism's primary contribution; by downplaying the differences among conservatives regarding what we are for, we could better mobilize politically to combat what we all agreed we were against—Soviet Communism and the rapid advance of federal-government spending and regulation.

Conservatism's weakness today comes from the fact that these core ambitions have either been met (the defeat of the Soviet Union) or prove to be insufficient in practice. Once we win elections, we find it is not tenable to simply not do

If our reforms are primarily tactical and programmatic, they might lead to temporary success but they will ultimately be found wanting. Recall that the heart of Buckley's critique of Ike was not that he was liberal but that his approach was "undirected by principle." Ike's Modern Republicanism, Clinton's Democratic Leadership Council and the Third Way, and Tony Blair's New Labour shared this characteristic, and all withered quickly under fire from within because their partisans desperately wanted something principled they could be for.

I believe not only that such a unifying principle can be found, but that it already exists. It is the intellectual legacy of Ronald Reagan, which when studied on its own yields an affirmative fusionism that unites the different strains of

Conservatism remains a movement that defines itself largely by **what it is against** rather than what it is for.

Harold Ford, for the Senate in 2006 at much higher rates than those at which they would back Obama in 2008. South Carolina whites elected Nikki Haley, a conservative of Indian ancestry, and Tim Scott, a black conservative, to statewide office in 2010 and 2012 respectively. The fact that white southerners can back black and other non-white candidates over white opponents in races that immediately bracketed 2008 suggests that the story of what happened in the rural, conservative South is much more complicated than progressives such as Dionne want to admit.

But these flaws do not detract from the salience of his main point, that the recurrent problems the Right has in both winning elections and enacting meaningful policy changes are directly tied to its difficulty in dealing with the Goldwaterite heritage. It is quite clear that there is no appetite in America for the sort of rollback that Goldwater advocated. Indeed, even the most ardent tea-partiers and neo-Goldwater groups shrink from claiming that there is. Ted Cruz and the Heritage Foundation, for example, proclaim that they merely want to reform and shrink the welfare state, not repeal it. Full-throated Goldwaterism is found only on the hard-core libertarian right, a movement that, it should be noted, started in earnest only after Meyer's fusionism tempered the original anti-statist core of conservatism.

liberal things. Conservatism in power must act, and since conservatives themselves differ *and have always differed* about how to act, conservatism in practice finds it difficult to do anything other than preside over existing government structures. In this sense, all strains of conservatism have become mere tax collectors for the liberal welfare state.

Fusionism created a political confederation, uniting different conservatisms in opposition to a clear and present danger, mainly the Soviet Union. In this sense, it was like the original Articles of Confederation uniting the Colonies in opposition to King George. Once the common enemy had been defeated, however, the Articles proved insufficient for the newly independent country to govern itself. It was only with the replacement of confederation with federation, the replacement of the Articles with the "more perfect Union" of the Constitution, that America could truly start to act as a sovereign state.

This is the challenge those of us who are known as Reformocons face. Dionne says that we have not yet challenged the existing intellectual architecture of the Right, and in this he is largely correct. The movement is badly in need of a Conservative Reformation, and Reformocons must decide what we want to reform and why.

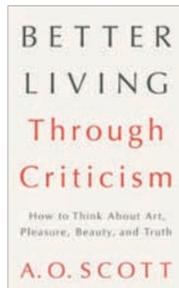
conservatism into something mighty and new. Dionne contends that my view is romantic, but it is anything but. The real Reagan romantics are those who view him through their own ideological lenses and thus fail to see him for what he really was.

A conservatism that pays lip service to the Goldwaterite ideal of welfare-state rollback will neither succeed politically nor be effective in providing a principle that explains why we want what we say we want, a government that gives Americans a Better Deal, one that gives us more for less. It will forever define success in ways that are not achievable and do not even represent what most conservatives want to achieve. It will, under the guise of uniting us, in fact divide us and inevitably lead to deeper and bitterer divisions until at last the entire conservative edifice will be a house divided, and fall.

We conservatives face our own rendezvous with destiny, our own time for choosing. We either face up to it and finish the work we have been bequeathed, to reform conservatism in line with all of its principles and transform a negative confederation into a positive federation, or we condemn our movement to "a thousand years of darkness." Dionne's book, for all its faults, clarifies the challenge we face. **NR**

The Critic's Art

ELIZABETH POWERS



Better Living through Criticism: How to Think about Art, Pleasure, Beauty, and Truth, by A. O. Scott (Penguin, 288 pp., \$28)

FILM critics are an opinionated lot, and many have written books on individual filmmakers. A. O. Scott, however, a *New York Times* film critic since 2000, takes on the subject of opinion itself, i.e., “criticism.” Some people think art doesn’t need interpreting or analyzing; it is what it is. For them, criticism is not a handmaiden, but rather a kind of step-sister to art, an intrusion on their individual, unmediated response. They can do without criticism, thank you, because it entails judging—distinguishing the bad from the good, the beautiful from the less so. And who, especially in our postmodern age, has the right to judge? Scott is of a different mind.

