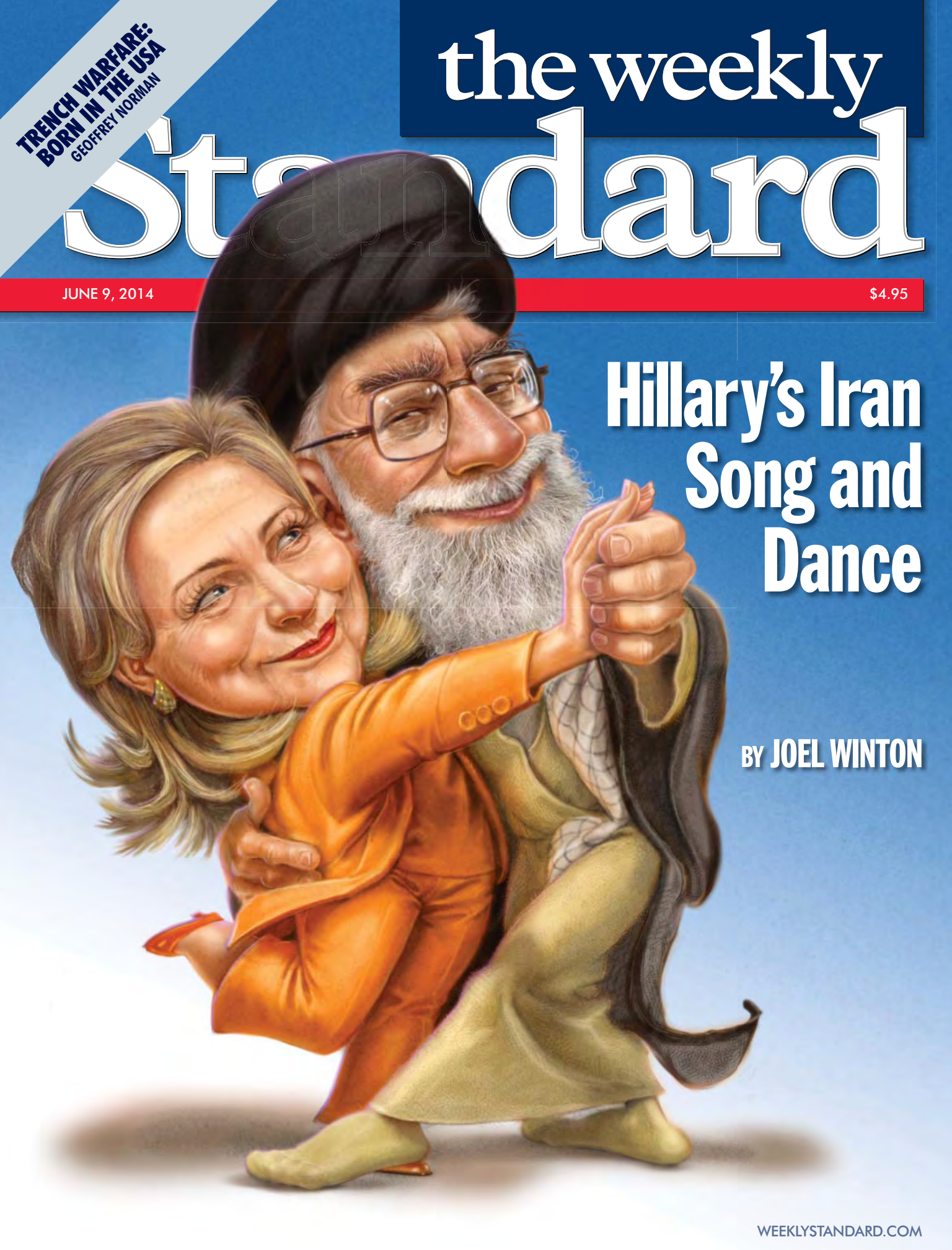
the weekly Standard

TRENCH WARFARE: BORN IN THE USA
GEOFFREY NORMAN

JUNE 9, 2014 $4.95



# Hillary's Iran Song and Dance

BY JOEL WINTON

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

# Contents

June 9, 2014 • Volume 19, Number 37






COVER BY GARY LOCKE

# Syllabus of Errors

The Scrapbook keeps an eye on the British press—largely because it's interesting, and sometimes fun, to read; but also because, now and then, a little nugget emerges which tells a larger story.

Case in point was the explosion last week when it was reported, in hazy detail, that Britain's secretary of state for education, Michael Gove, had revised the reading syllabus for Britain's English curriculum by expelling certain popular American titles—*Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee—and substituting British authors such as William Shakespeare and Charles Dickens.

Progressive Britons, aided and abetted by social media, had a fit. Gove was denounced in print as a "fundamentalist" with a "misguided sense of patriotism." A popular BBC dramatist denounced him as a "dangerous philistine." The *Guardian* piled on, as if on cue, soliciting comments from (among others) a lecturer in English at King's College London who complained that requiring 16-year-olds to read Dickens "will just grind children down." A hashtag denouncing Gove went viral on Twitter.

All of which, needless to say, was so much noise. It turns out that Michael Gove had banned nothing from the syllabus but had, instead, encouraged the expansion of reading lists, in these carefully chosen words:

> Students should study a range of high-quality, intellectually challenging, and substantial whole texts in detail. These must include: at least one play by Shakespeare; at least one 19th-century novel; a selection of poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry; and fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards. All works should have been originally written in English.

*Michael Gove*

In The Scrapbook's humble view, this seems like common sense for a literature curriculum in the land that gave the world Jane Austen, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the English language. Indeed, Gove went out of his way to explain that the new guidelines would broaden, rather than restrict, opportunities to read contemporary authors as well as canonical texts. He went on: "Do I think *Of Mice and Men* . . . and *To Kill a Mockingbird* are bad books? Of course not. I read and loved them all as a child. And I want children in the future to be able to read them all."

Which leads The Scrapbook to two observations. First, it is a measure of the bitterness felt by the political left in Britain that it should have set aside its reflexive anti-Americanism to attack the current government by defending American authors. That's a rare role-reversal we won't soon forget!

The other observation is that, all things being equal, Michael Gove is self-evidently intent on raising the intellectual level of Britain's English syllabus but feels constrained to say nice things about John Steinbeck, Arthur Miller, and Harper Lee. Well, if it takes a venerable American institution to state the obvious, allow The Scrapbook to grab this one by the horns: Steinbeck is a mediocre prose stylist, *The Crucible* is antiquated left-wing agitprop, and *To Kill a Mockingbird* is a sentimental children's story best ingested in movie form. If this emboldens any secondary school in Great Britain to toss *Of Mice and Men* in favor of *Richard III*, we'll gladly take the blame—and credit. ♦

## See No Evil

On May 23, a young man killed 6 people and wounded 13 others near the campus of the University of California, Santa Barbara, before turning a gun on himself. But you probably knew that, because the incident was unavoidable in the news. Despite all of the national coverage, the student-government-run newspaper at UCSB, *The Bottom Line*, had a unique perspective on the crime and could have provided invaluable coverage. Yet they decided not to cover the story:

> After extensive discussions among our Editorial Staff, advisor and alumni, we have decided to not immediately publish an article on the recent tragedy in our community of Isla Vista to minimize the emotional harm for our reporters, photographers and multimedia journalists. Before we are journalists, we are Gauchos [UCSB's mascot] and feel we need our time to mourn, process and recover from this senseless violence.

Now there are any number of legitimate reasons to withhold information as a journalist, often involving the need to protect the innocent or minimize harm. For instance, most news agencies sensibly decided not to name a "pretty blond

NEWSCOM

girl" that the killer claimed had humiliated him. The Scrapbook, for its part, prefers not to name the killer because spree killers (and their potential copycats) are known to harbor narcissistic fantasies about the fame their crimes will bring them. There are legitimate concerns that excessive coverage of the personal manifestoes of these monsters can only encourage other killers.

However, when the reaction to tragedy is to shirk one's vocational duty altogether, it's likely time to pursue a different vocation. Any student at UCSB's newspaper involved in this decision—not to mention advisers and alumni—should probably spend some serious time in sackcloth and ashes before being allowed within 50 feet of a newsroom. There are six dead bodies. People want to know what happened. This is what reporters are for. Workers in lots of professions, not just journalists, manage to do their jobs even as they "mourn, process and recover."

It may not be a coincidence that UCSB was last in the national news in March, when the student government there passed a resolution urging campus instructors to publish "trigger warnings" on syllabi, lest students be exposed to books or discussions that might cause them emotional trauma. According to the Associated Press, the University of Michigan, Bryn Mawr, Oberlin, Rutgers, Scripps, and Wellesley have all likewise taken up the issue this year. Suffice to say, the list of classic works of literature with allegedly traumatic depictions of sex, violence, etc. is indeed long (see Joe Queenan's take elsewhere in this issue). Any student genuinely so fragile that he can't handle, say, the depiction of race relations in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* without advance warning should probably not be attending college.

We hope all this is just a passing liberal arts fad, but we're not sanguine about the current crop of participation-trophy millennials. For their sake (and ours), let's hope they learn to buck up and cope with adversity. ♦


## Instagram Envy

Perhaps you're aware that a prominent athlete recently posed for an Instagram photo alongside an attractive woman who happened to be involved with another man. Her significant other got carried away with his emotions. Hounded by the green-eyed god jealousy, he acted foolishly and spoke rashly. And then everyone forgot all about it—participants, press, and public.

Apologies if you thought we were talking about the Donald Sterling affair. Understandable, however, since it was only a few weeks ago that audiotapes of the soon-to-be-former owner of the Los Angeles Clippers in conversation with his girlfriend revealed the 80-year-old billionaire to be a bigot. Sterling, the tapes show, didn't want his lady, V. Stiviano, to keep posting pictures of herself posing with prominent African-American athletes, particularly NBA legend Magic Johnson. "I'm just saying that it's too bad you can't admire him privately," Sterling told her during the now-famous conversation. "But don't put him on an Instagram for the world to see so they have to call me."

No, what The Scrapbook is referring to is the latest iteration of what appears to be the same phenomenon—let's call it Instagram Envy.

In Las Vegas last week, the rapper known as T.I. picked a fight with Floyd Mayweather Jr. after the boxer was captured in a photo posing with T.I.'s wife, Tameka "Tiny" Cottle. It was late at night at Fatburger on the Vegas strip when T.I. approached Mayweather about the Instagram, and the pugilist told him he had the wrong idea. There was nothing going on between him and Tiny, and if T.I. was intent on further confrontation, then, said the top pound-for-pound fighter in the world, "you must've forgot what I did for a living."

Still, T.I. took his chances. All we know for sure about the impromptu showdown is that there were a lot of chairs thrown at Fatburger. It's hard to tell from the video, but it seems it was Mayweather's bodyguards rather than the champ himself who did most of the heavy lifting. T.I., it was feared at first, had wound up with two black eyes, but he later released a video to show the world he was unscathed.

The same, of course, cannot be said for Donald Sterling, banned for life from the NBA and compelled by the league to sell his franchise. What's worth noting is that both he and T.I. were motivated by the same complex of emotions. That's where the similarity ends. The former confided in what he thought was privacy to his girlfriend, who made his buffoonery public. Conversely, we know nothing about T.I.'s private thoughts about other men and the woman he cares about. And for starting a fistfight with Floyd Mayweather, his image is forever enhanced. ♦

## Sentences We Didn't Finish

"I was deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Maya Angelou, a true national treasure whom I have admired for many, many years. Dr. Angelou was much more than a literary genius, a chronicler of Jim Crow, and a witness to history. Through her extraordinary work, she captured the tenacity of the human spirit and . . . " (Statement by Attorney General Eric Holder, May 28). ♦


the weekly Standard
*www.weeklystandard.com*

**William Kristol,** *Editor*
**Fred Barnes, Terry Eastland,** *Executive Editors*
**Richard Starr,** *Deputy Editor*
**Claudia Anderson,** *Managing Editor*
**Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson, Victorino Matus, Lee Smith,** *Senior Editors*
**Philip Terzian,** *Literary Editor*
**Stephen F. Hayes, Mark Hemingway, Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, John McCormack,** *Senior Writers*
**Jay Cost, Michael Warren,** *Staff Writers*
**Daniel Halper,** *Online Editor*
**Kelly Jane Torrance,** *Assistant Managing Editor*
**Julianne Dudley, Ethan Epstein, Jim Swift,** *Assistant Editors*
**Maria Santos,** *Editorial Assistant*
**Philip Chalk,** *Design Director*
**Barbara Kyttle,** *Design Assistant*
**Teri Perry,** *Executive Assistant*
**Max Boot, Joseph Bottum, Tucker Carlson, Matthew Continetti, Noemie Emery, Joseph Epstein, David Frum, David Gelernter, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Michael Goldfarb, Mary Katharine Ham, Brit Hume, Frederick W. Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Yuval Levin, Tod Lindberg, Robert Messenger, P.J. O'Rourke, John Podhoretz, Irwin M. Stelzer,** *Contributing Editors*

**MediaDC**
**Lou Ann Sabatier,** *Chief Executive Officer*
**Joe Guerriero,** *Chief Revenue Officer*
**Grace Paine Terzian,** *Chief Communications Officer*
**Steve Sparks,** *Chief Operating Officer*
**Kathy Schaffhauser,** *Chief Financial Officer*
**Catherine Lowe,** *Integrated Marketing Director*
**Nicholas H.B. Swezey,** *V.P. Advertising*
**T. Barry Davis, Peter Dunn, Andrew Kaumeier, Brooke McIngvale, Jason Roberts**
*Advertising Sales*

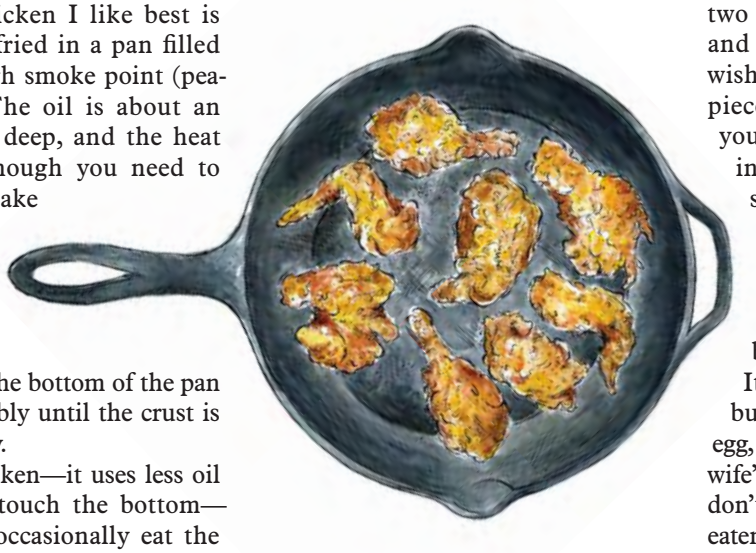
***Advertising inquiries: 202-293-4900***
***Subscriptions: 1-800-274-7293***

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-274-7293. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-386-597-4378 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

# Fry, Fry Again

I happen to like fried chicken. I like just about everything about it. I like being in the store and looking for the right chicken. I like cutting up the chicken, and then preparing the pieces for frying, and then frying them in the big pan we use for that purpose. And I like eating my portion. I can't say I like disposing of the grease, a messy business, but then the meal I've just eaten has usually been worth it.

The fried chicken I like best is deep-fried. It's fried in a pan filled with oil of a high smoke point (peanut is good). The oil is about an inch-and-a-half deep, and the heat (325 degrees, though you need to watch it and make adjustments) is such that the pieces, while submerged in the oil, don't touch the bottom of the pan but fry comfortably until the crust is brown and crispy.



KATHERINE MESSENGER

Pan-fried chicken—it uses less oil and the pieces touch the bottom—is okay. And I occasionally eat the kind made with a special pressure cooker that accelerates the process—so-called pressure-fried chicken. It was introduced in the Second World War by Colonel Sanders of Kentucky Fried Chicken fame and is used where demand is high, in fast-food chains and some restaurants. But when the measure is taste, neither pan-fried nor pressure-fried can match deep-fried chicken, provided it is made right.

I learned about fried chicken growing up in Texas in a family that ate a lot of it. My mother's mother didn't go to the store for her chickens but raised them out back, near the garden. She could wring a chicken's neck—a skill, alas, I did not learn—and she used a large cast-iron pan for frying the bird, as did my father's mother—and as did my mother, a home economics teacher.

To the extent I thought about such things in those days, I would have guessed that fried chicken was a Southern invention, since it was often referred to in my part of the country as "Southern fried chicken."

But history tells a more complicated story. Four hundred years ago, chicken was being fried in Scotland (though not in prissy England, where it was baked) and in West Africa—precursors, it turns out, of the fried chicken that first appeared on our continent in the American South in the late seventeenth century.

Today fried chicken remains "a staple of the South," as the old cookbooks call it. But in the past 80 years it has become popular across the country, admired today even by the best chefs. It's a national food, indeed a great American food.

And, if it is to be good, two things matter. The first is the chicken itself. Roasters, ranging from three-and-a-half pounds to six, aren't bred for frying; they're just too big to make good fried chicken. I learned that lesson while a student in England, when the only chickens in the market the day I was asked to fry chicken were big roasters, one of which I warily bought and tried to fry.

Broilers or fryers—the terms are used interchangeably—range from two-and-a-half pounds to above four and do make for good fried chicken—especially if the bird is on the lighter side, less than three pounds. Obviously, the smaller the bird the smaller the pieces cut from it, and in my experience, smaller pieces fry best in the crackling deep fat.

What also matters is how you cut up a chicken to get those pieces. A chicken easily yields eight pieces you can fry—two wings, two thighs, two drumsticks, and two breasts—and the skilled cook can find the wishbone, surrounded by a delicate piece of white meat. On YouTube you can watch cooks demonstrating how to cut up a chicken with surgical care, using a small kitchen knife.

Preparing the pieces for frying can be done any number of ways. Each involves creating a batter to coat and seal the chicken. It's made with flour and milk or buttermilk, perhaps also a beaten egg, maybe a splash of hot sauce (my wife's addition), and desired spices. I don't have a strong preference. I've eaten fried chicken variously battered, and none have I regretted, save that wretched one in England.

Recently our daughter Katie, who ate her share of fried chicken growing up (though only breast meat), decided she'd learn how to make it. She followed the recipe in the Lee brothers' new *Charleston Kitchen*. It calls for legs and thighs only, which take about half again as much time to fry as white meat. She did a fine job. And she came up with a chef-like innovation, as she found a way to cut each thigh into two pieces.

Fried chicken is fast becoming one of Katie's best dishes, though I don't expect she'll raise her own chickens and wring their necks.

