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JONATHAN V. LAST

THE OLDEST WAR

ANDREW FERGUSON on the battle between the sexes

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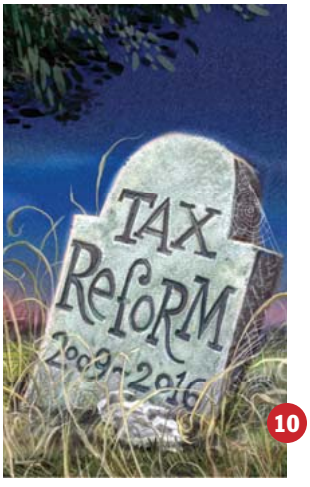

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COVER BY DAVID CLARK

The Bonding Market

On July 24, the *New York Times* was granted a rare sit-down interview with President Obama. The interview was unremarkable, but that's to be expected considering that the *Times* has been as sycophantic toward Obama as he has been contemptuous toward the press. The interview contained no inquiries on the IRS, Benghazi, or surveillance scandals and focused mostly on the White House's embarrassingly inchoate economic agenda, leaving readers to squint between the lines to find something interesting or newsworthy. But there was one inadvertently revealing exchange:

> Mr. Obama: I had a conversation a couple of weeks back with a guy named Robert Putnam, who I've known for a long time.
>
> NYT: He was my professor actually at Harvard.
>
> Mr. Obama: Right. I actually knew Bob when I was a state senator and he had put together this seminar to just talk about some of the themes that he had written about in "Bowling Alone," the weakening of the community fabric and the impact it's having on people.

The president goes on to note that the trends Putnam first observed in his seminal 1995 article "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" have only gotten worse, without any special insight as to why. Putnam argued then, and presented a great deal of data to back up his thesis, that there had been a major collapse in civic and social organizations in America between the 1960s and 1990s. Further, Putnam observed that Americans had become less likely to interact with those outside their narrow peer groups.

Expanding on that last point, Putnam made an important distinction about the different kinds of social capital that exist in America: bonding capital and bridging capital. Bonding capital comes from the association of people from similar socioeconomic backgrounds or among people who share similar interests. Bridging capital is produced when people of dissimilar backgrounds are brought together, and it was the depletion of bridging capital that Putnam was most concerned with. In a sprawling and diverse society such as America, the decline in bridging capital might lead to greater political and social tensions.

The Scrapbook doesn't expect the president to be self-aware enough to realize that his own relentless big-government agenda might be crowding out civil society, to say nothing of the Obama administration's overt attacks on important civic organizations such as churches. But ponder for a moment the recursive nature of this exchange—the president of the United States and a *New York Times* reporter sit down for a rare interview. It turns out they're both Harvard grads who know Robert Putnam. And by invoking Putnam, they end up inadvertently confirming his thesis about the importance of bridging capital over bonding capital.

They understand their old professor in theory, but in practice they're incapable of having an interesting discussion about the nation's very pressing problems. That's because they exemplify a surplus of bonding capital and a deficit of bridging capital. Both the White House and the *New York Times* newsroom are inhabited by Ivy League elites who think there's no real debate to be had. Smart people with correct politics should be empowered to dictate what Americans do. And their faith in this liberal governance is so total, they're ultimately uninterested in protecting a civic space where Americans can get together and solve their own problems. ♦

End of an Era

The Scrapbook notes with regret the death of two names from the recent political past: William Scranton, 96, the former Pennsylvania governor, U.N. ambassador, and Republican presidential candidate; and Harry Byrd Jr., 98, longtime U.S. senator from Virginia and, as it happens, avid reader of The Weekly Standard.

Both were scions of fabled families in their respective states, and both earned, in their time, a mention in political history. Scranton, with his eleventh-hour challenge to Barry Goldwater in 1964, personified the once-dominant "Northeast" wing of the Republican party as it was being challenged by insurgent conservatism. And when Byrd, the son of a legendary Dixiecrat senator, moved from the Democratic party to Independent status in 1970, he symbolized the transition of the South to a two-party system. Both were patriots who served their country in war, and principled, affable, even lovable, gentlemen.

Their near-simultaneous exits, however, tell us something about the ideology of modern journalism. The Scrapbook could not fail to notice that the lugubrious NBC news reader, Brian Williams, said of Scranton that "he used to be referred to as a 'moderately liberal Republican,' back when there was such a thing." Yet no such courtesy was extended to Byrd, who used to be referred to as a conservative Democrat, back when there was such a thing. While the press tends to obsess on the eclipse of liberal Republicans, especially in Congress, it is never mentioned that conservative Democrats, who hailed from all regions of the country and wielded considerable power in their party, are now extinct.

The reason, presumably, is that while liberal Republicans were a Good Thing, conservative Democrats were a Bad Thing, and good riddance. The irony, of course, is that what made Bill Scranton "liberal" was his support for civil rights in the 1960s, which, in his Democratic days, Harry Byrd opposed. Otherwise the two were essentially indistinguishable: fiscal conservatives, hawks on foreign policy, and critics of the Great Society. We will miss them. ♦

These Boots Are Made for Lobbying

Nancy Sinatra has been a good daughter to her father Frank—probably, in The Scrapbook's view, better than the late singer deserves. Since his death in 1998, she has resolutely defended her father's reputation against the dozens of stories of his coarse behavior—our favorite being a meal of steak and eggs served on the naked torso of a Las Vegas prostitute—and his lifelong association with mobsters and assorted lowlifes.

Of course, a daughter is entitled to revere her father, and we don't expect Nancy Sinatra to be objective about Frank Sinatra. But filial devotion is one thing; public annoyance is another. For years she has been agitating for the city of New York to erect a statue of Frank Sinatra in Times Square. Last week she took to Twitter to exhort Mayor Bloomberg, before he leaves office, to give the project his approval.

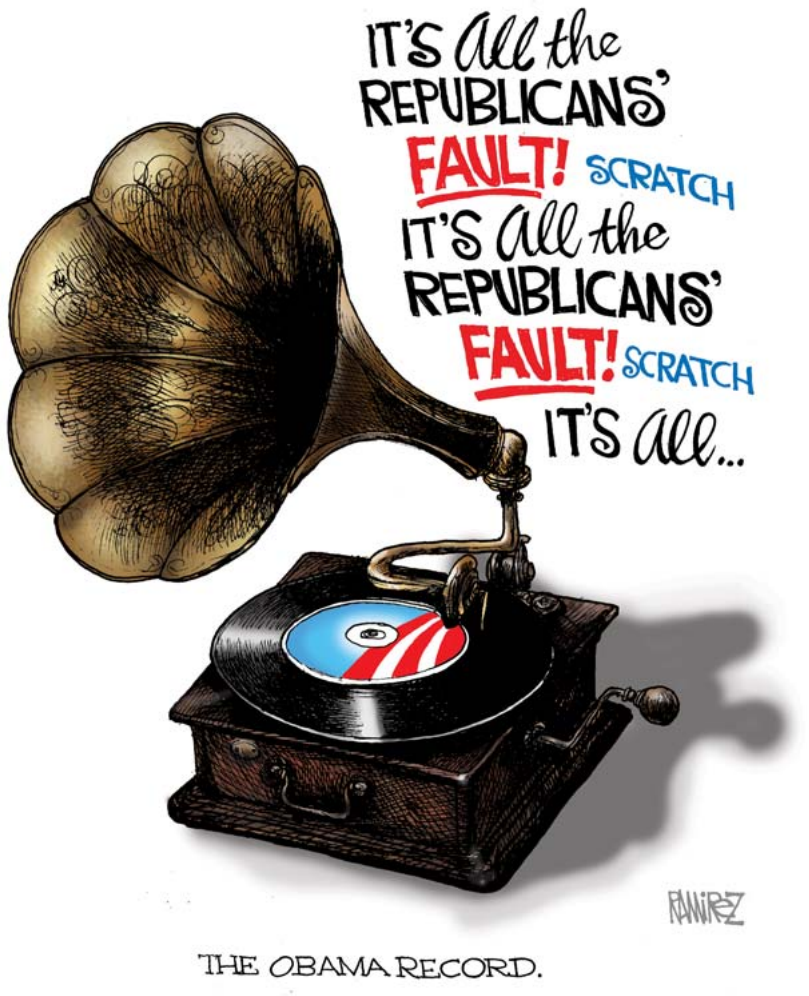
The Scrapbook has had its differences over the years with Michael Bloomberg. But if the mayor is the obstacle to a Frank Sinatra statue, we offer him our full support.

The Scrapbook has nothing against public monuments, and New York boasts a number of memorable statues. But the rationale for Frank Sinatra of Hoboken, New Jersey, is practically nonexistent. Yes, he performed in New York many times over his long career; but the same could be said of Ella Fitzgerald (Yonkers), Mel Tormé (Chicago), Rosemary Clooney (Cincinnati), Bing Crosby (Spokane), or Billie Holiday (Philadelphia). And the stated reason for Sinatra is the unpersuasive fact that, late in his career, he popularized the theme song from a forgettable movie, *New York, New York* (1977).

This is not an idle threat: A street-corner in Chicago has already been named for Sinatra and, lest we forget, he recorded popular versions of "I Love Paris," "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square," "By the Time I Get to Phoenix," "The Girl From Ipanema," "Roses of Picardy," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "It Happened in Monterey," "Stars Fell on Alabama," "On the Road to Mandalay," "Come Back to Sorrento," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," and most ominously, "Winchester Cathedral," among others.

Which brings us to The Scrapbook's solution. Since the only other show biz statue in Times Square depicts the playwright-composer-lyricist-performer George M. Cohan, it makes more sense—and would be considerably fairer—to commemorate the people who created the popular songs about New York rather than a singer who just included them in his repertoire. So instead of Frank Sinatra in Times Square, how about Lorenz Hart and Richard Rodgers ("Manhattan") elsewhere on Broadway, or Vernon Duke ("Autumn in New York") in Central Park, or Charles Lawlor and James Blake ("Sidewalks of New York") on the Lower East Side?

The place for a statue of Sinatra is in Hoboken, and we'd love to see Rodgers and Hart back on Broadway. ♦



Sensitivity Alert

We've published quite a few criticisms of local "human rights" or "civil rights" commissions in these pages. And we're going to keep at it, until they give up their Orwellian ways. Last week, Seattle city agencies received a memo from Elliott Bronstein of their Office for Civil Rights informing them that "brown bag" and "citizens" are offensive words.

"For 'brown bag,' try 'lunch-and-learn' or 'sack lunch,'" Bronstein wrote. "For 'citizens,' how about 'residents?' (Our Citizens Service Bureau became the Customer Service Bureau a few years ago.) Just thought I'd bring this up. Language matters, and the city has entrusted us with the keyboards." Set aside for a second the revealing demotion of citizens into "customers," and ponder the appalling notion that "the city has entrusted us with the keyboards"—Seattle has a government agency that prides itself on telling people what to say.

In the case of "brown bag," the usage being extirpated is obscure. As The Scrapbook discovered after some Googling, many moons ago—particularly in New Orleans—there were racists who would throw parties where the only African Americans to be admitted were those with skin color lighter than a brown paper bag. Meanwhile, a brown bag is self-evidently a brown bag. What rational person would assume that a "brown bag lunch" is racist?

The objection to *citizens*, by contrast, is regrettably predictable. "We sometimes use it as another way of saying 'members of the public'—except for all the members of the public who aren't actually citizens but who live and work here," noted Bronstein. We're guessing it's not commuters and tourists that Bronstein is taking absurd precautions not to offend, but illegal aliens.

We'll leave you with this comment on the matter from Joel Connelly, who covers city politics for the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*: "Language *does* matter—witness the recent excesses of Rush Limbaugh and various Fox News hosts—but isn't the Office for Civil Rights trolling the far parameters of political correctness?"

It's telling that in Seattle one can't simply point out the absurdity of government entities running around telling people what they can and can't say without simultaneously lamenting that "various Fox News hosts" are allowed to speak freely. ♦

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The Hunter Home from the Hill

One August afternoon in 1999, my parents and I drove to a farm in Leesburg, Virginia, to look at a litter of Jack Russell Terrier puppies we'd seen advertised. As soon as we arrived at the breeder's house, we were confronted by Bunny, the long-legged mother of the pups. She was jumping in place, and for the entire time we visited, she never stopped jumping, up to three feet in the air. We should have known what we were in for.

The puppy we chose held her white-tipped tail high and posed as if on camera, while her brothers and sisters lolled about. As the breeder noted, she favored her glamorous show-dog grandmother. And when she looked at me, she turned her head intelligently, pricking up her ears so that they formed perfect triangles. We named her Daisy, because she was delicate and cheerful like the flower. It didn't last.

As soon as coordination set in, she proved so energetic as to be aggressive. Running in loops in the backyard was a common activity when nobody would play. Head-butting beach balls also amused her, and she relished getting wet—in the wading pool outside, and in her water bowl inside. We strove to confine her to the kitchen, but she defeated our ever-sturdier gates—shimmying under them, leaping over them, or, in her preferred method, simply bashing them to the ground with a whole-body slam—then zipped upstairs to stomp on our bed pillows in victory.

Hoping to tame Daisy Do-Wrong, we enrolled her in obedience school. She easily learned to "sit," "roll over," and "dance" but refused to perform a trick without a treat—or to do more than one trick at a time. Once, when the owners' attention was on the instructor after we'd supposedly gotten our dogs to "heel," Daisy slipped out of her collar, charged across the room, and tackled a Bichon. No diploma from Old Dominion University for Dogs ever adorned the Eastland family manse.

The vet told us Daisy acted out because she needed more "entertainment." More was never enough. If she got four walks a day, she wanted five. When she got a new toy, she liked it for a minute and looked for the next. And when she got a brother, it was the same. He slept; she trotted about the house investigating every possible line of mischief. What she enjoyed most was the backyard, her kingdom. To give her full access, and infinite opportunity to tire herself, we installed a doggy door. She reverted to her true calling: huntress. Our merciless Diana brought in sparrows, rabbits, chipmunks, and the occasional raccoon. Not even bees escaped her pleasure in the chase—though swallowing them did land her in the animal hospital with a face like a football more than once.

KATHERINE MESSENGER

At age 10, Daisy developed a liver condition. With the help of a pill, she pressed on with ardor undiminished, still swiping hosiery from the hamper and scratching the pantry door for marshmallows. A few years later, she began to lose her hearing. And then two months ago, she was diagnosed with congestive heart failure. When I came down from New York to say goodbye, not even an ice cube cascading down the hallway could interest her.

And then she rallied. As a family beach vacation approached, the question was what to do with Daisy. Was she well enough to travel? The vet said sure, so she came. Her bark was back, and so was her appetite. She was having no part of the salt-free diet the vet had ordered. This was, after all, a dog I once dressed as a French fry for Halloween. Daisy protested every piece of plain chicken or unbuttered biscuit offered and waited until no one was around but my grandmother. Then she would sit and bark sharply until Grandma Ed gave in and microwaved Daisy her favorite snack: a hotdog.

On the night of my grandmother's birthday, Daisy jumped onto the dining room table and got a hunk of pineapple upside-down cake. When we caught her mid-bite, she looked at us with delight, her face dotted with golden crumbs and her ears pointing to the ceiling like exclamation marks. The next night, she struck again, gleefully stealing flounder skins and playing tug-of-war once caught. She slept soundly and without remorse.

We left the beach joking that Daisy had already made her reservation for next year. (She'd surely hidden a pancake in one of the closets for future snacking.) But it turned out it really was the end. Two days later, at the vet's for a routine procedure, her tired heart gave out. The vet was surprised. We were shocked. But then that queenly, brazen, beautiful girl never would do the expected.

KATHERINE MESSENGER

the weekly Standard

The Soft Underbelly of Obamacare

For opponents of Obamacare, it almost seems like the law offers too many targets to choose from. Its effects on premiums and costs look to be highly unpopular, its perverse incentives are already harming employment, its state exchanges will hand out costly subsidies without the necessary checks against fraud, the promises of its champions—from keeping costs down to keeping the coverage and doctors you have—are proving empty, its lawless implementation is anathema to our system of government, and on and on. Where to focus their efforts to best combine political appeal with practical effect has been a real challenge for Obamacare's foes.

But fortunately for the cause of repeal and replace, the most essential part of Obamacare is also among the most unpopular: the individual mandate. This is where efforts to use the GOP's limited leverage should be concentrated.

The law's champions have always considered the individual mandate to be the indispensable provision. It is what allows them to make the only boast they really care to make, which is that the law—in their estimation—will deliver on the long-sought goal of "universal coverage" (which now appears to mean covering all but 30 million people in our country). And it is what allows them to attempt to transform the purchase of government-sanctioned health insurance from just another consumer choice into a social obligation, if not a legal decree.

Of course, the mandate has already ceased to be the obligation that Obamacare's architects wanted it to be. In his landmark ruling in *NFIB* v. *Sebelius* last summer, Chief Justice John Roberts found that Congress did not have the authority under the commerce clause to make the purchase of health insurance obligatory. The only way the "personal responsibility" requirement was found constitutional was as a tax on the uninsured: Citizens can either purchase insurance or pay that tax. Both options are perfectly permissible under the law. Indeed, the Roberts decision suggests that Congress could never raise the tax very much because that would tip the balance away from providing a genuine choice to imposing a de facto obligation to buy coverage.

As a choice, rather than a requirement, the individual mandate doesn't make expensive coverage look all that appealing. In 2014, an uninsured household (with income above an exemption threshold) must pay a tax of only $95 or 1 percent of household income, whichever is greater. For a family with a $40,000 income, that's either a $400 uninsured tax, or about $1,800 in premiums for insurance offered in the Obamacare exchanges (after the subsidies they'd receive). Some will buy the insurance, but many will not. And of those who don't, some won't bother to pay the uninsured tax either, because the ability of the IRS to collect it from them is severely restricted. The only way the government can ever recapture the money is by reducing future tax refunds, and then it can only do so a little at a time.

