the weekly Standard

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A FAILED PRESIDENCY
STEPHEN F. HAYES

The Neo-Victorian Campus

Is this the end of the collegiate bacchanal?

BY HEATHER MAC DONALD

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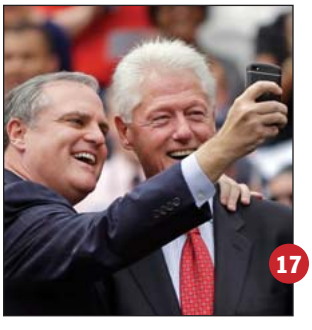


COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Flacking for Pol Pot

Apart from the death of a journalist, no more poignant event is ever recorded in the media than the demise of a onetime "antiwar activist." This was confirmed in the pages of the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* last week, where the passing in Budapest of Fred Branfman, 72, was duly noted.

Who was Fred Branfman, you ask? He was (according to the extended *Post* obituary) "the first person to draw public attention to a previously unknown U.S. bombing campaign inside Laos during the Vietnam War," a former aid worker, teacher in Africa, and civilian "education adviser" in Laos and South Vietnam who, after 1969, became a full-time opponent of the war. In 1972, in the *Post*'s words,

> He organized a star-studded antiwar demonstration at the U.S. Capitol. Those arrested included singer Judy Collins, Dr. Benjamin Spock, leftist scholar Noam Chomsky, painter Larry Rivers, theatrical producer Joseph Papp and writer Garry Wills.

Heady times for Fred Branfman! A few months later, however, the last American combat troops were withdrawn from Vietnam, and in March 1973, Richard Nixon ended the draft. Practically overnight, the antiwar movement—which had flourished for nearly a decade and made the careers of more than a few members—was defunct, and Fred Branfman was cast suddenly adrift. He moved to California, "where he became active in the solar energy movement," but returned to Washington in the mid-1980s to work on the presidential campaign of Sen. Gary Hart.

Then, in 1990, after the death of his father, "Mr. Branfman abruptly changed the direction of his life. He embarked on a prolonged spiritual exploration that led him to study various religious traditions around the world and to become an advocate for 'death with dignity.'"

The Scrapbook records these details not to make light of the late Fred Branfman's anticlimactic existence after the signing of the Paris Peace Accords but to remind readers of the comically worshipful tone employed in the press when eulogizing old radicals. We also noticed one minor assertion in Branfman's biography that tells us something about the way history is treated, and sometimes mistreated, in the mainstream media. According to the *Times* and *Post*, Branfman was also cofounder of an organization in Washington called the Indochina Resource Center, described in the *Post* as "an information service that was allied with the antiwar movement" and in the *Times* obituary as "an influential antiwar group . . . which lobbied Congress to stop financing the war."

Both of these descriptions are true, strictly speaking; but neither remotely resembles the whole truth. In fact, the Indochina Resource Center was nothing less than the Washington lobby for the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia; during the genocide in that country (1975-79), Branfman and his cofounder Gareth Porter were not only reliable advocates and apologists for the Khmer Rouge but (so far as The Scrapbook is aware) never apologized for their views on the subject. Branfman, of course, exited the stage some decades ago to study "various religious traditions around the world," but Gareth Porter is still very much with us, teaching and writing for *Foreign Policy* and the *Huffington Post* and appearing on RT and Al-Jazeera English; the title of his latest book—*Manufactured Crisis: The Untold Story of the Iran Nuclear Scare* (2013)—gives some flavor of his current thinking. Indeed, two years ago, Porter was awarded the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism.

Fred Branfman is dead, but the Indochina Resource Center lives on. ♦

When Sister Cities Go South

You've probably seen it before—text on a city's welcome sign that boasts a sister-city relationship, with somewhere you likely haven't heard of. For example, in The Scrapbook's backyard, Rockville, Md., has a sibling relationship with Pinneburg, Germany, and Arlington, Va., with San Miguel, El Salvador (among others).

Passersby will sometimes wonder what that relationship entails, or where the heck Pinneburg is, and probably not give it much thought beyond that. But what happens when your sister-city is overrun by Islamic extremists—a question the city of Laguna Niguel has been mulling for a few months?

Scrapbook correspondent Matthew Fleming filed this report from Orange County:

Located about 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles, Laguna Niguel began a sibling-city relationship in 2008 with Al Qa'im, an Iraqi town that sits on the Syrian border. As the story goes, Lt. Col. Jason Bohm, who was the commanding officer of Laguna Niguel's adopted Marine unit, recommended the relationship with Al Qa'im after developing an affinity for the region and arguing that helping the area prosper would naturally steal power from insurgents.

But now ISIS has overrun the town, and the Laguna Niguel mayor and council find themselves in the unenviable position of having to decide among three bad choices: sever ties entirely, thereby abandoning the Iraqi people, at least temporarily; simply wait and see what happens and risk the perception that they're supporting the new militant government; or place the relationship on emeritus status, which is not really severing ties but waiting to see what happens.

They chose the last.

"It's important that we continue to

support the people of Iraq and at the same time not give credibility to the terrorist organization that's currently controlling that area," said city councilmember Robert Ming, right before the mayor and council unanimously approved the emeritus status last week.

Others echoed his sentiment. Mayor Linda Lindholm lamented the old arrangement as "a peace-making relationship . . . working with women and children on their economic status," while councilmember Jerry Slusiewicz said that he was "saddened by the situation," and that he didn't want to "feel like we are abandoning the people [of Al Qa'im]." But again, under the advice of city counsel, they voted for emeritus.

According to Sister Cities International, the point of a sister-city relationship is to "promote peace through people-to-people relationships—with program offerings varying . . . from basic cultural exchange programs to shared research and development projects between cities with relationships."

Laguna Niguel has worked closely with the mayor of Al Qa'im, offering gestures of goodwill and support to the region, sending soccer balls and uniforms, as well as medical textbooks and equipment.

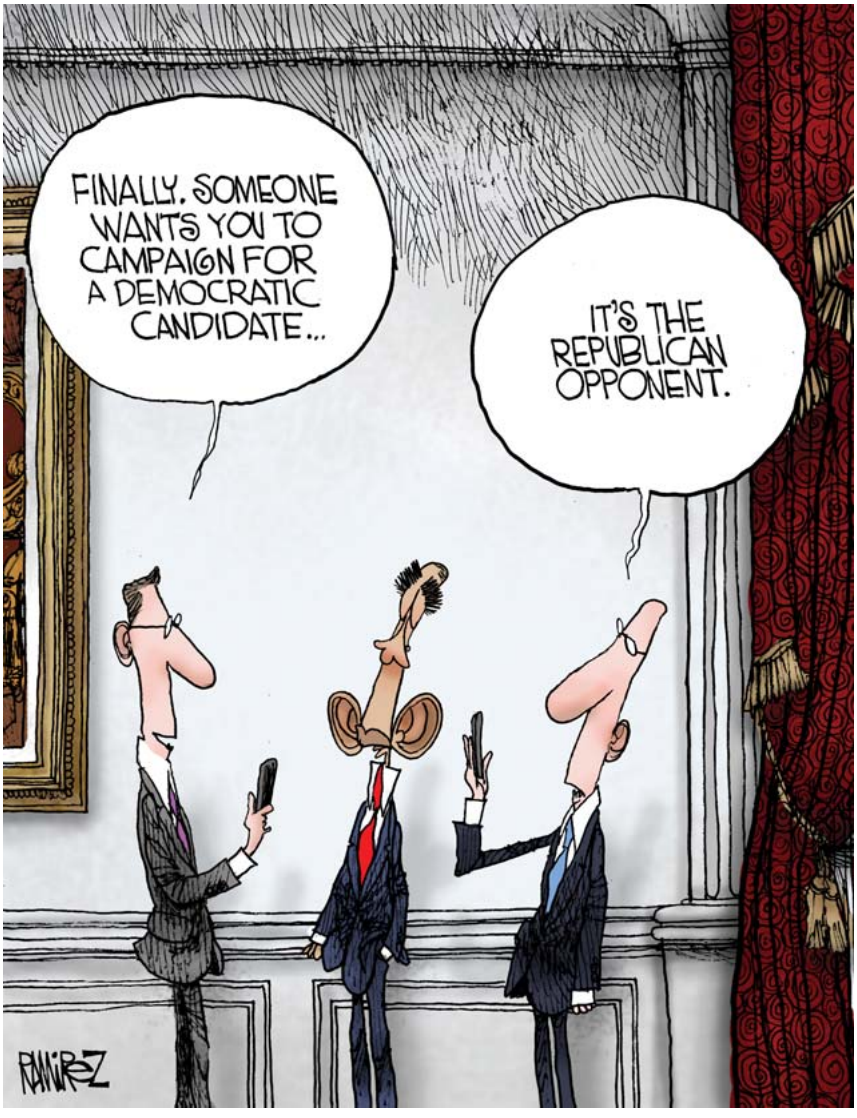
Although the situation is uncommon, it's not unprecedented. Sister Cities International president and CEO Mary Kane said that within the last few years there's been pressure to end some or all of the 75 relationships between American cities and Russia, but only Lansing, Mich., actually severed ties with its sibling, St. Petersburg—citing the Russian city's stance on LGBT rights.

Overall, there are 68 sister-city relationships with cities in the Middle East, some as unlikely as Los Angeles with Tehran and San Diego with Jalalabad, Afghanistan.

The program was started by President Eisenhower in 1956, and one of the first relationships was also one of the most unlikely: Honolulu, which sits on the same island as Pearl Harbor, and Hiroshima.

"He was asking a lot of people to step out of their comfort zones and build each relationship because he knew that we would end up back in a bad situation again if we didn't get people to know each other," says Kane.

Although the relations can evolve into something politically sensitive and difficult to navigate, like the sisterhood of Laguna Niguel and Al Qa'im, Kane says, "This is their worst nightmare, and walking away from them is not what we should do. That's not being compassionate Americans." ♦



Saved by the Blood

Last week Reuters ran a story about the movement to do away with the ban on blood donation from gay men in America. In 1983, with the AIDS epidemic raging, the FDA prohibited gay men from giving blood because of fears of increasing transmission of the virus. But the American Medical Association and American Red Cross now say the ban is "discriminatory" and "not based on sound science."

Into which fray arrives the Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Law at UCLA. The Williams Institute has produced a study on the subject that concludes, claims Reuters, that lifting the ban will "save more than a million lives a year." (What the study actually says is that it could "help save the lives of more than 1.8 million people." A claim that

is both more and less expansive than Reuters allows.)

Speaking of sound science, we wonder how blood donated by gay men could possibly save anything like one million lives per year, considering that America averages roughly 2.5 million deaths per year, in toto. According to the CDC, the leading causes of death are heart disease (596,000) and cancer (576,000). So Reuters and the Williams Institute are claiming (or, if you want to be more charitable, merely insinuating) that allowing gay men to give blood would save nearly as many lives annually as curing cancer and heart disease, combined.

There's something about LGBT issues that clouds the mind when it comes to numbers. For instance, a few months ago the Department of Defense released a study claiming that there were 15,500 "transgendered" soldiers in the Army. With 1,369,532 active-duty personnel, that would mean that an incredible 1.13 percent of all soldiers were transgendered. Does that sound right to you? But forget how it sounds—according to a massive CDC study of American sexual preferences, only 1.6 percent of the U.S. population identifies as gay or lesbian. Which means that to believe the Pentagon's claim, you'd have to believe that transgendered soldiers make up the same proportion of the military as gays and lesbians in American society—a claim that strains credulity.

But then, credulity is more like credulousness when it comes to these things. For decades, some gay activists insisted that 1 out of every 10 Americans was homosexual. And since contradicting these claims was tantamount to "homophobia," most people went along with it. So much so that in 2011, Gallup surveyed people and asked them what percentage of the population they thought was gay. And they found that the average American believes that 25 percent of the country is gay or lesbian.

Of course, if they've been consuming a steady diet of news like that Reuters report, this last number is at least understandable. ♦

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I'd Walk a Mile

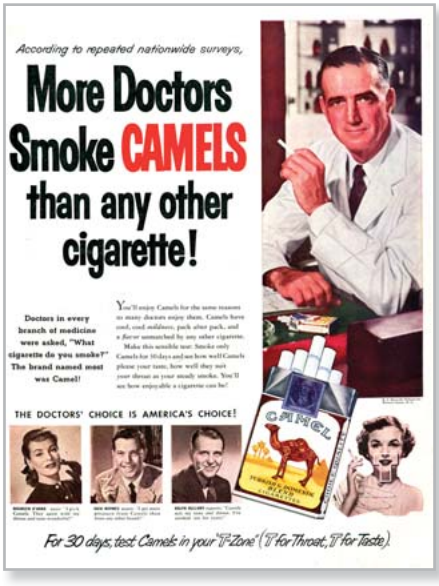
I went to my favorite pen shop in downtown Washington the other day to buy some ink, and on reflecting that the act of riding the subway to buy a bottle of ink had a certain antediluvian quality, I was seized with a very antediluvian idea. I decided that I wanted to buy a pack of cigarettes as well; in fact, I wanted to buy the very brand—Camels, unfiltered—that I had smoked in my youth.

Like many ex-cigarette smokers, I can recall the exact date (August 18, 1978) when I quit—although I have to admit that I did so only at the behest of the alluring woman who became my wife, and that quitting was not very difficult. The explanation, I suppose, is that I was not especially devoted to cigarettes: I had started comparatively late, while in college, and smoked only when drinking coffee or alcohol. I was not the sort of person, like one unfortunate roommate, who lit up upon awakening in the morning. And when I had a cold, or was suffering a periodic bout of asthma or bronchitis, smoking was abhorrent to me.

Of course, the fact that an asthmatic—with a family history of cancer—had taken up smoking at all is testament to the irrationality of my habit. There was an element of adolescent rebellion involved: In the time-honored fashion of dogmatic left-wingers, both my parents strongly condemned the practice of smoking, but were smokers themselves. Since I tended to disappoint them in most things, or so I must have reasoned, I might as well take up smoking. And annoy them in the process.

Already that had taken the form of a childhood fascination and delight in the marketing of cigarettes. I might well be one of the few people in America who remember cigarette advertising with affection. I was genuinely aggrieved when tobacco commercials were banned from television (1970). Come to think of it, that sad occasion might have prompted me to get started.

From my perspective, anyway, the advertising was pure entertainment: The qualities extolled in television commercials—smoothness, mildness, mentholated flavor, and so on—meant nothing to me; but the wonderful ways in which smoking was described, extolled, glamorized—a little like the automobile advertising of the era—was hypnotic in its self-evident silliness. I quickly specialized in what *MAD* magazine called cigarette geography: I knew that Kents contained a filter made with "micronite," whatever that is, while Parliament's filters were recessed, for whatever reason. Best of all, of course, were the jingles—give me a piano and I'll happily play my version of "Take a puff, it's springtime" (Salem) or "Come up to the Kool taste"—and the no-doubt-deliberately ungrammatical slogans: "Us Tareyton smokers would rather fight than switch" or "Winston tastes good like a cigarette should."



Some of the slogans, indeed, became catch phrases in their time: Viceroy's, for instance, which featured "the thinking man's filter and the smoking man's taste," was subject to innumerable variations, and kept more than a few comedians busy. And during the late 1960s/early '70s, the marketing of one brand, Virginia Slims, exclusively to women gave birth to a cringeworthy phrase still heard in the land: "You've come a long way, baby."

I recount all this partly as an exercise in nostalgia, but also as a means of describing the extent to which cigarette smoking, not so very long ago, was a larger part of the popular culture. Nowadays, of course, smoking is very nearly taboo, and smokers are long since banished from places—offices, stadiums, restaurants, airplanes, even bars—where they used to congregate in high numbers. Like the men in bow ties who filled your tank with gasoline and cleaned the windshield—and checked the oil and battery, if desired—they've gone away, I am not sure where.

In my own case, I quit cigarettes overnight and, except for the occasional cigar, have never smoked since. Which is just as well, for in the half-hour it took me to walk back to my office, I could not find a pack of unfiltered Camels to purchase. My father's old tobacconist, on 15th Street, is now shuttered, and the largest drugstore chain in the region ostentatiously stopped selling tobacco last month. Newsstands were no help, nor were the handful of hotel gift shops I visited.

Indeed, over the weekend, my quest continued, and to no avail. Most revealing, I suppose, is the fact that I did manage to find Camels for sale in a couple of places, but only the filtered variety. When I inquired if, perhaps, they stocked Camels without filters, the clerks were uncertain whether such a product exists—and looked at me as if to say: What sort of person would want such a thing?

Philip Terzian

the weekly Standard

E Pluribus Conservatibus

It's a daunting moment for conservatives. To have even a chance for a semblance of a conservative future in the United States, we probably need (1) to elect a GOP Congress in 2014, which (2) does well enough in the majority for the next two years to (3) allow a Republican to win the White House in 2016, who will then (4) have to restore our military strength and morale while (5) dealing urgently with serious threats abroad, in the meantime (6) repealing and replacing Obamacare, (7) moving decisively to roll back the smothering and enervating nanny state, (8) enacting an economic growth agenda that benefits Middle America, and (9) saving the Supreme Court and therewith the Constitution. Then (10) this conservative president has to get reelected in 2020.

I'm not sure there's a single one of these items conservatives can afford not to accomplish. I am sure there are other important tasks I haven't mentioned. And all of this will have to be achieved over the resistance of media, educational, and government elites, with the support of a public suffering from a certain amount of cultural confusion, in a nation many of whose crucial institutions have been weakened or corrupted.

Happy conservatives

Dealing with some of these tasks will require caution and diligence. Dealing with others will require boldness and daring. In fact, dealing with each of these challenges will demand a mixture of caution and boldness, of diligence and daring.

That's one reason politics is interesting. It's hard to know ahead of time just when to be bold and when cautious, when daring and when diligent. In fact, it's a mistake to think that you can figure that out ahead of time. One might call it a fatal conceit. In any case, in a free society, in a free political movement, there will be differences on such questions. The belief that there will be unity about strategy and tactics, or emphases and priorities, is a fantasy.

So there'll be disagreement and debate on the right over the next year and a half. There'll be disagreement and debate about congressional strategy and tactics. There'll be disagreement and debate about the merits of various presidential possibilities. There'll be honest differences of opinion and inevitable divergences of ambition.

There's not much point worrying about it. Conservatives nonetheless will. It's human nature, and it's perhaps especially conservatives' nature to cherish harmony and to hope that one's own side will be in accord. There will be dismay about effort wasted fighting among ourselves, and laments about circular firing squads, and exasperation that everyone isn't marching to the beat of the same drummer. But in today's conservative movement there's no drum major.

And there shouldn't be. No one faction will have it all right. The establishment will overvalue going along to get along, and insurgents will overly cherish fighting for fighting's sake. The partisans of various issues will jostle for pride of place. There will be tension between the operatives who slavishly follow the polls as they gaze into the rearview mirror and the visionaries who claim gifts of prophecy and the ability to look ahead and see around corners.

We'll have to get used to the discord, and we should embrace the hurly-burly. Successful political movements aren't well-organized bureaucracies or even well-ordered armies. (Successful armies often aren't well-ordered armies.) Conservatives will have to accept more diversity of views, debate about strategy, and disorder in the ranks than they're comfortable with. But comfort isn't everything. In politics it's often not even a good thing. Its discomfort that's usually the spur to fresh thinking, to strenuous effort, to surprising victory.

So conservatives will have to make debate, diversity, and disorder their friend. They'll have to appreciate ambiguity, cooperate with complexity, come to live with confusion.

