

the weekly

# Standard

MARCH 18, 2013

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**BETWEEN  
A ROCK...**

The dilemma  
of the Republican party  
BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

**...AND  
A HARD  
PLACE**



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# The Customer Is Always Wrong

The recent decision of the *Washington Post* to abolish its ombudsman has inspired a variety of responses among the chattering classes. Some have been cynical, some have been furious, and some have been anguished—although, to be truthful, we took a certain pleasure in *Post* publisher Katharine Weymouth’s announcement, which was clothed in the kind of corporatespeak—“The world has changed, and we at the *Post* must change with it”—intended to disguise economic decline as social progress. We fall somewhere between cynicism and indifference.

No, here at THE SCRAPBOOK, we see all this as a natural evolution of the Internet era. Like most newspapers, the *Washington Post* has relentlessly shrunk in size and stature, and the shrinkage has taken its toll on what might be called the personality of the *Post*. Its writers and editors are disconcerted by the brave new world of journalism, even angry—as who wouldn’t be if their business were collapsing? But they have chosen to direct their anger at an unlikely, one might even say undeserving, target: the diminishing ranks of *Post* readers.

The abolition of the ombudsman, and his/her weekly column on the editorial page, is a case in point: If

you’re thoroughly annoyed with the people who purchase your product, really offended by them, what better way to retaliate than to kick their representative down the staircase?

The *Post*, which was always famous for a certain sanctimoniousness of tone, has become a daily encyclopedia of snark, a gathering place for smirking columnists and reporters—Ezra Klein, Dana Milbank, Al Kamen, Richard Cohen, Eugene Robinson, Philip Kennicott, even the TV writer Lisa de Moraes—whose contempt for readers is nearly as great as their professional self-regard.

We found evidence of this last week in a most unlikely location: the *Post* sports pages. Columnist Mike Wise was writing about a Washington Redskin of yesteryear named Dave Kopay, who acquired a brief notoriety in retirement when, 38 years ago, he became the first NFL player to reveal publicly that he is gay. Kopay has complained that his aspiration to coach in the NFL was thwarted by prejudice, which may or may not be true; but he played only a single season for the Redskins (1969-70), and that was long before anyone in Washington knew anything about his private life.

Of course, all of this is natural fodder for a sports columnist, and

Wise doesn’t fail us: He is livid about current players being questioned by teams about their sex lives—“stupid and criminal”—and adds, parenthetically, that during his Redskins tenure Kopay had “a sexual encounter” with a teammate named Jerry Smith, who subsequently died of AIDS.

Yes, Burgundy and Gold faithful, two of [Vince] Lombardi’s grittiest, durable players in his one season in Washington had a dalliance. Get over it.

To which THE SCRAPBOOK could only respond, “I beg your pardon?” To our knowledge, no Redskins fan or *Post* reader has ever publicly expressed any view on the “dalliance” of Jerry Smith and Dave Kopay, or given much extended thought to the two, or lamented that they played together during Vince Lombardi’s brief tenure as Redskins coach.

No, the presumption of prejudice, discernment of rage, the insult to character is entirely a product of the mind of the *Post* columnist, whose fury, sarcasm (“Burgundy and Gold faithful”), and contempt (“get over it”) are directed, typically but inexplicably, toward the sports-minded citizens of the nation’s capital who buy his newspaper and read his column.

For now. ♦

## News Flash: Study Confirms Tea Party’s 18th-Century Roots

A new conspiracy theory began percolating on the port side of the Internet last month. The essentials of the story are best summed up by this *Huffington Post* headline: “Study Confirms Tea Party Was Created by Big Tobacco and Billionaire Koch Brothers.” Confirms? Many on the left have alleged that the Koch

brothers, prominent philanthropists and supporters of libertarian causes, were puppeteering the Tea Party, which in fact was as spontaneous a political uprising as any seen in recent American history. Whatever one’s views of the Tea Party, whether one takes the Koch accusation seriously has proved to be a good litmus test for honesty and sobriety in political discourse. As for the supposed role of Big Tobacco in the Tea Party, THE SCRAPBOOK is regrettably well-versed in left-wing conspiracy theories, but

the allegation that the Tea Party wants to give you cancer was new to us.

So who cooked up this latest absurdity to discredit conservatives? We were a bit taken aback by the answer—the source was a “study” funded by the National Cancer Institute of the National Institutes of Health. Here are your tax dollars at work, folks: “Nonprofit organizations associated with the Tea Party have longstanding ties to tobacco companies, and continue to advocate on behalf of the tobacco industry’s anti-tax, anti-

regulation agenda.” The “study” goes on to note that two Koch-funded groups, Americans for Prosperity and FreedomWorks, are “supporting the tobacco companies’ political agenda.” Further, tobacco companies—along with many other corporate entities—gave Koch-funded groups a few million dollars over decades.

But the *pièce de résistance* unearthed by the study was the fact that Citizens for a Sound Economy—a precursor to FreedomWorks—had set up a website with the address USTeaParty.com back in 2002. The website was “open to all Americans who feel our taxes are too high and the tax code is too complicated.” As Jacob Sullum at *Reason* magazine reports, one of the authors of the study went on to say, “The records indicate that the Tea Party has been shaped by the tobacco industry and is not a spontaneous grassroots movement at all.” Case closed!

It falls to THE SCRAPBOOK to point out the obvious here. One, the Koch brothers are worth in excess of \$80 billion; a few million dispensed to pet political causes hardly indicates fealty to Big Tobacco. Two, the Tea Party is a well-known and much-beloved event in American history that used to be (and perhaps still is) taught to every American schoolchild. That otherwise unrelated groups holding shared antitax views would seek to wrap themselves in its aura reveals nothing but its political potency.

And speaking of shared political views, the *Huffington Post* informs us that this study was “peer-reviewed,” which rather depressingly says a lot about the general intellectual milieu of those on the receiving end of government research grants.

The good news is that Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, was asked about the study last week at a congressional hearing. Not only did he refuse to defend the study, Sullum reports Collins said he was “quite troubled” by it. Collins added, “We thought we were funding a different kind of research when those grants were awarded.”

So, to summarize, a powerful fed-



eral bureaucracy claims your tax dollars to fund research aimed at discrediting those who feel the federal government is too big and powerful. When asked to account for this, the bureaucrats-in-charge concede the government is too sprawling for them to keep tabs on. And yet, somehow the Koch brothers are the ones with a sub rosa agenda aimed at controlling the lives of Americans.

The final indignity is this: David Koch is perhaps the largest private funder of cancer research in the country. He gave \$100 million to build the David H. Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and has done much more.

What exactly does the National Cancer Institute think it is doing when it subsidizes hamfisted attempts to discredit him? ♦

## Now on Display in Caracas

Recently deceased Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez is officially joining the ranks of Vladimir Lenin, Mao Zedong, Kim Il Sung, and Ferdinand Marcos—yes, El Jefe is now a member of the Glass Coffin Club for Villains and Dictators (not to be confused with the Glass Coffin Club for Saints and Martyrs).

According to the Associated Press,

Venezuela's "Vice President Nicolas Maduro says the remains will be put on permanent display at the Museum of the Revolution" and "displayed in a glass casket so that 'his people will always have him.'"

Think of all the class trips that will be taken to the Museum of the Revolution so the Children of the Hugo Mummy can get up close and personal with the anticapitalist cadaver. The lines at first will no doubt be long—the kids will probably have to wait behind Danny Glover and Sean Penn. But perhaps there will be memorabilia in display cases to keep them occupied—a beret here, a handkerchief there. And maybe they can watch a videotaped message from Joe Kennedy thanking the late dictator for the gift of heating oil to the low-income community of Massachusetts.

If museum officials have even the slightest of capitalist tendencies, they might want to direct the visitors to the exits through the gift store, where they can buy postcards and T-shirts say-

ing "I'm stuffed!" or "Feeling stiff?"

Then again, if a different regime better representing the people of Venezuela takes power, Chávez's remains might end up as just a temporary exhibit and eventually be buried along with his legacy. We can only hope. ♦

## Correction

The March 4, 2013, issue of THE WEEKLY STANDARD includes two erroneous photo captions. The reenactor's firearm on page 23 is apparently a reproduction of a British musket, not a long rifle. The rifles shown on page 25, being fired by Dwight D. Eisenhower, Winston Churchill, and Omar Bradley, are M1 carbines. We thank the many readers who alerted us to the errors. ♦



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## Health of Nations

Being a health nut and a creature of habit, I claim as my breakfast of champions six pieces of bacon and a large tankard of iced tea spiked with Sweet’N Low. That way, I quickly cover the essential food groups (sodium, grease, caffeine, saccharin, etc.). But in this age of the Nanny Nutritionist, I’m cognizant of the fact that the good life is a well-balanced one. So on two out of three mornings, I dutifully take up my bowl of high-fiber Special K, sweetened with a dollop of organic honey and studded with fresh blackberries. Doing so causes me to feel clean and whole and slightly accomplished, since, like most Americans, I enjoy setting unimpressive goals, then celebrating myself for achieving them.

For in choosing such healthy goodness, I am not merely fortifying, but antioxidizing. The plentiful antioxidants in the likes of honey and blackberries—as any seeker who reads omnipresent Internet health squibs knows—kill cancer-causing free radicals. What free radicals are, I can’t exactly say. Science wasn’t my primary area of emphasis in school—I had bigger fish to fry in Social Studies and Physical Education. But I’ve read enough to know that free radicals need to be killed. Preferably by antioxidants.

So imagine my puzzlement when I sat down one recent morning with my antioxidant bounty and turned to that ever-reliable source of panic, alarm, and predictable contrarianism—my Yahoo! homepage—only to find out that there might be a slight addendum to antioxidant/free radical science. It turns out that Nobel laureate James Watson, codiscoverer of the double-helix structure of DNA, now says that

the time has come “to seriously ask whether antioxidant use much more likely causes than prevents cancer.”

Ten years ago, the news that I might be pumping cancer into my system with the very nutrients that I thought were preventing it would’ve rocked me. But by now, I’m so jaded I might as well have been told that ice makes you warm or water makes you dry. I’ve ceased giving much credence to any health “expert,” since the experts seem to reverse



themselves every time they speak. It’s all come to resemble the hoary trope invoked by every small-market meteorologist trying to pass for Mark Twain: “If you don’t like the weather in [insert your locality here], wait five minutes. It’ll change.”

For there are now enough headline-hunting researchers making enough questionable discoveries that the four shakiest words in the English language have come to be “a new study shows.” Over the years, a short list of things touted by science as making us less healthy or even killing us would include cholesterol, red meat, eggs, vitamins, grains, estrogen, fish, alcohol, aspirin, sun, coffee, and contracted cardio. Depending on which

day of the week you check, that might be the very list of things pushed by other scientists as promoting good health and longevity. Recently, new research broke that suggests it’s healthier to be a bit overweight. That’s the happiest news for our chronically indulgent nation since another study claimed that onanism—once believed to cause blindness and hairy palms—might prevent prostate cancer.

Mind you, I’m not completely against feigning certitude regarding things we will forever be uncertain about. I am, after all, a professional journalist. It’s my job to pretend I know things that I don’t. But only take such pronouncements to the bank if you enjoy the prospect of future disappointment. As Einstein said, essentially admitting he was no Einstein, “If we knew what we were doing, it wouldn’t be called research, would it?”

The science writer David H. Freedman, in his excellent book *Wrong: Why Experts Keep Failing Us—and How to Know When Not to Trust Them*, cites the work of John Ioannidis, who studies the studies, and who has calculated that two out of three times it takes only a few years, and often only a few months, until studies published in medical journals are either fully refuted or found to be exaggerated.

It’s enough to make you stand back in disbelief. Though you don’t want to stand for too long, since some studies suggest that excessive standing can cause everything from varicose veins to spontaneous abortions. (On the other hand, say other studies, sitting kills too.)

If you’re like me, you don’t know what to do with all these mixed messages. Which is why I suggest taking up smoking—preferably cigarettes with high tar content and no filters. Yes, I’m well aware that the science is as close to unanimous as science gets that smoking kills.

But wait five minutes. It’ll change.

MATT LABASH

# Sound and Fury

What to make of Rand Paul's 12 hours and 52 minutes of fame? Was his filibuster on the floor of the Senate last Wednesday, as Charles Krauthammer said on Fox's *Special Report*, though substantively misguided, "a stroke of political genius"? Was it, as Seth Lipsky suggested in a column in the *New York Post*, "wonderful," signifying both that "our country is in a constitutional moment" and "the rise of a new generation of Republican constitutional conservatives"? Or was it, as William Shakespeare wrote ahead of the fact, "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"?

Forced to choose among three of our favorite pundits, we incline toward Shakespeare. That's not to say Krauthammer isn't right to be struck by Paul's political talent. The senator dramatically seized a moment to make a point. He made himself briefly a central figure on the national stage. He demonstrated a political entrepreneurship that's mystifyingly lacking in many of his GOP colleagues on Capitol Hill.

On the other hand, Paul's political genius strikes us as very much of the short-term variety. Will it ultimately serve him well to be the spokesman for the Code Pink faction of the Republican party? How much staying power is there in a political stance that requires waxing semihysterical about the imminent threat of Obama-ordered drone strikes against Americans sitting in cafés? And as for the other Republican senators who rushed to the floor to cheer Paul on, won't they soon be entertaining second thoughts? Is patting Rand Paul on the back for his fearmongering a plausible path to the presidency for Marco Rubio or Ted Cruz? Is embracing kookiness a winning strategy for the Republican party? We doubt it.

As for Lipsky, he's right to point out that, to the extent Paul struck a chord that resonated among listeners of good sense, it was a constitutionalist one. The Obama administration's disdain for the Constitution and for the rule of law is startling. In reaction to that, and to the nanny state and crony government more broadly, conservatives

have rediscovered constitutionalism and brought it politically to the fore. A restoration of constitutional forms and limits is a key element in the Republican vision. But the revival of constitutionalism is a serious task. Contra Lipsky, it does no favor to the cause of conservative constitutionalism to let it become identified with pseudo-constitutionalist paranoia.

After all, Lipsky himself acknowledges that "it's hard to see where Obama has run off the constitutional rails so far in the drone warfare." And neither Lipsky, nor others who want to give Paul the benefit of the doubt, have explained why anyone should take seriously what David Frum calls Rand Paul's "nightmare out of a dystopian future: an evil future president shooting a missile at an American having coffee in a neighborhood café, merely on suspicion, without any due process of law." Such an act would be illegal and unconstitutional, and if a president gave such an order, it should not and would not be obeyed. Meanwhile, there are important questions



Code Pink activists thank Rand Paul for his filibuster.

about both the efficacy and safeguards of the real, existing drone program of the U.S. government. But precisely because such issues are complicated ones and require argument, not demagoguery, Paul went out of his way not to deal with them on the Senate floor.

Frum worries that Paul's moment of glory suggests that "the Republican party used to be the party more serious about defending America. Now it provides a home to those more doubtful that America is worth defending." We trust that Republicans are still serious about defending America. And while Obama's a bad president, and America's got many problems, it isn't, as Paul sometimes seemed to suggest, hurtling towards tyranny.

Which brings us back to Shakespeare. It would of course be unfair to compare Rand Paul to Macbeth—unfair both to Paul's lawfulness and to Macbeth's greatness (of a kind). It would be unfair to compare conservative talk radio to Lady Macbeth, just because both recklessly egg on their heroes. But it's true that a Republican party

that follows the path of Rand Paul will end up as thoroughly defeated at the ballot box as Macbeth was routed on the battlefield of Dunsinane. And as deservedly so.

But there is another course for Republicans. It's increasingly clear, just two months into his second term, that President Obama has overreached on behalf of a rhetorically tired and substantively discredited agenda. "We still have judgment here." Liberalism will be ripe for the judgment of the American people in 2014 and in 2016.

But you can't beat something with nothing. The filibusterer from Kentucky has had "his hour upon the stage." When will other, more serious, Republican *dramatis personae* step forward?

—William Kristol

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# What Did Iran Know?