The individual mandate is thus already very weak, and certainly far weaker than the law's proponents would like it to be. But that does not mean it is not important. It remains the key provision in Obamacare. First, though it is weak, it will still influence *some* consumer behavior. Moreover, the mandate is essential to the expectations of the Congressional Budget Office and the law's architects—it is the main reason they can continue to claim (and presumably to believe) that the system will be sustainable. Despite its weakness, and evidence of its likely ineffectiveness, they are counting on the mandate to transform the landscape of our health care system by driving millions of relatively young and healthy Americans to sign up for Obamacare's insurance, even though doing so will in many cases cost them much more than today's insurance options and provide them with less valuable protection against risk than today's insurance does—after all, under the law's new insurance rules, if they decide to opt out they can always opt back in within a year if they get sick, with no penalty.

One should thus not discount the importance of the individual mandate to the psychology of those supporting the law. They believe they have passed a universal coverage solution, despite all evidence to the contrary. Removing the individual mandate would deflate these claims and make full repeal or wholesale change far more likely. In the wake of last year's Court decision, the CBO insisted that changing the rule from a mandate to a tax would not much undermine its effectiveness. But the agency, and Obamacare's defenders, would have to respond to a delay or repeal of the mandate by facing the reality of the new system's perverse economics.

They therefore have to implement the individual mandate as the system gets going next year, even though it is very unpopular. Indeed, the mandate generally ranks as the most unpopular provision of Obamacare. A recent survey found only 12 percent of Americans supported it. That

kind of public opposition is why Barack Obama himself expressed opposition to a mandate in the 2008 election—only to reverse himself when it came time to write a bill. It was also why the law's architects made the mandate so weak. And it is why Republicans have already successfully used it to pressure the Democrats.

Last month, well aware of the mandate's unpopularity, the House GOP wisely seized on the opening presented by the administration's one-year delay of the employer mandate to push not only for a genuine statutory delay of the employer mandate but also a corresponding and simultaneous delay of the mandate for individuals. Twenty-two Democrats joined all but one Republican in support of the individual-mandate delay—a hint that at least some modest part of the coalition defending Obamacare could be picked off on this point.

Indeed, when the Obama administration delayed the employer mandate, it made a debate about the individual mandate inevitable and handed the GOP its best opportunity yet to make real headway in repealing the entire law.

On purely political grounds, it is both easy and right for voters to think about the mandates in tandem. The law created new obligations on employers and workers alike. If large employers are going to be given a reprieve, why shouldn't working families get one too? But beyond the obvious political link, delaying the employer mandate also makes it much more difficult to fairly enforce the individual mandate.

For starters, the administration's decision gave a reprieve not only to employers but also to insurance companies. They do not have to report who is enrolled in their plans in 2014. Thus, the IRS will have no independent data with which to verify who is covered and who isn't, by employers or directly by insurers, and will have to rely entirely on self-reporting to determine who should have to pay the tax for being uninsured. This is a recipe for rewarding the dishonest and penalizing the rest.

Further, if employers do not have to offer insurance in 2014 but will have to in 2015, while workers still must get coverage or pay a fine in 2014, workers will face a counterproductive and complicated ping-pong effect. In 2014, the only way for some workers to avoid the uninsured tax would be to get coverage in the Obamacare exchanges. But in 2015, when the employer mandate will supposedly kick in, many of these very same workers will be pushed into accepting what their employers offer and dropping their exchange coverage (as they would no longer qualify for exchange subsidies). This discontinuity in insurance coverage will create needless complexity and problems for many families and their health care providers.

The Obama administration didn't want to delay the employer mandate—they had to. That mandate could not be implemented in 2014, and it probably cannot ever be implemented without imposing massive costs on employers. Having been delayed once to avoid such consequences, it is hard to see how it could be imposed a year from now—right around the time of a congressional election. The pressure to delay it again will be immense.

Under these circumstances, the potential for delaying the individual mandate is very real, and the pressure to do so will be very difficult for Democrats to resist. Congressional Republicans should use whatever leverage they feel they can responsibly deploy to push for such a delay. The substantive case is compelling. The political argument is overwhelming. And a delay of the individual mandate would make it clear that Obamacare as a whole is far from inevitable and would greatly advance the cause of a broader repeal.

The individual mandate is simultaneously the most vulnerable and most important element of the law. That is the ground that opponents should attack and that Obamacare's champions must be made to defend.

—James C. Capretta & Yuval Levin

'A Different Country'

The Weekly Standard has paid tribute to Philip Larkin's great 1969 poem "Homage to a Government" before. In light of the release this week of Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel's strategic review laying out the dramatic reductions in our fundamental defense capabilities that current budget scenarios will produce, we're not embarrassed to give it pride of place again. Indeed, given the broad acquiescence of our political leaders to the feckless hollowing-out of our military, we think it would be a dereliction of duty *not* to do so.

So here's Larkin's mordant lament over postwar Britain's retreat from responsibility, not to say from greatness. Read it and weep:

Next year we are to bring all the soldiers home
For lack of money, and it is all right.
Places they guarded, or kept orderly,
Must guard themselves, and keep themselves orderly.
We want the money for ourselves at home
Instead of working. And this is all right.

It's hard to say who wanted it to happen,
But now it's been decided nobody minds.
The places are a long way off, not here,
Which is all right, and from what we hear
The soldiers there only made trouble happen.
Next year we shall be easier in our minds.

Next year we shall be living in a country
That brought its soldiers home for lack of money.
The statues will be standing in the same
Tree-muffled squares, and look nearly the same.

Our children will not know it's a different country.
All we can hope to leave them now is money.

Larkin wrote "Homage" almost a quarter-century after the end of World War II. In the darkest moments of that war, on June 18, 1940, when Britain stood alone, Churchill famously proclaimed: "Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour.'" So it was, and so men say it still—but in a mood of nostalgia for past glory.

Is that our fate? It's been almost a quarter-century since the American-led victory in the Cold War. Are we now "a different country" than the America that was willing and able to brace itself to its duties not so long ago?

We trust we are not. But the Obama defense review confirms the bleak analysis offered recently in these pages by Gary Schmitt and Thomas Donnelly:

> In 2012, the Department of Defense spent a total of $651 billion, including the costs of fighting in Afghanistan. According to the budget plan submitted by the White House a few months ago, projected 2014 spending will be $547 billion. If, as seems nearly inevitable, the "sequestration" provision of the Budget Control Act is triggered, that figure will fall below $500 billion, a loss of more than 20 percent in just two years. . . . Alas, no conceivable amount of reform can possibly make up for the deep cuts. . . . No budgetary efficiencies can make up for the cuts now already in law and the resulting hollowing-out of the American military.

In presenting his strategic review, Hagel admitted that no savings from reforms and efficiencies can make up for the shortfall in resources. He did speak of tradeoffs between quantity and quality in the military and acknowledged those tradeoffs would be increasingly difficult. In fact, it's worse than that. As the Foreign Policy Initiative explained in a staff analysis, "When it comes to national defense, quantity has a quality of its own, and reducing the Armed Forces to the point that they could no longer sustain critical operations would cripple America's standing in the world." As Hagel's predecessor at the Pentagon, Leon Panetta, put it, we are heading to a situation in which the United States will have the smallest ground forces since 1940, the smallest fleet since 1915, and the smallest tactical fighter force in the history of the Air Force.

This is all utterly unnecessary and shockingly irresponsible. We have never been wealthier as a nation than we are today. We have never been technologically more advanced. The challenges we face are less daunting than those our forefathers dealt with. Our young men and women who have volunteered since 9/11 are at least the equals of the generations who have gone before. The attack on 9/11 is still fresh in mind, and the prospect of a world in which terror is rewarded, the enemies of liberty flourish, and nuclear weapons proliferate is clear enough ahead.

The good news is that all this is manageable at a far lower percentage of GDP, with a smaller military and with fewer troops in combat, than was required for most of the last 70 years. The good news is that our current enemies aren't really that strong or clever or formidable. But they do need to be fought and deterred. That requires a military that is technologically preeminent and globally present. And if our enemies are not deterred, they can still produce terrible destruction and fearsome chaos.

But of course the problem isn't our enemies. We have met the enemy of American greatness. The enemy is us.

—William Kristol

Hunger Games

In a newly released video, Ayman al Zawahiri, confederate and successor of Osama bin Laden, vows to free al Qaeda's "imprisoned brothers" at Guantánamo. Seeking to capitalize on the controversy over the U.S. government's force-feeding of some detainees, Zawahiri says the ongoing hunger strike exposes "the real odious and ugly face of America."

Oddly, Zawahiri's opinion of the hunger strike, and Guantánamo, is similar to President Obama's.

Referring to Guantánamo during a speech at the National Defense University in May, Obama said that "history will cast a harsh judgment on this aspect of our fight against terrorism and those of us who fail to end it." The president continued: "Imagine a future—10 years from now or 20 years from now—when the United States of America is still holding people who have been charged with no crime on a piece of land that is not part of our country."

Obama was particularly disturbed by the hunger strike at Guantánamo. "Look at the current situation, where we are force-feeding detainees who are being held on a hunger strike. . . . Is this who we are? Is that something our Founders foresaw? Is that the America we want to leave our children? Our sense of justice is stronger than that."

As is so often the case, Obama's rhetoric on Guantánamo is at odds with reality.

According to press reports, 45 detainees have been fed via nasal tube during the hunger strike. The *Miami Herald*, relying on the detainees' lawyers, has identified 24 of these detainees. We don't know who the other 21 are. But a look at the 24 reportedly force-fed detainees who have been identified is eye-opening.

One of the 24, for example, is Mohammed al-Qahtani, the would-be 20th hijacker on September 11, 2001. If it were up to Qahtani, he would have died a "martyr" more than a decade ago in al Qaeda's greatest day of terror. The fact

that Qahtani is being force-fed by the U.S. government says nothing about his guilt or innocence. Nor does it say anything about the necessity of keeping him in custody.

President Obama's own Guantánamo Review Task Force recommended that 12 of the 24 detainees identified by the *Miami Herald* be held in "continued detention." This is commonly referred to as "indefinite detention," as the detainees are not slated for prosecution or transfer.

The task force's decision about these detainees, according to a file released by the Defense Department, reads as follows: "Continued detention pursuant to the Authorization for Use of Military Force (2001), as informed by principles of the laws of war."

So when President Obama laments the supposed lack of "justice" granted to Guantánamo's hunger strikers, he is ignoring the fact that some of those same men are going to be held by the United States indefinitely because of a decision made by his own task force. Again, that these detainees are being force-fed says nothing about why the United States is holding them.

The same argument applies to 2 other detainees who were slated for prosecution by the task force. One is the aforementioned Mohammed al-Qahtani.

This means that the Obama administration itself has no intention of transferring or freeing 14 of the 24 reported hunger strikers who have been force-fed.

An additional 4 detainees are Yemenis whom the task force placed in "conditional detention" because of the security situation in their native country, which is home to one of the most prolific al Qaeda affiliates, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP).

The president himself put a moratorium on transfers to Yemen after AQAP's attempted Christmas Day 2009 attack on a Detroit-bound airliner. This was a reasonable decision for many reasons, but also means that since at least late 2009 the administration has had no intention to transfer these 4 detainees home.

For these 4, the situation is even more complicated. In late May, the administration decided to lift the moratorium on transfers to Yemen. But if the administration sticks to the task force's plan, these 4 Yemeni hunger strikers will not be among the first Yemenis transferred to their home country.

In its final report, the task force noted that one of three conditions must be met before these 4 Yemeni detainees (as well as the others placed in "conditional detention") can be transferred: "(1) the security situation improves in Yemen; (2) an appropriate rehabilitation program becomes available; or (3) an appropriate third-country resettlement option becomes available."

The first two conditions have certainly not been satisfied. And third-country resettlements have stalled for a variety of reasons. Even if any of these conditions were satisfied, the Yemenis approved for outright transfer "would receive priority for any transfer options" before the Yemeni detainees placed in "conditional detention," including the 4 Yemeni hunger strikers being force-fed.

This leaves 6 detainees who have been approved for transfer out of the 24 identified by the *Miami Herald* as being force-fed. These 6 have not been "cleared for release," as has been reported. For each of these 6 detainees, Obama's task force recommended: "Transfer outside the United States to a country that will implement appropriate security measures."

In other words, the president's task force concluded that these 6 detainees pose some level of risk and did not recommend that they be freed outright. The Obama administration wants to transfer them but has not been able to arrange their transfer either because of congressional restrictions or because a host country capable of implementing the "appropriate security measures" has not yet been found.

The Guantánamo Review Task Force was established by President Obama in early 2009. Each of the 24 detainees in question had been previously evaluated by Joint Task Force Guantánamo (JTF-GTMO), which oversees the detention facility, and its threat assessments have been leaked online.

JTF-GTMO deemed 20 of the 24 detainees to be "high risk," as they are "likely to pose a threat to the US, its interests, and allies." The other 4 were deemed "medium risk," as they "may pose a threat to the US, its interests and allies." JTF-GTMO did not conclude that any of these 24 detainees posed a "low" risk.

Much of the public discourse concerning the hunger strikers has been framed by the detainees' advocates, who are eager to present the detainees as men who have been wronged by an American war machine run amok. President Obama's rhetoric is consistent with this biased narrative. The truth about these detainees, as discovered by President Obama's task force, is quite different.

In his latest message to the public, Zawahiri says al Qaeda "will not spare any effort until we free [the Guantánamo detainees] and all our captives, and on top of them, Omar Abdel Rahman, Aafia Siddiqui, and Khalid Sheikh Mohammed." Zawahiri thus counts the Guantánamo detainees among jihadist ranks that include: a terrorist convicted for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing and a follow-on plot against New York City landmarks (Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman), another convicted jihadist, known as "Lady Al Qaeda" for her efforts on behalf of the terrorist organization (Aafia Siddiqui), and the mastermind of the 9/11 attacks, among other operations (Khalid Sheikh Mohammed).

Since 2002, al Qaeda has dreamed of executing an operation that would force the United States to free its comrades from the American-controlled detention facility in Cuba. Those efforts have gotten the terrorist organization nowhere. And, contrary to President Obama's claims, al Qaeda has not made Guantánamo a major theme in its propaganda.

The controversy over the hunger strikers, however, is tailor-made for al Qaeda's propaganda operation. After all, even the president of the United States thinks America is at fault for holding and "force-feeding" these detainees.

—Thomas Joscelyn

Let's Not Make a Deal

Obama and Reid kill tax reform.

BY FRED BARNES

GARY LOCKE

Tax reform is dead. President Obama killed it, with an assist from Senate majority leader Harry Reid.

To be exact, it's *officially* dead now for this year and next. But in truth, it's been dead for months because Obama, in private negotiations with Republicans conducted by his aides, rejected the one thing that makes tax reform politically possible: revenue neutrality. It allows the tax base to be broadened and tax rates to be lowered.

But Obama doesn't like this formula—that is, traditional tax reform. He wants reform that raises tax revenues. He would kill tax preferences and loopholes, then use the windfall this produces to fund his favorite spending programs.

The president has been publicly committed to revenue-neutral reform of corporate taxes for years. But his negotiators added a twist. Sure, the White House would happily go along with neutrality. But they insisted this was a concession on Obama's part and would have to be matched by GOP concessions.

You can guess the concession they had in mind: higher taxes. For corporate reform to be neutral, Republicans would have to agree to raising revenue with higher taxes on individuals. For Republicans, that was (and is) a non-starter.

The difference in 1986 was that leading Democrats were enthusiasts for tax reform. And President Reagan had put tax reform on the agenda with his own proposal.

Last week, Obama abandoned the pretense of revenue neutrality. He proposed to cut the corporate rate to 28 percent from 35 percent through reform that would leave him with a bundle of money to spend. By definition, that's not revenue neutrality. Also, he called for a permanent tax on profits that American companies keep in foreign countries to avoid corporate taxes here. Republicans, conservatives, and the business community said no to these concoctions.

A week earlier, Reid did to reform of the tax code covering personal income what Obama did to reform of the corporate tax system. He pronounced a death sentence. "It can't be revenue neutral," he said. "It can't be even close to revenue neutral. There has to be significant new revenues." He suggested a tax hike of $1 trillion, as called for in the budget endorsed by Senate Democrats.

Like Obama, Reid knew his demand for more tax revenue would be unacceptable to Republicans. There aren't many things Republicans are unanimous about these days, but revenue-neutral tax reform is one of them. They regard the 1986 tax reform, in which the top rate on individuals dropped to 28 percent, as the holy grail of tax legislation.

The difference in 1986 was that leading Democrats—Sen. Bill Bradley and Rep. Dick Gephardt—were enthusiasts for tax reform. After his own tax bill failed, Rep. Dan Rostenkowski, the Democratic chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, signed on. And the president, Ronald Reagan, had put tax reform on the agenda with his own proposal.

Obama has taken it off the table. What does he get out of doing this? An issue. He'll insist he agreed to a bipartisan compromise to cut the corporate rate, only to have Republicans

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refuse to cooperate. All he wanted in return, Obama will say, was tax revenues to "invest" in roads, education, and job training and boost the economy. What's not to like?

The answer is many things and one big thing. Obama operates under the illusion that government spending boosts the economy and produces a wave of new jobs. That's why he wants more revenue. What he ignores is that the government spent at record levels in his first term and produced a lame recovery and a serious decline in the percentage of Americans in the workforce.

Yet instead of offering incentives to the private sector to invest in growth and jobs, Obama is sticking to his government-only bias. If he were a pragmatist, he'd see the error of his ways and change his economic policy. But he's a liberal ideologue who has now killed a proven spur to the economy: tax reform that cuts rates without adding more taxes.

Since the last reform in 1986, "the global marketplace is moving much faster than a once-in-a-generation pace," Douglas Holtz-Eakin, former director of the Congressional Budget Office, wrote in *Politico*. "The current rules were fine when U.S. exports dominated a global economy . . . but they are ill-suited for a digital age of intense competition."

Despite Obama and Reid, Rep. Dave Camp, who chairs the Ways and Means Committee, intends to draft a tax reform bill this fall. He and Sen. Max Baucus, the chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, have been negotiating a compromise on tax reform for months.