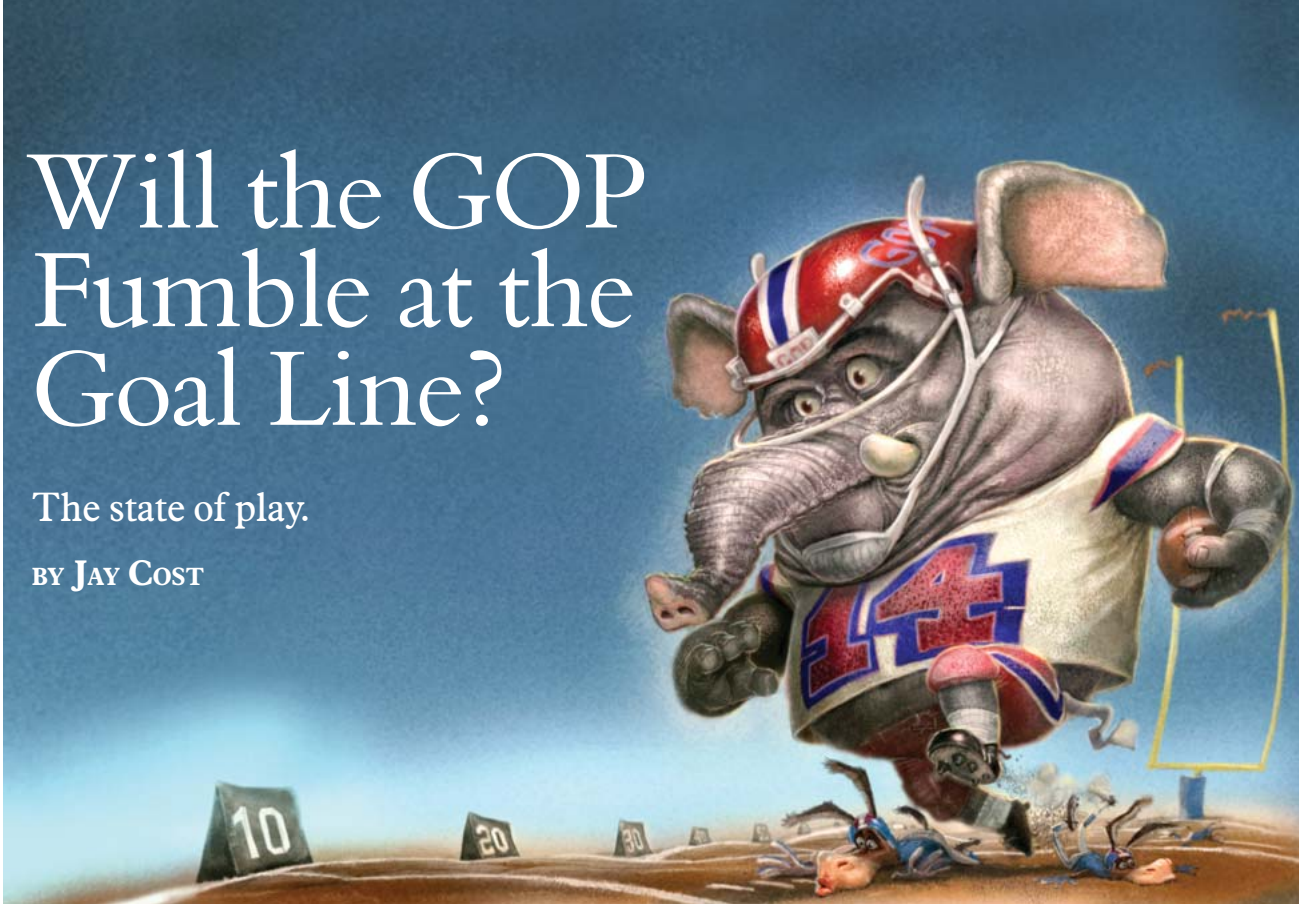
Of course there are times when (relative) unity is important. In the key moments of congressional confrontation, in national debates when the battle is fully joined, in the last months of a presidential campaign, unity is needed to prevail. And so, having marched separately as they must, the various parts of the movement will then have to strike together. At that point: *e pluribus unum*. But before then, for most of the next year and a half, we'll have to get used to lots of *pluribus*, and we'll have to make a virtue of not much *unum*.

—William Kristol

Will the GOP Fumble at the Goal Line?

The state of play.

BY JAY COST



With about three weeks to go until the midterm elections, where does the battle for Congress stand?

Last year House Democrats had high hopes of retaking the lower chamber in 2014, and political junkies were inundated with stories about their prowess at fundraising and mobilizing. Those hopes have mostly been dashed. The brutal national environment has forced Democrats onto the defensive. Just last week, the party quietly cut ad time in many Republican-held districts it had been targeting. Still, there is little room for the GOP to grow; its natural ceiling in the House is probably 250 seats, and it already controls 234. In its last update, the *Cook Political Report* listed 26 Democratic-held seats as being in some jeopardy, but just 11 Republican seats. How these races will break remains to be seen, but Republican gains in the range of 7 to 15 seats seem probable.

The more the merrier: The GOP already has a strong majority in the House, so gains would amount to an insurance policy in case the Democrats surge in 2016. Typically, when a party retains the White House, it enjoys little in the way of coattails; apart from the unusual election of 1964 in the wake of the Kennedy assassination, you have to go back all the way to 1948 to find an incumbent president's party retaining the White House *and* picking up a decisive number of House seats. A president-elect Hillary Clinton, then, would be unlikely to sweep, say, 25-30 Democrats into the House, and even that would give Democrats only a nominal majority; an actual governing majority would require upwards of 40 pickups in 2016. So if Republicans do well in the House next month, that will go a long way toward preventing a liberal governing majority until at least 2019.

As for the Senate, the GOP's prospects include the good, the bad, and the ugly. In the last month the Republican position has unequivocally improved in three must-win races with Democratic incumbents. In Alaska, Republican Dan Sullivan has broken open a lead against Democrat Mark Begich. Recent polls show the Democrat down by about 5 points and stuck at an anemic 42 percent of the vote. Alaska is a tricky state to poll, so you never know until the votes are counted, but the GOP should feel good about its position on the Last Frontier.

In Arkansas, Republican Tom Cotton retains an apparently durable lead over Democrat Mark Pryor. The Democratic narrative of the spring and summer—Pryor was great on the stump, while Cotton was wooden—has mostly fallen apart. Just last week, Pryor was asked a simple question about how the government was handling Ebola and gave an answer to rival Ted Kennedy's meandering nonresponse to Roger Mudd about why he wanted to be president. Cotton, meanwhile, responded to Bill Clinton's campaigning on behalf of Pryor with this winning rebuke: "I'm not worried about Bill Clinton's support for Mark Pryor. I'm worried about Pryor's support for Barack Obama." Conservatives should feel excited at the prospect of a Senator Cotton. Combine him with Ben Sasse of Nebraska, a shoo-in for victory, and the intellectual wattage of the

GARY LOCKE

Jay Cost is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Senate GOP increases substantially.

In Louisiana, Republican Bill Cassidy has mostly held a lead over Democrat Mary Landrieu this year. That lead appears to have widened, and the polls show Cassidy nearing the critical 50 percent mark. That is especially important because Louisiana's election occurs in two stages: a jungle primary, in which candidates from all parties battle one another, and a runoff between the top vote-getters. This race is widely expected to go to a runoff, in which Cassidy would be the favorite.

More good news in Iowa. Republican Joni Ernst charged out of nowhere early this year to capture the attention of the party establishment and grassroots activists. She cruised to victory in the primary and has taken what appears to be a clear lead over Democrat Bruce Braley. This is the reverse of what Beltway wags expected a year ago. It seemed then that the Democrats had scored a coup in recruiting Braley, a House member, while the GOP field was unimpressive. Now it is Ernst who is the star and Braley the gaffe-prone dud. Given the president's unpopularity and the staunch independence of Iowa, the GOP can be hopeful about this race. Still, with 15 percent of voters undecided in the average of the latest polls, the seat can't be taken for granted.

In Colorado, Republican Cory Gardner has withstood months of attacks from Democratic incumbent Mark Udall, focused mainly on abortion and birth control. A month ago, the conventional wisdom was that Gardner was fading, but he has shown strength of late, and the polling averages show a tied race. Like Iowa, Colorado is a true swing state, and with Obama unpopular, Gardner has at least even odds of pulling out the win. Again, Democrats cannot be pleased that Udall, who dominated the airwaves through the summer, is stuck around 45 percent—in the danger zone for an incumbent seeking reelection.

Finally, New Hampshire has emerged as the party's potential "stretch" victory. This too is quite a change. In August, Sam Wang—a Ph.D. neurobiologist who runs the Princeton Election Consortium—tweeted snarkily, "People. Please. If Jeanne Shaheen (D) loses to Scott Brown (R) in NH-Sen, I promise to eat a bug." Chances are still good that Wang will not have to swallow a cricket, but less good than he would like. Recent polling shows Shaheen leading, but Brown within striking distance—down about 5 points in the reputable polls. Unlike other vulnerable Democrats, Shaheen is reasonably close to the 50 percent mark, however, which means that almost all the undecideds would have to break towards Brown for him to win.

Next, the bad news. Would-be GOP challenges seem to have fizzled in Michigan, Minnesota, and Oregon. In all three states, Republican candidates are down by 10 points or more. That is a tough margin to overcome in just under a month, and it is disappointing. Michigan, in particular, is a bitter pill for Republicans. Early ads put Democrat Gary Peters on the defensive, but the left struck back—and how. Republican Terri Lynn Land has been savaged on the airwaves, and the GOP response has not kept pace. Add the complaint from insiders that Land's campaign has been lackluster, and this once-promising pickup is all but out of reach.

More bad news from North Carolina. Democratic incumbent Kay Hagan has held her own, mostly by running a negative campaign against her Republican challenger, Thom Tillis. Of course, campaigns these days are largely negative. Yet Democrats have precious few issues that work for them this cycle, so incumbents like Udall and Pryor have been reduced to limp warnings about the "war on women" (Udall) and even Ebola (Pryor). The story is different in North Carolina. Tillis is the speaker of the unpopular state house, and Hagan has been blasting him for his record there, especially on education. So far, it seems to have worked. She maintains a lead of about 3 points, though her own share of the vote is stuck around 45 percent. North Carolina is a quirky state that has swung back and forth in recent cycles, so this is shaping up as a potential nailbiter.

Bad news in Georgia and Kentucky, too. Republicans have leads in both states, ranging from 3 to 5 points, but given the overall partisan dynamics there, not to mention the unpopularity of the president, it is frustrating that the Democrats have held on. The GOP is favored in both states, but resources that will have to be directed there could have been better spent in places like Iowa and Colorado.

Finally, the ugly news—first from Kansas. Republican infighting led to a nasty primary between radiologist Milton Wolf and longtime senator Pat Roberts. The latter won, more narrowly than expected. That seemed the end of the story, but Democrats pulled their candidate from the ballot and threw their support to independent Greg Orman. Polling is all over the map, but it is a fair bet that Orman has a narrow lead. This is a self-inflicted wound for the GOP, and there is blame to go around. The silver lining is that Kansas remains one of the most Republican states in the union, so the Roberts campaign "merely" needs voters to stick with their party.

Aiding Republicans is the fact that—despite his claims to independence—Orman, on closer inspection, looks like a Democrat. There is also a growing sense that he might not be ready for prime time. He recently floated the notion that he might switch partisan loyalties back and forth in the upper chamber. Likewise, he has inartfully dodged salient questions, like what he would do about Obamacare. His lead in the polls notwithstanding, Orman faces a difficult task. To win, he needs to motivate Kansas Democrats—about 40 percent of the electorate—without alienating independents or a critical number of Republicans. So far, his strategy has him sounding vague and occasionally asinine.

The race in South Dakota may also turn ugly. Polling remains sparse, but the Republican nominee, former governor Mike Rounds, is in a three-way

race against Democrat Rick Weiland and Republican-turned-independent (and two-time Obama endorser) Larry Pressler. Rounds has held a lead all along, but he has begun to take on water, in part because of a controversial visa program run on his watch. The last couple of polls have shown Weiland or Pressler gaining, and just last week national Democrats pledged to pump $1 million into the state. This race should be an easy victory for Republicans. But the same thing was said about the North Dakota Senate battle in 2012; that year, Republican Rick Berg ran a lackadaisical campaign against Democrat Heidi Heitkamp. Despite Berg's consistent lead in the handful of public polls, he narrowly lost on Election Day.

Add all this up and what do you get? The GOP probably has a clear lead in seven Democratic-held seats (Alaska, Arkansas, Iowa, Louisiana, Montana, South Dakota, West Virginia); there is a tie in Colorado; and the party is within striking distance in New Hampshire and North Carolina. It has yet to finish off challengers in Georgia and Kentucky, and it is behind in Kansas. The party needs a net six pickups to claim the majority. Midterm races often break in October, even late in the month, as low-information voters begin to engage. While Republicans have the edge for the Senate, there has not been a definitive break, and it is safest to consider control of the Senate a toss-up.

And even if they won, Republicans would be foolish to take victory as a vindication. At most, it would mean that the public wants to check Barack Obama. Polls show wide swaths of the population still view the Republican party as part of the problem, and one need look no further than deep-red Kansas to see the implications. Orman, though largely a cipher, may very well beat a Republican who has been in Congress for over 30 years—in a state that last voted Democratic for president in 1964. So, while capturing the Senate would be enormously helpful in stopping Obama in his final two years, it should not be mistaken for a vote of confidence in the GOP. ♦

The Health Care Apology Tour

It's not over yet.

BY MICHAEL ASTRUE

President Obama has had to acknowledge two big lies of the Affordable Care Act: (1) You could keep your health insurance plan; and (2) the HealthCare.gov website would be fully operational at launch. Unless he acts with urgency, he will also be forced to apologize for assuring us that personal data received

Sorry indeed

by the Department of Health and Human Services are secure.

In its cynical public relations campaign just before the launch of HealthCare.gov a year ago, HHS came up with a clever way of reassuring Americans that they should not hesitate to hand their sensitive data over to a new bureaucracy in shambles. The pre-launch rhetorical trick was to focus on one small part of HealthCare.gov—what HHS calls the "data hub"—and claim that it does not "retain or store Personally Identifiable Information."

If you define the "data hub" narrowly—as just those electronic communications between agencies to verify specific data the way that the Social Security Administration verifies Social Security numbers for employers—it is arguably a true statement. However, Congress and the media regularly took that statement to apply to the entire federal exchange (unsuccessfully dubbed a "marketplace"), and HHS did not volunteer that it retains detailed personal information on applicants and callers to its toll-free number—whether or not they buy insurance through the federal exchange. HHS also did not volunteer the fact that it solicits personal data from states that chose not to participate in HealthCare.gov.

HHS established a system for storing Affordable Care Act data long before the launch of HealthCare.gov. In late 2011, HHS awarded a contract to a tiny company called IDL Solutions to provide data storage and analysis of data obtained from the public through the federal exchange. The six-year $59 million contract was huge—and probably overwhelming—for a company with less than $20 million in annual revenue, and, with that windfall in hand, IDL Solutions soon sold itself for "an undisclosed amount" to one of the largest Beltway contractors, CACI.

HHS calls the system that CACI now manages "MIDAS" (Multidimensional Insurance Data Analytics System). A senior CACI executive has publicly described MIDAS "as the central repository for health insurance coverage."

While HHS has been secretive about MIDAS, this central repository contains more than just the

Michael Astrue served as HHS general counsel (1989-1992) and commissioner of Social Security (2007-2013).

names, addresses, incomes, and Social Security numbers of millions of Americans. It also includes data of great value to cybercriminals, such as telephone numbers and email addresses. Moreover, according to a publicly available draft document of the National Archives and Records Administration, MIDAS includes notes on conversations between teleservice employees and callers to HealthCare.gov's toll-free number.

At least six subcontractors now help run MIDAS, and one of them, the American Institutes for Research (AIR), recently solicited Affordable Care Act data from states unconnected to HealthCare.gov so that it could do with those data whatever it is doing with the federal data. AIR's requested data elements include: name, address, phone number, mailing address, citizenship status, age, gender, race, primary language, and a description of the health plan the person selected. What this solicitation means is that HHS and its contractors collect data on people who never contacted HHS and never gave permission for the federal government to access their data, much less share it widely among contractors and then store it permanently with one or more of those contractors.

Combine a massive amount of data stored in an unaudited contractor's servers with an insecure website that stores data in other locations and you have a security breach waiting to happen—one that could damage millions of Americans. This summer HHS suffered an embarrassing breach of HealthCare.gov; it was not a sophisticated cyberattack by a foreign government or criminal enterprise—it was apparently garden-variety malicious software roaming the Internet that happened to wander into a haplessly managed peripheral section of HealthCare.gov.

As I and others predicted last year, this part of HealthCare.gov was easily penetrated, and its security systems were so deficient that it took months for HHS to recognize the penetration. The Government Accountability Office reported on September 16 that HHS had not "fully addressed security and privacy management weaknesses, including having incomplete security plans and privacy documentation, conducting incomplete security tests, and not establishing an alternate processing site to avoid major disruptions." The GAO report also found that HHS had not followed Office of Management and Budget government-wide guidance for assessing the privacy risks of MIDAS.

On September 23 HHS inspector general Daniel Levinson roused himself long enough to concur with the gist of the GAO report, albeit tepidly. Levinson's lackadaisical report tried to spin the situation more favorably for HHS, but his report's key finding was that his staff was able to breach the system and—even more damningly—*HHS did not detect that breach*.

Levinson's lack of leadership as HHS inspector general has aggravated the security problems of the Affordable Care Act. When Donald Berwick, the former administrator of HHS's Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, was bungling the early development of HealthCare.gov, Levinson should have stepped in with detailed audits and made the chaos clear to Congress and the president.

Levinson failed in that duty, and the chaos continued at great cost to the public and to President Obama's legacy. Levinson's only report on the security of HealthCare.gov before last month's report was a few pages released on the eve of the website's launch; it can be summarized as "HHS refused to turn over documents, but they assure us everything is fine." Moreover, when 47 inspectors general bravely went public with their concern that this increasingly Nixonian administration was illegally withholding documents necessary for effective oversight of federal programs, Levinson declined to join that protest even though his 2013 HealthCare.gov report described HHS's refusal to disclose *any* key documents.

Levinson compounded his failures in the September 23 report by noting in the fine print that his office will eventually audit MIDAS; he did not specify when. That task should have been completed over a year ago; one has to ask whether Levinson has the backbone to challenge CACI, a highly influential player in the world of federal contracting. MIDAS is not the only location where HHS is storing personal data of individuals, but it is a critically important one, and Levinson is dithering again while HHS dithers on cybersecurity.

President Obama should learn from his mistake of trusting his dishonest appointees at HHS, and he should know by now that Americans are more forgiving when an apology is unforced. His legacy will be further damaged if he lets HHS stay on its crooked course. The president's statement should come as soon as possible and it should sound something like this:

I want to apologize again for incorrectly assuring Americans that HealthCare.gov was ready for launch and that all Americans would be able to keep their insurance plans. I recognize, too, that many Americans lost valued physicians when they lost their insurance plans, and I regret that result as well.

Today I also want to acknowledge that the data held by HealthCare.gov are not as secure as HHS told both you and me. I accept responsibility for that failure and apologize for it. Furthermore, I am taking these actions: (1) I have accepted the resignation of HHS inspector general Daniel Levinson. (2) I am directing the acting HHS inspector general to prepare a report within the next 100 days for me and the relevant congressional oversight committees that lists all locations where HHS collects personal data pursuant to the Affordable Care Act and a list of all the organizations and individuals with access to those locations. I am further directing the acting inspector general to develop a schedule for promptly performing security audits at each location where personal data are stored. (3) I am directing the HHS secretary to suspend collection of personally identifiable information from states that operate their own health exchanges until such time as the attorney general has advised me that collection of these data is fully consistent with all requirements of federal law.