Last week, the U.S. government announced that Sulaiman Abu Ghaith, Osama bin Laden's Kuwaiti-born spokesman and son-in-law, had been arrested in Jordan and is awaiting trial in New York City. The Obama administration's decision to place Abu Ghaith in the criminal justice system reignited a longstanding debate about the best way to deal with senior al Qaeda leaders. For example, Senator Lindsey Graham had this reaction: "The Congress has tried to tell the administration that when it comes to people like this we want them to go to Gitmo to be held for interrogation purposes."



Sulaiman Abu Ghaith

Here is one question interrogators would almost certainly need substantial time to explore: What does Abu Ghaith know about al Qaeda's relationship with Iran?

Beginning in 2002, and for much of the post-9/11 period, Abu Ghaith lived in Iran. He operated freely for part of that time. The Iranians placed Abu Ghaith under a loose form of house arrest in 2003. But they reportedly eased their grip on him sometime in 2010. After leaving Iran, Abu Ghaith was detained in Turkey earlier this year—before being picked up by the FBI in Jordan.

As a trusted member of bin Laden's inner circle who had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks, Abu Ghaith recruited Kuwaitis for training in al Qaeda's Afghan camps. In the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, he served as bin Laden's chief apologist and propagandist. In late 2001, he

threatened America while sitting alongside bin Laden and Ayman al Zawahiri in al Qaeda videos.

But with the American-led manhunt under way, he and other senior al Qaeda operatives soon sought refuge with Afghanistan's western neighbor. The Obama administration's indictment reads: "During 2002, Abu Ghaith arranged to be, and was, smuggled successfully from Afghanistan into Iran." The indictment is limited to Abu Ghaith's involvement in al Qaeda activities in 2001 and 2002. We do not know exactly when in 2002 he relocated to Iran. But a great deal of his work was almost certainly done from the mullahs' refuge.

In June 2002, Abu Ghaith published a statement online saying that "Al Qaeda has the right to kill four million Americans, including one million children, displace double that figure, and injure and cripple hundreds and thousands." In his memoir, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA*, former CIA director George Tenet says that an alarmed U.S. government "had to consider the possibility that Abu Ghaith was attempting to justify the future use of weapons of mass destruction that might greatly exceed the death toll of 9/11."

Fortunately, no such attack took place. But in an audio recording released that same June, Abu Ghaith claimed credit on behalf of al Qaeda for the April 11, 2002, truck bombing of a Tunisian synagogue. NBC News and the Associated Press reported that the cell responsible for the bombing had been in touch with al Qaeda leaders inside Iran.

In July 2002, Abu Ghaith threatened more bloodshed. "Al Qaeda will organize more attacks inside American territory and outside, at the moment we choose, at the place we choose and with the objectives that we want," he said, according to an account published at the time by the Associated Press.

In October 2002, an al Qaeda cell recruited and indoctrinated by Abu Ghaith opened fire on U.S. Marines stationed on Kuwait's Faylaka Island. One Marine was killed and another was seriously wounded. Was bin Laden's man in contact with the cell beforehand? We don't know.

Then, in November 2002, al Qaeda terrorists attacked an Israeli hotel, killing 13 people, and tried to down an Israeli jetliner in Mombasa, Kenya. Abu Ghaith claimed credit for that operation on behalf of al Qaeda the following month. Al Qaeda has strict protocols for claiming responsibility for its attacks. That Abu Ghaith trumpeted the organization's culpability in Tunisia and Kenya strongly suggests he was coordinating with al Qaeda's most senior leaders at the time.

Also in December 2002, Abu Ghaith threatened additional attacks against the United States and Israel. And bin Laden's spokesman warned the Muslim world of the "danger of what America and its allies are preparing against Iraq and its people," which "is not limited to overthrowing the infidel regime and its dictator but is aimed at . . . Balkanizing this great country."

At some point in 2003, after repeated complaints from

the United States and its allies, the Iranians placed Abu Ghaith and other senior al Qaeda operatives under house arrest. Abu Ghaith was mostly quiet in the years that followed, and we cannot be sure what he was up to.

But according to the Obama administration, al Qaeda has operated a facilitation network inside Iran since at least 2005 under an “agreement” with the Iranian regime. Today, that network is led by one of Abu Ghaith’s fellow Kuwaitis, a notorious al Qaeda operative named Muhsin al Fadhli. Was Abu Ghaith involved in al Fadhli’s network? It is a reasonable question given the two have reportedly known one another since before the 9/11 attacks.

In the weeks to come, we may learn more about Abu Ghaith’s arrest and questioning. But the types of interrogations required to unpack Iran’s complex relationship with al Qaeda could take months. Has Abu Ghaith been forthcoming about these ties during his short time in custody?

The Obama administration has long wanted to showcase its ability to put terrorists on trial in the U.S. criminal justice system. It would be a travesty if, as a consequence, the administration squandered an opportunity to gain an invaluable window into the alliance between the world’s foremost state sponsor of terrorism and America’s principal terrorist enemy.

—Thomas Foscelyn

# Spender in Chief

On March 6, Barack Obama invited a dozen Republican senators to dine with him at the Jefferson Hotel in Washington. The group spent virtually all of their time discussing debt, deficits, and spending. Obama picked up the tab. The next day, he hosted House Budget chairman Paul Ryan, along with his Democratic counterpart, for a lunch of grilled sea bass and roasted vegetable ragu and more discussion. This week, Obama will travel to Capitol Hill for meetings with Republicans in both chambers of Congress. All of this on top of personal phone calls he made to Republican lawmakers he thinks could be open to working with the White House.

What’s going on here?

Is a president who defends activist government at every turn and has added \$6 trillion to the national debt in four years suddenly interested in an open and honest discussion of fiscal restraint? Is a president who until very recently boasted about his willingness and ability to go around con-

## What’s Next for Businesses and Health Care?

**By Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

This month marks the third anniversary of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA) becoming law. And there’s still a lot businesses don’t know about the health reform law.

PPACA has created enormous uncertainty for companies of every size—especially America’s small businesses. Without knowing what taxes, fines, fees, and rules they’ll be subjected to—and without having a lot of guidance on how to comply with all that red tape—it’s hard for business owners to plan. It’s hard for them to invest and hire as well as know how to offer coverage to their employees. On top of that, the law contains \$800 billion in higher taxes and hundreds of new regulations and mandates that will drive up costs and eliminate jobs, creating even more instability and uncertainty in our economy. But one thing is certain—outright

repeal is not a practical option. The business community’s challenge now is to be engaged with the administration as it issues rules to flesh out the policies and implement the new requirements over the next four years. The U.S. Chamber has already filed nearly 60 comment letters, which have led to several significant improvements in health care regulations. We will continue to represent and protect the interests of consumers and businesses during this critical process.

The business community will work to mitigate the damage done to companies and employers as the implementation of PPACA continues, but we can’t lose sight of the fact that the American health care system still needs reform. Even with 2,700 pages of legislation, significant challenges remain. Health care costs are climbing, and too many Americans will continue to be uninsured or underinsured. Patients have inadequate information on the quality and value of many services, hindering their ability to make well-informed choices about their care. More

Americans are suffering from preventable chronic diseases that significantly drive up health care costs.

Even as PPACA is being implemented, the Chamber will work to advance crucial reforms to the health care system. It is essential that we fix our entitlement programs, control rising costs for employers and families, improve wellness and prevent chronic diseases, expand access to insurance and health services, raise the quality of patient care, and advance innovation.

Just because we’ve been saddled with a burdensome law doesn’t mean we have to settle for a dysfunctional health system. If the business community works together, we can minimize the negative impact of PPACA and lead the charge on the market-driven solutions that will help deliver the kind of health care system America deserves.



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gressional Republicans, and traveled the country proving it, suddenly eager to engage them?

Theoretically, the answer to both questions might be yes, just as, theoretically, I could win my age group in the Ironman Kona next year. But believing that Obama is sincere requires accepting that he now believes in a means he's largely rejected (bipartisanship) towards an end he doesn't seem to want (reducing the debt).

Here's another possibility: The White House screwed up the sequester fight, the president's approval ratings are dropping, heretofore-friendly reporters are criticizing his failure to lead, and, while Obama remains relatively unconcerned about debt and deficits, he recognizes the political utility of reaching out to Republicans now in order to demonize them once again in the months leading up to the 2014 midterm elections. In short, it's a setup.

This is a cynical view, to be sure, but there's good reason to believe it's the correct one.

First, there is little evidence Barack Obama wants to cut spending or reform the entitlements driving our debt. He promised shortly before his inauguration that entitlement reform would be "central" to his efforts to reduce the deficit. It hasn't been. Obama's budget proposals have largely ignored entitlements. After his own debt commission offered a specific reform blueprint, the president refused to embrace it. In the summer of 2011, when reporters pressed White House press secretary Jay Carney for an actual plan from the administration, he said, with evident frustration: "You need it written down?" Last year, in an exchange on the subject with Paul Ryan, former Treasury secretary Tim Geithner criticized Ryan's entitlement reform proposals and acknowledged that the Obama administration didn't have any of their own. "You are right to say we're not coming here to say we have a definitive solution to that long-term problem. What we know is we don't like yours." In an interview last July with *National Journal*, former top Obama adviser David Axelrod was asked to outline the president's priorities in a second term. He listed six separate issues but said nothing about debt and deficits. When David Letterman asked Obama about the debt in an interview six weeks before the election, Obama acknowledged it was a potential problem down the road, but nonetheless told him, "We don't have to worry about it short term." In fiscal cliff negotiations with House Republicans after his reelection, Obama told House speaker John Boehner that the United States doesn't "have a spending problem." Not exactly a profile in courage on debt and spending issues.

Second, there is little reason to believe Obama sees bipartisanship as the way to secure his legacy. Four days before the president hosted the dinner for GOP senators, the *Washington Post* laid out the details of his second-term strategy. "The goal is to flip the Republican-held House back to Democratic control, allowing Obama to push forward with a progressive agenda on gun control, immigration, climate change and the economy during his final two years in office." The president

set his plan in motion on the day he was reelected. "After delivering his election victory speech in November, Obama walked off the Chicago stage and made two phone calls related to his political plans," one of them to Steve Israel, chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, charged with electing Democrats to the House, and the other to Nancy Pelosi. The president's plan depends on his ability once again to cast congressional Republicans as villains. Obama, according to the *Post*, intends "to articulate for the American electorate his own feelings—an exasperation with an opposition party that blocks even the most politically popular elements of his agenda."

What the White House didn't count on, suffused as it was with postelection hubris, was that the public might be skeptical of its claims of sequester chaos. In his press conference with first responders on February 19, Obama described something close to a Hobbesian state of nature if discretionary spending were cut 5.3 percent. Prosecutors, he claimed, would have to "let criminals go." Others claimed that teachers would be fired, seniors would go hungry, children would go unvaccinated. Those claims were proven to be exaggerated or simply untrue.

This was too much even for the Obama-friendly press corps, who recognized that the president's history on the sequester had been an exercise in bad faith. Obama, after all, (1) proposed the sequester, (2) threatened to veto any attempt to avoid it, (3) ignored warnings about its consequences for months, (4) promised it wouldn't happen, (5) pledged to pay legal fees of federal employees if it did, (6) complained he had too little flexibility, (7) rejected Republican efforts to give him more flexibility, and then, finally, (8) predicted calamity once the cuts he'd championed went through.

The White House recognizes that the fight over the sequester is about much more than the immediate reduction in the growth of federal spending. In some respects, it's about the central rationale of the Obama presidency—that government is a force for good in the lives of Americans, not just necessary but constructive and even benevolent. Think back to the Obama campaign's "Julia," a fictional single woman who was aided by a caring and compassionate government at every stage of her life. The president's argument over the past two months is that the government is so important it cannot be trimmed even a little. On the contrary, from universal pre-K to more green energy to new medical research, it ought to be doing things tomorrow that it's not doing today.

So it's fair to ask: Why should Republicans trust a man whose second Inaugural Address was a clarion call to greater government activism, whose State of the Union the *New York Times* described as a case for "closing out the politics of austerity," who has previously demonstrated bad faith by fighting even modest reductions in spending growth, and whose second-term strategy so far has depended on casting Republicans as villains?

Republicans ought to proceed with caution.

—Stephen F. Hayes

# Who Will End Up with Heartburn?

The president breaks bread with Republicans.

BY FRED BARNES



President Obama's outreach to congressional Republicans isn't a minor tactical shift. It's a course correction. Five days after denouncing Republicans as tools of "the well-off and well-connected," he had dinner at the swanky Jefferson Hotel in Washington with a dozen GOP senators. Not only had Obama invited them, but he paid the bill. The next day, he hosted Paul Ryan, the Republican chairman of the House Budget Committee, for lunch at the White House.

Obama doesn't go out of his way to socialize with Republicans. He avoids them. So why would he engage them so vigorously now? Simple. He is slipping politically. His overwrought claims about the effect of the sequester backfired. In little more than a week,

his presidential job approval fell dangerously below 50 percent, dipping to 43 percent in one poll. His focus on winning control of the House in the 2014 midterm election stamped him as a partisan president of half the people. Even the normally pliant press corps is increasingly critical.

That Obama acted swiftly, with troubles mounting, reflects his acute political sensitivity. He understands he has much to gain from togetherness with Republicans. His poll numbers are likely to rise (independents love bipartisanship). The media can probably be counted on to jump on his bandwagon again. And he'll have an excuse should a grand bargain fail to materialize. It's all the fault of Republicans, he'll say. They rejected a reasonable offer—Obama's proposals are always "reasonable"—and thwarted his efforts to spur the economy and

trim the deficit. In the unlikely event a bipartisan deal emerges, that's fine too. Obama will get most of the credit.

Might his new approach represent a sincere change of heart? No. It's a change of political strategy. Besides, sincerity isn't Obama's strong suit. Nor is negotiating with Republicans. They've learned to distrust him. He spurned compromise in his first two years when he didn't need their votes and single-handedly blew up a potential agreement on spending and taxes in the second two years.

Yet he blamed Republicans for reflexively obstructing his agenda and the press bought his story.

Many Republicans on Capitol Hill are still mad, and those who aren't should be. Before negotiating with the president or his congressional surrogates, Republicans will need to be certain he isn't setting them up to be blamed again and targeted as the rejectionist "party of no" in 2014. Republicans should reverse Reagan's practice in dealing with the Soviets. Rather than trust, but verify, with Obama they should verify, then trust.

Senator Tom Coburn, an attendee at the dinner and an occasional ally when Obama was in the Senate, says the president has considerable work to do to ease Republican distrust. "If you'd had years of having somebody put their finger in your eye and question your motivations and ascribe to you things that aren't accurate, that takes some healing," the Oklahoma Republican told MSNBC's *Morning Joe*.

The first test of Obama's sudden commitment to compromise is whether he halts his attacks on Republicans. As recently as his March 1 press conference, he said Republicans believe preserving tax cuts for the rich is "more important than protecting our military or our middle-class families from the pain" of the spending cuts mandated by the sequester.

Obama often acts as if his way is the only way and Republican ideas aren't worth considering. He said as

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GARY LOCKE

much about his tax-heavy alternative to the sequester. It wasn't partisan, he said. "It's the kind of approach I've proposed for two years. It's what I ran on last year. And the majority of the American people agree with me." Unlike Republicans, he was trying to do "the right thing."

Senator Roy Blunt, who wasn't invited to the dinner, says Obama missed the best opportunity for meeting with Republicans in the days after his reelection. Instead, the Missouri Republican says, the president devoted speech after speech to excoriating them, rather than "getting as much out of the way as he could" before the deadlines (fiscal cliff, sequester, spending resolution) took priority.

Next, Obama will have to change his tune on tax reform as a vehicle for a big tax increase. As he doubtless knows, this conflicts with what has become a Republican principle: Tax reform must be revenue neutral, its proceeds used to lower tax rates.