**Terry Eastland**

the weekly Standard

# 'Moral Health and Martial Vigour'

President Obama's announcement that U.S. forces will be withdrawn from Afghanistan by the end of 2016 should have been no surprise. As the *Washington Post* editorial page pointed out, "You can't fault President Obama for inconsistency. After winning election in 2008, he reduced the U.S. military presence in Iraq to zero. After helping to topple Libyan dictator Moammar Gaddafi in 2011, he made sure no U.S. forces would remain. He has steadfastly stayed aloof, except rhetorically, from the conflict in Syria."

The *Post* editors—who endorsed Barack Obama for election in 2008 and for reelection in 2012—went on to observe:

> The Afghan decision would be understandable had Mr. Obama's previous choices proved out. But what's remarkable is that the results also have been consistent—consistently bad. Iraq has slid into something close to civil war, with al-Qaeda retaking territory that U.S. Marines once died to liberate. In Syria, al-Qaeda has carved out safe zones that senior U.S. officials warn will be used as staging grounds for attacks against Europe and the United States. Libya is falling apart, with Islamists, secularists, military and other factions battling for control.

One might add: Iran, with the acquiescence of the Obama administration, is on the verge of becoming a nuclear threshold state. Russia has responded to five years of efforts by the Obama administration to "reset" our relationship by invading a neighboring state. American counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan have now virtually ground to a halt, and al Qaeda branches and affiliates are gaining strength throughout the greater Middle East. FBI director James Comey recently commented, "I didn't have anywhere near the appreciation I got after I came into this job just how virulent those affiliates had become. There are both many more than I appreciated, and they are stronger than I appreciated."

Let's repeat that last sentence from the Obama administration's new FBI head: Al Qaeda affiliates "are stronger than I appreciated." One could says more generally: Our enemies are stronger than the administration appreciates. The United States is weaker than the administration appreciates.

So what is the loyal opposition to do? First of all, don't be intimidated by the president's demagoguery. Speaking at West Point, President Obama derided critics of his foreign policy as "either misreading history or engaged in partisan politics." Both charges are risible. As for the first, Obama's West Point speech may be the most ahistorical major foreign policy speech ever given by an American president. It offers no "reading" of the history of American foreign policy, or even of post-Cold War or post-9/11 American foreign policy, to support his policies. The headline of the *Post* editorial the next day was correct: "At West Point, President Obama rejects decades of U.S. foreign policy." But he offered no rationale for that rejection either.

As for the charge of partisanship, we cite the *Post* once again:

> President Obama has retrenched U.S. global engagement in a way that has shaken the confidence of many U.S. allies and encouraged some adversaries. That conclusion can be heard not just from Republican hawks but also from senior officials from Singapore to France and, more quietly, from some leading congressional Democrats.

In any case, if the president wants to insist that his critics are mere partisans, we would respond: We wear his scorn as a badge of honor. Edmund Burke, the founder of the modern political party, described it as "a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed."

The principle upon which Republicans are agreed, and which leads them to oppose President Obama's foreign policy, can be summarized as American strength. In a talk given the same day as Obama's West Point remarks, Rep. Mac Thornberry, the next chairman of the Armed Services Committee, emphasized: "Peace through strength is one of those principles we can and should relearn, keep fresh, and apply over and over."

Thornberry's speech suggests Republicans may rise to the challenge of providing serious opposition to Obama's foreign policy—and of laying out an alternative. Thornberry made the case that, under Obama, the United States is and is seen to be "in withdrawal mode." He pointed out the consequences: "Aggressors are emboldened; friends are unsure; neutrals are making new calculations; and according to the yearly index published by Freedom House, freedom is in retreat, declining for the eighth consecutive year."

Thornberry called attention to the intersection of "military weakness" and "loss of credibility in the world,"

and pointed out that "defense spending this year is 17 percent of the federal budget, the lowest since before World War II." In a break with recent Republican orthodoxy, he called for replacing the defense budget caps in current law with "something more reasonable," i.e., higher spending levels. And he explained that he is "not willing to accept that we must have a smaller military and a smaller role in the world. Most Republicans and many Democrats are not willing to throw up our hands in retreat and resign ourselves to a smaller military and a smaller role. Because we know that as the United States retreats, others will fill the void, and those others will not move the world toward greater freedom and prosperity."

Thornberry closed by quoting Tony Blair and Ronald Reagan. Blair: "Don't worry so much about being loved. Just be strong. . . . What the world needs now is for you to be strong." Reagan: "We must be strong enough to create peace where it does not exist and strong enough to protect it where it does."

It's fair for doubters to note that one speech does not a trend make. But when one takes note of what Senator Ted Cruz has been saying on his trip to Israel and Ukraine, when one sees Republican Senators trying to prevent a bad deal with Iran, when one hears Republicans from Marco Rubio to Mike Pence to Eric Cantor stepping up to make serious statements on defense and foreign policy, one has cause to be heartened.

Reversing Obama's years of weakness and retreat will be difficult. It will require political courage. It will require a willingness to take on both the alleged "war-weariness" of the public and the all-too-real disdain for American strength of many of our elites.

But the consequences of continued American weakness and retreat are awful to contemplate. For what we see around the world today is, as Winston Churchill said in October 1938, "only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time."

It is the task of today's Republican party to help bring about a recovery of America's moral health and martial vigor. It's no easy task. But no great task ever is.

*—William Kristol*

# Excuses Excuses

Since 2009, the world has been trying to make sense of America's foreign and national security policies under Barack Obama. Allies and enemies, historians and scholars, the president's critics and his supporters—all have struggled to define, or even discern, an Obama Doctrine. So last week, the man optimally positioned to elucidate the president's vision sought to provide some clarity.

In a rambling, defensive, and disjointed commencement speech at West Point, the president attempted retroactively to impose a framework on his ad hoc and often incoherent foreign policy. He sought to convince his audience—and the world—that he has a vision for America's role and that it's working. What we're seeing today, he argued, is all part of the plan.

That's a tough sell. Our allies are confused and dispirited, our enemies are unquestionably emboldened. The Russian reset failed. The Asia pivot never happened. The Middle East peace process collapsed. The Syrian leader once embraced as a "reformer" has slaughtered more than 150,000 of his own people. Libya is a mess. Iraq is regressing. Obama's own top intelligence officials acknowledge that al Qaeda is amassing territory and gaining strength.

Rather than defend or explain these policy failures, the president chose instead to attack critics, real and imaginary. He challenged "critics who think military intervention is the only way for America to avoid looking weak," though no one actually thinks this. He rejected as "naïve and unsustainable" any "strategy that involves invading every country that harbors terrorist networks" despite the fact that there are no advocates for such a strategy.

When the president wasn't inventing fantasy arguments of nonexistent critics, he was recasting setbacks and failures as geopolitical triumphs. Obama argued that his willingness to work with international institutions was a sign of American strength and offered two examples to demonstrate the "effectiveness of multilateralism."

One example was premature and optimistic, the other delusional. Because of his leadership on Iran, Obama argued, "we have a very real chance of achieving a breakthrough agreement." Even if Obama's optimism is justified, and he had to admit that success is far from certain, what will such an agreement mean to a regime that routinely flouts international obligations and violates multilateral agreements? Beyond that, Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terror. According to Obama's State Department, the Iranian regime continues to harbor senior al Qaeda leaders and, "since 2012, the United States has also seen a resurgence of activity by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Qods Force, the Iranian Ministry of Intelligence and Security and Tehran's ally Hizballah."

And his other example, Ukraine? The Obama administration's "mobilization of world opinion and international institutions served as a counterweight to Russian propaganda and Russian troops on the border and armed militias in ski masks," he argued, leaving Russia "isolated." Moreover, "standing with our allies on behalf of international order working with international institutions has given a chance for the Ukrainian people to choose their future without us firing a shot."

In the real world, a not-so-isolated Russia has signed a

landmark energy deal with China worth some $400 billion, and Russia's European trade partners are balking at serious sanctions on the Russian economy. In Ukraine, with the possibility of a Russia-provoked civil war increasing every day, all of Obama's "standing" and "mobilizing" has meant little to the pro-Russian militias roaming the streets of Donetsk or the Ukrainian Army soldiers who have been killed trying to repel Russian invaders. And Ukrainians in Crimea might challenge Obama's claim that they're free to choose their own future.

If this is foreign policy effectiveness, the world would be better off with less of it.

Perhaps nothing made the confusion of Obama's foreign policy more obvious than the president's brief discussion of Syria. Before the speech, White House aides told reporters that the president would make news by announcing increased lethal aid to the good guys in the Syrian opposition. Obama didn't do that. Instead, he promised aid to Syria's neighbors and announced only that he would "work with Congress to ramp up support for those in the Syrian opposition who offer the best alternative to terrorists and brutal dictators."

In a White House conference call after the speech, reporters pressed a senior Obama administration official to explain what, exactly, "ramping up support" might mean. The administration, this official disclosed, would seek to "have a conversation . . . with Congress" and would be "discussing with Congress" the options available. Beyond that: "We do want to have this discussion with Congress" and "this is something we have to work with Congress on going forward" and we "will discuss our overseas contingency funding with Congress in the coming weeks" and "there needs to be dialogue and coordination between the administration and Congress" and "we want to explore whether we can come to some understanding with Congress about the best way to maximize our resources and get additional support to the Syrian people." And on it went.

Work with Congress? What explains this sudden respect for the legislative branch? This is the same president who has repeatedly declared his willingness to circumvent Congress or ignore it altogether. "Congress is tough right now, but that's not going to stop me," he boasted last summer. "We're going to do everything we can, wherever we can, with or without Congress, to make things happen." Obama has made good on this promise—on immigration, climate change, welfare reform, health care. When Obama intervened militarily in Libya, administration lawyers prepared a lengthy justification for his decision to bypass Congress. The United States scrambled to drop bombs on regime targets to prevent Muammar Qaddafi from killing hundreds of his countrymen—and the president ordered those attacks without approval from Congress.

But in Syria, where Bashar al-Assad has slaughtered scores of thousands and shows no signs of slowing down? That's different. In late August 2013, after Assad's repeated breach of Obama's red line on chemical weapons, the president and his top advisers prepared the country for military retaliation. But at the last second, Obama decided to seek from Congress authorization he knew he wouldn't get. Why? He needed an alibi for his own weakness and vacillation.

The ability to work well with others—with Congress, with allies, with international institutions—can be a hallmark of an effective leader, confident in his ability to build coalitions for joint action. You might say that it can be a force-multiplier for a strong president. For Obama, who is not a strong leader, it is something else entirely: an excuse-multiplier, a way to spread the responsibility and blame for his own failures.

This isn't new American leadership. It's old-fashioned evasion of responsibility.

*—Stephen F. Hayes*

# The Real VA Problem

The Department of Veterans Affairs has admitted that 23 deaths are linked to "secret waiting lists" for health care and other malfeasance and mismanagement at the agency, though the actual total is probably significantly higher. So far, dozens of veterans have lost their lives. Not a single VA official responsible for this tragedy has lost his job. In a more functional political culture, the VA scandal would be a clarion call for civil service reform.

Despite long-running problems, the VA has fired a grand total of three senior executives for performance in the last five years—one-fourth the federal average for terminations. Last year, the Office of Personnel Management disclosed that about 0.47 percent of the federal workforce was terminated for cause, considerably below the 3 percent fired in the private sector. In 2011, *USA Today* reported that in at least 15 federal agencies, employees were more likely to die of natural causes than be terminated in any given year. It's not uncommon for federal agencies that employ thousands of people to go an entire year without firing a single employee. Meanwhile, the average federal employee made $126,141 in pay and benefits in 2012, more than double the private sector average.

On an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote of 390-33, the House of Representatives passed legislation last week that would give the VA greater authority to fire or demote senior executives for performance. The additional firing flexibility would apply only to the top 360 supervisors out of more than 340,000 employees at the VA. Even so, the bill has been blocked in the Senate by Vermont's Bernie Sanders. "Some of us are old-fashioned enough to know that maybe folks in the Senate might want to know what is in the bill before we voted on it," he said. It's much more likely that Sanders and allied Democrats are so influenced by donations from powerful federal employee unions that, even in face of fatal negligence, they are going to the mat for a few hundred employees out of a federal workforce of more than two million.

A report in the *Washington Examiner* earlier this year demonstrated the quid pro quo. In 2008, the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) endorsed Obama. Six months after his election and three years before their contract was to expire, the FAA suddenly renegotiated with the union. The new NATCA contract cost taxpayers an additional $669 million. The biggest spender in the 2012 election cycle was NATCA's PAC, which gave $1.25 million to the Obama reelection PAC, Priorities USA.

So what can be done to fix this state of affairs? If federal employees are to be given jobs for life, they could work a little harder to earn them. The current probationary period for federal employees is one year. This could be doubled to two years to allow federal managers more opportunity to weed out problematic employees. Beyond that, managers need more discretion to dismiss employees for poor performance.

Union activities could also be curtailed. Stopping tax dollars from finding their way into Democratic coffers—as they do most obviously when public employees' union dues flow into the unions' political contributions—is going to be a problem as long as public unions exist, but enforcing the Hatch Act vigorously would be a good start. And federal employees should not be able to work on union organizing on the taxpayer's dime, as they have done for years. In 2012, the IRS alone spent $21.6 million compensating employees who were working on union activities, not on public jobs.

Finally, it's time to reexamine whether some agencies should even have the right to collectively bargain. When the original federal labor agreement was hammered out, agencies such as the FBI and CIA were exempted from collective bargaining because of the political sensitivity of their work. Last year's political targeting scandal at the IRS—which, again, has resulted in no firings—convincingly demonstrates there's no reason to allow IRS employees to belong to the National Treasury Employees Union, which is actively engaged in electoral politics. As it happens, Rep. Cory Gardner of Colorado (now the Republican Senate candidate) proposed H.R. 2679 last year, legislation that would exclude the Internal Revenue Service from the relevant federal labor-management relations statute.

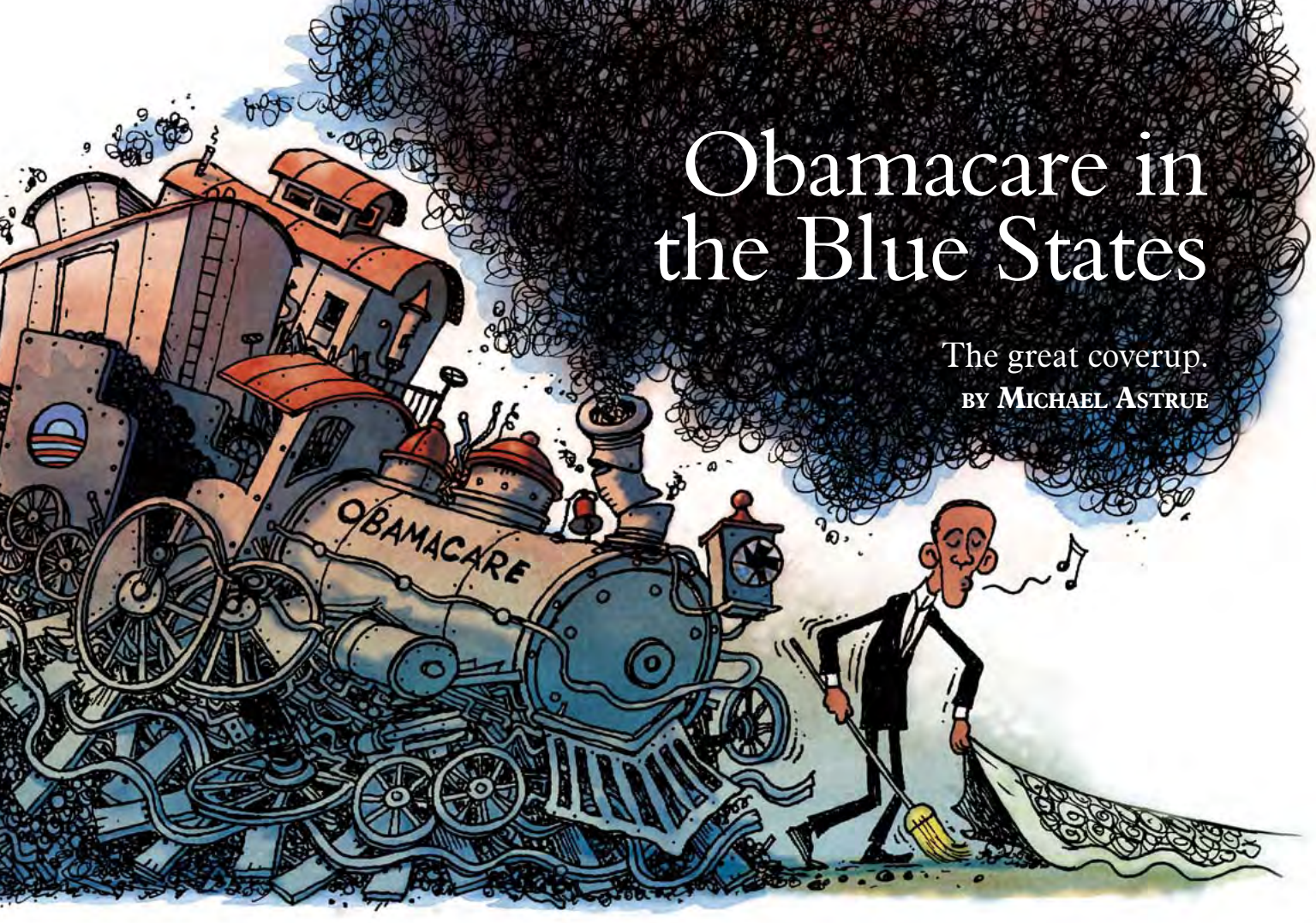
As soon as Republicans take back the Senate in 2015, they should pass Gardner's bill, the VA accountability legislation, and other sensible civil service reforms. Then the president will have to decide whether to veto the bill and continue protecting wealthy federal employees at the expense of taxpayers and veterans.

*—Mark Hemingway*

# Obamacare in the Blue States

## The great coverup.

BY MICHAEL ASTRUE




DAVID CLARK

One of the ironies of the Affordable Care Act is that many of the governors who zealously supported the bill failed spectacularly in its implementation. Oregon, Maryland, and Minnesota are among the most prominent failures. The Massachusetts exchange, the primary inspiration for the ACA exchanges, collapsed entirely, and state officials lack a plan for fixing it in time for this fall's enrollments.

After the passage of the ACA, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) instituted a management process to ensure accountability among states that chose to build their own exchanges instead of participating in HealthCare.gov. It involved "gate reviews," a periodic assessment of progress in seven areas; CMS designed the process to ensure that continued federal funding would lead to secure and functional exchanges.