As painful as this statement will be, it is less painful than the one that would be required after a theft of personal data from HealthCare.gov. ♦

The End of Neurononsense

We can dream, can't we?

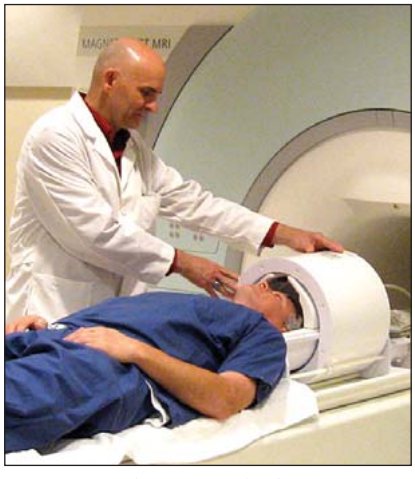
BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Cambridge, U.K.

Kingsley Amis, the British novelist, once explained that everything that had gone wrong with his country in the second half of the last century could be summarized in the word "workshop." His point is sound. No two syllables better conjure up the mandatory "sharing," the regimented bonhomie and bogus cheerfulness, the mincing and posturing, the smiley-faced Maoism that descended upon corporate and academic culture a generation ago and show no signs of abating. The word alone suggests a string of horrifying cognates: "team work," "role playing," "brainstorming," "trust building," "leadership" . . . *Brrrr*.

I think I've found a workshop Amis would have approved of, however, if only because it wasn't like a workshop at all—no falling backwards into your colleagues' threaded arms, no happytalk about building your brand. Its title, "The Uses and Abuses of Biology," referred to a series of papers commissioned by the Faraday Institute at St. Edmund's College of Cambridge University and presented there in late September. The purpose was to discover how evolutionary biology is used to illuminate economics, sociology, education, religion, ethics, philosophy, and other academic disciplines, and whether it can illuminate anything beyond itself. The conclusion was surprising and uplifting.

Evolutionary biology is imperialistic, overtaking entire fields of endeavor simply by attaching the prefix bio- or neuro- to their names: bioethics, neuroeconomics, even, God help us, neurotheology. Its logic is deployed against hapless laymen as a bully's truncheon or an argument stopper. A famous example of biological imperialism was offered by one of the greatest biologists of them all, Francis Crick, who believed his discovery (with James Watson) of DNA had exposed all philosophical problems, from free will to the nature of the self, as meaningless.



Try to relax, you pack of neurons.

"You," he wrote, "your joys and your sorrows, your memories and your ambitions, your sense of personal identity and free will, are in fact no more than the behavior of a vast assembly of nerve cells and their associated molecules. Who you are is nothing but a pack of neurons."

For 50 years this reductionism has been a prevailing view among biologists and their publicists in academic philosophy and science journalism. It's particularly common when the subject turns to neurobiology, the biological study of the brain. All of neuroscience has been greatly aided as a popular topic by magnetic resonance imaging, or MRIs. With their familiar shapes and pretty colors, brain scans provide editors and art designers with dynamic, off-the-shelf images to illustrate stories about how the brain determines what we do and why we think we do it. The complexities of the brain often come off as quite simple, forming a tidy causal link from brain to behavior: If your amygdala is turning magenta, you must be in love. Further, if you're in love, it's because your amygdala is turning magenta.

"Everybody's interested in the brain and likes to talk about it, because everybody's got one" said Duncan Astle, a researcher at Cambridge's Cognition and Brain Science unit. But the popularity of neuroscience, along with the loose talk of journalists and other popularizers, has led to a large number of what Astle called "neuromyths."

Not surprisingly, educational institutions, which are staffed by education majors, are especially vulnerable. School districts in the United States and the U.K. have spent millions of tax dollars on "Brain Gym" and other programs said to specialize in "neuro-sculpting," "brain training," and "mental fitness." The idea is that specified physical exercises can increase student learning far beyond the undoubted aerobic benefits. Try this: Massage your chest just below the clavicle with your extended thumb and second finger while rubbing your navel with your other palm. Feel smarter? Maybe you're not doing it right.

There is no persuasive evidence supporting the claims of the neurosculptors and brain gym coaches, just as there isn't any support for the popular, and allegedly scientific, belief that "right brain learning" is somehow different from "left brain learning." "We use both sides of our brain for most tasks," Astle said. Nor has any experimental basis been found for the theory of the three learning styles—auditory, visual, and tactile—that many educators now accept as dogma. "Everybody pretty much learns the same way," Astle said. The idea of learning styles, pounded into children from an early

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age, can even impede learning. If you convince a child over years of schooling that he's an auditory learner, he won't learn as well if he thinks you're teaching him visually—even though the teaching style is the same.

MRIs are commonly brought out when fads like this are questioned. But MRIs, as Astle noted, measure only blood flow: Any activity not associated with blood flow won't be captured by the image of the brain. In "reading" an MRI, we can only infer brain activity, not observe it. Details like this are ignored when pop scientists set out to prove that every task we perform is "caused" by some neurobiological activity that can be isolated and measured. As other researchers noted at the workshop, the recent publication of *Brainwashed: The Seductive Appeal of Mindless Neuroscience*, by Sally Satel and Scott Lilienfeld, has gone far in introducing a note of cautionary realism into our MRI obsession and the reductionism it often feeds.

Skepticism isn't as contagious as credulity, especially in journalism, but it can spread in unexpected places. The James S. McDonnell Foundation, once known as a "neuromill" for all the brain studies it funds, has posted a disclaimer to its grant guidelines. "Proposals proposing to use functional imaging to identify the 'neural correlates' of cognitive or behavioral tasks (for example, mapping the parts of the brain that 'light up' when different groups of subjects play chess, solve physics problems, or choose apples over oranges) are not funded through this program. In general, JSMF and its expert advisors have taken an unfavorable view of . . . functional imaging studies using poorly characterized tasks as proxies for complex behavioral issues involving empathy, moral judgments, or social decision-making."

Daniel McKaughan, a philosopher at Boston College, offered the workshoppers a textbook example of a neuromyth in action: the oxytocin fad. There are signs the fad may be in remission, but it was goosed along a few years ago with a pop science book by a "neuroeconomist" named Paul J. Zak, who doubles as a professor of neurology at Loma Linda University Medical Center. The book's title, *The Moral Molecule: The Source of Love and Prosperity*, guaranteed that it would be feted by a less-than-skeptical press, and Zak has gone on to fame as a speaker at conferences and (of course) workshops around the world.

The molecule of his title is oxytocin, naturally created in the brain. Various experiments in the 2000s showed that a supplemental whiff of the stuff could elevate levels of trust, compassion, and sociability in human subjects. In this way, Zak reasoned, oxytocin could be said to control your moral sense and mine. Hence the "moral molecule"!

Brain activity, like the operation of genes, is almost infinitely complex, and its chain of cause and effect has scarcely begun to be understood, much less 'mapped.'

"We can turn the [moral] behavioral response on and off like a garden hose," Zak told an interviewer for the *Wall Street Journal*. (Among serious news outlets, the *Journal* has a uniquely ravenous appetite for the claims of neurononsense.)

As McKaughan showed, however, the performance of oxytocin is hardly uniform. Along with its happy effects, oxytocin can have unhappy effects too. Depending on the subject and situation, oxytocin is associated with feelings of envy, group prejudice, estrangement, favoritism, irritability, and schadenfreude (and not only in Germans). Under many conditions, McKaughan pointed out, the moral molecule can also double as the immoral molecule.

And so it goes with the specious scheme of cause and effects in pop biology. We get the "monogamy gene"—or the "cheatin' gene," as the newsreader Brian Williams labeled it for viewers of the *NBC Nightly News*—and the "God gene" and also, though you'll think I'm kidding, the Kobe Bryant neuron. That one lights up on a brain scan when subjects are shown pictures of Kobe Bryant.

Neuroscientists are getting better at policing their ranks—you are more likely these days to hear the "morality molecule" dismissed as the "hype hormone." The objection to such boneheaded fantasies isn't that behavior is unrelated to brain activity and even, in some sense, caused by it; it's that brain activity, like the operation of genes, is almost infinitely complex and its chain of cause and effect has scarcely begun to be understood, much less "mapped." Simplifying it for the sake of marketing or journalism is a cheat on the public, which is too busy with other business to question the neuromyths. It also serves to advance the reductionism advocated by Crick and his fellow determinists.

And what's wrong with that? The commonest criticism of reductionism—the idea that we are a pack of neurons and nothing more—is that it will lead us to treat our fellow human beings as if . . . well, as if they were a pack of neurons and nothing more. John Evans, a sociologist of religion at University of California, San Diego, has set about testing whether the criticism has any merit.

In the Western humanistic tradition, he finds three definitions of the human: the theological, the philosophical, and the biological (his term for reductionist). Evans arranged a large national survey of a random sample of Americans. He asked them which of the three definitions they agreed or disagreed with most. Women, churchgoers, and conservatives were more likely than men, nonchurchgoers, and liberals to disagree with the reductionist account of human life. Then he asked a series of questions designed to elicit their attitudes toward behavior. Were they in favor of allowing experiments on prisoners without their consent? Selling human organs for profit? Allowing suicide in the case of people who wanted to save money? Intervening to stop genocide?

Sure enough, he found that people who hold the reductionist view—who deny the special status of the human

species in nature, who believe behavior is determined by physical processes alone—were far more likely to agree with the maltreatment of humans. Evans can't draw conclusions about whether determinism causes those views. But the correlations between them, he said, are unmistakable.

You can question the reliability of such a large survey on such complicated questions. It offers little more than a glimpse of what people say they might do rather than of how they would truly behave. And of course it does nothing to confirm or deny the ultimate truth of the determinism that still has so many biologists and science writers in its grip.

But the grip is loosening. This is thanks in part to the new field of epigenetics, which suggests that environmental factors can alter the genes that we pass on to our children—an idea deemed heretical since the dawn of modern genetics. Some evolutionary biologists have even begun to speak timorously of "predictable evolution," a process in which certain patterns recur and to which evolutionary adaptations conform. More heresy: Nothing can rile a dogmatic biological determinist like the suggestion that evolution might point in a certain direction or have anything like an ordained outcome. Who knows where such thinking might lead?

The great quantum physicist (turned Anglican priest) John Polkinghorne once noted that very few physicists, a century ago, doubted that the mechanical model of Newtonian physics was the whole truth about how the world works. Yet today, after a hundred years of relativity and quantum mechanics, not to mention Dark Matter and quarks and Higgs bosons, comprehensive certainty in physics is impossible. Nowadays, Polkinghorne said, evolutionary biology is in the position of physics a hundred years ago: a young discipline full of certainties—dogmas, really—that are soon to crumble in the face of greater understanding.

Some of us will consider this wonderful news, even if it takes a whole series of workshops to spread it. ♦

Testing the Limits

Putin and the Baltics.

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

"I don't *think* it's 1940," the woman in Riga told me in June, referring to the year the Soviets brought their own variety of hell to Latvia. "But then, I wouldn't have expected 1940 in 1940 either." And then she laughed, nervously. With Russia's ambitions spilling across the borders that the breakup of the Soviet Union left behind, and talk from Vladimir Putin of a broader Russian World (*Russkiy Mir*), in which the Kremlin has the right to intervene to "protect" ethnic Russian "compatriots" in former Soviet republics, the once bright line that had cut the Baltic states off from the horrors of their past now seems fuzzy.

Soviets enter Riga, 1940.

And in a more literal sense the borders that separated the Baltics from their old oppressor have lately appeared more vulnerable than once believed. Moscow has been pressing and provoking in the *Pribaltika* for years—some subversion here, some denial of history there. There have been maliciously random trade bans (Lithuanian cheese, Latvian sprats, and quite a bit more besides) and carefully planned cyberattacks. But the bullying has been stepped up sharply this year. The saber-rattling has evolved from menacing "training exercises," such as last year's Zapad-13 (70,000 Russian and Belarusian troops war-gaming their way through a fight against "Baltic terrorists"), to include too many flights by Russian fighters near or even in Baltic airspace to be anything other than part of a significantly more aggressive strategy.

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On September 3, Barack Obama traveled to Tallinn, the Estonian capital, to reaffirm NATO's commitment to the three Baltic states, all of which have been members of the alliance since 2004. Two days later Eston Kohver, an Estonian intelligence officer investigating smuggling across Estonia's remote and poorly defended southeastern frontier, was, claims Tallinn, grabbed by a group of gunmen and dragged across the border into Russia. His support team at the Luhamaa frontier post nearby were distracted and disoriented by flash grenades and their communications were jammed: They were in no position to help.

Shortly afterwards, Kohver turned up in Moscow's notorious Lefortovo prison. According to Russia's rather different version of events, the Estonian was captured while on a mission on the *Russian* side of the border. Kohver faces espionage charges that could mean decades behind bars. He has "decided" to drop the lawyer that the Estonian government had arranged for him. Court-appointed lawyers will fill the gap. The stage is being set for a show trial, complete, I would imagine, with confession.

After a year of Russian lies over Ukraine, I'm inclined to believe democratic Estonia over Putin's Russia. The timing was just too good. Barack Obama descends on Tallinn with fine words and a welcome promise of increased support, and Russia promptly trumps that with a move clearly designed to demonstrate who really rules the Baltic roost. In the immediate aftermath of Kohver's kidnapping the Estonians signaled that they were prepared to treat the whole incident

as an unfortunate misunderstanding. No deal. The power play stands, made all the more pointed by the way that it breaks the conventions of *Spy vs. Spy*, a breach that comes with the implication that Estonia is not enough of a country to merit such courtesies.

If anything could make this outrage worse, it is the historical resonances that come with it. There are the obvious ones, the memories of half a century of brutal Soviet occupation, the slaughter, the deportations, the Gulag, and all the rest. But there are also the echoes of a prelude to that: the kidnapping of a number of Estonians in the border region by the Soviets in the days of the country's interwar independence, intelligence-gathering operations of the crudest type. These days Russia prefers more sophisticated techniques: Earlier this year, it *polled* people in largely Russian-speaking eastern Latvia for their views of a potential Crimean-type operation there (as it happens, they weren't too keen).

But whatever the (pretended) ambiguities of the Kohver case, there were none about what came next. Moscow reopened decades-old criminal cases against Lithuanians who acted on their government's instructions and declined to serve in the Red Army after Lithuania's unilateral declaration of independence in March 1990. That government may not have won international recognition at that time, but recognition—including from Moscow—followed within 18 months. To attempt to overturn now what it approved in the interim comes very close to questioning the legitimacy of Lithuanian independence today.

This could turn out to be more than merely symbolic harassment. The Lithuanian government has advised any of its citizens theoretically at risk of Russian prosecution on these grounds not to travel beyond EU or NATO countries. That's not as paranoid as it sounds—Russia has been known to abuse Interpol's procedures in ways that can make for trying times at the airport for those it regards as its opponents.

As if that was not enough, injury has since been added to insult: A week or so later, Russia detained a Lithuanian fishing boat in waters that are international but within Russia's exclusive economic zone. Lithuania acknowledges that's where the vessel was, but argues that it had every right to be there. Russia maintained that the boat had been illegally fishing for crab, and took it back to Murmansk. Such disputes blow up from time to time, but once again the timing is, well . . .

And of course these actions are unfolding against a background not only of Russian aggression in Ukraine, but heightened verbal violence against the Baltics. We can be confident that when (as it seems he did) Putin boasted to Ukraine's president, Petro Poroshenko, last month that Russian troops could be in the Baltic capitals (and, for good measure, Kiev, Bucharest, and Warsaw) "within two days," he did so safe in the knowledge that his threatening braggadocio would be passed on.

Konstantin Dolgov, the Russian foreign ministry's Special Representative for Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law (yes, really), obviously didn't want to rely on third parties to get the message out: He went straight to Riga to deliver the message that Russia "would not tolerate the creeping offensive against the Russian language that we are seeing in the Baltics." He pledged Russia's "most serious" support to its purportedly embattled "compatriots." No matter that they are, in reality, considerably freer (and generally better off) than Russians in Russia itself.

To be sure, Balts have heard this sort of talk before, but it's hard not to suspect that this time something wicked might be on its way. A direct assault remains highly unlikely. This is *not* 1940. But the probing, the baiting, and the bullying will intensify, and so will efforts to foment trouble among the large Russian minorities in Latvia and Estonia. The October 4 election in Latvia passed peacefully, but the fact that "Russian" parties took about a quarter of the vote nationally (out of an electorate that excludes 300,000 mainly Russian "noncitizens") and over 40 percent in Latgale in eastern Latvia will not, to put it mildly, have been overlooked in Moscow.

As to what Putin might want out of the Baltics in the end, it's hard to say. If he succeeds in proving that NATO's shield is nothing more than bluff (with all the consequences elsewhere that such an unmasking would bring in its wake), leaving Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia with nominal independence—flags, folk dancing, presidents, elections, and all that—would probably be acceptable so long as real power resided in Moscow. Continued Baltic membership in the EU might still be possible, even desirable: A Trojan horse or three within the EU could come in handy one day. Guesses too far? Maybe, but what we know is that Putin will try to take what he thinks he can get away with.

That's why deterrence counts. Both Latvia and Lithuania have committed to increase defense spending from current (meager) levels to the NATO minimum target of 2 percent of GDP, a target that Estonia has met for a while. Latvia recently bought 123 secondhand armored combat vehicles from the United Kingdom. Estonia has announced that it will improve the demarcation of the border with Russia and will reinforce its border guard with special response teams. Recruitment is running at much higher levels for volunteer home defense units such as Estonia's Kaitseliit and the Lithuanian Riflemen's Union. Again, this is not 1940: This time the Baltics would fight.

That's all well and good, but it's important to remember that the Estonian military can boast fewer than 4,000 regulars. Latvia may be getting those combat vehicles, but it only has three tanks. In the end, the security of the Baltic states depends on their membership in NATO and the guarantee that comes with it: An attack on one NATO member, be it France or be it Estonia, is treated as an attack on all. In recent months, NATO has sent a blunt message—from tough declarations to an increased and increasing presence in the region—that this would indeed be the case, but Moscow's continued pressure indicates that it is not convinced.

Until it is, this dangerous game will continue. ♦

Fakery of a High Order

The Democrats' strategy.

BY FRED BARNES

Along with thousands of others, I got an email from Bill Clinton last week. "Hey there," the former president began. He was raising money for the Democratic candidates. "There's an election around the corner, so I've been traveling around the country to help Democrats who are standing up for the values you and I believe in, Fred," he continued, adding a nice personal touch.

"I've been in Kentucky with Alison Lundergan Grimes, in Florida with Charlie Crist, in Iowa with Bruce Braley, in Arkansas with Mark Pryor, and several other states. These folks are real leaders with great ideas about how to expand the middle class and make sure that every American has a shot at success. They do us proud."

Clinton was moonlighting as a party hack. Is it possible he actually believes these candidates are leaders who make Democrats proud? No. Grimes, for all the aid she's gotten in her race against Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell, has been a disappointment to Democrats. Crist is an empty suit. Braley specializes in gaffes. Pryor is a senator thanks to his family name.

Clinton's email is a small part of the Democratic campaign to dress candidates in tough races in political apparel suitable for 2014. They're no longer partisan Democrats or liberals or tied to President Obama's agenda or allies of Senate majority leader Harry Reid or House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi. Instead, they're fakes.