But as recently as last week, White House aides told the *Washington Post* that \$600 billion could be generated through tax reform by eliminating special interest tax breaks and preferences. This windfall would come on top of what Republicans calculate is \$1.6 trillion in tax hikes this year due to Obamacare and the fiscal cliff deal.

Obama, however, does have a case for a \$76 billion boost in taxes from tax reform. That would be raised by erasing tax credits for GE, Hollywood, and other corporate interests, credits the White House imposed as part of the fiscal cliff agreement. If Obama wants to use the \$76 billion for deficit reduction, he's entitled to.

The president must also give up a bad habit from past talks: walking away from things he'd agreed to. He reneged on increasing the age of eligibility for Medicare and slashing \$100 billion from Medicaid, and he jettisoned his own plan for means-testing Medicare.

One more thing. The White House has endorsed a return to "regular order" in Congress. After refusing to draft a budget since 2009, much less pass one, the Senate Democrats have finally relented, and their budget is

due to be released this week. Whatever his own budget, Obama should be prepared to advise Democrats to enact a Senate plan that's a credible basis for compromise when they confer with Republicans.

This is important. Given their ideological inclinations, Senate Democrats favor tax hikes and spending cuts that won't occur until the "out years," 5 to

10 years from now. In an era of large deficits and a potential debt crisis, such a budget wouldn't pass the smell test.

All this would be asking a lot of Obama, who may want a few guarantees from Republicans before negotiating. But it's Obama who stepped forward to connect with Republicans. As president, he is obligated to lead. And for once, he might. ♦

# Congress Goes AWOL

Over women in combat.

BY JOHN McCORMACK

When news broke that the Obama administration was lifting the rule excluding women from combat units, the rare sound of bipartisan applause reverberated on Capitol Hill. Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, one of two conservative women in the Senate, said she was "pleased" with the change, issued in late January: "I've seen firsthand servicemen and women working together in a range of dangerous operations to achieve our military objectives—and today's announcement reflects the increasing role that female service members play in securing our country."

To the extent that opposition to the Obama administration's policy was even acknowledged, it was portrayed as irrational and patriarchal. "Women in combat . . . that's something I think a lot of older conservatives had a really gut reaction to and didn't like," *Buzzfeed* editor Ben Smith said in a February 5 interview with Florida senator Marco Rubio.

"The reality of it is that women are already in combat roles whether we admit that or not," Rubio replied. "I

think that we need to have our best people doing the job, and if that person happens to be a woman, then why would we not want that?"

Had members of the Senate and House taken the time to ask this question before endorsing the administration's new policy, they would have learned there are many legitimate reasons to keep combat units exclusively male. The big divide on this issue is not between the young and the old or women and men, but between the political class and the infantrymen who have seen combat. Although they've been largely ignored by Congress and the media, a number of Marines and soldiers have spoken out since the policy change was announced.

One is Sergeant James Robert Webb, who served as an infantryman in Ramadi in 2006 and 2007. The 31-year-old son of former Democratic senator, secretary of the Navy, and Vietnam war hero Jim Webb took to his blog to describe how the change would harm combat effectiveness and unit cohesion. The Marine explained that a noninfantry convoy unit engaging in combat if attacked—returning fire and getting to safety—is different from the infantry fulfilling its mission

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to “close with and destroy hostile forces.” Furthermore, the infantry demands the utmost from Marines in terms of physical strength, endurance, attitude, and group loyalty and bonding. “More to the point, if the calculus is altered, our people, my peers, die,” wrote Webb.

“The major concern is with women in infantry units,” Webb tells me in an email. “This is a subject which comes up every time I get together with combat veterans—from any branch of service. The message is an unequivocal ‘No, this should not happen.’ I have yet to receive an email, comment, text message, etc. from anyone who has served in a combat unit who supports this decision by DoD.”

The public supports the change—66 percent, according to a Pew poll—but the view from inside the infantry is very different. “The overarching opinion is one of confusion and disillusionment with the decision, not just in my age group, but among those who fought wars before us in Vietnam as well,” Webb reports. “Guys just don’t understand the rationale behind it, and moreover, there’s a general feeling that those who have been fighting our wars weren’t consulted on the decision.”

Not only did Congress and the White House fail to hold a serious public debate on the issue, “the Department of Defense has done no evaluations on the long-term impact upon [women] medically,” notes Gunnery Sergeant Jessie Jane Duff, who served 20 years in the Marines. A woman might make it into a ground combat unit, but “is she going to have a shot at making it 4 years, 10 years?” asks Duff, a member of the advisory committee at Concerned Veterans for America. She points to Captain Katie Petronio, a combat engineer officer who served in Afghanistan alongside the infantry and wrote in the *Marine Corps Gazette* of the severe physical

deterioration, including infertility, she suffered as a result. Duff observes that “hand-to-hand combat is still inevitable,” and that even some of the most muscular women will be at a distinct disadvantage against an athletic man.

Another Marine, a combat veteran of Afghanistan, raises the matter of men’s natural instinct to protect women. “Would you be prepared to let a woman bleed to death in front of you because she is less likely to survive than another male casualty, in circumstances where you only have one



*Is she the one to close with and destroy hostile forces?*

medic?” he asks in an email. “If you do that, what are those nightmares going to be like for the rest of your life?”

Given these concerns, and many more, within the military, why have Republicans in Congress been so quiet? Polls show the public supports women in combat, and Republicans are afraid of being seen as antiwoman. “You know, battered politician syndrome,” a Republican congressman tells me. “They actually believe the Democratic rhetoric that we’re waging a war on women and therefore we have to be covering anytime an issue like this comes up.”

“A lot of people who might otherwise be more outspoken adopted more of a wait-and-see stance,” because of the gradual approach the Department of Defense says it will use in implementing the change, the congressman

adds. According to the Pentagon, the armed services will have until 2016 to develop “gender-neutral” physical standards for the 237,000 positions previously closed to women, and the services may petition the Pentagon to keep some assignments all-male.

But in reality, the military is expected to release new standards for many positions as early as May, and it’s not clear that “gender-neutral” will mean what a normal person thinks it means.

The law already states that physical standards for the military must be “gender-neutral,” but the government has a very peculiar definition of the phrase. “A plain reading of the term suggests that men and women would be required to meet the same physical standards in order to be similarly assigned,” reads a report by the Congressional Research Service. “However, in the past, the Services have used this and similar terms to suggest that men and women must exert the same amount of energy in a particular task, regardless of the work that is actually

accomplished by either.”

For example, the CRS notes, in the Air Force the “minimum number of push-ups for males and females in the same age group is 33 and 18, respectively. In the case of push-ups, males and females who achieve the minimum passing number of push-ups receive the same score.” Such disparities exist in all branches of the military.

“That’s not going to cut it when it comes to combat,” declares Rep. Duncan Hunter, a three-term congressman from California and one of the few members of either house of Congress to raise concerns about the issue. “You’re going to have to judge not on an effort standard, but on a work-accomplished standard.”

Hunter plans to do more than speak out. He intends to introduce an

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: NEWS.COM

amendment this spring that would require the military to establish uniform physical standards for the positions previously closed to women: "All it says is that we're not going to lower standards, but if we do, we are going to lower them for everybody, not one group of people."

"There's going to be extreme pressure to lower the standards to make sure there's a quota met in these combat units," says Hunter. "I think that's unavoidable. I think that pressure is going to exist, and our military leaders under this administration are going to acquiesce to that pressure."

General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, has already suggested standards might be lowered if women can't meet them. "If we do decide that a particular standard is so high that a woman couldn't make it, the burden is now on the service to come back and explain to the secretary, why is it that high? Does it really have to be that high?" Dempsey said during a January 24 press conference.

The 36-year-old Hunter, who as a Marine served two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan, worries about 18-to-22-year-old men and women serving in combat units together for reasons beyond physical ability. "When you have a bunch of young men like that who are made to believe they are the absolute finest fighting machines in the world, it's hard enough to control them just with them, when there are no other outside factors. They get in fights. They're a pretty rough-and-tumble group," he says. "When you insert women into that equation, I think it just makes things more complicated, and it makes it harder to keep that unit cohesion and harder to keep good order and discipline in those units."

But the amendment he'll introduce deals strictly with physical standards, a concession to the reality of a Democratic Senate and White House. "We don't talk about gender in any way," Hunter says. "The point of the military is to fight and win wars. Does this make it more effective at its job? If the answer is no, then change shouldn't take place." ♦

# A Difference that Can't Be Split

The parties have to fight over the budget because the status quo is untenable. **BY JAY COST**



*Paul Ryan: The fiscal chickens have come home to roost.*

**T**his week Paul Ryan's House Budget Committee is set to release its fiscal year 2014 budget, which promises to balance Uncle Sam's books in 10 years. Ryan's offering will elicit lamentations from the usual quarters of the mainstream media: House Republicans have lurched sharply to the right, they have abandoned the pragmatic principles of their forebears, they are now totally unfit to govern.

This view of congressional Republicans is weirdly shorn of historical context, as if today's liberals have forgotten everything conservatives did in the past that outraged liberals. For instance, the GOP tried, unsuccessfully, to push root-and-branch reform of Medicare in the early part of George W. Bush's administration. Before that, the GOP attempted to modernize

Medicare during the "Republican Revolution" of the mid-1990s, and also met with failure.

Yet the leftists do have a point. After those failed attempts, Republicans in Washington largely abandoned their reform endeavors. Similarly, when Lyndon Johnson pushed for Medicare in 1965, House Republicans, led by Gerald Ford, offered an alternative program, but when that failed to pass, they lined up to support the liberal plan. So why do conservatives persist today?

The answer the left prefers—that conservatives are suffering from some kind of mass hysteria—is self-serving, as it casts congressional liberals and President Obama as the only responsible agents in government. It is also absurd. In fact, Ryan and House Republicans persist in the effort to get control of the nation's budget because they see a civic obligation to prevent disaster.

Last month, the Congressional

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Budget Office released its revised baseline for spending, taxation, and deficits for the next decade. It is not pretty. The gross federal debt is expected to increase by nearly \$10 trillion over 10 years, from \$16 trillion today to roughly \$26 trillion in 2023.

Beyond the 10-year horizon, the fiscal picture only gets worse. Without major reforms, the government's vast array of health entitlements—starting with Medicare, Medicaid, CHIP, and Obamacare—are set to grow from about 5 percent of gross domestic product today to 9 percent in 2033, 12 percent in 2053, and 15 percent in 2073. There is no way the nation can afford that bill, absent a shocking increase in taxation. What's more, taxes would have to be raised again and again and again, as health entitlements are expected to grow faster than the economy.

The consequences of such a debt load are dire. As the CBO wrote last month:

The nation's net interest costs will be very high (after interest rates return to more normal levels) and rising. Higher costs for interest eventually will require the government to raise taxes, reduce benefits and services, or undertake some combination of those two actions.

National saving will be held down, leading to more borrowing from abroad and less domestic investment, which in turn will decrease income in the United States relative to what it would be otherwise.

Much has been written about the nation's awful budgetary outlook, but one aspect that is often overlooked is the effect the country's debt and deficit will have on the American political landscape.

Right off the bat, the looming debt crisis explains why House Republicans persist with a policy solution that has not been politically popular in the past. Today's House GOP believes it has no choice; the duties of responsible governing require a solution to this problem, even if such a solution is unpopular. Hence, House Republicans propose major reforms year after year, despite the pummeling they take from Democrats

and their friends in the media.

The fiscal situation also explains why Senate Democrats have failed to produce a budget in four years. Senate majority leader Harry Reid has a hyper-transactional approach to politics, always preferring to shield his members from tough votes, or sweeten the pot for them when he has no choice. On the budget, he faces a seemingly intractable problem: Should he force his caucus to sign on to a budget that projects expanding deficits from here to eternity, or a budget that imposes a mix of unpopular taxes and entitlement reforms? Reid has chosen to do neither: His Senate simply ignores its obligation to produce a budget.

Together, the different approaches that House Republicans and Senate Democrats have taken in dealing with the nation's fiscal mess illustrate the profound changes occurring in American politics. Reid has chosen the fiscally irresponsible but politically easy path; Ryan the opposite. It is either one or the other, because the two goals are now mutually exclusive. A responsible policy requires a departure from the status quo—meaning higher taxes, entitlement reforms, or both—that will be politically dangerous.

This implies the beginning of a new era in American politics. For generations, dating back to the earliest days of the Industrial Revolution, Americans have been able to have their cake and eat it too. The growth of the economy always outstripped the social welfare ambitions of politicians in Washington. Thus, leaders could provide an ever-increasing stream of benefits to the citizenry—starting with generous Civil War pensions and ending most recently with Obamacare—without worrying that there would be no cash in the bank when the bill came due. In other words, economic growth has always ensured that, when push came to shove, pols never really had to make the hard choices.

But no longer. As the CBO has made clear, the government's obligations are right now growing faster than its capacity to pay for them. The future, in other words, is here. What this means in turn is that the center of American

politics is no longer a responsible place for policymakers to reside. The era of guns, butter, and low taxes is at an end.

Already, the country is in the slow, tortuous process of renegotiating the political settlement that generations of Americans have taken for granted. The adjustment will be completed only when the people recognize the scope of the problem and settle on broad parameters for addressing it. That has obviously not happened yet—poll after poll shows the average voter simply fails to understand what is driving the nation's long-term, structural deficits. Nevertheless, the recent flare-ups over the budget—from the debt ceiling to the fiscal cliff to the upcoming continuing resolution—have all been as hot as they were because this change is now upon us. Politicians of generations past could pass a budget or agree to raise the debt ceiling without much trouble because they never really had to worry that the debt was out of control. Today, they have no such luxury. Hence the persistent fighting over what were once perfunctory tasks.

Until the public makes up its mind about what to do next, all bets about American politics are off. The near-term political outlook is messy, fraught with finger-pointing, demagoguery, and vitriolic rhetoric as both sides try to position themselves. Over the last few cycles, we have seen wild swings in the political pendulum, and there is good reason to expect them to continue as the public comes to terms with the age of limits.

Beyond that, projecting what will happen next is like trying to describe 1947 in 1927, or 1876 in 1856. Powerful exogenous forces are starting to reshape American politics, and it is simply impossible to say what the political divide will look like after they have finished their work.

One thing, though, is clear: The political center as we know it today will no longer exist. For generations, Americans have demanded more, more, more from their government, which has been able to supply it without burdening the citizenry with onerous taxes. No longer. The time for painful choices is at hand. ♦

# The Party of Prison Reform

Conservatives lead the way.

BY ELI LEHRER



*Can we let some of them out?*

Michael Hough—a second-term Republican state legislator from Frederick County, Md.—is about as conservative as blue-state legislators come. He played a prominent role in opposing the state’s new gay marriage law, holds an “A” rating from the National Rifle Association, and received a 100 percent score from the state’s business lobby.

The major focus of his legislative agenda, however, crushes any stereotypes that might come to mind, given his résumé. Hough wants to reform America’s prisons and help the more than 500,000 people who come home from correctional facilities every year.

In the past few years, he’s successfully pushed programs that offer well-behaved offenders the chance to significantly shorten their time under state supervision and that replace potentially long sentences with “swift

and certain” stays in prison for failed drug tests and other slip ups. This year, he’s working to pass mental health reforms and to create a “certificate of rehabilitation” program that allows ex-offenders to present formal evidence that they’ve mended their ways.

“As a fiscal conservative, it just made sense to me. We spend a lot on prisons,” he says. “On a human level, I know that people sometimes just get trapped in addiction.”

Hough isn’t alone. Around the country, dozens of political leaders with rock-solid conservative credentials have begun to take a new line on crime and, particularly, the issue of reintegrating ex-offenders into society. This loose movement represents a sea change in conservative thinking and, arguably, the largest social reform effort to emerge from the right in several decades.

The efforts have affected much of the country. Since 2007, conservatives

have led the charge for major criminal justice reforms in Texas, Missouri, Florida, Kansas, South Carolina, Louisiana, South Dakota, and Georgia, among other states. Many conservatives have also supported efforts led by liberals in states like Michigan (under former governor Jennifer Granholm). “It’s at the point where we have critical mass. It’s a movement,” says Pat Nolan of Prison Fellowship Ministries. “It’s a conservative movement that focuses on being skeptical of bureaucracy and getting the most value out of the tax dollars we collect.”