The terms “beauty” and “truth” in the subtitle are reminders that criticism goes back in the West at least to Plato and Aristotle, who did not have a daily or weekly reviewing gig. Plato was a theorist of art, and his remit was, indeed, pleasure, beauty, and truth, while Aristotle was more interested in the nuts and bolts of the various arts (e.g., music and tragedy). After ancient times, the practice of criticism fell into abeyance, but from the Renaissance to the mid 18th century, with the growth of arts patronage and the revival of classical models in art, it returned with a vengeance. Artists and critics came

Elizabeth Powers is writing a memoir about the ascendance of contemporary liberalism.

to see themselves as participating in a centuries-long dialogue with predecessors. Imitation was the rule, but not in the stultifying sense in which that is now understood: Artists participated in a generational transmission that passed on the characteristics of forebears in the creation of new progeny. (Since this process mimicked the natural one of reproduction and the creation of new life, it is strange that it is now called “patriarchal.”) Critics were the gatekeepers, keeping the conversation on track.

The 19th century produced a new self-understanding among artists. Gone was the obeisance to tradition, and each generation (or even decade) endeavored to create works that strove to be radical, thereby declaring its emancipation from indebtedness to the past. The art trade became a free-for-all, as can be seen in the multiplication of artistic movements. Pitched battles for status among practitioners of the arts were accompanied by intense critical debates and the rise of great critics, including Walter Pater and Matthew Arnold. Once upon a time, those debates meant something—recall the booing on the opening night of *Afternoon of a Faun*—but lately a cloud of doubt has stood over the critical enterprise, as the current plethora of artistic phenomena and of digital outlets for opinion has eroded the authority of critics. It is through such thickets of dialogue and monologue that *Better Living through Criticism* seeks to steer readers.

Scott begins in Socratic mode, with a Q and A. Such dialogues, interspersed throughout, represent a kind of critical self-examination of Scott by Scott. The opening one begins defensively, describing the blowback against his review of a movie that went on to gross over \$1 billion. The intemperate reaction by the star against “intellectualizing” about the movie, a personal instance of the skepticism and suspicion facing critics today, has led Scott to what is in effect an apology (in the Socratic sense of a defense of his beliefs). Besides revealing his formative influences, in these dialogues Scott defends what critics do and discusses how they make judgments. And he makes some big claims for the critical enterprise: that it is a necessary activity “vital to human

self-understanding”; “that it is an art form in its own right”; and “that it exists to enhance the glory of the other arts.”

For the most part, this is a good book for our time, especially in its consideration of the role of a “discerning sensibility” amid the present “concatenation of consumer choices,” not to forget conflicting critical voices. It is the work of a thoughtful person, and it is wide ranging—directed at people who have at least a passing acquaintance with H. L. Mencken, George Steiner, Terry Eagleton, and T. S. Eliot, not to mention French New Wave directors, *The Avengers*, and *The Searchers*. There is a lovely analysis of Rilke’s poem “The Torso of Apollo,” to portray the way that a work of art is part of the tradition of responding to earlier works of art, in effect itself representing “criticism.” Because of the poem, our perception of the qualities of the original work is altered; otherwise, writes Scott, we might be looking at “nothing but cold, broken stone.” Such thoughtful consideration is among this book’s pleasures.

That said—and this review is also an act of criticism, right?—*Better Living through Criticism* reveals what happens to too many people’s appreciation for the arts when they majored in literature in college in the 1980s. The conversation that criticism supposedly represents has been reduced to a one-size-fits-all judgment, and not by the ignoramuses, but by the smart people. Thus, in the chapter “Lost in the Museum,” we are reminded of the “social and economic considerations” that brought masterpieces to the Louvre (where we might encounter the headless statue of Apollo, of Rilke’s poem). “Excellence” is an evaluation that is henceforth to be weighed against the knowledge that the “treasures of civilization housed in this gargantuan pile of masonry were purchased, stolen, commissioned, or coerced so that we . . . might have a look and pick up a cheap souvenir manufactured by sweated labor half a world away. Beneath the steady tread of tourist feet you can hear a faint echo of primordial violence—exploitation, appropriation, objectification.” If you haven’t got the point, Walter Benjamin hammers it home: “No document of civilization . . . is not at the same time a document of barbarism.”

Such scruples sit uneasily with the job of helping the public come to terms with what is frequently on exhibit in museums these days. Especially for folks who have never heard of Jacques Derrida, contemporary art produces puzzlement and discomfort, as well as the feeling that they are missing something. While Scott proposes, for instance, that “art is whatever an artist says it is” (I assume he is not speaking for himself here, but conveying current wisdom), he concedes that “this fluid, boundaryless identity can make it feel more rather than less exclusive.” In other words, you have to be among the cognoscenti to appreciate it.