In this cross-dressing effort, a favorite tactic of Democratic senator Kay Hagan of North Carolina is to claim she's bipartisan. "One of the things I love about North Carolina is that unless you're talking about basketball you don't have to pick a team," she says in a TV ad. "That's how I get results for folks here at home. Republican or Democrat, if a good idea works for middle-class families, I'm all for it." Republicans, however, note that Hagan has voted with Obama 96 percent of the time.

Pryor: Hey, Bill, let's capture my defeat.

Democrat Michelle Nunn, running for the open Senate seat in Georgia, says she too is eager to work with Republicans. In a debate last week with Republican David Perdue, she declared: "If you want to have people that are going to work together pragmatically to do things that will matter in people's lives . . . and you want to put the people of Georgia first, then I'd ask you to look at my candidacy." Nunn is adept at sounding like a Republican. She's said she might not vote for Reid to continue as Democratic leader in the Senate.

That touches on another tactic: separation from party leaders. Senator Pryor was quoted as saying at a fundraiser: "Possibly the best thing that could happen . . . this election cycle would be if Mitch McConnell gets beat and Harry Reid gets replaced." Pryor says he wants Senator Chuck Schumer of New York to take over from Reid. His GOP opponent, Tom Cotton, says Pryor has voted with Obama—and thus with Reid—93 percent of the time.

Other Democrats won't confess their position on Reid. Senator Mark Warner of Virginia, in a televised debate last week, was mildly critical of Reid but dodged the question of removing him. Senators Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire and Mark Begich of Alaska and Grimes have flatly declined to answer whether Reid should stay on.

Nor is Pelosi immune. In Florida, Gwen Graham, the daughter of former Democratic governor Bob Graham, is challenging GOP congressman Steve Southerland for one of the few House seats regarded as a potential Democratic pickup. She shows Pelosi and House speaker John Boehner on the screen in a TV spot and says: "Congress is broken. Both parties—Republican and Democrat—are to blame. And both need new leaders in Washington."

To obscure their having voted for Obamacare, Democratic incumbents stress they're now bent on "fixing" it. Warner wants to add a cheaper fifth tier of coverage. He calls it the "copper plan." Warner wasn't a major player in health care negotiations, and if he fought bravely for his new plan before voting for Obamacare, it escaped notice. But now it's one of his top campaign talking points.

Warner doesn't mention the deductibles a copper plan would necessitate. Grace-Marie Turner, the health care expert and critic of Obamacare, says they would be "in the stratosphere. The real question for Senator Warner is, how does he expect people to pay that first possibly $7,000 to $10,000 before insurance triggers in?" Nunn also supports a copper-type plan.

That many Democrats in competitive races who opposed President Bush's war in Iraq have emerged as born-again hawks should be no

AP / DANNY JOHNSTON

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surprise. Once the beheadings of Americans by ISIS made military intervention in Iraq and Syria popular, they were forced to respond, Kimberley Strassel of the *Wall Street Journal* has noted. Iowa Senate candidate Bruce Braley, for instance, said in a debate: "Anytime American citizens are attacked by a terrorist group, they need to be brought to justice or to the grave." He had won a House seat in 2006 while calling for a troop withdrawal in Iraq.

In North Carolina, Hagan appeared furious in a 30-second ad to rebut criticism by her Republican challenger, Thom Tillis, on Iraq. He "should be ashamed for running an ad that says I would let our soldiers die in vain. . . . I'll stand up to anyone when it comes to protecting our military, and Speaker Tillis knows that." Whew! She refers to him as "Speaker" to remind voters of his role in the unpopular, GOP-controlled state legislature.

Like other Democrats, Hagan portrays herself as a victim of attacks funded by the Koch brothers. In her telling, it's as if a great wrong has been committed. It's true the Koch-funded Americans for Prosperity has aired ads tying her to Obama. On her website, there's a sign-up to "help Kay fight back against the Koch brothers." She doesn't acknowledge the help she's received from well-heeled Democratic groups from outside North Carolina. Harry Reid's Senate Majority PAC alone has spent $1.4 million defending her and $8.7 million trashing Tillis.

When Clinton was in Arkansas last week, he took up the victimhood theme. "Out-of-state money buying television ads," he said, is turning Pryor's bid for reelection into a protest against Obama. Forget Obama, Clinton said. He urged voters "to think about what would be best for our children and grandchildren." He spoke as if the $4.2 million that Reid's PAC has spent against Tom Cotton didn't exist.

I'll stipulate that Republicans are capable of camouflaging their candidates when that's required. But Democrats are a lot better at it, as we can see with our own eyes this year. ♦

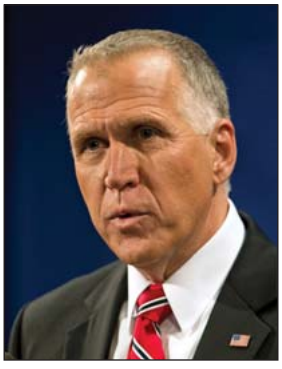
The One That Got Away?

The surprisingly close North Carolina Senate race.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

The U.S. Senate race in North Carolina calls to mind Henry Kissinger's notion about the Iran-Iraq war: Could both sides actually lose?

The sitting Democrat, Kay Hagan, holds only a tenuous lead, unlike more secure purple-state incumbent Democrats in Virginia and New Hampshire. Tar Heel State Democrats are cautiously optimistic that she's winning, but the influx of money—more than $13 million so far from the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Harry Reid's super-PAC, plus nearly $10 million from her own campaign—betrays a sense of desperation. Despite leading in 13 straight polls, Hagan, 61, hasn't polled above 50 percent the entire year and has been stuck in the mid-forties for months. There's a real fear that she's already maxed out her support.




Thom Tillis and Kay Hagan

True, Hagan's Republican opponent, Thom Tillis, hasn't pulled ahead, as have fellow GOP challengers in, for instance, Arkansas and Alaska. Tillis, the 54-year-old speaker of the state house of representatives, has been behind in every poll since August, which has Republicans fretting. What looked like a winnable seat in a potential wave year could be slipping away. "It's probably easier to win Colorado than North Carolina," says John Hood, president of the conservative John Locke Foundation in Raleigh.

Tying Hagan to Barack Obama ought to be good politics for Tillis. In a recent poll from NBC News and Marist College, Obama's approval rating in North Carolina is 39 percent. Half of respondents say they have a negative opinion of the president, and 48 percent disapprove of Obamacare. Sixty-seven percent say the country is on the wrong track. Things aren't much better for Obama in another new poll from *USA Today* and Suffolk University, showing 53 percent of North Carolina's likely voters disapprove of the president's job performance, while 50 percent say Obamacare has been a "generally bad idea."

But disenchantment with Obama isn't quite translating into support for Tillis. The Marist poll found Hagan leading Tillis 44 percent to 40 percent, while Suffolk found Hagan ahead 47 percent to 45 percent. (Libertarian candidate Sean Haugh polled 7 percent and 4 percent, respectively, though Democrats and Republicans alike say they expect his share to drop enough to make him a nonfactor.)

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Michael Warren is a staff writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Suffolk found that Tillis is winning just 78 percent of those who disapprove of Obama. Hagan, on the other hand, wins 91 percent of those who approve of the president.

Rob Christensen, the chief political writer at the Raleigh *News & Observer*, says the problem with Tillis's strategy is that Obama has been "thoroughly debated" in North Carolina, particularly since the state was one of the most hotly contested in 2012 (Romney won it by just under 100,000 votes). "The Obama issue has lost a little bit of its air," says Christensen. So while Tillis has struggled to make the race a referendum on Obama, Hagan and the Democrats have been making it a referendum on Speaker Tillis and the Republican-controlled state legislature.

"It's a reversal of the candidates' positions," says Hood. "Tillis feels like the incumbent, Hagan is the challenger."

Democrats have argued that, since the GOP took over the legislature in 2011, Tillis and his colleagues have overreached, cutting important government spending while giving the wealthy tax cuts. In particular, Hagan claims Tillis and the Republicans cut education spending by half a billion dollars. Tillis says that's false. "Senator Hagan's talking about a cut in the rate of growth," he tells me. "We increased education spending by a billion dollars."

But since Labor Day, the Hagan campaign has flooded North Carolina TV with ads featuring teachers and parents—all women—talking directly to the camera about the "cuts." The ads reinforced the idea that the Republicans in the legislature were short-changing schools. In one spot, a young teacher from Cary named Megan says because of budget cuts, her school can't even afford to buy her a textbook. "When I'm asked who's responsible for these education cuts, it's Thom Tillis and his legislature," she says.

"She's trying to use false ads to divert North Carolinians," Tillis says of Hagan. Consider them diverted. Not long after Hagan's ad blitz began, Tillis's poll numbers sank, though they've started to recover.

"Tillis is trying to answer something in three months that has been going on for three years," says Carter Wrenn, longtime political aide to the late Republican senator Jesse Helms. Republicans, Wrenn says, never mounted a defense of their policies while Democratic discontent grew. "The anger factor is working for the Democrats," says Christensen.

Unless, of course, it doesn't. Hagan isn't claiming victory yet, and with good reason. For one thing, she's still an incumbent Democrat in a bad year for her party. Christensen says there's not much passion for Hagan among grassroots liberals. The state Democratic party is frequently described as a "mess," so much so that Hagan and Democrats in Washington are funneling their resources and efforts through the Wake County (Raleigh) party

committee. To win, Hagan will need 20 percent of those who cast votes to be African-American, but as one Democratic consultant says, "I don't see it." Even history is against Hagan. North Carolina hasn't reelected a Democratic senator since Sam Ervin in 1968.

And then there are the events of the past year—from the disastrous Obamacare rollout to the rising threat of Islamic terrorism in the Middle East—that mean the debate over Obama hasn't quite ended in North Carolina. Tillis regularly deploys the statistic that Hagan votes with Obama 96 percent of the time and cast the "deciding vote" on Obamacare. He points to Obama policies like sequestration (which hurts North Carolina's large military population) and immigration reform (Tillis opposes the Gang of Eight bill supported by the White House) and argues Hagan has shown no independence on those issues.

In the final weeks, Tillis sees national security as a way to reach undecideds. His campaign's latest ads target Obama's "jayvee" comments about the Islamic State terrorist group, linking them to the fact that Hagan has missed half of all Armed Services Committee hearings this year. One of the hearings Hagan skipped in February discussed the "growing threat" of ISIS. Hagan admitted last week that she attended a fundraiser the same day.

"While ISIS grew, Obama did nothing," says one ad's voiceover. "Senator Hagan did cocktails."

Will the shadow of Obama's failures be enough to put Tillis over the top? Or have Hagan and the Democrats successfully changed the subject to Tillis's Republican overreach? The ambiguity of the race played out in an exchange during the October 7 debate. Tillis pressed Hagan to prove her independence from the president. "Which of the policies, out of the 96 percent that you supported, do you regret?" Tillis asked.

"You know, Speaker Tillis," Hagan shot back, "your idea of effectiveness is hurting the people of North Carolina every day." ♦

Hunkering Down

Who stands with Hong Kong's democrats?

BY ELLEN BORK

Hong Kong

On the evening of Saturday, October 4, enormous crowds gathered in downtown Hong Kong at the main site of the democracy protests that have dominated the affairs of this city of 7.2 million for weeks. They filled an eight-lane thoroughfare in the center of the Admiralty business district, spilling out around the adjacent government office complex. Banners hanging from overpasses demanded democracy and denounced the deeply unpopular, Beijing-appointed chief executive, CY Leung.

Pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong, October 4

A university student working as an usher—I'll call him Teddy—interpreted the speeches for me. As the band Beyond sang the anthem of the protest movement, he held his cell phone up above his head, its bright screen lighting up the dark with thousands of others. A broad smile came across his face when the students leading the "Umbrella" movement—Alex Chow, Lester Shum of the Hong Kong Federation of Students, and Joshua Wong, the 17-year-old head of Scholarism, representing secondary school students—took the stage.

That night was an extraordinary display of the movement's character just a day after tattooed thugs, presumed linked to Hong Kong's criminal triads, had attacked pro-democracy protesters in the Mong Kok neighborhood.

As they had throughout the protests, the participants showed discipline, civic mindedness, humor, and grace. At the same time, anxiety was mounting. At the end of the evening, Teddy urged me not to come back the next night for fear I might get hurt if Leung followed through on his threat to clear the protests by the start of the work week.

Nothing happened that Sunday night, or this past week. Some of life has returned to normal, with children in the neighborhoods around the protests returning to school, and protesters allowing civil servants to get to their offices.

In the meantime, demonstrators continue to hold ground, in smaller numbers. Determined to maintain leverage for promised talks with the government, they called for a new round of civil disobedience. Pro-democracy politicians who had taken a low profile joined in, saying they would obstruct some business in the legislature. Late on Thursday, the government abruptly canceled the meeting with demonstrators. In fact, the talks were already foundering as the government has insisted that they be confined to the blueprint for Hong Kong's political system already laid out by Beijing, and exclude the August 31 decision that candidates for elective office in 2017 must be approved by Beijing.

Just children in 1997 when Hong Kong was returned to China, the students leading the movement feel unconstrained by the deal made back then between London and Beijing,

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over their parents' heads, delivering Hong Kong to Communist rule. That agreement did not foresee that, far from becoming adapted to Beijing's rule, the people of Hong Kong would develop a distinct identity, tightly linked to civil liberties, the rule of law, and the institutions that make Hong Kong different from the mainland. More than most democracy movements, this one is seeking to defend what people already have. To do that, they need a government accountable to the electorate.

This is a challenge not only to Beijing, but also to those democracies that tacitly accept China's control of Hong Kong and the inevitable erosion of its way of life. "We have principles and values that we want to promote," an unnamed senior Obama administration official told the *New York Times*. "But we're not looking to inject the United States into the middle of this." Even so, there is genuine disappointment here at the lack of support from the world's most powerful democracy. "To stand on the side of power in such a struggle is contrary to the most basic principles of free societies," said Margaret Ng, a former pro-democracy lawmaker and barrister.

As of now, the authorities appear to be biding their time. They may hope the inconvenience caused by the protests will erode support for the demonstrators, or that the government will have a freer hand to act after the summit meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, which President Obama is scheduled to attend in Beijing in November.

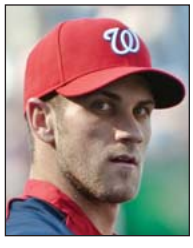
With talks between the students and the authorities off for now, and with some rest for demonstrators over the past several days, the crowds are likely to return to the streets. Tensions will mount. The students and their political allies and supporters can expect to be targeted by Beijing. Indeed, such pressures have already started. At the rally last Saturday, Joshua Wong, the young hero of the movement, addressed himself to people who had gone to his home and harassed his parents. "If you want to threaten me, do," he said, "but leave my parents alone." ♦

Let's Help the Strivers

The case for an early exit from high school to community college. BY ELI LEHRER

In 2009, Bryce Harper—then a sophomore at Las Vegas High School and already the best high school baseball player in the nation—made the unusual and controversial decision to forgo his final two years of high school, on the grounds that there was simply no effective competition for him at that level. He passed the GED test and enrolled in the two-year College of Southern Nevada.

Harper's choice turned out to be the right one. In his only season at CSN, he more than doubled the school's single-season home run record, was awarded the Golden Spikes award as the best player in college baseball, and was the first player taken in the 2010 Major League Baseball draft. Starring for the Washington Nationals, Harper was the National League's rookie of the year in 2012.



The Bryce is right.

The choice Harper made is not one limited just to once-in-a-generation athletes. Based on results from some limited experiments, proposals to allow students to finish high school a year early in favor of two-year community college scholarships have a lot to recommend them.

Texas and Utah currently offer small grants for students who forgo a fourth year of high school to enroll in college, while Arizona provides forgivable loans for the same purpose. Connecticut's Yankee Institute for Public Policy has promoted the idea in conservative circles. But the idea has hardly caught fire, even though it could appeal across party lines, saving taxpayer money while also expanding opportunities for some of those poorly served by the educational system.

Liberals have obvious reasons to like such scholarships. They would provide 14 years of free schooling to students, rather than the current 13 years. They would relieve financial pressures for those who would struggle to pay the $2,700 a year that full-time community college costs, on average. They also would mark a significant public sector investment in professional training, greatly increasing the potential earning power of those who otherwise might receive only a high school degree.

Fiscal conservatives should be attracted by the fact that high school is far more expensive than community college, and even trading two years of the latter for one of the former will usually be a net savings. In Boston, for example, high school costs an average of about $17,000 per year, per student, while the most expensive community college option is only $4,500. In some areas, free community college could avoid pricey duplication of resources. A rural high school might not need to build an advanced placement physics lab if students could get essentially the same instruction at a community college.

Community college scholarships also would bend the cost curve for many who eventually go on to a four-year college, but would need to finance only two years there. This could prove especially helpful to those ambitious strivers who might not be ready or able to complete a four-year degree, but could "ease in" through community

CATHY T.

Eli Lehrer is president of the R Street Institute.

college. Those that didn't complete the degree quickly would still leave with at least some college credit and new skills.

The feasibility of such plans will vary by jurisdiction. In most states, a high school diploma requires four years of class credits. However, in some localities, students may finish school early by compressing their schedules. And local boards of education in some places have broad powers to decide when to award diplomas. In others, students may be able to complete high school and an associate degree simultaneously, by applying community colleges courses for high school credit. (This is already pretty common.) In still others, the GED test may be the most efficient way to accelerate the process.

There are potential drawbacks that policymakers must consider. Students who take a chance on free community college would be left with no credential if they dropped out, and community college drop-out rates are very high. One reason community colleges cost less than high schools is that they do less: Class sizes are larger, total class time is more limited, and there are often fewer extracurricular opportunities like sports and theater. Students also are financially responsible for books and other materials that high schools typically provide for free.

But these issues can all be addressed, and the idea of getting high school students to complete college classwork already has broad appeal. In recent years, both the Democratic and Republican national platforms have called for more opportunities to earn college credits in high school. Most high schools have offered at least some advanced placement courses for decades. A full third of the class of 2013 took at least one AP exam, and the overwhelming majority scored well enough for most colleges to award them credit.

Most larger school districts also allow dual enrollment in some college courses already. The Gates Foundation's Early College High School initiative has helped students in 28 states take college and high school classes simultaneously, sometimes earning an associate degree in the process. (The programs generally take place at special high schools rather than traditional community college campuses.) At least one very well respected freestanding program, Bard College at Simon's Rock, exists exclusively for students who want to start college after 10th grade. Furthermore, many four-year college admissions offices will consider applications from sufficiently prepared high school juniors already.

Nonetheless, the idea of trading some high school for guaranteed community college scholarships has not attracted much support, and implementation of current programs leaves something to be desired. Arizona provides loan forgiveness only if students complete associate degrees or the equivalent. Students in most of the programs aren't able to apply the grants to tuition at a four-year school, which limits their appeal. Since the programs don't usually attract the very best students, who are bound for four-year colleges anyway, they haven't found as many takers as they might. Not only should the grants be more broadly applicable (including as a way to pay part of the tuition for a four-year college), but the window in which to take them should be expanded to accommodate those who might need to work after high school or simply aren't ready for college right away.

For most students, a standard four-year high school experience is still probably best. Few students want to miss out on prom, homecoming games, or many of the other senior-year rites of passage. Community colleges, while great resources, aren't necessarily intended for the very brightest and most ambitious students. As with any choice, some who make this decision might find that they are worse off. But it is an option that could benefit many, and for that reason alone, it's an idea that deserves a closer look. ♦

Not All That Safe

The Minnesota governor's race isn't over.