But at best, Republicans will only get an issue of their own. *Politico* has reported that Camp wants to cut the top corporate and individual rates to 25 percent. That's a far cry from what Obama and Reid want.

"There always seemed to be a sliver of hope" that tax reform would succeed in spite of obstacles, says Sen. Pat Toomey, a leading reformer. After all, the 1986 bill was given up for dead more than once. But for the time being, Toomey says, "it's hopeless." ♦

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Phony Baloney

A pathetic new scandal defense.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

During his speech on the economy last month in Galesburg, Illinois, Barack Obama suggested Washington should stop focusing on an "endless parade of distractions and political posturing and phony scandals." He repeated the line about "phony scandals" in another speech on July 25 and in his weekly address on July 27. Obama, whose approval rating has been falling since the spring, has been rocked by months of scandal coverage. His administration's strategy to change the subject, it seems, is to channel its inner Holden Caulfield.

Phony, indeed

White House press secretary Jay Carney kicked things off a few days before Galesburg during his daily briefing with reporters, cautioning Washington not to be "buffeted about" by "fake scandals." The next day, Carney spoke about "phony scandals" that have "captured the attention of many here in Washington." The narrative was set by July 24, the day of Obama's speech, when Carney told MSNBC's Joe Scarborough: "It shouldn't be on the skirmishes that cause gridlock, it shouldn't be on the phony scandals that have consumed so much attention here, all to come to naught."

Which scandals, exactly, are the phony ones? When pressed, one White House official pointed to the investigation into the IRS's extra scrutiny of conservative and Tea Party groups applying for tax-exempt status.

"The allegation . . . by many Republicans was that the White House was directing the IRS to target Tea Party groups," said Dan Pfeiffer, a senior adviser to Obama, at a breakfast in Washington last week sponsored by the *Christian Science Monitor*. "That was the allegation, and that has turned out to be completely false."

Pushing the administration's line that what Obama cares most about is "addressing" the problem and "ensuring that it never happens again," Pfeiffer accused Republicans like House Oversight and Government Reform Committee chairman Darrell Issa of trying to use "legitimate questions" about the IRS to "score political points." That, Pfeiffer says, is what Obama and Carney mean by calling the scandal phony: It's grounded in anti-Obama politics, not substance.

The congressional investigation into the IRS's special targeting of conservative nonprofits is still underway, but what it's revealed since the scandal broke doesn't square with Pfeiffer's explanation. According to House Republicans leading the investigation, IRS employees testified that Lois Lerner, the agency official who oversaw the division that scrutinized groups seeking tax-exempt status, "ordered Tea Party cases to go through a multilayer review that included her senior adviser and the IRS chief counsel's office." The chief counsel is one of two positions at the IRS appointed by the president, and incumbent William Wilkins met with the president at the White House several times.

If there's no connection whatsoever between the IRS's malpractice and the White House, the principals

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in the administration haven't been forthcoming with evidence to that effect. Lerner, a career bureaucrat, invoked the Fifth Amendment at a House Oversight Committee hearing in June and did not testify. And on *Fox News Sunday* last week, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew refused to say whether he had asked Wilkins about his role in targeting conservative groups. "I am leaving the investigation to the proper people who do investigations," Lew told host Chris Wallace. "I don't think it's appropriate for me to do the investigation."

None of which proves, as Pfeiffer claims Republicans allege, that the administration directed the IRS to target its political opponents. But testimony from IRS employees and the public silence of Lerner and Lew have led Republicans to push for more information.

"If it were phony, then why did Lois Lerner take the Fifth Amendment?" asks Trey Gowdy, a South Carolina Republican and member of the House Oversight Committee. Gowdy says the committee is still interviewing witnesses and gathering evidence.

Obama himself didn't always consider the IRS scandal phony. In a public address in May, he called the "misconduct" uncovered by the agency's inspector general "inexcusable."

"Americans are right to be angry about it, and I am angry about it," the president said. "I will not tolerate this kind of behavior in any agency, but especially in the IRS, given the power that it has and the reach that it has into all of our lives." Obama added he would direct Lew to ask the acting IRS commissioner to step down.

And heads did roll. Lerner was placed on leave, while acting commissioner Steven Miller resigned and the commissioner of the tax exemption division, Joseph Grant, retired early. If, as the administration now contends, the scandal was nothing more than Republicans trying to "score political points," why did it force these officials out?

"There is a fundamental difference," Pfeiffer said last week, "between if something goes wrong and misconduct happens, and then some sort of political scandal that many people in Washington have compared to Watergate and things like that, when there is nothing that suggests any sort of political involvement."

But Gowdy isn't buying it. "It is patently absurd that the new standard for propriety is if the president knew about it," he says. "It's his administration."

It's revealing that although the administration refers to "phony scandals" in the plural, they've shut up about Benghazi. As House speaker John Boehner said on August 1, "We need to get to the bottom of what happened that terrible night, why it happened, and how we can prevent similar tragedies in the future. We're also going to continue to investigate the IRS for its abuse of power. There's nothing 'phony' about these scandals, Mr. President." ♦

The Obama Magic Fades

But his approval ratings probably won't sink much more. BY JAY COST

When he was sworn in for a second term in January, Barack Obama's political standing was the best it had been in years. His job approval had climbed into the mid-50s—not extraordinary but solid—and he seemed to have the wind at his back as he called for a new era of liberal governance. Six months later, and it looks as though the winds have shifted against the president. His domestic agenda is stalled in Congress, with no foreseeable action on his proposals for gun control, big government stimulus, cap and trade, or even immigration reform. His job approval is languishing in the mid-40s, and most polls show a plurality of Americans disapprove of the job he is doing.

Approval? Who cares? I got reelected.

Why does the president find himself in this position? The polls provide some evidence, and at least the outlines of what to expect as the president continues battling with Congress over the next few months.

The *Real Clear Politics* average of national polls found Barack Obama hit a postelection high in mid-December, when 54 percent of Americans approved of how he was handling the job. Considering that his average approval rating in the runup to the election was just 48 percent, and that he had averaged 47 percent in both 2011 and 2010, this was a marked bump. When that rating fell below 45 percent in late July 2013, this was a low not seen since mid-2011.

Some pollsters provide detailed cross-tabulations to show how Obama is doing among various sectors of the public. Most notable among these is Gallup, which shows a broad-based decline, including among staunchly Democratic groups. Among young adults, Obama has fallen 11 points since mid-December; among liberals, 15 points; among African Americans, 9 points. His approval rating has declined by 18 points among independents. It is only among Republican groups that Obama's job rating has held firm, although it was already so low with them, there really wasn't much room to drop further.

Two years ago, his job approval suffered in large measure because of the economy, but no such explanation suffices here. Though first quarter economic growth was weak, consumer confidence is up since December and employment gains have been decent, if a bit halting. Indeed, the Pew poll finds that the number of people who rate the economy as good or excellent is statistically unchanged since December. The NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll shows a decrease from 38 percent to 31 percent of people thinking the economy will be better in the next 12 months, but there has been an equivalent drop in those who think it will be worse (from 28 percent to 21 percent).

There is no denying that more people think the country is headed in the wrong direction. *Real Clear Politics* also averages "right track/wrong track" polls. For all of Obama's tenure (and, indeed, for much of George W. Bush's as well) this number has been net negative—i.e., more people think the country is on the wrong track. But again, early last December was a high-water mark; 41 percent of people then thought the country was on the right track while 51 percent said it was on the wrong track. Today, those numbers have worsened substantially: 29 percent of Americans say we're on the right track, 62 percent say wrong track.

So if it is not the economy, what is it? There is strong circumstantial evidence that bad news for the president has taken its toll. The slide starts with the sequester, which took effect on March 1, 2013. On February 1, *Real Clear Politics* had found the president holding steady with 52.5 percent job approval. A month after the sequester took effect, on April 1, his rating had fallen to about 48 percent. It held steady in the high 40s until the run of scandals in the late spring. On May 9, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee held its highly publicized Benghazi whistleblower hearing; the next day Lois Lerner admitted that the Internal Revenue Service had improperly targeted Tea Party groups; on June 6, the *Guardian* published details of the National Security Agency's PRISM program, leaked to them by Edward Snowden. The cumulative effect of these scandals seems to have been significant. On May 9, the *Real Clear Politics* average of the polls still had Obama's job approval at roughly 48 percent; on June 20, two weeks after the Snowden story broke, it was under 46 percent, and it has drifted downward since then.

There are two implications to

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draw from all this. First, the rough news cycles of recent months seem to have drawn President Obama's job approval back to its "natural" range. His average approval since he was first inaugurated according to *Real Clear Politics* is 49 percent, a number that includes the significant bounces he received from his first inaugural, the killing of Osama bin Laden, and his reelection. Take those positive bumps out, and his approval has been fairly close to 47-48 percent for much of his time in office. The fact is he is a highly divisive president: Democrats strongly support him; Republicans strongly oppose him; and swing voters are split. It should not come as a huge surprise that, absent the pro-Obama hoopla of the winter months, the number should drift back downwards.

Second, it is to be expected that his job approval will rebound over time, at least a little. Bad news comes, and then it goes, often replaced by good news. Even if such a bounce never comes his way again, he still should rebound some, for a good portion of his decline over recent months has come among Democratic-leaning groups like young people and minorities. At the very least, when the 2014 midterms are near, expect the Democratic campaign to bring many of these wavering supporters back into the fold.

In the meantime it will be very difficult for Obama to move an agenda through Congress. Dividing the country into two, roughly equal parts might be a fine way to win reelection, but it hardly makes for much of a mandate. The Beltway intelligentsia love to complain about gridlock, but the Framers of our Constitution counted on it: When the country is divided as deeply and evenly as it is today, our system of divided powers, federalism, and checks-and-balances is not going to produce much of substance. And so it will probably be for the rest of Obama's presidency, absent some major change to shift his standing with people who have disapproved of him, more or less, for most of his tenure. ♦

No Kidding

Republicans, Democrats, and illegal immigrants.

BY PETER SKERRY

These days, the precocious teenage political junkie who lives across the street from me understands that the notorious intransigence and truculence of House Republicans can be explained in great part by their ingeniously gerrymandered, extremely homogeneous congressional districts. Yet in the past couple of weeks, it has been Democrats who have dug in their heels, as Republican stalwarts have begun to budge on one of the most contentious issues currently facing America: immigration reform. Prodded by their leadership, House Republicans are contemplating what only a few months ago they vigorously rejected: legal status for individuals who arrived here illegally when they were children.

Assuming they have votes to offer

So far, contemplating is all they are doing. On July 23 a hearing was held by the House subcommittee on immigration and border security to discuss the "Kids Act," touted by majority leader Eric Cantor and Judiciary Committee chairman Bob Goodlatte as a way to address the concerns of young people who are here illegally through no fault of their own. Yet as several of the Democratic and Republican members who spoke at the hearing emphasized, there is as yet no legislation to discuss. So it is not at all clear whether Cantor and Goodlatte are talking merely about legal status for undocumented minors or an actual path to citizenship.

Still, for a party whose presidential candidate was arguing last year that illegal immigrants should "self-deport" and whose congressional leaders in 2010 resoundingly rejected legislation providing a path to citizenship for illegal youth (the DREAM Act), the Kids Act, even as a gleam in Eric Cantor's eye, represents a sea change in Republican thinking about illegal immigration. Anyone who doubts that should listen to subcommittee chairman Trey Gowdy's striking opening statement at the hearing, delineating how the rule of law applies differently to adults and to children.

Yet the Democratic response to this sea change has been swift—and negative. To be sure, some Democratic members have acknowledged their Republican colleagues' movement. But they have also rejected it as inadequate. As House Democratic caucus chairman Xavier Becerra declared, "There is no reason why Democrats should be part of this political game that Republicans are playing." Suddenly, it's the Democrats who are rigid and unyielding.

Intransigent Democrats are of course no novelty. After all, they too get elected from gerrymandered, homogeneous congressional districts. And even more than Republicans, they are in thrall to well-organized interest groups that tend to enforce ideological rigidity. It's also true that congressional Republicans have come to the party late, so they should expect to endure the predictable posturing and bargaining behavior from Democrats.

Yet there's another aspect of Democratic intransigence that reflects widely overlooked peculiarities of immigration politics. For example, it is difficult

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for the advocacy groups that have been supporting the push for "comprehensive immigration reform" to compromise and agree on a fallback position. This dynamic has been insightfully and honestly explored by Georgetown law professor Philip G. Schrag in his neglected insider's account of advocacy on behalf of immigrants and refugees during the 1990s. As Schrag explains in *A Well-Founded Fear: The Congressional Battle to Save Political Asylum in America*, immigrant advocates invariably come together in coalitions whose dominant ethos is, not surprisingly, "consensus politics and transparent decision-making." Yet these principles are extremely difficult for large, cumbersome coalitions to sustain. Particularly in a policy area as complicated as immigration, intense negotiations typically boil down to a few key players making tough decisions in private.

There's more. Schrag also highlights that compromise is difficult for immigrant advocates because they feel a "sense of stewardship for the interests or constituents they represent, most of whom did not choose their representatives, even in the fictitious sense that stockholders choose their boards of directors." Immigrant advocates are consequently left "wondering if they have sold out the interests they claimed to represent." Schrag goes even further and observes that such "advocates perpetually doubt their right to take less than an absolutist position, even when it is clear that advocating an absolutist position will result in worse legislation than seeking a compromise."

To be sure, members of Congress *do* get elected by their constituents. But do their constituents include illegal immigrants in their districts? Many members appear to believe so, even though those illegals do not get to vote for them. This raises thorny issues about the nature of representation in a democracy. But even before considering these, it is worth stopping to consider how those gerrymandered congressional districts rely on census population data that routinely include illegal immigrants. One result is that many of the 32 or so Hispanic-majority congressional districts include substantial numbers of illegal immigrants.

A good example is California's 34th District, represented by congressman Xavier Becerra, quoted above. After the recent redistricting, the 34th is over 65 percent Hispanic, and includes Los Angeles suburbs like Huntington Park and Bell Gardens that are classic ports of entry for illegal immigrants. So while in November 2012 voter turnout in congressional districts across California averaged about 250,000, in the 34th it was only 140,590. And for a variety of reasons, this was an unusually high turnout. In previous years, Becerra's vote totals were substantially lower. Thus, the American version of "rotten boroughs" is directly attributable to aggregated numbers of illegal immigrants.

It is possible that when Rep. Becerra and other similarly situated members reject Republican proposals such as the Kids Act, they are basing their response on what they hear from the illegals in their districts. But consider: These elected officials are hardly accountable to such politically passive individuals. Indeed, it is worth asking how, exactly, such officials determine what is in the best interests of such "constituents"? Perhaps, like the advocates described by Schrag, these officials are rejecting a compromise that the illegals themselves would accept.

I am reminded here of an interview I conducted in 1984 with a lawyer at the Los Angeles office of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF). This occurred at a particularly intense point in the prolonged debate over what eventually became the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 and its amnesty provision. At that time, MALDEF was the primary lobby on behalf of Mexican Americans and other Hispanics, even though it was not a membership organization. And while MALDEF supported amnesty, it opposed other parts of the legislation and took a notoriously uncompromising position in opposing the overall package.

As I returned from lunch with the lawyer, we had to work our way through a picket line of illegal Mexican immigrants pleading that the advocacy group compromise and secure amnesty as soon as possible. The lawyer grimaced and proceeded into the building. Once inside, he commented that leadership was sometimes not easy!

Today, MALDEF plays a much less visible role in immigration politics. But the same dilemmas persist. Indeed, we now have evidence from our experience with IRCA that illegals may be willing to accept less than their advocates persist in demanding. Today, more than 25 years after IRCA granted an outright amnesty to 2.7 million illegal immigrants, including the option of full citizenship, we know from Homeland Security data that most of those beneficiaries—fully 60 percent—have become permanent legal residents and have opted *not* to exercise their right to become citizens.

This is hardly surprising. Most illegal immigrants, especially those from Latin America, arrive here not intending to stay. Their plan is typically to work hard, save, and return home to their families with enough money to buy land or build a house. Obviously, that is not how it works out for most of them. Yet "the myth of return" remains strong. Even after living here for decades and raising children who are U.S. citizens, notions of returning "home" linger on. While this may be unlikely, such dreams endure, and their impact is evident in the decision not to become citizens.

In the ongoing debate over immigration policy, it has come to be taken as a given that Democrats are eager to build on their 2012 victory and expand their voting base among Hispanics by securing citizenship for as many of the 11 million illegals among us as possible. Other things being equal, this is certainly true. Yet there are few disincentives for Democrats to pursue citizenship for illegals at all costs, even at the risk of illegals remaining in their current predicament. And the fact is those costs will be paid substantially more by the illegals than by Democratic politicians—who almost certainly will not be penalized for pushing for more than many illegals themselves seem to want. ♦

Liberal Dogmatism

How a far-out idea becomes orthodox.

BY EDWARD ALEXANDER

In his dissent from the Supreme Court's recent overthrow of the Defense of Marriage Act, Justice Antonin Scalia observed that the majority opinion accused the Congress and president who had enacted this law not merely of exceeding their powers but of spreading malice, encouraging stigmatization, and—above all—denying equality. "It is one thing," wrote Scalia, "for a society to elect change; it is another for a court of law to impose change by adjudging those who oppose it *hostes humani generis*, enemies of the human race."

What would Arnold say?

The triumphant campaign for gay marriage (and gay adoption) had swept all before it, once Vice President Biden forced President Obama to accelerate his "evolution" from the traditional (for most of human history) understanding of marriage as a heterosexual institution to endorsement of same-sex unions. The campaign had been conducted on the lowest possible intellectual level, i.e., that of "equal rights" for all people who love each other. But do any two heterosexual people in love have a "right" to marry? Suppose one of them is already married? Suppose one of them is the child of the other?

Sloganeering, however, was the order of the day, and it has carried the day, not only in the left wing of the Democratic party but in one state after another, sometimes in the courts, and sometimes (as in the state of Washington) in the legislatures.