Several of the seven areas for the gate reviews required a state official to make critically important representations about the readiness of the state exchange. Those representations allowed CMS to determine whether an exchange should continue to receive massive amounts of federal funding. Law enforcement officials in Oregon and Maryland are asking whether state officials misrepresented their progress in order to keep the funding spigot open, and that is a question which needs to be asked in other states as well.

President Obama's response to mounting concerns about potentially criminal misconduct may become a defining moment of his second term. He should start by reviewing the performance of the key law enforcement official, Health and Human Services inspector general Daniel Levinson, who slumbered through the gate reviews in the same way he slumbered through the disastrous launch of HealthCare.gov.

In Oregon, complaints by a state representative concerning $300 million in squandered taxpayer money finally provoked the FBI, the HHS inspector general, and the Government Accountability Office to open investigations into many issues, including whether Cover Oregon officials had misrepresented their progress in gate reviews to CMS officials. Knowingly making false statements to a federal official in this context is a federal felony, and we should know before long whether misrepresentations during the gate reviews turned the program into "Coverup Oregon."

The story is similar, albeit on a slightly slower track, in Maryland, where calls for an investigation by Democratic attorney general Douglas Gansler and Republican congressman Andy Harris have prodded Inspector

*Michael Astrue is a former commissioner of Social Security and general counsel of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.*

General Levinson into investigating another $300 million of squandered taxpayer money. It is an investigation that has an inherent credibility problem because, as I pointed out last year in these pages, Inspector General Levinson has repeatedly shirked his duties in order to be a good ACA team player.

Sylvia Mathews Burwell, whose confirmation as secretary of HHS appears to be imminent, declared during her confirmation hearing that she would use "the full extent of the law" to recover misspent health exchange funding. That pledge requires her, as soon as she takes her oath of office, to follow the precedent established in Oregon and to insist that Attorney General Holder send the FBI into Maryland to babysit Levinson's see-no-evil employees; any action less than that will strongly suggest that the fix is in.

The most spectacular failure in the country occurred on the watch of Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick. The Massachusetts website still does not allow residents to obtain insurance as the ACA requires, and state officials will not decide until late July whether to rebuild the site or use HealthCare.gov—even though we are now less than six months away from the next round of health exchange enrollments. In other words, the health exchange train wreck continues in Massachusetts.

Governor Patrick has stonewalled attempts by his heavily Democratic legislature to obtain an accounting of where the money went, but it appears that the state that once served as a model for the Affordable Care Act has already spent over half a billion dollars. In addition, as part of his chaotic implementation of the ACA, Patrick placed as many as 200,000 applicants who requested financial assistance onto Medicaid—whether they qualified for Medicaid or not. The state is just beginning to weed out the ineligible from the eligible, and it lacks the data to come clean with the public and CMS as to how many hundreds of millions of dollars will be spent on Medicaid payments for people ineligible for Medicaid. Where was CMS and where was the inspector general?

The self-declared consumer watchdogs of the Massachusetts congressional delegation and state attorney general Martha Coakley have been studiously silent about evidence of possible criminal activity in Massachusetts, which includes untrue statements made to obtain funding as well as multiple cases of no-bid contracts going to entities paid to oversee themselves. They need to raise their voices to ensure that federal and state law enforcement officials step in immediately.

Patrick's pattern of behavior has an increasingly Nixonian flavor, thus it is overdue to ask, "What did he know and when did he know it?" His stonewalling of financial data that other states have disclosed is the first indicator of a problem. The second sign is that there is simply no credible explanation—other than outright misrepresentation—for how Massachusetts slipped through the CMS gate reviews without having even a marginally functional beta version of its exchange. Tellingly, members of the state oversight board for the Massachusetts exchange have complained about their own staff's failure to inform them promptly that the system had failed. Minutes of advisory board meetings on the exchange's website document this failure.

**Obama's new nominee for secretary of HHS must follow the precedent established in Oregon and insist that Attorney General Eric Holder send the FBI into Maryland; any action less than that will strongly suggest that the fix is in.**

The third, and perhaps the most critical, sign of misconduct is that Patrick has stripped the executive director of the state exchange of her program management and contracting responsibilities. He has placed functional control of the state's exchange in the hands of his trusted former deputy chief of staff for cabinet affairs, a labor lawyer who is totally lacking in the technical expertise or experience necessary to turn around the failed exchange. Desperate damage control is trumping transparency and competence.

The collapse of the Minnesota's MNsure website mirrors the Massachusetts meltdown. Again, an arrogant and inexperienced executive director withheld critically important information from her board, the public, and even the insurance companies that needed to plug into the system. Again, ill-advised software contracts compounded timeline failures produced primarily by poor planning and execution. Somehow, Minnesota also miraculously passed the CMS gate reviews even though, as in Massachusetts, it could not test a beta system before its failed launch. We need to know how CMS could have possibly found adequate progress for functionality and security in light of this disarray, and law enforcement needs to know too.

President Obama is setting up his new HHS secretary for failure if he hesitates to hold his appointees accountable. As the VA scandals demonstrate, we cannot rely on investigations by an inspector general who has been a significant and longstanding part of the problem he is investigating. President Obama should fire Inspector General Levinson, and he should do so immediately. Next, he should direct Attorney General Holder to appoint a special counsel with broad powers to oversee an investigation into all the failed state exchanges in order to determine whether federal and state officials committed felonies. Finally, Congress needs to ask whether partisan considerations—or personal relationships such as the friendship between President Obama and Governor Patrick—influenced decisions by CMS officials to continue funding completely nonfunctional systems.

As a student of American history and a scholar of constitutional law, President Obama should be well aware of how hesitation in the coming weeks could taint his legacy. ♦

# 'The June 4th Incident'

## Tiananmen Square and truth-telling.

**BY DENNIS P. HALPIN**

In a March 28 speech at the Körber Foundation in Berlin, China's president, Xi Jinping, called for historical truth-telling. He had in mind the Rape of Nanking, the massacre carried out by Imperial Japan's forces in 1937-38 during their occupation of the then-capital of the Chinese Nationalists (the city is now called Nanjing).

"The crimes of the Japanese militarists in invading China, including the Nanjing Massacre, are historical facts that cannot be denied," Xi said. "Recently, there has been a trend in Japan towards beautifying and denying the history of aggression, which has attracted high concern and caused alarm internationally amongst those who love peace."

Following an official Japanese protest, foreign ministry spokesperson Hong Lei defended the Chinese president's remarks, stating that Xi cited historical facts to "ensure that people always remember what happened to ensure such tragedies can be avoided in the future."

If it's important to remember the crimes of the Japanese Imperial Army in Nanjing, then what of a massacre that took place a mere quarter-century ago? If historic accountability is needed for Nanjing, then surely the same is true for "the June 4th Incident," as the 1989 assault in Tiananmen Square is known in China.

Yet even as Beijing castigates Japan for "denying its history of aggression," the censors in China continue to block Internet access to Chinese people seeking answers about Tiananmen Square.What's more, Beijing's propagandists go into overdrive every June 4 with official denials of the bloody use of force at Tiananmen Square. Here, for example, is the piece of sophistry China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs released in June 2012 in reaction to a U.S. statement on the Tiananmen anniversary date:

> The U.S. side has been ignoring the facts and issuing such statements year after year, making baseless accusations against the Chinese government and arbitrarily interfering with China's internal affairs. The Chinese side expresses strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition to such acts.

The U.S. statement read, in part: "We encourage the Chinese government to release all those still serving sentences for their participation in the demonstrations; to provide a full public accounting of those killed, detained or missing; and to end the continued harassment of demonstration participants and their families."

*The Goddess of Democracy faces Mao.*

Among those still incarcerated from Tiananmen Square is 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. Liu organized and participated in the "Tiananmen Four Gentlemen Hunger Strike" on June 2, 1989. He also joined with his human rights colleagues in successfully negotiating with the military commander the peaceful withdrawal of thousands of students from Tiananmen Square, thus likely avoiding bloodshed on an even more massive scale. For this and other activities termed "inciting subversion of state power," he remains locked up as a political prisoner in northeast China.

Tiananmen left a lasting, negative impression of China's leaders in the outside world that lingered for years, thanks in part to the iconic photograph of "Tank Man," the lonely, heroic figure who stood in protest in front of a column of tanks. The tanks were rolling menacingly down a Beijing street in the wake of the mass killing of students and workers in and around Tiananmen Square on the night of June 3-4, 1989. The young man stopped them in their tracks. Almost a decade later, in April 1998, *Time* included this "Unknown Rebel" in a feature titled *Time 100: The Most Important People of the Century*. (No one knows what became of the heroic "Tank Man"—some say he was executed days later; others claim he mingled with the gathered crowd and then melted away.)

Yet congressional delegations on subsequent visits to China found in university meetings that young people displayed complete ignorance of this historic figure. They assumed the man was in a street protest in Thailand, Burma, or some other Asian country. The Chinese educational system has circumvented the means "to ensure that people always remember" what happened at Tiananmen.

And who can forget the toppling in Tiananmen Square of the Goddess of Democracy, that inspiring figure of China's hope? The statue was constructed by students from

PHOTOS: ASSOCIATED PRESS

*Dennis P. Halpin is a visiting scholar at the U.S.-Korea Institute at SAIS (Johns Hopkins) and a consultant for the Poblete Analysis Group (PAG).*

the Central Academy of Fine Arts to reenergize the movement after weeks of protests. A student sculptor has said she was *not* modeled after her sister, the Statue of Liberty, as this would have been seen as "too openly pro-American."

The statue was placed in the square facing the Tiananmen Gate, casting what could be considered an accusatory glance at the portrait of Chairman Mao. This was the same Chairman Mao who once famously pledged the benevolence of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) toward the Chinese people with the dictum: "The people are like water and the army is like fish." The reputation of the PLA was forever blemished by the bloody events that occurred a few days after the statue's unveiling on May 30, 1989, to shouts of "long live democracy!" Those shouts changed to calls on June 4 of "Down with fascism!" and "bandits, bandits!" as the statue, pushed by a tank, was toppled in a scene viewed on television screens throughout the world.

While the students prudently denied any connection between the Goddess and the Statue of Liberty, others, including Chinese people, were certainly aware of the resemblance. So were American officials. While attending one Fourth of July party at the U.S. embassy during my mid-1990s diplomatic tour in Beijing, I noticed that a replica of the Statue of Liberty displayed for this celebration of freedom had been placed behind the chancery building out of view from any passersby on the street.

I asked a colleague why the U.S. government was hiding the Statue of Liberty, and she replied that there was a public relations problem. "People in China associate the Statue of Liberty with the Goddess of Democracy and the failed democracy movement at Tiananmen Square. We don't want to rub the Statue of Liberty in the Chinese leaders' faces."

As the ghosts of Nanjing cry for righteous retribution, so also does the memory of the slain students and workers from Tiananmen Square. On the evening of June 3, 1989, an estimated 70,000 to 80,000 people remained in the square as 38th Army armored personnel carriers and paratroopers of the 15th Airborne Corps, armed with live ammunition, along with other military units mobilized under martial law, headed toward the city's center. It was a show of force that reportedly exceeded that displayed for China's border wars with Vietnam and India.

The civilians killed in Beijing on the night of June 3-4, according to city police, "included university professors, technical people, officials, workers, owners of small private enterprises, retired workers, high school students and grade school students, of whom the youngest was nine years old." Estimates of the number of casualties vary widely, ranging from several hundred to several thousand.

*Bodies of dead civilians lie near Tiananmen Square, June 4, 1989.*

And it was not just Chinese civilians who were fired on. The late James Lilley, the American ambassador during the Tiananmen events, recalled in his memoir *China Hands* that military attaché Larry Wortzel received a telephone call on the night of June 6 "warning me not to be near my apartment tomorrow." Ambassador Lilley noted that "it was a classic tip-off. We ended up getting all Americans out of their apartments except for seven dependents. Two small children of one of our diplomats may well have been saved by their alert Chinese amah who threw herself over the children when bullets crashed through the windows."

Through his contacts, Wortzel had learned that the Chinese Army wanted to teach the international community a lesson for reporting on the Tiananmen events from their balconies. The idea was to "close the door to beat the dog," as the Chinese proverb states. "The PLA planned to close the door by firing on the diplomatic compound, thus chasing out the snooping foreigners, and then, in the privacy of their own country, Chinese security forces would carry out a massive crackdown." (This echoes efforts made by the Imperial Japanese Army to conceal atrocities from the small number of foreign missionaries, medical and business personnel, and journalists gathered in the Nanking Safety Zone during the 1937-38 massacre.)

The same Chinese Communist leadership that repeatedly calls on Tokyo to come clean on history has stubbornly defied all demands for an explanation of what happened at Tiananman Square. Even more disturbing, Chinese security forces continue their campaign of harassment and intimidation of victims' families to this day.

Radio Free Asia reported on April 7 that "Members of the Tiananmen Mothers advocacy group, which represents all victims of the crackdown who died or were maimed, told Hong Kong media they were prevented from traveling to the graves of their loved ones ahead of the Qingming (Tomb Sweeping) holiday, which fell on Friday (April 4) but is honored throughout the weekend."

The Tomb Sweeping holiday, in honor of a family's deceased, is the ancient Chinese equivalent of Memorial Day. What kind of leadership would prevent grieving mothers from visiting the gravesites of their children? Is this an action of "those who love peace," to quote the Chinese president?

President Xi was correct in Berlin. A sincere accounting of historic error is the only way to heal the wounds of the past. But the Chinese leadership needs to look homeward. If their concerns over skewed World War II history are to be taken seriously, they could first provide the Tiananmen Mothers and other human rights organizations with a full accounting. ♦

# The Range Race

## The two parties battle it out in northern Minnesota. BY BARRY CASSELMAN

*Minneapolis*

One of the most fascinating congressional races in the nation this year is taking place in a practically unknown Minnesota district between two men who could not be more different—in style and in substance.

The incumbent, 70-year-old Democrat Rick Nolan, had served three terms for another Minnesota congressional district from 1975 to 1981. Born in the 8th Congressional District, he decided to come out of retirement in 2012 to run there against a Republican freshman who had upset an 18-term Democrat two years before; Nolan defeated him in the Obama landslide that year in the state.

*Stewart Mills III*

His Republican opponent this time is Stewart Mills III, a 42-year-old, long-haired business executive who, some say, looks just like Brad Pitt. This is Mills's first political race, but he has already garnered attention with some unconventional ads introducing himself to voters. Mills, the grandson of the founder of Mills Fleet Farm, a major Minnesota retail chain with numerous stores in the district, presumably has the resources to mount a serious campaign against Nolan. He'll need them: The Minnesota iron range region has voted dependably Democratic for most of the past 70 years. (The party is called Democratic-Farmer-Labor in this state.)

Much of the region, usually referred to by the short-hand term "the range," was settled by Serbo-Croatian Catholics, Finnish radicals, Jewish refugees from Russia, and other blue-collar European immigrants who then worked the iron and taconite mines in Mesabi and Vermilion, cut the timber on area forests, manned the boats on Lake Superior, and were pioneer traders in this northernmost part of the state. The major city in the district is Duluth, the fourth-largest in the state and a major Great Lakes shipping port on Lake Superior. The region's most famous son is probably Bob Dylan (né Zimmerman), from the Iron Range town of Hibbing, but the area also produced dentist-turned-politician Rudy Perpich, a colorful DFL Croatian-American figure who became the state's longest-serving governor (1976-79 and 1983-91).

The 8th Congressional District was created in 1903 and until World War II was represented mostly by Republicans and a few populist Farmer-Laborites. After Hubert Humphrey and other urban liberals merged the old Farmer-Labor party with the Democratic party in 1944, the new DFL elected its first congressman, John Blatnik, in 1947. He served until 1974, when he was succeeded by James Oberstar, another DFLer, who served 18 terms until 2010.

The district traditionally delivered substantial and dependable margins to any statewide DFL candidate. But the blue-collar DFLers from the range did not much resemble their urban liberal counterparts in the Twin Cities, the other bastion of DFL voters. Ethnic, Catholic, union members, pro-life, pro-gun, and socially conservative, they did embrace the DFL economic program, and as long as the liberal party's tent included them, they were an invaluable electoral partner in producing such national political figures as Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale.

This partnership temporarily broke down in 1978 when the DFL endorsed the very socially liberal Minneapolis congressman Don Fraser for an open U.S. Senate seat. Hotel magnate Bob Short was a friend of Humphrey and for a time the national Democratic treasurer, but also a social conservative; he challenged Fraser in the primary and, with a heavy vote in the 8th District, won the DFL nomination. Twin Cities liberals then had their revenge by supporting the Republican candidate in the general election, who won. In fact, Republicans swept all the major statewide offices that year, and it marked the end of the state's Humphrey-Mondale liberal era.

Still, pro-life, pro-gun DFL congressman Oberstar kept winning by large margins in the 8th District. Until 2010, when Republican Chip Cravaack, an airline pilot and union member, challenged the complacent incumbent, who was running for his 19th consecutive term. Initially perceived as a sure loser, Cravaack campaigned tirelessly while Oberstar remained in Washington, assuming he would win easily. But 2010 was a bad year for Democrats, and Oberstar had voted for Obamacare. The 8th District had also lost population in the previous decades as taconite mines were closed. The heavy advantage of the DFL over Republicans had narrowed as more and more GOP precincts in the south of the region, in the exurbs of the Twin Cities, were added. On Election Day, Cravaack's efforts produced one of the most startling upsets in the nation: He beat Oberstar by 4,000 votes.

The DFL still had a notable advantage in the district, however. When he tried to win reelection in 2012, Cravaack was overwhelmed by the national Obama tide, and that former congressman from a southern Minnesota district, Rick Nolan, won back the seat for the party. Nolan was a populist figure from the 1960s and '70s, and he

MILLS FOR CONGRESS

*Barry Casselman has covered Minnesota and national politics since 1972. His* Prairie Editor *blog is at barrycasselman.com.*

won the 8th District seat after a 32-year absence from Congress.

But Nolan's Vietnam-era populism, his strong pro-choice views, and his support for single-payer health care are an uncomfortable fit with some of the more conservative blue-collar DFL voters in the district, and his reelection for a second term is in doubt.

Republican opponent Stewart Mills III, vice president of the Mills Fleet Farm retail chain, is not your stereotypical business executive, in looks or manner. The family company employs 6,000, many of them in the district. Mills is an avid hunter and sportsman, and with five children, he and his wife play an active role in the community.

As one of his main functions at Mills Fleet Farm, he has managed the company health insurance program for 10 years. He decided to enter politics, he says, primarily because of his outrage at the effect Obamacare is having on working men and women in Minnesota and the nation.