This “boundaryless” situation was set out by Kant: It is not in the object itself that beauty inheres but in our experience of it. But there is something imperious about aesthetic appreciation, about what we call “taste.” It is fine and good to say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but when something pleases (or displeases) us, we feel that *everyone else* should also be pleased (or displeased), as if they were seeing the object with our eyes. This demand for universal agreement is the essence of “subjective universality.” Scott’s discussion of Kant does not explore the irony that it is often the so-called open-minded who are the most intolerably insistent that everyone agree with their judgment of what is “true” or “good.” The public is correct in its suspicion that both contemporary art and current

critical opinion are produced to express the critics’ superiority and their condescension toward what Scott calls “the middling masses.”

An example he discusses is a 2010 performance piece, *The Artist Is Present*, at New York’s Museum of Modern Art. The artist was the Serbian Marina Abramović, who sat unmoving in a chair in the museum’s atrium while visitors, on the other side of a small table, had the chance to sit opposite her. With all the media and publicity that the museum was able to harness, it was an enormous success, with 750,000 visitors (at \$25 a pop), including Lady Gaga. “Like much contemporary art,” Scott writes, “[*The Artist Is Present*] was (and is) an intensely cerebral undertaking, arising from a set of theoretical concerns about gender, the body, and . . . the institutional and ontological nature of art itself.” Got that?

Scott, to his credit, goes beyond such artspeak. He mentions a strange crowd phenomenon: Some members of the paying audience found the event moving, as recorded by the tear-stained faces captured in photos posted on Tumblr. And a few patrons, according to the curator, succumbed to the illusion that Abramović was falling in love with them. Scott traces these reactions to the power of the human presence. My cynical take is that some people forced themselves into a reaction; after all, they had waited for hours and paid \$25 to be admitted to her presence. Their tears

became a comment on the performance; call it part of the conversation.

Scott does not pay much attention to formal elements in judging a work of art, relegating them to the category of “Formalism,” a resolutely pre-postmodern approach to criticism. Formalism, however, is simply a type of literary analysis that focuses on technical devices, e.g., metrics, figurative language, and so on, attempting thereby to distinguish ordinary language from the literary. In other words, art is not life. And knowledge of formal elements is an indication that a critic has thoroughly studied his subject and understands how it “works.” Otherwise, how is his opinion different from that of ordinary folks? Call it “intellectualizing,” if you like, but it’s important, even as it is, in the best cases, balanced by the critic’s personal reaction. Recall, for instance, how people once relished Pauline Kael’s *New Yorker* reviews. Kael rhapsodized, but she also knew her stuff.

Scott is a good guide to the vexed nature of the contemporary critical terrain, but there is throughout the book an irritatingly indecisive “yes and no,” “either/or” quality to what he says. Clearly, he can’t decide whether the critic should be a “tribune of the common mind” or a “principled antagonist, sidestepping the whims of the crowd in favor of eternal standards or her own idiosyncrasies.”

It is only in the final dialogue, “The End of Criticism,” that Scott offers any insight into his own enthusiasms. His discussion of *Ratatouille* is a fine example of what a good critic brings to the job, returning to his original claim that art and criticism are in conversation. Most important, he conveys what he calls the “precritical capacity for simple delight,” i.e., the simple thrill that a well-crafted work can elicit. Unfortunately, before reaching that point, readers have to wade through the latter part of the book, which mixes in a lot of ugliness—including repetitious statements about market forces, academic battles, the loss of distinction between professional and amateur, careerism vs. idealism, and so on. This “apology” for criticism could have used a little more enthusiasm and some strongly held opinions (imagine a *Times* critic having the nerve to take on the vacuousness of current academic discourse), especially if he is serious in asserting that criticism makes life better. **NR**

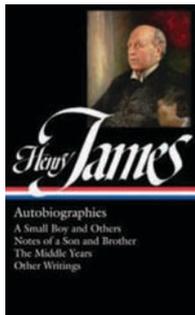
36 WEST PITMAN

What witches, what magicians, but . . . they needed
Sixty years—the slowest sleight of hand
On record. Did they fail to understand
We were sufficiently distracted on
Our own already, as the years receded?
Still, they waved their wands, and what went gone
Were placid, tidy, gabled fronts, not brave
At all (no need) but plain- and vinyl-sided,
Clapboarded, with mums at their foundations;
Neat, painted bungalows that could not save
Themselves from now; the seedy transformations;
Lawns in weeds; the front-porch screens elided;
Junkers blocked on unpaved driveways. Well.
Though sluggish mages, still they cast their spell.

—LEN KRISAK

Inside the Master

LAUREN WEINER



Autobiographies, by Henry James
(Library of America, 850 pp., \$37.50)

THE autobiographical works of Henry James (1843–1916) are from the Master’s later period, and we all know what that means: The style is ornate, and reading it is no picnic.

James would pace around the room and dictate this prose to an assistant at her typewriter. (His main assistant, Theodora Bosanquet, left a fine remembrance of him that’s included in this collection.) “If I may parenthesize,” the author of *Daisy Miller*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *The Ambassadors* will say—giving his reader a sinking feeling. Discussing his cousins in Albany, for example, he writes:

It must be allowed that there was nothing composite in any spell proceeding, whether directly or indirectly, from the great Albany connection: this form of the agreeable, through whatever appeals, could certainly not have been more of a piece, as we say—more of a single superfused complexion, an element or principle that we could in the usual case ever so easily and pleasantly account for.