While budgetary concerns have been the impetus for many of these efforts, relatively flush states like South Dakota—where Republican governor Dennis Daugaard signed sweeping legislation earlier this month—have embarked on reforms just as significant as fiscal basket-case California.

Judeo-Christian commandments to care for prisoners have no doubt been a significant part of the reform movement, as evidenced by the prominent role that Prison Fellowship Ministries has played in nearly all the efforts. The organization was founded by the late Charles Colson and counts a bevy of distinguished conservative pols (including Nolan, a former Republican leader in the California legislature) among its staff and supporters. But just as much passion has emanated from libertarians and “Main Street” conservatives worried about big, wasteful, and inefficient government, many of whom have joined the Right on Crime coalition spearheaded by the Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF, which also counts many religiously motivated supporters).

In many ways, the changing attitudes toward offenders reflect conservative values. Hough, Nolan, and others like them note that drug treatment can hold offenders responsible; that making ex-offenders eligible for professional licenses represents a triumph of deregulation; and that keeping parents out of jail strengthens families.

“Everything we did was rooted in true conservative values of [being] pro-family, changing offender behavior,

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and saving money,” says Jim Seward, who served as Daugaard’s point man on the reforms in South Dakota.

The results, in both fiscal and human terms, are impressive. After climbing more or less steadily for the better part of four decades, per-capita incarceration rates began to level off after the first major reforms were implemented in the mid-2000s. Since peaking in 2008, the prison and jail population has been declining. Importantly, the decline has done nothing to reverse the falling crime rates that we’ve seen since the mid-1990s. In fact, states that have reduced their prison populations have seen crime decline at the same or greater rates than states that haven’t. Indeed, as measured by overall crime statistics, the United States is safer today than at any time since the 1960s and also safer than any other sizable developed Western country. (Homicide rates remain higher than in other rich nations.) Reports of victimization collected in telephone polls by the Bureau of Justice Statistics show an even deeper drop in crime.

But while the new approaches—fewer prisons, more drug treatment, more alternative sentences, a focus on community monitoring, reducing the number of offenses punishable by law, and a generally more lenient attitude towards people who have served their time—may well be consistent with conservative values and principles, they are, nonetheless, a break from orthodoxy.

Much of the best research offered in support of these approaches comes from liberal organizations like the Pew Center on the States and the Urban Institute, and they stand in stark contrast to the heavily punitive tough-on-crime stances taken by Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and even Joe Biden (the author of major crime-related legislation supported by both Reagan and Clinton).

So why have conservative attitudes changed?

First, and perhaps most important, the politics have changed. After serving as a major issue in every presidential election from 1960 to 1992, crime has more or less vanished from public

debate. Neither Barack Obama nor Mitt Romney so much as mentioned it in his party convention address, or in any of the debates. In most of the country, politicians’ attitudes toward crime and criminals sway few votes. With elected leaders no longer fearful of the ballot box consequences of taking a superficially “soft” stance on crime (the actual policies are anything but soft), the voices of those who seek criminal justice reform have been strengthened.

Technology also plays a role. It is much easier today to treat and monitor potentially dangerous people outside of correctional institutions than it was in the past. In particular, GPS tracking devices allow police, parole, and probation officers to monitor offenders

**While the new approaches to criminal justice issues may well be consistent with conservative values and principles, they are, nonetheless, a break from orthodoxy.**

closely without actually locking them up. While relapse and recidivism rates remain high, new pharmaceuticals and other treatments have improved our ability to help those with mental illness and substance abuse problems. Restrictions have also been loosened to allow faith-based groups greater freedom to operate inside correctional facilities, giving many offenders new and effective pathways toward personal reform.

The justice system has also changed. In particular, new specialty courts—most prominently “drug courts”—have encouraged judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, and social workers to work together to help offenders mend their ways rather than simply locking them up. The approach, pioneered in the late 1980s, has spread to almost all sizable jurisdictions in the United States and has shown some promise to deal with a variety of thorny issues including mental health and domestic abuse.

Other trends that are more

difficult to measure also play a role. Recent years have seen tremendous growth in the number of African Americans employed as law enforcement officers and police chiefs. This has coincided both with a significant drop in crime rates among African Americans and with a general easing of “oppositional” tensions that led police forces to be viewed (sometimes correctly) as racist organizations in some black communities.

Just as important, however, conservatives have simply decided to change with the times.

“We don’t say conservatives were wrong in the 1980s and 1990s when they said ‘We need more prisons,’” explains Marc Levin, who heads the Right on Crime coalition for TPPF. “But as we expanded incarceration, we’ve swept in a lot of low-risk offenders and spent a lot of money.”

Nor is the new thinking a total reversal. Conservatives may work to end the criminalization of matters that should be left to regulators and the civil courts, like laws against taking oysters from unapproved beds or missing deadlines to file environmental paperwork. But longtime left-wing causes like decriminalizing possession of hard drugs and legalizing prostitution have gained adherents only among hardcore libertarians. Although they’re generally popular when conservative prison reformers talk amongst themselves, there have likewise been few public efforts to ease superficially “tough” policies that deny early release to the seriously ill and make it almost impossible for convicts to qualify for college financial aid. Even marijuana legalization efforts, which have some support among conservatives, have been disconnected from the broader movement toward prison reform. And notably, while U.S. incarceration rates are dropping, they remain the highest in the developed world.

Still, the changes in prison policy—and particularly the new emphasis on prisoner reentry—represent a significant evolution of the conservative movement. Times have changed, crime has changed, and conservatism has changed, too. ♦

# The Double Bind

*What stands in the way of a Republican revival? Republicans.*

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

I doubt John Boehner has read much feminist theory, but it's never too late for him to start. He and other GOP leaders, not to mention the Republicans who want to run for president in 2016, might want to familiarize themselves with the concept of the double bind. They are in the middle of one, and it will be difficult for them to escape.

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote the classic treatment of the subject in her 1995 book, *Beyond the Double Bind: Women and Leadership*. A trap confronts successful women, Jamieson argued. They can't display mastery in the workplace without sacrificing their sense of femininity. On the other hand, they can't emphasize the feminine without being condemned as bimbos.

Hobson's choice; Catch-22; double bind—all of these expressions describe situations in which you are damned if you do and damned if you don't. Situations of the sort Republicans are in. In the months since the November election, a bipartisan chorus, including many conservative intellectuals, has urged GOP officials to adopt new domestic policies to attract support from groups that have been trending Democratic. At the same time, though, the chorus expects the GOP to maintain its base of support from the coalition that won 51 percent of the House popular vote in 2010 and 48 percent in 2012.

Here's the problem. The domestic proposals that have the greatest chance of making the Republican party attractive to the "coalition of the ascendant"—immigrants, members of the millennial generation, single white women—involve far more government intervention in the economy than the GOP coalition—married white people, Wall

Street, the Tea Party—will allow. And we haven't even mentioned changing the GOP approach to social issues, which would drive the Republican base of religious conservatives out of the party. Pursuing such proposals would break the coalition that puts Republicans close to a majority.

On the other hand, sticking with the policies that glue this so-close-to-a-majority coalition together would foreclose the possibility of expanding the GOP vote. And it would limit the vote Republicans pull from disaffected voters who used to support the GOP but have turned away for various reasons.

There's more. Trying to appeal to the coalition of the ascendant and the Reagan coalition simultaneously would give the party a severe case of political schizophrenia. The GOP would bewilder its historic base of support while disappointing newcomers, leading to confusion, disillusionment, apathy, and perhaps (ultimately) dissolution.

The Republicans, like feminists, can't have it all. They are trapped in the double bind.

Michael Gerson and Peter Wehner, who worked for President George W. Bush, have a cover story in *Commentary* on how to revive the Republican party. Their proposals are well intentioned, cogent, and in some

ways persuasive. When they get into the nitty-gritty of specifics, though, they bump up against the double bind.

For example, Gerson and Wehner propose "ending corporate welfare as we know it"; "supporting the breakup of the big banks"; and "thoroughgoing reform of the federal role in education, focusing on public and private choice." Timothy Carney of the *Washington Examiner* made similar arguments shortly after the election, when he called for a "new Republican populism" that "can promise to level the field by getting the bureaucrats and politicians out of it" and by cutting regulations and ending bailouts.

Sounds great. But a word of caution: There is

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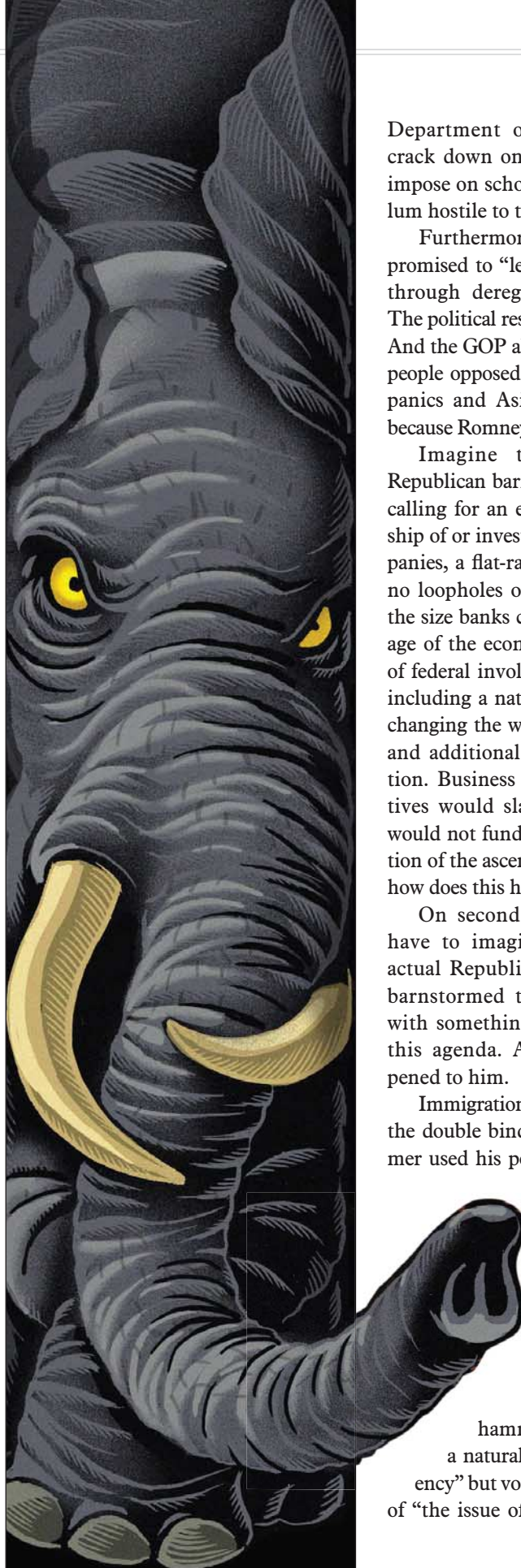
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little evidence these policies would be any more popular than traditional Republican ones. And one reason there is so little evidence is that there is no serious advocate for these ideas within the ranks of Republican officeholders. Why is there no advocate for these ideas? Because major elements of the Republican party oppose them.

For 30 years, the Republican party has stood for low taxes, a strong national defense, and traditional understandings of moral questions. The base of the party can be divided into groups that care particularly about each of these items. There are the libertarians and businessmen and Wall Street Masters of the Universe, who put a priority on low taxes, especially on income and capital, fewer regulations, and free trade. There are the defense hawks, who lobby for big Pentagon budgets and confrontational approaches to global security problems. There are the religious conservatives, who are pro-life and against same-sex marriage.

The money for Republican campaigns, television ads, and the institutional apparatus of the conservative movement comes primarily from the first group. Ending corporate welfare and breaking up the big banks may sound swell, it may be the right thing to do, but you won't see a Republican politician advocating these policies because that politician depends on campaign funds from banks and corporations. And you won't see defense hawks or social conservatives really get tough on Wall Street, either, because that's not a priority for them.

Meanwhile, a "reform of the federal role in education" would be problematic from the point of view of both libertarians and social conservatives. Libertarians oppose increasing power of the central government while social conservatives worry that an empowered



Department of Education would crack down on homeschooling and impose on school districts a curriculum hostile to traditional values.

Furthermore, Republicans have promised to "level the playing field" through deregulation for decades. The political results have been mixed. And the GOP already has the votes of people opposed to bailouts. Did Hispanics and Asians vote for Obama because Romney supported TARP?

Imagine that an ambitious Republican barnstormed the country calling for an end to federal ownership of or investment in private companies, a flat-rate corporate tax with no loopholes or subsidies, a cap on the size banks can grow as a percentage of the economy, a major reform of federal involvement in education, including a national curriculum and changing the way school is financed, and additional rounds of deregulation. Business and social conservatives would slam him. Wall Street would not fund him. And the "coalition of the ascendant" would wonder, how does this help us?

On second thought, you don't have to imagine this because an actual Republican, Jon Huntsman, barnstormed the country in 2011 with something closely resembling this agenda. And look what happened to him.

Immigration is another example of the double bind. Charles Krauthammer used his postelection column to argue that GOP fortunes would change with "a single policy change: border fence plus amnesty. Yes, amnesty. Use the word."

Hispanics, Krauthammer said, "should be a natural Republican constituency" but vote Democratic because of "the issue of illegal immigrants."

No more illegal immigrants, no more issue. And party elites agree with Krauthammer. They have signaled their willingness to compromise with President Obama on a “comprehensive immigration reform” bill.

But their reasoning is faulty. Illegal immigration is not the reason Hispanic voters support the Democratic party. Hispanic voters support the Democratic party because they tend to agree with its domestic policy agenda of redistributing money to the middle class and needy.

Obama’s senior strategist, David Plouffe, recently told the *New York Times*, “By the way, the bigger problem [the GOP has] got with Latinos isn’t immigration. It’s the economic policies and health care. The group that supported the president’s health care bill the most? Latinos.” Maybe we shouldn’t listen to Plouffe, though. He’s only won two consecutive presidential elections.

Not only would an amnesty fail to win Latino votes, it would tear the Republican coalition apart. Wall Street and the business community may support comprehensive immigration reform because it would increase the supply of labor and keep wages competitive. But the everyday Republican voter is less sanguine about millions of newcomers showing up on his porch.

Immigration from south of the border may have subsided thanks to an improving Mexican economy and a sclerotic American one. But there is reason to be concerned that a legislative amnesty would provoke another round of illegal border crossings.

There is reason to be concerned because that is exactly what happened after the last amnesty in 1986.

And it’s not as though the GOP has failed to go down the amnesty road before. President George W. Bush’s attempts to pass an amnesty divided his party and sparked anti-immigration-reform marches in the capital. The fierce backlash was a precursor to the Tea Party.

Does the GOP really want to repeat the experience?

Some say the Republican double bind is a messaging problem. Republicans are too insensitive, according to this view. They need to update their arguments for a kinder, gentler, 21st-century world. Last week Arthur Brooks of the American Enterprise Institute wrote a *Wall Street*

*Journal* op-ed urging the party to “make improving the lives of vulnerable people the primary focus of authentically conservative policies.”

This would improve the GOP’s standing when voters are asked which party cares more about “people like me,” Brooks writes. And a more compassionately phrased conservatism, it is said, would win more elections. Republicans can keep their current

platform. They just need to frame it in terms of uplifting the weak and aspirant.

Brooks writes, “The core problem with out of control entitlements is not that they are costly,” contrary to what the GOP has been saying since Paul Ryan took over the budget committee. It’s that “the impending insolvency of Social Security and Medicare imperils the social safety net for the neediest citizens.”

School choice, a longstanding conservative policy, isn’t intended “to fight rapacious unions and bureaucrats.” It’s meant to improve schools for “poor children and their parents.” Corporate tax reform, one supposes, would allow the poor to operate on a level playing field with Alcoa and Anheuser-Busch. And once again, conservatives who “instinctively welcome the immigrants” would reap the electoral benefits Republicans have enjoyed for the last 20 years.

