the weekly
Standard

DISASTER IN IRAQ
DAVID DEVOSS • LEE SMITH
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JUNE 30 / JULY 7, 2014 $4.95

FEMINISM AND ITS DISCONTENTS

Cads and Coeds
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THIS IS A COMBINED ISSUE. THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE WEEKLY STANDARD WILL APPEAR IN TWO WEEKS.

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COVER BY JASON SEILER

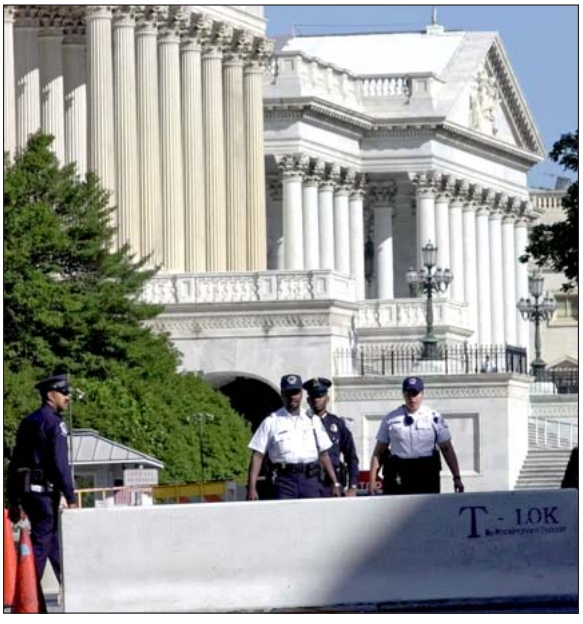
Down with the Barricades!

One of the many things that The Scrapbook doesn't like about life in modern Washington—aside from the politics, of course—is the extent to which the nation's capital, especially its downtown core, has become a high-pitch security zone. Access to public spaces and buildings is severely restricted; there are several competing police jurisdictions, all eager to respond to perceived emergencies. When a VIP is transported from one fundraiser to another, the route (and adjacent blocks) are shut down tight while a long, screaming motorcade of cops and Secret Service agents flies past.

Between the guns, blackened windows, and scrum of glaring guards, you could easily imagine you're in downtown Caracas, and Generalissimo Whatsisname has just whizzed by.

As always, The Scrapbook is quick to acknowledge that safety and security are important, especially in the post-9/11 world, and people who live and work in Washington understand this more than most. In a democratic society such as ours, however, there must be limits. For if safety and security were absolutely paramount, and the Secret Service ran things more than it already does, our elected officials, and especially our president, would live in a series of underground bunkers, shielded and cosseted, moving about in absolute secrecy, seen by none but authorized eyes. This is not what the Founding Fathers had in mind.

A good—or we should say, horrifying—example of this mentality is contained in the current proposal from Terry Gainer, former head of the U.S. Capitol police force, who believes that, at the heart of this ancient democracy, safety comes first. Accordingly, he is demanding that the federal government purchase the dozen square blocks surrounding the Capitol building, construct a "functional yet tasteful" fence around Congress, and create what one admiring *Washington Post* columnist calls a "pedestrian-only campus at the east end of the Mall."



Halt! Who goes there?

Automobile traffic would be banned, of course, and access to the lively Capitol Hill neighborhood would be blocked on (now-) busy Constitution and Independence avenues. Union Station would be largely inaccessible by car or taxi, and institutions such as the Library of Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, even the Folger Shakespeare Library, would be marooned in a militarized security zone.

Of course, Gainer's idea may be malevolent, but Gainer himself is no fool: This gruesome transformation of the Capitol's character—from park-like grandeur to prison-like bleakness—is cast in environmental terms: "The Mall gets larger," he tells the *Post*, "greener [and the] air cleaner, and safety abounds."

Indeed, the Mall would not only get "greener," but might largely be devoid of (civilian) human life. Thanks to the various Terry Gainers among us, it is already a challenge, even slightly perilous, to traverse the Capitol neighborhood—streets are blockaded, ingress is restricted—or to approach the building itself. With this new proposal, the principle of citizen access to the legislature, of peacefully petitioning our representative government, would be lost in environmentally friendly obstructions, a reductio ad absurdum of fear and "security."

In The Scrapbook's opinion, if Gainer and his fans in the press want cleaner air, they should plant some much-needed trees along the Mall and relax in the shade. ♦

The Edwards Rehabilitation

It's always a solemn occasion when The Scrapbook finds John Edwards back in the news. At this point, the stories are less a reminder of the former senator and vice-presidential candidate's odious conduct than fresh evidence that there's no Democratic rehabilitation project the media won't enthusiastically undertake. The *Washington Post Magazine* recently decided to profile Cate Edwards, John's daughter. Certainly, Cate has had her own ordeal and shouldn't be blamed for the sins of her father, right?

In a word, yes. But there is one small matter that bears mentioning. Cate is a Harvard Law grad who's just hung out her own shingle. "In November, she turned her two-lawyer firm in Dupont Circle into the Washington office of Edwards Kirby, the elder Edwards's

AP / KENNETH LAMBERT

attempt to relaunch the trade that made him famous. (In his first trial after renewing his license, completed last month, he helped win a $13 million settlement in a personal injury case.)" That's right—Cate Edwards has just gone into business with her father, and the *Washington Post* has just published what amounts to a glossy advertisement for their new firm. And you'll be glad to learn that working with her father provides "Cate more latitude in pursuing their public interest cases: individual civil rights, whistleblower and sexual-orientation matters."

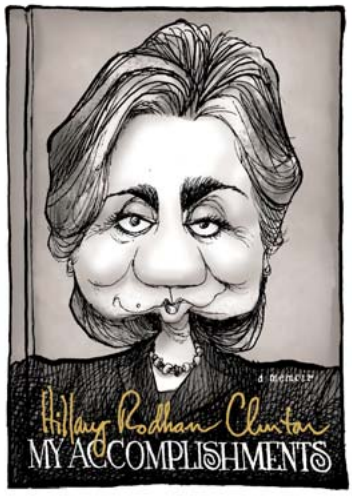
How credulous is the *Post*? "Both father and daughter say the idea of working together gradually emerged. . . . Each has an affinity for civil cases that champion the proletariat, and the self-description of Cate's boutique firm might have been lifted from the early days of her father's work: 'representing regular, working people . . . and giv[ing] them a level playing field in the law,'" notes the *Post*.

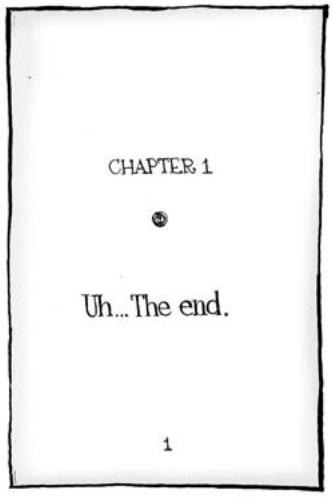
Using the phrase "champion the proletariat" unironically in any context is enough to make a well-adjusted reader recoil; using it to describe the legal profession is doubly questionable; and using it to sum up the self-described altruistic motivations of John Edwards is deeply lacking in self-awareness.

Then there's the article's unfortunate attempts to portray Cate Edwards as just your average young lawyer. "Given her privileged start in life, Cate Edwards is pretty low-key. Yes, she bought her $1.3 million home while still in law school, but she doesn't come off as upper-crust." Well, it's good to know she's just like the proletariat she likes to champion. If you skip ahead a couple of sentences, you get a few more clues about her regular, working-people lifestyle. "She and [husband] Trevor have Luca, an Italian water dog, and a Vespa. At dinner at Il Canale in Georgetown, they are a fun couple." Nope, she's not giving off any "upper crust" vibes at all.

And yet, the *Post* proceeds blithely, recapping John Edwards's cretinous behavior in the broadest possible terms, and with nary an unflattering or critical word offered. An unflinching article about Cate Edwards's relationship with her troubled father might be worth reading. A glowing article about how big things are ahead for a family of socially progressive and fantastically wealthy personal injury attorneys is an affront.

The Scrapbook would be remiss if we didn't mention the article's denouement. There's a description of John Edwards embracing his daughter, accompanied by the final line, "Perhaps in family, as in love, as it was, so it remains." The editors at the *Washington Post* owe an apology to any reader with a functioning gag reflex. ♦





RAMIREZ

Well-Deserved Prizes

Movies have the Oscars. TV has the Emmys, Broadway the Tonys. And the conservative movement has the Bradley Prizes. The Scrapbook isn't exaggerating—much. Last week, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation held its annual celebration of individual achievement in the cause of freedom, and it was more like a show-business saturnalia than the typical wonky D.C. powwow. In one of the august auditoriums of the Kennedy Center, a comely star of Broadway musicals opened and closed the event, serenading the crowd. Red, white, and blue strobe

lights flashed as each recipient, conspicuously wearing a medal hanging on a ribbon, walked onstage to the orchestra's cue. There was a crucial difference, however: Instead of insipid grocery-list-style thank-yous interspersed with the occasional call to end genocide, there were inspiring speeches showcasing the primacy of freedom to every human being, from artists of genius to disadvantaged parents of struggling schoolchildren.

Four figures received the acclaim of their colleagues—and a $250,000 check—for their work in varied fields. George Will, who emceed the event (and a former Bradley Prize-winner himself), dubbed *Wall Street Journal* columnist Kimberley Strassel the "fourth branch of government" for her dogged pursuit of the truth behind what she called "the accepted storylines" advanced by politicos and pundits alike. Goldwater Institute president Darcy Olsen, a preeminent advocate of school choice, asked a question more leaders should take to heart: "What if the solution to Washington isn't in Washington?" Terry Teachout, the playwright and *Wall Street Journal* drama critic, gave a provocative talk arguing for art over ideas. He elegantly summarized his job: "I seek to be ever and always alive to the moral force of art whose creators aspire merely to make everything more beautiful, and in so doing to pierce the veil of the visible and give us a glimpse of the transcendently true."

Georgetown law professor Randy Barnett, one of the country's greatest legal minds, discussed the two conflicting visions of the Constitution and ended the evening on a particularly stirring note by dismissing the idea that America has become, as the media often have it, too "polarized." "Our politics seems divisive today because there are now two sides to this fundamental debate," he argued.

For the first time in its 10-year history, the Bradley Prize ceremony was streamed online. You can watch all of the fabulous event—from outside the Beltway, even—at BradleyPrizes.org. ♦

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Making a Spectacles of Myself

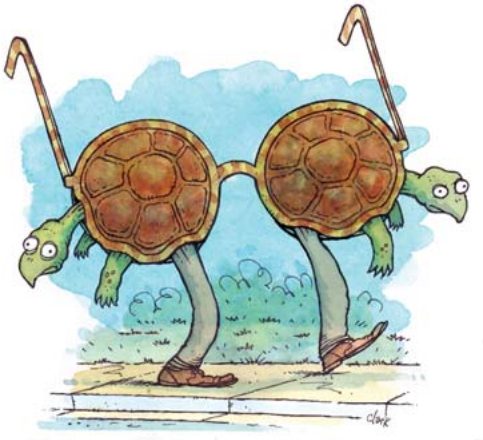
Of late, the last four years or so, I rarely go out for long without being praised. I am praised not for my writing, my perspicacity, my elegant bearing, my youthful good looks, my extreme modesty, but for my eyeglasses. "Nice glasses," strangers say to me. "Like your glasses," they say. "Love those glasses," is a refrain I hear at least once a week. "Where did you get those glasses?" people wearing glasses of their own often ask me. "Thank you for your kind words about these glasses," I have taken to answering. "They are my best feature."

The frames of my glasses are round, large, heavy, and dappled with an emphatic tortoiseshell. Although they are bifocals, I do not need them full-time. I work at my computer without them. I don't need them to watch television. I sometimes leave my apartment without them. Clearly, though, when I do wear them they dominate my face. Were I to commit a crime, they are probably the first thing that witnesses to it would recall about me.

A few Sundays ago, I was walking in the neighborhood when a middle-aged woman, in tights and doing a power walk, paused to say, "Love your glasses." I told her I much liked the glasses she was wearing. She told me she has several pairs of glasses at home. "Glasses are jewelry for the face," she said, and humped and pumped her way down the street.

Some glasses make one look forbidding. I think here of those rimless spectacles that suggest an older banker foreclosing on one's mortgage. Other glasses make one look owlish. As an older man, Cary Grant wore black-framed glasses that made him even more elegant. Senator Carl Levin of Michigan wears half-glasses low on the nose that do not work well with his sad comb-over.

When I grew up, wearing glasses of any kind was considered a serious detraction, a handicap of sorts. "Men seldom make passes," Dorothy Parker wrote, "at girls who wear glasses." Men who wore them were thought bookish, make that bookwormish, nerdy *avant la lettre*. "Four-eyes" was the put-down term of choice used against those who did. As if to illustrate how much this has changed, For Eyes is today one of the nation's leading optical franchises. Naming a company after an insult—only in America.



DAVID CLARK

I did not need to wear glasses until my mid-forties. I have not in the least minded wearing them thereafter. Thirty or forty years ago, many people still did mind. For those who could afford them, contact lenses were the first solution. The solution was not always a successful one. People who wore them seemed fairly regularly to lose a contact lens. I've seen professional basketball games stopped while players, down on their hands and knees, hunted for a teammate's lost contact lens. Contact lenses are more efficient today, and some people wear them purely for cosmetic reasons to change the color of their eyes, a touch that has always struck me as positively Persian Empire in its decadence.

Not many movie stars have worn glasses. Harold Lloyd, the silent-film star did; and so, too, does Woody Allen, the too-talky film star. No women regularly wore glasses in movies. A standard movie bit, though, had a female star playing a spinster, perhaps a librarian, until at the appropriate point in the story her glasses would come off, the bun at the back of her head would be loosed to release a luxuriant growth of hair, and—presto change-o—she turns into a sexpot.

Monocle-wearing men used to appear in English movies; Adolphe Menjou might have donned a monocle in a flick or two. Did Margaret Dumont use a lorgnette, glasses on a stem, in the Marx Brothers' *A Day at the Opera*? The University of Chicago philosophy teacher Allan Bloom, who went in for lavish haberdashery, affected a pince-nez late in life, which even with his florid personality did not quite come off.

In the 1970s, I was on a cruise of the Greek Islands on which the political journalist I. F. Stone was a fellow passenger. Stone wore Coke-bottle-thick lenses in rimless glasses. Magooishly, he made his way among monuments and sculptures. At one point, in the museum at Olympia, I watched him inspect the detail of a dazzling Hermes statue from a distance of three feet through binoculars.

As for my own glasses, a friend who hadn't seen me for a few years remarked that they seemed to be getting bigger and bigger. Is it possible that eventually they will take over my face and then my personality, and I shall become little more than tortoiseshell on legs, which sounds like the perfect donnée for a story by Kafka? I haven't yet written it, but its working title is "The Man Who Made a Spectacles of Himself."

Joseph Epstein

the weekly Standard

A Victory for Free Speech

The other day a unanimous Supreme Court ruled that a First Amendment challenge to an Ohio law should be heard in the lower courts. While the decision may have seemed a minor one, it represents an important advance for freedom of speech.

The question that the Court answered in the affirmative, with Justice Clarence Thomas writing, was whether Susan B. Anthony List, a pro-life advocacy organization, has standing to challenge an Ohio statute that prohibits false statements made during a political campaign.

Ohio is one of 16 states that have false statement statutes. Most of them date from the post-Watergate era and seek to promote an ostensibly more virtuous politics. The laws vary in their details, but they all involve government in passing judgment on what are essentially statements of opinion. That is what makes them unconstitutional, since under the First Amendment, the people, and not the government, have the authority to decide which political statements are true or false or somewhere in between.

The Ohio law makes it a crime for anyone to make false statements about the voting record of a candidate or incumbent officeholder and for anyone to "post, publish, circulate, distribute, or otherwise disseminate a false statement concerning a candidate" that the speaker knows is false or has made with "reckless disregard of whether it was false or not." Note that the law applies even to campaign falsities composed by bloggers.

In 2010, SBA, doing as advocacy groups do in an election year, targeted members of Congress who had supported "a health care bill that includes taxpayer-funded abortion"—Obamacare. One was Rep. Steve Driehaus, the Democrat who then represented the state's First Congressional District, most of which is in Cincinnati.

SBA sought to rent billboard space in the district to "educate voters" about his position. "Shame on Steve Driehaus! Driehaus voted FOR taxpayer-funded abortion" was to be the message. The company that owned the space refused to display it after a lawyer for Driehaus threatened legal action. Aware that under the false statement statute "any person" may file a complaint with the Ohio Elections Commission alleging a violation of the law, Driehaus did so—on October 4, 2010, 29 days before the general election.

Driehaus's complaint—that SBA had falsely stated his voting record—meant that SBA would be subjected to a process established by the statute in which government officials would decide whether the organization had indeed falsely spoken. Conducting an "expedited review" as the law provides, 3 members of the commission (there are 10 in all) decided on October 14 that there was "probable cause" to believe that the alleged violation had occurred.

SBA now risked criminal prosecution and punishment if the full commission, which would act next, were to decide there was "clear and convincing evidence" that a violation had occurred. Such a judgment must, under the law, be referred to "the relevant county prosecutor," with fines, prison, and disfranchisement awaiting those charged and found guilty.

SBA didn't wait around to find out what the full commission might do. On October 18, before the commission's scheduled hearing, SBA filed its challenge to the constitutionality of the false statement statute. After the election, Driehaus, having lost his bid to keep his seat, decided to drop his complaint. But SBA stayed with its lawsuit, contending that its speech had been inhibited, that it intended to send the same message in future elections, and that it expected to see its constitutional rights again "being chilled and burdened," because anyone can hale it before the commission, "forcing it to expend time and resources defending itself."

The district court dismissed SBA's lawsuit, as well as a similar one brought by the Coalition Opposed to Additional Spending and Taxes, with which it had been consolidated. The cases fared no better on appeal, in the Sixth Circuit.

At issue was whether the two parties had presented a sufficiently concrete injury that would confer on them standing to have their case heard. SBA and COAST argued that the threat of enforcement of the false statement statute amounted to such an injury, and the Supreme Court agreed, concluding that "the burdensome commission proceedings" together with "threat of criminal prosecution" suffices to create an injury that entitles the parties to have their case heard.

A Supreme Court decision sustaining the Sixth Circuit would have effectively insulated Ohio's false statement statute—as well as those in other states—from constitutional challenge. It would have ensured the continued involvement of government in decisions that the First Amendment leaves to the people.

As matters stand, *SBA* v. *Driehaus* has been sent back

to the lower courts for review of the constitutional issue it raises. And who knows? *SBA* v. *Driehaus* might someday return to the Supreme Court. If not, let's hope that the justices take a similar case. It's time for the Court to affirm the First Amendment by taking government out of the business of political fact-checking and removing the threat of prosecution against speakers who dissent from its views of political truth.