Even the IRS got into the act. *Wall Street Journal* columnist Peggy Noonan revealed that one of the chief victims of that agency's discrimination against "conservative" groups was the National Organization for Marriage, whose cardinal principle is affirmation of heterosexual monogamy. Apparently denial of the collective mind and common experience of most of the human race is now liberal orthodoxy. It was as if mankind knew nothing until liberal reformers taught it to them; until, that is, about 10 minutes ago in historical time, when the brand-new dispensation became unquestionable truth. So rapidly did the new dogma become rooted in the liberal mind that there was a genuine innocence in the irate denial by Lois Lerner, chief of the tax-exemption unit, and her IRS colleagues that they'd done "anything wrong" in punishing troglodytes still in thrall to the Genesis view of these matters: "Male and female created He them."

Some state legislators, who know how fast liberal dogmatism gives rise to liberal dictate, began scurrying about looking for ways to protect unconverted clergymen from being prosecuted for objecting to gay marriage from their pulpits, or adoption agencies from being accused of civil rights violations for requiring both a father and a mother for their wards. Fox News reported in mid-July that a 27-year veteran of the Utah Air National Guard who objected in a private email to a same-sex ceremony being held in the Cadet Chapel at West Point was treated as if he had incited mutiny. He was officially reprimanded and had his six-year reenlistment contract reduced by five years. No doubt the busy virtuosi of campus speech codes establishing "verbal abuse" policies to protect "diversity"—but not, it seems, *la différence*—are now hard at work incorporating "same-sex marriage" into the body of infallible doctrine that is never to be called into question at a university.

Did I say liberal dogmatism? Surely that is a contradiction in terms. The usually astute John Henry Newman, after all, declared in his *Apologia Pro Vita Sua* (1864) that liberalism was "the anti-dogmatic principle." And Newman's long struggle against the liberal (or "Protestant") branch of the Church of England (which he would leave for Rome in 1845) demonstrated and documented this. But as he added in a note dated 1865, "Merely to call [liberalism] the anti-dogmatic principle is to tell very little about it."

More could have been told by Newman's adversaries, the leading Victorian liberals themselves, who often sensed within their own most cherished doctrine the seed of its eventual undoing. Take John Stuart Mill, whose *On Liberty* was published five years before Newman made his remarks and was almost certainly in Newman's mind when he espoused the doctrine of infallibility (of the Roman church, not the pope) in Chapter Five of the *Apologia*. Mill had relentlessly argued in *On Liberty* that "all silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility," and "there is no such thing as absolute certainty."

But Mill was a man of ideas, not ideology, and could recognize the

Edward Alexander is the author of, among other books, Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill *(Columbia University Press, 1965).*

dangerous tendencies within his own school of thought. In his magisterial essays of 1838 and 1840 comparing his teacher Bentham, the great progressive ("the same division with ourselves"), and Coleridge, their formidable conservative adversary, he identified one glaring deficiency in the former. Bentham, like most progressives, ignored "the collective mind of the human race," which develops from "common wants and common experience." It is often forgotten that Mill decided to write "a volume on Liberty" because "almost all the projects of social reformers in these days are really *liberticide*." *On Liberty*, to be sure, excoriated the "despotism of custom," but with this qualification: "The despotism of custom . . . proscribes singularity, but it does not preclude change, *provided all change together*" (italics added).

Matthew Arnold, who described himself as "a liberal tempered by experience, reflection, and renouncement," also warned of liberalism's herd instinct, that trait which would later earn American liberals the sobriquet "herd of independent minds." Here he is in the famous 1865 essay "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" satirizing doctrinaire liberalism: "Let us have a social movement, let us organize and combine a party to pursue truth and new thought, let us call it the *liberal* party, and let us all stick to each other, and back each other up. . . . If one of us speaks well, applaud him; if one of us speaks ill, applaud him too; we are all in the same movement, we are all liberals."

A few years later, in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold singled out for relentless mockery liberalism's obsessive campaign to change England's marriage laws so as "to give a man leave to marry his deceased wife's sister," that is, to eliminate the longstanding English taboo on in-law marriage. Defenders of the taboo claimed that Leviticus forbade such marriages. Liberals said Leviticus did no such thing and therefore "man's law, the law of liberty, . . . makes us free to marry our deceased wife's sister." But Arnold's objection to the liberal position had nothing to do with Leviticus—"the voice of an Oriental and polygamous nation." Rather, it expressed his sense of the sacredness of marriage and the customs that regulate it as the delicately woven fabric of civilization, a barrier against the promiscuity of primitive life, against "anarchy." Such barriers are laborious to create, easy to unravel.

England's 65-year battle over this taboo, viewed from the perspective of our own recent reversal of the laws (to say nothing of ancient custom) regarding marriage, reverses Marx's famous saying about history repeating itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce. But there is an eerie resemblance to the present that is worth noting. Arnold mocked Victorian liberalism's obsession with the "right" to marry one's deceased wife's sister as the perfect example of its Philistine "double craving" because it combined "the craving for forbidden fruit and the craving for legality." (Joe Biden, whatever his shortcomings, grasped this combination instinctively; and it is thanks in large part to him that a future book of presidential history may well be entitled *Legalizing Forbidden Fruit: The Age of Obama*.)

Newman may have been wrong in calling liberalism "the anti-dogmatic principle," but he was prescient in saying, "The liberalism which gives a colour to society . . . is scarcely now a party; it is the educated lay world." *Hélas*. ♦

The Real Fed Sweepstakes

It's policy that counts, not personalities.

BY JUDY SHELTON

At first, it was fun—this parlor game of guessing who the Obama administration will appoint as the next chairman of the Federal Reserve. We all assumed it would be Janet Yellen, because she's a woman. And then suddenly we had Larry Summers all over the leading financial newspapers receiving multiple endorsements from respected economists. There were sly references to his intellectual prowess and invaluable experience, not to mention (but they always did) his connections with Obama's closest advisers on economic and financial matters.

Now this little diversion for monetary policy wonks is shaping up to be a referendum on banking deregulation efforts and "sensitive gender issues"—even as the president emphasizes wealth inequality as the defining problem for a nation unable to regain its economic footing and start growing again despite four years of unprecedented fiscal and monetary stimulus.

"When wealth concentrates at the very top, it can inflate unstable bubbles that threaten the economy," intoned President Obama in his Knox College speech on July 24. "When middle-class families have less to spend, businesses have fewer customers."

Um, hello? Unstable bubbles are the result of excessive money creation by the Federal Reserve, which is charged with controlling the money supply. Middle-class families—and especially retirees who planned to live off the returns from their lifetime savings—have less to spend because the Fed's near-zero interest rate policies have slashed their anticipated income streams.

Judy Shelton, an economist, is author of Money Meltdown *and codirector of the Atlas Sound Money Project.*

What the president might have mentioned, since he was expounding on growing wealth inequality, was the fact that those reduced returns on savings accounts for Main Street depositors have made it possible for Wall Street investors to reap huge capital gains from stock market increases. In the loose money/tight credit environment that has been in effect since Obama came to power, giant hedge funds and major corporations enjoy access to near-zero-cost financing, while small business borrowers are turned away or charged punitive interest rates.

But was there even one mention of the Federal Reserve in the president's highly promoted speech on the economy, which lasted more than an hour? No, none. Among the more than 5,000 words uttered by the president to describe the impact of government policies on prosperity, does the word "monetary" show up? Nope, not once.

It's easy to imagine the indignant ripostes to be unleashed at the merest suggestion that anyone in the White House would ever "politicize" the Fed by acknowledging that the easy-money policies engineered under Ben Bernanke, its current chairman, have been the chief factor in disbursing unequal financial rewards. Stock market values have more than doubled since March 2009, fueled by the Fed's serial programs of quantitative easing. The wealthiest 1 percent of Americans own 52 percent of all directly owned, publicly traded stocks in the United States; the top 5 percent own 82 percent of directly held stocks.

Yet the president cannot bring himself to explain to the American people that the Fed's cash injections to the economy through monthly purchases of $85 billion in Treasury bonds and mortgage-backed securities dwarf by a dozen times over the amount of a year of the sequester, some $85 billion in *total*—which Obama described last week as a "meat cleaver." And while the president roundly condemned our "winner-take-all economy where a few do better and better and better, while everybody else just treads water," he neglected to point out the role of our central bank in making that happen.

It's as if the manipulations of money and credit by the Fed, which are aimed at creating a wealth effect to stimulate demand, are acts of nature; this despite the fact that the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System is a federal agency whose seven members are appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate.

Janet Yellen

Larry Summers

Meanwhile, the White House finds itself in the uncomfortable position of having to pretend that all the buzz over who will be appointed to replace Bernanke is not cause for consternation. Don't believe it for a second—they are worried. If Yellen is *not* appointed, there will be lots of explaining to do about why a highly qualified, well-practiced policymaker was deemed insufficiently worthy of taking over the monetary helm. "She's extremely talented," piped up House minority leader Nancy Pelosi last week, trying (but failing) to be helpful. "It's not just that she's a woman."

Summers has adherents as well, particularly among economic policy veterans from the Clinton administration such as Gene Sperling and Robert Rubin. He is seen as someone who can be counted on to perform confidently in a financial crisis, taking command when others are paralyzed by fear. Given the Fed's key role in fomenting such events, the ability to conduct lender-of-last-resort functions with verve may come in handy indeed. Too bad we can't choose someone with the same qualities that should characterize management of the money supply: someone wonderfully boring, predictable, and reliable.

The sad fact for those of us who think the Fed's extraordinary interventions are doing more harm than good—distorting market signals and misallocating capital to the detriment of productive economic activity—is that both Yellen and Summers would continue with the dovish policies of pumping in excess liquidity in the vain hope of reducing unemployment. They both embrace the notion that monetary illusion can induce real economic gains; they both accept the broadest mandate for the Fed to justify its dominance in determining economic outcomes.

It's interesting that Paul Volcker, the former Fed chairman who actually demonstrated that political independence from the White House and Congress was a virtue, has recently been suggesting that the Federal Reserve is attempting to do too much, taking on "responsibilities that it cannot reasonably meet with the appropriately limited power provided." In a speech before the Economic Club of New York in May, Volcker criticized the idea that monetary policy should be directed toward achieving both price stability and full employment:

> I find that mandate both operationally confusing and ultimately illusory: operationally confusing in breeding incessant debate in the Fed and the markets about which way should policy lean month-to-month or quarter-to-quarter with minute inspection of every

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passing statistic; illusory in the sense it implies a trade-off between economic growth and price stability, a concept that I thought had long ago been refuted not just by Nobel Prize winners but by experience.

Is it too late to consider recruiting Volcker back to the task? Would those 18 or so Senate Democrats who signed a letter urging Obama to appoint Yellen because of their concerns about Summers having favored banking deregulation be drawn to the man behind the eponymous "Volcker Rule" that would prevent banks from engaging in speculative trading for their own accounts using depositors' money? Probably not; being a male, Volcker is at a distinct disadvantage. And not having visited the White House some 14 times in the last two years, he can't claim the insider edge.

It's a shame, because our economy may well be headed for another round of bubbles and bailouts. Already, housing prices reflect the excessive liquidity. Favored patrons of large financial institutions can flip real estate for profits while first-time homebuyers, shunned by snakebit community banks, are frozen out.

Instead of engaging in feverish whisper campaigns to slide favored appointees into the world's most powerful financial position, what we should be discussing is whether the Fed's outsized role in determining the price and availability of credit is beneficial to economic performance. Legislation to establish a bipartisan commission to examine the long-term impact of monetary policy—on output, employment, prices, and financial stability—was introduced in March by Rep. Kevin Brady, chairman of the Joint Economic Committee. It now has 23 cosponsors and seems to be gathering momentum as Congress slowly recognizes the magnitude of the Fed's influence in allocating financial resources and the scope for economic failure in the wake of monetary miscalibration.

Maybe it's time to acknowledge the Fed elephant in the room instead of dancing around the root causes for the global financial breakdown that launched our most recent dismal recession. When the president inveighs against the "rising cost of groceries" in his economic speeches or refers to the evils of "a housing bubble, credit cards, and a churning financial sector that kept the economy artificially juiced up" before he took office in 2009, as he did last week, let's not allow the role of monetary policy to be dismissed in favor of invoking human greed or the shortcomings of markets.

And when Obama claims that "we've cleared away the rubble from the financial crisis and begun to lay a new foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth," let's challenge him with a fundamental question: How can you lay a foundation for stronger, more durable economic growth without first laying a foundation for sound money? ♦

The Oldest War

Remember when the battle of the sexes was a laughing matter?

By Andrew Ferguson

I'm showing my age again, but I can remember, just barely, when we had the war between men and women. Not *a* war, but *the* war: eternal and (of course) metaphorical, a fight without massed ranks of infantry or elaborate flanking maneuvers or formal parleys among belligerents. The opening salvo dated to the Garden of Eden, and a truce wasn't expected until Gabriel or whoever sounded the trumpet's final wail.

The phrase *war between men and women* was meant in a lighthearted way, mostly. It described an ineradicable truth of human life, plain to everyone but best spoken of indirectly. It is this: The two halves of our otherwise terrific species aren't really suited to each other, even though the replenishing of our kind depends on their close, to say no more, association. The unavoidable pickle—the tension between the incompatibility of man and woman and the urgent need for man and woman to get along and then some—has traditionally been understood as comic. To view it otherwise is too grim a prospect. And besides, we have reasoned, it's just the way things are, so what the hell.

Men on Strike
Why Men Are Boycotting Marriage, Fatherhood, and the American Dream—and Why It Matters
by Helen Smith
Encounter, 176 pages, $23.99

The Art of Manliness Collection
The Art of Manliness
The Art of Manliness: Manvotionals
by Brett McKay and Kate McKay
HOW, $29.99

Great artists from Aristophanes to Shakespeare, from Molière to Ira Gershwin, understood the war this way. The humorist James Thurber summed it up in a series of drawings explicitly titled "The War Between Men and Women." Each piece illustrated a signal event in the ongoing struggle: "The Fight in the Grocery Store," the "Capture of Three Physics Professors," the "Surrender of Three Blondes," and so on.

"It's all in good fun," Thurber seemed to be saying, "I hope."

Thurber's series was first published in 1934, in the backwash of what progressive historians call First Wave Feminism—the feminism of Susan B. Anthony and suffragettes and temperance advocates and other assorted crabby grannies in bonnets and high collars. Roughly two generations later Second Wave Feminism rolled in to make sure everyone knew that relations between the sexes were no laughing matter. (The summary joke from this unhappy period: Q. *How many feminists does it take to change a light bulb?* A. *That's not funny!*) Second Wave Feminism was the feminism of grim Gloria Steinem and scary Germaine Greer and no bras.

I don't know if we're in the post-Second Wave or pre-Third Wave period of feminism, but war talk is once again in the air, spoken with the same clenched-jaw severity that made Second Wave feminism so excruciating. Except nowadays, instead of a war *between* men and women, women (some of them, anyway) talk about a war on women and (some) men talk about a war on men. This bifurcation of the ancient war is in keeping with our galloping individualism and self-absorption. We interpret a mutual antagonism as a one-sided assault on me and mine.

The war on men is the particular concern of the newest incarnation of the "men's movement." Older readers may remember the earlier men's movement, from the 1990s. It was invented and led by such aging hippies as the poet Robert Bly and the author Sam Keen. The former LBJ hatchet man Bill Moyers filmed a documentary with Bly called *A Gathering of Men*, which served as the movement's manifesto and ran like a tape loop on PBS. The movement made for easy trend stories in the newsmagazines and newspaper lifestyle sections because it was so eccentric. Feminism was pushing women into traditionally male domains, was the theme; and men were escaping out the other side, lost in confusion about their roles as husbands, fathers, and cogs in the postindustrial machine.

The confusion took strange forms. In the Moyers-Bly version, men were trying to recapture their true natures. They did this by gathering in forests, removing crucial articles of clothing, adorning their hair with feathers, and beating drums in an attempt to stimulate orgiastic dancing. It often worked, and the dancing wasn't pretty. The trappings were heavily indebted to New Age spirituality, American Indian-division, and the purpose was meant to

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be therapeutic—it was a rare Gathering of Men in which some burly fellow didn't burst into tears.

After a year or two the men's movement went the way of all trend stories and vaporized. The new men's movement that has recently emerged is far less suited to lighthearted features on the evening news—even if there were still such a thing as "the evening news." The feathers are gone and so are the drums. At the heart of the new movement is a loosely defined notion of "men's rights," which have become casualties in the newly discovered war on men. This spring, a manifesto of the new movement was published, to much praise. *Men on Strike* is the work of Dr. Helen Smith, a psychologist from Tennessee. She writes a popular blog, called *Dr. Helen*, on the conservative website pjmedia.com. If the old men's movement got men crying, the new one hopes to get them complaining.

Men on Strike relies heavily on material accumulated through Dr. Helen's blog, which has gained a large following of men drawn to her daily briefs in their defense. The book has the energy, the hit-and-run tone, of a blog. She knows how to marshal an argument quickly and drive it home with what the marketers of breakfast cereals used to call *vim*. Her premise is that the tables have turned in the U.S.A.: Nowadays, she and her followers assert, men are more likely than women to be victims of systematic discrimination, in school or the workplace, owing to developments in divorce and family law, sexual harassment guidelines, school curriculums—indeed, in every area of social life where considerations of sex come into play.

This is a lot of ground to cover, and Dr. Helen manages to do it in under 200 pages. Her book is a "call to action," she says, and it's the place to start for any reader curious about the 21st-century men's movement and the nascent cause of men's rights.

For all its range, there are signs that *Men on Strike* was written in haste and rushed into print by her publisher. Dr. Helen has a weakness for mixed metaphors; in one notable sentence we confront an Army of Davids gathering steam to turn a tide that has been brewing for more than 40 years. Several points are made more than once—more than once a page, in some cases. Her roundhouse exaggerations ("Our society tells men they are worthless perverts who reek of male privilege while simultaneously castrating them should they act in a manly manner") lose their rhetorical oomph after a while. And sometimes the vividness of her imagery runs away from her, as when she refers to "men who must swallow their manhood." Oh yuck.