Rick Nolan, unlike former congressman Oberstar, will not take this race for granted. Having received an "F" rating from the National Rifle Association, Nolan has been stressing that he, too, is a hunter and recently sent out a franked, taxpayer-funded congressional mailer declaring his support for the Second Amendment.

Nolan's supporters point to two legislative accomplishments in his first term, the settlement of a long-standing treaty dispute between the Ojibway Indian tribe and the U.S. government and a bill that helped 8th District-headquartered Cirrus Aircraft avoid prohibitive administration regulatory rules.

There are no reliable published polls yet in this race, but it seems likely, as the incumbent in a DFL-leaning district, that Nolan has an early lead over Mills, who is not yet well known as a political figure. But as Chip Cravaack demonstrated in 2010, without a Democratic presidential candidate running in November, DFL turnout can be low and ambivalent in the 8th District.

Rick Nolan, by all accounts, is a very personable and likable political figure, albeit one whose electioneering is perhaps stuck in the era in which he entered politics 40 years ago. Mills, it is becoming clear, is not just a "pretty face" who happens to have a lot of money, but a very smart, experienced businessman who mixes easily with voters. He is determined to win this race.

Chip Cravaack, as a pilot, was a union member and gained some union endorsements in 2012. Stewart Mills is unlikely to snag any of those, but with thousands of Mills Fleet Farm employees, their spouses, and voting-age dependents living in the district—along with his political views—he could win a lot of blue-collar votes.

If this race continues to be competitive, both national parties and their allies will send in substantial cash for the contest. The state DFL, usually masterful in getting out their vote, will do their best to bring out the party faithful on Election Day. It is not clear yet what kind of get-out-the-vote effort the Mills campaign will make, although it clearly has the resources to put behind one. GOP leaders in the state sense the opportunity. Rep. John Kline, dean of the state's congressional delegation, says, "Minnesota 8th District voters share their values with Stewart Mills, whether it's reforming and replacing Obamacare or championing job-creating efforts to develop natural resources like mining on the iron range."

Mills says he could no longer stand on the sidelines while Democrats "overspent and grew the national debt." He says President Obama is trying to promote a Wall Street recovery, while he will work in Congress to "promote a Main Street recovery." He criticizes Nolan for voting against the Keystone XL pipeline, for his hostility to military defense spending, and for his support of an administration which decrees so many regulations that harm small businesses.

The two 8th District contestants represent a remarkable contrast—in their ages, their personal styles, and their political, social, and economic views. Nolan has to be the early favorite for reelection in this contest, but with such an energetic and well-financed opponent, the markedly diminished popularity of President Obama in the state, and the district's unorthodox demographics, this race is far from over. ♦

# On the Origin of 'Sharing'

## It didn't start with Facebook.

**BY STEVEN C. MUNSON**

The practice of "sharing" is now so widespread and ingrained in our daily lives that it bids fair to become the distinguishing feature of our age, much as the use of stone tools once defined an earlier period of progressive enlightenment. As with other important developments in our cultural and social life over the past four or five decades, "sharing" did not come out of nowhere. Nor did it start with the Internet, even though this may be the tool most people use these days to "share." On the contrary, the origins of "sharing" are ideological, and predate such lucrative enterprises as Twitter and Facebook.

Like the childish self-absorption of the contemporary "guy" personality, the calculated selfishness of the culture of hooking-up, and the oblivious vanity ("self-esteem") and sense of

*Steven C. Munson lives and writes in Rome.*

entitlement displayed by many people today, "sharing" is a realization of ideas about solipsism and narcissism that came to the fore with the rise of the counterculture in the 1960s.

Once seen as unhelpful tendencies that we were supposed to be educated out of as we grew up, solipsism and narcissism were heralded as the basis of a new consciousness by such leading theorists of the counterculture as Charles Reich, Germaine Greer, and Theodore Roszak. In his 1970 book *The Greening of America*, Reich announced that the new consciousness "starts with self. . . . [It] declares that the individual self is the only true reality." And in her 1970 book *The Female Eunuch*, Greer advanced "the principle of love that is reaffirmed in the relationship of the narcissistic self to the world of which it is a part."

This redefinition of love as self-love —and the subsequent reconceiving of narcissism and solipsism as personal virtues rather than undesirable personal tendencies—produced the mode of consciousness that was disparagingly, but justly, called "navel gazing." In his 1969 book *The Making of a Counter Culture*, Theodore Roszak celebrated this propensity, "grounded in an intensive examination of the self," as comprising the "distinctive character" of the "bohemian fringe of our youth culture." And Charles Reich envisioned a time when the results of such self-contemplation would be freely communicated to—or shared with—other people.

As Reich wrote in *The Greening of America*, complaining about such forms of social interaction as dinners, cocktail parties, and lunches among friends, people "do not talk about philosophy or subjective experience. They do not strive for genuine relationships, but keep their conversation at the level of sociability, one-upmanship, and banter, all of which leave the individual himself uncommitted, and not vulnerable. Above all, there is no exchange of brotherhood and love."

This general lack of social conversation about "subjective experience" was soon to be remedied. Navel-gazing spread quickly from the "bohemian fringe of the youth culture" to all reaches of society. It was observing the increasingly active expressions of this tendency that led Tom Wolfe to label the 1970s the "Me Decade," a period that, now nearing the "me half-century," shows no signs of exhaustion.

The navel-gazing mode of consciousness has come to permeate our personal, cultural, and intellectual life, something quite evident in the vast growth of the "self-improvement"

*Another proud legacy*

industry, the immense popularity of "self-help" books, and the predominance of confessional and "reality" television programs, as well as in a great deal of what passes under the name of art, literature, and a college education. This mode of consciousness has also come to permeate our social life, as evidenced by the practice of "sharing." Indeed, one could say that "sharing" is the foreign policy of the navel-gazer.

The invasive character of this personal form of foreign policy—of this exporting, as it were, of "subjective experience"—has been made abundantly clear in recent years. This is especially true with regard to what, since the 1960s, has been viewed by many people as an exemplary form of "sharing," namely, being "open" and "honest" about sex. Commenting in 1999 on the inundation of our society with sexual material, including the details of other people's sex lives, then-*New York Observer* columnist Alexandra Jacobs wrote, "It's as if the peep shows were ripped out of Times Square, only to take residence in our collective psyche. One does not have to be a prude to proclaim, 'Enough!' We have entered an era when sex has become so mainstream, so ubiquitous, so . . . chintzy." Jacobs quoted others who felt the same way about a phenomenon they had all grown sick of but felt powerless to do anything about, including one woman who asked, "'Why do you need to be so accessible to everyone?'"

Hers might very well be the question of the century. And it expresses what many of us have become all too painfully aware of: that being talked at by somebody intent on "sharing" is actually a way of making us feel vulnerable. "Sharing" does this by aggressively collapsing the civilized "space"—that is, the once-recognized as reasonable and once-experienced as comfortable boundaries—between the personal consciousness of the sharer and that of the sharee. Such boundaries were once routinely respected as a result of the use of good manners. Respect for the sensibilities of others constituted an important part of what it meant to behave "in good taste."

Since the revolution in consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s, the obligation of behaving in good taste has gone the way of everything else deemed to be part of an "unnatural" and "culturally imposed" social role. Rather than thinking of how others might feel or react, as people were once taught and expected to do, being "spontaneous" and "authentic" has been the order of the day. Among other things, this has meant abandoning something previously valued and observed: reticence.

Our age is not the first in which this virtue has gone by the wayside. As Stendhal wrote of his native country, in his 19th-century treatise *On Love*, "In France, towards 1770, there was no such thing as reticence; on the contrary, the proper thing to do was to live and to die in public, and, inasmuch as the Duchesse de Luxembourg was intimate with a hundred friends, there was, in the strict sense of the words, no such thing as either intimacy or friendship."

The same could be said—to put it

BETTMANN CORBIS / AP

mildly—of the times in which we have been living, in which the once common practice of keeping things to oneself is now so unusual as to be a cause for social suspicion. At the same time, it is not uncommon for people who "share" too much to come to regret it. The reason they continue to do it anyway is that the imperative to "share" has been internalized.

The writer Walter Kirn makes this point in contrasting the compulsory "Big Brother" mentality of George Orwell's novel *1984* with what he calls the voluntary "Little Brother" mentality promoted by the Internet. Kirn argues that today "the private and public realms are so confused that it's best to treat them as identical. With nowhere to hide, you might as well perform, dispensing with old-fashioned notions of discretion and personal dignity." But what Kirn calls our "quest for attention by any means" is, again, not the result of technological advance but of our having chosen to embrace the ideas advanced four decades or so ago by such revolutionary social theorists as Reich, Roszak, and Greer.

At the same time, this quest is being expanded and intensified by technology, with consequences well-limned by the novelist Zadie Smith: "When a human being becomes a set of data on a website like Facebook, he or she is reduced. Everything shrinks. Individual character. Friendships. Language. Sensibility. . . . It reminds me that those of us who turn in disgust from what we consider an overinflated liberal-bourgeois sense of self should be careful what we wish for: our denuded networked selves don't look more free, they just look more owned."

It was the "liberal-bourgeois sense of self"—along with respect for personal boundaries and the values of modesty, discretion, self-restraint, and reticence—that advocates of the revolution in consciousness of the 1960s and 1970s were intent on replacing. Their stated goal in seeking to delegitimize and overthrow this model of a modern individual was the creation of a new, "authentic," "natural," and "freer personality" capable of "an exchange of brotherhood and love." The extent to which this goal has been realized, even if what is being exchanged these days is not "brotherhood and love," can be seen in what Zadie Smith calls the passing of "a kind of person who no longer exists. A private person, a person who is a mystery, to the world and—which is more important—to herself. Person as mystery: this idea of personhood is certainly changing, perhaps has already changed."

Instead of respect for a "private person, a person who is a mystery," today we are faced with a kind of culturally authorized, socially approved, and technologically institutionalized impertinence: the impertinence of those who impose on us and on themselves by "sharing," an impertinence motivated by the desperation that comes with imagining, as Charles Reich and others so long ago encouraged us to do, that "the individual self is the only true reality." ♦

# Rewriting History

*The real Hillary record on Iran sanctions*

**By Joel Winton**

Hillary Clinton will shortly release a memoir, *Hard Choices*, chronicling her tenure as secretary of state. If what she has to say in its pages resembles what she had to say from the stage at the American Jewish Committee's (AJC) annual Global Forum on May 14—where she claimed undue credit for implementing sanctions against Iran—it's worth setting the record straight now.

In reality, the Obama administration, and Clinton's State Department in particular, opposed, dragged their feet on, and sought to water down every piece of sanctions legislation introduced by bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate. With that history now being rewritten, let's review the actual record.

President Obama took office believing that personal diplomacy without "preconditions" would convince Iran's leaders to relinquish their nuclear ambitions. As Clinton later explained in an interview with CNN's Candy Crowley, "We believed that the effort of seeking engagement would actually strengthen our hand."

Others were unconvinced. In April 2009 Congress signaled its skepticism of this "carrots and carrots" approach by introducing several sticks in the form of sanctions bills—of which the Iran Refined Petroleum Sanctions Act of 2009 (IRPSA) was the most notable.

Sure enough the administration's "outstretched hand" was met with an Iranian middle finger over the following months: There were repeated Iranian rebuffs of negotiations; a stolen election in June; Tehran's atavistic repression of the pro-democracy Green Movement which followed that election; Iran's rejection of a comprehensive fuel-swap deal after commitments were made to the contrary; and, finally, Iran's disclosure of its secret underground Fordow enrichment complex after that site had been discovered by Western intelligence services.

Consequently, towards the end of 2009, congressional skepticism about the administration's quixotic diplomacy morphed into open hostility.

*Joel Winton, formerly a Tikvah fellow at the* Wall Street Journal*, works in New York.*

On November 19, a companion to the House's IRPSA, the Dodd-Shelby Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act (CISADA) was introduced in the Senate. It took aim at Iran's petroleum sector and prohibited financial transactions with U.S. banks on behalf of sanctioned firms.

With the House's passage of the IRPSA on December 15, these two initiatives marked a clear repudiation of the Obama administration's preference for carrots without sticks. They represented a serious attempt to apply pressure on Tehran in the hope of fashioning a diplomatic accord. That Mrs. Clinton now takes credit for them is curious, to say the least.

Days before the House passed its sanctions bill, Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg wrote to Senator John Kerry, then chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, to express the State Department's "serious substantive concern" and fear of "unintended foreign policy consequences." The administration felt the legislation too "inflexible" and feared that it "might weaken rather than strengthen" its diplomatic efforts. Clinton's message to Congress at the time might be characterized as "back off."

The Senate's dissatisfaction with this message was emphasized in a January 27, 2010, bipartisan letter to President Obama. The senators called for "crippling sanctions" and expressed their hope that the "administration will pursue parallel and complementary measures . . . to increase the pressure on the Iranian government." To buttress that hope the Senate ignored the administration's concern and passed CISADA by a voice vote on January 28.

With sanctions legislation passed in both chambers of Congress by January 2010, one might have expected the administration to cut its losses and drop its opposition to pairing diplomacy with leverage in the form of sanctions. It did no such thing. Instead, the administration spent months trying to dilute and delay the legislation.

A *Washington Times* headline that April read plainly: "White House seeks to soften Iran sanctions." And readers were left in no doubt that the impetus for delay came from the top: "One congressional staff member working on the bill told the *Washington Times* that Mr. Obama personally asked the House leadership this month to put off the sanctions bill until after the current work period."

The historical record on CISADA—the first serious

piece of sanctions legislation adopted during the Obama years—is unequivocal. CISADA was a bipartisan effort pushed through Congress against direct opposition from President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton. It was significantly watered down by the administration. And after months of delay, during which Iran's nuclear progress accelerated unchecked, it was reluctantly signed into law on July 1, 2010, by a president whose top brass would later claim credit for the very measures they had staunchly resisted.

When CISADA proved ineffectual at halting Iran's nuclear progress, Congress once again seized the initiative in demanding the administration take a tougher line on Iran. In August 2011, 92 senators sent a letter to President Obama demanding his administration "do more to increase the economic pressure" on Tehran. The letter called for "crippling sanctions on Iran's financial system by cutting off the Central Bank." The administration responded with lip service, sharpening its rhetoric but maintaining the same failed diplomatic policies.

Consequently, in November, Senators Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) and Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) decided to force the issue by introducing amendments to the 2012 Defense Authorization. These amendments were responsible for establishing what Mrs. Clinton now describes as "the most stringent, crippling sanctions" to date. They went after the main arteries in Iran's economy: oil exports and the Central Bank of Iran. That's probably why Mrs. Clinton is so eager to pat herself on the back: "We went after Iran's oil industry, banks, and weapons programs, enlisted insurance firms, shipping lines, energy companies, financial institutions, and others to cut Iran off from global commerce," she told the AJC forum. At the time, however, the administration was decidedly less supportive. It resolutely opposed and actively lobbied against the amendment.

GARY LOCKE

First, President Obama and Secretary Clinton sought to scupper the amendment privately. On November 29, three senior administration officials—Deputy Secretary of State Bill Burns, Treasury deputy secretary Neal Wolin, and deputy national security adviser Denis McDonough—called an emergency meeting on Capitol Hill with Senators Kirk, Menendez, and Kerry. The administration argued that the amendment would critically hinder their attempts to create a multilateral sanctions infrastructure. The senators refused to withdraw the amendment.

Next came a letter from Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner to Senate Armed Services chair Carl Levin stating "the Administration's strong opposition to this amendment because . . . it threatens to undermine the . . . approach we have undertaken to build strong international pressure against Iran." Levin, a Michigan Democrat, was unmoved.

On December 1, administration officials spent the morning of the vote lobbying against the amendment at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing. Undersecretary of state for political affairs Wendy Sherman and undersecretary of the Treasury for terrorism and financial intelligence David Cohen conveyed the administration's disapproval. Cohen claimed the amendment "risks fracturing the international coalition that has been built up over the last several years to bring pressure to bear on Iran."

Appalled by the opposition, Menendez took seven minutes at the hearing to excoriate the administration's conduct. That these critical words were spoken by a Democrat emphasized how outside the mainstream the administration was on the issue. Menendez thundered:

> At your request we engaged in an effort to come to a bipartisan agreement that I believe is fair and balanced. And now you come here and vitiate that agreement. . . . You should have said we want no amendment. . . . Everything that you have said in your testimony undermines your opposition to this amendment. The clock is ticking. . . . We should not be leading from behind, we should be leading forward.

That afternoon, the Senate voted unanimously (100-0) in favor of the amendment. According to Suzanne Maloney, an Iran specialist at the Brookings Institution, it marked "one of the most universal votes we've seen in a divided Capitol Hill in several years."

The critical headlines captured the mood rather well: "Senate votes for new Iran sanctions, defying White House" (*Los Angeles Times*); "The wrong signals to Iran" (*Washington Post*); "Gutting Iran Sanctions" (*Wall Street Journal*); "White House on defensive over Iran sanctions" (*Financial Times*); "Congress rebuffs administration pleas to ease impact of potential sanctions on Iran" (Associated Press).

Not that the administration's jiggery-pokery stopped there. After weeks of further foot-dragging, they succeeded in significantly watering down the legislation. As a report from the Bipartisan Policy Center made clear: "The administration lobbied against the Kirk-Menendez Amendment. . . . After it passed the Senate, the State and Treasury departments requested changes before it went to

conference. As a result, the final bill for presidential consideration softened penalties for foreign banks, extended the grace period before implementing sanctions from 60-180 days, allowed exceptions for companies reducing but not ending their purchase of Iranian oil and broadened the president's waiver authorities."

Then having secured myriad concessions, when President Obama finally agreed to ink the bill on December 31, 2011, he carved out further scope for noncompliance. In his signing statement the president warned that several provisions, including the sanctions that target Iran's Central Bank, may "interfere with . . . constitutional authority to conduct foreign relations," and so he would retain the ability to "treat the provisions as non-binding."

The administration's protestations against a serious sanctions regime continued throughout 2012. When Congress introduced legislation in February aimed at forcing SWIFT—the interbank financial messaging system upon which international commerce depends—to sever ties with Iran, the administration's lobbyists went to work again.

Prior to consideration of the amendment on SWIFT before the Senate Banking Committee, Treasury Secretary Geithner and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke phoned members of the committee and urged them to oppose the measure. "When the Senate Banking Committee began preparing legislation on SWIFT, a Treasury Department official met with aides to ask that it be watered down," reported the *Los Angeles Times*.

There are those who might argue that this is all too harsh a rendering. According to Mrs. Clinton, her signature involvement with Iran sanctions was to "revitalize" a divided international community so as to build a consensus for multilateral sanctions. As she told the crowd at the AJC forum, "When President Obama asked me to serve as secretary of state back in late 2008 . . . with the international community divided, there was little standing in the way of Iran's march toward nuclear-weapons capability." But the idea of a divided international community is a canard.