To make it through the thickets of words, you have to put yourself in a kind of trance. While the *Middle Years* (posthumous, 1917) portion of the volume doesn’t to my mind yield much of interest, the memoirs of his early life richly reward perseverance. *A Small Boy and Others* (1913) and *Notes of a Son and*

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Brother (1914) give us what he called “that intensely ‘reacting’ small organism,” the young Henry James, and evoke with great vividness what Victorian America was like.

James’s third-person descriptions of himself are of a child thrilled “just to *be* somewhere—almost anywhere would do—and somehow receive an impression or an accession, feel a relation or a vibration.” As to “what it at all appreciably gave him,” that would “be difficult to state.” He gamely tries—this is after all James we’re talking about. His apparently photographic memory conveys the New York, Albany, Newport, London, Paris, Geneva, and Bonn of his youth, down to “smell[ing] the cold dusty paint and iron as the rails of the Eighteenth Street corner rub his contemplative nose.”

Shy, sickly, and lacking confidence in his abilities (whether physical, intellectual, or artistic), he projects a surface docility beneath which ferocious powers are developing. The boy hardly looks so much as he “gapes”—that word is used again and again, reflecting the boy’s vulnerability but also his zeal to add to his “impressionable harvest.”

His earliest years were spent in Lower Manhattan, where many James cousins lived. Little Henry Jr. was allowed to wander the streets of Greenwich Village all by himself. The memory stirs in him

wonder at the liberty of range and opportunity of adventure allowed to my tender age; though the puzzle may very well drop, after all, as I ruefully reflect that I couldn’t have been judged at home reckless or adventurous. What I look back to as my infant license can only have had for its ground some timely conviction on the part of my elders that the only form of riot or revel ever known to me would be that of the visiting mind.

He may have been a milquetoast, but milquetoasthood had its privileges.

Circuses and the theater were an obsession for James and his friends and relations, in New York and in the European cities to which his dilettantish, kindly parents took him. Discerning the varying quality of the productions he saw, he started to grasp something crucial: that the authentic critic criticizes not out of animus but from an essentially benevolent position. His boyhood experiences of being spellbound by staged versions of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the works of

Charles Dickens taught him that it was only “onto the shoulders of appreciation” that the “wings” of “conscious criticism” were meant to fit.

This sensibility is in his fiction, too. G. K. Chesterton remarked of James that “his whole world is made out of sympathy”—and so the characters endear themselves to us despite their being weird (Olive Chancellor), or full of inadequacies (Lambert Strether) or even criminal-level duplicities (Madame Merle).

James fans can pick up from the life many connections to the work. We gain insight into such Jamesian literary themes as the nature of artistic inspiration and the constant measuring of the manners and morals of the New World against those of the Old, as well as into the painterly aspects of modern storytelling and the inspiration for the spiritual/material emanations in James’s ghostly tales.

The restless Jameses sailed back and forth across the Atlantic a lot, depositing their five children in far-flung places in search of a good education. That education was highly unsystematic, though. The family sometimes pulled up stakes abruptly. Henry James Sr. lived off investments of the wealth that had been earned by his father, so a downturn in the financial markets could cause a sudden need to economize.

Henry Sr. emerges here as a wonderfully quirky figure: an energetic but not too disciplined public intellectual, an indulgent parent who cultivated in his children, particularly William and Henry, independent-mindedness and an ambition for creative achievements of which he himself was not capable. A disciplinarian he was not. With great affection James writes of him: “Weakness was never so positive and plausible, nor could the attitude of sparing you be more handsomely or on occasion even more comically aggressive.”

The Jameses’ repatriation under financial pressures in 1860 was also, ironically, a return to America from Europe for the sake of high culture. William James wanted to study painting and sculpture under William Morris Hunt in Rhode Island. The apprenticeship was not only William’s but also his brother Henry’s. The future philosopher and founder of American psychology would not end up pursuing the plastic arts, nor would his brother, but it was a key moment.

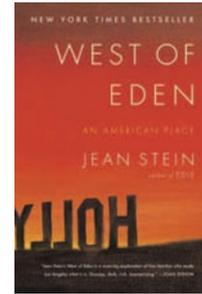
The future muralist John La Farge was a student of Hunt’s alongside William



Henry James Jr.

The Real Land Of Illusions

PETER TONGUETTE



West of Eden: An American Place, by Jean Stein
(Random House, 368 pp., \$30)

IT is possible to gain perspective on almost anything after 70 years. Let us consider, then, Hollywood cinema as it was in 1946.