Surely the condition of American men is not so perilous that we couldn't have waited a few days while a copy editor looked the book over. But maybe I'm wrong about this. Maybe we can't wait. Dr. Helen's tone is alternately sarcastic, disgusted, pitiless, and huffy, but never less than urgent. This is war! "[O]ur society is at war with men and men know it full well." And according to Dr. Helen, an increasing number of these reluctant combatants are responding by going AWOL—from marriage and fatherhood, from the workplace, and from educational institutions. The percentage of unmarried men has tripled among some demographic cohorts, for those with college educations and those without. Labor participation rates for men are falling: In 1967, nearly 97 percent of men with no more than a high school education had a job, Dr. Helen says, citing figures from the Brookings Institution. Now the number is 76 percent. Among all working-age men, only 66 percent work full time—down from 80 percent 40 years ago. College admissions counselors across the country despair over the lack of male applicants. About 60 percent of college applicants each year are female—a ratio carried over into the student bodies of more and more schools.

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So there's evidence that a significant percentage of men are shying away from the social institutions that historically have required male participation for success, for both their own flourishing and that of the institutions themselves. For Dr. Helen, the reasons are straightforward. A right-leaning libertarian, she is a believer in *homo economicus*. The general retreat of men from their traditional responsibilities, she reasons, reflects a rational calculation of costs and benefits. When men go on strike, she says, they "are acting *rationally* in response to the lack of incentives today's society offers them to be responsible fathers, husbands and providers."

Take the institution of marriage. "Research shows," she writes, that men who live with their girlfriends are happier than married men. Why? Because men who don't get married enjoy "perks"—her word—that their married brethren don't. Among the perks: "Research shows" (she says again) that single women are thinner than married women, making them more desirable. Cohabiting women have lower expectations for the men they live with; they ask for less in the way of material and emotional support, which lessens

the stress that can make marriage such a pressure cooker for men. And when the time comes to part company, as it so often does these days, unmarried men duck away with greater ease. There are no ravenous divorce lawyers circling in sharknado mode, no sticky procedures to disentangle family property, and, usually, no kids who will have to be Solomonically cut in half when the relationship ends. Much more than marriage, cohabitation is a turnkey operation: no muss, no fuss.

"The discrepancy between the life of the freer, single man and the life of the less respected, less free life [sic] of the married man is at the heart of why so many men have gone on strike." The traditional division of labor that made marriage such an attractive deal for men—king of the castle and so on—has been disarranged, vastly increasing men's obligations (laundry! dishwashing! diapers!) without any compensating increase in comfort or convenience. Indeed, the risks involved in marriage have surged for men, she says. Child custody and divorce laws are rigged against husbands and fathers, and courts have a general tendency to side with wives and mothers. A man's entire paternal and financial future is up for grabs if he and his wife divorce.

DAVID CLARK

Dr. Helen quotes one of her young readers on the subject of marriage: "At least 7 out of 10 guys I talk to tell me that it is one of the worst mistakes that they ever made. . . . One married guy told me that I could get the same effect by selling my house, giving all my money away and having someone castrate me. This is really starting to unnerve me . . . "

Unnerve is certainly too mild a word for any situation involving castration, in my opinion, but no one can doubt the pessimism with which Dr. Helen's informants assess their prospects. On campus they confront the increasingly fashionable anti-fraternity movement and sexual harassment guidelines that criminalize the most innocuous flirtation. Similar rules govern the "feminized" workplace, where middle-management positions are more likely to be occupied by women. "I haven't had a man for a boss in over 17 years," a man who holds a staff position in a law firm glumly tells Dr. Helen. "Women managers tend to hire more women," he adds, leaving men behind.

"Maybe when there are no more men working, people will start to notice," Dr. Helen writes, failing to keep her sarcasm in check. "Until then, they will continue to discuss the 'war on women' until there are no men anywhere."

Dr. Helen acknowledges that her method of gathering all this gloomy testimony is not rigorous, scientifically. In addition to posting questions on her blog and then waiting for answers to roll in from her readers, she has haunted bars and gyms, interviewing the tipsy and the sweaty about their hopes and disappointments. She has queried her way through the distant quarter of the Internet known as the "manosphere," an informal constellation of sites and chat rooms devoted to video games, sports, science fiction, libertarian politics, and pornography of varying degrees of loathsomeness. Statistically such temperature-readings are worthless, of course, and while she thinks the anonymity of the web encourages candor from her respondents, it may very well do the opposite, inviting exaggeration and aimless bitching. How does one weigh the credibility of a source known only as Chateau Heartiste or Afkbrad or Oso Pardo or Armageddon Rex or (my favorite) Richard Ricardo? Somebody's got some 'splainin' to do.

Yet we can only conclude that Dr. Helen is illuminating some part of American manhood, and the sight is—well, unnerving. Her men are an unhappy lot, nursing their gripes and resentments. "I'm on strike and have been for years now," writes "Bob." "Women are so full of hatred and disdain for me." Some who have managed to secure a relationship with a woman have come away angry. "Personally," says one, "I hate the idea that a woman can stop anything and everything I care about doing, just by making my life a living hell until I concede to her demands"—especially, he adds, his girlfriend's demand that he "be the man."

All across America, Dr. Helen writes, men are being told they must "provide for women and their families with nary a whimper," and they're not going to take it anymore.

In Dr. Helen's manifesto, men appear exclusively as victims. This unexpected view brings readers to places they might not have visited before—or even known existed—including to a field that men's activists call "men's reproductive rights." The phrase "reproductive rights" was

brought to us by Second Wave Feminists decades ago, as a euphemism for the ability of a woman to obtain a legal abortion. It was posted as a kind of No Trespassing Sign around an area that was thought to be particularly vulnerable to male intervention. Now, it turns out, men are sexually vulnerable too.

"Yes," Dr. Helen tells us, "men and boys can be raped or coerced into sex by women, though many people think otherwise."

You'd have to count me among the latter—among those who think otherwise, I mean, not among those who say they've been raped. She cites three examples of the sexual exploitation of men by women. All three might have been lifted from the letters section of an old issue of *Penthouse*. In one case a 15-year-old boy had sex with a woman in her 30s, making her technically guilty of statutory rape and now a fantasy figure for 15-year-old boys everywhere. In another, a young man passed out at a friend's house after a party and awoke to find himself on the living room floor, naked. So far, so normal, you say. But then another partygoer claimed to have had sex with him *while he was unconscious*. She got pregnant and demanded child support. Dr. Helen's third anecdote tells of a young male victim visiting his parents at the hospital, where a predatory nurse offered to perform oral sex if he agreed to wear a condom. Later the nurse volunteered to throw away the condom—nurses are trained to be tidy—but instead used it to impregnate herself. Even the editors of *Penthouse* never thought of that.

Men's reproductive rights are also violated, we're told, by something called paternity fraud. Here again the women outfox their men. In paternity fraud, judges or other legal authorities force men to help rear children that a wife or girlfriend (or nurse) has led them to believe, erroneously, are theirs. How many men are in this uncomfortable position? The practice, Dr. Helen says, "is so rampant that it is hard to get an exact count." She notes that the organization Father and Families puts the figure at tens of thousands; *Men's Health* magazine says it's "more than a million." Whatever. She asks her blog readers what they would do if a judge forced them to support a child that wasn't theirs. The bitterness and recriminations flow: "I wouldn't resort to violence, but I'd do a heck of a frame job to make sure she ended up in jail. . . . I would feel like running away to a south sea island where I could never have to see any of them again. . . . I would be tempted to tell [the judge] to put me in jail right now because I simply would not pay."

"These are good and appropriate responses," Dr. Helen writes, "because they are the fuel that will cause men to act on their own behalf to change the laws."

The final chapter of her manifesto offers an "action plan" for men to fight back. The plan ranges from the personal to the political. First, she says, when men are stereotyped as dolts or wimps on TV or in the movies, "stop laughing." (*How many men's activists does it take to change a light bulb*?) She also has ideas for new laws. One would require paternity tests for all newborns and their alleged fathers. Some might consider this an invasion of privacy, she admits, but: "Given how few rights men have and how important paternity rights are, maybe it is not a bad idea."

So there you have it, everything a movement needs: questionable statistics, a scattering of inconclusive anecdotes, a steady harvest of victims, and a program for political agitation. The movement even has a ready-made martyr. Thomas Ball became an icon of men's rights advocates when he set himself on fire on the steps of a New Hampshire courthouse after an unfavorable ruling in a custody case. Among his last words were "I'm done being bullied for being a man." Dr. Helen is scandalized that the national press didn't give space to Ball's suicide. "Apparently," she complains, "our society cares so little about men that those who kill themselves are hardly news."

You don't need a long look to see that the men's movement Dr. Helen hopes to advance is a mirror image of the movement it's reacting to. This is why it's disconcerting to see the men's movement taken up as a *conservative* cause. In its ideological DNA is the same heedless individualism that bred Second Wave feminists, who likewise reduced every human interaction to a confrontation of legally enforceable "rights." Gender warriors think alike, no matter which army they're in.

Like 1970s feminists, Dr. Helen and her comrades place the blame for injustice squarely on the fuzziest possible malefactor—not specific individuals or even discrete groups, but vague entities like "society," "the media," "the culture," "today's PC climate," and of course "the environment": the working environment, the current environment, the college environment . . . all of them hostile, all of them subjecting men to unbidden terrors.

To these dimensionless clouds of ill will the gender warrior attributes stupendous powers. The environment or society or the culture or the climate is responsible for how we see ourselves, whether we choose to marry, what kind of jobs we're offered or interested in, the number of children we have or whether we have them at all. Second Wave feminists saw the American woman the same way, as a creature gone limp, a hopeless chump subject to endless manipulation. Like those earlier gender warriors, Dr. Helen thinks the root problem is that society—you know, *society*—doesn't treat the objects of her pity as "autonomous beings." Personal autonomy is her lodestar. The movement's ideal is a person stripped of all responsibilities and constraints except those he freely chooses for himself. The

ancient view that we are embedded in obligations that are not of our own choosing and which should not be quickly discarded—and which are finally the source of life's richness and deepest rewards—is as foreign to her as it was to the theorists of feminism.

Going "on strike" is thus the way the American man, that pathetic loser, rallies from his victimization to become the autonomous being that men's rights activists dream of. Another term for it is "going Galt." Dr. Helen didn't coin the term but she has done much to popularize it. With its hard "g"s back to back, going Galt has a manly sound to it—not surprisingly, since it is taken from the work of one of the manliest writers of the 20th century, Ayn Rand. John Galt is the hero of Rand's preposterous novel *Atlas Shrugged*. The book tells of a generation of entrepreneurs and industrialists (the Prime Movers, she calls them) beset by unnecessary government regulation and clawing social demands from "moral cannibals." They rebel by going underground, abandoning their businesses to the parasites. Chaos ensues. (Take that, society!)

A number of Dr. Helen's readers have gone Galt. The term pops up often in the manosphere, which is itself a logical destination for young men when they lose themselves in Rand's fantasy. Even discounting for her usual exaggeration, Dr. Helen is right about the dismal options facing uneducated young men in the economy the Great Recession left behind. Ayn Rand offers an off-the-shelf explanation for the future as it must present itself to a footloose 20-year-old. "I'm going Galt" sounds much nobler—manlier—than "I'm sleeping in my mom's garage while I collect disability checks for my ADHD and try to avoid her bipolar boyfriend." Randianism contains not only a coherent economics but a pre-fab metaphysics too. It's at once self-aggrandizing and self-pitying, a rationale for failure if or when it comes—a quick way out for a boy who has been provided with no other means to make sense of the world.

A number of Dr. Helen's readers have gone Galt. The term pops up often in the manosphere, which is itself a logical destination for young men when they lose themselves in Ayn Rand's fantasy.

Of course, there are alternatives—other dreams for young men to place themselves in. Whether they're plausible, given the condition of American manhood, is a good question. In one of those pleasing coincidences that long-winded book reviewers can only wish for, the publication of *Men on Strike* coincided with the release of *The Art of Manliness Collection*, a two-book set packaged in a souvenir cigar box with a stack of coasters adorned with inspirational quotes for aspiring men. ("The courage we desire and prize is not the courage to die decently but to live manfully"—Thomas Carlyle.)

The first of the two books, *The Art of Manliness*, is an etiquette guide, an advice book, and a how-to manual, all in one. The reader is taken step by step through skills that have been swamped in the Second Wave: homey talents such as how to tie a four-in-hand and write a thank-you note, and more rarefied skills such as how to treat a snakebite, light a fire without matches, save a drowning person, and "accept criticism without coming off like a cad." The second volume in the collection, *Manvotionals*, is a commonplace book of "timeless advice on living the 7 manly virtues," with selections from Benjamin Franklin, Theodore Roosevelt, Xenophon, Epictetus, and more Victorian moralists than you can shake a shillelagh at. The word *chivalry* is used often, without a hint of a smirk.

Like *Men on Strike*, the two manliness books are concerned with the state of American manhood. And like *Men on Strike*, they contain lots of material drawn from a website (in this case, artofmanliness.com). And there the similarity ends. In her book about men Dr. Helen uses the word *manly* twice, once in ironic quote marks. The irony would be lost on the authors of *The Art of Manliness*, a husband and wife team from Tulsa, Oklahoma, called Brett and Kate McKay. If the ideal for the men's movement is the autonomous man, vigorously asserting his rights in order to free himself from any constraint placed on him by someone else, the McKays' ideal is the man who knows how to respond well to the expectations and inhibitions that come with being a father or husband, a son or brother or friend.

The Art of Manliness, in other words, stands as an implicit rebuke to the men's movement. Its response to the Second Wave is not to ape it but to ignore it, in favor of a timeless view of the relationship between the sexes. While Dr. Helen's men go Galt, these men head in the opposite direction. They settle into the deeper loam that lies beneath often inconvenient and uncomfortable social arrangements to the place where honor, devotion, and even sanctity can grow. Manliness, the McKays say, requires an awareness of reciprocity—the knowledge that "both genders are capable of and should strive for virtuous, human excellence." For that matter, only such women and men—confident, knowing, patient, courteous, and moved always by fellow feeling—could call a halt to the war on women and to the war on men, and return to the much more enjoyable, and much less dangerous, war between men and women. ♦

Miss America vs. Mr. Incumbent

Not your ordinary House primary race

By Jonathan V. Last

The most interesting House primary of the 2014 cycle began in June in the 13th District of Illinois. It pits freshman Republican congressman Rodney Davis against an insurgent candidate named Erika Harold. Davis is a political operative who won his seat last year nearly by accident. Erika Harold is a 33-year-old lawyer. Who happens to have been Miss America.

The recent history of the 13th District is about as confusing as a game of musical chairs played in the dark. Reapportionment after the 2010 census shunted a seven-term Republican incumbent to a neighboring district, leaving the 13th an open seat. Another Republican congressman displaced by redistricting, Tim Johnson, decided to try his luck there.

Johnson was a longtime Illinois pol. He'd served in the state legislature for 24 years before being elected to Congress in 2000 from the 15th District. After declaring for the 13th, the 66-year-old Johnson won an uncontested Republican primary—then promptly retired, intending to hand the nomination (and the seat) off to his longtime chief of staff, Jerry Clarke. The baton-pass was so blatant that Clarke announced his candidacy before his boss had formally stepped aside.

In Illinois, when a nominee withdraws after the primary, his replacement is chosen by the party heads of the counties in the district. The 13th includes parts of 14 counties, so the nomination was to be awarded by 14 Republican leaders. Clarke, it turns out, wasn't particularly popular with them.

Which brings us to Rodney Davis. Davis was the political director for another neighboring Republican congressman when he stepped up to challenge the unpopular Clarke. Two other candidates also came forward—one of whom was Harold—but it wasn't much of a contest. Davis was extremely well connected with, and well liked by, the local establishment, in addition to being, by nearly all accounts, a smart and decent fellow. (In Illinois, such niceties are nonessential.)

So Davis became the nominee, not by standing before the district's voters, but by winning a beauty contest. The outcome of the general election was no sure thing. Not only was the district a toss-up politically, but Davis had lost two earlier attempts at public office, a bid for an Illinois house seat in 1998 and a campaign for mayor in his hometown of Taylorville. Last November, Davis squeaked to victory, carrying the 13th by a spine-tingling 1,002 votes and running a worrisome 2.9 points behind Mitt Romney.

With Davis's reelection prospects in mind, the local party establishment became somewhat distraught when Harold declared her intention to run against him for the Republican nomination in 2014. Part of their dyspepsia is natural to party establishments, which exist to support officeholders and insulate them from challenge. Another part seems rooted in personal trust. Davis has been working for local Republican politicians since he graduated from college. He has been a good and loyal soldier, and they are comfortable with him. Harold is a native of the district—she grew up in Urbana and went to the University of Illinois—but she's younger and has spent her professional life in the national spotlight, as Miss America, and in the private sector, practicing law in Chicago.

The Republican establishment also has a prudential concern: A weak freshman, Davis has already drawn a top-tier Democratic challenger. Ann Callis, a former prosecutor and Illinois appeals court judge, stepped down from the bench in May to run against him. She's an attractive candidate who had been the party's first choice to run for the open seat in 2012 but had declined. This time around, the Democrats may succeed in keeping the primary field clear for her. So even if Davis defeats Harold, as most locals assume he will, the primary could sap him of money he'll need against Callis in a race that could be tight.

Harold's decision to run has already driven one of the

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local poobahs to self-immolation. In June, Montgomery County GOP chairman Jim Allen called Harold a "street-walker" and the "love child" of the DNC. That is, we assume Allen was talking about Harold. He never mentioned her by name, referring to her instead as "Little Queenie." This caused something of a firestorm.

Allen is now the *former* Montgomery County Republican chairman, the first member of the Illinois GOP establishment to be displaced by Harold's entrance into politics. There may be more.

Erika Harold at the 2004 Republican convention in New York

NEWSCOM

Why is Erika Harold trying to disintermediate the Champaign-Urbana Republican establishment? To understand Harold's candidacy, you have to understand Miss America.