—Terry Eastland

Cronyism and Coercion

After the upset of House majority leader Eric Cantor at the hands of GOP primary voters, many congressional Republicans may be looking for ways to show they are listening to their constituents. One way they can do so is to take renewed aim at Obamacare.

Obamacare's risk-corridor program is serving as a slush fund for President Obama. He is using that fund to placate his insurance company allies whom he double-crossed. After Obama declared last fall that insurance policies banned by Obamacare would be unbanned by presidential proclamation, insurers were understandably alarmed. Obama's lawless decree meant that millions of people who already had insurance—and who were likely to be healthier on the whole than those who didn't—would not be forced into the Obamacare exchanges after all. His decree, therefore, likely made the exchanges' risk pools even worse.

Insurers registered their concern, and Obama responded by changing the rules on the risk-corridor program so that more money would flow insurers' way. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that the administration's rule change was worth $8 billion to insurance companies. The risk corridors that were once projected to generate $8 billion in revenue for the government are now projected to be budget-neutral. But that revenue was being counted on to help offset the cost of Obamacare, which means that (according to CBO scoring) the insurers have now effectively received an $8 billion tax break for which the general taxpayer is on the hook.

Obama now says he won't dip into the risk-corridor slush fund again. But why should we take his word on that? To prevent taxpayers from being at the mercy of Obama's whim, Congress would have to pass legislation.

In doing so, the House would clearly be acting on the people's will. Polling by McLaughlin & Associates, commissioned by the 2017 Project, finds that voters are overwhelmingly opposed to putting taxpayers on the hook for a bailout of health insurers. The poll asked, "If private insurance companies lose money selling health insurance under Obamacare, should taxpayers help cover their losses?" By 81 to 10 percent, respondents said no.

This issue unites Americans. Using taxpayer money to help cover insurers' losses is overwhelmingly opposed by Republicans (86 to 8 percent), independents (83 to 7 percent), and even Democrats (76 to 14 percent). It's opposed by those who are white (85 to 7 percent), black (69 to 16 percent), Hispanic (73 to 19 percent), and Asian (80 to 20 percent); by those who are under 40 years of age (78 to 16 percent) and those over 40 years of age (83 to 7 percent); by men (83 to 10 percent) and women (79 to 10 percent). Among seniors—known to be reliable midterm voters—it's opposed by the tally of 83 to 5 percent.

Nor was this a Republican-heavy poll—38 percent of the respondents were Democrats, while only 31 percent were Republicans.

Democrats will argue that making the risk corridors budget-neutral by law will raise the price of insurance in the Obamacare exchanges. But that would be true only if, in the absence of such legislation, insurers' losses would have been covered by taxpayers. If the risk corridors were really going to be budget-neutral, as Obama has said and the CBO has echoed (taking his word for it), then such a law wouldn't raise the price of insurance one bit.

Obamacare's risk corridors are hardly the only evidence of Big Government's unholy alliance with Big Insurance, Big Pharma, and Big Hospitals. Further evidence of these cozy relationships is seen in Obamacare's de facto ban on doctor-owned hospitals. It's seen in Obamacare's determined effort to herd doctors out of private practice and into big hospital conglomerates, where they can more easily be controlled. It's seen in Obamacare's reinsurance program, which amounts to a tax on most Americans' health insurance—including employer-provided insurance—in the amount of $63 a head this year, which is used to subsidize insurance in the Obamacare exchanges at other Americans' expense.

Perhaps the most glaring evidence, however, of the alliance between Big Government and Big Health is the government's having broken with more than 200 years of precedent by imposing an individual mandate. Under that mandate, private American citizens are now compelled to buy a product of the federal government's choosing—for the first time ever. What's more, the mandate is helping to drive Obamacare enrollment. A recent poll conducted for Enroll America asked people why they bought Obamacare-compliant insurance. The most common response was, "It's the law."

Americans would like to see that mandate—Obamacare's coercive core—suspended. McLaughlin's polling for the 2017 Project asked, "Obamacare's individual mandate requires Americans to buy government-approved health insurance. Would you support legislation to suspend that mandate for one year?" By a tally of more than 2-to-1 (57 to 28 percent), respondents said yes.

Legislation to suspend the mandate is supported by a majority of Republicans (74 to 19 percent) and independents (59 to 24 percent) and a plurality of Democrats (42 to 38 percent). It's supported by 63 percent of adults under the age of 30, the highest of any age group, and by 62 percent of Hispanics, the highest of any racial group. That makes sense—the polling for Enroll America found that young people and Hispanics are particularly likely to enroll in Obamacare to avoid the mandate's penalty or to avoid running afoul of the law. That polling found that "avoiding the fine was more important to young adults . . . while the 'law' mattered more to Latinos."

Obamacare relies on its risk-corridor slush fund to keep insurance companies happy, and it relies on its individual mandate to coerce Americans into buying overpriced insurance they don't want. In taking aim at each of these, Republicans have a welcome opportunity to fight corporate welfare, help Main Street Americans, thwart Obamacare, and show they are listening.

—Jeffrey H. Anderson

2016 or Bust

Commenting on the results of the latest NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* survey, NBC's Chuck Todd remarked, "This poll is a disaster for the president." Indeed, he continued, "essentially the public is saying, 'Your presidency is over.'"

But it isn't over. It won't be over for two and a half years. And that's a problem.

We're generally inclined to defend our presidential system of government as opposed to a parliamentary alternative. But if we weren't so set in our ways and such fans of the Founders, this is one of those moments that could lead us to rethink our allegiance. It sure would be nice to be able to move a vote of no confidence in an American parliament right now, and take the issue of who should govern to the country. It would be wonderful not to be stuck with Barack Obama for two and a half more years.

She's far from invincible.

NEWSCOM

But of course in our system, even if it were discovered that Barack Obama personally took a hammer to Lois Lerner's hard drive in the Lincoln bedroom, and Obama were impeached and convicted, we'd end up with President Joe Biden. Which would be good for the late night comedians, but no better for America.

So what is to be done? Minimize the damage in the present, develop serious alternatives for the future, win the Senate in November, and, above all, win the presidency in 2016 with the best possible candidate with the strongest possible mandate for the boldest possible agenda.

Speaking of 2016, the NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll had a couple of interesting findings on the question of who might be our next president. The good news is that while 38 percent of respondents say they "probably" or "almost certainly" will vote for Hillary Clinton in 2016, 37 percent say they "definitely" will *not* vote for her. This means that Clinton, the candidate with by far the highest name recognition and the longest résumé, starts off at about 50-50. And while her approval numbers remain decent, they're falling: Today, 44 percent view her positively against 37 percent negatively. Just two months ago, those numbers were 48 percent positive, and only 32 percent negative.

By contrast, in the sixth year of the Bush administration, John McCain, the frontrunner and eventual nominee of the party in power, had a favorable rating in the mid-50s and an unfavorable number in the mid-20s. And of course he lost.

Here's another set of precedents to cheer us up—if we can survive the next two years. Since World War II, the party seeking to hold the White House for a third term has done significantly worse than it did in the preceding presidential election. Here are the numbers:

Eisenhower won his second term in 1956 by 15 percentage points. Nixon lost in 1960 by 0.1. Drop: 15 points.

Johnson won in 1964 by 22 points. Humphrey lost in 1968 by 1 point. Drop: 23 points.

Nixon won in 1972 by 23 points. Ford lost by 2 points in 1976. Drop: 25 points.

Reagan won in 1984 by 18; Bush won in 1988 by 8. Drop: 10 points.

Clinton won in 1996 by 9; Gore carried the popular vote in 2000 by half a point. Drop: 8 points.

Bush won by 2 points in 2004; McCain lost by 7 in 2008. Drop: 9 points.

So the average swing away from the party seeking a third straight term in the White House is 15 points. One could say that the 1950s-80s were a different era in American politics. Fair enough. But even in the two cases since the Cold War, the swing has been 8 points. Obama, as it happens, won reelection in 2012 by 4 points.

Republicans have a good chance to win the presidency in 2016. Meanwhile, they need to do their best to make sure our situation at home remains fixable, and, even more daunting, that the world situation is salvageable. And then Republicans have to nominate someone who can win and who, as president, can right the ship of state after the wreckage of eight years of Obama. Not easy tasks. But no one ever said the challenges of self-government are easy.

—William Kristol

Taking a Tumble Again

What Obama's descending job approval ratings mean for November. BY JAY COST

President Barack Obama's job approval seems to be slipping again. After a brutal couple of months following the failed launch of HealthCare.gov, the *Real Clear Politics* average of opinion polls found his approval at 40 percent in December. But the government claimed to have fixed HealthCare.gov, never mind the continuing problems, and the "surge" in enrollments gave him a further boost. By mid-April, he was back up to nearly 45 percent approval in the *RCP* average. Recently, though, his numbers have tumbled again, and today his job approval is just 42 percent.

The likely driver of this decline is the onslaught of bad news: the crisis in Ukraine, the scandal at the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Bowe Bergdahl prisoner exchange, the flood of illegal crossings of the Texas border, and most recently the deteriorating situation in Iraq; the capture of Abu Khattala, a suspect in the Benghazi attacks, is a rare bright spot whose effect on the polls, if any, remains to be determined. So far, the cumulative effect of week after week of bad headlines for the administration has been rising disapproval of the president across a host of metrics. Recent polling by Bloomberg and ABC News/*Washington Post* has shown the president taking a slide not just in his overall job approval, but in his handling of the economy, inter-national affairs, health care, the deficit, and immigration.

A 42 percent approval rating is terrible for any president; Obama's is drawing comparisons to the support George W. Bush registered at a similar point in his tenure. This must scare the wits out of professional Democrats, who remember well that Bush's political misery was their joy.

Still, it is fair to ask: Will this slide, if it persists, affect the midterm elections in November? Probably not directly. The Democratic party has not fallen below 45 percent of the two-party vote in nationwide House contests since 1928. In several instances—1972 and 1984, for example—Democrats have garnered less than 45 percent in presidential elections, but those are less reliable measures of the core Democratic electorate because personalities often loom so large.

House results are a better measure of core party support. It is possible—perhaps likely—this year that the GOP will score its largest House victory since before the Great Depression. Republicans are on track to win as many seats as they did in 2010, and because they are the incumbent party, their margins of victory are likely to be greater than they were four years ago.

Even so, if the Democrats fall below 45 percent, they probably will not fall as far as Obama's recent job approval. The core Democratic electorate should come out to support the party, even if some Democrats now disapprove of Obama.

We have seen this dynamic before. George W. Bush's job approval stood at just 39 percent in the *Real Clear Politics* average at the time of the 2006 midterms, yet House Republicans won about 46 percent of the two-party House vote. In 2008, Bush's job approval was an abysmal 28 percent according to *Real Clear Politics*, but congressional Republicans still won 44 percent of the two-party House vote.

The reason is that partisan voting habits are much harder to change than perceptions of the president. Thus, a slide in presidential approval from 50 percent to 45 percent has much more electoral relevance than a fall below 45 percent. The former indicates the loss of the all-critical bloc of independents; the latter suggests your partisans are dropping away, but they will probably come back in November. The latest Gallup poll placed Obama's job approval at 64 percent among nonwhites, 70 percent among liberals, and 78 percent among Democrats. These are dangerous numbers for a Democratic president, no doubt; still, Democrats will likely do better with these base groups on Election Day.

That said, there may be an indirect

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link between Obama's slide and his party's electoral fortunes.

Republicans need to gain six seats to take control of the Senate, and seven of their targets are in states that Mitt Romney carried in 2012. In 2013, Obama averaged just 34 percent in the Gallup poll in these states, and his standing is probably no better today. Congressional Democrats have been pinning their hopes on the idea that a critical mass of voters will not be put off by their dislike of Obama, so that Democratic candidates can run on personal traits or local issues and win.

But that theory may be coming undone. It is possible that the forces moving Democratic voters away from Obama are also pushing swing voters toward the GOP, to stymie a president they can no longer abide. If recent news is inducing Democrats to say, "That's it, I oppose this president!" it may also be compelling swing voters to say, "That's it, he has to be stopped!"

When this happens, the Beltway political class talks about "nationalizing" an election. Something like nationalization probably occurred in 1980, when the Democratic president, Jimmy Carter, was very unpopular and the GOP won a Senate majority for the first time in 28 years. Nationalization helps explain several upsets over the last few cycles—Ron Johnson's defeat of Russ Feingold in Wisconsin in 2010 would not have happened absent nationalization, for instance, nor would Jim Webb's defeat of George Allen in Virginia in 2006.

Unfortunately, horse-race polling cannot yet give us a clear sense of what lies ahead. The portion of the electorate that swings midterm elections is small, and at this point in the cycle their thoughts on November's Senate contests are not well formed. The GOP is leading in seven Democratic-held seats and well within striking distance in another four. But that is about all we can say. Polling cannot yet tell us whether swing voters will punish Democratic candidates for the failings of their party leader.

Republicans, though, would do well to encourage voters to do precisely that. The crush of events has shown the president to be desperately out of his depth. Both incompetent and factious, he lacks the mettle and the inclination to manage the affairs of state in the public interest. His allies should not be allowed to control any branch of government. He should be isolated to minimize the damage he can do in his last two years in office. If the people want Obama stopped, the only means is the GOP. Anything else is, for all intents and purposes, a vote for Obama.

This attack will not play in California or New York, but it may help move the needle in those seven Republican states with Senate races, not to mention in Colorado and Iowa, and maybe Michigan, New Hampshire, and Virginia.

Even a GOP Senate majority will not stop Obama, of course. The powers of the presidency have grown far beyond the original grant in the Constitution, quite often because Congress wrote vague or open-ended laws that presidents and their bureaucrats have been free to interpret. Still, a Republican Congress would be a start. ♦

The Enemy of My Enemy Is My Enemy

No one should mistake Iran for a friend.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

When Ottoman armies marched into Europe in the mid-14th century, Europeans started looking hopefully eastward for enemies of the Turks. Spanish and French kings sent ambassadors to Tamerlane when the last great Muslim Mongol conqueror started marching west. Europeans and Byzantines rejoiced when the Central Asian obliterated the hitherto invincible legions of the Ottoman sultan, Beyazid the Lightning Bolt, at the Battle of Ankara in 1402. When the Persian Safavid shah Abbas I started gaining strength in the late 16th century, Europeans took note, seeing a potential powerful ally against their dreaded Muslim foe.

Change dates and Muslims: Some Westerners are again hoping that Iranians can be helpful against Sunni holy warriors in the Middle East. This thought has crossed the minds of senior administration officials and even a dogged skeptic of Iranian intentions like the Republican senator from South Carolina Lindsey Graham. He wants Tehran to help save Baghdad from the onrushing Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, a ferocious offshoot of Abu Musab al Zarqawi's savage Al Qaeda in Iraq.

"We need to coordinate with the Iranians," the senator urged, "and the Turks need to get in the game and get the Sunni Arabs back into the game, [and] form a new government without [Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-] Maliki." Through talks, Graham believes, the United States can persuade the clerical regime not to seek dominion over the Shiite regions of Iraq.

None of this makes sense. Sunni radical Islamists are more primitive than their Iranian counterparts: In the Islamic Republic there has been a vivid debate, and a seesawing of government policy, about whether the public stoning of adulteresses, now banned, is a civilized practice; lapidation is de rigueur among staunch

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Sunni fundamentalists. The one-time major-domo of the politicized clergy and President Hassan Rouhani's most consequential patron, Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, has a real appreciation for history and literature, which may partly explain his enthusiasm for nuclear weapons and the assassination, now and then, of troublesome dissidents. Iranian emissaries often have no trouble shaking the hands of (male) Westerners. With only the rarest exceptions, Sunni hardcore Islamists who spring from the Saudi Wahhabi tradition are cultural reductionists. They zealously strip their own history of its color and complexity. They are incurious about foreign lands. They loathe the touch of infidels.

Sunni jihadists are certainly scarier now than their Shiite counterparts: Public decapitation with swords and knives is, at least in modern times, more Saudi than Persian, and suicide bombing, which Sunni radicals now relish, has passed into desuetude among Shiites. Even the radical Shiite clergy—Sunnis don't really have a clerisy to whom they give their obeisance—was never particularly enamored of this type of terrorism, even though Arab Shiites in Iraq, Kuwait, and Lebanon were its trailblazers. It's questionable whether the leaders of the Sunni jihad raging across Syria and Iraq really want to blow themselves up, but certainly the rank-and-file radicals appear more wild than even the shock troops of the Lebanese Hezbollah, who've slaughtered Sunni civilians in Syria. Hezbollah's fighters are more professional and camera-shy when they butcher their enemies.

Compared with Shiite holy warriors, Sunni jihadists, especially in Arab lands, are morally more distant from their fathers' and grandfathers' socially conservative traditions, which despite their severity allowed for furtive sin and hypocrisy. In this sense, modern Sunni jihadists aren't just stateless; they're village-less. Their pristine, zealously egalitarian faith has become fluid, ready to be poured into any projectile that radical Sunni leaders have the skill to aim. That is just less true of militant Shiites. Ali Khamenei, Iran's supreme leader, has certainly tried to turn Islam into an ideology, a never-ending charge against the United States and Westernization. But the vanguard of Iran's Islamic Revolution, who have brutally battered the older mores of the faith and the restraining politesse of Persian culture, kill and torture selectively, more carefully now than they had to 30 years ago. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the praetorians of the revolution, who've used terrorism at home and abroad as an essential tool of statecraft, still have to, however reluctantly, give deference to clerics.

Another friendly flag-and-Obama-burning in Tehran

This isn't an intentional system of checks and balances; it's just what happens when an Islamic revolution is made by well-educated Iranian mullahs who can't quite figure out how the Persian-Islamic marriage works in a modern theocratic state with a global revolutionary mission. Iranians can shift from zealous, arrogant, extroverted believers to introverted, polite, and pious worshippers to rampaging cynics in fairly short order. They're not schizophrenic; they're just giving due deference to all of the component parts of their heavy yet evolving cultural inheritance.

By contrast, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the leader of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, defers to no one, and certainly not to Ayman al Zawahiri, the far less powerful titular head of al Qaeda central, who probably fears that his group, hiding on the subcontinent, may no longer be that competitive among Arabs. Most Arab Sunni jihadists have grown up in societies without any real moral compass. From the 1950s through the 1990s, Arab military dictatorships more or less obliterated the old order, with its deference to family, class, education, and religious institutions. The only thing that gave comfort and security in this vacuum was the faith, but the faith was in free fall.

Shiites have an advantage over Sunnis in times of trouble because their historic evolution, even after Iran became a powerful Shiite empire in the 16th century, has been at a distance from "those who hold the reins." In the Islamic Republic, the state and the clergy are not interchangeable. There is a tension—a constant negotiation—among clerics about who are the proper arbiters of right and wrong. Sunnis have always been much more closely married to the state; they are more likely to collapse into crises of faith when government gives way or comes to be seen as illegitimate. Both are happening throughout the Arab Middle East.