William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* won plaudits and eight Academy Awards for its consideration of the lot of soldiers after World War II. The film still impresses with its stoicism and simplicity—the way, for instance, Sergeant Stephenson (Fredric March) wants his excited teenage children to quiet down in order to make his return a surprise to his wife (Myrna Loy). Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life* was no blockbuster, but its idea that one's friends and family are to be prized above all else proved appealing over the long run. And it was a film from England—Powell and Pressburger's *A Matter of Life and Death*—that best encapsulated the postwar mood: RAF pilot David Niven has steeled himself to die for God and country, but when a heavenly blunder causes him to retain his life, he determines to do so in the company of charming Kim Hunter.

These films had more than just production quality going for them. They shared a certain gravity—a sense that issues such as war and peace, love and kindness, were to be taken seriously. That does not mean, of course, that those who made these films were moralists, but that the spirit of the age—the West, triumphant in war, proceeding onward and upward at home—seeped into their handiwork.

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James. While the pupils were with their teacher, the tagging-along younger brother was allowed to muck around with casts and canvases in another part of the studio. “No one disturbed me,” writes James. “The earnest workers were elsewhere; I had a chamber of the temple all to myself, with immortal forms and curves, with shadows beautiful and right, waiting there on blank-eyed faces for me to prove myself not helpless.” The forms were “company just then for muddled *me* and for the queer figures projected by my crayon. Frankly, intensely—that was the great thing—these were the hours of Art, art definitely named, looking me full in the face and accepting my stare in return—no longer a tacit implication or a shy subterfuge, but a flagrant unattenuated aim. I had somehow come into the temple by the back door.”

Just as important as the Jamesian independent-mindedness was a particular stance—idealistic and skeptical at the same time—toward religion and morality. Henry Sr., like his friends among the Transcendentalists, was less than impressed with the accomplishments of the leading scientists, clergymen, and businessmen of the day. This attitude was impressed upon the next generation. It shows in the stories and novels of the younger Henry James, which explore what he calls “the Puritan residuum” of the Americans—and by that phrase, he means something pure, something that is able to survive the corruptions of life abroad. It is not conventional; it knows how to distinguish moralism from morality in the true sense.

A highlight of the memoirs is William's career switch from the arts to “strenuous Science in all its exactitude.” Henry calls

his brother “addicted to ‘experiments’ and the consumption of chemicals.” William's “boldly disinterested absorption of curious drugs”—he famously ingested nitrous oxide to test its effects on the brain—was “often appalling to a nature so incurious as mine in *that* direction.” Henry goes on to say that although he himself was not interested in “visibly provoked or engineered phenomena, by that same amount was I open to those of the mysteriously or insidiously aggressive, the ambushed or suffered sort.”

That's indeed what we get in the stories and novels—the spurned lady in *The Aspern Papers*, the conspiracy of Gilbert Osmond and Madame Merle against Isabel Archer in *The Portrait of a Lady*, and so many others. Henry is here defining his young self in contradistinction to William, but when we step back, we see two peas in a pod. It is characteristic of both of them to find odd things to appreciate, including the faculties of appreciation themselves. The famous novelist wrote like a psychologist, and the famous psychologist wrote like a novelist, goes the saying, and it's borne out in spades in this volume.

As is the fact that the return to the homeland was crucial to the eventual success of both. This success, Henry Jr. hints, was in a way built upon the failure of the father: The elder Henry, a promoter of Emanuel Swedenborg's theology, had “gradually ceased to ‘like’ Europe” because, “as a worker in his own field and as to what he held most dear,” he was “scantly heeded” over there. The greatness he nurtured, of course, was to take hold here, after his literary son made a writing life for himself—on both sides of the Atlantic. **NR**

A new oral history of Hollywood's Golden Age, however, might leave some readers thinking that the sincere sentiments of many classic films masked a business (and a town) that was essentially amoral. In this book, Jean Stein—whose thin bibliography also includes oral histories of Robert F. Kennedy and Edie Sedgwick, both published decades ago—makes use of interviews with participants and observers to recount the fates of a quintet of California-based families (the Dohenys, the Warners, and the Steins—the author's family, which included her father, Jules, a founder of MCA—plus the assorted relations of Jane Garland and Jennifer Jones).

The book's prologue frames the picture: Mike Davis, now an author, recalls working as a driver for Gray Line Tours. Assigned to a route that snaked through Hollywood and Beverly Hills, Davis elected not to buy addresses of celebrities, "so I just winged it," he says. "I'd pick out a big house and lie about who lived there." Occasionally, a savvy passenger called him out. "I remember one time exuding 'Here she is—I Love Lucy! There's her house. We'll slow down so you can take photos,'" Davis says. "Then some lady in the back absolutely freaks out. 'I've been on this tour enough times to know that's not Lucille Ball's house. She lives three blocks away.'"