Once upon a time, the Miss America contest was a beauty pageant. Try calling it a "beauty pageant" today and the Miss America organization will congenially rap your knuckles. Yes, the aspirants compete in categories such as "swimsuit" and "evening gown," but the organizers no longer view the event as a "pageant" of any sort. It is, as they constantly correct laypeople, a scholarship program.

This isn't PC window dressing. Last year the Miss America Organization handed out $45 million worth of grants across the pageant's various national, state, and local levels, making it one of the biggest scholarship programs in the country. Harold herself entered Miss America after being admitted to Harvard Law School and reckoning the mountain of student loan debt that was coming her way.

Once you understand how Miss America sees itself, it becomes easier to understand what kind of woman tends to be named Miss America.

The best inside account of Miss America is the book *Hype and Glory* (1990), by screenwriting legend William Goldman, who served as a judge of the 1989 pageant. As Goldman recounts, celebrity judges like him are given strict instructions on how to grade contestants:

> Leonard Horn, the head of the pageant, spoke very clearly about what he wanted and what our job was. . . . [O]ur job was absolutely clear: give them ten girls, any one of whom could be Miss America. Not just a girl with some talent, who might or might not be attractive. But one who could serve as a role model for her generation. . . .
>
> Then Karen Aarons, administrative officer of the pageant, spoke briefly. . . . What we were doing, she explained, was just this: we were interviewing someone for a job.
>
> And what was that job?
>
> Well, she would have to deal with her first press conference after the pageant. And another the following morning, Sunday. And then off to New York for television and more interviews on Monday.
>
> That was the kind of year it would be.
>
> Miss America busts her chops during her year. It's been estimated that the prize brings close to $200,000 in all to the lady. But it's earned. She works every other day, several times a day, personal appearances, public-relations work for the sponsors of the program, talking at schools, hospitals, on and on. She is always, always on. The day she isn't pressing the flesh is spent mainly in traveling from one city to the next.

Goldman observes that what the pageant prizes most in a Miss America is poise, intelligence, charisma, and unflappability. He jokes that to the organization, the platonic ideal of Miss America isn't Marilyn Monroe. It's Jane Pauley. Because the requirements for the job of Miss America are essentially the same as those for a big-time morning TV news anchor.

This vision is why the dispositive part of the Miss America pageant is one the audience never sees: It's the individual seven-minute interviews with the judging panel at the beginning of Miss America week. "The interview," Goldman writes, "is everything." Because in that period it becomes clear to the judges who fits the job.

To show you how dead-on Goldman's analysis was, based on the interviews alone, he narrowed the field from 53 down to 5 girls he believed could win. One of them did. The Miss America who emerged that year was a Stanford senior from Minnesota named Gretchen Carlson. You may know her today as the co-host of Fox News Channel's morning show *Fox & Friends*—or, as some conservatives like to think of her, Jane Pauley with an extra 30 IQ points.

What didn't occur to Goldman is that the same qualities that make for a good morning TV host can also make for a formidable retail politician. This insight, however, was not lost on Erika Harold.

In addition to the charisma and poise native to good politicians, Harold has exhibited the principled toughness of the best pols. And again, to appreciate this aspect of her character, you need only go back to Miss America.

Harold competed three times for the Miss Illinois crown, which she finally won in 2003. Each time, she ran on a platform of abstinence. But one of the arcane traditions of Miss America is that while contestants choose their own platforms when competing for the state crown, it's the state organization that decides what platform the winner will take to Atlantic City. The year Harold was named Miss Illinois, her state committee settled on a bland platform opposing "youth violence." (Think of it as "world peace," for the children.) Harold agreed to oppose youth violence.

After she was named Miss America, however, Harold decided to add abstinence to her platform for the year of her reign. She didn't abandon "youth violence" but rather included it, along with abstinence, in a broad appeal to kids to respect themselves by standing up to bullies and avoiding sex, drugs, and alcohol. This was, as a matter of both intellectual coherence and moral sense, a significant improvement on the pure "youth violence" platform she'd been handed. The Miss America organization did not like it one bit.

The organization pushed back hard and told Harold to keep quiet—especially about sex. The disagreement made national headlines and culminated in a news conference at the National Press Club in Washington, where the newly crowned Harold told reporters, "I will not be bullied. I've gone through enough adversity in my life to stand up for what I believe in." Miss America stared down the pageant and won.

Harold was already interested in politics. During a Miss America appearance at East St. Louis High School, students asked her what she wanted to be when she grew up. She told them, "My ultimate goal is that I want to be the first black female president of the United States." While still an undergraduate at Illinois, she volunteered for conservative Patrick O'Malley's doomed 2002 Illinois gubernatorial campaign. She also volunteered with the Republican National Committee in an effort to promote conservative economic principles in African-American communities. After graduating from law school, she joined a Chicago firm where her practice has specialized in health care law and religious freedom. Both have led her to be increasingly critical of President Obama's policies, though not the man himself.

In fact, she goes out of her way—far out of it—not to criticize Obama. For instance, in June she told *Politico*:

> [Obama] and I both have an optimistic view of the country and people's capacity to effect change, and I think that we do share that in common. I know that he has a background in organizing communities to affect issues, and I think that's a very empowering way to organize people. And I think that sense of optimism is something people hopefully find appealing. And I also admire the fact that he seems like he's a great father and I've found it heartwarming to see pictures of his daughters growing up. They're great representatives of their generation.

This sort of talk has been interpreted by some in the Illinois Republican establishment as suggesting that Harold isn't, to put it more nicely than Jim Allen did, a genuine conservative.

Is she a squish? Possibly, but probably not. Differentiating between Obama and his policies is smart politics—Harold is running in Illinois, after all, a heavily Democratic state where Obama is a favorite son. Yet while Harold tries to resist easy classification, her ideological markers are highly suggestive of a conservative worldview. There's the abstinence, of course. She's fiercely pro-life. She favors concealed-carry gun laws. And she's on the board of Prison Fellowship Ministries, the program founded by Chuck Colson.

While Harold tries to resist easy classification, her ideological markers are highly suggestive of a conservative worldview. There's the abstinence, of course. She's fiercely pro-life. She favors concealed-carry gun laws.

This last is telling. The most interesting part of Harold's legal practice has been her work defending faith-based entities. In one case, for example, she represented a retirement community affiliated with a religious group. The organization featured a cross on its logo and used a Bible verse in its mission statement—which attracted a lawsuit from an advocacy group contending that this amounted to discrimination. Describing this work, Harold says, "It's a passion of mine."

Looking across the broader national landscape, Harold sees ample reason to be concerned about religious freedom. "We're starting to see ways in which our constitutional protections are being encroached upon," she says. "We all are less free when any group isn't afforded their constitutional protections."

And not just less free, but less well off. Harold says that her time with Prison Fellowship Ministries has deepened

her appreciation for the good religious organizations can do. "I've seen firsthand the need for there to be a space in public life for religious groups to be able to offer service to their fellow man," she says. When government seeks to quarantine religious organizations, moving from freedom of religion to "freedom of worship" (to use the formulation President Obama favors), "it's far too limiting in terms of the good they can do for the public, and it's far too restrictive in terms of the protections which are afforded religious groups by the Constitution. We give something up when we say that certain voices aren't welcome in the public square."

Harold says she intends to make religious freedom an issue in her campaign. This is fitting at a time when the HHS mandate, the Hobby Lobby case, and the torrent of litigation about to be unleashed by the Supreme Court's gay marriage decisions appear likely to make religious freedom a central front in the culture war.

None of this has made much of an impression on the Republican establishment. As a senior adviser to the local party told me with some exasperation, "It doesn't make any sense that she's running. She has no complaints about Davis. No one has any complaints about Davis—he's a good man and he's done a good job for the district. All this does is hurt the Republican party in Illinois."

Yet the twin rationales for Harold's campaign are fairly obvious: The 2012 results suggest that Republicans might be able to field a stronger general election candidate for a tough 2014 race. And more important, whatever Davis's merits, Republican primary voters never got a say in choosing him.

When you add it all up, the real mystery about Harold isn't why she's challenging Davis. It's why the Illinois GOP didn't find a way to harness her talents and ambition when she came home five years ago.

In 2002, a friend of mine got a surprise call asking if she would sit as a judge for Miss America. Like any sensible person, she said yes. When she told me the news, I gave her a copy of Goldman's book, and after the pageant—sorry, scholarship contest—she confirmed his reporting. She said that the minute Harold finished her extended interview, it was clear to the panel that she would be Miss America. She was that good.

The crowning moment, Atlantic City, 2002

NEWSCOM

Shortly thereafter, when Harold came to Washington in the middle of the abstinence platform dust-up, my friend had a small party for her. It was informal, maybe two dozen people at a home by the D.C. reservoir. Harold was there, with her sash, her tiara, and her elderly minder from the organization. (During her tenure, Miss America has a chaperone with her every waking minute. That's probably why the only scandals the pageant has ever endured came from indiscretions committed before the competition.)

My wife and I spent a little time talking with Harold. We hadn't met a Miss America before, and she wasn't what I expected. For starters, she wasn't beautiful. This isn't meant as a slight—Harold was then and is today a very attractive woman by any standard. But I was expecting Helen of Troy, or at least Heidi Klum. And she wasn't that. Also, she was short.

Those were my immediate impressions. It took less than a minute to appreciate how engaging she was. Even at 23, she was uncannily personable; all the more so because her manner seemed effortless and natural. After a few minutes, it became clear that she was also very smart. On this score I had been expecting Jane Pauley; Harold reminded me more of Bill Clinton—of the package of attributes that made the young Bill Clinton such a promising politician.

In the car on the way home, my wife and I compared notes. We were both convinced that Harold was destined for politics and would be a formidable contender once she arrived there.

Other formidable politicians have started out by displeasing their party establishments. In 2000, Barack Obama mounted a primary challenge to Bobby Rush, a four-term congressman. Obama got thrashed in an ugly race. In 1995, Chris Christie was a sitting freeholder (the New Jersey term for county commissioner) when he challenged Anthony Bucco, the incumbent Republican, for a seat in the state's general assembly. Christie lost, and in retaliation the county Republican party recruited a candidate to challenge him in the primary when he ran for reelection to his freeholder seat. He lost that, too.

Today, the national Democratic party belongs to Obama just as surely as the New Jersey Republican party belongs to Christie. Erika Harold understands that while political establishments can be powerful, they are neither irresistible nor immortal. ♦

Railroad through the Cilento region, 2012

Down the Boot

Understanding Italy, one train at a time. BY THOMAS SWICK

Tim Parks has followed in that predominantly British literary tradition of making another country one's home and then making that home one's principal subject. Gerald Brenan chose Spain; Lawrence Durrell and Patrick Leigh Fermor shared Greece; William Dalrymple has claimed India. For the last three decades, Parks—with books like *Italian Neighbors*, *A Season with Verona*, *Medici Money*, and a number of novels—has taken it upon himself to explain Italy to the English-speaking world. And he has done this in an age when the field has been crowded by sybaritic short-timers, whose books appeal more to people dreaming of idyllic retirements than to readers wishing to learn about another culture.

Italian Ways
On and Off the Rails from Milan to Palermo
by Tim Parks
W.W. Norton, 288 pp., $25.95

So it's a pleasure to pick up *Italian Ways* and, from the first sentence, feel informed in a way one never does after reading rhapsodies on Tuscan vegetables. "Italians commute," Parks begins, explaining that personal connections are so essential for getting anything accomplished in Italy that people tend to stay where they have them, i.e., in their hometowns, even when they find work in other cities. And for the unmarried, Mamma's there to do their laundry.

Parks himself commutes, from his home in Verona to his university in Milan. He does this—and has been doing this for years—by train. He's not a fan of the automobile, and trains give him time to read.

> Sometimes I think I should have kept a list of all the books I have read on trains. Certainly most of the books that have been important to me would be there. Perhaps I just read better on rails. A book has a better chance of getting through to me, particularly when I'm in a compartment, and at night. This hiss of metal on metal, the very slight swaying of the carriage, the feeling of being securely enclosed in a

COSIMO DI GIACOMO

Thomas Swick is the author of Unquiet Days: At Home in Poland *and* A Way to See the World: From Texas to Transylvania with a Maverick Traveler.

> comfortable, well-lighted space while the world is flung by in glossy darkness outside, all this puts me in a mood to read, as if the material world had been suspended and I were entirely in the realm of the mind.

Italian Ways has rhapsodies, but it mixes them with rants; Parks's love of trains is far from blind. "You can't smoke on the trains anymore," he writes while sitting on the 6:40 from Verona, "but the smell lingers. There are smudgy neon lights that offend the eyes without illuminating a book."

And people are always plopping down near him, disturbing his concentration, even when there are empty seats elsewhere. Usually, something other than their unwelcome proximity irks him: "Her Discman is tinkling, she wears a sickly perfume. . . . His hair sprouts unkempt from a baseball cap, his whole body exudes discomfort and stickiness." This is far from the *bella Italia* of contemporary travel memoirs.

Parks's exasperation with the byzantine ticketing system (and its enforcers) takes up large portions of the first few chapters. His learned dissection of the system's inconsistencies is part of his plan to explain the country through its trains, but it's far too involved to be of much interest to anyone other than fellow Trenitalia riders. Though it does elicit this cautionary note for romanticizing foreigners: "Italy is not a country for beginners."

The 6:40 passes Custoza, where, in 1866, the Austrians defeated troops led by Victor Emmanuel II. The place reminds Parks that many of the soldiers fighting on the Austrian side were Italians unmoved by the idea of national unity, and he quotes anti-southern graffiti he reads from his window. (Another beauty of train travel, or of movement in general, is its ability to set the mind wandering.) Unlike many outside observers, the seasoned expatriate—who sees his neighbors heading to Puglia for vacation—doesn't take separatist sentiments all that seriously: "In every aspect of Italian life," he writes, "one of the key characteristics to get to grips with is that this is a nation at ease with the distance between ideal and real. They are beyond what we call hypocrisy. Quite simply they do not register the contradiction between rhetoric and behavior. It's an enviable mind-set."

Such illuminating compliments, however oblique or sarcastic, pop up periodically and help relieve the persistent tone of complaint. You begin to suspect that Parks's love affair with his adopted country has turned sour. But then you realize that most commuters, if asked to write about their years in transit, would produce an equally cranky (and far less insightful) screed. You yearn for the author to finally board a train for southern Italy.

Unfortunately, it takes him half the book to do so. And when he eventually does, he is still frustratingly (for himself, his fellow passengers, his faithful readers) trying to shut out the material world. On the 11:39 to Palermo, a man tries to engage him in conversation, and Parks's response is to wonder why he's become an object of interest. He, of all people, should know by now that if he wanted quiet and solitude, he chose the wrong country—and the wrong means of transportation. He is not writing a travel book, as he will tell some people in Sicily, but he is writing a book and is traveling to do so—hence, a little openness would help it along. But Parks sits in his compartment observing his fellow passengers—e.g., "the permed woman, who appeared to be studying her magazines as if for an exam"—and recording their trite conversations, remaining, for the most part, magisterially aloof. He possesses Paul Theroux's gimlet eye, but not his gift for socializing with strangers.

Yet he professes an affection for the train compartment, which still exists on southern trains. "It will be a sad day when it is truly extinct," he writes. "Arranging passengers face to face, three on three, with barely enough space for legs between, it militates against all those gadgets we use to isolate ourselves, the phones, the mp3s, the computer screens." He omits, you may have noticed, books from the list. What did he say about "ideal and real," the national inability to recognize "the contradiction between rhetoric and behavior"? For all his dismay that Italians can always tell he's not one of them before he even opens his mouth, it would appear that he has become hopelessly Italian in at least one respect.

In Sicily, the unpopularity of trains does not deter him; in fact, it seems to give him new life. He studies the schedules and rejoices at his successes. (Even though sometimes he's reduced to riding a bus.) In Modica, he eats dinner with the friends of his hotelier, none of whom is impressed by the idea behind his book. Back on the mainland, he quotes George Gissing and Norman Douglas, two great chroniclers of Italy who had their own complaints. Watching family scenes on station platforms, he wonders if the "asphyxiating" emotionalism of the south is part of what drives its sons and daughters northward.

Parks becomes happy in his discovery of a land that he, like many northerners, had long dismissed. "My adopted country was bigger than I had thought. . . . I had traveled a long way and still hadn't left home." It is a statement that expresses a newfound appreciation for Italy's richness, as well as an unbegrudging acceptance of his connection to it.

Walking through the labyrinthine streets of Crotone, he finds them full of life, some of it unchanged from ancient times—like the man sharpening knives on a grindstone. The antiquities in the town's archeological museum, he opines, make "nonsense of concepts of progress in human achievement, at least in the fields of art and craftsmanship. We may acquire more and more technology, but the ability to conjure ideas and visions of every kind from the most ordinary materials was as powerful thousands of years ago as it ever can be."

His only quibble is with the museums' information, provided in writing that is comprehensive but dry and long-winded. It reminds him of what he calls "Italy's eternal dilemma: how to be equal to such a rich tradition on a daily basis, how to preserve beauty without becoming prisoner to the past, how not to kill it with the dullness of a school-trip atmosphere." It's a difficult challenge, but the country has had help in meeting it from writers like Gissing, Douglas, and Parks. ♦

B&A

Culture Shock

There's a reason why they call it the humanities.

BY JONATHAN MARKS

"That will never work," one cannot help thinking, as the late Earl Shorris retells the story of the first Clemente Course in the Humanities, or in "the study of human constructs and concerns," such as political philosophy, history, literature, art, and logic.

The students to whom Shorris and his faculty introduce Socrates, Dostoyevsky, and truth tables do not seem promising. Almost all live on incomes no greater than 150 percent of the Census Bureau's poverty threshold. Some are homeless; some are pregnant; some have been in prison; some can barely read a tabloid newspaper. There is a woman with five children who "often answered the door at the single-room occupancy hotel where she lived with a butcher knife in her hand."