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Perhaps there is a way to frame conservative arguments to make them palatable in an American political culture that prefers equality to difference and diversity to merit. George W. Bush’s compassionate conservatism, after all, won him 48 percent of the national popular vote in 2000.

Maybe it’s not only the packaging of the message, though. Maybe it’s also the content of the message. Voters want to know, what have you done for us lately? They want tangible benefits. Now.

Man’s “propensity to truck, barter, and exchange” really does lead him to better his condition. But the

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mechanism by which the free market enriches the least among us is invisible and gradual. It's so gradual, in fact, that it may have stopped. The stock market and corporate earnings may be soaring, but wages as a share of the economy have fallen to a record low. Unemployment remains stuck around 8 percent. Growth is negligible.

When the rhetorical varnish has worn off, voters will look at the substance of GOP proposals. And voters not already part of the Republican coalition will find in those proposals the same things they disliked when Mitt Romney proposed them last year. They do not take from the rich and give to the poor. They deliver intangible benefits. They can be portrayed easily as serving the interests of the rich and powerful.

Thus the Republican quandary: Crack down on Wall Street and watch the party's financial resources dry up. Increase the power of the Education Department and watch the conservative coalition divide. Amnesty 12 million illegal immigrants and gain 12 million new Democrats while incentivizing additional illegal border crossings and watching parts of the GOP coalition self-immolate. Or play the compassion card for a couple of hands—until the media call you hypocrites and the targets of outreach turn against you.

If there is any consolation, it's that none of this is new. In 1976, in his essay "The Republican Future," Irving Kristol wrote:

Why hasn't the Republican Party been able to construct a program of its own, in which the American people can have confidence? I would suggest two reasons. First, the party has never fully reconciled itself to the welfare state, and therefore has never given comprehensive thought to the question of what a *conservative welfare state* would look like. Second, because of their close historic association with the business community, Republican leaders tend to think like businessmen rather than like statesmen, and therefore bumble their way through their terms in office.

Kristol added, "I say 'businessman's mentality,' but a more accurate description would be 'accountant's mentality.'"

In hindsight, we see the last four years have conformed to Kristol's analysis. Stunned and panicked by Obama's ambition, and by the explosive growth in government transfer payments, Republican politicians have been on defense. They have spent more time attempting to check Obama, and to reduce spending, than attempting to sketch an alternative vision of the good society. And when they did sketch an alternative vision, in the form of Ryan's Path to Prosperity, they prioritized debt and deficit reduction. Then they ran a responsible businessman as their presidential candidate. They embraced the "accountant's mentality."

Certainly public debt has grown. Certainly the rising cost of health care is unsustainable in the long run. But most people do not think in terms of the long run. Most people

think in terms of the short run. And the horrible consequences of which Republicans warn have not yet materialized. They may not materialize for a long time.

Americans have been on the receiving end of a bad deal, everyone agrees. But you can't beat a bad deal with no deal. And that is what many believe the Republican party has been offering.

And this, too, has been a problem for a while. "The idea of 'liberty' which conservatives wish to defend, and which our liberal institutions are supposed to incarnate, has become exceedingly nebulous in the course of the past century," Kristol wrote in a 1975 essay, "On Conservatism and Capitalism."

"This puts conservatives in the position of being, or seeming to be, merely mindless defenders of the status quo," Kristol wrote. "Indeed, to many they seem merely intransigent defenders of existing privilege, issuing appeals to 'liberty' for such an ulterior purpose alone." This is life in the double bind.

Still, let's assume for the sake of argument, and our mental health, that the double bind does not exist. Let's assume we live in a twilight zone where Republican politicians are not bound by the Republican coalition that currently exists. Let's say, in this imaginary land, that Republicans follow Kristol's dicta, stop thinking like accountants, and accept the welfare state. What would a good deal for voters—a conservative welfare state—look like?

Well, just as the liberal welfare state could be said to benefit liberals, a conservative welfare state presumably would benefit conservatives. And who are the conservatives? They tend to be taxpaying married adults with families. And they tend to have been ill-served by the last couple of decades of American government, which has promised them the bounty of a global economy but left them paying the tab for the mistakes of Republican and Democratic elites, bankers, and bobos.

These middle Americans see one party as the shield of super-rich "job creators" and the other as the shield of a growing number of government dependents and beneficiaries. These middle Americans' wages are stagnant. The costs of health care and education are rising. On homeownership and energy, the government has ginned up expectations but underdelivered.

Imagining a conservative welfare state requires Republicans to revisit some of the assumptions they have held since the end of the Cold War. Maybe the foremost concern of most Americans is *not* the top marginal income tax rate. Maybe you can't seriously lower health care costs without radically overhauling the way we pay for health care. Maybe a political party can't address adequately such middle-class concerns as school quality and

transportation without using the power of government. Maybe the globalization of capital and products and labor hasn't been an unimpeachable good.

Take the payroll tax, for example. More Americans are affected by the payroll tax than by the income tax, notes conservative writer Ramesh Ponnuru. The payroll tax is a tax on work, which is an odd thing to support for a party with the founding slogan "free soil, free labor, free men." Both parties have increased and maintained the payroll tax over the years. The single exception was the 2010 tax deal. And when that deal expired last year, both parties allowed the payroll tax to increase. Sure enough, consumer spending declined.

There is a way to lighten the burden of payroll taxes on the families with children that vote Republican. "An expanded child tax credit that offset the burden of both taxes would be the kind of broad-based middle-class tax relief that Reagan delivered," Ponnuru wrote recently in the *New York Times*. "Republicans should make room for this idea in their budgets, even if it means giving up on the idea of a 25 percent tax rate."

Instead Republicans call for reform of the personal income tax and corporate income tax. They want to use the revenue from eliminating tax exemptions, deductions, and credits to lower tax rates on capital and dividends and inheritance. If they really wanted to reward their voters, they would shift the discussion to cutting the payroll tax and increasing tax benefits for parents with children.

Or consider the rising cost of health insurance. Every year Americans pay tens of thousands of dollars in health premiums, payroll taxes, and income taxes to cover the cost of insurance. And the cost keeps rising. President Obama's Affordable Care Act was meant to achieve universal coverage using the insurance model. But that model is broken.

Republicans might go beyond simply opposing the Affordable Care Act. They might provide the states exits to more flexibility and fewer mandates. They might incentivize high-deductible plans and Health Savings Accounts and demand price transparency.

Above all, they might begin a decades-long process of having consumers play a more active role in their health care. A competitive consumer market is the only known means of lowering cost while increasing supply. And introducing consumer principles into American health care would provide direct benefits—cheaper premiums, lower taxes, long-term savings—to Republican voters.

In our federal system, education and transportation mainly are state concerns. Voters experience the success or

failure of state initiatives in these areas every day. So, in our conservative utopia, Republicans in Congress would help governors and legislatures experiment with school funding mechanisms, statewide curricula, and congestion pricing and public-private partnerships. Their job would be to give the governors the maximum amount of flexibility. No one would judge which is the "true conservative" approach. As Ponnuru put it last week, Republicans would spend more time looking for allies and less time looking for heretics.

The conservative welfare state of our dreams would be, well, a state. That is, it would be an effective federal government. And it would be a community. Human beings are not faceless monads choosing identities at will from a universal menu of options. Human beings are born into families, faiths, and nations.

The security of all three of these pre-liberal forms of association is important. For families, that means growing

incomes while lessening the costs of child-rearing, and giving parents blocking gear against the offenses of a hazardous popular culture. For faiths, that means protecting ministerial exceptions and religious liberty. For the nation, that means borders that are secure, a trade policy that puts the interests of American laborers over the interests of multinational corporations, a sound currency, and a fearsome military.

Every daydream, though, has to end. The conservative welfare state is unachievable so long as the Republican party exists in its current form. That is the reality of the double bind.

But that reality is not necessarily permanent. Recall that Kristol was describing the set of circumstances that existed almost 40 years ago. Ronald Reagan ended up breaking the double bind of the 1970s by ditching the accountant's mentality and adopting a supply-side economics program that put economic growth and military superiority above deficit concerns. Reagan did not touch Social Security—he actually strengthened it with tax increases—and ignored Medicare. His presidency was such a success that President Obama now seeks to emulate it.

Reagan's solutions are no longer applicable in the post-Cold War, post-9/11, post-financial-crisis world. But his experience in the late 1970s shows that an entrepreneurial politician can escape a stagnant GOP by questioning the assumptions of the Republican party and challenging the priorities of its strongest constituencies.

Who in the GOP is ready to make a similar challenge today? Beats me. But I do know this: Whoever she is, she will know all about the double bind. ♦

**In a conservative utopia, Republicans in Congress would help governors and legislatures experiment with school funding mechanisms, statewide curricula, and congestion pricing and public-private partnerships.**

# The Kurds Are for the Kurds

*Syria's other combatants*

By JONATHAN SPYER

## *Syrian Kurdistan*

In northeast Syria, from the border with Iraq to the disputed town of Seri Kaniyah, a de facto Kurdish autonomous region has emerged. The area, known to the Kurds as western Kurdistan, is ruled by the Democratic Union party (PYD). This is the Syrian franchise of the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK), which has been waging a military campaign against Turkey since 1984. The Kurds' creation and successful defense of this area has largely been ignored in media coverage of Syria, with attention focused farther south and west, on the battle between the forces of Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and the rebel insurgency.

Syria's approximately 2 million Kurds constitute around 9 percent of the country's 23 million inhabitants.

Under the Baath party regimes that have ruled Syria since 1963, and the nationalist and military regimes that preceded them, the Kurds were the most repressed and impoverished part of the population, and the use of the Kurdish language and Kurdish names was banned by the authorities. In 1961-62, the regime stripped some 120,000 members of the long-established Kurdish population of their citizenship, claiming that they were recent immigrants from Turkey. Some of these people were registered as foreign, while others were simply not registered at all, and were thus deprived of access to education, basic

health care, and use of the public transportation system. Today, about 300,000 Kurds in Syria are either registered as foreign or deprived of any legal status.

The Kurdish area of the northeast was underdeveloped, and characterized by grinding poverty. Even the cost of permission to build a house was beyond the reach of many families. The Kurds have a long and bitter account with the Assads, and the outbreak of revolution and civil war has led to previously unimaginable opportunities.



*YPG fighters in Sere Kaniyah*

The emergent Syrian Kurdistan sits on the greater part of Syria's oil reserves, worth \$4 billion annually before the outbreak of the uprising. The region is also known as the breadbasket of Syria for its rich and fertile soil. Kurds, Turks, the Assad regime, and the rebels all have their own ambitions for northeast Syria, where a complex political and military game is being played out.

Last month, I traveled into the Kurdish-controlled area of Syria from flourishing Iraqi Kurdistan. The authorities of the Kurdish Regional Government in northern Iraq do not permit journalists to cross the border via the official checkpoint. The KRG evidently has no desire to be held responsible for whatever might befall such travelers in Syria. But there is an additional reason, which requires untangling the knotty alphabet of Kurdish internal politics.

Syrian Kurdistan is controlled by the PYD, which is affiliated with the PKK. Iraqi Kurdistan, meanwhile, is ruled by the Kurdish Democratic party of Massoud Barzani, which has close relations with Turkey, the PKK's primary enemy. The KDP and PKK represent opposite ends of the spectrum of Kurdish politics. The former is conservative, traditional, and influenced by tribal and clan concerns. The

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PHOTOS BY JONATHAN SPYER

latter is leftist, secular, quasi-Marxist. They share a tendency to authoritarianism. While Barzani has provided considerable amounts of aid to the Syrian Kurdish area, relations between the sides remain tense.

The crossing is manned by the KRG's Peshmerga soldiers. I entered by night, accompanying a group of fighters of the Popular Protection Units (YPG), a militia established to protect the Kurdish-ruled zone in Syria. Officially, it is the product of an alliance between the PYD and the pro-Barzani Kurdish parties. In practice, however, it is the armed element of the PYD. Setting out through the countryside from the border area, we crossed the Tigris River and hiked to a position above the town of Derik.

The YPG group I accompanied included both male and female fighters. They displayed a high level of professionalism, fitness, and knowledge of the terrain. Both the mixing of the genders (unique in a Syrian context) and the high level of competence were obvious testimony to the fact that they had been trained by the PKK.

After crossing the border, I slept the night in a small village called Wadi Souss. Waking in the morning, I saw a kind of architecture I have never encountered

before in the Middle East: houses built out of dried mud and logs, looking like something from medieval Europe. It was testimony both to the deep traditions and to the poverty of this area. From the village, I was driven the following morning into Derik.

The last regime elements were pushed out of Derik in November of last year. The town constitutes one of the bastions of PYD exclusive rule. The movement's symbols—red stars, pictures of jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan—were everywhere. Nonetheless, a PYD official I spoke to at the party's headquarters in the town denied that the PYD is a branch of the PKK. "The PYD and the PKK are not one party," said Talal Yunis, a slight, black-haired teacher by profession. We sat on the rooftop of the party's building, until recently the headquarters of the Political Security branch of Assad's intelligence. "Here in Syria," Yunis told me, "there is only the PYD."

But the PYD official's claims were not borne out by the evidence. The tight, efficient, and comprehensive PYD-dominated administration in the town was clearly not the work solely of the activists of a small, harried local party in existence since 2003. Ahmed, a bright young PYD supporter

I spoke to in Derik, confirmed that both the civil and military setups in the town were established under the guidance of PKK fighters and activists who arrived in the course of the summer. Ahmed, a former student at Damascus University, was strongly behind the PYD, but saw no reason to obscure its links with the PKK.

Usually, the PYD stresses its Syrian identity and downplays its ties to the PKK for two reasons. First, the PKK is designated a terrorist organization by both the United States and the European Union. The PYD has no such troublesome designation at present. Second, PYD spokesmen are keen to emphasize that the party is not seeking to split Kurdish majority areas off from Syria. Rather, the PYD officially seeks to preserve Kurdish self-rule within the context of what it hopes will, after the fall of Assad, be a federal Syria. Membership in a pan-Kurdish alliance might suggest otherwise.

I had heard from both Kurdish opponents of the party and Arab rebel leaders that the PYD is working in cooperation with the Assad regime. A leading member of the Azadi party, one of the many small Syrian Kurdish parties opposed to the PYD, told me in my hotel in Iraqi Kurdistan that "the PYD is

a tool of the regime. There is an agreement that the PYD works on behalf of the government." Similarly, Hadji al-Bab, a commander of the Islamist Tawhid Brigade whom I interviewed in Aleppo late last year, accused the movement of conspiring with the regime and seeking the dismemberment of the country.

PYD supporters indignantly reject these charges. As proof, they point to the regime's brutal suppression of their movement prior to the uprising and subsequent civil war. They also note the many instances of combat between their forces and regime troops in recent months. PYD supporters in Derik reminded me that the regime had not left Derik of its own free will back in November, but rather had been driven out by a Kurdish mobilization. PYD chairman Saleh Muslim spoke in January this year of a "de facto truce" between the regime forces and the PYD, in which the latter was focusing on establishing organs of rule in the areas under its control.

The Kurdish areas are ruled by a supreme committee bringing together the PYD with the myriad smaller parties associated with Barzani. This committee was established in an agreement signed in the Iraqi Kurdish capital of Erbil last summer. The committee has equal representation for



*Mud houses in Tel Khanzir on the Syrian-Iraqi border*

the PYD and the pro-Barzani parties, organized into the Kurdish National Council (KNC).

Officially, the YPG militia forces are under the authority of this supreme committee. However, all acknowledge the dominance of the PYD. Because of its links with the PKK, the PYD possesses a far more powerful armed element than any of the other parties. In a situation of civil war, the ability to project armed strength is the basic currency of politics. The PYD has it. Its opponents don't. This makes its authority effectively beyond challenge in northeast Syria. It is seeking to keep out both regime and rebel forces and to set the basis for long-term Kurdish self-rule, under its leadership.