Consider Europe. When President Obama assumed office in 2009 and set about unsuccessfully engaging Tehran in personal diplomacy, sentiments among Europe's leading powers were clear: "France, UK push for EU sanctions on Iran" (Reuters, January 19, 2009); "EU trio targets tougher Iran sanctions" (*Financial Times*, February 25, 2009).

President Nicolas Sarkozy of France was already galvanizing the EU and agitating for sanctions long before the Obama administration was forced to countenance that course of action. What the Europeans wanted was American support and leadership. Which is why, while the Obama administration was busy lobbying against the Kirk-Menendez sanctions in 2011, the French president wrote to Congress expressing France's desire for "decisive, extraordinary measures" and urging the president to "impose sanctions of unprecedented magnitude."

Not content with waiting on an administration that was clearly unwilling to lead on sanctions, Sarkozy took up the mantle of leadership himself in late 2011. As the *Los Angeles Times* noted, "Top [U.S] administration officials . . . were strongly resistant when Congress slapped Iran's Central Bank with harsh sanctions. The European Union then went further, however, imposing an embargo to halt purchases of Iranian oil by European nations over the ensuing five months." America would eventually follow where France had led.

Realities at the U.N. were no different from those in Paris. Not that the historical record has stopped Mrs. Clinton from spinning otherwise: "I worked for months to round up the [U.N. Security Council] votes," she now says. And "after years of division, the international community came together and sent a very strong, unified message to Iran."

For all the rhetoric about America's "diplomatic isolation" at the U.N. on Iran prior to Secretary Clinton's efforts, one would do well to remember that the Bush administration was able to achieve that which eluded the Obama administration: a unanimous (15-0) Security Council vote for sanctions against Iran over its nuclear activities.

In fact, President Bush got two of them, in December 2006 and March 2007, and then a third near-unanimous resolution in March 2008 (14-0 with Indonesia abstaining), followed by a fourth unanimous resolution in September 2008, reaffirming the previous measures.

By contrast, during Hillary Clinton's tenure at the State Department, the Obama administration achieved just one Security Council resolution on sanctions, in June 2010, and it was unable to get all members onboard. Turkey and Brazil opposed the measure, while Lebanon abstained.

There are other examples, at home and abroad, that one could invoke to make the same point: If Mrs. Clinton believes sanctions to have been a positive force in attempts to stop Iran's march toward a nuclear bomb, she is well within her right to trumpet America's imposition of them as a foreign policy success. She should be candid, though: It was a success in spite of her efforts, not because of them. Instead of taking credit for the work of others, she should explain why her office opposed their endeavors for so long, and with such temerity. That might be history worth listening to.

*Hard Choices*—Mrs. Clinton's soon-to-be released memoir—will no doubt be a bestseller, but in which category? If her speech at the AJC is any indication, one should expect to find it next to James Patterson's *Unlucky 13*—on the fiction shelves. ♦

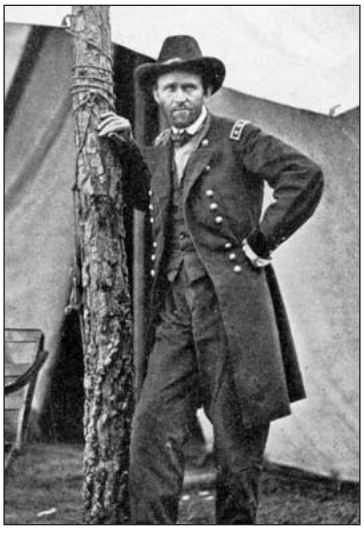
# Slaughter at Cold Harbor

*The fight that Grant regretted*

## By Geoffrey Norman

The evening before the battle, a Union officer walked among troops who would be assaulting Confederate positions in the morning and observed something he had not seen before. As he wrote after the war, "I noticed that many of the soldiers had taken off their coats and seemed to be engaged in sewing up rents in them."

The behavior was unusual enough that he took a closer look and "found that the men were calmly writing their names and home addresses on slips of paper and pinning them on the backs of their coats so their bodies might be recognized and their fate made known to their families at home."



*U.S. Grant at Cold Harbor*

Their stoicism was validated in the morning when 40,000 men attacked along a front of some seven miles. They charged into a line of earthworks that had been constructed expertly by men who, when they'd fought on ground close by two years earlier, had disdained digging as unfit work for soldiers. Back then, they had disparaged their new commander, Robert E. Lee, who was an engineer and believed in field fortifications, as "the King of Spades." But now they fiercely believed—both in him and in digging. They were badly outnumbered, but they were well entrenched, and their positions would bring heavy, overlapping fire on any assaulting force.

George McClellan, who had been the Union commander two years earlier in the Peninsula Campaign, would almost certainly not have attacked. But Ulysses S. Grant was now in command, and it was almost inevitable that he would. It was in his nature, and he had been pressing Lee and his army for a month. The two armies had fought a series of battles, and after each one, with the lines essentially unaltered, the Army of the Potomac would move, seeking an advantage in position that would threaten Richmond, the capital of the Confederacy, and force Lee into a battle in the open that, given his disadvantage in numbers, he could not win.

First, there had been the battle of the Wilderness, which might have been a Union defeat if Grant had chosen to react as his predecessors had—by pulling back on Washington to regroup and refit for another try. But despite his heavy losses, Grant chose to look for better ground and to keep fighting. Lee seemed to divine his intentions, and the two armies raced for the critical crossroads town of Spotsylvania. It was a near-run thing, but the Confederates got there in time to organize a defense.

They fortified a line that was anchored on the flanks by rivers and they dug in. But the line bulged, dangerously, in the direction of the enemy, creating a salient that troops called the Muleshoe. This was the focus of Union attacks that came so close, at one point, to succeeding that at a critical moment Lee himself rode into the action, urging the troops to fill the breach and hold the line.

"Lee to the rear," the troops shouted. They promised their general that they would hold, and one of them took the reins of his horse and led him back out of immediate danger.

In the fighting that followed, the Confederates held, but barely. The battle came, eventually, to focus on one section of the Muleshoe, a salient within a salient that the soldiers called the Bloody Angle. The name had been used in other battles; none had better claim to the title.

The fighting here came down to men standing on the bodies of other men, using their rifles as clubs and their fists, even their teeth . . . anything that would do to kill

*Geoffrey Norman, a writer in Vermont, is a frequent contributor to* The Weekly Standard.

their enemies before they went down themselves and added to the pile of the dead. The firing was so intense and heavy that it cut down an oak tree two feet in diameter.

The fight lasted more than 16 hours, and when it ended, and the Confederates had fallen back to shortened and more easily defended lines, one of Grant's aides inspected the scene and later wrote:

> The appalling sight presented was harrowing in the extreme. Our own killed were scattered over a large space near the "angle," while in front of the captured breastworks the enemy's dead, vastly more numerous than our own, were piled upon each other in some places four layers deep, exhibiting every ghastly phase of mutilation. Below the mass of fast-decaying corpses, the convulsive twitching of limbs and the writhing of bodies showed that there were wounded men still alive and struggling to extricate themselves from the horrid entombment. Every relief possible was afforded, but in too many cases it came too late. The place was well named the "Bloody Angle."

When the fighting was done and the armies were stalemated, Grant again broke contact and moved around Lee's flank to get between him and Richmond. Lee was, once more, a step ahead and laid a trap on the North Anna River. It nearly worked. However, this late in the war, Lee did not have the subordinates to execute his designs (if, as some historians might point out, he ever did), and he was ill and weary. His frustration boiled over in a rare, public dressing-down of one of his generals. An indecisive A.P. Hill had, in Lee's estimation, missed an opportunity to destroy a quarter of Grant's army. "Why did you not do as Jackson would have done," he said to Hill, and "thrown your whole force upon those people and driven them back?"

*Detail from a rendering of Union troops under fire during the battle*

Stonewall Jackson, of course, had been dead for a year, and Lee had missed him badly at Gettysburg. Longstreet had been seriously wounded, earlier in the month, at the battle of the Wilderness, and he was out of action and recovering. And a week or so earlier, J.E.B. Stuart had been killed in a battle with Union cavalry led by Philip Sheridan.

Lee's army was, then, losing both leaders and soldiers, and there were no replacements. The army was also inadequately fed and supplied, and these problems were getting worse as the blockade slowly strangled the Confederacy. What was being called Grant's "Overland Campaign" was developing into a war of attrition, one the South would inevitably lose. The Union Army was well—indeed, lavishly—supplied, and replacements were being sent down from Washington to fill the gaps in the ranks left by casualties.

There were a lot of casualties. So many that some people back in Washington were beginning to speak of Grant as a "butcher," and concerns were building over the prospect of President Lincoln's defeat when he ran for reelection. If the struggle continued as a series of bloody, stalemated battles throughout the summer . . . then perhaps someone like McClellan would be elected president and a negotiated peace might be possible.

Aware of this, Lee searched for opportunities, like the one that A.P. Hill had missed, to take the offensive and strike. He could not afford to let himself be trapped and besieged. "We must destroy this army of Grant's before he gets to the James River," he told one of his generals. "If he gets there it will become a siege, and then it will be a mere question of time."

Grant, who had famously vowed to "fight it out on this line if it takes all summer," believed, after he had escaped Lee's North Anna trap and the two armies had grappled in an action that was inconclusive, that things were going his way and that "Lee's army [was] really whipped."

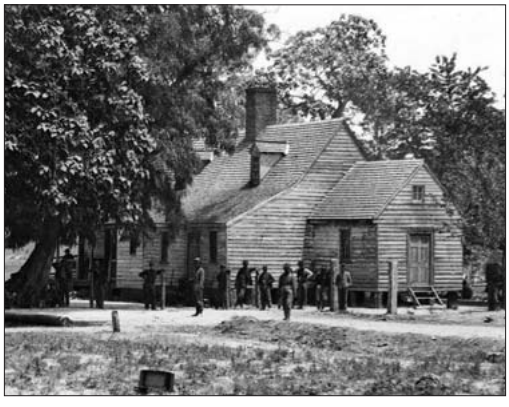
He explained the evidence to one of his generals: "The prisoners we now take show it, and the action of this army shows it unmistakably. A battle with them outside of entrenchments cannot be had. Our men feel they have gained the *morale* over the enemy, and attack him with confidence. I may be mistaken, but I feel that our success over Lee's army is already assured."

He was moving his army, at this time, toward a place called Cold Harbor and a battle, as he would write in his memoirs, that he would regret having ordered.

The Overland Campaign, to this point, had been something of a chess match between the generals. For the soldiers, it had been almost unrelieved slaughter. Wounded men were burned alive in the Wilderness and buried beneath a pile of bodies at the "Bloody Angle," and it felt as though there were fresh horrors to

come. So far, neither general could maneuver his forces into a position to gain the kind of advantage that would bring on a decisive battle and end the war. And the soldiers could not be broken: neither their lines nor their spirits. Without quite realizing it, they were fighting a new kind of war and perhaps even the first modern war.

At Gettysburg, not quite a year earlier, the armies had met on open ground and fought the way armies always had. The generals had positioned troops on ground that was good for defense and had maneuvered them on offense, as Lee had with Longstreet's corps, on the second day, when he attacked *en echelon* and almost rolled up the Union left. Large formations charged over open ground in an effort to close with the enemy and kill him, if possible, with the bayonet. If they could break the enemy's line, send him into retreat, then they would win the battle, the day, and perhaps even the war. Defenders, for their part, attempted to break the charge and hold their ground and, if possible, counter-attack. It was all very Napoleonic. Pickett's Charge may have been the high-water mark not only of the Confederacy but also the Napoleonic way of war.



*The inn at Cold Harbor*

By the time of Spotsylvania, men were still charging across open ground in an effort to close with and break their enemies. But maneuver was impossible and had been replaced by the frontal assault, and the bayonet had become an anachronism. One study after the war concluded that:

> Less than 0.4 percent of Union casualties were the result of sabre or bayonet wounds. This, however, did not make them less deadly. Approximately 50 percent of such wounds occurred to the scalp, skull, face or neck. Sometimes the victim had been involved in "fierce hand to hand combat," but a large number of the cases were found to be due to "private quarrels, brawls, or inflicted by sentinels in the discharge of their duty."

War was now a matter of firepower; of rifled muskets firing miniballs that were accurate and lethal out to 300 yards; and of artillery killing at ranges both long and short, as when those masses of men charging into their enemy's lines were met with canister, grapeshot, and in desperate situations nails and bolts and pieces of scrap wood and iron. The effect was to turn an artillery piece into a huge shotgun.

All this firepower gave an advantage to the men defending a position. They had used sunken roads and stone walls, as at Antietam and Fredricksburg, to increase this advantage, and by the time of the Overland Campaign, the Confederates had begun to dig and to construct extensive field fortifications—trenches. The defense was now supreme on the battlefield and the men obliged to attack it were becoming aware of this truth. "Before we left the North Anna," one of them wrote, "I discovered that our infantry were tired of charging earthworks. The ordinary enlisted men assert that one good man behind an earthwork was equal to three good men outside it."

This was the essential military truth of the American Civil War. There were many innovations in weaponry and tactics: armored ships, hot-air balloons for observation, telegraph lines for communications, trains for transport. There were experiments with submarines. Some consideration was even given to the feasibility of using poisonous gas as a weapon. It was, in short, a modern war, an industrial war, but one that was unaccompanied by new thinking about tactics on a battlefield where firepower ruled.

By the time of the Overland Campaign, then, the fighting, when maneuver failed, came down to massed formations attacking dug-in positions with secure flanks. There appeared to be no alternative, so the heavy casualties were, it seemed, inevitable.

There was another difference about the fighting in Virginia in 1864. In previous campaigns, the armies had met in a great battle lasting no more than a few days at most, then withdrawn into their camps or winter quarters until the next encounter. Grant's campaign had forced the armies into almost constant contact, and even when there was no actual battle underway, the fighting continued as artillery and snipers killed men from long range.

During a lull in the Spotsylvania fighting, General John Sedgwick, one of the Union Army's corps commanders, was conducting a mounted inspection of his lines when he noticed some of his men taking cover against occasional shots from a sniper in the Confederate positions, which were over 500 yards away.

Sedgwick told the men, "I'm ashamed of you dodging that way. They couldn't hit an elephant at this distance."

His men called Sedgwick "Uncle John," and he was probably the most beloved general in the Union Army. Still, they had seen what the Confederate snipers could do with their scope-mounted rifles. They had seen a staff officer hit in this spot, at this range, earlier in the day. So they continued to flinch and take cover, and Sedgwick said again, "They couldn't hit an elephant at this range." A few seconds later, a bullet struck him in the face, just under the

eye, knocking him out of the saddle and killing him. He was the highest-ranking Union officer killed in action during the war. Grant reacted to the news almost in disbelief, saying, "Is he really dead?"

Cold Harbor was not a port, and the weather there was not especially cold. The name was derived from a tavern that offered the traveler shelter—hence "harbor"—but no hot meals, thus "cold." It was a crossroads located between two rivers, with the ground between them offering an invading army an avenue to Richmond, 10 miles to the southwest.

Grant and Lee had been maneuvering and their men had been fighting around Cold Harbor for several days before the June 3 battle. Lee was still looking for an opportunity to attack Grant and win a decisive battle that might finally galvanize Northern opinion in favor of some kind of negotiated settlement. He had made attempts, but his generals had been dilatory and the attacks failed, bolstering, no doubt, the confidence of Grant, who believed that he was on the verge of finishing Lee's army. One breach in the enemy's line, after which he would exploit the breakthrough and . . . that would be the end of it.

*Collecting bones after the battle*

Grant ordered an attack, then delayed it so that he could put as many men as possible into the assault and so that they would be rested and fed and ready. That's what gave the men time, unbeknownst to their commander, to sew their names onto their uniforms.

Lee's men, for their part, used the opportunity of Grant's delay to dig and to fortify and to make their positions as strong as possible—as formidable, most likely, as any the world had yet seen. They were, as a Union officer said of similar but less lethal entrenchments around Spotsylvania, constructed in "a manner unknown to European warfare, and, indeed, in a manner new to warfare in this country."

Europe would learn, in another half-century, all too well about fortifications of this sort. Deep trenches, continuous positions, interlocking fire . . . those features that would become the essentials of the Great War were still new in the American Civil War, and the generals, including Grant, were slow to adapt. French and British generals, with less excuse, tragically failed to learn from their experience.

Grant was confident, perhaps overconfident. He had written to Washington a week earlier that he felt "success over Lee's army is already assured." Neither he nor General George Meade, his immediate subordinate, had personally reconnoitered the ground where their men would be fighting. Nor, it seems, had any officer from either staff. What the soldiers knew about the strength of the Confederate positions was unknown to the command.

And command was not very precise in its orders and conception of the battle. These came down, essentially, to a frontal assault by all units. One Union commander later wrote that he had been "aghast," and that the order "proved conclusively the utter absence of any military plan."

Grant, it seems, wanted the attack and was convinced it would work. Much as Lee had felt about Pickett's charge.

So the attack was launched at dawn. Forty thousand men went forward. Writing after the war, a Union general wrote that "there ran out suddenly on the summer air such a crash of artillery and musketry as is seldom heard in war. . . . The time of the actual advance was not over eight minutes. In that little period more men fell bleeding as they advanced than in any other like period of time throughout the war."

Some historians put that number at 7,000. Other, more recent works suggest that Union casualties for the entire day were somewhat less than that. Whatever the number, the dead and wounded did not accomplish the objective of breaking Lee's line, and many lay for three days in the open, where they could not be rescued, suffering and dying, while the two generals tried to arrange for their evacuation. The problem, as often in such negotiations, hung on a technicality. Grant wanted the evacuation to be conducted under the premise that injured men from both armies lay between the lines. Lee insisted that only Grant's men required evacuation.

Such are the refinements of war. By the time the necessary stipulations had been made and agreed to, most of the injured had bled out. One Union officer who walked the ground wrote:

> Every corpse I saw was as black as coal. . . . I saw no live man lying on this ground. The wounded must have suffered horribly before death relieved them, lying there exposed to the blazing southern sun o' days, and being eaten alive by beetles o' nights.

Cold Harbor was unquestionably a Union defeat, though Grant was slow to concede the point, even, perhaps,

to himself. In his first report on the battle, he wrote, "We assaulted at 4:30 this A.M., driving the enemy within his entrenchments at all points, but without gaining a decided advantage. We now occupy a position close to the enemy and in some places within fifty yards. Our loss was not severe, nor do I suppose the enemy lost heavily."