We meet many like her in this book, which follows the students, teachers, and organizers of the Clemente Course as it is implemented in the United States (in Illinois, Wisconsin, and South Carolina), Korea, and the Sudan, among other places. Shorris's improbable thesis is that, even more than job training, poor people need an education that will draw from them their opinions about fundamental human questions and subject them to gentle scrutiny.

In the course of such an education, they will be drawn from a life of reaction to the forces with which poverty surrounds them into a community of reflection that connects them with each other and to the wider world. To become reflective and capable of changing their lives, they must become, in W.E.B. Du Bois's words, "co-workers in the kingdom of culture."

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The Art of Freedom
Teaching the Humanities to the Poor
by Earl Shorris
W.W. Norton, 320 pp., $27.95

Perhaps more remarkable is Shorris's conviction that these students will respond to high demands. As he says to potential recruits, they will "have to read and think about the same kinds of ideas [they] would encounter in a first-year course at Harvard or Yale or Oxford." They will "have to come to class in the snow and the rain." They will have to take tests and write papers.

Not everyone responds. About half failed to complete the first Clemente Course. But of those who completed it, many went on to attend college. Two became dentists, two went on to study for doctorates, and one is head of the counseling staff at the drug program at which she was once a client.

One student, Barbara, who took a version of the Clemente Course after escaping with her child from a polygamous cult, helps explain what in the course (apart from the hope of having a better life) inspires students to meet its demands. "I was born," she says, with "a giant question mark in my head." She had, for most of her life, been encouraged to think that this question mark was a defect rather than a sign of her "freedom to choose how to live."

"I know," she now says, "that all the questions inside of me are freedom."

Teachers of the humanities have much to learn from *The Art of Freedom* about the soft bigotry of low expectations—and not just for these students, but for their own. We may know that Socrates and his friends reflected on love and justice even as the Peloponnesian War was destroying Athens. But we are not always confident that the works we teach have the power to draw students away from their immediate concerns. It helps, then, to read the testimony of Ismat Mahmoud Ahmed, head of the philosophy department at the University of Khartoum, about the version of the Clemente Course he helped teach to "internally displaced persons" from Darfur. "At the beginning of the class, there was a prevailing feeling of despair," says Ahmed, "but as the study progressed that feeling was replaced by hope. . . . [T]his might be one of the reasons that strengthened my trust in philosophy."

The story of the Sudan course is another point at which I thought to myself, "This will never work." But even if Shorris is half right about the "extraordinary success" of the course, I have to admit that I was wrong, and that my error was in underestimating the power of great texts.

The Art of Freedom is also a testament to the value of good, dedicated teachers. Mutasim Yousif Mustapha, who organized the Sudan course—"in a country where the government threw dissenting students out of fourth-story windows" and teachers had reason to fear for their own safety—is a rare example of courage. But Shorris also gives us more everyday examples, like Vivian Hapaniewski, who delayed her retirement to bring the Clemente Course to a troubled high school in Chicago's South Side, and Darrell Moore, a philosophy professor at DePaul University who, as a Clemente faculty member, "learned each student as if they were his family."

Especially now, when great bets are being made that massive online courses will open education up to people who cannot otherwise afford to attend college, it is worth bearing in mind Shorris's model, which depends on teachers who can earn the trust of students who, in the absence of such teachers, would have little hope of succeeding.

Shorris was a man of the left, and not every reader will agree with some of the ways in which he understood the success of his course: "They all had notably more appreciation for the concepts of

benevolence, spirituality, universalism, and collectivism." He also adhered to a kind of multiculturalism; and while few will argue with his claim that wisdom speaks many languages, not every reader will agree with his decision, in at least one version of the course, to set aside Western texts entirely.

But in *The Art of Freedom*, Shorris nonetheless champions an idea of the humanities as something that transcends politics and against which the works of any culture can be judged. The idea of the humanities as the source of reflection is the means by which "the Greeks first stepped back from nature to experience wonder at what they beheld." At the first Clemente graduation, Shorris had his students "recall the moment when [they] had come to the denouement of . . . [Aristotle's] *Nicomachean Ethics*" and, in particular, when they had encountered "the idea that in the contemplative life man was most like God."

"One or two, perhaps more, of the students closed their eyes," says Shorris. "In the momentary stillness of the room, it was possible to think."

Had Shorris told us in the beginning that this was the very moment at which his course was aiming, I would have thought, "That will never work." Amid increasing calls for us to recognize that college is not the best path for everyone, it is worth recalling, too, this quiet moment—and its democratic promise that the humanities will sometimes find its lovers in surprising places. ♦

B&A

Beats Go On

Publishing and profiting with the avant-garde.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Through the modernist upheaval in American cultural life, with its earliest significant traces in the 1930s and an inerasable mark on the society as we now know it, three publishing houses were most prominent in redefining aesthetic taste. All of the trio remain in business today.

The first, the New Directions Publishing Corporation, was founded in 1936 by steel company heir James "Jay" Laughlin. The second such effort, chronologically, is the subject of this odd, ephemeral volume. Grove Press was purchased by Barney Rosset, a footloose New York leftist, in 1951, soon after its creation. San Francisco-based City Lights Books, inaugurated with slender "pocket books" of poetry, emerged last. City Lights was created in 1953 by writer Lawrence Ferlinghetti and a now-forgotten partner, Peter D. Martin, who soon left the enterprise.

Counterculture Colophon
Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, *and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde*
by Loren Glass
Stanford, 272 pp., $27.95

The publishing lists of these three businesses had some names in common, but all came to be identified with a single, loose network of authors then known as "underground" writers. For New Directions, the brightest star in its constellation was the poet and controversialist Ezra Pound. At City Lights, the pacesetter became the stridently nonconformist, if typically incoherent, versifier Allen Ginsberg. Both New Directions and City Lights published many additional personalities, as well as each other (New Directions issued Ferlinghetti, while City Lights printed Laughlin's *Selected Poems*).

But Barney Rosset, Grove Press, and the *Evergreen Review*, a magazine produced quarterly and, eventually, monthly by Grove from 1957 to 1973, had a greater immediate impact on America. Identifying with the limited, if not psychologically incestuous, "underground" of the time, *Evergreen*'s second number, headed "The San Francisco Scene," included Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg. Still, the destinies of the three publishing vessels were bound to be different.

New Directions traded in many experimental American and foreign writers, but most of them were, in retrospect, surprisingly conventional stylists, such as Wallace Stevens, Tennessee Williams, James Agee, and Dylan Thomas. City Lights favored the friends of Ferlinghetti who were among the Beat Generation and its predecessors, led by the poet and essayist Kenneth Rexroth. Each publisher plows its original furrows, and City Lights has added a list of prose volumes that are ambitious, though paralyzed in the self-consciousness of their political correctness.

Grove Press brought together the most impressive stable of authors. Its highest-magnitude figure, equal to Pound in brilliance, was Samuel Beckett, for whom Grove became the main, if not sole, American publisher. Yet Rosset turned numerous celebrities, including the philosophical sex writer and anarchist Henry Miller, into "Grove authors." Grove published nearly Miller's entire corpus after his work was rinsed of the charge of obscenity in a series of trials involving local booksellers across America in the early 1960s.

Grove's attractions were, nonetheless, not merely lascivious. Rosset published Richard Howard's translation of André Breton's 1928 *Nadja*, the surrealist "novel" wherein the author did nothing but wander the streets of Paris seeking mental stimulation of a rather abstract kind, in 1960, when the book was unknown outside France. In 1961, Grove brought out an English translation

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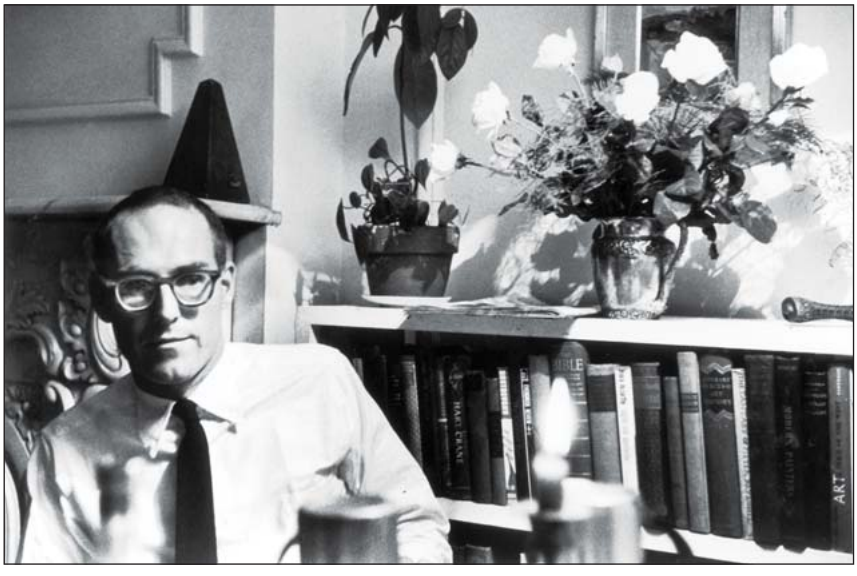
of the most profound Latin American exercise in self-reflection to appear in the past three-quarters of a century: *The Labyrinth of Solitude* by the Mexican poet Octavio Paz. Also in 1961, the International Publishers' Prize was presented by a committee, including Grove and five European publishers, to Beckett and Jorge Luis Borges, as a shared award. Borges is cited in this book as crediting the 1961 prize with his global success.



Barney Rosset at home, 1958

Rosset and Grove were different from Laughlin and New Directions and Ferlinghetti and City Lights in further important ways. Both Laughlin and Ferlinghetti were parochial. Laughlin was concerned with supporting American cultural innovation, while Ferlinghetti, similarly, stood for the promotion of his San Francisco "city-state" and the Beat Generation. Yet Jack Kerouac, the archetypal Beat author, ended up alongside Beckett and Miller as an asset for Grove, which released most of his books, as it did those of the completely disordered William S. Burroughs.

Rosset, having printed Henry Miller, went on to advertise bulky tomes by the Marquis de Sade and other contentious erotic items from France, exemplified by an English translation of the pseudonymous, sado-masochistic *Story of O*. Rosset likewise presented a full list, in English, of the radical homosexual works of the French author Jean Genet. Indeed, were it not for its parallel commitment to difficult, mainly French examples of the "new novel," by writers like Alain Robbe-Grillet and Marguerite Duras, Grove risked becoming a merchandiser of dirty books and little else. Of course, especially in the case of Robbe-Grillet, many such scribes were often mentioned but seldom fully read.

As the 1960s and 1970s wore on, Grove's output continued to diversify. With the radicalization of the civil rights movement and intensified protests against the Vietnam war, Grove emitted new variants in print. The most famous property in this line was *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, appearing in 1965. The same year, Grove announced *The Wretched of the Earth*, by the black Caribbean psychiatrist Frantz Fanon. And as these two polemics infiltrated the curricula and dorm rooms of every American institution of higher education, it could be said that Grove had acquired a monopoly on black protest literature. Rosset published other African-American militants (LeRoi Jones, later Imamu Amiri Baraka, comes to mind), but none possessed the insurgency and charisma of Malcolm X and Fanon. Certainly, none sold so many books.

Grove Press became, simultaneously, a catalogue for serious avant-garde writers, a porno house, and a political agitation center. In this respect, it probably mirrored accurately the confused and often-baffling environment of the 1960s. With the arrival of the 1970s, Grove's innovative literature component diminished, resting on Beckett and rarer translations of French, Latin American, and Asian authors. Its sexuality-related offerings became disapproved of by feminists. Grove Press was transformed into a leftist house par excellence. After Malcolm X and Fanon, it distributed selections from the writings of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, who had been killed in Bolivia in 1967.

Grove also added to its catalogue such paragons of the so-called counterculture as Abbie Hoffman's *Steal This Book*, in 1971. But aside from its "black" list, the high-water mark had passed, in America, for Grove. The refined literary experimentation Grove once championed was ignored increasingly, as was its long and mainly tedious allegiance to the sexual revolution. Early in the 1970s, the radical left, too, lost much of its attraction.

Loren Glass, an associate professor of English at the University of Iowa, has written a lazy account of the Grove Press excitement, which was real in its moment. Glass overlooks any serious analysis of the writers Barney Rosset championed or even of the causes he publicized. It is Glass's stated aim to explain how New York allegedly "siphoned cultural capital from Paris to New York in the 1950s and 1960s." In this, Glass imitates explicitly the demagogy of the French critic Serge Guilbaut, author of the 1983 rant *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. But Glass fails in his goal, which is mainly rhetorical and perfunctory on his part.

Counterculture Colophon, doubtless unintentionally, undermines the impact of Grove Press, the *Evergreen Review*, and their authors on America in the 1960s. But this was perhaps predictable. Much that was valuable in the Grove effort (especially involving French and Latin American writers) is no longer associated with the "counterculture." And much of the rest is forgotten. A more substantial and serious history of the American and international aesthetic convulsions of the mid-20th century remains to be written. ♦

GETTY IMAGES

B&A

Two Roads Converged

How fascism and communism led to totalitarianism. **BY RONALD RADOSH**

For those who considered themselves men of the left, it was a staple of belief that the very concept of totalitarianism was deeply flawed. Marxism, it was argued, came from the age of the Enlightenment and sought man's perfection in a classless society that would end in something close to heaven on earth. Fascism, on the other hand, was predicated on barbarism, loyalty to the leader, a commitment to total war, and a virulent racism that declared Jews to be the scourge of advanced civilization and demanded their total elimination.

On the eve of World War II, liberal opinion in the United States and Western Europe saw the Soviet Union of Joseph Stalin as the advance guard of a worldwide anti-fascist coalition. When the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, anti-fascists throughout the West saw it as a noble effort led by the Communist International to break the back of fascism before Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy would go to war—and they despised the noninterventionist policy of the United States and other Western powers. They saw the Soviet Union as the one nation whose leaders believed that military and economic aid to the Spanish republic could allow it to survive and repel the Falangist generals, led by Francisco Franco.

In the context of these events, the myth of the Soviet Union as a brave anti-fascist power emerged, and the parallel purges going on within the Soviet Union were ignored—or justified as a necessary tool for Stalin to defeat fascist opponents who threatened Soviet power and, ostensibly, had attained top positions within the government in Moscow.

The Devil in History
Communism, Fascism, and Some Lessons of the Twentieth Century
by Vladimir Tismaneanu
California, 336 pp., 34.95

Many books have been written about the similarities and differences between communism and fascism, both in theory and practice. None, however, matches the insight, analysis, and deep thought found in *The Devil in History*. Vladimir Tismaneanu has produced, in his words, "a political-philosophical interpretation of how maximalist utopian aspirations can lead to the nightmares of Soviet and Nazi camps."

Tismaneanu is especially qualified to tackle the subject. He grew up in Communist Romania, raised by parents who both believed in the Communist myth. His father fought, and was severely injured, in the Spanish Civil War. A good education and a negative reaction to the reality of "really existing socialism" made him skeptical of the ideology he was taught, however. He educated himself by studying the forbidden writings of major anti-Communist thinkers, finally finding people who understood that the system in which he lived was not only flawed but based on a philosophical lie.

Tismaneanu's own experience, combined with study of the works of scholars like Leszek Kolakowski and others, gave him the knowledge to learn the truth—and the courage to leave his own country to take up residence in the West (eventually, in the United States, where he now teaches at the University of Maryland).

Tismaneanu has read and considered the thoughts and arguments of all the major anti-Communist thinkers; he has digested their contributions and integrated their analyses into an all-encompassing portrait of his own. He is clear that, in all of their essentials, no basic difference exists between communism and fascism. Both projected what he calls "a fantasy of salvation. . . . [B]oth promised to rescue humanity from the bondage of capitalist mercantilism and to ensure the advent of the total community."

In many respects, Bolshevism as developed from Marx—first by Lenin and then by Stalin—required an even more severe obedience. Both communism and fascism demanded a revolutionary break from the past and the creation of a "New Man" whose life would be led to guarantee the creation of a new social order. But Bolshevism alone asserted that all wisdom and truth lay in the party. From its very beginnings, in 1917, it was founded (Tismaneanu writes) "upon fanaticism, elitism, unflinching commitment to a sacred cause, and total submission of critical reason by means of faith to a self-appointed 'vanguard' of militant illuminati." Its adherents believed that "you can't be right against the Party" and had to be ready, overnight, to say that black is white, if that was demanded.

Both ideologies were nihilistic, contemptuous of any idea that universal rights exist. Both sanctified violence as a method necessary for reaching the utopian goal, and both had total contempt for the old bourgeois order and complete faith in a utopian future in which all human conflict would finally come to an end. To reach that goal, party militants had to be ready at any moment to suspend reason and honesty, to carry out the orders of the party without hesitation and bear whatever sacrifices that entailed. To Communists, the party was a mystical repository of truth, "a 'community of saints' dedicated to bringing about the cataclysmic millennium; it was *the* historical agent, for it encompassed the professional revolutionaries, those who, by reuniting their acting and thinking faculties, regained 'the grace of the harmonious original being.'"

That paradigm, Tismaneanu argues, stemmed from a very correct reading of

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Marx by Lenin. And it was Lenin, and not any of his successors, who created the model of the totalitarian social structure, beginning with the very concept of the party as the all-knowing foundation of a new order. The strange development that differentiates communism from fascism, however, is the reality that so many early followers of Lenin's system would break and become disillusioned: first, by seeking the development of an alternate Marxism that they hoped would prove to be humanistic and different; and eventually, by concluding that such a task was impossible. These dissident Marxists, who began by differentiating an early Marx from a later Marx, and argued on behalf of a socialist humanism, or "critical Marxism" (such as those involved in the Prague Spring of 1968), would later devote themselves to explicating the intrinsic failure of *all* Marxism as a worldview.