BY BARRY CASSELMAN

Minneapolis

The 2014 race for governor of Minnesota had been placed in the "Safe Democrat" category since it began in earnest. Potential Republican opponents to the Democratic (Democratic-Farmer-Labor in this state) incumbent Mark Dayton were numerous, but most voters told pollsters the state was going in the right direction. Unemployment was lower than the national average, and Minneapolis was growing again and seemingly booming with new housing construction.

But not all was rosy for the DFL. President Obama, who had carried the state twice, was down to 38 percent approval in the state. The liberals who had won control of the legislature in the 2012 election overreached in some of their legislation, forcing day-care workers to join a union, constructing a costly new state senate office building, and creating an often dysfunctional health care program called MNsure that even Dayton had to concede was riddled with mistakes. The governor and the legislature also raised state income taxes by $2 billion in his first two years (and then called it "tax reduction" when, after an inevitable surplus, they lowered the increase by half).

Nevertheless, Dayton's poll numbers remained high until the beginning of this year, and even after that, he maintained a double-digit lead over

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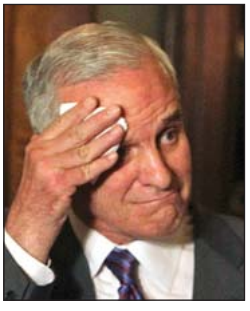
any of his potential rivals. A department store heir, Dayton had been state auditor and U.S. senator, but had not previously run for reelection to any office he held. Occasional poor health, and several surgeries during his first term, led to speculation that, now 67, he might not run again.

But he finally announced he would run for a second term. He then abruptly dumped his lieutenant governor, Yvonne Solon, a popular figure from the northeast region of the state known as "the Range," replacing her with his Twin Cities chief of staff, Tina Smith, who had not previously run for elected office. This move was not well-received in DFL circles in the Range, usually a DFL stronghold.



Dayton feels the heat.

Four major Republicans sought their party endorsement. In Minnesota, candidates first face party endorsement conventions before running in the primary. In recent years, some candidates in both parties (including Dayton) have bypassed the endorsement process. But the eventual GOP nominee Jeff Johnson, a lawyer, former state representative, and now a county commissioner, won the backing of the convention and emerged victorious over his three main rivals in the August primary.

With the party organization solidly behind Johnson, he then faced the formidable task of taking on an incumbent with 100 percent name recognition, a powerful DFL organization behind him, and a personal fortune enabling him to spend whatever necessary for his campaign.

A recent poll, conducted by the largest newspaper in the state, showed Dayton at only 45 percent, Johnson at 33 percent, and about 20 percent undecided. The newspaper and its poll have long had the reputation of pro-DFL bias; true to form, the headline was "Dayton leads Johnson by double digits." Even taking the poll at face value, however, the governor was well under 50 percent, always a danger sign for an incumbent, and the Dayton campaign immediately began sending out worried calls for support and donations. The DFL has now also called in former president Bill Clinton to rally the party base.

Johnson, meanwhile, has relatively low name recognition, less money on hand, no personal fortune, and an untried GOP get-out-the-vote effort.

Johnson likes to point out that he has always been underestimated, including when he ran for the state legislature, for GOP national committeeman, for county commissioner in the state's largest county, and, finally, for the gubernatorial nomination—all of which he did win. He further argues that he will do much better than the GOP nominee who lost in 2010 by only 8,000 votes. He cites the state's conservative northwestern 7th district, where both Johnson and his wife were born and raised, the 3rd district, where he has served as state representative and county commissioner for many years, and the growing Rochester area, where his lieutenant governor choice lives. Another area where he is likely to outperform previous GOP candidates is in the Range, where polling shows the Republicans already 2 points ahead of the DFL, and the Republican congressional candidate, Stewart Mills, seems on his way to upsetting incumbent Rep. Rick Nolan.

The DFL has just announced it will spend $1 million for political ads to reelect the governor. So far, the Republican party has not indicated it will, or can, match that amount. In fact, there has been a widespread belief expressed by GOP activists that Johnson might be overwhelmed by spending from the DFL side. The state business community, Johnson's most likely resource for campaign funds, has so far been tight-fisted. They will have to step up to the plate if they want a new governor.

The latest quarterly fundraising report, though, showed that Johnson had outraised Dayton by $200,000. Johnson is now up on TV with his first major ad with a $500,000 buy, but he remains at a serious financial disadvantage. Also good news for the GOP nominee was the announcement that Chris Christie, chairman of the Republican Governors Association, will appear in the state for a Johnson fundraiser, signaling the race is being given a higher priority than before.

The DFL strategy has been to try to paint Johnson as a Tea Party candidate. Although he does have the support of many Tea Partiers, Johnson has built support in his party over the years from the most conservative to the most moderate. The centrist Independence party (IP) gubernatorial candidate in 2010, who received 12 percent of the vote and probably cost the GOP nominee the race, has strongly endorsed Johnson and is even campaigning for him across the state. The IP has no serious candidate this year.

Although Jeff Johnson lacks name recognition, he does have one of the most popular surnames in this state, with its still-large Scandinavian-American population. While many Twin Cities residents are prospering, many in the rural and other outstate areas are not. Higher taxes and increased regulations by the Dayton administration are not popular outside the cities, nor is the DFL's unambiguous favoritism to labor unions, especially to public employees' unions. Some businesses have left the state, and others are saying they will, citing an antibusiness climate, especially to small business.

Finally, there is the question of whether an anti-incumbent or anti-Obama political wave will hit this state. Incumbent governors of both parties are facing serious challengers across the country, including Republicans in Kansas, Michigan, Florida, and Pennsylvania, and Democrats in Connecticut, Illinois, and Colorado. Such a wave might be heading for Minnesota and might be necessary if Johnson is to overcome Dayton's lead.

Dayton is still ahead, but this race is not yet over. ♦

NEWSCOM

Neo-Victorianism on Campus

Is this the end of the collegiate bacchanal?

By Heather Mac Donald

Sexual liberation is having a nervous breakdown on college campuses. Conservatives should be cheering on its collapse; instead they sometimes sound as if they want to administer the victim smelling salts.

It is impossible to overstate the growing weirdness of the college sex scene. Campus feminists are reimporting selective portions of a traditional sexual code that they have long scorned, in the name of ending what they preposterously call an epidemic of campus rape. They are once again making males the guardians of female safety and are portraying females as fainting, helpless victims of the untrammeled male libido. They are demanding that college administrators write highly technical rules for sex and aggressively enforce them, 50 years after the proponents of sexual liberation insisted that college adults stop policing student sexual behavior. While the campus feminists are not yet calling for an assistant dean to be present at their drunken couplings, they have created the next best thing: the opportunity to replay every grope and caress before a tribunal of voyeuristic administrators.

Back to the future: Texas Tech, 2014

The ultimate result of the feminists' crusade may be the same as if they were explicitly calling for a return to sexual modesty: a sharp decrease in casual, drunken sex. There is no downside to this development.

Let us recall the norms which the sexual revolution contemptuously swept away in the 1960s. Males and females were assumed on average to have different needs regarding sex: The omnivorous male sex drive would leap at all available targets, whereas females were more selective, associating sex with love and commitment. The male was expected to channel his desire for sex through the rituals of courtship and a proposal of marriage. A high premium was placed on female chastity and great significance accorded its loss; males, by contrast, were given a virtual free pass to play the sexual field to the extent that they could find or purchase a willing partner. The default setting for premarital sex was "no," at least for females. Girls could opt out of that default—and many did. But placing the default at "no" meant that a female didn't have to justify her decision not to have sex with particular reasons each time a male importuned her; individual sexual restraint was backed up by collective values. On campuses, administrators enforced these norms through visitation rules designed to prevent student couplings.

The sexual revolution threw these arrangements aside. From now on, males and females would meet as equals on the sexual battlefield. The ideal of female modesty, the liberationists declared, was simply a cover for sexism. Chivalry was punished; females were assumed to desire sex as voraciously as males; they required no elaborate courtship rituals to engage in it and would presumably experience no pang of thwarted attachment after a one-night stand. The default for premarital sex was now "yes," rather than "no"; opting out of that default required an individualized explanation that could no longer rely on the fact that such things are simply not done. In colleges, the authorities should get out of the way and leave students free to navigate coital relations as they saw fit.

Four decades later, the liberationist regime is disintegrating before our eyes. The new order is a bizarre hybrid of liberationist and traditionalist values. It carefully preserves the prerogative of no-strings-attached sex while cabining it with legalistic caveats that

AP PHOTO / BETSY BLANEY

Heather Mac Donald is the Thomas W. Smith fellow at the Manhattan Institute.

allow females to revert at will to a stance of offended virtue. Consider the sexual consent policy of California's Claremont McKenna College, shared almost verbatim with other schools such as Occidental College in Los Angeles. Paragraphs long, consisting of multiple sections and subsections, and embedded within an even wordier 44-page document on harassment and sexual misconduct, Claremont's sexual consent rules resemble nothing so much as a multilawyer-drafted contract for the sale and delivery of widgets, complete with definitions, the obligations of "all" (as opposed to "both") parties, and the preconditions for default. "Effective consent consists of an affirmative, conscious decision by each participant to engage in mutually agreed upon (and the conditions of) sexual activity," the authorities declare awkwardly. The policy goes on to elaborate at great length upon each of the "essential elements of Consent"—"Informed and reciprocal," "Freely and actively given," "Mutually understandable," "Not indefinite," "Not unlimited." "All parties must demonstrate a clear and mutual understanding of the nature and scope of the act to which they are consenting"—think: signing a mortgage—"and a willingness to do the same thing, at the same time, in the same way," declare Claremont's sex bureaucrats. Never mind that sex is the realm of the irrational and inarticulate, fraught with ambivalence, fear, longing, and shame—at least outside the security of a good marriage. Doing something that you are not certain about does not make it rape, it makes it sex.

The policy's assumption of transparent contractual intention may be laughably out of touch with reality. But its agenda is serious: to rehabilitate the "no" default for premarital sex, despite a backdrop of permissiveness. In fact, the policy goes even farther into the realm of Victorian sex roles than simply a presumption of female modesty. Females are now considered so helpless and passive that they should not even be assumed to have the strength or capacity to say "no." "Withdrawal of Consent can be an expressed 'no' or can be based on an outward demonstration that conveys that an individual is hesitant, confused, uncertain, or is no longer a mutual participant," announce Claremont's sexocrats.

Good luck litigating that clause in a campus sex tribunal. The female can allege that the male should have known that she was "confused" because of what she didn't do. The male will respond that he didn't notice any particular nonactivity on her part. Resolving this evidentiary dispute would not be helped by bedside cameras—the logical next step in campus rape hysteria. Pressure sensors would be needed as well to detect asymmetries in touch.

With or without cameras, adjudicating college sex in the neo-Victorian era requires a degree of prurience that should be repugnant to any self-respecting university. A campus sex investigator named Djuna Perkins described the nauseating enterprise to National Public Radio in June: "It will sometimes boil down to details like who turned who around, or [whether] she lifted up her body so [another student] could pull down her pants. There have been plenty of cases that I've done when the accused student says, 'What do you mean? [The accuser] was moaning with pleasure. He was raising his body, clutching my back, exhibiting all signs that sounded like this was a pleasurable event.'"

Feminists in the neo-Victorian era are demanding that written material that allegedly evokes nonconsensual sex be prefaced by warnings regarding its threatening content, so that female readers can avoid fits of vapors and fainting—a phenomenon known as 'trigger warnings.'

Rather than shrinking from this Peeping Tom role, college administrators are enthusiastically drafting new sex rules that require even more minute analysis of drunken couplings. Harvard, also assuming that delicate co-eds cannot summon the will to say "no," now allows females unfettered discretion after the fact to allege that they were sexually assaulted by conduct they silently regarded as "undesirable."

We have come very far from the mud-drenched orgies of Woodstock. Feminists in the neo-Victorian era are demanding that written material that allegedly evokes nonconsensual sex be prefaced by warnings regarding its threatening content, so that female readers can avoid fits of vapors and fainting—a phenomenon known as "trigger warnings." Earlier this year, Wellesley College students petitioned for the removal of a statue of a sleep-walking, underwear-clad middle-aged man, whose installation on college grounds immediately caused "apprehension, fear, and triggering thoughts regarding sexual assault" among many students, according to the petition. A hyperventilating, publicity-seeking senior at Columbia University is carrying around a mattress with her everywhere she goes on campus, like Jesus bearing his cross, until Columbia expels her alleged "rapist." Ohio State University underwent a four-year investigation by the U.S. Education Department for its crude marching band culture, even though the only assault female band members may have experienced was on

their sensibilities. Many girls, we belatedly rediscover, don't enjoy bawdy sexual humor as much as boys do.

It turns out that when you decouple the sex drive from modesty and prudence, it takes armies of elected officials, bureaucrats, and consultants to protect females from "undesirable" behavior. Virginia's governor Terry McAuliffe is establishing a task force on campus sexual violence comprising up to 30 top state officials and representatives from law enforcement and higher education. Connecticut is requiring colleges to form sexual assault response teams, on the model, presumably, of active shooter response teams. California has just enacted a law mandating that colleges receiving state funds require students to be in "affirmative, conscious and voluntary agreement" in order to engage in sexual activity, agreement that is "ongoing throughout a sexual activity and that can be revoked at any time." Gloria Steinem and a gender studies professor from New York's Stony Brook University explain in the *New York Times*: The California law "redefines that gray area" between "yes" and "no." "Silence is not consent; it is the absence of consent. Only an explicit 'yes' can be considered consent." In other words, California's new statute, like many existing campus policies, moves the sexual default for female students back to "no."

Emma Sulkowicz, a senior visual arts student at Columbia, carries a mattress in protest of the university's lack of action after she reported being raped during her sophomore year. The protest is doubling as her senior thesis project.

ANDREW BURTON / GETTY IMAGES

But isn't this bureaucratic and legislative ferment, however ham-handed, being driven by an epidemic of campus rape? There is no such epidemic. There is, however, a squalid hook-up scene, the result of jettisoning all normative checks on promiscuous behavior. A recent case from Occidental College illustrates the reality behind so-called "campus rape." Girls are drinking themselves blotto precisely in order to lower their inhibitions for casual sex, then regretting it afterwards.

The freshman complainant, Jane Doe (a pseudonym), began her weekend drinking binge on Friday, September 6, 2013. She attended a dance party in the dorm room of John Doe, another freshman whom she had just met, and woke up the next morning with a hangover. She soon began "pregaming" again—that is, drinking before an event at which one expects to drink further. Jane drank before a daytime soccer game and continued during the evening, repeatedly swigging from a bottle of orange juice and vodka which she had prepared. Around midnight, she went to a second party in John Doe's dorm room, still drinking vodka. John, too, had been drinking all day. Jane removed her shirt while dancing with John and engaged in heavy petting on his bed, sitting on top of him and grinding her hips. Jane's friends tried to shepherd her home, but before she left John's room, she gave him her cell phone number so that they could coordinate their planned sexual tryst.

When she arrived at her own dorm room, John texted her: "The second that you away from them, come back." Jane responded: "Okay." John wrote back: "Just get back here." Jane responded: "Okay do you have a condom." John replied: "Yes." Jane texted back: "Good, give me two minutes." John texted: "Knock when you're here."

Before leaving her dorm room, Jane texted a friend from back home: "I'm going to have sex now." Jane walked down to John's room at approximately 1 A.M., knocked on his door, went in, took off her earrings, got undressed, performed oral sex, and had sexual intercourse with him. When an acquaintance knocked on John's door to check up on her, Jane three times called out: "Yeah, I'm fine." Shortly before 2 A.M., Jane dressed herself and returned to her room. On her way there, she texted her friends vapid messages, complete with smiley faces, none of which mentioned assault. She then walked to a different dorm where she sat on the lap of another male student whom she had met the night before, talking and joking. The next day she texted John asking if she had left her earrings and belt in his room and asked to come by to pick them up.

Now someone who asks a male if he has a condom, who conspires with him to have sex, who announces to a friend that she intends to have sex, who voluntarily goes to his dorm room in order to have sex, who has sex through no coercion or force on the male's part, is as voluntary and responsible an agent in that sex act as the male. Any male on the receiving end of such behavior, who is asked if he has a condom before a planned sex act, is going to rightly assume that he is facing a willing and consenting partner. And yet Occidental, under investigation from the Obama administration for ignoring sexual violence (a baseless charge), found

John guilty of assault and expelled him. Though Jane's actions and statements seemed to indicate that she consented to sexual intercourse, John should have known that she was too incapacitated to consent, the adjudicators concluded.

This finding rests on a neo-Victorian ethos which makes the male the sole guardian of female safety. John and Jane were equally drunk. They both agreed to have sex. Neither of them remembered the actual moment of intercourse afterwards (though Jane remembers the oral sex). Yet John is viewed as the primary mover in that sex act, and the only member of the pair obligated to evaluate the mental capacities of his partner. Jane, however, could be deemed equally guilty of having sex with a partner who was too drunk to consent. In the neo-Victorian worldview, however, females have no responsibility for their own behavior, while the male is responsible not only for himself but for his partner as well.

Pace the feminists, the Occidental case is emblematic not of "rape culture" but of the emotional fallout from sexual liberation. Jane was a virgin before her tryst with John. She only decided to report her intercourse to the Occidental authorities, after prompting from her college advisers, when she realized how much it had affected her psychologically. She saw that John "wasn't fazed by what happened at all" and appeared to attend classes without difficulty, whereas she found herself distracted and unable to concentrate. She should not have to risk the discomfort of seeing him, she concluded, and thus, Occidental should expel him.

Jane's reactions are understandable, if hardly grounds for expulsion. While there are thankfully few actual rape victims on college campuses, there are thousands of girls feeling taken advantage of by partners who walk away from casual sex with no apparent sense of thwarted attachment. That such behavior conforms to the ground rules for campus sex doesn't matter. What campus feminists call "post traumatic stress disorder" and fear of getting "raped" again is often rather a female's quite natural embarrassment at reencountering a sex partner whom she barely knew and with whom she has no continuing relationship. Girls losing their virginity are at particular risk of being emotionally ambushed by drunken hook-up couplings. Though sexual liberation has stripped virginity and its loss of any formally recognized significance, the lived experience can be more momentous than girls are prepared for.

The bogus statistics thrown around by the feminist-industrial complex—a one-in-four to one-in-five incidence of sexual assault among undergraduate girls—dwarf any known crime rate, even in the most brutal African ethnic wars.

The conservative response to campus rape hysteria has been only partially helpful. The main line of attack has been to say: "Yes, campus rape is a grave problem. But because rape is so serious an offense, all such charges should be tried in criminal court, not in flimsy college tribunals." As a strategic move, this position is unimpeachable. Requiring that every campus rape allegation be sent to the criminal justice system would end the campus rape movement overnight. Very few alleged campus rape cases are brought to the police because the accuser and her counselors know that most cases wouldn't stand a chance in court. During a debate last month (in which I participated), Occidental College professor Caroline Heldman, a leader in the campus rape movement, asserted that campus rape cases should not be taken to criminal trial because juries are steeped in rape culture—i.e., they cannot be trusted to convict. (Heldman also argued that the preponderance of evidence standard which Obama regulators are forcing on colleges for rape findings is too high. Apparently requiring that the fact-finder have a negligible 51 percent certainty that a rape occurred does not guarantee enough convictions.) So conservatives are right to call the rape hysterics' bluff by arguing: If you believe that this is rape, treat it as such.