Mutatis mutandis, something similar has happened with radicalized young Sunni Arab men who've grown up in Europe. Westernization has stripped them of their past, their conservative hierarchies and customs, while offering them a difficult

AP PHOTO / VAHID SALEMI

integration into unfriendly societies whose national identities are still ethnic (think German) or impossibly vague (think Belgian) and still more than a little bit Christian. Liberal individualism, the elixir of Western strength, can be a lonely, cold creed for immigrants, and the children of immigrants, in an identity crisis. And alienation in Europe now pairs up with desecration in the Middle East. Islam, the oldest of such people's available identities, naturally rises and becomes supercharged. Jihadism can then quickly emerge—especially if the right hot war is nearby.

We don't know how many European and American Sunnis have traveled to fight in Syria and Iraq. But it appears that something has finally snapped in the West's young Arab Sunni males, at least in Europe. If true, that crackup mirrors, or imitates, the cultural *Gotterdämmerung* in the motherlands. It's interesting: Even though millions of Iranians and Arab Shiites now live in the West, we've not seen them in significant numbers answer a call to jihad against Sunnis or Westerners. Although Westernization once produced a remarkable number of Iranian Islamist revolutionaries, that is no longer the case. Westernization among Shiites now appears to severely dampen their enthusiasm for Muslim fraternity or more violent callings.

In his loathing of the United States, al-Baghdadi is probably indistinguishable from Khamenei or Qassem Suleimani, the head of the Quds Force, the expeditionary and preeminent terrorist unit within the Revolutionary Guard Corps, who, with considerable foresight and planning, killed probably hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq. The difference between these men, at least vis-à-vis the West, is not really of ideas or ideals or even means. In Iraq, Khamenei and Suleimani, like al-Baghdadi, have doggedly encouraged sectarian politics and violence to increase Tehran's leverage over the Iraqi Shiites, who tend to take their distance from Iran as they become more self-confident. The triumph of Sunni militants in the north of Iraq doesn't weaken Tehran's position in that country; it fortifies it. It's doubtful that Suleimani is all that worried about Baghdad falling—the capital is now Shiite turf, and Suleimani has an excellent, eyewitness grasp of the Battle of Baghdad between 2005 and 2007, which the Iranian-backed Shiite militias decisively won. Sunni numbers and weaponry are still woefully insufficient for urban combat in hostile territory. Al-Baghdadi's forces could easily get destroyed in a protracted conflict in the capital. The loss of Samarra, one of Shiism's shrine cities, to Sunni radicals is embarrassing to all Shiites. And the certain increase of Sunni terrorism in Baghdad and elsewhere will anger Iranians. But such terrorism will inevitably tighten the ties between the Quds Force and Iraqi security and intelligence services, which is an enormous, long-term plus for Khamenei's regime.

Iran has never been averse to Sunni radicals who lived to harm the United States. In the 1980s and 1990s, Rafsanjani, with Rouhani always at his side, institutionalized an ecumenical approach towards militant Sunni fundamentalists: The Islamic Republic would esteem and aid them—even if they had unkind thoughts about Shiites—so long as they expressed enmity towards the United States and Israel.

What's different now is that Sunni radicals have succeeded spectacularly in Syria and Iraq, threatening Tehran's most important Arab Shiite ally in the Levant, Bashar al-Assad's Alawite regime. Sectarian conflict on this scale makes it difficult to find Sunni Muslims willing to bless the Islamic Republic's overarching mission against the United States. However, this loss isn't going to moderate the clerical regime's anti-American calling—the hope of those who now see an Iranian opportunity for America in Iraq. Just read the supreme leader's speeches since the Sunni uprising in Syria started threatening the Islamic Republic's alliances. Anti-Americanism is as strong as ever if not worse —even though President Obama has shown that he has no intention of militarily threatening Assad's rule.

What is going to happen? The Iranians will probably double down on their militant Sunni outreach, even as they fan the flames of sectarian war in both Syria and Iraq. They will reflexively try to find common ground with jihadists in anti-American rhetoric. They will try to rally all Muslims to their side in the nuclear test of wills with Washington and Europe. The Iranians know that they are in a major religious battle with Saudi Arabia, comparable to the tug of war when the Iranian revolution led to the expansion of militant missionary activity on both sides. The Saudis decisively won that round; one of its deleterious byproducts was the Wahhabization of so many Sunni schools and mosques in the Islamic world and Europe.

It is possible that the present Sunni-Shiite conflict could, if the Iranian body count rises and too much national treasure is spent, produce shock waves that fundamentally weaken the clerical regime. Iran has millions of Sunnis living within its borders—many more than the regime likes to admit. Things could get violent inside the Islamic Republic. Further down the road, it's even conceivable that if the Sunni-Shiite slaughter were sufficiently intense, both sides might exhaust themselves and grow more tolerant.

But whenever Islam is superheated, infidels fare poorly. While both sides of this old and bitter divide kill each other, Sunni and Shiite radicals will surely try to outbid each other over who is the staunchest enemy of the United States. In this ugly contest, the Iranians will be the more fascinating to watch: They are highbrow Islamic revolutionaries, which means, among other things, that they can esteem risqué Persian verse as much as they do nuclear physics. Qassem Suleimani, my Shiite Iraqi friends swear, can even be an entertaining dinner guest. ♦

What About the Book?

As, you know, *a book*.

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

Nobody has time to read these days. Everybody says so, anyway. So in the case of Hillary Clinton's *Hard Choices*, is there any good reason to buy the book and read it? Not much, going by the reviews. None has called it a page turner and, at more than 600 of them, you'd like to have a reason to keep turning. Life is short, and there are many, many books still to read.

Maureen Dowd describes the book as "inert, a big yawn." Others are kinder, but none is enthusiastic. There is no review that makes you think that you can buy this book and count on it to deliver the satisfactions enjoyed by literate people.

Now there is absolutely nothing contingent about this. Mrs. Clinton wasn't broke any longer when she wrote the book. She wasn't trying to turn out a bodice ripper to pay some bills in the fashion of William Faulkner when he wrote *Sanctuary*. She got close to a $14 million advance for this book. She could have found herself a little studio somewhere, shut down the phone and the email, splurged on a top-shelf coffeemaker and a comfortable desk chair and gone to work, making it her goal to write the kind of book that, in the contemporary argot, would "change people's lives." A book that an ordinary reader, not consumed by the politics of the moment, would find pleasure and enlightenment in reading.

She chose, manifestly, not to do that, and the choice says something about her. Nobody can write a good book as the result of merely having decided to. But one can make an effort *not* to write a bad book, and Mrs. Clinton is certainly intelligent enough to recognize flaws in a book that would keep it from being good, or great, and might even make it bad.

You don't, for instance, write about how Canada "our northern neighbor is an indispensable partner."

What's the wholesale price of a platitude?

Readers hoping for a book that will be a kind of companion for many hours aren't looking for the sort of thing they can get from any canned political speech. Which is to say, passages like this:

> Ultimately, what happens in 2016 should be about what kind of future Americans want for themselves and their children—and grandchildren. I hope we choose inclusive politics and a common purpose to unleash the creativity, potential, and opportunity that makes America exceptional. That's what all American people deserve.

Even great books include the occasional clunker. But an accumulation reveals either a tin ear or, worse, contempt for literary standards. If the author couldn't even take the trouble to clean up this kind of mush, one thinks, why should I bother to keep up my end and read the damned thing?

And then there is the matter of proportion. You don't include in the same autobiographical work a chapter on how much you love your mother and your daughter along with one on the controversial murder of an American ambassador who worked for you. You don't do this, that is, unless your aim is not to write a good book but one that contains material that you can place in *Vogue* to soften your image along with something that will work in *Politico* and help "position" you for a coming political campaign.

Constructing (as opposed to writing) a book that can be excerpted in both *Vogue* and *Politico* will likely result in one that recalls the Winston Churchill line: "Pray remove this pudding. It has no theme." Churchill had an actual pudding in mind, but the line can be applied to *Hard Choices* and to many less-celebrated books belonging to this unfortunate genre. In fact, Churchill himself provides the proof that it is not some iron law of nature that such books should be a bore and chore to read, that it is possible to write a political/historical memoir that succeeds as a book and even a work of literature.

This thought occurred to me during the week when all the talk was of Mrs. Clinton's book. Why not, thought I, read an actual book that is right for the moment? This is the 100th summer since the Guns of August, and Churchill's *The World Crisis* is still one of the indispensable books on that catastrophe. So I spent the week rereading the one-volume, abridged edition.

Churchill, of course, was no disinterested party. He had played an important part in the events of which he wrote. His fingerprints were all over some of the war's most controversial episodes, not least among them the Gallipoli campaign. The reader is aware of this, and the writer does not flinch from it. At the end of the long section of the book that deals with Gallipoli, I found myself more or less

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in sympathy with Churchill, who was obliged to resign as first lord of the Admiralty when the project failed. I felt that way chiefly because I sensed Churchill was playing straight with his readers. That, as Orwell, no admirer of Churchill's larger politics, once wrote: "In general, Churchill's writings are more like those of a human being than of a public figure."

Then there is the matter of style. Churchill worked on his books, and they deliver, over and over, in passages like this one, concluding the section on Gallipoli:

> There was nothing left on land now but the war of exhaustion—not only of armies but of nations. No more strategy, very little tactics; only the dull wearing down of the weaker combinations by exchanging lives; only the multiplying of machinery on both sides to exchange them quicker.

Passages like that occur over and over in Churchill's book, and they do what good writing does—they take over the reader's consciousness. The distance between reader and subject matter vanishes. But those passages don't appear on the page because some "book team" (Clinton's phrase) has engineered them. They come straight from the writer, working hard at his craft. Like this one, in which Churchill writes of the awful Passchendaele battle:

> The disappointing captures of ground were relieved by tales of prodigious German slaughter. The losses and anxieties of the enemy must not be underrated. . . . But the German losses were always on a far smaller scale. They always had far fewer troops in the cauldron. They always took nearly two lives for one and sold every inch of ground with extortion.

If it is unfair to compare Hillary Clinton with Winston Churchill, then it is also unfair of her and her "book team" to inflict on readers something like *Hard Choices*. They could have used the money, and their time, on something that would not have been such a waste of ours. Readers deserve better. ♦

Between Iraq and a Hard Place

The Kurds love America. It's time to reciprocate.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

They came from the west through the Syrian Desert, across the Euphrates River, and down off the Nineveh Plain. Mosul, Baiji, Tikrit, Samarra—cities held by the U.S. military just two and a half years before—fell almost without a fight, absorbed into the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), a prospective terrorist caliphate based on *sharia* law and governed by Salafist militants who make even al Qaeda shudder.

Erbil

For the moment, America's $3 trillion attempt to plant a pluralist democracy in the heart of the Middle East lies in ruins. Trained and equipped at a cost of $25 billion, Iraq's army is in disarray, the Humvees, tanks, and field artillery it inherited from the United States now in enemy hands. Al Anbar sheikhs like Mohammed Khamis Abu Risha who joined the Sunni Awakening in 2007 at the behest of Gen. David Petraeus are being hunted down and killed. Captured government officials who happen to be Shiite face the possibility of summary execution.

No armed foreign intervention will quell the enmity that divides Sunni and Shiites. In Saudi Arabia, Wahhabi disdain for Shiites is such that an inadvertent handshake requires ablutions. Pakistani Sunni disparage fervent Shiites with nicknames like "mosquitoes." In Iraq, where the collision of the Persian and Arab worlds has left a 60/40 Shiite to Sunni divide, American options are limited. "The initial impulse is to take short-term military action, but the problems in Iraq are political," says American Academy of Diplomacy president Ron Neumann, a former U.S. ambassador who served in Iraq with the Coalition Provisional Authority. "Sending in American troops will just redirect all the anger toward us."

Much of the blame for the current chaos goes to Iraq's 64-year-old premier, Nuri al-Maliki, a Shiite who came to power in 2006 after promising George W. Bush and U.S. ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad he would form a government of national reconciliation. After twice building coalitions with Sunni support, Maliki denied Sunni political parties the ministries he had promised. His biggest mistake, however, was dismissing from government service the former al Qaeda sympathizers Petraeus had employed at minimal expense during the surge.

A dour politician, Maliki is no man of the people. Instead of shaking hands with voters, he moves through a crowd head bowed, enveloped by a flying wedge of bodyguards with linked

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arms. "In return for military assistance, Maliki once again has promised to form an inclusive government, but I suspect he will break his promise," says Marina Ottaway, a senior scholar of Middle East affairs at the Wilson Center. "Maliki has no credibility left. There can be no reconciliation as long as he heads the government."

Iraq's constitution requires Maliki, who has already served two terms as premier, to relinquish power. But there is little chance of that happening since last year cronies on Iraq's Supreme Court voided that part of the constitution.

ISIS has no chance of taking over Iraq. The Shiites will fight to the death to protect the holy cities of Karbala and Najaf that lie south of Baghdad. With massive support from Iran, Maliki might even survive politically. Washington's reasons for saving Maliki and befriending Iran are less compelling given the fact the United States has an alternative, alliance with a more prosperous and stable partner in northern Iraq's Kurdish population.

Spend more than a few days in the Kurdish capital of Erbil and you'll hear Kurds say, "We love America but it doesn't love us." From an American perspective, it is hard to see what's not to love. The Kurds have a booming capitalist economy, a functioning court system, two political parties that manage to compromise on most issues, and a regulatory environment that favors Western investment. Though officially part of Iraq, the three Kurdish provinces function as a quasi-independent nation in that they collectively issue visas, control border crossings, and pursue a foreign policy independent of Baghdad. Though largely Sunni in orientation, the Kurds maintain friendly relations with Tehran's Shiite government and close business ties with Ankara.

All this is possible because of oil, a commodity Washington fears might prompt Iraq's Kurds to proclaim independence.

Iraq has 150 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, but 45 billion of those lie in northern Iraq, an area the size of Switzerland with a population of 5.2 million Kurds. Baghdad is responsible for selling Iraq's oil. Kurds should receive 17 percent of the oil revenue. Unfortunately, corruption in Baghdad is so bad that the Kurds rarely receive their full share. Indeed, Iraq's cities often suffer prolonged blackouts because the ministry in charge of oil denies the Ministry of Electricity enough oil to generate power.

Several years ago, Kurdistan began circumventing Baghdad by trucking its oil to Turkey, an industrialized neighbor dependent on Iran and Russia for energy. More recently, the Kurds built a pipeline to move oil directly to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean. When oil companies frustrated by unacceptable business practices in southern Iraq announced their intention to move north, the U.S. embassy in Baghdad told them to stay put. They went anyway. Today, ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total, and Hess have exploration deals in Kurdistan.

Despite Iraq's well-documented shortcomings and Kurdistan's economic growth, the State Department continues to favor Baghdad. As ISIS terrorists began tolling down the Tigris River valley, a freighter loaded with a million barrels of Kurdish oil cruised aimlessly off the coast of Morocco because of U.S. pressure on Europe not to buy Kurdish oil.

"Our most immediate concern is for Iraq's stability," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki told a daily press briefing in Washington. "We've been clear that it's important for all sides to help [Iraq] pull together and avoid actions that might further exacerbate divisions and tensions."

Because of the spiraling cost of oil and the uncertainty of Middle Eastern deliveries, the Turkish broker handling the shipment managed to find a European buyer. Today, two more tankers filled with Kurdish crude are sailing for Europe.

It is reasonable for Washington to try to salvage a relationship with a government in which it has invested more than 4,400 American lives. But who is our real ally in Mesopotamia? Unlike Iraq's army, the Kurdish Peshmerga did not retreat from the ISIS assault. The Kurds held all three of their provinces, provided shelter for fleeing refugees, and moved into the nearby city of Kirkuk, saving it from terrorist occupation while adding to northern Iraq's oil reserves.

Historically, Kirkuk was an ethnically diverse town inhabited by Kurds, Turkmen, and Arabs. But because it sits atop a huge pool of oil, Saddam Hussein expelled 500,000 Kurds in 1991 and gave their homes to Arabs brought in from the Sunni Triangle. The Kurds' return to the city rights a historical wrong, but it also changes the relationship between Erbil and Baghdad to the point that Baghdad now needs the Kurds more than ever before.

In 2008, George W. Bush told Maliki that Iraq needed a permanent U.S. military presence. Maliki refused, insisting that all American forces leave his country by December 2011. Two years later, Barack Obama reiterated the Bush position, asking only that remaining U.S. soldiers be indemnified against local prosecution. Maliki again rebuffed the offer of continuing assistance. In the present situation, the United States should do what it reasonably can to defend and shelter the people of Iraq, no matter their religion or ethnicity, starting by having the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance help the more than 500,000 refugees from Nineveh Province now in Kurdistan. The Iraqi government as presently configured is not worth another investment of lives and treasure.

It's time for the Pentagon and State Department to admit what they already know: Iraq's Kurdish Regional Government is a true ally and committed friend that shares our values. Working in cooperation with our NATO partner Turkey, Washington should help the Kurds preserve what they have achieved.

The prospect of an independent Kurdistan still troubles Erbil's neighbors. But there is little reason for Iraq's Kurds to change the status quo, given their oil wealth, leverage with Baghdad, and solid business relationship with Turkey. Perhaps it's time for the United States to love the Kurds as much as they love us. ♦

‘Student Loan Relief Now’

The case for allowing these debts to be erased via bankruptcy. BY IKE BRANNON

Let’s just sign the loan papers. What’s the worst that could happen?

My father is one of the reasons that student loans cannot normally be discharged via bankruptcy. Such an outcome was never his goal: quite the opposite, in fact, because exempting student debt from bankruptcy relief makes little economic sense and is patently unfair to the students saddled with such debt. A sensible reform of this law could slow tuition growth and put a lid on exploding student debt while sparing young adults the debilitating stress of a debt they can never hope to repay.

The path by which a small-town lawyer inadvertently helped change bankruptcy law began shortly after the Supreme Court in 1977 ended prohibitions against lawyers advertising. Soon after the decision my father placed an ad for his services in the *Peoria Journal Star*, making him the first lawyer in Illinois to advertise.

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He knew that the novelty of an ad for legal services would create some buzz around town: However, he wanted a *lot* of buzz. So his ad—a 1-inch-by-2-inch display buried amongst the box scores on the sports page—read “Student Loan Relief Now: Discharge your Debts via Bankruptcy.”

Mission accomplished: The editorial page of the same paper thundered against such a tawdry ad shortly thereafter, back when such a thing mattered greatly, and a local TV station chimed in. A federal judge referred to my father as a shyster in court for publishing the ad, which earned the judge a formal censure and created another media storm. My father found himself in the news quite a bit in the ensuing months, and as a result became known as the bankruptcy expert in Central Illinois. His practice exploded: At one point he filed the majority of bankruptcy cases in the area.