Nothing like that ever happened to any of the intellectual adopters of fascism, either Mussolini's version or the *volkisch* ideology developed by Nazi theorists in Hitler's Germany. There were self-proclaimed Marxist humanists, who sought to rescue Marxism from Leninism and totalitarianism; there were no fascist humanists who sought to rescue fascism from Hitler or Mussolini. But while fascism as an ideology is all but dead in today's world, Tismaneanu cautions us that Leninism still has its appeals. It arose out of the Enlightenment belief in reason and progress, Marx's social theory, and Russian revolutionary tradition. Tismaneanu argues that, in post-Soviet Russia, the antidemocratic collectivist ethos lives on, and that its leading political figures, such as Vladimir Putin, "define themselves . . . in relationship to Lenin's legacies." Leninism survives as a principle of organization, if not as a Marxist ideology. One sees evidence of this in Putin's praise of Stalin, in his refusal to close Lenin's tomb in Red Square, in his recent renaming of Volgograd to Stalingrad for a few celebratory days each year.

When Hitler came to power in Germany, Tismaneanu notes, he inaugurated a state based on Lenin's construct of a "permanent emergency," which abolished the "bourgeois freedoms" of the short-lived Russian republic and Germany's Weimar government. In both nations, the destruction of legality took place, followed by the arrest and elimination of those who were considered "objective" enemies of the people, whether Social Democrats in Germany or Mensheviks and anarchists in Russia, all of whom stood against the creation of the "perfect, organic community." As the Soviet Union came near its end, even Mikhail Gorbachev could not break with the principles of communism to allow for real political pluralism—which explains his vacillations and backsliding as everything was collapsing. Unlike those who see Gorbachev as a hero who brought tyranny to an end, Tismaneanu paints him as a flawed leader who began a revolution from above but was unable to break with the system's major principles to follow through with what he had begun.

The great importance of *The Devil in History* is that Tismaneanu challenges the continuing belief system of so many Western intellectuals who, despite their acknowledgement of the crimes of Stalinism, still see the collapse of the Soviet Union as a sad end to a well-meaning experiment. One still hears the refrain that "real socialism as it would exist here has never been tried," or that "socialism in the West would be democratic and would work," or that Communist leaders were "progressive, anti-imperialist, and, more important still, anti-fascist."

How else to explain the enduring admiration for tyrants like Fidel Castro and the late Hugo Chávez in many sectors of today's leftist intelligentsia? Indeed, while Eastern European dissidents came to give up their hope for a humane socialism, the Western left persists in standing behind their dream of a socialist future. But Tismaneanu warns that there is no easy road to any kind of utopia in which a "delusional vision of mandatory happiness" exists. All we can do is remain steady amidst the threats to a liberal social order based on private property, the market, and individual freedom—from whatever source those threats emanate. The "devil in history" has changed since the era of communism and fascism; its forms and adherents are still with us. ♦

B&A

Dutch Treats

Oh, to be in Holland, now that August's there . . .

BY SARA LODGE

Groningen

As my plane drops toward Amsterdam's Schiphol airport, I can see what look like multiple alternative runways: broad pink, blue, and yellow strips that turn the fields around the coast into the flags of an imaginary nation. They are bands of flowers—tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils—and the plane rushes towards them like an overstimulated bee.

Bang. The wheels are down. And I am in the Low Countries, the flatlands, where the ground and the sky extend as far along the horizontal axis as the ruler can measure—and where the people stretch further on the vertical axis than anywhere else in Europe. This is a country of fairground-mirror contrasts: tall, thin, canal-side houses and wide, wide polders, reclaimed land that still shimmers like an ocean to the far horizon; steep spires and flat skating lakes; bicycles and pancakes.

I am heading for Groningen, in the north, to give a series of lectures.

Sara Lodge, a senior lecturer in English at the University of St Andrews, is the author of Thomas Hood and Nineteenth-Century Poetry: Work, Play, and Politics.

Getting from Schiphol to the railway takes only 10 minutes. The Dutch are a practical people, and the efficiency of their public transportation systems makes those of other countries look creaky. The train shot through flat fields crisscrossed with drainage ditches and occasionally punctuated with windmills. I, however, had no seat: The station platform was dominated by apprentice giants (i.e., students) who shouldered into the carriages, leaving lesser mortals standing forlornly like mushrooms in the forest.

"Oh, but you should have confronted them!" laughed my Dutch colleagues. "That's the way here. It's a very forthright society. You do what you want, and if the other person doesn't like it, they let you know."

Groningen is a moated city that is chiefly modern, but contains some older buildings of notable beauty, such as the Martini Tower—not a cocktail joint, but a 15th-century church campanile that rises 320 feet above the market square. Canals form a belt around the town's belly so that, as in other Dutch cities, you are constantly crossing bridges, cresting parabolas over water on which the sun dances in a million tiny points of light. It is a pleasure that doesn't pall.

Another joy is the carillons that mark the hours with a laughing waterfall of musical notes. While most European church bells go "dong" or "ding-dong-ding," the ingenious mechanisms of the Dutch system allow bells to be tuned to notes and played as instruments, creating chimes with the magical tinkling resonance of a music box.

The downside of this, as I discovered while teaching in a room very close to the university bell tower, is that on certain days students are permitted to "play" the bells for an hour at a time. If you have ever tried to explain the finer points of *Jane Eyre* while competing with a bell tower that is pealing out the theme from *The Godfather*, you will pity my predicament.

The other major hazard in Groningen is bicycles. I have never, ever seen so many bicycles in one place. The square opposite the Academy Building, an impressive 1909 edifice in the style of the Dutch High Renaissance, features hundreds of bikes parked upright, with interlocking handlebars like a vast migratory herd of metal antelopes. To distinguish their bicycles from the crowd, some students resort to ingenious decorative schemes: plastic ivy draped around the frame, paintwork of pink and purple with green spots. Students can often be seen transporting large items, such as chairs, as they pedal. I even witnessed the extraordinary sight of a female student riding with a large wall-mirror gripped tightly between her handlebars. (I suspect that oncoming drivers saw only a hurtling flash of light and then an image of their own puzzled faces as she passed.)

Keukenhof Gardens, near Leiden

Flowers are so cheap here that they are like salt and pepper. Every sidewalk café has pots of narcissi, tiny grape hyacinths, or green hellebores growing on the tables. In the market, you can pick up 10 roses or 25 tulips for about $3.30. It was tempting to buy an armful and go around pretending that I'd just sung *Carmen* at the Met.

For tulip lovers, the place of spring pilgrimage is Keukenhof Gardens, located just outside Leiden on the former estate of a 15th-century countess. After World War II, the land was transformed into a flash-popping fantasy of bulbs. With my lectures over, I duly headed south, passing signs exhorting travelers to "Focus on the Crocus," and found myself … back in the 1970s. A mock-Victorian street organ was playing "The Age of Aquarius" in tinny strains; many people were dressed in orange (the Dutch national color); and the extraordinary geometric beds of thousands of pink, yellow, and red tulips, with a backdrop of swans on a lake, formed a Polaroid vista reminiscent of the color-heightened postcards of my childhood. The staff told me that there are 35 gardeners working 12-hour days to create this floral spectacular, which exists for only 8 weeks of the year.

The first recorded mention of tulips in the West was made by an Austrian ambassador at the Ottoman court in 1555: He mistakenly thought that they were called "tuliban," after their turban shape. He'd gotten the name wrong (the Turkish word for tulip is "lale"), but it stuck. Tulips quickly became a Dutch craze, such that by 1636 a single prize specimen could fetch up to 100 times the average annual income.

It was a classic example of bloom and bust: In 1637, the bottom fell out of the market, trading ceased, and hundreds of speculators were ruined.

In the current Keukenhof bulb market, where peach and green-striped amaryllis flourish like surreal gramophone horns and frilly-fringed black and crimson tulips evoke a line of can-can dancers, traders told me that their expanding markets are in Eastern Europe and Asia. There is some irony in this, because Eastern Europe and Asia are where wild tulips originated: in Turkey, the Balkans, and the northern Himalayas. The Netherlands now exports 130 million bulbs annually to Poland.

The ancient university city of Leiden, whose former students and teachers include John Quincy Adams, Henry Fielding, and Albert Einstein, is well worth a visit of several days. Compact and charming, it is a delightful place to wander around, enjoying the elegant 17th-century canal-side brownstone merchants' houses (so clearly an

CHUCK SZMURLO

inspiration for early East Coast American architecture), stooping into antique book and map dealers' premises, and visiting the many lively beer cellars boasting a vast range of brews, including wheat beers and fruit beers. There are also tempting pastry shops, such as Snijers, selling apple fritters and *paasstol*, an Easter specialty of raisin dough filled with sweet almond paste. On Fridays, a large canal-side market offers everything from bolts of cloth to bicycle locks to asparagus, chocolate, hair dye, watches, and many different locally made hard cheeses, some of which are in rounds as big as kettle drums.

One attraction, the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, is easily overlooked, but should on no account be missed. Tucked away behind an anonymous door in the oldest datable house in Leiden, it aims to tell the true story of the Pilgrim Fathers' residence there and the intellectual and practical journey that led to the founding of Plymouth Colony in Massachusetts.

The scholar and antiques-dealer Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs created this resource as a personal project, and it is like no other museum I have ever visited: You can touch all the artifacts, and the history that the museum relates depends on you. Rather than trailing around a succession of signboards and labels, you ask Jeremy questions. Thus, you learn about the Pilgrims and their culture by exploring your own specific interests and ideas. His expertise ensures that the conversation will be both unique and illuminating.

I asked why the Pilgrim Fathers were in Leiden in the first place. Bangs replied that it was partly a matter of personal connections: William Brewster, a diplomat, had been on the Earl of Leicester's triumphal tour as a young man and knew Leiden well. But Leiden was also more open to foreign workers than most cities: It had suffered population depletion in the 1574 siege against Spain and needed refugees to man its cloth industry.

The future Americans stayed in Leiden for over a decade, developing their theological ideas and practical skills. And they benefited from the education on offer in a university town. Deacon Samuel Fuller got his medical training by attending dissections; the botanical gardens taught pharmaceutical skills; Miles Standish, garrisoned in the city, was able to attend engineering lectures. Bangs argues that the simplified house-frame distinctive to Plymouth Colony was learned by Standish in Leiden.

What emerges most vividly from a visit to the museum is a sense of the Pilgrims' daily lives—from the very tight size of the rooms (dimensions that continued to prevail in Massachusetts despite the abundance of land) to the candlelit interior, to the familiar objects (baby-walkers, Geneva Bibles) that occupied their domestic spaces.

While I was there, an American family with five small children arrived. Before long, the children were dressing in period costume, sitting on the furniture (including a 12th-century chair), playing with pigs' knucklebones (used as jacks in 17th-century games), and studying 17th-century blue-and-white tiles depicting children skating, flying a kite, and walking on stilts. My heart was in my mouth as the smallest child handed back the tiles with nothing broken. I don't think those kids will ever forget their visit.

I finished my Dutch sojourn in Amsterdam, staying in the Spiegel Quarter among hip galleries and antique glass merchants. Many tourists come to Amsterdam to sample its illicit pleasures in "coffee" shops that are more about the pot or to window-shop in De Wallen, where the nudes behind the glass are real. But the best reason to come here is to have your mind blown by Dutch art. The Rijksmuseum, closed for building renovations since 2003, triumphantly reopened this past April. It is stunning. Rather than opting for interactive displays and other novelties, the architects have concentrated on making the beautiful building a lighter and more dynamic frame for the extraordinary paintings it contains. Here, you can marvel at Vermeer's *Woman in Blue Reading a Letter* (1664) and, of course, Rembrandt's *The Night Watch* (1642).

To understand Rembrandt's habits as a painter, it is worth also visiting his house in Jodenbreestraat. The studio where he and his pupils worked elbow to elbow is flooded with cool north light. Beside it is a room filled with treasures that were props in the paintings: exotic shells, armor, terrestrial and celestial globes. Here, you can see how the artist made his brushes from weasel hair, the nib of a bird's feather, and a wooden handle, and how he mixed his pigments. Of the roughly 20 colors available at the time, Rembrandt used relatively few, eschewing the expensive lapis lazuli blue and preferring the more readily available yellow and red ochre, umbers, bone black, and lead white.

Seeing Rembrandt's copper etching plates, where the focus of the technique is on determining light and dark areas, helped me to understand the dramatic chiaroscuro in his paintings. And learning about the pigments he used and the way his palette was literally drawn from earth—from the rocks and soil—helped me to appreciate the down-to-earth quality of his work, the way it loves the ordinary, the humane, the rich ground out of which flesh emerges with all its flaws.

Indeed, if there was a theme to my Dutch journey, it was the experience of being brought down to earth. In Han van der Horst's *The Low Sky: Understanding the Dutch*, he comments that the nation is naturally egalitarian and utilitarian, with a dislike of pomp and circumstance. A favorite Dutch saying is "Act normal, that's crazy enough." Moderation, thriftiness, and consensus are prized. This makes perfect sense: If you live on a flood plain, the necessity for cooperation is obvious.

I came to enjoy the levelheaded, deadpan humor of my Dutch colleagues as much as the pancakes that I wolfed down while looking out at the reflection of the calm water of the canals glinting evenly off of 100 mullioned windows. And I came to realize that my native Britain, currently struggling with an uneasy coalition government and entrenching daily its differences with Europe, has much to learn from a nation that rose from the sea and knows that steering the ship of state on a steady course depends on keeping everyone on board. ♦

B&A

Feminine Mistake

The high cost, and sweet rewards, of Woody Allen's vision of women. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

If you are a female performer desperately in want of an Oscar or an award from some critics' circle somewhere, your best bet is to work for Woody Allen. Since Diane Keaton's *Annie Hall* statuette in 1978, actresses in Allen movies have been nominated for 10 Academy Awards and have won 4 of them: Dianne Wiest twice, for *Hannah and Her Sisters* (released in 1986) and *Bullets Over Broadway* (1994); Mira Sorvino in *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995); Penélope Cruz in *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* (2008).

There's never been anything quite like this in the history of the movies. Allen does reasonably well by men, too—Michael Caine won for *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and another three actors were nominated—but his specialty is getting prizes for the ladies.

Which is interesting, because Woody Allen is a spectacular, galling, nearly intolerable misogynist. I don't mean as a human being, although one might intuit this from his life history. I mean as a creator of female characters. Allen's award-winning types are: a delusional and lost waif (Wiest in *Hannah*); a Machiavellian manipulator (Wiest in *Bullets*); a childlike hooker (Sorvino in *Mighty Aphrodite*); and an unhinged bisexual (Cruz in *Vicky Cristina*).

Among the characters whose performers received nominations but did not win are Geraldine Page's suicidal perfectionist in *Interiors* (1978), Judy Davis's harridan virago in *Husbands and Wives* (1992), and Samantha Morton's mute doorstop in *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999). Other Allen female characters of note who did not make the final Oscar cut include the clingy and desperate

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

Blue Jasmine
Directed by Woody Allen

Scarlett Johansson in *Match Point* (2005), the bitter and talentless sister played by Mary Beth Hurt in *Interiors*, and the castrating mother (Mae Questel) who literally watches her son from the sky in *New York Stories* (1989).

Allen often returns to the same woman-hating well. To go with Mira Sorvino's hooker, there was Hazelle Goodman's hooker in *Deconstructing Harry* (1997) and a veritable who's who of hookers (Jodie Foster, Lily Tomlin, and Kathy Bates) in *Shadows and Fog* (1991). Judy Davis played pretty much the same horror-show ex-wife in both *Deconstructing Harry* and *Celebrity* (1998). Penelope Cruz's bipolar lunatic was preceded by Charlotte Rampling's bipolar lunatic in *Stardust Memories* (1980), Christina Ricci's bipolar lunatic in *Anything Else* (2003), and Radha Mitchell's in *Melinda and Melinda* (2004).

And now, surprise of surprises, there's a brand-new bipolar-lunatic movie from Woody Allen called *Blue Jasmine*, with Cate Blanchett inhabiting the 77-year-old Allen's latest iteration of his Eternal Horrible Feminine. Jasmine is the wife of a Bernie Madoff type who has hanged himself in prison after being arrested and convicted. We first encounter her after a nervous breakdown, fleeing New York to take up residence with her estranged working-class sister in San Francisco.

Throughout the movie, Jasmine is rude, cruel, self-centered, pathetic, and unpleasant. She lies, she complains, she demands. She looks down on her good-hearted sister, Ginger (Sally Hawkins), who has a habit of hooking up with goombah louts—even though it was Jasmine and her husband who lost Ginger's life savings, which led to the breakup of her first marriage. When she's not being cruel, Jasmine is talking to herself, consuming Xanax as though it were Pez, and lying through her teeth about her past.

It's a meaty part, to be sure, since it requires Blanchett to spend most of the movie barely controlling her emotions. So there's a lot of trembling and a lot of shaking. And when she isn't loathing her life in the present, she's remembering her past glories as a Park Avenue matron. But even in these scenes, Jasmine is shown to be a brittle and humorless perfectionist who is very tightly wound, beautiful but unattractive. But then, that is true of many, if not most, Allen women—Annie Hall always excepted.

This overdrawn and overwrought character is the sole focus of our attention for all but about five minutes of the movie. The only relief comes from the 1980s shock comedian Andrew Dice Clay, who gives a moving and layered performance as Ginger's ruined husband—and from the British actress Sally Hawkins, who underplays beautifully as Ginger.

What pleasures *Blue Jasmine* affords come from the telling. The movie is gripping because of the structure Allen has imposed upon it, which keeps you guessing about Jasmine's spiritual and mental condition and ultimately pays off with a major plot surprise. But it's highly contrived, and Allen seems to have derived his ideas about mental illness from melodramatic plays of the 1930s rather than the way people who suffer from it actually behave.

All of this is beside the point. *Blue Jasmine* is practically designed to win Cate Blanchett an Oscar this year, and even though she already has one for playing Katharine Hepburn in *The Aviator* (2004), she's the odds-on favorite right now. And why not? She's the most hateful character of Woody Allen's career. The deeper question is why so many people find Allen's remorselessly hostile depictions of women so alluring. ◆

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—Memorandum from Nicholas Goldberg, editorial page editor of the* Los Angeles Times, *seeking a new writer for the editorial board, July 29, 2013