The point, in case you missed it, is that the image Hollywood projects of itself is bogus, and that most are too dim to notice. Later, Davis wags his finger at passengers who have filed out at Grauman's Chinese Theatre "to go venerate the footprints," oblivious to homeless, drug-addicted, or otherwise unwell citizens around them. "Instead of being distressed by the huge moral discrepancy between the myth of Hollywood and its current reality," Davis laments, "most of them only saw what already had been fixed in their minds." To be sure, this episode is unfortunate, but in leading with it, Stein is saying: *Forget all the hokey—here's the real story.*

The book certainly offers plenty of ghoulish stories—none more so than that of Jane Garland. In 1957, a group of young men are retained to serve as "special psychiatric attendants" to Garland, the twenty-something, schizophrenic daughter of a railroad and real-estate tycoon; the misbegotten goal is to acclimate Garland to supposedly normal outings. Walter Hopps, then one of Garland's "attendants," recalls an expedition with her to Disneyland while he was under the influence of marijuana.

"To experience it stoned, in the company of a charming, totally delighted schizophrenic girl—that's the only way to see Disneyland," he says. As a portrait of local wreckage, this chapter would not be out of place in Kenneth Anger's *Hollywood Babylon*.

On the other hand, much of the material concerning Warner Bros. studio head Jack Warner and his wife, Ann, is not half as ghastly as Salvador Dalí's paintings of the couple (reproduced, a bit too gleefully, here). "As a child I was really frightened of that portrait of Mrs. Warner," Stein says, and we can see why: She sits in front of an apocalyptic desert landscape and has a touch of the Crypt Keeper about her.

"Jack Warner was a great character, like all of them," says producer David Geffen. "They were remarkable guys, but they were monsters." But was Warner really so different from most effective businessmen? Son Jack Warner Jr. remembers his father pointing toward a "monstrous" (there's that word again) water tower adorned with the words "Warner Bros." as a kind of conversation-stopper during arguments with others. "He wanted to stress that he ran this company and by God, he did," Jack Jr. says. Meanwhile, daughter Barbara Warner Howard speaks of watching dailies with her father at age eleven; when she observantly spots a mix-up in screen direction during one scene, the old man does not react favorably. "Two months later, I was sent to Switzerland," she says. "They must have had the idea of sending me away before, but my outspokenness clinched it." Readers will be forgiven if they shrug their shoulders at this point.

The chapter on Jennifer Jones is the book's most absorbing. The actress who would later star in *Duel in the Sun* and *Since You Went Away* began life as Phylis Lee Isley in Tulsa, Okla., later taking the name of her first husband, actor Robert Walker. Neither Christian name nor surname passed muster with producer David O. Selznick, who dashed off memos on the matter. "Where the hell is that new name for Phylis Walker?" Selznick writes in 1942. "Personally, I would like to decide on Jennifer and get a one-syllable name that has some rhythm to it and that is easy to remember." Selznick shepherded Jones's career, becoming her second husband and father to daughter Mary Jennifer.

Innocent enough beginnings, perhaps, but what follows is bleak stuff. Psychiatrist Beatriz Foster says of Mary Jennifer: "She had this habit of going to high-rises, even

walking on the roof, and together we tried to figure out her obsession with high places." This rather understated remark foretells Mary Jennifer's demise in 1976, when she died following a jump from a 22-storey building. Some years earlier, Jones herself made an attempt at suicide by drowning, and her sad tale may reach its nadir in an anecdote from hairstylist Tomoyuki Takei, who recalls that the actress never removed her makeup before retiring to bed. "She said it was 'in case I get sick at night and have to go to the hospital. Somebody's going to take a picture of me, and I don't want to be without makeup,'" Takei says. "She did this every night."

Stein does herself no favors in presenting this material as oral history; instead of supplying background about the speakers in the text, she gives readers brief biographical notes at the end (which many will find themselves referring to continually). Key facts and potent observations get lost amid the interviewees' soliloquies; the book comes to resemble a telephone party line dominated by gossipy bores.

In the end, the laundry list of alternately tawdry and tedious tales is wearying. And it must be reiterated: No matter how strange, greedy, or ethically lacking a number of these long-departed people are, they often produced work that reflected higher values. The book bolsters the idea that it is best to distinguish entirely between the makers of the art and the art itself.

Consider an amusing, only mildly disturbing story told by Dennis Hopper's daughter, Marin, about visits to the Malibu residence of Larry Hagman. "I remember going there, and it was so strange, because every Sunday he took a vow of silence, so he wouldn't speak to anyone," she says, adding that Hagman would dress up "in some kind of caftan with a hood" and parade about the beach with a giant flag.

Now, Larry Hagman was the son of Mary Martin, the all-American actress and singer who portrayed such paragons of virtue as Maria von Trapp in the Broadway production of *The Sound of Music*. ("Mary Martin is our ideal, our dream, our faith," wrote theater critic Harold Clurman.) That her grown son partook in wacky weekend rituals does nothing to help us appreciate—nor anything to diminish—her legacy as a performer, or his.

To put it another way: Jack Warner might not have been the nicest guy in town, but he was still capable of producing *My Fair Lady*. **NR**

Film
**Testimony
From Hell**

ROSS DOUTHAT

IN the tangled debates about the Holocaust and theodicy, I often find myself coming back to a line from the Australian critic Clive James, criticizing one of the innumerable attempts to trace the Shoah back to one specific, manageable taproot. “Not many of us,” James wrote, “in a secular age, are willing to concede that, in the form of Hitler, Satan visited the Earth, recruited an army of sinners, and fought and won a battle against God.”