At the time my father placed his ad, student loans were treated much like any other debt. A Chapter 7 or “straight” bankruptcy discharges most obligations, save tax debt or loans that were secured by pledging an asset against their repayment, as is commonly done with car loans. In 1976 Congress had made student loans slightly more difficult to escape by deeming that they could not be discharged via bankruptcy during the first five years of repayment unless there was “undue hardship,” although judges had considerable latitude to interpret hardship.

The year after my father’s advertisement appeared, Congress passed legislation making it much more difficult. A few years later further legislation made it all but impossible.

The rationale typically given for exempting student loan debt from bankruptcy relief is that new college graduates may attempt to jettison debt just before they reap the fruits of their education. It only takes a few medical residents or newly minted lawyers stiffing their lenders to gin up enough outrage to get a law passed, helped along by a provocative newspaper ad.

But my father didn’t write his ad solely to provoke: The burden of student loan debt is not a new phenomenon, and he did not—and in retirement still does not—see any special difference between someone who can’t afford to pay back their student loans and one who can’t afford to pay their credit card debt or health care bills.

We allow people to declare bankruptcy in acknowledgment that letting people escape from debt they cannot repay is a beneficial policy for both society and the economy. To exempt a particular type of debt—for an activity society should very much like to encourage—belies the very reason for a bankruptcy law in the first place.

Lending a student $60,000 to attend a private school he may have little chance of graduating from is not terribly different than the mortgage lenders who gave imprudent loans to people buying homes they could not really afford. Both the school and the company that made the student loan get their money regardless of what happens to the student, and as a result neither has any compunction about helping a student attend a

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school where his prospects are poor.

The provision prohibiting the discharge of student debt via bankruptcy is in some respects an anachronism, given that the bankruptcy reform of 2005 addressed the bogeyman the provision was originally written to prevent—by precluding people with an income above the median from filing a straight bankruptcy. Instead, those people must file a Chapter 13 "reorganization," which requires debtors to assume a repayment plan set forth by the court that requires as close to a full repayment of their debt as deemed reasonable.

If we are concerned that allowing students to escape student debt via bankruptcy might open up the college loan market to the same moral hazard problems that befell the mortgage market and will leave the government on the hook, we could make the institution of higher learning assume their loan payments after a bankruptcy. That might make schools think twice before they admit a marginal prospect and charge them thousands of dollars for an education that might not do them much good, and it might make students think twice about disdaining lower-price options, such as the junior college near their home.

One thing is certain: The Obama administration's recently announced plan to limit loan payments to 10 percent of income for 20 years (or, for people who work in a "public service" job, 10 years), to punish schools with high default rates, and to allow students with high student debt to refinance at low rates, is a costly palliative that ignores the fundamental economic issue at hand. Namely, most of the billions of dollars loaned to college students each year goes to the schools in the form of higher tuition.

While we're trying to improve the lot of the indebted college graduate, let's give the market a chance to help the cause. Making it easier for students to escape debt they cannot hope to repay via bankruptcy would bring a healthy dose of realism to colleges, students, and an administration hell-bent on over-regulating yet another sector of the economy. ♦

Can India's Military Be Fixed?

A reformist prime minister vs. a dysfunctional defense ministry.

BY SADANAND DHUME & GARY SCHMITT

American strategists are taken with the idea of India's strategic potential: a large democracy with a blue-water navy and the world's third-largest armed forces that happens to be jammed between an imploding Pakistan and an expansionist China. But a deeply dysfunctional Indian defense community has frustrated efforts to turn that potential into reality. Will the election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi last month with the strongest mandate of any Indian leader in 30 years jumpstart much-needed reforms? The answer will help determine whether India begins to fulfill its vaunted potential as a U.S. strategic partner in Asia and beyond.

Modi in the cockpit of one of India's aging MiGs, June 2014

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On the face of it, Modi's election augurs well for India's defense preparedness. On the campaign trail, Modi promised a strong India able to stand up to its adversaries. He deplored what he called the then-ruling Congress party's lack of respect for soldiers, and promised to devote his government to long-overdue military modernization.

But the list of problems he faces is a long one. The Indian defense budget has declined to less than 2 percent of the country's GDP, the lowest in five decades. This might be tolerable if the country's security environment had gotten appreciably better in recent years—but it hasn't. Though India hasn't witnessed a major terrorist strike since the carnage in Mumbai in 2008, Pakistan remains a threat, and the prospect of terrorist attacks has not gone away. As the United States draws down its troops in the region, Afghan instability is likely to be of increasing concern, and India faces on land and at sea a rapidly rising military power in China, with which the country

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shares a disputed 2,500-mile border.

The challenges, however, run much deeper than a lack of resources. The procurement system is broken, corruption a constant problem, and tensions between the various military services and the civilian defense bureaucracy are serious and longstanding. Politically appointed defense ministers have had little time for—and, more important, little interest in—straightening out all that ails the Indian defense effort.

The last defense minister, A. K. Antony, was so worried that corruption associated with military procurement would tarnish his image that he brought India's acquisition process to a virtual halt. At the slightest hint of scandal, purchases would be stalled and companies blacklisted until investigations could be completed. The result: tens of billions of dollars in new equipment not acquired, with existing platforms growing outdated and more expensive to maintain.

Indians themselves point to the history of multiple on-again, off-again attempts to procure aerial refuelers, transport aircraft, and light utility helicopters. For example, even though India's air force is replete with older (in some cases, relatively ancient) fighter aircraft like the MiG-21, there seems little urgency in replacing them. After a drawn-out bidding process, the government finally opted in 2012 to buy 126 of Dassault's Rafale aircraft for $11 billion, but it still hasn't finalized the contract. As a result, the full complement of Rafales probably will not enter the Indian Air Force's inventory until well into the next decade.

Similarly, before the turn of the century, plans were approved for India to acquire 24 new diesel-electric attack submarines, both to increase the size of the submarine fleet and to replace an aging fleet. Yet it's possible that over the next year only 9 of the current fleet of 14 attack submarines will be operational, with the rest needing overhauls—a reality reinforced by repeated accidents onboard Indian Navy submarines, including the total loss, with crew, of a Russian-made submarine last August. Yet plans to build the new submarines have been delayed time and again. Inevitably, delays mean higher costs, and, with a budget dominated by personnel expenses, this means even fewer rupees to buy needed equipment.

Already, the army is facing shortages in ammunition, field artillery, night-vision capabilities, specialized counterterrorism equipment, and antitank weapons.

Though India prides itself on its strategic autonomy, it is actually the world's largest importer of defense equipment. Buying from abroad is an absolute necessity, given the sclerotic condition of India's own defense industry. What India does procure domestically is overwhelmingly tied to state-owned companies and government ordnance factories. As for defense R&D, virtually all of India's expenditures go to the state-run Defence Research and Development Organization. With little private sector involvement and a cap of 26 percent for any foreign direct investment, India has not been able to take advantage of the type of technology and expertise that Western defense giants might bring to the table. Instead, India's military acquires homegrown tanks, armored vehicles, and helicopters that it doesn't want or fighter aircraft, such as the Tejas, a multirole light fighter, only now being built after 30 years in development.

Compounding these difficulties is the fact that India's defense ministry is highly rigid and largely staffed by civil servant generalists. Further, lacking the equivalent of a chief of the defense staff to force interservice cooperation, India's military is unable to take advantage of whatever efficiencies in planning or acquisitions might in theory be possible. The convoluted state of India's defense establishment and decision-making process amounts to an open invitation for middlemen to ply their trade and, in turn, stoke the perennial corruption.

None of this will be news to Modi's new government. Over the years there have been a number of high-profile looks at fixing India's defense establishment. At best, only minor progress has been made, with reform plans lagging for various reasons, the most important being a lack of interest on the part of the prime minister and a defense minister utterly unsuited to the job.

Will it be different this time around? Certainly, the Modi defense agenda is an ambitious one—some would say Herculean. Among the goals that have been bruited about: raising foreign direct investment caps in defense manufacturing; opening up procurement to the private sector; boosting military spending; creating a chief-of-defense-like post and new tri-service commands for space, cyberwarfare, and Special Operations Forces; completing India's nuclear triad with the faster introduction of the indigenously produced, nuclear-powered Arihant-class SSBN; and uprooting the entrenched defense bureaucracy while at the same time professionalizing the higher levels of the defense ministry's management.

Right now, the new prime minister has the public backing and majority support in parliament to move this agenda forward. Moreover, unlike some of his left-of-center predecessors, Modi appears not to believe that India has to choose between guns and butter: His campaign emphasized both economic growth and a strong defense.

But as the list suggests, many of the problems can't be fixed with immediate infusions of money or even changes in laws. Those may help, but modifications in the culture of institutions and management require a capacity for sustained commitment that is increasingly rare in modern democracies. The natural tendency will be to adopt changes that are easy to see and produce quick results. But unless root-and-branch reforms are tackled as well, the odds of the system falling back into its old ways are high. In short, when it comes to India reaching its strategic potential, Prime Minister Modi and his government have much to do—and, uniquely, the political capital to do it. ♦

Forbidden Thoughts

Seven ideas you can't hold in today's China.

BY LESLIE LENKOWSKY

In late April, a 70-year-old Chinese journalist, Gao Yu, was taken into custody, one of several human rights activists rounded up to keep them from observing the 25th anniversary of the massacre of student protesters by government troops in Tiananmen Square. Shortly afterwards, Gao appeared on television, confessing to a specific offense: leaking what the Chinese news agency Xinhua described as a "highly confidential document" to a foreign website.

"I admit that what I have done touched on legal issues and threatened national interests," she said, according to the BBC. "My actions were very wrong."

What had she revealed? Not the plans for a new Chinese warplane or cyberattack. Not even details about the real health of China's economy or major industries. Rather, as her lawyer has all but acknowledged, the secret paper Gao made public was "Document Number 9," issued a year earlier by the main administrative office of China's Communist party. Entitled "Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere," it demonstrates what the leadership of China regards as truly threatening: not the West's economic or military might but its political and philosophical ideas.

Pronouncements such as this—the ninth issued in 2013—aim to instruct the party faithful throughout China on official doctrine as promulgated by the Central Committee and, importantly at that time, newly chosen President Xi Jinping. Like the others, Document Number 9 was meant to be discussed at local party meetings and inform party-run publications and websites, but was not for public consumption. It opens a window into what China's normally secretive government officials are thinking, or at least want loyalists to think, which, thanks to the unfortunate Gao Yu, everyone can now know.

The communiqué focuses on seven "false ideological trends, positions, and activities" that the party leadership believes are spreading in the country and endangering "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." Foremost among them is "Western Constitutional democracy," the idea that good governance requires a separation of powers, general elections, a multiparty system, an independent judiciary, and other features. According to Document Number 9, China's system of government should reflect "Chinese characteristics." It should place "the Party's leadership" and "the People's Democracy" ahead of the political and legal processes championed by the West.

Likewise, in the eyes of China's leaders, advocating for "universal values" amounts to claiming "that the West's value system defies time and space, transcends nation and class, and applies to all humanity." Such arguments are "confusing and deceptive," they contend, because China—and "Socialism"—should subscribe to fundamentally different values.

These include rejecting individual and economic freedom. Document Number 9 dismisses "promoting civil society" as based on the idea that "in the social sphere, individual rights are paramount and ought to be immune to obstruction by the state"; it pits "the Party against the masses." Nor does "neoliberalism," defined as relying on private property and markets to shape economic activity, fare any better. The "catastrophic consequences" that have occurred in "Latin America, the Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe" show its flaws, the authors write, and underscore the dangers of efforts "to weaken the government's control of the national economy."

Also disparaged is freedom of the press. It is an idea, says Document Number 9, which challenges "China's principle that the media and publishing system should be subject to Party discipline." Those who embrace it "gouge an opening through which to infiltrate our ideology."

Writing about the past is suspect as well. "Historical nihilism," which Document Number 9 defines as the repudiation of the "historical purpose" of the Chinese revolution, such as by rejecting "the scientific and guiding value of Mao Zedong thought," is not only mistaken, but also "tantamount to denying the legitimacy of the CCP's long-term political dominance."

Finally, the communiqué makes clear that questioning public policies, even in the name of "reform" or of "opening," is impermissible. Raising doubts about the direction or pace of the government's current course will "disturb people's existing consensus on important issues like which flag to raise, which road to take, which goals to pursue, etc.," ultimately retarding China's "stable progress." Not least of all, Document Number 9 warns that this could encourage "Tibetan self-immolation," "terrorist attacks in Xinjiang," and the breakup of China along ethnic and religious lines, among other dire consequences.

To prevent those, the party leadership called on its followers to work harder in the "ideological sphere." They should do more to "distinguish between true and false theories" and be steadfast in their efforts to control the media. "We must reinforce our management of all types and levels of propaganda on the cultural front, perfect and carry out related administrative systems, and allow absolutely no opportunity or outlets for incorrect thinking or viewpoints to spread," Document Number 9 concludes.

In a country as vast as China, this would be no small feat, even for the

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Great Helmsman himself (and he certainly tried). Indeed, the government's extensive efforts to block Internet access to websites it deems offensive are more annoying than effective, as both Chinese citizens and foreign visitors have learned ways to bypass them. Notwithstanding the party leadership's attitude toward civil society, China's nonprofit sector has been expanding, with the greatest growth coming among grassroots groups that choose not to register under the country's onerous laws (which are slowly being eased). Despite official distaste for Western values, record numbers of Chinese students are studying in the United States, where they learn not just science and engineering, but also what life in a free society is like. On Weibo, the Chinese version of Twitter, a survey by *Foreign Policy* in April showed far more chatter about Christianity, Jesus, and God than about the Communist party, Xi Jinping, and Mao Zedong.

In the "ideological sphere," seemingly, the party still has a great deal of work ahead of it. And how committed it is to doing this work is not clear. According to China watchers, Document Number 9 is unpopular among the party's rank-and-file. A communiqué issued last November to mark the end of the Third Plenary Session of the party's Central Committee laid out an extensive program of economic reforms, including more effective use of "market systems," but devoted little attention to ideological matters.

Still, journalists remain wary of writing about sensitive topics; social scientists fret about how the government might use their research; visiting professors need to be alert lest their presentations are altered to avoid material the government regards as troublesome.

For all its prosperity and international importance, China remains a deeply insecure nation. Document Number 9 (and subsequent speeches by party officials supporting it) suggests that China's leaders still see themselves as guardians of political and philosophical beliefs that their citizens are rapidly abandoning. ♦

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Nobody Did It Better

Tony Gwynn, 1960-2014.

BY JEREMY ROZANSKY

The Hall of Famer Greg Maddux once explained his pitching success by pointing to a road a quarter-mile off. At that distance, he observed, you couldn't tell whether a car was traveling 55, 65, or

His only World Series home run, 1998

75 miles per hour. So it was in pitching. Unless the batter is tipped off by a hitch in the delivery or an anomalous spin, he's left guessing at whether the ball will come at 80, 85, or 90 miles per hour. "You just can't do it," Maddux explained, "except for that [expletive] Tony Gwynn."

Indeed, Tony Gwynn got more hits off Maddux over the course of his career than off any other pitcher, compiling a .415 average and never striking out. Maddux can be forgiven the career blemish, for Gwynn was the greatest hitter of his era. His career average (.338) was the highest of any player to enter the league after World War II by 10 points. The San Diego Padres's number 19 is 19th on the all-time hits list, with 3,141, and no hitter born after 1900 got to 3,000 hits in fewer at bats. Gwynn won eight batting titles, ranking behind only the dead-ball phenoms Ty Cobb and Honus Wagner. Not since Ted Williams hit .406 in 1941 has a hitter come so close to a .400 average as Gwynn did when he finished at .394 during the strike-shortened 1994 season.

Gwynn died last week of salivary-gland cancer at the age of 54. Baseball fans will remember Gwynn as Maddux does: as the exception. Gwynn was a prewar contact hitter in an era of Bash Brothers and home-run chases. With his career covering almost the entire "Steroid Era," Gwynn was one of the first players to speak out against the rampant use of steroids and amphetamines.

As baseball writers have universally attested, Gwynn was, as a superstar, neither a cantankerous recluse nor an overmanaged corporate icon. His voice may have been more distinctive than his batting stance: high, nasal, and ready to explode with laughter. It was a wonder such an exuberant man could be so patient at the plate. Most of all though, Gwynn is an exception because he never left the San Diego Padres. Though free agency obliterated expectations of loyalty, leading countless players to take their talents elsewhere, Gwynn, a southern California native who attended San Diego State University, routinely took a hometown discount to stay with his oft-hapless Padres. He

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became Mr. Padre. America's Finest City's finest.

Hitting was Gwynn's obsession and vocation. There are two great contradictory myths we like to tell ourselves about sports. One is that the great ones are simply naturals. Beyond the way it corrodes meritocracy, such a view is flat wrong: Most of the greats are obsessive workers. But its opposite is wrong too: Greatness does not come to every hard worker. Gwynn's greatness was in making the most of his natural gifts. A star point guard at San Diego State, he had exceptional hand-eye coordination and quick wrists. But he also spent the last half of his career with what he called "a body by Betty Crocker." Gwynn had small hands, compelling him to use a smaller, swifter bat, good for singles but not for home runs. Gwynn nicknamed his slender bat "Seven Grains of Pain," but he couldn't use it against power pitchers, otherwise it'd snap. When Ted Williams first saw "Seven Grains," he snarled that he could pick his teeth with it.

What Gwynn did best in the team pursuit of runs and wins was spraying line-drive doubles and duck-snort singles across the diamond, advancing runners, and hoping he would be advanced. When George Will needed a subject for the chapter "The Batter" in *Men at Work*, he chose Gwynn. Will recounts a story of Gwynn pleased by an out and distressed by a home run. He explained to Will that even though he'd made an out, he kept his shoulders square just long enough and swung with his hands leading the barrel of the bat by the right number of inches. On the home run, he complained, he had come forward with the barrel of the bat and had swung a millisecond too soon. Repeating the same swinging action several times a game over a 162-game season means a ballplayer must rely on muscle memory. Given baseball's relentless and gradual averaging out, a well-timed swing led by the hands would produce more runs than an early swing with the hands behind the barrel. Gwynn was never seduced by swinging for the fences. He set his sights on more solid ground: generally swinging for the 5.5 hole between the shortstop (6 on a scorecard) and the third baseman (5).

His success was the result of discipline and preparation. He would arrive at the ballpark and take batting practice at least five hours before the game. He'd start with a drag bunt, then he'd tap line drives across the field, starting behind third and moving a tick toward first with each pitch. His meticulousness took other forms, like requesting that the Padres' batting cages be lit at 300 candle feet (the exact lighting at Jack Murphy Stadium) rather than the original 285 candle feet.

Gwynn was a pioneer in the use of video and let any Padre use his equipment. Originally Gwynn had his wife record games to analyze his own tendencies, but later he examined the tendencies of opposing pitchers. He'd often scribble some lines on wax paper he put over the monitor to make sure that he wasn't diving for the ball too much, or that the tip of his bat followed the right path. And he'd have to start his swing 10 frames of the cassette after the pitcher let go of the ball—9 he was pulling the ball, 11 he was behind. Video allowed him to quickly correct any lapses in his swing, any irregularities. Gwynn was so consistent that, in any season, he never struck out more than 40 times—a bad month for some sluggers. Gwynn was so prepared that he managed to hit .302 with two strikes, leading his closest peer by 40 points.