Conservatives are also right to criticize the glaring due process deficiencies of campus rape tribunals. Those deficiencies grow more egregious by the day. They include the absence of such traditional safeguards as a defendant's right to cross-examine his accuser, to which one can now add the wholly subjective standards for what constitutes illegal behavior, such as whether it was "undesirable" from the female's point of view. Colleges are under enormous pressure both from the Department of Education and the press to deliver more convictions; the *New York Times* has been running a series of articles about campus rape which presume that any acquittal in a college rape case constitutes a miscarriage of justice.

But some conservatives are making two errors. The first is to agree that campus rape is a significant problem, en route to calling for its adjudication in court. If campus rape were the epidemic that the activists allege, there would have been a stampede to create alternative schools for girls. Instead, every year the competition among girls (and boys) to get into selective colleges grows fiercer. Sophisticated baby boomer mothers start their daughters' preparation

for college earlier and earlier. The Obama White House asserts that campus rape "survivors" suffer a lifetime of psychological and physical trauma, yet females are graduating from college in ever more disproportionate numbers, after which they go on to have lucrative careers, with no evidence of crippling mental injury. The bogus statistics thrown around by the feminist-industrial complex—a one-in-four to one-in-five incidence of sexual assault among undergraduate girls—dwarf any known crime rate, even in the most brutal African ethnic wars. In 2012, Newark, New Jersey's rate for all violent crimes—murder, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault—was 1.1 percent; its rape rate was under .02 percent.

Activist researchers attain their 20-25 percent rape incidence statistic by the strategic phrasing of questions and the exquisite parsing of definitions. In a 1986 *Ms.* survey that sparked the campus-rape industry, 73 percent of respondents whom the study characterized as rape victims said that they hadn't been raped when asked the question directly. Forty-two percent of these supposed victims had intercourse again with their alleged assailants—an inconceivable behavior in the case of actual rape. Sixty-five percent of females whom a 2000 Department of Justice study deemed "completed rape" victims said that they did not think that their experiences were "serious enough to report," nor did their alleged "victimization" result in physical or emotional injuries.

A 2011 protest at Dickinson College, which included demands that the school discipline students who make catcalls and lewd comments

The campus rape crisis, in other words, requires ignoring females' own characterization of their experience. There is simply no reason to concede any factual legitimacy to the rape hysterics, even as a debating tactic, since doing so only prolongs the life of the campus rape myth.

Conservatives' second error is a tone of occasional exasperation at the burgeoning college sex regulations. Do the bureaucrats' rules misunderstand the nature of sex? Do they take the fun out of it? You bet! And what's not to like? Leave laments about the inhibition of campus sex to *Reason* magazine.

To be sure, the new campus sex regime puts boys in danger of trumped-up assault charges heard before kangaroo courts. But the solution is not more complex procedural protections cobbled over a sordid culture, the solution is to reject that culture entirely. Just as girls can avoid the risk of what the feminists call "rape" by not getting drunk and getting into bed with a guy whom they barely know, boys, too, can radically reduce the risk of a rape accusation by themselves not getting drunk and having sex with a girl whom they barely know. Mothers worried that their college-bound sons will be hauled before a biased campus sex tribunal by a vindictive female should tell them: "Wait. Find a girlfriend and smother her with affection and respect. Write her love letters in the middle of the night. Escort her home after a date and then go home yourself." If one-sided litigation risk results in boys taking a vow of celibacy until graduation, there is simply no loss whatsoever to society and only gain to individual character. Such efforts at self-control were made before, and can be made again.

Unlike the overregulation of natural gas production, say, which results in less of a valuable commodity, there is no cost to an overregulation-induced decrease in campus sex. Society has no interest in preserving the collegiate bacchanal. Should college fornication become a rare event preceded by contract signing and notarization, maybe students would actually do some studying instead. At present, many students drink through the entire weekend without worrying about any academic repercussions. Maybe colleges should assign and grade some real homework instead of wasting faculty and administrator time drafting cringingly lurid consent scenarios. Rather than passing out tips on orgasm and the use of sex toys—a staple of campus health centers—colleges might send the message that they expect students to learn the periodic table, read the Greek tragedies, and understand the evolution of constitutional government. Parents might get some value out of their extortionate tuition payments, and boys might catch up to girls' graduation rates.

There are no sympathetic victims in the campus sex wars. While few boys are guilty of what most people understand as rape, many are guilty of acting as boorishly as they can get away with. Sexual liberation and radical feminism unleashed the current mess by misunderstanding male and female nature. Feminists may now be unwittingly accomplishing what they would never allow conservatives to do: restoring sexual decorum. ♦

CHRISTINE BAKER / THE PATRIOT-NEWS / LANDOV

Failure Upon Failure

The disintegration of the Obama presidency

By Stephen F. Hayes

A year before his first inauguration, Barack Obama laid out the objective of his presidency: to renew faith and trust in activist government and transform the country. In an hourlong interview with the editorial board of the *Reno Gazette-Journal* on January 16, 2008, Obama said that his campaign was already "shifting the political paradigm" and promised that his presidency would do the same. His model would be Ronald Reagan, who "put us on a fundamentally different path," in a way that distinguished him from leaders who were content merely to occupy the office. "I think that Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America in a way that Richard Nixon did not. And in a way that Bill Clinton did not."

If Reagan sought to minimize the role of government in the lives of Americans, Obama set out to do the opposite. "We've had a federal government that I think has gotten worn down and ineffective over the course of the Bush administration, partly because philosophically this administration did not believe in government as an agent of change," he complained.

"I want to make government cool again," he said.

Obama believed in government, and he was confident that his election would signal that the American people were ready to believe again, too.

As we approach the sixth anniversary of his election, the Obama presidency is in tatters. Obama's policies, foreign and domestic, are widely seen as failed or failing. His approval rating is near its lowest point. Obama's base of support is loyal and fierce and shrinking. Much of the country sees him as incompetent or untrustworthy, and government, far from being "cool," is a joke on good days and a threat on bad ones.

Barack Obama came to office with hugely ambitious goals for transforming the country, changing its trajectory, and putting America on a fundamentally different path. He advertised his audacity and boasted of his boldness. He told audiences he was compelled to run for president by what Martin Luther King Jr. had called "the fierce urgency of now." He launched his campaign in Springfield, Illinois, and invited flattering comparisons to that other president from Springfield, Abraham Lincoln.

Obama sought to portray himself as a new kind of politician—a "post-partisan," pragmatic problem-solver, not so much a centrist as someone who couldn't be pinpointed on the left-right ideological spectrum because he floated above it. Traditional labels were anachronistic constructs that didn't apply to such a transcendent political figure.

Journalists not only swallowed this legend, many of them promoted it. Obama didn't appear ideological to influential political reporters because they shared his views. He wasn't liberal, he was right.

And yet Obama didn't attempt to conceal his embrace of big government. In nearly every stump speech, he touted government as the answer to virtually every problem facing the country.

The economic crisis that shook the nation shortly before his election gave him an early opportunity to use government as an agent of change. A stunned populace that had long been skeptical of the ever-growing state was suddenly open to the kind of overachieving government that Obama had been promising. His inauguration had even some conservatives wondering if man and moment had come together in such a singular way that a slide from American welfare state to European-style socialism was inevitable.

Obama's first Inaugural Address—equal parts inspiration, confidence, and grandiosity—sought to take advantage of and shape this national mood. Looking out at the nearly two million people who had come to Washington for the ceremony, Obama proclaimed: "Starting today, we must pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off, and begin the work of remaking America."

The words that make it into an Inaugural Address are those that survive dozens and dozens of drafts. They do not appear by accident. For Obama, the project of his presidency was one of remaking the country—not improving it, not recovering historical greatness, not restoring past glory, but *remaking* America.

On his first day in office, Obama issued executive orders on transparency and ethics—to "ensure the public trust" and, importantly, to "restore faith in government, without which we cannot deliver the changes that we were sent here to make."

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The change came quickly. And it came big. With Democrats in control of both House and Senate, Obama shortly signed into law an "economic stimulus" package that would cost nearly $1 trillion and would, in the administration's telling, keep unemployment under 8 percent and prompt a robust economic recovery.

A month into office Obama released his first budget. It reflected a deep belief in government—and was bold enough to surprise even delighted liberals. Robert Reich, Bill Clinton's left-wing secretary of labor, called the proposal "audacious" because "it represents the biggest redistribution of income from the wealthy to the middle class and poor that this nation has seen in more than 40 years."

Republicans, well aware of Obama's popularity, were surpassingly polite in their criticism, often choosing to express concern about "Washington spending" rather than target the new president directly.

Then came health care reform. Obama was determined to go big. He was undeterred by growing public skepticism about the comprehensive reforms he favored and unpersuaded by arguments that he should lower his expectations. As some moderate Democrats in Congress expressed misgivings about aspects of the bill, and the prospects for passage looked uncertain, several top Obama advisers, including White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel, urged the president to consider a more incremental approach. The president said no, and after he successfully employed precisely the kinds of inside-Washington tricks he had pledged to end, the Affordable Care Act became law.

Obamacare was a momentous achievement. As Justice Anthony Kennedy noted with evident concern when the ACA came before the Supreme Court, the law would change the relationship between the citizen and the state "in a very fundamental way." Kennedy was correct, but for Obama that wasn't a flaw—that was one of his objectives.

When moderate Democrats expressed concern that Obama's aggressive liberalism would threaten congressional majorities, as had happened in 1994, the White House was dismissive. "The big difference between here and in '94 was you've got me," Obama told a group of lawmakers.

The August congressional recess in 2010 brought angry protests to town halls across the country. Democrats in competitive races struggled to defend the president and their support for him. The summer offered the first hint that despite Obama's legislative successes, there had not been a corresponding shift in public opinion about the size and scope of government.

Confirmation came three months later with historic Republican gains in the midterm elections. Obama's party lost 63 seats in the House and 6 seats in the Senate. Democrats lost 6 gubernatorial seats and control of nearly two-dozen state legislatures.

In a front-page news analysis, Peter Baker of the *New York Times* wrote that the results "effectively put an end to his transformational ambitions and left him searching for a way forward with a more circumscribed horizon of possibilities." Bill Clinton, Baker wrote, had responded to the 1994 midterms by "tacking to the middle and cutting deals with Republicans on welfare while outmaneuvering them during a government shutdown." Obama, he noted with admirable prescience, "has not shown the same sort of centrist tendencies Mr. Clinton did."

Obama offered some postelection platitudes about bipartisanship. He brought on a chief of staff with a reputation of being friendly to business and held a high-profile meeting at the Chamber of Commerce. For a moment, Obama seemed to consider changing course. But that moment, if it occurred, didn't last long. In his 2011 State of the Union address, Obama called for a temporary freeze on domestic, nonsecurity discretionary spending in what was meant to be an acknowledgment of the election results. But such spending was already at inflated levels after the influx of new money from the stimulus, and whatever the political value of such posturing, it was undermined by Obama's repeated calls for new "investments" in research, infrastructure, education, and green energy.

In reality, the 2010 elections did nothing to convince Obama to move to the center. If large chunks of the country thought Obama had been too uncompromising and too liberal, Obama was frustrated that he hadn't been as progressive as he'd hoped.

At a meeting with top White House advisers in the fall of 2011, Obama unloaded. "All too often, Obama felt as if he were driving with his foot on the brake," wrote Mark Halperin and John Heilemann in *Double Down*, their account of the 2012 election. Obama believed "that over the past three years his progressive impulses had too often been trumped by the demands of pragmatism—that he had trimmed his sails in just the way his critics on the left had charged." Obama made clear that he would run for reelection even further to the left on issues like climate change, immigration, income inequality, gay marriage, and Guantánamo Bay.

This was not Bill Clinton redux. There would be no move to the center. Obama would run against a do-nothing Congress and the Tea Party. He would run as a proud liberal.

Both Obama and Clinton would use the final State of

WEEKLY STANDARD PHOTO ILLUSTRATION

the Union address of their first term to frame their bid for reelection. Clinton famously declared: "The era of big government is over." Obama, in effect, declared: *The era of big government is here to stay, and I'm the man who will guarantee it.*

Obama asked anxious voters to give him more time to fix the nation's problems. His reelection would turn on his ability to convince voters that his policies hadn't failed—they just hadn't succeeded quite yet. The stagnant recovery, he argued, was not an indication that his economic policies hadn't worked, as Mitt Romney claimed, but a reflection of the depth of the problems caused by George W. Bush and Republicans. Obama said he was willing to work with reasonable Republicans to address these challenges if the voters would give him more time.

To clinch that argument, Obama turned to Bill Clinton, who had done precisely those things. Clinton worked with Republicans and saw real growth in his second term. In a primetime speech at the Democratic convention, Clinton insisted that Obama favored bipartisanship and "constructive cooperation." Clinton told voters that he understood their frustration at the slow recovery—"too many people don't feel it yet"—but promised that good times were just ahead. Obama had "inherited a deeply damaged economy" from Republicans, Clinton said, "and no president, not me, not any of my predecessors, no one could have fully repaired all the damage that he found in just four years."

There are many reasons Obama won a second term: an energized base; a major advantage in electoral technology; a weak Republican field that produced a poor nominee who ran an uninspired campaign. Beyond that, though, many voters bought Obama's claims, endorsed by Clinton, that he just hadn't had enough time to succeed. Obama won despite the fact that exit polls showed more voters favored Romney's positions on the three most important issues facing the country—the economy, health care, and the deficit. By a margin of 52-46, voters said the country was going in the wrong direction. But when asked who deserves more blame for "current economic conditions," 53 percent of voters said George W. Bush and just 38 percent faulted Barack Obama.

Obama had won a second term, and with an impressive margin of victory. But it wasn't because he had succeeded in restoring faith in government or convinced Americans to embrace the kind of activist government he favored. In fact, when asked about the size and scope of government, the same electorate that reelected Obama told exit pollsters that they believed government "is doing too much" (51 percent) rather than "should do more" (43 percent).

Obama's second inaugural offered a sweeping vision of a progressive second term. His State of the Union provided details. Obama spoke of deficits and entitlement reform. "It is not a bigger government we need," he said, "but a smarter government that sets priorities and invests in broad-based growth." The rest of his speech, though, was a blueprint for bigger government—"job-creating investments" and "investments in American energy" and investments in "the best ideas" and investments in "high-quality early childhood education" and even "investments" in new defense capabilities.

It was a highly ideological speech, an unmistakable call for government to do more still—a lot more. "Thirty-two years after President Ronald Reagan proclaimed that 'government is the problem' and 17 years after President Bill Clinton offered a surrender of sorts on that issue by stating that the 'era of big government is over,' President Obama made a case Tuesday for closing out the politics of austerity," Dick Stevenson wrote in an analysis published the next day in the *New York Times*.

If reasonable people could disagree on whether Obama had been restrained by the "politics of austerity," there was broad consensus that he was beginning his second term with a determination to cast aside any such constraints.

This was the moment. With the triumphant consolidation of Obama's progressive agenda, the popular embrace of a new liberalism was at hand. Government, to borrow Obama's phrase, would be cool again.

And then it all collapsed.

The problems came in waves. The attacks on U.S. diplomatic facilities in Benghazi, Libya, took place eight weeks before the election, but the many inconsistencies in the administration's narrative dogged Obama into his second term. On May 9, 2013, The Weekly Standard reported on emails sent between senior Obama administration and intelligence officials as they put together talking points for the administration's public story about the attacks. Top administration officials had repeatedly characterized the flawed talking points as a product of the intelligence community and insisted the White House and State Department had no significant role in shaping them. The emails made clear those claims were false.

Senior administration officials, including top White House and State Department advisers, had objected to language from the intelligence community that was subsequently removed. The initial draft of the talking points had included references to al Qaeda, but after input from Obama administration political appointees those references had all been scrubbed, presumably because the president was campaigning as the man who had al Qaeda on the run.

The emails "directly contradict what White House press secretary Jay Carney said about the talking points in November," reported Jonathan Karl of ABC News, who obtained all 12 versions of the talking points. The emails "show that the State Department had extensive input into the editing of the talking points." What's more, the first

draft was far more accurate than the final, scrubbed one.

The controversy over the talking points revived a scandal that the administration had hoped was behind them. At a press briefing just days before the new revelations, Carney had dismissed a question about the attacks six months earlier by claiming, "Benghazi happened a long time ago."

The following day, on May 10, the director of the Internal Revenue Service's Exempt Organizations office responded to a question from an audience member at an American Bar Association conference in Washington. The question concerned the IRS's handling of applications made by conservative and Tea Party groups for tax-exempt status.

The answer from Lois Lerner lasted several minutes. IRS employees—"line people in Cincinnati who handled the applications"—had targeted for scrutiny groups whose names included "Tea Party" and "Patriots." Lerner abruptly condemned the practice. "That was wrong, that was absolutely incorrect, insensitive, and inappropriate—that's not how we go about selecting cases for further review."

It wasn't just the selection process that was inappropriate, she said. The IRS requests to these conservative groups "were far too broad" and included "questions that weren't really necessary for the type of application" they sought. The IRS even "asked for contributor names," something Lerner said was "not appropriate."

The question, it turns out, was planted. Lerner had a friend ask it so that she could preempt the scandal before a damning report from the Treasury Department inspector general was made public. And those responsible for the targeting, it soon became apparent, were not "line officials in Cincinnati" but senior IRS officials in Washington.

Top Democrats in Washington had been publicly calling for the IRS to scrutinize Tea Party groups. But White House officials denied any role in the targeting, and President Obama was quick to condemn it. "Americans have a right to be angry about it," he said. "And I'm angry about it." The targeting, Obama said, was "inexcusable."

Three days later, the public learned that the federal government was spying on reporters. The Department of Justice had obtained phone records for nearly two dozen reporters and editors from the Associated Press as part of an investigation into alleged leaks of classified information. The records went back two months and included both home and office lines. Gary Pruitt, the president and CEO of the AP, blasted the "massive and unprecedented intrusion" into newsgathering operations of the global wire service.

Days later, the *Washington Post* reported that the Department of Justice had gone even further in another investigation, closely monitoring the activities of Fox News correspondent James Rosen, who had scored a series of exclusives involving North Korea's nuclear weapons program. In an unprecedented move, the FBI and Justice Department—in a search warrant application improperly kept secret for 18 months—branded Rosen a "co-conspirator" with his source in a violation of the Espionage Act. Under that flimsy pretext, the government obtained access to Rosen's phone records and emails, along with phone records from his parents' home on Staten Island. Amid the ensuing controversy, Attorney General Eric Holder, who had previously testified to Congress that he had never contemplated the prosecution of a member of the media for disclosing classified information, admitted having approved the Rosen warrant application and formally revised DOJ's guidelines for the treatment of reporters in such investigations so that such a situation, in theory, would never recur.

Obama pronounced himself "troubled" by the revelations. "Journalists should not be at legal risk for doing their jobs," he said. "Our focus must be on those who break the law." The White House announced that Obama had instructed Attorney General Holder to investigate the abuses. NBC News reported the same day that Holder had signed off on the Rosen search warrant.

These scandals, revealed to the public in rapid succession, captured the attention of Washington and at least initially generated a stream of news reports on the malfeasance.

Conservatives had long alleged that the IRS targeted Tea Party groups. Congressional Republicans had asked IRS officials about targeting in hearings and had begun to look into the matter. The same was true on Benghazi. Republicans alleged that the administration's account of the attacks was misleading and meant to deflect blame from Obama six weeks before the presidential election.

Most Washington reporters had ignored or dismissed these complaints, agreeing with the White House that this was partisan carping. But the revelations changed things. With new evidence that the administration would abuse its power by investigating journalists as "co-conspirators," Republican claims that the IRS had been politicized and that the administration had built its Benghazi defense on a false narrative suddenly seemed plausible. And the evidence of malfeasance was indisputable: The IRS admitted that its officials had targeted conservatives groups. Emails between top administration and intelligence officials made clear that the White House and State Department had carefully sculpted the Benghazi talking points.