What this line gets at is the strange double effect of the Holocaust on religious belief. On the one hand, in the shadow of Auschwitz, faith quails, God’s presence seems to vanish, and the problem of evil rises to its sharpest pitch. And yet at the same time the Holocaust also seems to be beyond secular and materialist categories: The annihilation of God’s chosen people in a hellscape crafted with modern industrial precision and a satanic sense of “humor” (*work makes you free; hurry up into the shower; there’s coffee waiting for you*) feels inherently metaphysical, the closest thing to a proof of the existence of the prince of this world as history has supplied. Which should leave both the faithful and the skeptical, if we’re honest, not with either piety or unbelief, but with a kind of supernatural fear.

The achievement of *Son of Saul*, a Hungarian film recently honored with the Oscar for best foreign film, is to capture that sense of metaphysical dread, to take us inside the death camps the way Dante takes us inside the Inferno—except with no Virgil or Beatrice promising ascent.

The movie’s unbearable subject is the Sonderkommandos, those Jews who were employed—that is, enslaved—by the Nazis to help manage the mass murder of their fellow Jews. It opens with the camera attaching itself to one of these men—Saul Auslander (Géza Röhrig)—as he directs the crowds of prisoners emerging, amid trees and



Géza Röhrig and Amitai Kedar in *Son of Saul*

greenery, from a fresh-arriving train. It takes a few moments, at least, before you accept what’s actually going on—that the clothes he helps people hang up are bound for the furnace, the jewels he helps them remove are destined for Nazi treasure chests, and the people themselves . . .

And then it happens. Except, as with most of the horrors in the movie, it happens slightly out of focus, in a corner of the screen, while the camera stays with Saul—following him and circling around him and lingering only on Röhrig’s angular, impassive face.

The nightmare is always there, behind or around or alongside him—a man being beaten, people being shot and pitched into pits, a corpse’s bare breast, a pile of naked limbs and torsos, worse things still. But just as in a horror film (a genre that knows the devil exists but isn’t sure about God) the worst thing is what you can’t quite make out, what hovers in the shadows or on the edge of the frame, *Son of Saul* keeps you in a state of agony over what you could see, and don’t want to, and fear that in the next moment you might. And then at a certain point you realize that what the movie is really doing is giving you a sense of how the human mind would survive in such a hell: by looking, yet not seeing fully, or seeing only the minimum required to stay alive.

There is a plot as well. That first load of human bodies includes a boy who lives for a moment after the gas is with-

drawn, and Saul recognizes him—or so he says; the movie allows for ambiguity about this—as his own son, born out of wedlock. The corpse is taken by a doctor for autopsy, which allows Saul the time he needs to set out on a quest for a rabbi, so that he can give the boy a Jewish burial instead of consigning him to the ovens.

The quest is both complicated and assisted by Saul’s half-accidental recruitment into a plot by his fellow Sonderkommandos, involving guns and explosives, cameras to document what’s happening, and the hope of some kind of escape. (There was a real Sonderkommando uprising in Auschwitz late in the war, which succeeded in damaging one of the crematoria and killing a clutch of SS men; it ended the way you would expect.) And both Saul’s singular mission and the larger plot are a race against the clock, because the Sonderkommandos know that they’re scheduled for termination; the Nazis disposed of their unwilling “helpers” every few months and replaced them with a new battalion.

So *Son of Saul* offers, amid its horror, two paths to resistance: one religious and one secular, one accepting of death’s inevitability and one still hoping for escape. And it does not choose between them, or ask us to judge either one superior. That is left to God alone—wherever, in the most satanic of all mankind’s works, His presence might be found. **NR**

O.J. Trumps Trump

SOMETHING surreal happened a few days back. The cable news networks all cut away from the political horse race and their current ratings cash cow, Donald Trump, to focus on the O.J. Simpson trial.

It was a flashback to my childhood, when O.J. and Marcia Clark and Johnnie Cochran were on television every day. O.J.'s trial for the vicious murders of Nicole Brown and Ronald Goldman was inescapable. It was "reality news" in embryo. He was everywhere: broadcast networks, cable channels, newspapers, magazines.

He was even in my schoolhouse: One of my more vivid memories from middle school is of milling about on the hardwood basketball floor, waiting for gym class to end, when the overhead speakers crackled to life. "O.J. Simpson has been found innocent," the principal said. Or something like it, anyway; 13-year-old Sonny probably wasn't ready to grapple with the nuances of "innocent" versus "not guilty." More clearly do I remember the sociology of the moment: African-American kids on one side of the room whooping it up; white kids on the other, bemused. It may not have been the first time I noticed race as a concept rather than a simple skin color, but it was certainly the most intense.