This is not to say that Gwynn was some sort of analytical supercomputer. He claimed he came to the plate with a mostly clear mind. He'd have a sense of what the defensive alignment said about how his opponents were going to pitch to him or what the pitcher liked to do on a given count. But once the ball was thrown, he simply reacted to it. He estimated he picked up the rotation of the pitch only a fifth of the time. He wouldn't even try to look for hitches in a pitcher's windup. Gwynn's preparation affected his disposition, but it did not dictate. Hitting was not all analysis, it was *feel* too.

Late in his career, a reporter compared his statistics favorably to some of the greats. "I don't care what the numbers say," Gwynn retorted. "Am I better than Hank Aaron? Stan Musial? Frank Robinson? Not a chance. The only thing I want people to say about me is that I played the game the way it should be played. What I've always wanted to do is be a complete player. This is as close as I've ever come to it." He displayed a boyish wonderment at the chance to play at Yankee Stadium for the first time in the 1998 World Series. Without the pretense that he deserved his fame and success, he could not help but be generous with interviews and autographs.

Most of all, Gwynn will be remembered as San Diego's own. His first advice to his son when Tony Gwynn Jr. became a major leaguer was to take care of his family. For the senior Gwynn, that meant staying in San Diego. He was from Southern California, he went to college there, he was a hero there, he was Mr. Padre. So he stayed.

San Diego is the largest city without a championship in one of the four major sports leagues. It'd be as pitied as Cleveland if not for the weather. The Padres are possibly the worst franchise in baseball history. They've been to the World Series only twice, and Tony Gwynn was there both times. He endured a fire sale of virtually every valuable Padre other than himself. He played a team game and he played it well, but the rest of his team was never quite good enough, and was very frequently terrible.

But we remember more about sports than the outcomes, otherwise we wouldn't go to the games. We go to see how, through a combination of intense, unseen work at self-mastery and ineffable, God-given brilliance, a great hitter can hold back on a dropping curve ball and then hold back an extra split-second, all before dipping a seven-grain-wide bat, hands well in front of the bat's barrel, toward the falling curve. With the echo of contact, everyone in Jack Murphy Stadium knew where the ball was going: It'd loop just past the infield, between short and third, and no one could catch it. It happened thousands of times. ♦

The Iranian Regime's Mr. Fix It

Is there anything Gen. Qassem Suleimani can't do?

BY LEE SMITH

Qassem Suleimani is apparently the most interesting man in the world. To judge by the profiles in major Western media outlets—including the *New Yorker*, BBC, and the *Guardian*—the commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' external operations unit, the Quds Force, is the most feared and ruthless military strategist since Rommel. He's also a fixer, a cleaner, like a figure out of a Quentin Tarantino film. Just last week, Suleimani was on call to help out a troubled client in Baghdad. After the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) overran Mosul, Suleimani landed with a cadre of Iranian advisers to lend a steady hand and reinforcements to Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki.

Some call Suleimani the Iranian proconsul in Iraq, but these days, Hajj Qassem, as he is known to friends and admirers, is everywhere around the Middle East. As he reportedly texted the American commander of coalition forces in Iraq in 2007: "General Petraeus, you should know that I, Qassem Suleimani, control policy for Iran with respect to Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza, and Afghanistan." And now there's Syria, too, where Suleimani is gathering fighters from Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, and Afghanistan, as well as Iranian troops from the IRGC and Basij to build a Shiite International to defend another Iranian ally, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad.

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Some say Hajj Qassem is Iran's real powerbroker, and Hassan Rouhani is just the happy, so-called moderate, face of the clerical regime. Indeed, there are rumors floating around Shiite circles in Beirut that Suleimani recently attempted a coup against Rouhani, blocked at the last moment by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Qassem Suleimani

Maybe Suleimani really did try to topple Rouhani—it's no secret he favored a rival, Tehran mayor Mohammad-Baqer Qalibaf, a fellow IRGC field commander from the war with Iraq whose son is believed to be married to Suleimani's daughter. However, it's just as likely that the rumors are the latest installment in an Iranian public relations blitz intended to brand Suleimani as the Middle East's indispensable man. The campaign is directed at the Obama White House: If you want anything done in the Middle East, you'll have to go through Iran and you'll have to deal with Qassem Suleimani. If Rouhani and Javad Zarif are the regime's moderates, Suleimani is its pit bull at the gate.

Suleimani is a serious person. "He's considered a hero in Iran," says Ali Alfoneh, an Iran expert at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "He defended Iran in the face of Iraqi invasion in the 1980s, fought the drug cartels close to the Afghan border in the 1990s, and is now defending the Shia against Sunni terrorists like ISIS."

According to Alfoneh, Suleimani is one of the instruments the Islamic Republic has used to foment a permanent state of crisis in Iraq, making Iraqis, especially the Shiites, dependent on his good will. It seems the White House is equally eager to stay on his good side, says Alfoneh. "I'm sure Suleimani enjoys the fact that the United States government, which has formally designated him a terrorist, now depends on his help to restore security in Iraq and save Baghdad from ISIS."

Not surprisingly, the Obama administration has swallowed the bait from Tehran. Last week the White House indicated that it wanted Iraq's political parties to form a new government—a positive step insofar as Maliki is one of the key sources of Iraq's problems, and his failures paved the way for the ISIS blitzkrieg through Mosul. However, the administration also let on that it would be working with the regional power that controls Maliki. "We are interested in communicating with Iran," said Secretary of State John Kerry. So that "the Iranians know what we're thinking, that we know what they're thinking, and there is a sharing of information so people aren't making mistakes."

The White House believes it has no choice but to coordinate with Iran since there's no getting around Tehran's power on the ground. The administration has reportedly pursued the same policy in Lebanon:

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through the Lebanese Armed Forces, it has shared intelligence on Sunni extremists with Hezbollah, Tehran's division in the eastern Mediterranean. Because Obama will not devote sufficient assets to stopping Sunni jihadists fighting from Beirut to Baghdad, the administration believes it has little choice but to work with the only actor with men on the ground that shares an interest in stopping groups like ISIS. Who else but Qassem Suleimani? According to his PR offensive, he sees everything and knows everything. Hajj Qassem is everywhere.

The reality is that Suleimani isn't nearly as all-powerful as his press. The United States won the surge when it got Iraq's Sunni tribes to fight al Qaeda. Suleimani's anti-Sunni policies in Iraq, by contrast, have pushed the Sunni tribes into alliance with ISIS, along with holdovers from Saddam Hussein's Baathist regime. And in losing the tribes, which control the Syria-Iraq border, Suleimani is also losing supply and communications lines. After three years, hundreds of millions of dollars, Russian weapons, and Moscow's political cover, he still can't put down the Sunni rebellion in Syria. The fall of Mosul is evidence that Suleimani's Shiite International is spread increasingly thin.

For the last 35 years, Iran's ability to project power has been dependent on the willingness of Arab Shiites, especially Lebanon's Hezbollah, to fight and die for Iran's Islamic Revolution. But the Shiites are a regional minority, outnumbered by the Sunnis by something like five to one. Yet they are now fighting in Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq.

When Hezbollah entered the Syrian conflict in force in 2013, it called on the Lebanese Armed Forces to protect its rear and put down various Sunni organizations in Lebanon. After ISIS marched on Mosul, Suleimani recalled the Iraqi Shiite militias he'd dispatched to Syria, like Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, with the result that Hezbollah had to make up for the lost manpower and commit more men to Syria. Only a few days after Mosul, Hezbollah reportedly saw 29 fighters killed in action in Syria.

The various military triumphs in Syria that Iran, Hezbollah, and other allied forces have celebrated over the last few years may now be subject to reversal. In any case, with the likelihood of further conflict in Iraq, a conflict that will not be resolved even if Maliki is ousted, Suleimani's campaign will be stretched all around the region.

It's rumored that American forces had Suleimani in the crosshairs at least once during the U.S.-led coalition occupation of Iraq and chose not to kill him. It's irrelevant now. The concern is that if the White House coordinates with Iran, it will make the myth of Suleimani seem even more formidable than before—Hajj Qassem will have the Americans behind him. ♦

The Professor's Tale

What is it like to be a man in philosophy?

By Charlotte Allen

This is a story about campus sexual harassment, involving a female graduate student in philosophy and a prominent male philosophy professor at an Ivy League university. Except that the alleged events didn't take place on a campus or anywhere near one. Nor did the alleged events meet any legal definition of harassment, since the professor in question wasn't the student's professor, or her dean or her employer, and she was pursuing her doctoral degree at a completely different institution. But there sure was plenty of sex: in hotel rooms, her apartment, and other venues.

And there was also plenty of ill feeling after she discovered that the professor, who, she said, specialized in "moral philosophy" and "global justice"—and whom she called "my global justice hero" in an unsigned online article—turned out to be perhaps somewhat less than "moral." It emerged that he allegedly had quite a few other girlfriends with whom he rendezvoused in other hotel rooms in cities around the world. Those amorous adventures could be said to be "global," all right, although perhaps not "justice" as many people—and especially the aggrieved author of the online article—commonly understand it.

The article, which appeared on April 26 in the online magazine *Thought Catalog*, was titled "I Had An Affair With My Hero, A Philosopher Who's Famous For Being 'Moral.'" The author, who wrote as Anonymous, did not identify either the alleged two-timing professor or his institution, but a two-second Google of "Ivy League global justice" immediately yields a likely name. The piece circulated widely, in part because it makes for entertaining reading. Here are some excerpts:

> When I met him at a conference I didn't think he'd remember me, so I was surprised when he sent me an email, prompting a regular exchange between us. He told me he'll be coming to visit the city where I lived and invited me to his hotel. We talked for hours about philosophy and shared personal anecdotes. . . . Towards the end of his visit, he gave me a rose, took me to a concert, and dinner. I took it as a sign, and, when we returned to his hotel, I declared I was staying. When I asked him if he had protection, he replied that he hasn't had sex for many years, and that I shouldn't worry about it.
>
> That was an easy sell!
>
> The second time he visited City X, he opened the door to his hotel room naked.
>
> The things that go on in hotel rooms!
>
> The third time he was visiting City X, we decided he would stay in my apartment. While we were lying on my couch, I expressed astonishment about being with him, my global justice hero, and told him about how I worried that someone as amazing as him would already have someone in his life. He admitted he's been with the same woman for several decades, before I was even born. I was shocked by this revelation. How could he extol honesty, whilst omitting this crucially relevant information? I was in tears. He held me in his arms and told me that he's fallen in love with me. He assured me that his relationship with his partner has now become a platonic sibling-type, that she would be happy for him that he can have "love and romance" in his life.

Uh-huh. Anonymous must have had her earbuds plugged into Nirvana when her mother warned her that a man will say anything to a woman to get her into bed.

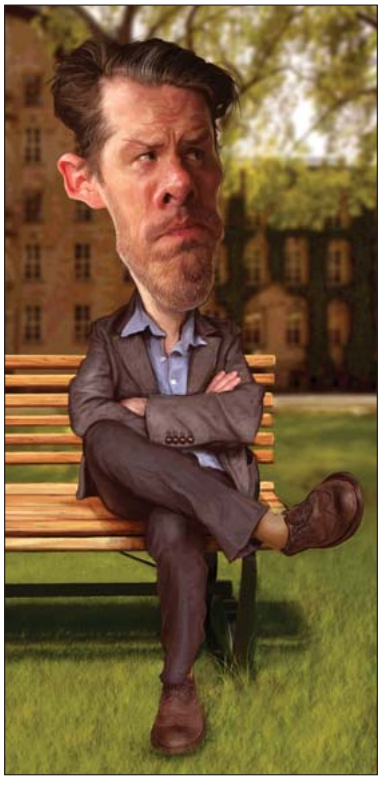
She reported that she began to get suspicious when the professor declined to leave his partner in order to be with her—or even, in fact, to tell his partner that she existed. Then she found out about the "22-year-old virgin" who'd been his former secret mistress, plus the "PhD student in India, who wears a sexy negligee," and the "other young female scholars that he hosts in his apartment." Anonymous concluded sadly: "He will continue giving his lectures about justice around the world, pretending not to eat meat for moral reasons, inviting young women to his hotel room for philosophical discussions, and I'm just among the other young women scorned by the moral philosopher, who devotes his life to justice."

All this would make for a merry tale illustrating the adage "Hell hath no fury like a woman who discovers that her man has been whispering the same sweet nothings into the ears of other females as he's been whispering into hers." It would also make for a merry tale of hypocrisy among sanctimonious progressives in academia. "Global justice" typically involves requiring citizens of wealthy First World countries to hand over their income and assets (via taxes) for

Charlotte Allen, a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard, *last wrote on Harvard's Black Mass.*

"redistribution" to impoverished Third World countries, on the theory that they're complicit in Third World poverty. It's always fun to see a vegetarian guru of redistribution who also happens to occupy a cushy position at a prestigious East Coast university doing a bit of redistribution of his own on the side. Anonymous lamented: "I falsely assumed that the man who calls affluent westerners human rights violators would treat women with dignity." Surprise, surprise!

And finally, this ought to be an inspirational tale for grad-school nerds laboring in the library stacks trying to finish their philosophy dissertations: Get yourself a job in "global justice," and you'll have more progressive females in sexy negligees throwing themselves at you than there are stars in the sky or Third World kleptocrats.



JASON SEILER

Unfortunately, this story, while certainly all of the above, has a dark side. It is also a story about a vendetta, actually one of a series of vendettas waged by feminists over the past few years against philosophy professors and philosophy departments. The campaigns typically make broad claims about sexual harassment, but the incidents alleged typically fall short of what would be required to make a legal case of assault, sexual quid pro quo, or maintaining a hostile workplace or academic environment. Yet they are remarkably successful, partly because universities these days are terrified of running afoul of the U.S. Education Department's Office of Civil Rights (OCR). The OCR under the Obama administration has been issuing increasingly draconian rules and press releases regarding campus harassment, including a May 1 "name and shame" list of 55 institutions, from Harvard on down, that are under OCR investigation for improper handling of harassment complaints. In 2013 the University of Miami forced a star philosopher on its faculty, Colin McGinn, to resign over a series of ill-considered but clearly consensual double-entendre emails and text messages he had exchanged with a female graduate student then working as his research assistant. Early in 2014, the University of Colorado-Boulder ousted the chairman of its philosophy department after a report that some professors had gone out drinking with graduate students and other professors had been observed "ogling" female undergraduates.

And in the case of the Ivy League global justice professor, within days of the appearance of Anonymous's article in *Thought Catalog*, he was specifically identified by a number of feminist activists—including Anonymous herself—as a Yale professor who had allegedly made sexual overtures to a female Yale undergraduate while serving as her senior-essay adviser and, after her graduation in 2010, employing her as a researcher and translator. That woman is reportedly preparing to sue both the professor and Yale itself, which, according to a September 30, 2011, article in the student newspaper, the *Yale Daily News*, had found "insufficient evidence to support the allegation of sexual harassment" and merely issued the professor a reprimand for improper business practices.

In short, the global justice professor has been effectively "outed"—linked irrevocably not just to a taste for trysts in hotel rooms around the world but to a concrete allegation of sexual harassment on his own campus. He may win the lawsuit if it is ever filed (those cases are hard to prove), but that's beside the point. Everyone in the philosophy world is now pretty certain who he is (he has been named on several philosophy blogs), and his career in academia, if not formally finished, may well be mortally wounded. Several well-known philosophers at other universities are more or less calling for his head. Global justice, indeed.

Here is what happened: According to Anonymous, she had submitted her article not only to *Thought Catalog* several weeks before it appeared, but also to *What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?*, a lugubrious feminist blog where female grad students in philosophy complain that their male professors are "dismissive" toward them in class, and female professors of philosophy complain that male grad students don't want them as advisers. A blog editor immediately put Anonymous into contact with lawyers for the Yale graduate who was contemplating a lawsuit. That young woman was doing some activist outreach of her own. Under the pen name "Lisbeth Mara" (apparently after Lisbeth Salander, the name of the heroine of *The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo*, and Rooney Mara, the actress who played Lisbeth in the 2011 movie), she posted a page on the FundRazr website seeking $7,000 in donations to pay for a forensic psychologist to testify in court about the post-traumatic stress she said she was suffering from her encounters with the professor while at Yale and immediately afterwards.

On May 10 Lisbeth's crowdfunding efforts were taken over by a friend, Emma Sloan, also of the Yale class of 2010.

Setting up FundRazr and Facebook pages titled "Protecting Lisbeth" and featuring a photo of Yale's neo-Gothic campus together with a scary stock photo of a man's grimy hand covering a woman's mouth, Sloan managed to raise the $7,000 within 30 hours, partly by upping the rhetorical ante on Lisbeth's plight. Lisbeth had claimed to be the unnamed woman described as "Case 2" in the *Yale Daily News* story of 2011, in which several alleged victims of sexual harassment told their stories to a reporter. The year 2011 had been a tough one for Yale in harassment terms. In March 2011, 16 students and alumni had filed a complaint against Yale with the OCR, alleging that the university's administrators had brushed off or otherwise mishandled pervasive sexual misconduct by male students and professors, and the OCR had started an intensive investigation. The "Case 2" complainant eventually added her name to those of the original 16 petitioners. Yale and the OCR reached a voluntary settlement in June 2012 in which there was no finding of wrongdoing on Yale's part, but Yale agreed to change some of its practices and procedures.

In her 2011 email interview with the *Yale Daily News*, the young alumna reported that while serving as her senior-essay adviser in 2009 and 2010, the professor had constantly attempted to make their relationship more personal, offering her a ride from the airport on one occasion, inviting her over for brunch, and going bicycling with her as they discussed her essay. After graduation he took her along on a 10-day trip as his research assistant and translator, insisting that the two share a hotel room so that he would "not spend funds that could be funneled towards charitable projects." He also confided to her that he had been accused of sexual harassment at the university where he had previously taught. The young woman related "several other incidents on the trip which she asked the *News* not to describe in detail" that she believed constituted sexual harassment. After the two returned, their relationship soured, she said, when the professor discovered she had a live-in boyfriend, and she had trouble getting paid by Yale because she had not officially been on the Yale payroll (Yale did eventually pay her, although on condition that she not discuss her differences with the professor, she said).

When Sloan took over the Lisbeth crowdfunding page, she escalated the extreme discomfort that the "Case 2" complainant had experienced over the shared hotel room (the professor had allegedly tried for a single king-size bed, perhaps to save even more money for charity) into language so incendiary that Sloan was obliged to remove it after hearing from the professor's lawyers raising libel issues. On the Facebook page, Sloan described the Lisbeth events as a "brutal, sadistic, sexual assault" by "a well-known professor of ethics." That's language that's hard to square with the *Yale Daily News* account of what the young woman had said about her unpleasant encounters with the professor. Sloan also wrote: "Lisbeth is one of as many as 12 women who may have been the objects of this professor's sexual misconduct." She claimed that Yale's administrators had known full well when they hired him that the professor had a reputation for "predatory behavior" and had left a trail of harassment complaints in his wake. (I tried unsuccessfully to reach Sloan by telephone.)