But Grant was always one to face facts. A few days later, he wrote that in the attack, "our loss was heavy, while that of the enemy, I have reason to believe was light."

And, in his memoirs, Grant had this to say about Cold Harbor:

> I have always regretted that the last assault at Cold Harbor was ever made. . . . [N]o advantage whatever was gained to compensate for the heavy loss we sustained. Indeed, the advantages other than those of relative losses, were on the Confederate side.

The battle had been costly, too, in terms of morale among Grant's troops and the confidence in him felt by some of his generals, one of whom wrote, after the war, that Cold Harbor "was the dismal, bloody, ineffective close of [Grant's] campaign . . . and corresponded in all of its essential features with what had preceded it."

Grant may not have agreed in the assessment, but he did break off contact and move to cross the James River and lay siege to Petersburg, the outcome that Lee had feared. The two armies remained there, locked in a war of trenches until the next spring, and the end at Appomattox. The war of movement and conquest—the destruction of armies, cities, and an entire people—was now the work of General Sherman. By some thinking, his campaign—especially his taking (and burning) of Atlanta—may well have saved Lincoln's reelection. At the very least, it validated Grant's overall strategic design.

Grant's Overland Campaign, which ended at Cold Harbor, had been exceedingly costly. The final (and frequently disputed) numbers put the Union casualties at something close to 60,000 and those of the Confederates at more than 30,000. In relative terms, the Confederate losses were heavier, and by the calculus of attrition, the battles of May and early June had been a defeat for the South. Still . . . in Washington, the casualties had been demoralizing. As Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells wrote in his diary, "the immense slaughter of our brave men chills and sickens us all. The hospitals are crowded with the thousands of mutilated and dying heroes who have poured out their blood for the Union cause."

And there was a sense that the country could not take much more bad news and continue to support the war. McClellan, who had led the army on this same ground two years earlier, would run against Lincoln in the coming campaign and might win if the news continued to be bad and bloody. More than 20 years after Appomattox, Joshua Chamberlain, the hero of Gettysburg, said in a speech that in the Army of the Potomac, "suffering and losses were such in . . . 1864 that we were not called upon or permitted to report our casualties during that whole campaign from the Rapidan and Rappahannock to the James and Appomattox, for fear the country could not stand the disclosure."

But it is hard to know what the alternative might have been. The planning before Cold Harbor might have been better. But if the Union was to take the fight to the Confederate Army, then there was, it now seems, no alternative to the doleful casualty numbers. As General Sherman had said and would demonstrate, it had to be total war. Otherwise, victory was impossible.

At Cold Harbor, the Army of the Potomac learned lessons that later armies ignored at much greater cost. Those 7,000 casualties in the frontal assault at Cold Harbor became the 60,000 lost on the first day at the Somme, where British troops walked, on line, in an assault of their enemy's trenches. The rifles were now repeaters, and the defenders had machine guns. But the trenches . . . those were not new. Better and stronger, maybe, but not new. You can still walk the templates from which they evolved at the Cold Harbor battlefield, which is not heavily visited, unlike Gettysburg and Antietam and Shiloh. Cold Harbor was unquestionably a place of bravery and sacrifice. But not of glory.

Today the trenches there are softened by time. Standing on their berms, you can easily imagine the futility of a frontal attack and appreciate the action of the Union general who, after the initial charge, when the survivors from his command had found whatever cover they could in the open ground, refused the order from headquarters to resume the attack, saying it would have been a "wanton waste of life." He was never disciplined.

The historian J.F.C. Fuller writes in *The Decisive Battles of the Western World*, "Had the nations of Europe studied the lessons of the Civil War and taken them to heart they could not in 1914-1918 have perpetrated the enormous tactical blunders of which that war bears record."

Some Europeans disdained our experience. The great Prussian commander Helmuth von Moltke may or may not actually have said that it would have been pointless to study the American Civil War since that conflict consisted merely of "two armed mobs chasing each other about the countryside." But if he didn't say it, he might as well have. The lessons fell on deaf ears.

Cold Harbor showed how pitiless war had become. As Sherman said, "You could not refine it." It's something the soldiers who sewed their names onto their jackets before the battle, creating the original dog tags, already knew. ♦

# Jillary's Wars

*Identity politics devours its children*

**By Noemie Emery**

Call them Jillary: as in Jill Abramson plus Hillary Clinton, two women of an age, of a kind, and of a political genre, the reigning queens of modern identity politics, each rising high and becoming a model for generations of feminists who admired their guts and brashness and gall. And call him Pinch: Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr., the Prince Charles of the house of *New York Times*, heir to the throne of one of the few modern-day institutions that still runs on the monarchical principle in which the first son of the reigning family is given great power (deserved or not), a backer of Hillary and employer of Jill—at least until May 14, when he tossed her under the bus and then backed up and ran over her, breaking the rules set for gender-relations and setting off rows in the gender-identity complex not seen in its annals before.

*Hillary Clinton*

Was she fired for cause? Fired for being a woman in power. Or, as the *Times* had often insisted when a powerful woman was under discussion, could "cause" be an issue at all? Thus in the same week when Hillary's backers were claiming it was out of bounds for her to be questioned by men about anything that could be said to have gone wrong in her tenure as secretary of state, two units of her team were engaged in a cage match, breaking an alliance of 20 years' standing, and putting them and their project at risk.

In the beginning, it all seemed much simpler. The early 1990s were the critical years for them all. Hillary went from being the lawyer-wife of an unknown southern governor to being first lady and feminist icon. Jill was at work on the book which would make her a player, *Strange Justice*, which she wrote with Jane Mayer, about the Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas war of words in the course of his Supreme Court nomination. Pinch took over the *Times*. He hated the concept of white male privilege as only a millionaire who inherited a job passed from his great-grandfather down through the generations could do. "He was like a silversmith, noisily banging the *New York Times* into a shape that reflected his own values, beliefs, and personality," wrote Alex S. Jones and Susan E. Tifft in *The Trust*, their 1999 book about the New York Times Company, quoting a colleague who said Pinch was "not nearly as fully formed as he appeared to be."

Declaring diversity to be the most critical challenge facing the paper, Pinch embraced the cause of gay and lesbian rights, hired blacks as editors, critics, and columnists, promoted women, and like his employees resolutely took Anita Hill's side in the Hill-Thomas sexual harassment showdown. This made him a good fit for Abramson, whom he would hire away from the *Wall Street Journal* in 1997 and whose views seemed to mirror his own: While treating liberal blacks with kid gloves and much reverence, the *Times* would make a practice of profiling conservatives such as Clarence Thomas and quota foe Ward Connerly as disturbed personalities whose judgment was wanting.

In 1992, the Clintons used the raw emotions from the Hill-Thomas battle to fuel their campaign, hitching their wagon to "The Year of the Woman" and working in tandem with feminist candidates, whose campaigns would feed into their own. Once in, Bill filled his cabinet with diversity hires, passing seats out on the basis of gender and color, and, on his wife's insistence, demanding the attorney general's seat go to a woman, which in the light of experience turned out to be a mistake. Hearings were held in which male nominees were derailed upon charges of insensitivity. Laws were drawn up to stop what was referred to as workplace harassment, determining that a man could be fired for inappropriate speech and/or actions, and that all romantic entanglements between male bosses and female employees were to be defined as exploitative, owing to the unequal balance of power therein.

Feminists had had a great run and looked forward to even brighter days ahead, until charges of harassment were brought by several women against President Clinton, and an affair he had had with an intern was thereby brought to light.

NEWSCOM

*Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to* The Weekly Standard *and a columnist for the* Washington Examiner.

The new codes were drawn up by the Jills and Hillarys in the belief that the men to be caught would all be conservatives just like Clarence Thomas, and the snaring of a president supported by feminists at first took them all by surprise. But not for long: In no time at all, the girls on the bus ditched their vulnerable, working-class sisters for the powerful male who sat in the White House. In *Vanity Fair*, the late and great essayist Marjorie Williams outlined the charges brought against Clinton: that he exposed himself to a state employee making $6.35 an hour (Paula Jones); that he groped a volunteer when she asked for a job that paid money (Kathleen Willey); that as president he had an affair with a 21-year-old intern who came to deliver pizza and stayed to dispense more intimate favors (Monica Lewinsky); that he used state personnel to procure sexual partners; and that he used "staff members, lawyers, and private investigators to tar the reputation of any woman who tries to call him to account" for his acts. "Can you find the problems with his behavior?" Williams then asked us. She continued:

> Take your time: These problems are apparently of an order so subtle as to escape the notice of many of the smartest women in America—the writers, lawyers, activists, officeholders and academics who call themselves feminists. When news broke that Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr was investigating whether President Clinton had lied under oath . . . the cacophony that ensued was notable for the absence of one set of voices: the sisterly chorus that backed up Anita Hill seven years earlier when her charges of sexual harassment nearly stopped Clarence Thomas's confirmation to the Supreme Court.

*Jill Abramson*

*Arthur Ochs Sulzberger Jr.*

ABRAMSON: NEWSCOM; SULZBERGER: AP / CHARLES SYKES

The charges were dismissed by such "Year of the Woman" stars as Nancy Pelosi, Barbara Boxer, and then-senator Carol Moseley Braun. "We do not know what happened," said a NOW honcho. "We're trying to think of the bigger picture," Eleanor Smeal told Williams. "It will be a great pity if the Democratic party were damaged by this," feminist writer Anne Roiphe confessed.

In February, when Juanita Broaddrick's rape charges against Clinton surfaced (too late to influence his acquittal by Congress), the *Times* waited six days to give them a mention, and then buried them, with an innocuous headline that gave no indication of what the story contained. As the *New York Observer* wrote at the time, "A rape charge against a President would seem to be very big front-page news anywhere. . . . But in the strange universe of 229 West 43rd Street, Ms. Broaddrick's corroborated charge against a congenital liar was only good for page A-16 . . . on the bottom half of the page with a flat headline and no photo . . . promoted under the heading, 'An Allegation Resurfaces' in the small table-of-contents on page 1."

The story was less about the charges themselves and what they might mean than the struggles of the paper as to whether to run them, with the arguments, among Dean Baquet, Bill Keller, Washington bureau chief Michael Oreskes, and deputy Washington editor Jill Abramson, being whether to run the story only "in context," or not run the story at all. No one wanted the story presented as simply straight news. "We decided we needed to try to explain it to our readers," Baquet said to the *Observer*, and as they explained it, the charges were trash. "Before the *Times* team of reporters and editors got to what Ms. Broaddrick had to say," the *Observer* noted, "they had already likened her allegation to 'toxic waste.'"

Anita Hill's charges against Clarence Thomas were as far in the past as Juanita Broaddrick's, and just as unprovable, but what was gospel truth in the case of Hill vs. Thomas was "toxic waste" in the case of Clinton vs. Broaddrick et al. "Toxic waste" also described Sarah Palin, picked in 2008 for the Republican ticket and as female as anyone, yet thrown to the wolves by the *Times* without hesitation. But by that time Hillary, caught in a bitter race with Barack Obama, found out that identity politics could also turn toxic for her.

When Hillary conceived her groundbreaking plan to run first for the Senate and then to become the first female president, no one dreamed she would be swamped by a far larger identity-wave, and that a little-known freshman senator—the son of a genuine African—would emerge to run against her. In the six months in 2008 before she went under, the reactions of Hillary and her friends (and her husband) at finding their group-think-plus-victim card trumped by one even stronger ranged from bewilderment to denial to frustration and finally to sputtering rage. Something of the sort happened to Jill in 2014, when she clashed with her subordinate at the *Times*, Dean Baquet, and Pinch, faced with choosing between them, went with the black male. "Abramson has risen beyond her coauthored book about the empowered black man and the gender victim [to become] herself possibly a gender victim—and look!—they replaced her with a black man. That's the kind of strange justice called poetic justice," wrote Ann Althouse. It was Jill herself who had made Clarence Thomas "the angry black man. The classic stereotype of a black man. And now,

replaced by a reputably amiable black man, Jill Abramson is exposed to the world as the classic stereotype of the successful woman: the bossy bitch."

"Jill couldn't have been replaced by a white male," the *New Yorker* quoted one *Times* staffer as saying, suggesting that only the presence of a black man on deck made her firing possible. So Jill was done in by the diversity principle, which she supported and urged if not pushed upon others—at least until it came back to hurt her.

And what about Pinch, the diversity monger, the backer of women when it was convenient, promoter of all of the feminists' causes, who now finds their rage trained on him? How could he have thought that this would *not* happen, when he deep-sided his paper's most prominent female, without even a grace note to spare? Didn't he embrace the whole genre of race/gender grievance? Didn't his paper dump on any (conservative) male it considered "insensitive"? Jump on any perceived (or nonexistent) slight against women?

Wasn't it the *Times* that "flooded the zone" decrying the Augusta National Golf Club and its males-only membership policies for months on end in 2002-03? Imagine Pinch and his paper covering Pinch and his paper as they covered Augusta, and you might have a lynching. In a well-deserved twist, identity politics is finally eating its own.

**Wasn't it the *Times* that 'flooded the zone' over the Augusta National Golf Club and its males-only membership policies for months on end in 2002-03? In a well-deserved twist, identity politics is finally eating its own.**

So what can we say of identity politics, as the whole drama rolls on? First that the groups that claim to speak for blacks and/or women don't really do so; they are liberal groups that push liberal causes that some blacks and some women support. They were more universal at the start, when all blacks and almost all women were against segregation and the exclusion of women from the business world and the marketplace, but when these goals were won, unanimity vanished, and the usual political schisms broke out. Instead of accepting these splits as healthy, zealots instead saw them as heresies, and their proponents not as political foes with whom one should argue but heretics whom they should try to destroy.

The problem with this is that it wears thin as people begin to see through it and wonder why one woman who brings a charge of harassment is a saint and a martyr, and another, as one Democrat put it, is trailer-park trash. It was the Lewinsky affair that blew the whistle on "women's groups," which before it were seen as concerned about women and after it as concerned about Democrats, and willing to trash any number of sisters to help the party succeed. The result is now that in harassment cases in which the facts are uncertain, people on both sides decide if they want the accused man embarrassed, and then judge his accusers accordingly. This has become bipartisan practice. But it does little to help women.

The second thing we can say is that identity politics tend to be tricky, as each group thinks itself the most deeply put-upon, and thus the groups can tend to compete. The status of victim is eagerly sought, and not readily ceded. Some blacks resent the claims of gays to be the "new civil rights movement," and protest accordingly. In 2008, Obama's supporters saw Hillary Clinton as another beneficiary of white, blue-eyed privilege, while Hillary's looked at Barack Obama, looked past his skin color, and saw another insensitive, chauvinist, guy.

It behooves us to say that thus far in the race/gender smackdown, race has trumped gender two times out of two: first in 2008, when Obama took the nomination from Hillary Clinton, and in 2014, when Pinch Sulzberger, torn between his two feuding diversity hires, went with his Y chromosome, not with his skin tones, and tossed Jill Abramson off the island. For some reason, people see slavery as a worse fate than being trapped in the steno pool. When push comes to shove in the great war of grievance, the sisters go under the bus.

The third thing about identity politics is that most people think it's a crock. Honestly, do most people in it believe what they're saying? More and more, it seems like a con, something picked up for the sake of convenience and dropped in a moment, when power's at stake. Hillary Clinton and all of her friends believed women ought to stand up in the face of harassment until Bill Clinton was threatened; then they turned on a dime and defamed his accusers. Pinch Sulzberger was all for strong women in the highest of places, until he wished to get rid of his hectoring editor, and quickly and brutally did.

And don't cry for Jill, and her two sets of standards—one for herself, Anita, and Hillary, to be handled like rare Christmas ornaments, and one for the Kathleen Willeys and Sarah Palins, who deserve to be treated like dirt. Or for Hillary, who poignantly said that women "ought to support one another," meaning of course, that they ought to support her. You didn't think she meant Kelly Ayotte, Susana Martínez, or Mia Love, did you?

This is a movement whose moment is passing. Let's get this show off the road. ♦

*Ted Danson as Lemuel Gulliver (1996)*

HALLMARK ENTERTAINMENT / EVERETT COLLECTION

# Dean of Contradictions

## *The savage, satiric, sympathetic Swift.* BY JAMES BOWMAN

The art of biography, as it is practiced today, nearly always involves the biographer as mediator between past and present, a bridge over the ever-widening gap between the two. As history has more and more become the record of what we feel we ought to be ashamed of our ancestors for, the biography-worthy great men of centuries gone by require new champions to explain why *they*, at least, weren't so bad as most of their benighted contemporaries.

*James Bowman, the author of* Honor: A History *and* Media Madness, *is a resident scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.*

**Jonathan Swift**
*His Life and His World*
by Leo Damrosch
Yale, 592 pp., $35

The biographical apologia, like the debunking, was already well-established 30 years ago, when Irvin Ehrenpreis completed his three-volume biography of Jonathan Swift after two decades of work. The vogue in the 1960s, when Ehrenpreis began his work, was for psychological, often Freudian, analysis of one's subject, and the undoubtedly weird figure of the 18th-century dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin and author of *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) must have offered one of the more tempting subjects in English literature for such treatment.

Yet, since Freudianism lost favor and patronizing the past in other ways became popular, it has taken another generation for Ehrenpreis's some-time-colleague at the University of Virginia, Leo Damrosch, now of Harvard, to write a Swift biography in the more up-to-date manner. The result is enlightening and amusing, and it is enlivened by the inclusion of stories and anecdotes about Swift that Ehrenpreis had omitted because they were

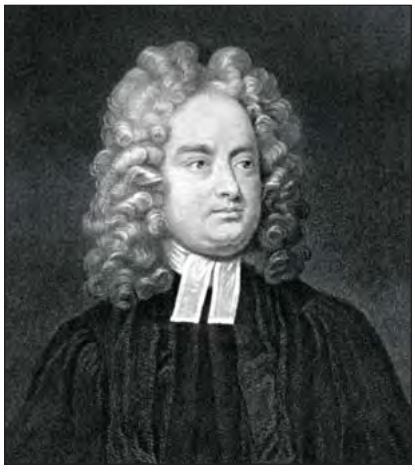
insufficiently well-attested in his overscrupulous view. But there is no denying the challenge Damrosch has taken on in trying to make Swift a more palatable subject for the 21st century.

Take, for instance, his penultimate chapter, called simply "The Disgusting Poems." Here, his sympathy for his subject is more evident than his conviction in advancing any of the multiple excuses for Swiftian scatology that have occurred to previous biographers and commentators. The reader may presumably pick his own favorite. For what it's worth, mine is the one separately suggested by two different writers who, though neither mentions the comparison, seem to see the poems of excrement and sexual disgust as ironic anticipations of Winnie Verloc in Joseph Conrad's *Secret Agent*, who "felt profoundly that things do not stand much looking into."