And then there I was 20 years later, looking at the wall of televisions in the *Washington Free Beacon's* "war room," listening to CNN talk about the discovery of a knife on the property O.J. once owned. It had been found years ago by a construction worker and handed over to an off-duty cop who, for some odd reason, decided to keep it for himself. The blood-stained implement spent years in a sock drawer or some such, reappearing only when the cop remembered that he still had it.

It's such an obviously absurd story—one that the owner of the construction company quickly and vociferously denied, by the way—that it's almost certainly false in some manner. Didn't really matter, though. There were the media, breathlessly covering the case yet again, running through the thousands of hours of archived footage. O.J. trying on a glove. O.J. hearing the not-guilty verdict. O.J. in a white Bronco. O.J. O.J. O.J. For at least a few hours that Friday, the Juice was loose again.

Perhaps it's no accident that "O.J.'s" knife was "rediscovered" recently, given that the case is the subject of a melodramatic and critically acclaimed true-crime miniseries. *American Crime Story: The People v. O.J. Simpson* is doing big numbers for the cable network FX: The premiere garnered more than 8.3 million viewers in "live plus three" (that is, people who watched it the day it aired or over the

next three days on their DVRs), a record number for series premieres on the network.

The show is an entertaining bit of overly dramatic silliness. But it's also insightful in its treatment of reality news. We see the way the culture helped corrupt the case: Robert Shapiro trying to convince *The New Yorker* that it was about the LAPD's trying to frame a black man, Judge Lance Ito's preoccupation with celebrities, that sort of thing.

More tenuously—but far more humorously—*American Crime Story* is also, in a way, *The Kim Kardashian Origin Story*. Astute viewers will perhaps remember that the O.J. Simpson trial was the nation's first introduction to Robert Kardashian, Kim's father. And her presence looms over the first couple of episodes, strangely enough. When O.J. hides out in Robert Kardashian's house before embarking on the infamous Bronco chase, he pulls a gun out in the future reality star's bedroom. "Do not kill yourself in Kimmy's bedroom!" Robert plaintively cries, a line and an image that can only prompt hard-to-stifle guffaws in the cognizant viewer.

Later, we see Kim and her siblings cheering O.J. on during the chase. The scene is almost certainly fabricated, as is a conversation that Robert has with his kids at a restaurant in the next episode. The family manages to score primo seats in a crowded Los Angeles restaurant because the hostess recognizes the father: "You're Richard Kordovian!" she yips, before guiding them to their seats ahead of the waiting masses. Wowed by the star treatment she and her family are receiving, Kimmy looks awed.

"We are Kardashians, and in this family, being a good person and a loyal friend is more important than being famous," Robert says, trying to extinguish the stars flitting through Kim's eyes. "Fame is fleeting, it's hollow. It means nothing at all without a virtuous heart." We, the audience, are meant to giggle at these admonitions, knowing the path Kim and her clan will travel to achieve stardom. But it's a potent reminder of just how our most vacuous, empty-headed, unproductive "famous" person got her first taste of glory.

The only story capable of dethroning the current king of hare-brained reality-news spectacle, Donald Trump—he of the casinos, reality-TV shows, beauty pageants, and mediocre steaks—was the original reality-news spectacle, O.J. Simpson. That his case, which would (eventually) bring us Kim Kardashian—she of the sex tape, emojis, never-ending E! series, and constant coverage on magazine racks—is the only thing that could put a damper on cable news's Trumpmania is fitting.

And not something that should comfort the American people.

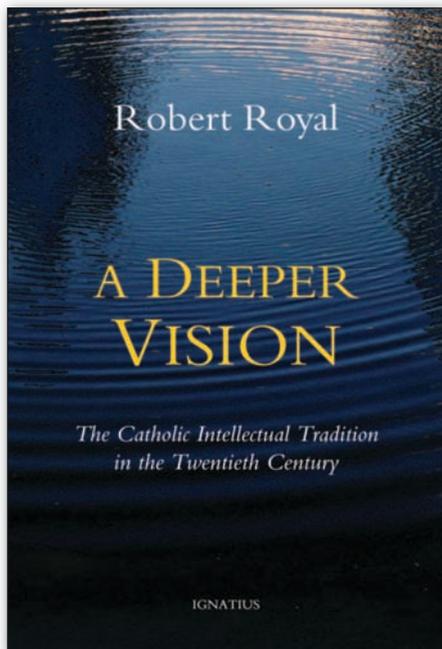
NR



O.J. Simpson and Donald Trump

Mr. Bunch is the executive editor of the *Washington Free Beacon*.

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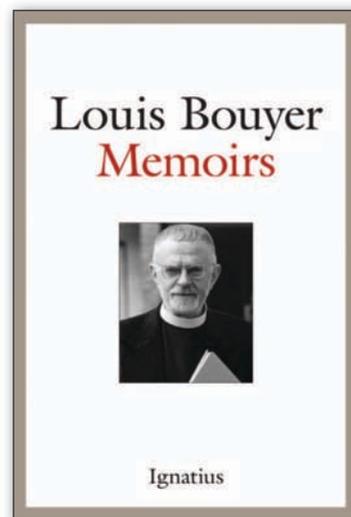
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