On May 5 Anonymous—she of the global-justice disillusion—chimed in with a second, longer article, this time on a "Protecting Lisbeth" blog that Sloan had set up. She confessed that, um, she was still keeping up her relationship with her moral-philosopher Lothario, even though she found him "reprehensible." She wrote: "[S]ince I have spoken to the lawyers [for Lisbeth], I pretended to continue my affair to gather more emails and information about the case." Anonymous also changed her tune considerably. In her *Thought Catalog* article, she had taken full responsibility for falling for a seducer's line as ancient as Zeno's Paradox: "I brought this up upon myself, and I deserve to live with the consequences of my free, voluntary action." In her second article, she decided that she, too, had been a victim of some sort. "[M]y affair with him was not a case of genuine consent for I would never have consented to being his secret mistress." She recast her onetime hero as an insecure manipulator who had a lousy childhood and liked to tell dirty stories.

What is interesting is how quickly a number of high-profile philosophy professors dug into their wallets to support a lawsuit that will inevitably blight the career of one of their confrères irretrievably, if it hasn't already done so. One was Brian Leiter, director of the Center for Law, Philosophy, and Human Values at the University of Chicago's law school. On his widely read left-of-center blog, *Leiter Reports*, he announced that he had contributed to the Lisbeth campaign (he claimed to know Lisbeth's real name) and urged others to do the same. (Leiter did distance himself somewhat from Emma Sloan's infrared rhetoric, saying he could "express no opinion" about what Sloan had written.) Other contributors had included Joshua Cohen, a global-justice theorist at Stanford, and Martha Nussbaum, Leiter's colleague at Chicago and a high-profile public intellectual. Another donor, Eric Schliesser, a moral philosopher at Ghent University, wrote on his blog: "I have come to believe that the systematic pattern of exclusion of women in philosophy is, in part, due to the fact that my profession has allowed a culture of harassment, sexual predating, and bullying to be reproduced from one generation to the next."

Right now, you might be asking: *Harassment? Sexual predating?* That's for campus jocks, frat brothers, and all-night partiers, not tweedy philosophical dweebs in horn-rimmed glasses debating the finer points of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*.

Yet as it happens, philosophy professors are the very bull's-eye of an ongoing campaign by academic feminists both male and female against what they see as rampant sexism in their profession. That's because philosophy seems to be the only branch of the humanities left that is still overwhelmingly male. Fewer women earn Ph.D.s in philosophy than in such fields as mathematics, economics, and chemistry. In 2011 just 21 percent of all college-level philosophy instructors were women and 17 percent of faculty with tenured or tenure-track philosophy jobs, according to the American Philosophical Association (APA). Undergraduate women receive only 29 percent of bachelor's degrees in philosophy.

There has to be an explanation for that. The simple explanation is that most women aren't very interested in philosophy, at least the variant that academics now pursue. It's the most abstract and mathematics-like of the humanities disciplines, and abstract thinking is something at which men seem to excel. The razor-sharp distinction-drawing and brutal, courtroom-style inquisitions that typically take place in philosophy classrooms aren't much to many women's taste, either.

That's the simple explanation. The preferred and politically correct explanation is that it's all the fault of men. And that's where the "systematic exclusion" and "culture of harassment, sexual predating, and bullying" to which Schliesser alluded comes in. And also, the ascendency of feminists frustrated by the fact that 40 years of affirmative action, diversity preferences, and sexual-assault grievance procedures on campuses—often deliberately designed to favor accusers over the accused—have done almost nothing to change the sex disparity in philosophy departments. It is a situation that makes the contributors to such blogs as *What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?* and *Feminist Philosophers* seethe with frustration.

Not surprisingly, many of those women have foraged around for extrajudicial and even extra-administrative tactics for bringing perceived perpetrators of philosophical sexism to justice without having to go through time-consuming proceedings that don't always end satisfactorily for accusers, or meet even the ultra-low burden of proof that those proceedings entail. Those off-the-books sanctions typically involve public shaming of the alleged perpetrator and also playing on university administrators' desire not to cross the OCR and yearning to be perceived as sufficiently enlightened and woman-sensitive. The *Feminist Philosophers* blog has endorsed a system of informal shunning: not inviting suspected harassers to conference panels, declining to appear on panels with them, and refusing to publish their papers. *What Is It Like to Be a Woman in Philosophy?* is mostly a shaming forum with no names named.

The APA's Committee on the Status of Women recently set up a "site visitation" program in which a team of investigators invited by a university descend on the campus, conduct interviews, and then recommend changes in department culture. The removal of the philosophy department's then-chairman, Graeme Forbes, at the University of Colorado-Boulder earlier this year was the result of one of those site visits. The committee's report, released in summary by the university this past February, did not specify a single instance of actual sexual harassment or misconduct. That didn't stop the committee from compiling a laundry list of further sanctions—not adopted by the university—that included banning the serving of alcohol at departmental functions, dissolving departmental listservs, and encouraging philosophy students to "call out" and issue Red Guard-style public "corrections" to professors whose teaching styles offended them.

Philosophy professors are the very bull's-eye of an ongoing campaign against alleged sexism in their profession. That's because philosophy seems to be the only branch of the humanities left that is still overwhelmingly male.

The tale of the Ivy League global-justice professor is yet another example of this sort of extrajudicial sexual-harassment "justice"—except that it's been taken one step further, bypassing any kind of formal investigation whatsoever. If you believe the Lisbeth Mara story as retold by Emma Sloan with help from Anonymous, you can applaud the tactics they have employed: the deft use of grassroots appeals and social media to force a long-overdue reckoning. But there are other words that aptly describe their actions: "witch hunt" and "reputational lynching."

The professor, with his posturing about Western exploitation while seemingly running his own exploitation racket, is not an appealing character. You might say that the trouble he's in right now couldn't happen to a nicer guy. But because everyone in the philosophy world now has a pretty good idea who he is, he is probably also a very frightened and defenseless guy. (I emailed the professor who I thought best matched the description, and he at first agreed to answer my questions, then later likely thought the better of it, because I never heard from him again.) At Yale, Stephanie Spangler, a deputy provost in charge of sexual-misconduct claims, is said to be reinvestigating the Lisbeth Mara matter—although a Yale spokesman refused to comment on that report. But right now it hardly matters how much truth there is to Lisbeth's story, or whether she wins her lawsuit, or whether that lawsuit ever gets filed. The furies of feminist philosophy have already exacted retribution. ♦

Feminism and Its Discontents

'Rape culture' at Harvard

By Harvey Mansfield

Feminism is in control of America's colleges and universities, where its principles at least are held as dogmas unquestioned and unopposed. Yet in what should be a paradise with those principles at work, women speak of a "rape culture" that sounds like the patriarchal hell we thought we'd left behind. One woman at Harvard (my place of work), an apparent victim of sexual assault, writing anonymously but very publicly in an open letter to the student newspaper that gained everyone's attention, felt obliged to call herself "hopeless, powerless, betrayed and worthless." In reaction, the university, already on alert, has sprung into action and created several new committees to consider what to do. The federal government is at hand to help provide what it describes as "significant guidance" to universities in this sort of situation, in which a single act of sexual assault can engender a "hostile environment."

Sexual assault does not sound like a minor offense, but though it may be a crime, it does not have to be one in the current understanding. The young woman does not appear to have been raped, as defined by the criminal code, nor were the police ever involved. Rather, she was apparently pressured into having sex while under the influence of alcohol. She was the victim of a fellow student, a man who took advantage of her. The "rape culture" in colleges does not produce rape typically but rather instances like this of women cajoled into something they did not feel they consented to, either at the moment or later. Apparently the requirement of consent to having sex does not provide women the protection they thought it would. Apparently it does not stop predatory males but quite to the contrary gives them greater opportunity than they had under patriarchy, when women had less freedom but more protection.

To look at the principles of feminism will help to understand the situation. Two of them are most relevant: that there is no essential difference between men and women, and the corollary that men and women are not real beings but arbitrary "social constructions" containing nothing "natural" or permanent. The purpose of the first is to declare that men and women are the same, so as to give women, formerly the "second sex" (the title of Simone de Beauvoir's famous founding book of contemporary feminism), an independence equal to that of men. Then the second has the function of guiding the construction of a society in which women's independence will be secured. The two are maintained without proof and to the exclusion of doubt, and are not subjected to debate. If someone wants to call them "radical feminism" as opposed to moderate feminism that merely wants to improve the status of women, I do not object as long as it is clear that these two principles are the ground of today's feminism.

The trouble is that the two do not work in concert. If "woman" is defined by society, by social construction, then women are dependent on society and not independent. They are defined not by their voices but by their voices' being heard, not by their accomplishments but by being recognized for their accomplishments, not by their own intent but by their environment, hostile or friendly. One may see then what has happened to feminism. In answer to the eternal complaint of women that men do not listen to them, feminism had the ambition for the first time in the history of man to compel him to listen. The unintended result is that women are defined by their listeners, by their desire to imitate men, not by themselves. The feminist desire for independence is defeated by the feminist principle of social construction that was designed and adopted to achieve it.

Social construction is whatever society does. The idea sounds independent and liberating because it suggests that society can do anything it wants. Society can make a feminine woman, as under patriarchy—the sort of woman that the American founder of feminism Betty Friedan deflated in her famous book *The Feminine Mystique* (1963)—or it can make the gender-neutral woman the feminists have tried to produce. This would be a woman no longer confined by male definition but capable all around, especially in matters formerly reserved for men. So which is better?

The problem with the idea of social construction is that

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society, on its own, has no notion of what is suitable to construct. Both the feminine woman and the feminist woman are socially constructed, and equally so. Actually, when one says social construction, the meaning is political construction: Who rules society in order to make its conventions, the patriarchal males or the feminists? But then we still have to know which ruler is more suitable for women—and let's not forget men and children.

If we take the anonymous Harvard woman student as exemplary, her example shows that the feminist model of sexual independence is not suitable for women, and perhaps not for men either. The feminist model of sexual independence wants women to be equal to men; it is therefore taken from the independent male whose main feature is the ability to walk away from sex afterwards. This borrowed model is actually the predatory male from whom the Harvard woman suffered, and whom feminism imitates and paradoxically glorifies. He is adventurous in sex, but this is because he is not too impressed by his adventures. He walks away after "good sex" just as after bad sex, neither captivated by the first nor much dismayed by the second. Cool! The premise of independent sex is that sex is no big deal. And this is precisely what the Harvard woman found to be unsuitable and untrue to herself.

Here is what she said in her open letter: "I do not care about my future anymore, because I do not know who I am or what I care about or whether I will still be alive in a few years." Quite a commentary, isn't it, on the social construction accomplished by the feminist, gender-neutral rulers of Harvard? And, as we shall see, those of the Obama administration.

One could understand feminism generally as an attack on woman as she was under "patriarchy" (that concept is a social construction of feminism). The feminine mystique was her ideal; in regard to sex, it consisted of women's modesty and in the double standard of sexual conduct that comes with it, which treated women's misbehavior as more serious than men's. Instead of trying to establish a single standard by bringing men up to the higher standard of women, as with earlier feminism, today's feminism decided to demand that women be entitled to sink to the level of men. It bought into the sexual revolution of the late sixties and required that women be rewarded with the privileges of male conquest rather than, say, continue serving as camp followers of rock bands. The result has been the turn for the worse that we see in the plaint of the Harvard student. What was there in feminine modesty that the feminists left behind?

In return for women's holding to a higher standard of sexual behavior, feminine modesty gave them protection while they considered whether they wanted to consent. It gave them time: Not so fast! Not the first date! I'm not ready for that! It gave them the pleasure of being courted along with the advantage of looking before you leap. To win over a woman, men had to strive to express their finer feelings, if they had any. Women could judge their character and choose accordingly. In sum, women had the right of choice, if I may borrow that slogan. All this and more was social construction, to be sure, but on the basis of the bent toward modesty that was held to be in the nature of women. That inclination, it was thought, cooperated with the aggressive drive in the nature of men that could be beneficially constructed into the male duty to take the initiative. There was no guarantee of perfection in this arrangement, but at least each sex would have a legitimate expectation of possible success in seeking marital happiness. They could live together, have children, and take care of them.

Without feminine modesty, however, women must imitate men, and in matters of sex, the most predatory men, as we have seen. The consequence is the hook-up culture now prevalent on college campuses, and off-campus too (even more, it is said). The purpose of hooking up is to replace the human complexity of courtship with "good sex," a kind of animal simplicity, eliminating all the preliminaries to sex as well as the aftermath. "Good sex," by the way, is in good part a social construction of the alliance between feminists and male predators that we see today. It narrows and distorts the human potentiality for something nobler and more satisfying than the bare minimum.

The hook-up culture denounced by conservatives is the very same rape culture denounced by feminists. Who wants it? Most college women do not; they ignore hookups and lament the loss of dating. Many men will not turn down the offer of an available woman, but what they really want is a girlfriend. The predatory males are a small minority among men who are the main beneficiaries of the feminist norm. It's not the fault of men that women want to join them in excess rather than calm them down, for men too are victims of the rape culture. Nor is it the fault of women. Women are so far from wanting hook-ups that they must drink themselves into drunken consent—in order to overcome their natural modesty, one might suggest. Not having a sociable drink but getting blind drunk is today's preliminary to sex. Beautifully romantic, isn't it? The anonymous Harvard woman by getting drunk was unfortunately helping to pressure herself into consenting to a very bad experience. But she is right that the pressure comes with the encouragement of the culture. And the culture comes from the dogmas of feminism that made this mess for women and men too.

One more feature of the mess should not be omitted, the worsening of it by our federal government. Colleges today are under pressure not only from feminist students but also from the Office for Civil

Rights (OCR) in the Department of Education. A recent letter from that office, one of a series, was sent to 55 colleges, addressed to "Dear Colleague" and containing what it called "significant guidance." Anyone who thinks that the idea of a "nanny state" is an exaggeration should read this letter. The official author, who is the assistant secretary for the OCR, purports to be the colleague of the leaders of America's universities but treats them as if they were children being instructed with a catechism. The form of the letter is Q-and-A, the questions innocent and submissive, the answers authoritative—usually you "must," occasionally you "may."

The purpose behind the letter is to create an area between the law's commands and the law's permissions that is "significantly guided" by the government, in which the government commands but leaves the responsibility of enforcement to the universities commanded. The universities have been required to set up (and of course pay for) a "Title IX coordinator" with the duty of preventing a "hostile environment" caused by sexual assault, which may or may not be a crime prosecuted by state and local authorities. The latter police the crime, and the universities are responsible, and open to penalties, for preventing the culture of crime. Harvard responded last year by appointing as its coordinator a woman lawyer formerly employed at the OCR. It has now answered last month's letter by hastening to hire more staff for her office. Without the slightest sign of pushback, the university volunteers to aid in the ridiculous accusation against itself. The OCR's ridiculous accusation (and this summary does not do justice to its many absurdities) is for having failed to establish a culture of sexual adventure that never results in misadventure.

In its vocabulary, the OCR fully adopts the feminist notion of gender neutrality so that the sex of the "complainant" or the "perpetrator" is never identified. Thus the obvious difference between the sexes in regard to sexual assault is never stated, the problem never described. Are most men really potential rapists as the term "rape culture" suggests, or are some of them merely taking what is offered? Are women so colossally imprudent as to desire to get into bed with such creatures? Does a gender-neutral environment exist that will please both sexes equally? Are both sexes not independent in different ways as well as dependent on each other? Will there be an end to feminist nonsense aided by government intrusion and university compliance?

These are easy questions, but they call for the independence of mind necessary to answer the hard question that comes next: How can we recover some sense of feminine modesty and male restraint? ◆

'Second Battle of Ypres' by Richard Jack (1917)

In Dubious Battle

The Great War, of modern memory, at 100.

BY J. HARVIE WILKINSON III

Back then, it was not known as World War I, for the obvious reason that the Second World War still lay in the future. It was simply the Great War, for the world had never seen anything like it.

We're close to the centennial of the Guns of August, which has brought forth all sorts of discussions of the causes and consequences of the war.

J. Harvie Wilkinson III, who sits on the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, is the author, most recently, of Cosmic Constitutional Theory: Why Americans Are Losing Their Inalienable Right to Self-Governance.

The Great War
A Combat History of the First World War
by Peter Hart
Oxford, 544 pp., $34.95

The focus of this book by Peter Hart, historian at the Imperial War Museum, is quite different: He sees the war through the eyes of those who fought it. The result is a riveting account from those on both sides of the conflict, those for whom the larger disquisitions on the meaning of the war yielded utterly to the daily struggle for survival.

The Great War featured an unusual number of highly literate soldiers for both the Allies (chiefly the Triple Entente of France, Britain, and Russia, and, much later, the United States) and the Central Powers (chiefly Germany and Austria-Hungary), who had no inkling of the inferno that awaited them. We know of the remarkable trio of war poets—Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon—and we expect that generals would convey their accounts and impressions. But it is the insight and sensitivity of innumerable junior officers and enlisted men that bring home the terrors of bombardment, from which there seemed no exit, and the eternal presence of mud.

Sadly, the description of Lieutenant Richard Dixon of the 14th Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, at the Third Battle of Ypres (1917) is not the worst:

> All around us lay the dead, both friend and foe, half in, half out of the water-logged shell holes. Their hands and boots stuck out at us from the mud. Their rotting faces stared blindly at us from coverlets of mud; their decaying buttocks heaved themselves obscenely from the filth with which the shell bursts had smothered them. Skulls grinned at us; all around us stank unbelievably. These corpses were never buried, for it was impossible for us to retrieve them. They had lain, many of them, for weeks and months; they would lie and rot and disintegrate foully into the muck until they were an inescapable part of it to manure the harvests of a future peace-time Belgium.

The Great War marked the progression of precision killing. The weapons may seem quaint or primitive to us now, but what they presaged was ominous for mankind. The first German U-boats were often lethal, but above all they were cramped, with the bunks of some officers so small they lay only on their sides. The machine guns made a killing field of No Man's Land; poison gases took aim at eyes, throats, and lungs: "We choked, spit, and coughed, my lungs felt as though they were being burnt out, and were going to burst. Red-hot needles were being thrust into my eyes." The air war featured celebrated aces, such as Germany's Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron, and Canada's William Barker, but the main initial use of planes was for reconnaissance—namely, to locate opposing artillery batteries. Indeed, it was those ever-more-massive artillery barrages that may have posed the greatest threat, as described by a German lieutenant:

> The earth roared, trembled, rocked—this was followed by an utterly amazing crash and there, before us in a huge arc, kilometres long, was raised a curtain of fire about one hundred metres high. The scene was quite extraordinary; almost beyond description. It was like a thunderstorm magnified one thousand times!