A supporter of a rival party claimed that the PYD rules by "force alone." Another, a young woman, told me of threats by party members to take over houses of affluent refugees. She also spoke of the movement's efforts to impose by force its own secular and socialist worldview, for example, jailing men suspected of taking second wives in accordance with Islamic traditions. She said that the PYD was giving power to "uneducated" people, in the areas that it controls.

From what I saw in Derik, the PYD does appear to enjoy considerable popular support. It is also well armed, mobilized, and tightly organized. For as long as its rivals remain riven by splits and unable to produce an effective militia of their own, this situation is unlikely to change. If the PYD can continue to preserve the largely peaceful situation in the areas it rules, its standing is unlikely to decline.

Derik offered a good opportunity to observe PYD rule in action. But I didn't want to stay only in the areas of firm Kurdish control, close to the Iraqi border. I was keen to get to Sere Kaniyah, which was the scene of an ongoing stand-off between the YPG fighters and Islamist rebels associated with the Jabhat al-Nusra and Ghuraba al-Sham organizations. Fighting had erupted in the town on November 19, as rebels sought to seize control of it from the Kurds. The YPG defended the area and expelled the Islamists from all but a few neighborhoods of the town.

To get from Kurdish-controlled Derik to Kurdish-controlled Seri Kaniyah required going through the city of Qamishli, the largest Kurdish-majority city in Syria, which remains in the hands of the regime. In accordance with the regime's policy elsewhere in the country, Assad's forces have conceded smaller towns and rural areas, while pushing forces into cities, like Qamishli, and holding them.

We were flagged down at the roadblock going into Qamishli, but the bored-looking regime soldiers seemed to be going through the motions, and there was no attempt at questioning us. Spending a few hours in the city was enough to correct a false impression given in reporting of Syria, that the regime presence in this city of nearly 200,000 residents is only token. On the contrary, what I saw was a fully functioning city under regime control, with no visible armed Kurdish presence.

The regime police were deployed in the city center, around a strange white statue of deceased former dictator Hafez al-Assad. Several kilometers west of Qamishli, we hit a YPG checkpoint and we were back in the Kurdish zone. The checkpoints are identifiable from a distance, because the Kurds block the road with mounds of earth, while the regime doesn't. We drove through the Kurdish-controlled town of Amuda, and then on into Sere Kaniyah.

While I was in Sere Kaniyah there was no fighting. Areas of the town have suffered from the clashes between the YPG and the Sunni rebels, but the devastation is not on the scale of that suffered, for example, in the city of Aleppo. Still, the situation was tense. Two rounds of heavy fighting, in November 2012 and late January 2013, have taken

place here between the Kurds and the Islamist rebels. Most of the civilian population appeared to have left the town. The streets were deserted, with the remaining civilians dependent on outside aid and rarely leaving their homes.

The rebel groups who attacked the town remain in possession of the neighborhoods of Yusuf al-Azma and al-Sumud, around 10 percent of the total area of the town. These are now sealed off by a tense frontline in which the Islamist and Kurdish fighters face one another. I visited a frontline position of the YPG in the town, and spoke to the commander of the position and some of his fighters.

The commander, Jamshid Osman, is a highly respected figure in the YPG as a result of his role in the Sere Kaniyah fighting. About 30 years old, stocky, and wearing an incongruous Russian-style military cap when I met him, Osman spoke to me in a room darkened by a power cut, with a group of his fighters around him.

Sere Kaniyah has become a kind of watchword for the Kurds. It is where, they believe, the interests of Sunni rebels and the government of Turkey coincided. As Osman put it, "The Free Army took money from the Turkish government. Sere Kaniyah was the first phase. Their intention was to go on all the way to Derik and the oil town of Rumeilan, and



*Devastation in Sere Kaniyah after fighting between YPG and Syrian Islamist rebels, February 2013*

take the petrol there.” Moreover, said Osman, “The Kurds are self-governing in Sere Kaniyah. That’s not good for the Turks, so they wanted to put an end to it.”

Osman described the battles of November and January, in which the fighters of Jabhat al-Nusra, Ghuraba al-Sham, Liwa al-Tawhid, and other groups deployed tanks against the Kurdish fighters. “When they first came in, the Turks opened the border gate, to bring in supplies and take out wounded. Ambulances carrying weapons also came in from the Turkish side.”

This claim of Turkish involvement in the fighting is commonly heard from the Kurdish side. The Kurds further claim that injured Islamist fighters were treated at a hospital in the Turkish border town of Ceylanpinar. That the rebel forces were operating from across the Turkish border is borne out by eyewitness reports. Turkey is undoubtedly watching with concern the emergence of a second Kurdish autonomous zone, alongside Kurdish-ruled northern Iraq. It is likely that in the long term, the Turkish government and the increasingly powerful Islamist rebels in northern Syria will share a common interest in blotting out the emergent semi-sovereignty of the Kurdish majority area. But whether the recent fighting was part of a detailed plan for an invasion by Turkish-backed Syrian Islamists is impossible to know.

A truce between the YPG and the Free Syrian Army came into effect February 17, but few expect it to last. The Kurds are well aware that their area of self-government offers a tempting prospect to surrounding forces. As Jamshid Osman told me, “Turkey, Assad, Iraq, all want this area, where we’re governing ourselves, because it’s full of oil. But we’ll fight anyone who wants to make us slaves.”

The YPG officer’s view of Turkish and rebel motivations notwithstanding, Syria was never an oil-rich state, even at the height of production before 2011. The revenues accruing from the oil fields in the Rumeilan area never came anywhere near those of the Iraqi oilfields or the Gulf. Still, in poverty-stricken, ruined Syria, possession of these areas would represent a considerable prize.

Rumeilan is a dusty, teeming town, surrounded by wells that looked inactive. There was a sale of oil at rock-bottom prices to residents going on in the town center as we drove in. Men took their allocation of two cans full of oil for their families, for heating and cooking purposes. An engineer from the oil plant at Rumeilan told me later that production was virtually at a standstill. From 166,000 barrels of oil a day in early 2011, they were now down to about 5,000-6,000. The pipelines to Homs and Tartus are damaged. The foreign companies, the British Gulfsands and the Chinese, had long since left. The oil that was extracted went to the Homs filter only, and was used for domestic consumption.

“This charity that the land gives us, the oil,” said one

Kurd I spoke to in the town, “never gave our people anything other than foul smells, cancer, and other diseases. The benefits were always for the others, who shipped it to Tartus, the Alawi people,” he said, referring to the sect to which the Assad regime belongs.

The YPG/PYD have political and security control in Rumeilan, but the oil industry is still in the hands of the regime. As one local official, Farzanan Munzer, explained, “We have no money to give to the people working in the plants, to change the ownership from the Baath to the Kurds. Also, the only filters are in Tartus and Homs, and without filtering, it’s useless.”

The officials I spoke with, associated with PYD-linked groups, spoke of their hopes for the area. Munzer, who told me he’d served four years in a regime jail for writing an article against the Assads, had evidently learned patience. He noted that “in the future, we’d like to build a pipeline to Iraqi Kurdistan. But right now, we don’t have the possibility. And if we didn’t send the oil, the regime would stand against us, and the Free Syrian Army would stand against us, and war would come to our areas. So there’ll come a day when we take control of it, but it’s not now.”

His responses seemed indicative of the modest dimensions of the current Kurdish project in northeast Syria. Many on both the regime and rebel sides believe that the Kurds are operating according to some detailed blueprint for separation. The truth, as suggested by the accommodations reached with the rebels in Sere Kaniyah and the regime in Rumeilan, is that this very poor, historically oppressed population is looking mainly for self-protection and a measure of self-rule, and, if possible, hopes to sit out the terrible civil war raging elsewhere.

The YPG is running a defensive campaign, not an insurgency, in Kurdish northeast Syria. This campaign goes hand in hand with the PYD’s successful efforts to build social and administrative structures in the areas of its control. The dominance of the PYD and YPG rests ultimately on the guns of the latter. There is no evidence of a comprehensive agreement between the Assad regime and the PYD/YPG. The Kurds will tolerate the presence of both regime and rebels on a pragmatic basis, where necessary, in their areas. Their preference, which they are working towards, is that neither be present.

The opposition of both the government of Turkey and the Sunni Arab insurgents to Kurdish self-rule in these areas is clear. The Assad regime surely opposes this too. But the Assad regime is not coming back in force to northern Syria any time soon, and probably ever. If and when Damascus falls, and the new, ascendant Sunnis take power in one form or another, the defenders of the Kurdish zone in northeast Syria will likely have to fight again to defend what they have gained. ♦



President Calvin Coolidge, October 2, 1924

# Not-So-Silent Cal

*The underestimation ends here.* BY ALVIN S. FELZENBERG

**R**onald Reagan astonished much of Washington when, in 1981, he hung Calvin Coolidge's portrait in the White House Cabinet Room.

The punditocracy saw in Reagan's gesture further evidence that he was, indeed, an "amiable dunce," as Clark Clifford maintained. Only a fool would choose to emulate a predecessor whom the chattering classes of his own era thought a fool. But Reagan knew what he was doing. In selecting a role model

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## Coolidge

by Amity Shlaes  
Harper, 576 pp., \$35

to symbolize the direction in which he wished to take the country—or in Obamaspeak, the trajectory he chose to embark on as a transformational president—Reagan cast his sights back to a time when Washington played less of a role in people's daily lives and the creative impulses of the American people soared.

This took Reagan back nearly 60 years, and to Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933). Reagan's search for a beacon

to guide him, at least in the domestic sphere, should not have surprised his skeptics all that much: He had majored in economics in college at a time when the free market—rather than Keynesian economics, or "mixed economies"—was the order of the day. It was natural that his journey from New Deal liberal to Goldwater conservative would uncover some long-buried roots. Reagan's tip of the hat to Coolidge began a decades-long feast of Coolidge revisionism.

Now, Amity Shlaes's new biography ushers in a long-overdue rehabilitation of the 30th president. *Coolidge* follows *The Forgotten Man*, her 2008 account of how the policies of Herbert Hoover

and Franklin D. Roosevelt prolonged the Great Depression. Contrary to what was commonly believed, and too often taught at the time and since, Shlaes argued that FDR and Hoover were more alike ideologically than different. Coolidge appeared in a subordinate role in *The Forgotten Man*, voicing reservations about Hoover, to whom he referred sarcastically as “the Wonder Boy.” In *Coolidge*, the taciturn New Englander moves to center stage, and, cast by Shlaes in the role of the “great refrainer,” he delivers a compelling performance.

The theme of this biography is that the prosperity that characterized the 1920s was the product of a determined president, backed by a tenacious budget chief and sagacious secretary of the Treasury. At the helm stood Calvin Coolidge, the president who rode shotgun over a Congress eager to spend more of the people’s money on popular programs. Time and again Coolidge had the courage to say “no”: to what he considered overly generous veterans bonuses (over-ridden); to farm subsidies and price supports (sustained); to increased military spending (sadly sustained). He wanted to say “no” to flood control as well, and when he yielded, he eschewed credit for what was, at the time, the single largest federal expenditure since the Great War. (He let Hoover, by then running for president, have it all.)

Shlaes begins her account by relating how a distant relation of Coolidge went to prison for owing a neighbor \$24.23. This she takes as a representation of a lesson Coolidge learned early: Debt can destroy both individuals and nations. Coolidge came from a well-known and well-established family, descended from English colonists who settled in New England in the 17th century. Unlike his more urbane and wealthier kinsmen who inhabited the region’s eastern enclaves, the Coolidges of Plymouth, Vermont, where Calvin was born, were Swamp Yankees. To this day, the term connotes rural folk who display a penchant for frugality and a streak of stubborn independence. (“Tell me, Mr. President,”

someone asked Coolidge in a receiving line, “are you related to the *Coolidges of Boston?*” His purported reply: “*They say ‘no.’*”)

While Coolidge’s immediate forebears were hardly wealthy, they more than made ends meet: Calvin’s father worked the land, ran a cheese factory, operated a general store, and served in the Vermont state legislature, as a justice of the peace, and as a notary public. In this last capacity, he swore

*The prosperity that characterized the 1920s was the product of a determined president, backed by a tenacious budget chief and sagacious secretary of the Treasury. At the helm stood Calvin Coolidge, who rode shotgun over a Congress eager to spend more of the people’s money on popular programs.*

his son in as president. (“Nobody said that I couldn’t,” he announced afterwards.) After graduating from Black River Academy, young Calvin enrolled at Amherst where, for the first time, he showed promise of future leadership, taking inspiration from the popular philosophy professor Charles Edward Garman. Garman taught his students that there was no such thing as group progress and that the true path to happiness lay in individuals bettering themselves through their own efforts. He urged his charges to think of their future career as if it were a body of water: If they stayed with the mainstream and avoided the crosscurrents, they would increase the odds that they would be pulled forward by chance.

Chance moved Calvin forward many a time, and he was always ready. After reading law with a local luminary in Northampton, Massachusetts, he began practicing and was elected to the local Republican City Committee. At the age of 26, he was elected city councilman, the first of a series of offices that he would hold until he retired from the presidency. He would subsequently serve as city solicitor, clerk of the county courts, state representative, mayor, state senator, president of the state senate, lieutenant governor, and governor. In a span of 30 years, Coolidge lost only one election, an early campaign for the Northampton school board.

In his pre-presidential career, Coolidge cut a figure as a progressive Republican in the Theodore Roosevelt mode. He favored higher salaries for teachers, women’s suffrage, direct election of U.S. senators, and maximum hours for workers, and he opposed child labor. Coolidge particularly enjoyed serving as president of the Massachusetts state senate because it allowed him to vote on legislation, often permitting him to cause a tie, which could doom legislation he opposed.

Shlaes demonstrates how, in one instance, Coolidge used that power to defeat a business regulation. But she does not mention that he cast the tie-inducing vote that prevented the tabling of a bill to establish a censorship board empowered to shut down performances it deemed incendiary. The legislature’s target was D.W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*, a film which Civil War veterans and African Americans had protested because of its negative portrayal of freed slaves and glorification of the Ku Klux Klan. Coolidge’s action in this instance, as well as his call for anti-lynching legislation in each of his annual messages to Congress, and his espousal of a Department of Education as a means of providing education to Southern blacks, suggests that, once persuaded that individuals were discriminated against as a class, Coolidge was prepared to see the state intervene.

Coolidge rose to national prominence in 1919 when, as governor of

Massachusetts, he declared during the Boston police strike that “there is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time,” thus breaking the strike and restoring order. Over the objection of party leaders (and the senior senator from his own state, Henry Cabot Lodge), delegates to the 1920 Republican convention foisted Coolidge onto Warren Harding’s winning ticket. Two years and four months into his term in the White House, Harding died suddenly, and Coolidge succeeded to the presidency.

As president, Coolidge made it his first orders of business to extricate the country from the Harding scandals (Teapot Dome and its lesser cousins) and to realize Harding’s program. On the former, he acted with dispatch, naming two independent counsels (one from each party) to investigate—and kept congressional inquisitors at bay. The Harding program that Coolidge carried on was an effort to restore the nation to peace and prosperity after a decade of Progressive reforms and a world war: Harding had promised a “return to normalcy,” and Coolidge set out to deliver it.

Taking advantage of legislation which Harding had signed establishing a federal Bureau of the Budget, Coolidge met regularly with division heads to ensure that fiscal limits were obeyed. His budget chief established “2 percent” clubs, offering memberships to agency heads who cut their budgets by that amount. Anticipating Reagan’s appreciation for good visuals and public relations, Coolidge, when presented with two lion cubs as a gift, named one “Tax Reduction” and the other “Budget Bureau.”

When it came to cutting taxes, Coolidge stood steadfastly behind his secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, who argued in advance of supply-siders that lowering marginal tax rates would bring increased revenues into the Treasury. By the end of the Coolidge presidency, Mellon’s “scientific tax experiment” was widely seen as a towering success: Spending was flat, with the states spending more than the federal government; revenues

had tripled; the highest tax rate had dropped to 25 percent (down from wartime levels of 73 percent); and the national debt had fallen by a third.