Less than a month later, the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post*, working from documents stolen by Edward Snowden, published detailed accounts of surveillance programs conducted by the National Security Agency. One described the bulk collection of phone records of U.S. citizens, and the other provided details about the agency sweeping up massive amounts of information from Yahoo, Google, Facebook, and other major Internet firms. The stories stoked fears of an all-knowing government with access to

revealing data on most Americans. The companies involved protested that they were powerless to resist and that they had not known the scope of the collection. Dozens of similar stories followed over the course of the summer.

The NSA controversy was different in kind from the scandals involving Benghazi, the IRS, and the Department of Justice. The programs are defensible and, many still argue, necessary. Nobody today defends the IRS targeting, the Benghazi fabrications, or treating reporters as criminals. But the disclosure of these programs heightened growing concern about the powers of the federal government. The government that had targeted political opponents of the president, had lied about a terrorist attack in the weeks before an election, and had gone after reporters who revealed things the government wanted secret—that same government had access to the details of who we communicate with and what we do online?

What's more, Barack Obama had run for office on a promise to end the excesses of George W. Bush's war on terror and had spent two years insisting that the threats to the American people were diminishing. If al Qaeda was on the run, what was the NSA up to?

These controversies were one part of Obama's collapse. His failing policies were the other. Four years after Obama signed the stimulus into law, unemployment remained high and economic growth was anemic. In the weeks before the 2009 stimulus vote in Congress, White House economists had projected that the boost it would give the economy would keep unemployment below 8 percent. It soared well above that and six months after Obama's reelection was still at 7.5 percent. The labor force participation rate flirted with all-time lows, and underemployment became chronic.

When the economy grew, it did so in fits and starts. The "Recovery Summer" that the White House first touted in 2010 was a distant memory and a punchline. The president himself joked that they had overestimated the number of "shovel-ready" jobs. The Obama recovery would go down as the most anemic in history.

And then came health care. The Obamacare rollout in October 2013 was an unmitigated disaster. The front-end of the HealthCare.gov website didn't work. The back-end hadn't even been built. Serious security issues made potential enrollees reluctant to sign up. And many of those who signed up did not initially make premium payments.

The promise that President Obama made more than three dozen times as he worked to pass Obamacare—"if you like your plan, you can keep it, period"—was inoperative. Worse, it was clear that Obama knew when he made the promise that he would break it. Analyses the White House itself conducted had concluded that millions of Americans would not be able to keep their health care plans, whether they liked them or not. The very structure of Obamacare requires the cancellation of plans that do not meet the standards of coverage mandated by Washington.

Obama knew this. So did his aides. And so did Republicans, who warned repeatedly and with great urgency that people would lose plans they liked.

The problems with Obamacare were so bad that they elicited public criticism from Obama's two living Democratic predecessors. "His major accomplishment was Obamacare and the implementation of it is now questionable at best," said Jimmy Carter. Bill Clinton urged Obama to keep his word. "The president should honor the commitment the federal government made to those people and let them keep what they got."

The Obama presidency has seen many low points, but this has to have been one of the lowest—Jimmy Carter questioning Obama's competence and Bill Clinton questioning his integrity.

The Obama presidency has seen many low points, but this has to have been one of the lowest—Jimmy Carter questioning Obama's competence and Bill Clinton questioning his integrity.

The administration scrambled to avoid a full collapse of the law. They suspended enforcement of the employer mandate. They granted the IRS authority to provide tax credits to those insured through the federal exchange despite the fact that the plain language of the law provided tax credits only to those who were insured through state exchanges. They provided carve-outs and exceptions to other aspects of the law on an ad hoc basis.

The scandals and policy challenges that shaped Obama's fifth year have derailed his sixth. New revelations about the IRS and Benghazi scandals—widespread "computer crashes" among IRS employees investigated by Congress and Benghazi documents that further undermine the administration's claims—have kept the stories alive despite the flagging attention of the establishment media.

Many of the policy decisions of yesterday have become the crises of today, particularly overseas. In the months before the 2012 election, Obama made the imminent defeat of al Qaeda a central part of his campaign. Top Obama advisers predicted the terror group would not even exist at the end of the decade. And administration officials, including the president, delivered speeches effectively announcing the end of the global war on terror.

Obama boasted that he had ended the war in Iraq. The

administration erected obstacles to an agreement with Baghdad that would have left a residual force in Iraq, and Obama celebrated the fact that he was the president who had brought all U.S. troops home from Iraq.

A year before he began his second term, Obama sent Robert Ford to serve as the U.S. ambassador to Syria with the hope that Bashar al-Assad would be a reformer. Instead, Assad responded to peaceful protests with the systematic slaughter of moderate rebels who opposed him. Obama called for Assad's ouster but declined to do anything that would produce that result. He insisted that the movement or use of chemical weapons would be a "red line" for the United States, but balked when presented with evidence that Assad had repeatedly used those weapons.

In the face of U.S. inaction, moderate rebels turned to Islamic extremists for help, and jihadists flocked to Syria to join the fight. With better weapons, more experience, superior organization, and steadily flowing funds, the jihadists began to crowd out other elements in the Syrian opposition. Al Qaeda and likeminded groups saw an opportunity to seize territory and expand their efforts, and in due time the Islamic State controlled vast sections of Iraq and Syria.

The Obama administration dismissed or sidelined intelligence officials who contradicted the official line by warning about the growing threat from al Qaeda and the Islamic State. But that threat soon became too big to ignore.

In an announcement that at once made clear the administration's failures on Iraq, Syria, and al Qaeda, Obama ordered airstrikes on jihadist targets in the region. The tide of war was rising once again.

The scandals and policy failures have had a devastating effect. With two years left in his presidency, Obama has no agenda. The major new investments and initiatives that he spoke of after his election never happened. Gun control measures he pushed went nowhere. Immigration reform—at least the comprehensive variety that Obama demanded—is dead. As the investigations of old scandals continue, new ones have taken their place on newspaper front pages across the country: the chronic failures of the VA and, most recently, a serious cover-up involving the Secret Service.

When he's not on the golf course, the president seems to spend most of his time fundraising for vulnerable Democrats, threatening executive action on those things he can't accomplish by leading, and working to minimize crises of his own making.

This is a failed presidency.

In December 2008, a month after Obama was elected, CNN asked voters if they believed he would be an effective manager of the government. Nearly 8 in 10 respondents said that he would. When CNN asked the same question earlier this summer, only 4 in 10 answered in the affirmative. A strong majority said Obama could not be an effective manager of government.

Every month, Gallup asks Americans to name the issue causing them the greatest concern. Last month, and throughout most of the year, the most popular response was "dissatisfaction with government/abuse of power." What came next? Other top answers, month after month in 2014: "The economy," then "unemployment and jobs," then "poor health care/high cost of health care." (Immigration spiked this summer, with the influx of children from Central America and the coverage that generated.)

The top concern of Americans today, more than six years after Barack Obama vowed to "make government cool again," is that they don't trust their government. When Obama took office, 43 percent of Americans told Gallup that they were satisfied with the way the country was being governed, while 56 percent said they were dissatisfied. Today, just 27 percent say they're satisfied and 72 percent say they're dissatisfied.

A CNN poll taken in July found that trust in government is at an all-time low, with just 13 percent saying they trust government all or most of the time. Keating Holland, the director of polling at CNN, framed the results this way: "The number who trust government all or most of the time has sunk so low that it is hard to remember that there was ever a time when Americans routinely trusted government."

This lack of trust isn't all Obama's fault. Trust in government has been on the decline since Watergate, with a brief reprieve after the 9/11 attacks. And there's little doubt that Congress, with its approval at near-record lows, bears some responsibility for pessimism about government.

But Obama's approval ratings have closely tracked the trust-in-government numbers over the course of his time in office. And not surprisingly, those numbers are today near the low point of his presidency. In the *Real Clear Politics* average of polls, 42 percent of Americans approve of the job Obama is doing, while 52 percent disapprove.

The disapproval of Obama is widespread. A *New York Times*/CBS/YouGov poll released on October 9 found that Obama's disapproval ratings are higher than his approval ratings in 43 of 50 states. Obama's approval rating is above 50 percent in only three states.

Here, then, is the great irony of the Obama presidency: Barack Obama will be a transformative president, but not in the way he imagined when he spoke to the *Reno Gazette-Journal* a year before he took the oath of office. Rather than restore faith in government, the Obama presidency has all but destroyed it.

Despite himself, Obama has made the case for limited government more powerfully than his opponents. The biggest question in American politics over the next two years is a simple one: Can Republicans take advantage of it? ♦

Mark Zuckerberg rings the NASDAQ opening bell (2012).

Contrary to Success

The art and science of entrepreneurship. BY JIM MANZI

It is inherently difficult to distinguish between an entrepreneur's skill and luck, even in retrospect. Peter Thiel, however, is the cofounder of two different billion-dollar technology businesses and the first outside investor in Facebook. If he's only lucky, I'd like to borrow his rabbit's foot.

In the spring of 2012, Thiel cotaught the Stanford computer science course CS183: Startup. A law student named Blake Masters began blogging about it and publishing his lecture notes online each week. They became an Internet sensation, and they form the basis for *Zero to One*. As telegraphed by the subtitle—*Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future*—it makes an argument on two levels: The narrower argument is how to build a successful startup technology company; the broader one is how America should build a more successful economy. Based on my experience, Thiel's advice on how to create a startup is practical, often unconventional, and uniformly excellent. Here are a few examples, chosen almost at random:

> Every startup should start with a very small market. . . . Recruiting should never be outsourced. . . . Everyone at your company should be different in the same way. . . . Like acting, sales works best when hidden. . . . A startup messed up at its foundation cannot be fixed.

While there is an exception to

Zero to One
Notes on Startups, or How to Build the Future
by Peter Thiel
with Blake Masters
Crown Business, 224 pp., $27

Jim Manzi is founder and chairman of Applied Predictive Technologies, a global software company.

BLOOMBERG / GETTY IMAGES

every rule, my own software company developed versions of these exact beliefs, often through painful experience. Thiel's strands of insight come together in the penultimate chapter, which explains why the Solyndra model for green energy is fundamentally flawed. It is a 21st-century version of what a Harvard Business School case-study ought to be.

Thiel begins with a question that he poses to job applicants: What important truth do very few people agree with you on? This is a great interview question, and I'm going to steal it from him. But the question also points to a deeper truth: It is extremely difficult to come up with an idea that is simultaneously contrarian, true, and valuable.

Such an idea is the genesis of most great technology companies. The unique intellectual task of the entrepreneur is to distinguish between the core contrarian idea, which must be preserved at all costs, and everything else, which is subject to endless questioning and change.

This is not usually as simple as it sounds, because there is almost always a difficult road from idea to realization. The exact boundaries of the core idea itself are usually clarified through sustained contact with the marketplace and repeated trial-and-error learning about various approaches to technology, sales, people management, and other elements of a real-world company.

The day-to-day role of the entrepreneur is to overcome the endless practical obstacles to realizing the vision. I have often described the subjective feeling of this experience with a paraphrased version of what I once heard another entrepreneur say: "You just keep putting one dumb foot in front of the other, while the whole world throws bricks at your head." Joseph Schumpeter summed up this combination of intellectual and practical tasks almost perfectly in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (1942):

> To undertake such new things is difficult and constitutes a distinct economic function, first, because they lie outside of the routine tasks which everybody understands and, secondly, because the environment resists in many ways that vary, according to social conditions, from simple refusal to finance or buy a new thing, to physical attack on the man who tries to produce it. To act with confidence beyond the range of familiar beacons and to overcome that resistance requires aptitudes that are present in only a small fraction of the population and that define the entrepreneurial type as well as the entrepreneurial function. This function does not essentially consist in either inventing anything or otherwise creating the conditions which the enterprise exploits. It consists in getting things done.

As Schumpeter writes, this isn't a wise career choice for most normal people, and the implication of *Zero to One* is that most readers who come to it looking for advice about creating a startup are really being given the advice to do something else for a living.

One of Thiel's most controversial ideas is that "capitalism and competition are opposites." This is an unfortunate phrasing that obscures an important truth. The content behind the aphorism could be more accurately stated as the view that a successful startup usually engages in a different kind of competition than is usefully described in economics textbooks or engaged in by any but the most innovative competitors. Schumpeter again:

> But in capitalist reality as distinguished from its textbook picture, it is not [traditional price] competition which counts but the competition from the new commodity, the new technology, the new source of supply, the new type of organization (the large-scale unit of control, for instance)—competition which commands a decisive cost or quality advantage and which strikes not at the margins of the profits and the outputs of the existing firms but at their foundations and their very lives. This kind of competition is as much more effective than the other as a bombardment is in comparison with forcing a door.

This basic concept of strategic advantage through unique knowledge or capability is not limited to startups. The most important modern thinker-practitioner of the art, outside of startups, was probably the late Bruce Henderson, who founded the pioneering strategy consulting firm Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Unlike the more conventional strivers who joined established consulting firms, Henderson was a classic entrepreneur who started with a desk, a telephone, and some contrarian ideas to create a business that is, today, by my rough calculation, worth several billion dollars. The whole focus of BCG was to help large, established companies achieve competitive advantage in the sense described by Schumpeter. In his *Logic of Business Strategy* (1984), Henderson draws a very similar distinction between what he calls "natural" and "strategic" competition. By strategic competition, Henderson was describing the ability to foresee the future evolution of competing moves and countermoves among competitors, and leaping ahead to achieve a decisive advantage. This is another version of what Thiel means by "secret knowledge," but it is appropriate to companies at a later stage of their life.

It is telling that Thiel, Schumpeter, and Henderson all make a point of attacking "textbook economics." This isn't a knock on economics per se; it's a knock on books, at least as a basis for achieving extraordinary results in business. Economics just happens to be the discipline that tries to describe what entrepreneurs do. All three men consider quantitative, prescriptive economic models for entrepreneurship to be simplistic and destructive because they point people toward the wrong bases for successful competition.

Yet the deeper complaint is that textbooks are not so much wrong as they are conventional—and an entrepreneurial idea must be contrarian. Even a correct, canonical textbook—which constitutes knowledge that any successful entrepreneur should have mastered in order to succeed in a given field—cannot be the basis for a successful startup, since everyone already uses this knowledge in the marketplace. If an economist were able to reduce some aspect of entrepreneurial success to an algorithmically defined process and it achieved widespread acceptance, it

would cease to be a source of profit. The entrepreneurial frontier would have moved on to some other, not-yet-systematized field of action.

So at the level of an entrepreneurial firm, *Zero to One* is full of excellent advice. Ironically, however, it is the implication of Thiel's views—how real competition works—that complicates the picture of how society should set the rules of the game to encourage innovation and progress.

Thiel (and Schumpeter and Henderson) emphasizes that achieving entrepreneurial breakthroughs requires not just intellectual assent to some contrarian idea but a high level of commitment to applying that idea in the real world. Thiel uses the term "definite" to denote this kind of commitment to a fixed goal and "indefinite" for the tendency to keep one's options open. America, he argues, was a definite/optimistic society in the 1950s and '60s but has been an indefinite/optimistic society for the past three decades.

This is disturbing to Thiel, and he questions whether it is possible for a society to be indefinite *and* optimistic in the long run: "How can the future get better if no one plans for it?" he asks. Nearly everybody in the modern world has a ready answer to this question: evolution. But Thiel finds this answer unsatisfying and believes it will lead to small, incremental improvements rather than important changes.

The echoes of Friedrich Hayek are unmistakable here, but it is striking that technology entrepreneur Thiel sides with the planners. It is also important to see his argument as a contrarian reaction to current Silicon Valley orthodoxy, which favors web-based companies that conduct repeated online tests only to make minor adjustments. This represents the exploitation of inherent capabilities of a new technology platform. But, as Thiel argues, it is also a reaction to the crashing and burning of so many businesses during the dot-com boom: The current generation of entrepreneurs resembles the generation scared by the Great Depression into a lifelong (and irrational) fear of debt. Thiel argues for a return to grand entrepreneurial ambition to create major innovations—"zero to one" changes—and issues this call to arms:

> A company is the strangest place of all for an indefinite optimist: why should you expect your own business to succeed without a plan to make it happen? Darwinism may be a fine theory in other contexts, but in startups, intelligent design works best.

The key institutions that define what is distinctive about Western civilization—science, free markets, democracy—share many important features beneath the skin. Among them is a multilevel structure in which

Peter Thiel

individual actors must be *definite* while the system as a whole remains *indefinite*. We need scientists to commit to outlandish new theories and work at them for years in the face of skepticism; but we want science to be open to alternative theories, as well. We want aspiring politicians and thinkers to commit to theories for policies and work to realize them; but we want the political system to remain open to alternative viewpoints. We want entrepreneurs to commit to new business ideas; but we want the economy to remain open to new entrepreneurs with competing businesses.

To be sure, we shouldn't idealize such open systems: Under some conditions, they outperform planning; under others, they do not. William F. Buckley famously said that he would rather be governed by the first 2,000 names in the Boston telephone book than by the Harvard faculty, and so would I. But I would rather fly in an airplane designed by competent aeronautical engineers. Open systems outperform planning when we are more ignorant: The notion that contrarian ideas are the basis for successful startups implies that the economy is a system in which ignorance is endemic. You can have a world where contrarian startups are worthwhile, or you can have a world where planning at the level of society works—but you can't have both.

Of course, there are huge technical projects that, even in an open society, are more effectively done through government leadership: Large-scale infrastructure building, a manned mission to Mars, and long-term medical research to cure disease are all examples of projects that would not only accomplish tangible goals but would help catalyze the cultural change described in *Zero to One*.

I suspect that Thiel has a fairly nuanced view about this, but what is missing is a serious engagement with the fundamental questions of political economy that emerge directly from his vision for innovation. Yes, this is a short book full of terrific ideas; but Thiel's ambition to furnish insight at the level of society raises two questions: Given that the process of innovation requires commitment to contrarian ideas, what are the boundaries between government planning and private action? And since innovation requires there to be entrepreneurs (a tiny minority), how do we provide them with sufficient incentives and freedom of action while ensuring that the benefits of innovation flow broadly to maintain social consent to the market process?

This volume provides some valuable field notes on how innovation really works in our present economy, ringing truer to my experience than anything I've read on the subject in a Washington policy paper. It would be great to see a second book from Peter Thiel that draws out some of the implications of *Zero to One* for political action. ♦

NEWSCOM

B&A

Sacred or Scarred?

The fate of Mecca in the hands of the Wahhabis.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Since Islam emerged more than 14 centuries ago, Mecca, near the western coast of the Arabian peninsula, has drawn the interest of the world. For Muslim believers, the city and its sacred mosque—which encompasses a high, cubical structure, the Kaaba—are the focus of spiritual devotion as the *qibla*, or direction of prayer, and a destination for pilgrimages. For non-Muslims, Mecca has long been enigmatic, as it has been closed to them since early in Islamic history. Ziauddin Sardar, a British Muslim of Pakistani background, has written an extensive history of Mecca. His panorama is somewhat limited, with attention focused on the great mosque and the Kaaba.

Sardar's account of Mecca's origins is based on conventional religious and historical sources, as is his treatment of Muhammad, who would make the city famous. The foundation of the Kaaba has been credited, in Islamic tradition, to Adam, as well as to Abraham and his first son Ishmael (Ismail), progenitor of the Arabs and, through descent from Ismail to Muhammad, of the Muslims. Sardar details how the original association with Abraham, the common originator of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim monotheism, was replaced with a vision of Mecca as a heavenly city in which Adam and Eve dwelt after their expulsion from paradise.