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS / Q 3255

The carnage of the Great War dwarfed any previous conflict, and the casualty figures are chillingly rounded-off here. Hart estimates that "just under 9,722,000 soldiers died through military action in the war." Another 21 million were injured, many "scarred or maimed for life." Germany alone lost two million soldiers; France almost a million-and-a-half. By contrast, the United States lost "only" 116,000. The Great War was hardly the first to take a heavy toll on civilians, but approximately

Sir Douglas Haig (1918)

950,000 "died from direct military action" and almost six million more from "war-related famine and disease." As the conflict wore on, the numbers mounted, to no apparent purpose or effect. An inch gained one day was often given back the next.

The seemingly senseless carnage understandably sparked a search for scapegoats, the most available of whom were inept commanders: The epithet of "lions led by donkeys" was meant to contrast the valor of the ordinary fighting men with the obtuseness of those who ordered them over the top. Hart attempts a modest rehabilitation of the reputations of several commanders, one of whom was the German general Erich von Falkenhayn.

Less well-known than Paul von Hindenburg or Erich Ludendorff, Falkenhayn comes across as a capable leader, first directing military operations as the chief of the German General Staff and, later, as a field commander in the snowy passes of the Transylvanian Alps. Falkenhayn wanted Germany to negotiate a separate peace with Russia, the better to press the war with Britain and France. To Falkenhayn, Russia's vast territory and endless manpower made a German assault on Moscow an act of madness. (Had such advice been heeded in 1941, and Operation Barbarossa not been launched, the course of World War II would have been very different.)

Hart also defends Sir Douglas Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Force, portraying him not as a "château general," but as one who possessed "a stern and unwavering work ethic": His bedroom door opened "punctually at 8:25 each morning," and his working day lasted long into the evening. In Hart's view, Haig battled a series of formidable obstacles: He did not have the luxury of fighting a defensive war, and the high spirits of the war's early days gave way to fatigue to the point that, by 1917, some French units were refusing to obey orders. In Russia, war-weariness was hastening the fall of the Romanovs and the rise of Lenin. Haig's own political chief, Prime Minister David Lloyd George, increasingly lost faith in him. Lloyd George, moreover, held the naïve view that the war's fortunes could be turned with fewer losses in a side theater and, accordingly, starved Haig of troops needed to blunt German attacks on the Western Front.

The shape of war changed constantly before Haig's eyes. An innovative tactic in one battle could prove obsolete by the next. The trenches that, in 1914, were sometimes little more than shallow ditches became progressively fortified. Assaulting forces fortunate enough to work their way through massive strands of barbed wire to overrun the enemy's forward positions soon found themselves the subject of counterattacks from second, and even third, lines of defense. Haig was supposed to solve

the riddles of shifting tactics and ever-more-sophisticated weaponry, all while smoothing out strains within the alliance and pacifying impatience on the home front.

Hart's ultimate verdict on Haig: He won.

The United States sees any military indebtedness to France in terms of the Marquis de Lafayette and the French fleet's role in bottling up Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown; the weak response to German panzer divisions in 1940 marked not only a blow to French pride but a diminution of American respect. France's role in the Great War, however, should add to our sense of indebtedness. Britain's participation at the beginning of the Great War was limited to naval missions and a token land force; their commitment gradually increased until it came full bore in 1916 at the Battle of the Somme. For those first critical months and years, then, France was left to bear the brunt of German military might. French marshal Joseph Joffre may not have been a great general, but he had one shining moment: the Allied victory in 1914 at the Battle of the Marne. After early German successes in the Battle of Mons and the Battle of the Frontiers, it was essential to stabilize the Western Front, and quickly. Joffre (and France) were critical in doing so, and, Hart notes, "the war was set on a grim path of attritional fighting." As depressing as that might have been, it was far preferable to German hegemony across Europe.

Hart does well to be modest in his attempt to rehabilitate the commanders of the Great War; a full swing of the reputational pendulum in their favor is unlikely. Too much was lost, too often, and for too little. Typical was the engagement at the St. Mihiel Salient (1915), where 65,000 Frenchmen gave their lives for "only minor gains" that were quickly reversed by German counterattacks. Battle after battle registered the same massive hemorrhaging of manpower for meager advances.

From the distance of a century and an ocean, Americans are likely to see the Great War as nothing but a conflict that nearly bled a great continent to death, and reading almost 500 pages about the slaughter and destruction that occurred abroad may lead some Americans to wish the problems of others away. Turning inward, however, cedes our little planet's destiny to humanity's most covetous and savage impulses. The Great War may show that war is not always worth the sacrifice, but that is an altogether different matter from how we best keep peace.

The grim years of 1914-18 may seem distant to us now, in time and place, but they should lead Americans to count each day of peace as a blessing. Peace through strength may be no guarantee, but it remains America's best bet. And this means strength in all its interlocking aspects: military, economic, technological, political, and moral. Strength that affords America a menu of measured options of unmistakable effect; strength that, alone, lends aspirational speech its credibility; strength that allows the United States to lead, unabashedly, in promoting world stability and freedom in the company of friends and allies.

It's a tall order for democracy, where the temptation to choose short-term indulgences over necessary sacrifice is ever-present, and the pursuit of diversion and the relaxation of vigilance is not often shared by determined enemies. The Great War's lesson is not one of isolationism, but of perseverance. And dismay at the follies of statesmen and generals should not lessen our respect for Peter Hart's ordinary combatants, who fought almost beyond the point of human endurance. ♦

B&A

Mirror, Mirror

The changing instinct for self-depiction.

BY HENRIK BERING

The Self-Portrait
A Cultural History
by James Hall
Thames & Hudson, 288 pp., $35

In the history of art, self-portraiture constitutes a world of its own, presenting us with moods ranging from the lighthearted to the sordid. There is sheer delight in Rubens's painting of himself and his first wife Isabella Brant in a bower of honeysuckle bliss; acute menace when Caravaggio decks himself out as Bacchus, looking like some exceedingly poisonous rent boy, and veering into grisliness when he lets the severed head of Goliath carry his own likeness. Self-mockery is on offer in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* (1536-41), in which the artist has given his own melancholy features to the flayed skin of St. Bartholomew. Edward Munch's androgynous self-images are exercises in toe-curling exhibitionism.

Here, James Hall provides a lively cultural interpretation of the genre from the Middle Ages to today. But rather than provide a series of "greatest hits," he is more concerned with the reasons why artists create self-portraits, pursuing themes such as the role of the self-portrait as a vehicle for self-promotion and self-exploration; its use as therapy; and sex and the self-portrait. Whereas a portrait painter often has to conform to the wishes of his client, the self-portrait leaves him free to do as he pleases.

Almost until the end of the 15th century, self-portraits were rare, notes Hall. The medieval artist might insert a vignette of himself in an illuminated manuscript, or include himself in a biblical crowd scene (he is the one who

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

looks directly at us). But things change dramatically from 1490 onwards, when sculptors and masons started calling attention to themselves, as did painters such as Parmigianino, Raphael, and Giorgione in Italy and Dürer—the most prolific creator of self-images in the Renaissance—in Germany.

Known across Europe for his engravings and woodcuts, Dürer proved an expert in self-advertisement and status affirmation. No mere artisan he! One oil portrait shows him as a fashion plate, clad in the finest fabrics; another shows him as a Christ-like figure. In both, his hair gets special attention, hair being regarded as indicative of the brain activity below. This marks Dürer "not as a proto hippie, but a supremely fertile and versatile thinker," writes Hall.

Common to Dürer and his Italian colleagues, Hall believes, is the fact that they subscribed to the notion of the child prodigy popular in the Renaissance: the idea that genius is something innate rather than acquired. They positively reveled in their youth and their gift. To an early drawing of himself, done at the age of 12, Dürer later proudly added, "This I drew myself from a mirror in the year 1484, when I was still a child." To Dürer, a gifted artist's quick sketch "on half a sheet of paper" or engraving on "a tiny piece of wood" will always beat the painting of a poor plodder who works "with the utmost diligence for a whole year."

After this outburst of youthful exuberance, notes Hall, a shift occurs with Michelangelo and Titian. Decades before bestowing his own likeness onto St. Bartholomew, Michelangelo produced the first-ever self-cartoon sketch, next to a sonnet grumbling about the working conditions in the Sistine Chapel. (As Hall notes, the ability to mock oneself is the hallmark of the supremely confident.) Titian, on the other hand, had the courage to portray himself in extreme old age, the first to do so. Of his two late self-portraits, the second shows Titian in a mood of "punitive piety," with a faraway gaze and translucent, parchment-like skin; he is a man no longer of this world.

With Rembrandt, the genre reaches a high point, both as a vehicle for self-advertisement and for self-examination: One of every five of his productions is a self-portrait. In *The Artist in his Studio* (ca. 1628), Rembrandt presents his credentials as a prodigy, a tiny figure "swallowed up by his voluminous working clothes and wide-brimmed hat, and dwarfed by the giant wooden easel with its elephantine legs." In his etchings, he experiments with expressions and grimaces, while his oils, featuring himself in fancy costumes, prove to costumers what he is capable of doing.

'Self-portrait in a fur-collared robe' by Albrecht Dürer (1500)

However, it is in the self-portraits produced in his last decade (which included his bankruptcy) that Rembrandt goes further than any of his predecessors in subjecting himself to intense scrutiny. No longer the hot name in art, his 1665 self-portrait with palette and brushes, and arm on hip, shows him magnificently defiant—the very coarseness of his style a taunt to smoother newcomers.

Self-portraiture can also serve as therapy: A 1793 exhibition in Vienna of a series of busts by Franz Xaver Messerschmidt provided a glimpse of the dark side of the mind and a foretaste of things to come. Because of his "deranged behavior," Messerschmidt had been refused a professorship at the Viennese Academy; as a therapeutic exercise, he created a series of 69 busts of himself engaging in various grimaces. After his death, most of them were bought at auction by a collector and displayed as a freak show in Vienna's municipal hospital. Given titles such as *Grief Locked Up Inside*, *The Incapable Bassoonist*, and *A Man Vomiting*, Messerschmidt's heads are seen today as precursors of Expressionism, as is Goya's etching *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* (1799), which shows the sleeping painter assailed by a host of creatures of the night—bats, owls, and a cat. It is van Gogh's self-studies, however, that provide the most striking premodern voyage into madness. As Hall notes, van Gogh detested photographs, claiming that an artist can reach depths the camera cannot. During 1886-89, he painted more than 30 self-portraits, characterized by a quivering intensity, the scariest of which is dedicated to Paul Gauguin and has a reptilian quality about the eyes.

Before 1900, artists would only rarely paint themselves naked. The modern body cult Hall ascribes to Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), which extolled the Dionysian over the coolly rational, and Freud's ideas about the suppression of man's deep seated urges. The result has been self-portraits in unprecedented numbers in our time, displaying cringe-inducing degrees of intimacy. And while mental illness in itself does not disqualify an artist—Van Gogh was mad, and he could certainly paint—problems arise when we automatically equate madness and exhibitionism with art, ignoring the need for skill. ♦

B&A

And Gladly Learn

Will you, won't you, benefit from graduate education?

BY ABIGAIL LAVIN

When I sat for my SAT exams as a high school senior, I thought to myself, "This is the last standardized test you will ever have to take!" I had never considered myself an intellectual and was vaguely distrustful of anyone who chose the cocoon of the academy over the rough-and-tumble of the "real world." Ten years later, I was sitting in a café in downtown Shanghai, gritting my teeth over the Princeton Review's GRE prep manual.

Looking back, it's difficult to say how I'd ended up there. I had no cause to run away from the "real world," where I had thus far excelled at being a professional version of myself, working in marketing and adjacent fields, none of which had anything to do with my undergraduate degree in political science. I loved my job at an esteemed advertising agency, where I got paid to sit in quirkily appointed conference rooms and brainstorm ideas for behemoth clients.

Once in a while, during a lull between conference calls, I would glance at the application for the philosophy master's degree program at St. John's College in Santa Fe, which I had printed out years ago and kept hidden in my desk drawer. It was a calling card from an alternate world, one where I sat cross-legged in the desert heat among sensitive scholars and connoisseurs of peyote, freely contemplating Spinoza and the Tao Te Ching.

I wasn't certain that I wanted to live in that world, but I was curious as to whether it was a live option. So I dusted off one of my mediocre undergraduate essays on Descartes and set about turning it into a passable writing sample with which to apply to philosophy M.A. programs. I solicited a letter of recommendation from an editor of this publication and from a couple of my undergraduate professors who kindly agreed to help, even though they hadn't heard from me for the better part of a decade and weren't sure they remembered who I was.

Should I Go to Grad School?
41 Answers to An Impossible Question
edited by Jessica Loudis, Boško Blagojević, John Arthur Peetz, and Allison Rodman
Bloomsbury, 256 pp., $16

Less than a year later, I bid farewell to the advertising agency—its PowerPoint presentations, cascades of emails, coffee, and cigarettes—and said hello to graduate school. I enrolled at Columbia instead of St. John's, the Ivy League being a much more attractive proposition to my father, a key financial stakeholder in this gambit.

At a philosophy department cocktail reception during my first week of graduate school, I listened as a second-year doctoral candidate described his tearful reaction to reading William James. I, too, have a tendency to cry over books. By contrast, it was tough to imagine crying over a PowerPoint presentation. Perhaps grad school, with its symposia, colloquia, coffee, and cigarettes, would feel like home in a way that the advertising grind never had.

Two years later, during my final semester, I received an email from a stranger in Iran. His name was Masoud. He apologized for his shaky English, explained that he had found my contact information on Columbia's online student directory, and sought my advice about applying to doctoral programs in philosophy at American universities. Masoud had a charmingly tentative way of describing his philosophical interests that suggested he had never spoken to anyone about them before—at least not in English. He referred to "the thought streams called 'Continental Philosophy' and 'German Idealism'" as if they were mythical creatures that he might never encounter firsthand.

Should I Go to Grad School? is not a volume I would recommend to Masoud or to anyone else seeking practical advice about the application process, financing, and so forth. It is not a cost-benefit analysis of tuition and the job market for people with letters after their names. (If it were, notes editor Jessica Loudis, "it would be much shorter and far more depressing.") Instead, it focuses specifically on advanced degrees in the humanities and the arts, and so it is not for those considering law school, medical school, or business school.

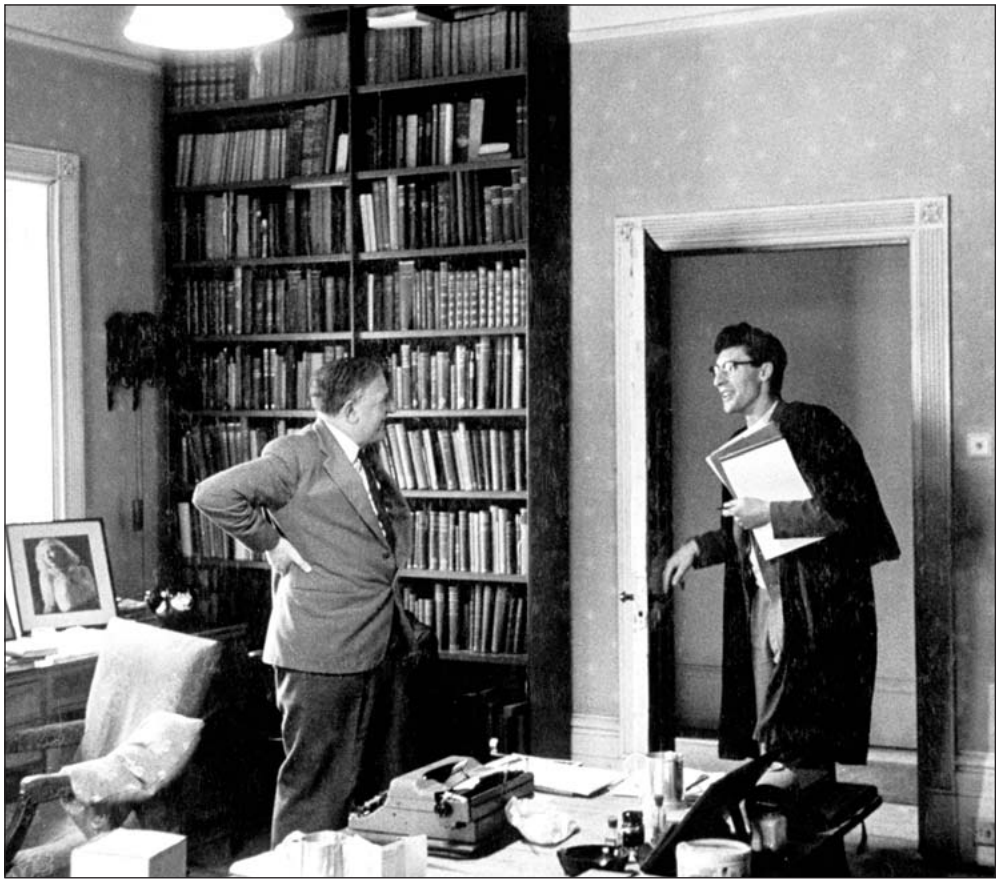
As its subtitle suggests, *Should I Go to Grad School?* offers no definitive answer to the "impossible question." Instead, it presents a collection of personal reflections from artists, journalists, poets, and others, speaking to us from beyond the fork-in-the-road that demands an answer. Just as one doesn't attend a potluck dinner hoping to learn how to cook, dipping into this anthology probably won't get you any closer to figuring out what to do with your life.

For the most part, even those contributors who are most cynical about academia do not dwell on the list of reasons *not* to attend graduate school. Rather, they adopt the sober tone of a sex-ed instructor: *I can't responsibly encourage you to do this, but you're going to do it anyway*, so *here's what you need to know.* Jessica Loudis quotes Heather Horn, who wrote in the *Atlantic* that "asking why young people keep entering Ph.D. programs is a lot like asking why young people keep moving to New York planning to become actors." Clearly, forces are

Abigail Lavin is a brand strategy consultant in New York.

at play that override common sense. As Peter Coviello, professor of English at Bowdoin, points out, anyone seriously considering enrolling in a doctoral program is already perfectly aware of the reasons why it may be a terrible idea and should be able to recite that litany of warnings "like beads of a rosary."

As varied as its accounts may be, this anthology is for a specific audience: people, like me, who have the luxury of entertaining the do-what-you-love mentality and exploring the titular question from the angle of self-fulfillment. We hear from Amy O'Leary, who, as a listless twentysomething disenchanted with her job at a Minnesota newspaper, saw grad school as a "thick, expensive balm that would calm my anxieties and channel my energies into something that looked like success." The lure of graduate school as a socially acceptable holding pattern for smart people who don't know what to do with themselves is a common theme throughout these essays, variously described as "a fig leaf to cover up nakedness" (Ross Perlin), "a ritualized shortcut of privilege" (Sarah Marcus), and "a place to hide . . . where the thickness and tensile strength of a single ID card is all that separates you from the thinking vagrant" (Michelle Orange).