Reflecting Coolidge’s “obsession” with the economy, Amity Shlaes makes his handling of the economy her primary focus. Shlaes’s analysis is less insightful when she turns to other aspects of the Coolidge presidency. The bill he approved severely restricting immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe, for example, erected obstacles that, a decade later, had dire consequences for would-be refugees from Nazi persecution.

And, surely, Coolidge understood the folly of loaning Germany funds to pay war reparations to Great Britain—funds which were returned to the United States as payment on Britain’s war debt. Yet he let this shell game continue. Regarding Prohibition, the elephant in the room throughout the Roaring Twenties, Shlaes makes only a handful of brief mentions, with Coolidge weighing in only once (when he asked the governor of South Dakota how enforcement was going).

Shlaes also leaves it to future

biographers to explain why a man of Coolidge’s obvious intelligence invested so much energy in naval reduction agreements and the 1928 Kellogg-Briand Pact, through which signatories (including Germany, Italy, and Japan) renounced war “as an instrument of national policy.” She cites economy as Coolidge’s primary motivation: Half of the federal budget in Coolidge’s time went toward funding the War Department, interest payments on the debt, and veterans’ benefits—all byproducts of the “war to end all wars.” Fair enough. Yet one sees why, in his search for a model of preserving the peace through strength, Ronald Reagan sought inspiration elsewhere.

Still, Amity Shlaes definitively lays to rest the picture of Calvin Coolidge as a do-nothing, out-of-touch placeholder who served in the interlude between the Progressive Era and the New Deal. Her Coolidge is a president who worked tirelessly in pursuit of noble ends, for which he gave unsparingly of himself. And *Coolidge*, in spite of its length, is a compelling, endlessly rewarding, and persuasive contribution to historical scholarship. ♦



# Patriarch of Identity

*Who is Jacob, and what does he mean?*

BY DAVID WOLPE

Jacob dreams of ladders. A romantic reading of his story would see the ladder as a metaphor of ascent. This child who begins as a deceiver ends surrounded by his children, and is brought back home to Israel for burial. A preacher would tie it up (as many have) with a nice didactic bow.

But Yair Zakovitch is not a preacher,

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**Jacob**  
*Unexpected Patriarch*  
by Yair Zakovitch  
Yale, 216 pp., \$25

and this is not a homiletic book. It is a profound, unsparing, and deeply learned look at a character who demonstrates the uneasy and charismatic qualities of a flawed hero. This is also a book about the underside of the Bible: the manner in which it hides the shadow of its own story, and the way

in which a biblical scholar with a keen eye can bring that tale to light.

Zakovitch begins his short, lucid inquiry by asking why the Torah needs to tell the patriarchal story at all. Why not begin with the Exodus narrative, the chronicle of a people? He reminds us that the early days of Israel were concerned with self-definition. In a land where many tribes shared customs (and perhaps ethnicity), the question was: What made Israel different? The stories of the founders serve to identify Israel by contrast. Other possible tribal associations are repudiated. A people with a unique lineage cannot be confused about its origins, and enemies are wonderfully clarifying when establishing identity.

Paradoxically, this patriarch of identity—whose name is changed to Israel—turns out himself to be entangled in deceit from his first moments. Zakovitch has coauthored, with Avigdor Shinan, a wonderful book in Hebrew called *That's Not What the Good Book Says*, which excavates allusions to stories left as mere hints in the text. He demonstrates how widely Jacob's very name is identified with deceit throughout Scripture. When Jacob is himself deceived, believing his bride to be Rachel when it turns out to be her older sister Leah, the rabbis imagine Leah answering his complaint: "Is there a school without teachers?" Jacob had deceived his father and placed himself before his older brother. Well, Leah says with some justice, my father has deceived you by placing the older (Leah) before the younger.

Of course, were he only a con artist, Jacob would not be worthy of our interest. But Jacob is a dreamer, a legacy he will pass on to his son Joseph, and, in a supreme moment of self-transcendence, he wrestles with an angel

and is transformed into Israel—one who struggles with God. Faithful and guileful, there is an unevenness to his character. "We see," writes Zakovich, "that Jacob alternately exhibited initiative and passiveness." The patterning of his life, made so clear in this exposition, reveals something important about Jacob that is a model for human understanding.

Jacob's life is not only a story of cunning; he is the "victim" of parental favoritism. While his father preferred

to the older. The alert reader is ready for a new confrontation. Indeed, Joseph tries to correct his father, but Jacob insists on the inverted order. Only, this time it occasions no fight: The brothers are reconciled. Menasseh is the unsung hero of the Torah because he does not protest. And now that some of the family breaches have been healed, the saga of a people can begin with the book of Exodus. In a beautiful moment of clarity, Jacob, the victim and perpetrator

of so much family anguish, becomes the agent of its healing.

Zakovitch tells all this both straight and slant, recounting the story so that the reader is refamiliarized, but also pointing out where the seams of the text show through. For instance, in the story of Dinah, known as the "Rape of Dinah," was the rape, in fact, added later for justification? Was Jacob's story a pattern for the saga of King David? Where was



*Jacob Receiving the Tunic of Joseph' by Diego Velázquez (ca. 1630)*

his brother Esau, his mother guided him to steal the birthright. Jacob, in turn, practices favoritism with Joseph, with near-catastrophic results: Joseph's brothers intend to kill him and end up selling him into slavery. Jacob is separated from his beloved mother by deceit and is later separated from his favorite son for decades, deceived by his own children. (They bring a bloody coat to Jacob recounting that Joseph was eaten by wild animals.) He is threatened by his brother Esau but ultimately reconciles with him, much as he later watches his son Joseph reconcile with his brothers.

These stories are part of the many accounts of fractured families that characterize all of Genesis. To close the circle, Jacob, who was blessed by his old blind father in his dotage, blesses his grandchildren, Ephraim and Menasseh, and insists on preferring the younger

Rachel's gravesite, and why are two different locations given?

Zakovitch has provocative and interesting answers to these and many other questions. In his gripping exegesis, we see Jacob as alternately courageous, cunning, self-pitying, faithful, and distrustful. The reader is left wondering why this fascinating, deeply flawed man lends his name to the people of Israel when surely we would have chosen a more upright representative. The answer can only be what Rabbi Alexandri said so beautifully in the Midrash: "If a person uses broken vessels it is considered an embarrassment, but God seeks out broken vessels for His use."

In his imperfection, his struggles, his wariness, and his gratitude—in his very brokenness—Jacob reflects who we are, with slight, shining hints of who we might be. Israel, indeed. ♦

# An English Chill

*Rediscovering the ghost stories of M.R. James.*

BY SARA LODGE



*M. R. James, ca. 1900*

Every Christmas Eve, M.R. James (1862-1936), the celebrated scholar of medieval literature and provost of King's College, Cambridge, enacted a strange ritual. After participating in the Christmas service at King's College Chapel—that miracle of 15th-century Gothic architecture whose soaring vaulted ceiling resembles vast skeletal hands clasped overhead—he repaired with a select group of scholars to his college room. Spiced ale and wine were quaffed as they settled by the fireside. Then all the candles but one were snuffed out. And James began to read from a handwritten paper: his latest tale of supernatural terror.

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James understood, you see, the vital importance of *atmosphere* to the ghost story: the necessity of the reader to not be entirely in control of the effect that it might have upon him; the unnerving possibilities of a placid, jog-trot domestic setting occupied by a scholarly figure—not the type to let his imagination run wild—whose research brings upon him something indistinctly visible but palpably evil: a buried violence that erupts into the present with undiminished rage.

American readers are likely to be less familiar with Montague Rhodes James than they are with Edgar Allan Poe or Ambrose Bierce. Yet his tales richly repay reading, not only for the shivers they induce, but for what they reveal about the British sensibility. What frightens us is a vital indication of our character, a clue to our dangerous desires as well as to the defenses

we establish to repress them. In M.R. James's work, the overriding fear and desire is that the past is not over—that it is still moving, swarming under the sheets of consciousness, in the books and buried objects we daily disturb. In a letter, James marveled that the ink of some medieval missals was “as black & the staves as fresh as if they had been laid on yesterday, and yet hundreds of years have passed since they laid down the pen.” The imminence of the past overtakes his fictional protagonists, too—often with the force of a blow to the head.

James grew up in a very devout family: His scholarly father was an Anglican clergyman in the parish of Livermere in Suffolk. As a child, Monty was preoccupied by imagined visions of the Last Judgment, and this interest in apocalypse and divine retribution would become an adult research interest: James specialized in biblical apocrypha. His home life seems to have been relatively happy, but when he was sent, aged 11, to board at a preparatory school, which led to Eton—the most famous, and perhaps fearsome, of English public schools—he would have experienced the exquisite torments of ragging (physical japes that might turn violent) and fagging (acting as a servant to older boys). Letters home confess that he cried in bed every night.

To the modern eye, it seems as if James, at first an unwilling prisoner in the all-male educational enclave, became so institutionalized that he never left. At Cambridge, he moved seamlessly from being a student, to becoming a fellow, and then provost. After World War I, he returned to Eton to become provost there. James's ghost stories belong to the same cloistered environment he inhabited, of lone male archivists whose inwardness arouses both our sympathy and our suspicion. The shadowy yet vicious horrors that stalk them are creepier for the fact that they emanate ambiguously from outside their sheltered lives, or from within.

In “Rats,” for example, Mr. Thomson, a Cambridge scholar, is staying at an old inn in Suffolk. His landlords

treat him with warm hospitality. It is spring, an unusually warm and sunny April, and Mr. Thomson reads in the mornings and later goes out walking for the good of his health. But one afternoon, he does not go out walking: He reads on. So do we. Alone in the establishment, Mr. Thomson decides to take a look around the unoccupied rooms on his floor. Three are unremarkable. The fourth is locked. Idly curious, Mr. Thomson tries the key of a neighboring room and it fits. Inside, the floor is bare; there is only an iron bed with a mattress and a bluish check counterpane:

As featureless a room as you can well imagine, and yet there was something that made Thomson close the door very quickly and yet quietly behind him and lean against the window-sill in the passage, actually quivering all over. It was this, that under the counterpane someone lay, and not only lay, but stirred. That it was some *one* and not some *thing* was certain, because the shape of a head was unmistakable on the bolster; and yet it was all covered, and no one lies with covered head but a dead person; and this was not dead, not truly dead, for it heaved and shivered.

The grotesque dead-alive figure that Mr. Thomson's curiosity has awoken turns out to belong to the history of the inn: The landlord knows that this room can never be opened. But the reader cannot help but feel that the terrible contents of the bed also belong to Mr. Thomson's subconscious. The unnatural aspect of the scholar's confinement in the inn on a bright, sunny day strikes us as ominous. He has been perversely inhabiting the interior (his room, his mind), and the horror he unlocks is the stronger for arising from a guilty impulse to explore what has been deliberately repressed. Like Bluebeard's wife, he finds an image of death all the more hideous for its parody of sexual arousal.

Despite the title, there are no rats in this tale. Since the reader is looking for them to appear, they become a cipher for something else: a fear without a name—of dirt, of invasion, of what perverse desire may disclose.

Mr. Thomson will have to take one more look inside the forbidden room; dreading what may befall him, we scuttle across the page.

In another story, "A View from a Hill," the academic protagonist has come to visit a friend, a country landowner. The visitor borrows some old field glasses so that he can scan the local landscapes for church spires and other sites of archaeological interest. He is delighted to see the tower of Fulnaker Abbey. His host tells him that this is impossible: The abbey is a ruin; he must be looking at Oldbourne Church. But he isn't: The scholar is staring back through time. These unholy "dead men's eyes" are a classic M.R. James artifact. They offer an extraordinary temptation: to see intact the glories of the past. In gazing, however, the viewer exposes himself to retribution. The angry eyes of the dead look in upon him in return, and he will have to fight his way back from their insistent grasp.

James learned his art from the Victorian ghost stories he read in the magazines of his childhood during the 1860s and 1870s. This was the high noon of the genre, and every Christmas brought new thrills, from Charles Dickens's "The Signal-man" to F. Marion Crawford's "The Upper Berth." It is notable that the era when the ghost story flourished was both the heyday of spiritualism and the period that saw the birth of psychoanalysis: Both a sense of the possible reality of ghosts and of their possible origins in the human psyche inspired specter-collectors. James's favorite author of suspense was the Irish novelist Sheridan Le Fanu, whose leisurely style and skill at "touching in the effective detail" he especially admired. Edgar Allan Poe, he felt, was too blatant and extreme in his effects. He disliked the theatrical orgy of horror, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, in which "the butter is spread far too thick."

James's style, by contrast, is marked by reticence. He is a master of the withheld. Even in his autobiography, *Eton and King's*, James informs us bluntly that there will be no details of his

family history or evidence of "the expression of emotions with which I may be reasonably believed to be familiar." It is as if love—parental, brotherly, or sexual—is the undershirt and pants of the speaker's inner wardrobe. We can assume their presence, but ought not to seek to know more about items so ubiquitous, so embarrassing.

Never was author so firmly and so obviously closeted. All the recorded details of his life suggest homosexual longings, whether fulfilled or not. But James will not write of sex, a topic which he regards as "a fatal mistake . . . tiresome enough in novels. . . . As the backbone of a ghost story, I have no patience with it."

The result of James sternly avoiding this particular backbone—if you will—is that its unstated presence is everywhere in his work. Apertures, bedclothes, hair, and mouths recur as motifs in the retributive terror that follows his protagonists back to their most vulnerable space: the bedroom. However, much is achieved by indirect means, by omission and suggestion. The tranquil, sometimes mildly comic, tone with which the stories begin lulls us into an easy confidence in climbing the narrative, until we reach the broken step that will plunge us into something horrible. If the form of the sonnet requires a "volta"—a turn in the argument—the form of the ghost story requires a lurch. In James, this is typically a moment when the abstracted hand reaches to touch something familiar and finds it horribly changed, threatening—breaching the boundaries that regulate the separateness of the self.

M.R. James was a medieval scholar and cataloguer of manuscripts first, a ghost-story writer second. Some of his 33 tales are underdeveloped or have weaknesses, as when he is attempting a working-class voice. But the best continue to exert an uncanny hold over the British imagination: They have achieved cult status. This is partly because many have been adapted into 45-minute BBC dramas, some of which are themselves classics of the genre.

Last year, to celebrate James's 150th

birthday, Oxford University Press produced a new edition of the stories, with a helpful introduction and notes by Darryl Jones. Additionally, a box set has been released of the BBC adaptations from 1968 to 2010. Both are enjoyable. Jonathan Miller's loose film adaptation of *Whistle and I'll Come to You* (1968) and Lawrence

Gordon Clark's version of *A Warning to the Curious* (1972) are particularly menacing. The box set also includes a recording of Christopher Lee reading some of the tales. Lee was interviewed for admission to Eton by M.R. James, and it is tempting to suppose that some instinct for the sinister passed between them. ♦



# Ignoble Experiment

*This is what happens when dogma distorts science.*

BY MICHAEL ROSEN

A meta-study that appeared in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* last September found no “strong evidence that organic foods are significantly more nutritious than conventional foods.” A dozen Stanford researchers combed some 237 studies that analyzed food consumption and health outcomes among thousands of people, only to conclude (in the words of the study's senior author) that “there isn't much difference between organic and conventional foods, if you're an adult and making a decision based solely on your health.”

In the weeks that followed, progressive foodies and activists were, predictably, apoplectic. The study was “an exercise in misdirection” and “junk science” that “conveniently obscur[ed] important features of organic agriculture,” according to Mark Bittman of the *New York Times*, who likened the Stanford findings to “declaring guns no more dangerous than baseball bats” and to “comparing milk and Elmer's glue on the basis of whiteness.”

When scientific facts collide with the ingrained worldview of left-wing activists like Bittman, chaos ensues—and it is such disorder among progressives that Alex Berezow and Hank Campbell

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## Science Left Behind

*Feel-Good Fallacies and the Rise of the Anti-Scientific Left*

by Alex B. Berezow and Hank Campbell  
Public Affairs, 320 pp., \$26.99

capably catalogue in this penetrating, entertaining world tour of what they label the “anti-scientific left.”