Swift's staunch Tory politics, which made him the most feared pamphleteer of his own age, also make him a dubious character in ours. Recently, congressman Paul Ryan got into trouble for saying that people in "inner cities" were somewhat lacking in "the culture of work" and had to apologize for his remark, calling it "inarticulate." His critics called it racist. Not being around to apologize or defend himself for want of feeling, Swift has to rely on his latest biographer to explain that a similar statement of his should be put down to the fact that "sensibilities were different then"—in case you didn't know it. Swift was hardly the only one among his contemporaries who "tended to see moral explanations for all kinds of social problems" even though "this moral emphasis neglected some deep structural causes of poverty." Which, by the way, is all the more remarkable if we are to believe Edmund Wilson's observation that "Swift shared with Marx a deadly sense of the infinite capacity of human nature for remaining oblivious or indifferent to the pains we inflict on others, when we have a chance to get something out of them for ourselves."

This is said about *A Modest Proposal* (1729), which, after *Gulliver's Travels*, may be Swift's best known work for its savage satire in proposing that Irish babies be sold as food for the rich of England. But even apart from the gratuitous reference to Marx—who didn't have such a view, or, indeed, *any* view of "human nature" in the classical sense—I find it hard to believe that Swift could have written *A Modest Proposal*, or any of his other appeals to conscience, without a belief in some limit to that human capacity for obliviousness short of infinity.

Perhaps a more delicate subject than even "The Disgusting Poems" was Swift's attitude toward women. Evidence that, compared with his swinish and chauvinistic contemporaries, he "was ahead of his time in



*Jonathan Swift*

his attitude toward gender" comes from the fact that

> He wanted to refute the assumption, then held by most women and nearly all men, that the last things to look for in a wife were "good natural sense, some taste of wit and humour, sufficiently versed in her own natural language, able to read and relish history, books of travels, moral or entertaining discourses, and be a tolerable judge of the beauties in poetry."

I'm not sure that this will strike everyone as enough of an exception from the "attitude toward gender" of his times, especially in view of the fact that Swift never married. Or did he? To the question of whether he secretly wed either of the two women with whom he had intimate, even passionate, relationships—Esther Johnson (known to him as "Stella") and Esther Vanhomrigh (known to him as "Vanessa")—Damrosch takes a necessarily cautious, agnostic approach, though he repeats the apocryphal story of Stella's begging Swift on her deathbed for a public acknowledgment of their union and Swift's refusing. It may be true that "keeping his intimate relationships mysterious was an essential strategy of self-protection," but it's not exactly up to our high standards as a progressive "attitude toward gender."

One of the problems with reimagining Swift as "our contemporary"—as the late Jan Kott tried to do with Shakespeare—is that it makes him much harder to read. We are constantly having to abandon our delight in what he wrote in order to get our minds around what he *really* must have meant by it, especially when he is at his most misanthropic or moralistic. One example comes in Damrosch's discussion of Swift's pseudonymous *A Project for the Advancement of Religion, and the Reformation of Manners* (1709). In it he proposes rigid enforcement of morality on the part of those in government offices, even though he recognizes that this will produce hypocrisy, which at least "wears the livery of religion . . . acknowledgeth her authority, and is cautious of giving scandal." Most shockingly, Swift wrote: "I believe it is with religion as it is with love, which by much dissembling at last grows real."

"Can Swift possibly have meant all this?" asks Damrosch. "Some distinguished Swiftians have thought he did. But it's hard to believe that the author of the *Argument to Abolish Christianity* [1708], with its mordant critique of 'nominal Christianity,' could call for obligatory hypocrisy in a police state founded on censorship and spying."

Yet Swift often wrote in favor of an outward conformity to established practices, especially those of the established church of which he was a clergyman, in spite of inward doubts and even contrary convictions. As the king of Brobdingnag says to Gulliver:

> He knew no reason why those, who entertain [religious or political]

NEWSCOM

opinions prejudicial to the public, should be obliged to change, or should not be obliged to conceal them. And as it was tyranny in any government to require the first, so it was weakness not to enforce the second: for a man may be allowed to keep poisons in his closet, but not to vend them about for cordials.

Damrosch concludes that *A Project for the Advancement of Religion* was a satire on the recent revival of Puritanism among the Whigs (who were his political enemies), but that it was so cleverly camouflaged they could not take exception to it, since it pretended to adopt the views of Queen Anne, lately fallen under their influence. This may be so—though such subtlety must always find its limit at the point where the satire becomes indistinguishable from the thing satirized. That Swift was always bumping up against that limit can hardly be an accident, and it must surely be the final word on all questions of his sincerity, or lack thereof, in what he wrote—questions which even the most ingenious biographer should relegate to the closet of his secrets.

Without the anxiety of having to prove Swift the kind of man who today's politically decent people would would choose to know, he emerges as the sort of amusing companion his contemporaries found him to be, a man his cousin Deane Swift described as one who "equally loved to speak, and loved to hearken," a man who could write in a letter of consolation to a woman who had lost a child, just as he himself was feeling anguished at the imminent death of Stella, that "Life is a tragedy, wherein we sit as spectators awhile, and then act our own part in it."

That sort of humanity is different from Damrosch's view that "Swift still matters, three and a half centuries after his birth, because he was a great writer and a great man." This irritating modern habit of writing about "why X matters" is one indication that we are now expected to look for excuses, in the onward march of progress, to discard such figures from the past who need the help of their biographers to tell us why they continue to hang on to some shred of relevance. ♦

B&A

# What Macy's Wrought

*Of computers and the convergence of minds.*

BY JOSHUA GELERNTER

*Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton*

In 1882, Louis Bamberger bought the stock of a bankrupt dry goods store and used it to open a store of his own in Newark, New Jersey. By 1928, it was one of the largest and most profitable businesses in the country: Bamberger's department store had expanded from a rented storefront to a million square feet and 3,500 employees. For customers, it boasted a toll-free telephone number and a no-questions-asked, money-back guarantee; for employees, it offered job security and an on-site lending library. The eight-story flagship had its own radio station and launched what would become the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1924, when Bamberger decided to retire and sell his store to Macy's.

Bamberger was childless; so was his sister and business partner, Caroline. They decided to give a million dollars of the Macy's sale profit to their longest-serving employees and use the rest to start a school of higher learning. For their school, the Bambergers had two requirements: It had to benefit the state of New Jersey, which had been good to them, and it had to be a refuge for Jewish students being turned away from the many institutions with Jewish quotas.

A New Jersey-based medical school seemed like just the ticket. The mathematician Oswald Veblen and education reformer Abraham Flexner caught wind of the idea and thought they had a better one: not a medical school but a school for advanced study in every field. They pitched their plan to the Bambergers, who were suitably impressed. In 1930, the Institute for Advanced Study was founded.

As the institute laid its cornerstone in Princeton, the Nazis were taking over in Germany—a catastrophe that

**Turing's Cathedral**
*The Origins of the Digital Universe*
by George Dyson
Vintage, 464 pp., $16.95

*Joshua Gelernter is a writer in Connecticut.*

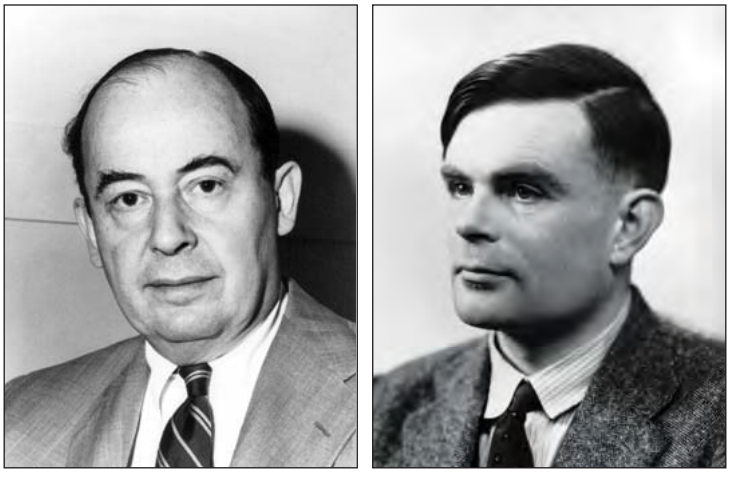
TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

worked out well for the institute: "The Nazis launched their purge of German universities in April 1933, and the exodus of mathematicians from Europe . . . began just as the Institute for Advanced Study opened its doors," writes George Dyson. The institute quickly stocked up on the biggest names and best minds in European scholarship: Their first hire was Albert Einstein; their second was John von Neumann.

Everyone knows who Einstein was, but von Neumann might have been the greatest mind of the 20th century. He was born in Budapest to a secular Jewish family. By adolescence, he was fluent in five languages and had started working independently on "the deepest problems of abstract mathematics." Said the physicist and Nobel laureate Eugene Wigner: "Whenever I talked with von Neumann, I always had the impression that only he was fully awake." The mathematician Herman Goldstine once said that von Neumann's lectures made complex problems so perfectly clear that students didn't need to take notes. When von Neumann obtained his doctorate in 1926, his oral examination featured a single question: "Pray, who is the candidate's tailor?" Von Neumann was also a snappy dresser.

Doctorate in hand, von Neumann spent seven years traveling back and forth between Hungary and Germany, busily revolutionizing mathematics. When the Nazis began firing Jewish professors in 1933, he crossed the Atlantic and started revolutionizing mathematics over here—although he never forgot where he came from, once remarking that he felt "the opposite of a nostalgia for Europe," which, he explained, was "an infernal pesthole." According to his wife, "His loathing for the Nazis was essentially boundless. They came and destroyed [a] perfect intellectual setting. In quick order they dispersed the concentration of minds and substituted concentration camps."

As soon as he became an American citizen, in 1937, von Neumann applied for a commission in the Army; but, already in his 30s, he was rejected as too old. Instead, he was recruited by the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps to apply science to weaponry. Some of his work for the Navy is still classified. When the atomic bomb was being developed under a heavy veil of secrecy at Los Alamos, von Neumann had innumerable irons in the fire, working out problems of nuclear fission and inventing the digital computer.



*John von Neumann, Alan Turing*

VON NEUMANN: NEWSCOM; TURING: NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

Those irons, hammered into shape at the Institute for Advanced Study, are the subject of *Turing's Cathedral*. Ostensibly, this is a book about the invention of the computer; but it's really a love letter, of sorts, to the men America saved from Hitler and who, in return, made America the world's scientific superpower. Von Neumann stars as the man whose design for a digital computer underlies every computer in the world today. He's joined by an impressive cast of supporting characters—Einstein, Wigner, Edward Teller, Kurt Gödel, Stanislaus Ulam, Wolfgang Pauli—all refugees from Nazi Europe, all based at the Institute for Advanced Study, and all accompanied by fascinating back stories.

The one person not featured here, at least not heavily, is the title character, Alan Turing. It was Turing who laid out a precise definition of a digital computer and what it would be able to do: His ideas created the field of computer science. He brought his ideas to the institute, where he worked briefly with von Neumann before the war pulled him home to England. Turing made a decisive contribution to the war effort by leading the fight to crack the Enigma code. Without Turing, World War II might well have turned out differently.

Without question, Alan Turing was one of the great men of the 20th century, a tragic genius who committed suicide not long after being chemically castrated as legal punishment for homosexuality. Arguments rage about who deserves credit as the true inventor of the digital computer: Turing, who laid the theoretical groundwork, or von Neumann, who laid the practical groundwork. The argument rages a little more fiercely when Turing's status as a gay martyr and von Neumann's as an anti-Communist bomb maker are factored in. George Dyson doesn't take sides, but Turing gets only one chapter. The computer may have been Turing's cathedral, but von Neumann figured out how to put it together—and then built it. That's the story here, interspersed with a lot of pithy anecdotes.

Indeed, it's the side stories that dominate, touching on subjects from the Lenni Lenape Indians of prehistoric Princeton to von Neumann's brief and abortive career as a skier. They're included because they're entertaining, and because Dyson clearly savors background detail. He writes well, and the tangents are fun to read. But the actual inventing-the-computer material presents a problem, the author alternating between compelling narratives and technical passages that are too long and too dry. If you understand the inner workings of a computer, the technical parts will be interesting. If you do not, they'll be incomprehensible.

That's a flaw, and you've been warned. But don't let it put you off the rest, where the good outweighs the confusing. ♦

B&A

# Scary Stuff

*You think 'Mrs. Dalloway' is traumatic? Think again.* BY JOE QUEENAN

The *New York Times* recently ran a story about college students requesting "trigger warnings" to alert them that something in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* or *The Great Gatsby* might freak them out. Such warnings would alert a student that *The Merchant of Venice* contains anti-Semitic elements and that *Mrs. Dalloway* deals with suicide. The issue of trigger warnings has been raised at schools as varied as Oberlin, Rutgers, and the University of Michigan.

A lot of people think this is more lefty twaddle, but I sure don't. Ever since I read *Hamlet* in high school, I have been terrified that somebody is going to pour poison into my ear while I am asleep, the way Claudius does to Hamlet's father. I really wouldn't put it past my wife; she's still mad about that hefty home-equity loan. And the 3-D TV we didn't need. If *Hamlet* had come with a trigger warning—"May contain upsetting auditory-canal passages"—I would not have had to spend the rest of my life being traumatized by fear of cochlear trauma.

I still sleep with earmuffs, even to this day. So I don't think this stuff is frivolous or stupid.

It would also have helped if *Moby-Dick* had contained a warning: "May contain upsetting passages about being forced to bed down with a heavily tattooed harpooner." Call me squeamish, but I grew up fearing having to share a bed with a harpooner, because in the part of Wildwood, New Jersey, I used to visit during summer vacations, motels often offered reduced rates for guests willing to double-up with seafaring desperadoes. Just the image of poor little Ishmael trapped in bed with that scary Queequeg has haunted me all my life. Not because I am afraid to be in the same bed as a man. But because I am afraid to be in bed with a man who makes his living with a harpoon.

The list of college-level books that should contain trigger warnings does not stop there. *Beowulf* has really creepy sea monsters that would make impressionable young people reluctant to go into the water. So does *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. All sorts of nutty behavior goes on in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. *Don Quixote* seems to make light of addled seniors who may be suffering from a late-medieval version of dementia. Banquo's showing up out of nowhere in the middle of that banquet in *Macbeth* is the kind of thing that could put kids off visiting rural Scotland forever. And all that creepy stuff about Gulliver getting tied up by the Lilliputians. What's up with that?

There is more. Innocent, pyrophobic co-eds could easily be spared the trauma awaiting them in *Jane Eyre* if the novel came with a warning: "Hero locks up scary wife in wing of castle. Oh, and another thing, she sets the house on fire and gets burned to a crisp." *Great Expectations* would be easier on those with a pathological fear of rodents if it were accompanied by a warning: "Famished rats eat jilted bride's wedding cake." Finally, *The Last of the Mohicans* should come with a warning: "If graphic images of a man getting his heart ripped out of his chest in front of his daughter is at all upsetting, maybe you should stick with *Leatherstocking Tales*. And don't even ask about the ordeal by fire."

How early in life should these trigger warnings be mandated? Really early.

"If the idea of a little kid breaking his crown upsets you, do not, do not, do not read *Jack and Jill*," is how a typical alert should read. "Contains head-butting *and* trolls" is how the alert accompanying "The Three Billy-Goats Gruff" should be phrased. "Stepmother issues? Be advised that 'Snow White' could be very, very unnerving," is yet another practical disclaimer. Along with this trigger warning on the cover of *Sleeping Beauty*: "Could be upsetting to children with chronic sleep disorders."

No, this subject is not trivial, and it is not silly. Young people have a

NEWSCOM

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

right to know that war causes impotence (*The Sun Also Rises*). They have a right to know that *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* is about a hunchback—not that there's anything wrong with that! And they have a right to know, far in advance, that the Bible contains passages that could prove unsettling to malleable young minds: "Contains mass drownings, stonings, blindings and plagues of both frogs and locusts," the trigger warning might read.

And that's just the Old Testament. ♦

B&A

# The Greatest Ex

*Herbert Hoover and his post-presidential triumph.*

BY ARAM BAKSHIAN JR.

I was raised in a Hoover household. By the time I came along in 1944, Herbert Hoover had already begun to reclaim the respect of many Americans, despite the vilification he had suffered at the hands of the New Deal propaganda machine. As the Great Depression waned and America went to war, and we then engaged in the reconstruction of Cold War Europe, people began to remember Herbert Hoover's instrumental part in saving millions from starvation during and after World War I—and saw him reprise that humanitarian role directing food aid to a devastated continent.

In the years that followed, he would become America's premier elder statesman, regularly speaking out on the issues of the day, energetically supporting charities and heading commissions, and penning a seemingly endless stream of books covering everything from foreign policy to trout fishing.

As a copyboy at the old *National Observer*, I was more aware of Hoover's iconic status than most people. Whenever he was hospitalized or reported ill, part of my job was to pull out the stock obituary for a writer to update. As a result, in October 1964, when Hoover finally breathed his last at the ripe old age of 90, I felt that I had already experienced his death several times over. Having read his extended obituary again and again, I also had acquired a serious appreciation for the breadth and depth of a truly admirable American life.

**The Crusade Years 1933-1955**
*Herbert Hoover's Lost Memoir of the New Deal and Its Aftermath*
edited by George H. Nash
Hoover Institution, 520 pp., $39.95

Besides being one of the great humanitarians of his age, an able but much maligned president, and an elder statesman of unmatched energy, vision, and integrity, Herbert Hoover was an inventor. He created—and remains the unsurpassed practitioner of—what might be called the imperial ex-presidency. Through sheer determination, and thanks in no small part to a robust old age, Hoover's ex-presidency, lasting from 1933 until his death 31 years later, was the most productive in our history, often imitated but never equaled by subsequent presidents.

Franklin Roosevelt and John Kennedy had no post-presidential years. Harry Truman quickly reverted to his core persona, that of a small-town, small-time political gadfly. Dwight Eisenhower enjoyed a quiet, well-earned retirement on his Gettysburg farm. Lyndon Johnson's post-presidential years were brief and bitter. Richard Nixon worked hard (and successfully) to preserve his standing as a global statesman, but achieved only partial political rehabilitation. Gerald Ford was liked and respected as a conscientious but accidental president, a worthy, low-key, retired caretaker. Jimmy Carter has written a string of books and helped build a number of houses for poor people; but his standing as an elder statesman is shaky at best. Ronald Reagan, our oldest president, wrote a respectable memoir and conducted himself with avuncular warmth, humor, and dignity—even as Alzheimer's began to take its toll. The Bushes, father and son, have approached their post-presidential years with a decorous modesty. And as for Bill Clinton, his post-presidency seems to consist of an open-ended, all-expenses-paid international junket-*cum*-speaking tour, with occasional timeouts to steal the limelight from other Democrats during election years.