C. E. Stevens, Oxford history don, with student (1958)

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Grad school was not predestined for most contributors. Nor was the decision to attend grad school impulsive. (The application paperwork alone precludes a whimsical approach.) Rather, grad school was a place where they wound up, a pit stop on a meandering journey toward a life well-lived. Professor Coviello points out that many potential upshots of graduate school—sharpened critical thinking skills, valuable interpersonal relationships—are not exclusive to academia: "Live a vibrant, vital sort of life," he says, and these benefits will manifest themselves with or without an accompanying degree. This book is for people who are wondering: *If I attend grad school, what will my life look like?* And *if I do not attend grad school, what will my life look like?* Its contributors, for the most part, are evaluating the counterfactual: *If I had* not *attended grad school, what would my life look like?*

Even with the benefit of hindsight, the answer is unknowable. That's the thing about forks in the road. I can't know how my life might have played out if I'd chosen tea rather than coffee this morning, let alone where I'd be today had I not gone to graduate school. But I can say with near certainty that I would have missed out on the following:

■ Sitting with my classmate Richard in a campus coffee shop until closing time, while he patiently explained Heidegger's metaphysics until I "got it" enough to wade through an oral presentation the following day.

■ Attending a seminar with Robert Stalnaker, a visiting professor from MIT who would often quote himself during class—not out of arrogance, but because it is nearly impossible to discuss modal logic without invoking the work of Robert Stalnaker.

■ Falling in love with the shy, tattooed man who sorted faculty mail in the philosophy department.

■ Having my heart broken by the shy, tattooed man.

■ Giving a presentation on Aristotelian syllogisms at a conference in Arizona, after which the keynote speaker asked a polite, thoughtful question that amounted to, "So what?" and I told him that I didn't really know.

Academia is often treated as distinct from the "real world." But as anyone who has spent a couple of years studying modal logic will tell you, the

"real world" is itself a slippery notion. Among innumerable possible worlds, you sometimes exist as an advertising and marketing professional, sometimes as a philosopher in the desert, and sometimes not at all.

In my case, I learned that it is possible to straddle multiple worlds: I worked part-time at a branding agency while pursuing my degree, keeping one foot in the "real world" and the other in academia, "a world where *unpack* is what you do to a text and not to a suitcase" (Michelle Orange). I struggled, sometimes, with the balancing act, arriving at the office with eyes bloodshot from Boolean algebra or diligently replying to work emails while doing my best impersonation of a young woman paying attention to a lecture on John Dewey's pragmatic naturalism. For the most part, however, work and school buoyed each other in positive ways: The former gave me a paycheck, while the latter forced me to think with logical rigor, a trait whose usefulness extends far beyond the ivory tower.

Should I Go to Grad School? left me with one piece of advice to pass along to my Persian pen pal, Masoud: "Do not, under any circumstances, pay for an advanced degree in the humanities. If necessary, continue applying until you secure funding" (Stephen Squibb). Beyond that valuable nugget, I'm not sure I can tell Masoud anything that will help him decide which world to inhabit. But he seems already to have figured it out. "At the one hand," he wrote to me recently, "I have seriously decide[d] to become a philosopher and at the other hand, I have not much money. So it doesn't matter for me how difficult it is. It must be done." ♦

B&A

Murder by Candlelight

The new indoor theater at Shakespeare's Globe.

BY SARA LODGE

There is a new reason to visit London. It is wooden, but lively. Old, but new. Shadowy, but luminous. The Sam Wanamaker Playhouse is a reconstruction of what an indoor theater might have looked and felt like around 1600, when Shakespeare was 36 and at the height of his career as an actor, theatrical entrepreneur, and dramatist.

Shakespeare had, in 1599, been one of the founders of a successful outdoor theater on the south bank of the Thames. Called the Globe, it was an O-shaped wooden structure where, in summer, crowds gathered to watch the first performances of *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, and *Othello*. In 1997, the Globe was lovingly re-created, and audiences for the last two decades have enjoyed open-air performances there, authentic in every detail except for the flight overhead of an occasional airplane during a soliloquy.

But what to do in winter? Shakespeare's company would transfer to a theater in Blackfriars. The Globe Trust had long intended to re-create a Jacobean indoor theater where actors all year round could explore the conditions of 17th-century performance. Now that ambition has been realized in a 340-seat, horseshoe-shaped playhouse, painted with allegorical figures and lit entirely by candles.

It is magical. As you enter, the warm smell of beeswax and wood puts you in mind of a hive. And indeed, the theater is abuzz. The intimacy of the space, its honey-colored oak pillars, blazing candelabras, and ceiling painted with golden angels intensify your sense of occupying a beautiful box that could erupt at any moment with laughter, music, and dance. Whether you are in one of the two galleries or in the ground-level pit, you are so close to the stage that you could almost touch the actors. Certainly a well-aimed apple would hit its target. You are also very close to your fellow audience members, whom you can see above and below you, particularly those in the "lords' boxes" abutting the stage. These are the premier seats: Jacobean theatergoers paid for their own visibility.

This continuity between the audience and the stage creates a very different experience from that in a conventional theater, where there is a "moat" between performers and spectators. Here, you are always looking in the social mirror, seeing the response to the play as well as the action. And it draws you in, making you aware that at any time the actors could leap the bleachers and a prop—or a character—could jump into your lap.

In the knockabout comedy that I saw, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), this is exactly what happened. The lack of a firm boundary between actors and audience is key to the plot. Players appear and begin to stage *The London Merchant*, a play about a poor apprentice thwarted in his love for his mean master's daughter. But suddenly, there is a ruckus in the pit: A swankily dressed, nouveau-riche grocer and his wife—he in a feathered velvet cap and breeches, she in a bodice whose padded shoulders bristle with crimson carnations—are voicing their displeasure. They want to see something else: a knight in shining armor. In fact, they want their own apprentice, Rafe, to play the knight—a kind of Sir Grocer, rescuing fair maidens from the calamity of finding themselves without essential ingredients.

Showering money on the cast like salt, the wannabe producers get their way, and soon we are watching two equally nonsensical, competing dramas whose plots never quite join up.

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

When Rafe is nervously questing through Waltham Forest (a suburb of London) on a pantomime horse whose clip-clop is ostentatiously fake, we know we've reached the territory of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. This is absurdist comedy of the kind the British have always loved. There is a riotous fight with a barber-giant; a chase that explodes through the audience and all the way along the back of the theater, with characters being pushed in through the windows. There is a gratuitous dance around the maypole, a daring descent from the roof by rope, and a death scene that is as hilarious as it is unconvincing.

Francis Beaumont, the author, enjoyed sending up stage conventions. All the upper-class characters speak badly rhymed verse while the lower-class characters speak prose. And there are scenes that look very like a spoof of *Romeo and Juliet* as well as chivalric romance. But what is most "modern" about this piece is the freedom with which it "breaks the fourth wall," acknowledging the audience and making the nub of the comedy the viewers' habit of noisily eating licorice, chatting during the performance, and wishing for improbable, epic action.

Indeed, watching this play made me reconsider our assumption that self-referential drama is a postmodern phenomenon. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is the original satire on pay-per-view culture. But it also celebrates the therapeutic value of laughter. As Master Merrythought sings, extolling the pleasures of drinking and revelling all day long: *Hey, ho, 'tis nought but mirth / That keeps the body from the earth!*

Bodies and earth featured horribly in another production in the debut season at the Sam Wanamaker: Webster's twisted psychodrama *The Duchess of Malfi* (ca. 1612). This is a claustrophobic tragedy of gathering menace, as the pregnant duchess (played affectingly by Gemma Arterton) is tormented by brothers who are determined to drive her mad and strangle her.

Her offense is one against caste. Following the duke's death, she has contracted a secret marriage to one of her servants. Her brothers, driven by incestuous jealousy and avarice, will not permit her to live and breed: The psychological and actual violence they employ against her are equal to any grotesquerie Bret Easton Ellis or Quentin Tarantino could invent.

Candles were used in this production to great dramatic effect, to create shadows and to define the space. The 7 candelabra, each of which holds 12 candles, were raised for outdoor scenes and lowered to make a "ceiling" in indoor scenes.

At the start, the windows to the back of the playhouse were open, admitting natural light; but as the action became darker, the theater became more crepuscular, until, in the second half, the audience was briefly pitched into complete blackness, with not even an exit light.

I have seen this play before, across the expanse of modern theaters, where the events seemed literally farfetched. But here the tightness of the space made them viscerally creepy.

Dominic Dromgoole, artistic director of the Globe, told me that the new space forces positive challenges on actors. "Wood makes you intelligent," he explained. The resonance of the timber means that the theater walls bounce words back fast, multiplying the sound of a single drum into that of an advancing army.

Several people thought he had adapted the script of *The Duchess of Malfi*, modernizing the language. "I hadn't," he said.

ALASTAIR MUIR

'The Knight of the Burning Pestle' (2014)

> It just seemed that way because the delivery was new. You can't bring a pre-prepared performance to this theater. It won't work. You have to listen, to be limber, to pitch lines carefully.

Clumsy actors also need not apply. There are no wings in this theater. The beautiful black and gold paneling at the back of the stage—like that of a grand banquet hall—conceals a tiny candlelit corridor where props are kept and actors can "tire" (put on costume). There is no room for error.

I wondered how the Globe had won permission to play by candlelight. The answer is that they had to do extensive homework. They tried over 80 different kinds of candle before finding one that melted slowly and, if it fell, tended to go out. They constructed a ceiling, painted with the goddess Luna, that opens at the flick of a switch to allow firefighters in and

Sam Wanamaker Playhouse stage

devised an evacuation plan that takes only four minutes to complete.

Yet these were only a few of the difficulties that the architects faced during a design process that sometimes resembled a wild goose chase. There are no extant Jacobean indoor theaters in Britain to copy, so the original plan was to use a theater design that (legend has it) fell out of a book of Inigo Jones's work in the Worcester College, Oxford, library. The drawings showed many elements that were known to have been part of Shakespeare's Blackfriars Theatre, and for a long time, scholars believed that Jones had produced them in the early 1600s. Later researchers, however, cast doubt on this view, re-attributing the drawings to Jones's protégé, John Webb, in the 1660s.

When the Globe's architects looked at the drawings, they realized, moreover, that certain aspects of the design were simply *impossible*; this was a theater that was never and could never have been built. So they faced a difficult choice: abandon the drawings altogether and start fresh, or use the drawings as an imaginative basis for what would be an architectural mélange—a mixture of elements of different Jacobean buildings, united to make something faithful to what we know of 17th-century theaters, but not a reconstruction.

They went ahead with the latter. And history will approve their decision. For in the new theater, as Dromgoole says, "the light is alive." Even when it is empty, it is beautiful.

Inevitably, there are small flies in the ointment. In the outdoor Globe, standing tickets (still only £5 each) require stamina but also reward it: You get the best view. The standing tickets in the upper balcony at the Wanamaker are not for the fainthearted, or short-limbed: When two actors converse at the wrong side of the stage, they disappear. One of the features of a pillared Jacobean theater is that the sightlines are occasionally blocked from any position. (My advice would be to sit in the lower gallery, or the pit, and to favor the seats at the back, since they allow you to rest your own back against the wall.)

But do go. This theater is an experiment that promises to shed new and fascinating light on how 17th-century plays and operas worked in practice. Eventually, it will also showcase new writing. And it can accommodate very diverse approaches: The last production I saw there was a one-woman show in which the veteran actress Eileen Atkins played Britain's greatest 19th-century theatrical star, Ellen Terry, who delivered lectures on Shakespeare's women and illustrated her comments by "becoming" Lady Macbeth, Rosalind, and Ophelia.

This show was a masterclass in the art of acting: Atkins not only played Terry—which she did with sharp wit and insight into the frustrations of a Victorian intellectual often upstaged by male impresarios—but inhabited at least 10 different Shakespeare heroines, giving each a distinct voice and character. She performed the final dialogue between Cordelia and King Lear, playing both parts, so movingly that several people in the audience around me were in tears.

An actor's voice is a delicate instrument. And in this small playhouse built of wood, it becomes evident that the theater itself is an instrument of incredible fineness, like a harpsichord. Actors who play in it will also be playing it, bringing out new sounds from old scripts, finding beats and colors and cadences whose music resonates long after the original notes have faded. ♦

PETE LE MAY

B&A

Death and the Maiden

There's a flaw at the heart of this unpretentious tearjerker. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

The Fault in Our Stars
Directed by Josh Boone

The key to understanding the publishing sensation called *The Fault in Our Stars*—John Green's young-adult novel that has dominated bestseller lists for more than two years and has already sold more than nine million copies worldwide—is first to imagine Holden Caulfield in the 21st century. Then imagine that, rather than being anxious and upset and in a funk for no good reason, Holden Caulfield actually has a very good reason, which is that he has terminal cancer. Then imagine that he falls in love. Then imagine that Holden Caulfield is actually a teenage girl rather than a teenage boy.

Teenagers have forever loved *The Catcher in the Rye* in part because it gives them permission to be moody and self-centered. It *understands* them. It flatters them. It holds their hand. Holden is just like them; his deficiencies of character go unexplained and need no explanation.

What John Green does in *The Fault in Our Stars* is to turn this on its head in every possible way. Hazel Grace Lancaster's mordant perspective is entirely earned. She's 16 when the novel begins. She's been dying since the age of 13. She has had one miraculous recovery, but she has stage-four metastatic cancer. It's hard for her to breathe, and the only thing that keeps her going through the motions of life is her sense that her parents need her to do so lest they fall to pieces.

Holden Caulfield is alienated from other people. Hazel, in effect, is alienated from life itself. Holden doesn't know what's bothering him. Hazel knows all too well. Holden thinks he deserves better. Hazel has given up thinking she deserves anything. She's been dealt a cruel, losing hand.

At a support group she attends only to please her parents, she comes across a charming and charismatic boy named Gus, who lost his leg to cancer but seems to have beaten the disease. He begins to court her, but while she enjoys his company, she doesn't take him very seriously. She has no future. What's more, she's a live grenade: When she goes off, she tells him, she's going to obliterate everything around her.

Of course she does fall for him, and that is the genius of *The Fault in Our Stars*: It takes the most banal and clichéd of tropes, first love, and gives it real and honest urgency. In a just universe, Hazel would not be denied life's most precious experiences because her life is going to be cut short.

The Fault in Our Stars has now been made into a very good movie that captures the everyday matter-of-factness of the novel. The director, Josh Boone, does nothing fancy. The screenwriters know these characters are unworldly teenagers and do not give them flashy dialogue or wisdom beyond their years.

Hazel and her parents are unpretentious and resolutely middle-class people. Gus is a videogame-playing ex-jock. The two leading performers, Shailene Woodley and Ansel Elgort, are charming and charismatic without seeming like glamorous Hollywood fly-ins. When the sobbing begins—and you would have to have a heart of stone not to cry during the movie's final half-hour—it does not seem cheap or exploitative.

But there is a gaping flaw. (The flaw is in the book, and the movie is determinedly faithful to the book.) Hazel and Gus, for complicated reasons, find themselves at Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam. She is determined to make it to the attic where Anne Frank and her family were hidden.

It is an incredibly difficult trek up three flights of stairs and a ladder—she is carrying an oxygen tank the entire way—but she makes it. And there, in the attic, she and Gus share their first kiss, to the applause of the other tourists. The analogy is explicit: Hazel is Anne Frank, and just as Anne Frank's diary is a triumph of the human spirit, so, too, is Hazel's journey into the attic.

But the story of Anne Frank isn't a story of a triumph of the human spirit. It is the story, in miniature, of the slaughter of six million people. Anne Frank is the Jewish people writ small; she was, at once, a brilliantly creative person and an entirely ordinary person. She might have done great things, but she was not permitted to do anything.

The story of what happened to the Franks and the other Jews hiding in the attic is the story of Europe's moral self-destruction writ small as well: how the self-sacrificing kindness of Miep Gies in helping to hide the Franks was undone by the betrayal to the authorities of those trapped in the attic, followed by the deportation to Bergen-Belsen, and the death of all but Anne's father, Otto. The diary is a crucial document in human history not in spite of what happens after it ends but because of what happens after it ends.

The Nazi murder of the six million wasn't a result of rogue cells and random mutations, an example of the cruelties of nature and the way our bodies can betray us. There was nothing natural about it; it was the result of human agency, human will, human evil. Using Anne Frank to make a point about an American teenager dying of cancer is a regrettable descent into a moral quagmire—an unfortunate stain on a story that otherwise offers an implicit rebuke to the solipsism that permeates so many accounts of American teenage anomie. ♦

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

"Obama Finds He Can't Put Iraq War Behind Him"
—New York Times *headline, June 13, 2014*

...warming trend.
But ... going to keep flogging the ol' dead horse of global warming anyway.

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

NEWS ANALYSIS

Iraqis Concerned: How Is Violence Affecting Obama?

By KAREEM FAHIM

BAGHDAD — It has been a tumultuous week in Iraq: major military clashes between government forces and the Sunni extremist group the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); hundreds of thousands of innocents driven from their homes; thousands more brutally executed in what the United Nations is already calling war crimes. Are we in fact seeing, as some observers believe, the beginning of what could be a bloody and intractable civil war?

One would think this question weighs most heavily on the minds of the Iraqis. But after last week's renewed outbreak of violence, with a major offensive by ISIS buckling the American-trained Iraqi forces, Iraqis seem to be preoccupied by another question entirely: How is President Obama doing?

"Is he okay?" asks Yusuf Awad, a shopkeeper in Mosul, through the help of a translator. "He was so proud of ending the war, I mean, this is probably a real blow for him personally." Indeed, many Iraqis echo Mr. Awad, voicing concern that Obama's landmark foreign policy achievement is in danger of being undone. "My uncle was kidnapped by the rebels yesterday, and all I could think was: just when Obamacare starts working out, now this!" says mechanic Hakim Azizi. "This guy [Obama] has the worst luck," he concludes, before adding forlornly, "The Republicans are going to have a field day with this."

Indeed, after a year full of public struggles, from the failed rollout of the Obamacare website to the crisis in Ukraine to likely electoral troubles for Democrats in the midterm elections, Iraqis are well aware that their fate could go a long way toward determining Obama's legacy. "I just hope he can put this war behind him," says Malik Hamadi, a member of the ISIS death squads. "I would hate to do anything that might harm his legacy, since his election was so historic and all."

In a street in front of the U.S. embassy, Baghdad women bewail the discomfort that the ISIS insurgency has caused U.S. President Barack Obama.

Already, the implications have begun rippling out to Afghanistan, where Obama has scheduled the final withdrawal of American troops for 2016. "What if the same thing happens here as in Iraq? It is troubling question," says Zalmay Wardak, a political scientist in Kabul. "How, for example, might the prestige of a hypothetical, post-presidency Obama Foundation for World Peace be affected if my entire family and I were to be murdered by the Tali-

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