For all the bluster on opposition to science emanating from conservatives, Berezow and Campbell note that it's progressives—whom they distinguish from less-leftist liberals—who “have mastered feel-good fallacies” and “bully the scientific community into playing along.” The authors don't excuse the right's faults, but train their focus, instead, on “highly influential progressives who misinterpret, misrepresent, and abuse science to advance their ideological and political agendas.”

Berezow, who holds a doctorate in microbiology and is the editor of *Real Clear Science*, and Campbell, founder and editor of *Science 2.0*, traverse the unplowed terrain of left-wing Ludism—ranging from vaccine refuseniks to nuclear energy opponents to anti-animal-testing zealots to ANWR lovers to Keystone XL haters—methodically demonstrating how progressives seek to “replace scientific

research with unscientific ideology.” A prime example is genetically modified (GM) organisms, which present no significant health risks but which promise better, cheaper, and more environmentally friendly living for humanity, especially for those mired in poverty. As the authors point out, “GM crops are spreading across the entire continent of Africa because of the numerous advantages they confer over conventional crops.”

Yet progressives the world over decry the production and consumption of “Frankenfoods” despite overwhelming scientific evidence of their safety. Fortunately, even in my left-tilting home state of California, voters in November (narrowly) rejected a ballot measure that would have required special labeling of all GM food sold in stores, a costly and pointless regime that would have most perniciously affected those who could least afford it. (Still, Berezow and Campbell believe GM products “should be closely monitored or regulated” and subjected to “long-term studies.”)

Another instance of progressive hostility to science lies in the “precautionary principle.” This is especially true in Europe, which has placed itself at the cutting edge of opposing technological breakthroughs. The authors fault this principle because it requires proponents of new technologies to prove their safety beyond a shadow of a doubt, and because it “assumes that older technologies are safer than newer technologies”—which simply isn't so as a general proposition. Recent years have seen a mushrooming of European antagonism to nuclear power, natural gas exploration, and electromagnetic radiation emitted by cell phones and even Wi-Fi, which a European Union directive sought to ban from classrooms. Small wonder that Europe badly lags behind the United States in research-and-development spending.

*Science Left Behind* also includes an instructive chapter documenting the steady decline of science journalism, which is Campbell's area of expertise. Mainstream science writing, the authors contend, has shifted

“toward opinion and even political activism,” and has been “overrun by partisan interests who do not love science as much as they hate their political opponents.” (One recent study of British science journalism found that only 12 percent of stories were generated by actual reporting, not press releases.) The authors also take obligatory, yet deadly accurate, potshots at Al Gore, prophet of the global warming catastrophe that always lies just around the corner; at John Holdren, President Obama’s science czar, who once collaborated with the discredited Paul Ehrlich of *Population Bomb* fame; and at the lunatics of PETA who oppose, sometimes violently, lifesaving animal research.

Ultimately, Berezow and Campbell conclude, it appears that “environmentalists believe any technological progress at all . . . is at odds with protecting the environment.” But they roundly reject this “false choice,” arguing instead that “we must choose both, for we have no other ethical option.” Scientific innovation aims to

extend and enhance life on Earth—a physical, cultural, and moral imperative for all of humanity, regardless of ideology, faith, or socioeconomic status.

To be sure, *Science Left Behind* occasionally suffers from some of the flaws it attributes to its subjects. While the authors often meticulously document their assertions with citations to various studies—the endnotes alone span some 30 pages—they sometimes fail to present, in the text, figures or other evidence supporting their assertions, such as when they criticize the wasteful cash-for-clunkers program without rigorously quantifying the waste. They might also have expanded their discussions of other controversial issues at the intersection of science and public policy, such as fracking and IQ tests.

Of course, Berezow and Campbell could address these subjects in a sequel as incisive and well-written as this, their first book. Given the increasing stridency with which progressives decry scientific progress, they may need to. ♦

My friend, a beefy guy who is not to be trifled with, agreed that the thief was the scum of the earth. He headed south and I headed north to see if we could run the lowlife down. If I found him first, his life would not be worth a brass farthing. I’d rip out his lungs. I’d grind my boot into his face. I’d fish-gut him.

We found nothing.

“I’m going to run over to the train station and check there,” I told my friend. “It’s probably a teenager. If I see him with that wrapping paper, I’m going to knock his teeth out. I am. I swear. I will literally rip that scumbag to pieces!”

Alas, there was no guilty party at the train station. I scoured the station, wandering up and down both platforms, but came up empty. As I looked around, seething, I thought back to other incidents of this sort. Fifteen years earlier, I was waiting for the uptown Q train in a deserted Manhattan subway station when I realized that I had dropped one of my new calfskin gloves. I had bought the gloves not 20 minutes earlier at Lord & Taylor. They were the only pair of expensive gloves I had ever owned.

Reconstructing my movements, I realized that I had removed the gloves while purchasing tokens, and had probably dropped one, so I ran back to the token booth. The area was still deserted. But the glove was nowhere to be found. Nor had the clerk seen anyone pick up the glove. I was enraged. What kind of person would make off with a single glove? A glove that was obviously brand-new? An expensive glove that could not possibly be of any use to anyone? What kind of person would do that? I never bought an expensive pair of gloves again.

Another time, I was coming out of the Roy and Niuta Titus Theater in the bowels of the Museum of Modern Art when I realized that I did not have my beautiful blue woolen scarf around my neck. It was a thick scarf with navy and royal blue checks that my wife had knitted for me. It had taken her months to finish the job. I ran back inside and looked all over the theater, in vain. Then I checked at the front

BCA

# The Paper Chase

*Vengeance is mine when the crime is so abhorrent.*

BY JOE QUEENAN

**R**ecently, I drove to the nearby village of Pleasantville to buy my wife a couple of books as a birthday present. I also bought some festive wrapping paper. The paper had lots of brightly colored fruits silhouetted against a shiny white surface. It was quite jolly.

It didn’t surprise me that the wrapping paper was so sweet and life-affirming because Pleasantville is a really pleasant, life-affirming little town. Shortly after making my purchase, I ran into a good friend who

invited me to grab a cup of coffee. I deposited the books and the jaunty wrapping paper on a wrought-iron table outside the coffee shop, and went inside. I couldn’t have been in there more than a couple of minutes; but when I came back out, the wrapping paper was gone. The books were still there, but the wrapping paper wasn’t.

“That was really jolly wrapping paper!” I exclaimed. “Anyone seeing that wrapping paper would know that it was specially purchased to make somebody happy. It’s the kind of paper you would use to wrap a child’s present. What kind of scumbag would steal festive, jaunty, jolly wrapping paper like that?”

*Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of One for the Books.*

desk to see if anyone had returned it. No one had.

I was beside myself. The scarf was obviously not store-bought merchandise. It had clearly been handcrafted by someone who loved the person wearing it: a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a lover. Whoever had scooped up that gorgeous scarf knew this. But it made no difference to them. For they were satanic. They subscribed to the theory “Finders, keepers; losers, weepers.” And yes, I was weeping.

I checked back at the lost-and-found desk many times over the weeks and months to come, without success. But one afternoon, about three months later, at a screening of the classic Jean-Pierre Melville film *Bob le Flambeur* at the Bleecker Street Cinema, I spotted a stubby, bespectacled man wearing my scarf. He was a regular at the arty movie houses we used to frequent. I cornered the brigand, laid my hands around his neck, and removed the purloined item. He tensed. He trembled. But he never said a word.

“Thanks for taking care of my scarf for the last three months,” I hissed. “You’re lucky I don’t hang you with this.” I never saw the man again.

I was thus in my reverie when I re-emerged from the Pleasantville train station. Across the street, I saw my friend. He was clutching my wrapping paper.

“Did you find the guy who stole it?” I asked, sure that the thief was a man.

“No,” he said. “I found it lying between those two vans.”

I immediately recalled that when I had launched into my tirade about what I would do to anyone horrible enough to steal a complete stranger’s jaunty, jolly wrapping paper, a man had been standing right beside the van. The man was now gone, though the van was still there. I was sure he was the culprit. I was sure he’d heard my threats and decided to save his hide by ditching the stolen wrapping paper.

I hung around for a while, but did not see the man again. I was happy to have the wrapping paper back, yet I still felt unsatisfied. The man had committed an outrageous crime and had coughed up the goods out of fear of reprisal. But

he had not been punished for what I viewed as a crime against humanity.

But he will be. Next week I’m going back over to Pleasantville with a roll of even jauntier wrapping paper. As before, I’m going to leave it out on full display. As before, I’m going to wander inside to buy a coffee. And then, with the trap baited, I will wait. I might need to stay there a few hours—there is no way of telling when he will come back—and I might need to return to the scene of

the crime more than once. I might even need to buy still jollier wrapping paper. This could take a while.

But I can wait. Because a person that villainous needs to be chastised for his misdeed. A person who would steal wrapping paper that sweet, that cute, that life-affirming, that jolly, is a person incapable of being rehabilitated. In the fullness of time, he will strike again. And when he does, I’ll be waiting for him with a two-by-four at the ready. It’s not going to be jolly. ♦

BCA

# If the Slipper Fits

*Cinderella gets the update she deserves.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**I**s there any fairytale more maddening than “Cinderella”? Other classic stories force their heroes and heroines to undergo a journey from innocence to experience in which they are punished for immoral choices and tested to show their moral worth; Cinderella is rewarded for doing nothing much, asking for nothing much, and being nothing much.

A tormented child who does not stand up for herself is saved from a life of penury not through any agency of her own, but through a magic spell and the intercession of a rich and powerful man. Cinderella does nothing to change her own circumstances. In the Disney cartoon version of 1950, Cinderella’s passivity is the cause of her reward. She gets the fairy godmother because she spends her days wishing for change, both while awake and in slumber. (“A dream is a wish your heart makes when you’re fast asleep,” she sings.)

Indeed, Cinderella’s passivity is one of the qualities that makes the fairytale so potent for little girls. For what can little girls do to combat

Rodgers & Hammerstein’s  
**Cinderella**

Directed by Mark Brokaw



injustice and cruelty and meanness? Nothing, really; even if they show ingenuity and intelligence and cleverness, that won’t ameliorate their lot. It must seem at times that only supernatural deliverance can save them from the world’s unpleasantness.

But while the fairytale has enduring power, it is a problematic basis for a full-length story: Cinderella is an inactive character, and the prince who rescues her is even more so. She is a victim; he is a featureless puzzle piece moved around by fate. Seven years after the Disney movie was released, the songwriting team of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II came out with their legendary version: a musical for TV—starring Julie Andrews—that was the most-watched program of the 1950s. But it was memorable only for its songs, not for its story, and it kept getting revised.

Eight years later, a new TV *Cinderella* came out (in color this time), with

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Laura Osnes, Santino Fontana

the starlet Lesley Ann Warren and a rejiggered plot. Thirty years after that came a version with the pop singer Brandy Norwood (and Whitney Houston as the fairy godmother), and its storyline toyed with yet again.

Now, the musical is live on Broadway—for the first time, remarkably enough—with an entirely new book by the playwright Douglas Carter Beane. Beane understood that you can't just go with a traditional Cinderella in 2013; the character makes no sense in the present context unless she is so horrifyingly abused that the proceedings become unwatchable. Beane and director Mark Brokaw avoid that pitfall, which is more than I can say about the revival of the musical *Annie* currently playing on Broadway. That production makes the calamitous error of trying to humanize its villain, Miss Hannigan, and give her psychological depth. Consequently, Miss Hannigan comes across as a disappointed, middle-aged drunk—a character out of a William Inge play—making the cruelty with which she treats the orphans in her care seem unfathomably monstrous.

The new *Annie* is the feel-bad revival of all time. Not so *Cinderella*. What Beane has done is to focus the plot on the prince, here called Topher. What kind of prince is Topher? this

production asks. What kind of king will he be? Will he go around slaying tree monsters, or will he help the people of his kingdom, who are being mistreated by the aide who has been running things while Topher swings his sword and rides his horse? (The show seems to have an Occupy Wall Street tinge, though it also has an anti-tax message. The confusion is understandable, since there are T-shirts for children on sale in the lobby for \$45.)

As for Cinderella, she becomes the prince's moral guide and teacher; such is her character's journey. Her stepmother is mean, but in a quippy way that gives her the bearing of a drag queen. The real villain is the prince's greedy aide. One of the stepsisters is nice. Cinderella earns the magic alteration in her circumstances by being kind to her fairy godmother, who has been disguised as a crazy homeless person.

The new *Cinderella* is a pretty clever job. The jokes aren't bad, and the twists Beane works on the old chestnut do add surprising suspense to a story everyone knows. There's no pain in this *Cinderella*, so there's no real emotional heft to it. But who cares about the story anyway? The only reason to see any iteration of the Rodgers and Hammerstein *Cinderella* is the score, and that remains

nothing less than heart-stopping. It delivers a wallop of a kind unique to Rodgers's indelible melodies—from this and the numerous other shows he contributed to over an astounding career which spanned more than half a century, before his death in 1979.

From "In My Own Little Corner" (Cinderella's private testament) to the jaunty and exciting "Impossible" (when the Fairy Godmother transforms Cinderella and the animals) to the ball dance called "A Lovely Night" to the gorgeous love ballad "Ten Minutes Ago," and the hilarious "Stepsisters' Lament," the songs are all as glorious as you remember them from your first viewing 55 years ago, or 45 years ago, or 20 years ago, or whenever.

And when the delightful actress Laura Osnes simply turns to the side and, in the spectacular costuming of the old wizard William Ivey Long, instantly trades a scullery maid's clothes for a glittering white gown, the cause of the enduring bewitchment of this tale, with origins as far back as Herodotus, is revealed. Cinderella is a tale not of beauty within, but of beauty without. The clothes make the girl. And anyone, even someone who feels ugly and ungainly and unloved, can become beautiful. All it takes are the dress and the shoes. ♦

**“David Coleman, president of the College Board, which creates and administers the SAT, e-mailed his 6,000 members on Tuesday to inform them that the board will redesign the test to more sharply focus on the ‘core set of knowledge and skills’ that high school graduates need to succeed in college.”**

**—Washington Post, February 26, 2013**

# PARODY

## THE SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST

11. If a student has a 4.1 grade-point average (GPA) but has not volunteered at a homeless shelter, he/she is most likely to be admitted to which institution of higher learning?
- (A) Stanford  
(B) Rutgers  
(C) Amherst  
(D) Duke
12. If a tenured professor of political science asserts that the real definition of affirmative action is “white privilege,” what is the correct classroom response?
- (A) “It depends on what you mean by ‘affirmative action.’”  
(B) “Finally, someone is speaking truth to power.”  
(C) “I am unfamiliar with the concept of ‘white privilege.’”  
(D) “Are you talking about equality of opportunity or equality of outcome?”
13. A 350ml hand-bottled container of whiskey (small batch) will supply one shot per person at a table seating how many freshmen?
- (A) Four  
(B) Twelve  
(C) Eighteen  
(D) Ten
14. An undergraduate who needs to fulfill a “non-Western” course requirement for graduation would find the widest variety of offerings in which department?
- (A) Sociology  
(B) African-American Studies  
(C) Chemical Engineering  
(D) Women’s Studies
15. A male undergraduate who wishes to favorably impress a female undergraduate with an invitation to a dramatic production should choose which offering?
- (A) *Romeo and Juliet*  
(B) *A Raisin in the Sun*  
(C) *Angels in America*  
(D) *The Vagina Monologues*
16. A student applies for an unpaid summer internship at a nonprofit organization. When asked whether this would constitute a personal hardship, how should he/she respond?
- (A) “I believe too strongly in your mission to care about such things.”  
(B) “No problem. My father is the CEO of a venture capital firm.”  
(C) “The experience is worth so much more than money.”  
(D) “I need this for my résumé and will do whatever is necessary.”