None of them has come close to doing what Herbert Hoover did as a former president. And that's not bad, as George H. Nash explains in his insightful introduction to this posthumous Hoover memoir, for someone whose

> life had begun in humble circumstances in 1874 in a little Iowa farming community as the son of the village blacksmith and a mother who had become a recorded minister in the Society of Friends. Orphaned before he was ten, Hoover managed to enter Stanford University when it opened its doors in 1891. Four years later he graduated as a member of the "pioneer" class, with a degree in geology and a determination to become a mining engineer.

From then on, until the Depression, it was a long triumphal march. By age 24, Hoover was superintendent of a gold mine in the Australian outback. By 27, he was managing a massive coal-mining operation in China, nearly losing his life in the Boxer Rebellion. By 1914, at the age of 40, he had reached the top of his profession, having "traveled around the world five times . . . [with] business interests on every continent except Antarctica."

*Aram Bakshian Jr., who served as an aide to Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan, lives in Washington.*

With the outbreak of World War I, he founded and directed the Commission for Belgian Relief, which brought "desperately needed food supplies to more than nine million Belgian and French citizens trapped between the German army of occupation and the British naval blockade." This operation morphed into "a gigantic humanitarian enterprise without precedent in world history. By 1917 he was an international hero, the embodiment of a new force in global politics: American benevolence." In the war's aftermath, Hoover would administer health and food aid to Europe, and famine relief to Russia, that saved further millions. Returning home, he became secretary of commerce under both Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge, and was then elected president by a landslide in 1928. The 1929 crash led to his political scapegoating and vilification—and his electoral defeat in 1932.

For most men, this would have marked the end of public life; for the remarkable Hoover, it was just the beginning, the political equivalent of a latter-day Lazarus bringing himself back from the dead. Leafing through the pages of *The Crusade Years*, one appreciates just how hard—and how effectively—Hoover labored to achieve his goals. Described as a "lost memoir" in its subtitle, this book is a tribute to both Hoover and George Nash, the distinguished scholar and biographer who painstakingly assembled, edited, and annotated it. Nash's introduction, actually a succinct biography of Hoover as well as an overview of the memoir itself, lends significant added value, and will reacquaint readers with the life and achievements of an important, but neglected, American leader.

Begun in the 1940s, and meant to serve as finial piece to his earlier autobiographical writing, *The Crusade Years* evolved into one of those open-ended literary projects that never quite make it to completion. Indeed, there are moments reading some of the more fragmentary passages when one is reminded of Edward Casaubon, the learned drudge in *Middlemarch* who dedicated his life to a never-completed masterpiece that turned out to be a loose collection of scraps, tatters, and ephemera. Unlike Casaubon, however, Hoover brought a unifying theme to his work, lending it a contemporary power and timeliness.

*Herbert Hoover, Harry Truman (1962)*

*American Individualism*, the title of an earlier Hoover book and the *leitmotif* here, is a ringing declaration of the concept of American exceptionalism and an important part of the unifying theme—one that Hoover never lost sight of and that is being rediscovered and re-articulated today. Hoover correctly recognized that the overarching struggle in American politics during his lifetime, and beyond it, would be the conflict between individualism and collectivism. "Creeping socialism"—a term Hoover helped to popularize in the 1940s and '50s—may have been dismissed as alarmist by liberals, but it is exactly what led to today's bloated, expanding welfare state, with its accompanying debt, taxes, and social deterioration.

But this is more than an extended polemic against the megastate. *The Crusade Years* contains personal accounts of marriage, family life, and the joys of camping, fishing, and fellowship that are both moving and amusing. There are also some sharp insights into historical figures. Truman, who respected Hoover and chose him to head a commission on reform of the the executive branch but also vilified him on the campaign trail, is defined as "a dual personality. On one hand he was a man of amiability and good-will, without malice or vindictiveness, with great loyalty to his friends and often with great political and moral courage. He apparently had little ideological conviction but when acting on his own instincts was more right than left." But "his other personality was a Pendergast inheritance—Votes at any price . . . with the boys participating in the good fruits of office."

His evaluation of Thomas Dewey, after a long private conversation in 1944, was confirmed not once but twice, when Dewey was defeated as the Republican presidential nominee that year, and again in 1948:

> I came out of the long discussion with confirmation of my high esteem for Dewey's intellectual capacities, his energy, and his political ability, but in some way I have a reservation as to his character. . . . He is seemingly convinced of his own intellectual superiority and abilities.

Unlike Dewey, Hoover never thought he had all the answers: Besides defending timeless liberties, he was always on the lookout for better ways of doing things, from serving suffering humanity to snaring the biggest fish in the trout stream. It kept him going and kept him young for 90 productive

ASSOCIATED PRESS

years, and it is best summed up by a vignette Nash includes here. A few weeks before his death, Hoover was visited by a young lady he had befriended. Although he was frail and confined to a wheelchair,

> his mind and formidable will were unbowed. As he and his guest drank tea together, he suddenly asked her: "Tell me, child, what do you really want in life?" After pausing for a moment, the young woman replied that she liked her life just as it was and wanted it to go on without change: "I have a nice husband, I have a nice apartment, so the answer is I want a status quo." Hoover looked at his young visitor with horror: "How can you say a thing like that," he exclaimed, "because *I want more*. I want to write a *better* book, I want to have *more* friends—*I just want more*—and I think you should never sit back and say, 'I want the status quo.'"

Had Hoover lived a few years longer, *The Crusade Years* might have evolved into that "better book." As it now stands, it serves as an impressive codicil to the legacy of a great American—an absorbing, and occasionally inspiring, read. ♦

B&A

# Verdict on 'Doonesbury'

*Dated, dull, and reliably predictable.*

BY PETER TONGUETTE

First, a confession. When I was a 9-year-old reader of comic strips, having recently set aside the (to my thinking) infantile pleasures of *Blondie* and *Dennis the Menace*, my eyes wandered to their considerably cooler cousin, *Doonesbury*. I wonder now what appeal it held for me at that age. It could not have been the famously rinky-dink artwork, the final word on which was rendered by Al Capp: "Anybody who can draw bad pictures of the White House four times in a row and succeed knows something I don't." No, what drew me to *Doonesbury* was its air of mature sophistication. Here, to accompany my mornings before school, were grownup characters dealing with grownup problems—broken marriages, lost jobs, and (since these were the days of the Persian Gulf war) overseas conflicts—as well as dialogue attributed to presidents, members of Congress, and celebrities.

Of course, in depicting all of this, *Doonesbury* did not affect neutrality.

*Garry Trudeau (2005)*

Particular political positions were being advanced, but their substance did not preoccupy this pre-adolescent. It was enough that the strip was sending communiqués from Washington or Baghdad; whether I might actually one day agree with them or not seemed irrelevant. So spellbound was I by *Doonesbury* that I even resolved to follow in the footsteps of its creator, Garry Trudeau. I was not very talented, but I did enjoy an intermittent correspondence with Trudeau, whose famous reclusiveness did not stop him from gamely looking at my clumsy handiwork and writing several kind letters (which I framed).

This past winter, Trudeau interrupted his seclusion for a much better reason than humoring a young fan. He announced that he was ending daily *Doonesbury*s for an undetermined length of time in order to give himself over to writing and producing his original Internet series, *Alpha House*. (He will persist, he said, with Sunday strips.) While I stopped following the strip closely a few years ago, and now had some political opinions of my own that wouldn't jibe with Trudeau's, this was big news, and attention had to be paid. So, in order to make up my mind about *Doonesbury*, I decided to revisit the strip of my youth. The atlas-sized *40: A Doonesbury Retrospective* (2010), which brings together four decades of the strip's cacophony of characters—among countless others, Mike Doonesbury, football hero and war veteran B.D., and NPR personality Mark Slackmeyer—fit the bill. But the answers it provided were not what I expected.

Simply put, *Doonesbury* does not age well. Certain strips contain outdated references, such as Mike's enthusiasm for the independent presidential candidate John Anderson (1980) or B.D.'s wife, Boopsie, plopping on a helmet in order to do some "virtual reality shopping" (1993). Yet even strips not tethered to passing fancies, or soon-to-be-obsolete technology, reflect an outlook that is cutting-edge for 1968, or thereabouts. No matter the era, or the current occupant of the Oval Office, *Doonesbury* beat the same drum: pro-youth, antiestablishment.

In commentaries included in *40*, Garry Trudeau is upfront about much of this. He credits Bob Dylan with spreading the gospel of "forever young" among baby boomers: "In fact, the worst thing we can say about anything is that it is 'old,'" he writes. "Old paradigms, old thinking, but particularly old age." Hence, the delight Trudeau took in Zonker Harris, the eternally

RICK MACKLER / ZUMAPRESS / NEWSCOM

*Peter Tonguette is at work on a book about Peter Bogdanovich.*

blond, perpetually off-the-grid dropout who is subject only to the gentlest of ribbing from his creator. Take the 1992 strip in which Zonker draws up a list of his lifetime of marijuana experimentation ("Sept. 14, 1971," "Sept 15-16, 1971," "Sept. 30, 1971," etc.). When the pothead confesses to having forgotten some dates, he is met with an amused, not-at-all-disapproving response from the supposedly "square" Mike. The case of Uncle Duke is even stranger: Despite being inspired by the late Hunter S. Thompson—an archenemy


of Trudeau—the character's uncouth, often unglued, behavior is documented with relish and verve.

Writing elsewhere in *40*, Trudeau sensibly tries to wall himself off from what he calls the "clownish" leaders of Vietnam war protests, with their mantras of "Power to the people!" and "Up against the wall!"

> The rhetoric seemed ridiculous, and I couldn't understand why otherwise thoughtful people were so happy to repeat everything that was shouted at them through a bullhorn.

Yet strips from the early 1970s reveal that Trudeau was perfectly at home with his own brand of hyperbole. How else to explain the strip in which the radical Mark stands with his straight-arrow parents as they proclaim their happiness and love for each other, while Mark thinks to himself, "Dream on, you fascists." A bit of an overreaction? In several strips from around the same time, Mark takes his father's instruction that he cut his long, unkempt hair and turns it into an existential battle—one in which we are meant to take Mark's side, of course. Trudeau notes that he intentionally omitted from *40* strips referring to long-forgotten "historical detritus," but the remaining strips prove how passé *Doonesbury*'s outlook can be even when current events are unmentioned.

While Trudeau approvingly refers to Mike as "the Richie Cunningham of the strip"—its purported "designated grownup"—more often than not *Doonesbury* is ill at ease with conservatives (such as Mark's father) and upstanding citizens of any type. When Mike goes Republican (1994) he has to justify his new party affiliation to his liberal wife—"A Rockefeller Republican! You'll hardly notice any difference!"—in terms that might be funny were it not for the fact that we sense that Trudeau is wagging his finger as well. In a series of strips from 1986, Mike's younger brother, Sal, is saddled with a "Reagan airhead" of a college roommate named Trip Tripler, who (horrors!) reads George Will and eagerly signs up for Navy ROTC. Although there is clearly more to mock in scraggy Sal, Trudeau could not bring himself to side with the straitlaced midshipman, putting wholly unbelievable words in his mouth. Asked by Sal what he would do if ordered to "bombard a hamlet of innocent civilians," Trip replies, "Innocent, my foot!"

Few respectable institutions have been safe from Trudeau. In 1976, he decided that lawyer Joanie Caucus and newspaperman Rick Redfern should shack up before getting married, their state of cohabitation leeringly disclosed in a series of panels. Trudeau regards Joanie as a vessel of feminism, and while he acknowledges in *40* that her choices result in "collateral damage," there is little indication in the strip itself that those choices are meant to garner anything but applause. It is one thing for Trudeau to poke (ever so gingerly) at Joanie for finding the title character in "Peter Peter Pumpkin Eater" to be a "sexist porker" while reading the tale to her son; but what are we to make of the 1973 strip in which Joanie gladly relinquishes sole custody of her daughter following a temper tantrum by the youngster in a courtroom—as though the outburst was the last straw?

Things get worse when Trudeau addresses politics head-on. Surely, what is most damning about his putdowns of Ronald Reagan, Dan Quayle, and George W. Bush is not that he is wrong about them (although he is), but that he is boring and unfunny in the process—like an album of stand-up comedy performed by Lawrence O'Donnell. Is a series of strips entitled "In Search of Reagan's Brain" any evidence of wit? When does representing Dan Quayle with a feather get old? By the 40th time? It is difficult to mourn the end of a comic strip that once balked at presidential candidate Bob Dole for referring to his service in World War II. ("Ladies and gentlemen, please give a warm welcome to . . . my old war wound!")

This was one of the most misguided attempts at satire since *Saturday Night Live* impugned the intelligence of Admiral James Stockdale—Lilliputians seeking to topple a moral giant. With rare exceptions—the fictional Republican congresswoman Lacey Davenport, *Doonesbury*'s most appealing personage, for example—Garry Trudeau clearly prefers the company of his ruffians, rascals, and free spirits. Happily, he now has them all to himself. ♦

B&A

# One-Scene Wonder

*The seventh installment of 'X-Men' poses a quandary.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**X-Men: Days of Future Past**
Directed by Bryan Singer

Is a single standout scene in a movie worth a half-billion dollars? That is the question to be answered by the worldwide gross of this seventh film in a series that began back in 2000.

*X-Men: Days of Future Past* is another in the endless series of "I've seen worse" comic-book blockbusters, which is to say it's not great but at least it's not *Thor*. For this reason, perhaps, the movie has received absurdly enthusiastic reviews—especially given that its opening action sequences are utterly incomprehensible, its plot thereafter makes no sense, and the logic of its surprise ending is that history has erased every single thing that happened in five of the other six X-Men movies.

True, Hugh Jackman has charisma to spare in his seventh turn as the indestructible Wolverine. Patrick Stewart again proves that no actor in history has ever spoken ridiculous expository dialogue about mutant powers as beautifully as he. Michael Fassbender manages, as he did in *X-Men: First Class* (2011), the extremely difficult feat of being charming in one scene and ominous in the next. Still, the movie doesn't do anything new; it even seems to borrow its basic plot structure from, of all things, the stinkeroo called *Men in Black 3* (2012).

And yet, for about two minutes, *Days of Future Past* turns into something extraordinary. For the first time in one of these pictures, you get a real sense of what it might be like to have a superpower. The setting is a kitchen inside the Pentagon. There's a standoff between a few mutant X-Men and some Pentagon personnel with guns. One of the mutants is Quicksilver, a teenage superhero who moves at the speed of light. The guys with the guns open fire. As the other characters remain motionless, Quicksilver begins to move.

*James McAvoy, Jennifer Lawrence, Hugh Jackman*

The year is 1973, and on the soundtrack we hear Jim Croce's hit from that year, "Time in a Bottle." Quicksilver approaches every one of the Pentagon guys and adjusts his body. He points their guns in the wrong direction. He redirects a swinging fist at the fighter's own chin. He flicks his finger at the cheek of another guy, causing it to reverberate like ripples in a pond. Then he goes to each bullet and pushes it away from a fellow mutant.

The kitchen's sprinklers are spraying water, causing a delightful indoor spring shower. The Croce song is ponderously slow and hilariously overpensive. When Quicksilver is done, time starts again and there is an instant slapstick ballet in which the Pentagon guys are all simultaneously undone and the bullets slam, harmless, into the wall.

When I saw it, the audience erupted into cheers. The last time I can remember such a thing in the middle of a movie was in 2006, when Jennifer Hudson finished her showstopping song "And I Am Telling You I'm Not Going" in *Dreamgirls*, and won an Oscar for it.

The cheers were deserved. This is what people still go to the movies for: to be exhilarated, to be shown something they didn't expect and that delights and amazes them. It is the scene people will go home and tell their friends about, and it's the scene that will likely cause them to go back to the theater and see *X-Men: Days of Future Past* again and again.

The Quicksilver scene so transcends the mediocrity of the rest of the picture that I suspect it will be the primary determinant of whether this seventh entry in the franchise is a global sensation (meaning that it grosses near, at, or about one billion dollars) or proves to be just another very expensive superhero hit that only barely makes back its ludicrous cost. (It took at least $200 million to make and another $100 million to market in the United States alone.)

We'll know soon. In the meantime, maybe the existence of this one scene will convince the studios that are determined to wring every last cent out of the superhero genre that they need these things to be *clever*—if they want to delay, as long as possible, the inevitable day when audiences, exhausted by the sameness of these adaptations, start to run screaming at the very sight of a comic book on film. ♦



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

*"Republicans lose by winning"*
*—Politico, May 22, 2014*

**PARODY**

POLITI

VOL. 8 NO. 163 WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2014

# GOP takes Senate, despairs at victory

**BY PHILIP EWING**

After a disappointing campaign season in 2012, the Republican party suffered yet another major blow in last night's midterm elections, seizing control of the Senate from Democrats after winning numerous hotly contested races and adding more than two dozen seats to their majority in the House of Representatives. What an outcome like this might mean for the future of the party is unclear, but whatever it is, it will almost certainly be bleak.

"It's clear that we're on the wrong track," a subdued John Boehner mumbled to reporters this morning on his way into the Capitol. "Honestly, I'm not even sure what our next move is..." he trailed off, shaking his head, a half-smoked Dunhill dangling from his lips. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell was more forceful in his criticism of the party. "It's a [expletive] disaster!" he exclaimed, pacing the floor of his office. "It's a wake-up call is what it is. I'm responsible. We're all responsible. We just never realized until now how bad it had gotten, how out of touch with the American people we really are. I mean, [expletive]!"

GAGE SKIDMORE

**Reince Priebus** resigns in disgrace following his party's resounding triumph over Democrats at the polls.

With the future of the party in jeopardy, a shakeup in leadership has already begun: Republican National Committee Chairman Reince Priebus announced his resignation shortly after returns started coming in last night. "It is clear that what many astute political commentators have been predicting for the past few years—a demographic shift inexorably leading to a permanent Democratic supermajority—is indeed on the horizon. Last night's election results, our many 'victories' aside, only serve to reinforce the fact that just such a shift has apparently already begun," said Preibus in a statement released to the press. "It is with great regret that I end my term as chairman by leading the GOP to what may very well be the triumph that ends this once-great party. The American people have spoken, and clearly, we are not the ones they have been waiting for."

As Republicans scrambled to regroup before what is sure to be another disastrous victory for them in 2016, this afternoon brought more bad news in the form of a *Politico/Washington Post* poll showing Hillary Clinton's unfavorable ratings rising nearly 10 points

See **DOOM** on Page 11