Before the coming of Muhammad and Islam, however, faith in a single omnipotent God (Allah) had been forgotten in Mecca, and it and the Kaaba drew wayfarers worshipping numerous idols. The commerce in pagan pilgrims and festivals was profitable for the Meccans, and in the established, theological narrative, Muhammad (who could neither read nor write) received a message from the Creator through an angel while meditating in a cave on Jabal al-Nur, the "hill of light," overlooking Mecca. He was to warn the Meccans, his neighbors and kin, against their polytheist practices.

Muhammad's teaching was not met with enthusiasm, even among his own tribe, the Quraysh, who claimed descent from Abraham and Ismail. Stories of Muhammad's travails in Mecca, the harassment of his few early followers, his move to Yathrib—a town that became known as Medina ("the city") after he established himself there—and the ensuing battles between the Meccans and Medinans are essential to Islamic religiosity.

Muhammad and the Medinans conquered Mecca and removed the idols from the precincts of the Kaaba. But the renewal of monotheism in the holy city of the Arabs did not lead to peace: Long chronicles recounted by Sardar involve conflicts among familes, tribes, and other factions in the city, as well as with sectarian rivals from elsewhere, broken by rare periods of tranquility. In addition, successive rulers of Mecca reconstructed the Kaaba and expanded and decorated the great mosque, sometimes after natural disasters that undermined the structures.

Mecca retained its allure as a destination for religious journeys, and, as Sardar portrays, it had a rich cultural environment in which the diverse identities of the hajj pilgrims were crucial. Religious jurists and spiritual Sufis also flocked to Mecca. In a well-known episode involving Islamic metaphysics, the Spanish Muslim Ibn Arabi (1165-1240) went to Mecca for the hajj, stayed in the city for some time, and wrote several of the masterpieces that have contributed to Ibn Arabi's reputation as "al-Sheikh al-Akbar," the supreme teacher.

These works, inspired by the environment of the city, include *Meccan Revelations*, in which Ibn Arabi constructs an elaborate interpretation for the exalted nature of the city, and a collection of odes entitled *The Interpreter of Desires*. The latter text is extravagant in its praise of an unnamed female, the daughter of Ibn Arabi's Meccan host, and is a Sufi classic. Its impassioned verses were taken up by the Meccan youth and recited to musical accompaniment. Ibn Arabi was compelled to write a line-by-line commentary in which he denied the physical and sensual content of his poetry and ascribed the love it professed to adoration of the divine.

Sardar's account of Meccan history shifts distinctly when, at the end of the 18th century, the agitation of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (for

Mecca
The Sacred City
by Ziauddin Sardar
Bloomsbury, 448 pp., $30

ASSOCIATED PRESS

'A Stalinesque pile that looms over the great mosque and the Kaaba'

Stephen Schwartz is a frequent contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

whom the Wahhabi sect is named) erupted from Najd, in the desolate interior of Arabia. Like fanatics before them and their imitators today, the Wahhabis condemned as un-Islamic many customs that had become part of the religion. The Wahhabis denounced the Sufis and Shiites, declaring that prayer at shrines as practiced by nearly all Muslims, but especially by the mystics, was revived idolatry and that it, along with music, dancing, and smoking, had contaminated Mecca.

Wahhabis attacked Baghdad, then pillaged Karbala, the Shia shrine-city in Iraq where Hussein Ibn Ali, grandson of Muhammad, is buried. The Wahhabis had forged their marriage alliance with the house of al-Saud, a hitherto-unknown clan; religious duties were to be assigned to the descendants of Ibn Abd al-Wahhab and political rule to those of al-Saud. The two families have wed each other's heirs to the present, with the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, established in the 20th century, recognizing Wahhabism as the privileged source of doctrinal legitimacy within its borders.

Sardar is an appropriately severe critic of Wahhabi violence and its consequences for Mecca. The Wahhabis prohibit preservation of historical buildings (along with shrines) out of fear that they may become "idols" as objects of worship. This has led to an absence of urban planning and the transformation of Mecca, symbolized most famously by the Mecca Royal Clock Tower, a Stalinesque pile that looms over the great mosque and the Kaaba. At the same time, the Saudis have neglected the city's water and sanitation needs; yet the clock tower is surrounded by expensive hotels and shopping malls. In addition, the late King Fahd erected an inelegant, modernist royal palace next to the great mosque, and heedless expansion of the great mosque goes on.

Mecca, in Sardar's view, does not change. It profited from the worship of idols before Muhammad, and today it makes money from the sale of religious kitsch, much like any other pilgrimage site around the world. Sardar has delivered an impressive indictment of the metamorphosis of Mecca, which includes the destruction of old neighborhoods and has left it without the cultural, artistic, and architectural legacy that is visible in other major cities around the world. Much of his criticism repeats that of his mentor, the Saudi dissident architect Sami Angawi, and echoes admonitions by Irfan al-Alawi, who heads the Islamic Heritage Research Foundation and contributed on this topic in these pages ("Bulldozing Islam," October 6, 2006).

Sardar, however, defines himself as a "post-modern" Muslim and tends to blame the West, and specifically the United States, for the desecration of Islam's most sacred precincts. Like others, he decries a Mecca that seems remodeled in the image of Disneyland or Las Vegas. But his bitterest comments equate today's Mecca with Houston, which Sardar sees as the epitome of a characterless metropolis rich from energy resources. This is unfair: Houston shelters the Menil Collection, one of the great museums of modern art, among other worthy institutions, and certainly provides adequate public services. But it seems that Sardar, a Muslim blinded by resentment of America, will never see Houston through the eyes of born Westerners—although, unlike non-Muslims who would like to visit Mecca, he is free to go there. ♦

B&A

Fog Minus Grog

A bilious Briton on board the Bush.

BY PETER TONGUETTE

Another Great Day at Sea
Life Aboard the USS George H.W. Bush
by Geoff Dyer
Pantheon, 208 pp., $24.95

Once upon a time, military life was familiar to most civilians. The arts rendered it comprehensible even to those who had never served. At midcentury, shows like *Mister Roberts* (1948) and *The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial* (1953) were all the rage on the stage, to say nothing of the rush of World War II fiction. Even the "service comedy"—a film genre that has since gone the way of the dodo—pollinated the minds of the public with some sense of what it meant to be in uniform. *Operation Petticoat* (1959) may not have been an accurate portrayal of life at sea, but at least it didn't make the U.S. Navy seem exotic.

Yet if this new volume from the British writer Geoff Dyer is any indication, a career devoted to the service of one's country is presently regarded as a curiosity. To be sure, Dyer writes that he was in thrall to "war and soldiering" as a youngster, devoting much time to "making and blotchily painting Airfix models." He even writes, rather unbelievably, that he once pondered whether he might have been better off as a member of our Marine Corps, daydreaming about being a "jarhead" and having "'Semper Fi' tattooed on a properly muscular forearm."

The conceit of this book is that Dyer observes a variant of his purported fantasy in a two-week spell on the aircraft carrier *George H. W. Bush*, during which time he was writer-in-residence. Yet his tone bespeaks bewilderment at the U.S. Navy and

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

its ethos. Dyer is a pleasingly candid writer, but he reveals perhaps more than he intends to when he is dismayed by the absence not only of "booze" on board but also any "trappings or decorations of alcohol," such as bars. "This was not life as we know it or want it," he glumly reflects. Again and again, he tests what he finds at sea against what he is familiar with on land—even the most trivial of things, such as the kind of mustache worn by his chaperone, Ensign Paul Newell, which he describes as being "almost entirely extinct in civilian life."

> Not an obsolete RAF handlebar extravaganza, just a little under-the-nose, over-the-lip number that had no desire to take itself seriously, that spent most of its time in a state of discreet embarrassment at the mere fact of its continued if meagre existence.

Dyer ruefully notes that, back home in London, the "most irritating noise" he has to put up with is the "occasional leaf-blower" ("You know how loud—how maddening—that is?") leaving him unprepared for the booming clamor on the ship. He asks Ensign Newell, incredulously, "And this goes on all night?" Was he expecting a Trappist monastery? At least he records the ensign's hilariously matter-of-fact answer for posterity: "Round the clock. It's an aircraft carrier. We're sort of in the business of flying aircraft."

A few pages later, Dyer sets up his description of mealtime on the *George H. W. Bush* by noting that he is "the worst kind of fussy eater," whose pickiness about food goes back to boyhood. "I grew up hating all the food my parents cooked, [and] was always being told I didn't eat enough to keep a sparrow alive," he writes. Predictably, Dyer finds the food provided to commissioned officers in the wardroom "revolting."

"The smell of cooked meats and the jet fuel they were cooked in made me heave," he writes. Later, he concedes that there was nothing really wrong with the steak he was served at a "Steel Beach Party" except that it was "an undisguised lump of meat"—and, of course, unaccompanied by beer. "It was extraordinary, in a way, that there could be a party like this without a keg in sight, just bath-sized troughs filled with ice and soft drinks, Cokes and waters," he writes.

At another point, Dyer recounts an episode when he was made to wait to go online on one of the carrier's scarce laptops, only to have his account unceremoniously freeze up: "Inside I was screaming but I didn't howl or whine, didn't even raise my voice. I was haemorrhaging tears, my head was a balloon pumped full of blood."

I will say this for Geoff Dyer: He is not afraid of overstatement. But his griping makes him seem absurd in his surroundings. After reading of his "dread" at the prospect of having to share quarters ("six in a room!"), we must take his Marine dreams with a healthy dose of skepticism. References to avant-garde European filmmakers (Andrei Tarkovsky, Werner Herzog, Claire Denis) do not enhance his credibility, nor does his proposal that the USS *Ronald Reagan* be rechristened the USS *Emily Dickinson*.

He is, at least, intellectually honest enough to be impressed with many of those inhabiting the USS *George H. W. Bush*. At times, he even seems starstruck by the armed forces, as when he observes that his civilian status resulted in treatment that suggested that he "outranked everyone," such as when he was given the right-of-way in tight corridors: "This willingness to step aside, to let me pass, was a demonstration, at the level of courtesy, of a larger point: they were willing to lay down their lives for me, for us."

At the same time, we sense that Dyer's bafflement often gets the better of him. Lieutenant Commander Ron Rancourt is called "a man seriously in love with what he did," which echoes Dyer's approving invocation of Walt Whitman's "Song for Occupations" in describing the indefatigable work ethic of those he encounters. Yet when we learn that Rancourt will soon be retiring to devote himself to home-schooling his children, partly out of his dissatisfaction with public schools, we can hear the wind go out of Dyer's sails: "He wasn't saying it in a crazy way at all, but he still sounded a little crazed to me." On top of everything else, Rancourt is dubious about the expansion of government and "outraged" over Obamacare. "There was quite a lot to disagree with," Dyer admits.

Dyer accounts for the difficulty he has "recording even the simplest things, such as someone's name and rank," by confessing that "of all the kinds of writer I was not, 'reporter' was top of the list." Actually, he is competent with technical details, but such

General mess on the George H.W. Bush *(2014)*

NEWSCOM

proficiency does not mask a lack of comprehension of the sort of men and women who sign up for a life of service and risk. Dyer proclaims it "odd" that one pilot "seemed almost completely unfazed" in describing a perilous "night catapult shot," and he spends a paragraph itemizing the many things that no one complains about missing—"restaurants or bars" and "windows with views" and "trying on clothes in shops" and "walking home at night as it's about to rain and getting to your door just as it starts pouring."

Geoff Dyer can't believe it. His title is inspired by a favorite saying of the ship's skipper: "What I didn't realize was that the Captain always told everyone what a great day it was," he writes, adding that "there was something very American about this ability to dwell constantly in the realm of the improvable superlative." True enough. But it might have been more accurate to take a page from Mark Twain and call this book *The Innocent On Board*. ♦

B&A

Rehab That Works

From extinction to distinction on HGTV.

BY ABBY W. SCHACHTER

As Nicole Curtis says at the beginning of every episode of her number-one HGTV show *Rehab Addict*, "I'm not your average flipper. . . . I don't just renovate, I restore old homes to their former glory."

The glory of old homes is Curtis's pride and passion, and in a landscape of shows about trying to make a mint by flipping property or renovating something old to look like a new dream home, Curtis's philosophy of reusing whatever she can, keeping to a strict budget, and renewing and maintaining as much of the historical and architectural integrity as possible is refreshingly traditional.

Curtis lives in Minneapolis, where she buys houses that look like they are ready for demolition or are in foreclosure. Some are in bad neighborhoods; others are in more up-and-coming areas. "I believe old houses hold memories and soul," she explains.

She fixes them up using as much old material as she can and then sells them and moves on to a new project. Unlike just about every other renovation show on HGTV and DIY Network, *Rehab Addict* usually features Curtis talking about saving anything and everything she can. She asks why anyone would want to cover a brick wall, for instance. She gets old stained-glass windows restored and resealed to be put right back where she found them. She exposes any and all wood, from floors to countertops to doors to banisters. "Everything can always be reused, it's just a bit of modification," Curtis explains, talking about turning old carriage doors into room dividers in her basement. At times, she is so proud of her restoration that she's even brought previous residents to see the work she's done returning their former home to the way they remember. And she always hangs an American flag outside her properties.

Curtis is also traditional in terms of her personal history. Indeed, she's so devoted to her hometown of Detroit that, as soon as she had the clout at the network to demand it (once her show was number one in the ratings, that is), she had *Rehab Addict* film episodes there. She restored a blighted house in a show of solidarity, and love, toward her past. Why does she feel such a connection to a city she hasn't lived in for decades? Because, she explained to one reporter, her roots are what make her who she is today.

"I always have people . . . question how a five-foot-three, 100-pound blonde gets all this done, and the answer for me has always been: I'm from Detroit."

Curtis loves conservation, and she's frugal as well. The point isn't to break the bank; it's to make a house as authentic as possible while keeping her business eye trained on the bottom line. The Detroit house offered a good example of that tension when she re-did one of the bathrooms. She found one extra box of original porcelain tile, but it wasn't enough to cover all the areas needed to restore the room. She showed the audience the difference in quality (and thickness) between the old porcelain and what she dubs the "cheapy" subway tile that she often uses. As she's prone to do with wood floors, she interweaved new tiles among the old porcelain and explained how to place the thinner tiles alongside thicker ones without the result being too noticeably different.

Curtis will, however, acknowledge the importance of newer technologies. Working on the Detroit restoration

Healy house, Minneapolis

BRADLEY LEMIRE

Abby W. Schachter writes for Acculturated.com.

revealed piping that was so degraded it all had to be replaced. Curtis did so with new plastic tubing, explaining that the choice was utilitarian because metal would have been too expensive—and because looters won't steal plastic.

Her passion for older homes can be controversial, however. Take what is going on with a home on the corner of 24th Street and Colfax Avenue South in Minneapolis. It was built in 1893 by Theron Potter (T. P.) Healy, a Twin Cities builder known for his Queen Anne style of architecture. Curtis got involved when she heard that the building was scheduled for demolition to make room for an apartment complex. Marshaling the force of her by-now-very-recognizable name and face, she appeared at the building site and at city council meetings to oppose the plan. "The entire structure of the original house is still there," Curtis told a local news station. "Just because it's old doesn't mean it's not valuable anymore." The owner says that restoration is unlikely since a fire during the 1990s gutted the second and third floors, leaving almost nothing of the original details.

For this fight, Curtis has joined forces with other preservationists—calling themselves the Healy Project—who argue that historic homes, like the property in question, ought to be preserved because of who built them. "Some of the people who want to tear it down say, 'We have enough Healy homes,'" Curtis says. "That's like saying, 'Oh, the museum has enough Picassos; it's okay if we throw these ones out.'"

The owner of the building isn't unsympathetic to the preservationist argument; but he is trying to salvage his property. The house hasn't been single-family for decades, having most recently been turned into a rooming house. And the area around the house is economically depressed. "It's the best thing for the neighborhood," the owner says of the planned apartment complex. And "it's the best thing for the city," he argues, since it "would increase the number of people with disposable income; it would increase the city's tax base. If there was something left to save, I probably wouldn't have had a problem trying to sell it."

Curtis isn't buying that argument: "We need another apartment building in the Uptown area like we need a hole in the head," she declares. "It's already so busy. I get it if we want pro-density, but then let's build on the empty lots we already have." She even tried to buy the house for $400,000, but that was considerably below what the developer was willing to pay, so the demolition plan passed the city council.

She is not one for accepting the logic of tearing down *any* older home, historic or not. A year before this fight, Curtis was so distraught about another demolition that she tried to create a human chain to stop the bulldozing of a 124-year-old Victorian. Police were called, she was removed, and the house was leveled. Afterwards, she told reporters, "Today is like a funeral for me." Not everyone agrees with Curtis's assessment: When asked about the same property, a neighbor described it as a "crack house" and a neighborhood "nightmare" that was beyond saving.

Between preservation, conservation, neighborhood restoration, and development, it isn't always easy to figure out the best path forward. Curtis says she favors letting residents decide the fate of local properties; but even if that were possible, she would not always get the outcome she wants. Meanwhile, the Healy Project is taking up Curtis's fight and has gotten an injunction against demolishing the Minneapolis house as the city council voted.

"Nobody wants a lawsuit," says Trillby Busch, who maintains the Healy Project blog. "We feel forced into this because if we didn't do it the house would go down soon. . . . We're going to show that it is a historic resource, and we're going to show that viable options exist instead of demolition." ♦

B&A

Father of History

Herodotus and the human dimension in the past.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Herodotus, the first Greek and thereby the first Western historian, had bad press long before there was anything resembling a press. Aristotle referred to him as a "storyteller," which was no honorific. What he meant was that Herodotus made things up, another word for which is "liar." Thucydides had little good to say about Herodotus and thought his attempt to recapture the long-gone past foolhardy. History, for Thucydides, meant contemporary, or near-contemporary, history, with an emphasis on politics and warfare. In his *Histories*, Herodotus went well outside these bounds, writing about Egypt, Scythia, Persia, and other countries; he took up the study of customs and *moeurs* among them, as might a modern anthropologist.

More than 400 years later, the attacks on Herodotus' reputation continued. In an essay titled "The Malice of Herodotus," Plutarch criticized him for undue sympathy for the Persians and other barbarians, a want of respect for facts coupled with a lack of balanced judgment, and a partiality for Athens. Worse attacks were to come from other commentators over the succeeding centuries, some of whom held that Herodotus relied too heavily on oral evidence, others that he was plain dishonest.

Herodotus (ca. 484-425 B.C.) was a

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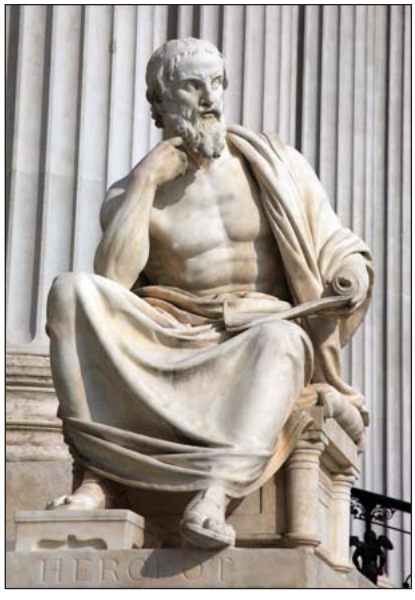
Carian, born in Halicarnassus in Asia Minor, in what would now be western Turkey. He was, in other words, from the periphery of the Greek world, and his book is the result of a sort of intellectual tourism. He traveled, collected stories, consulted documents where they existed, and wrote down his findings. No one knows for certain whether he visited all the countries he wrote about or how he came into his extensive knowledge. In the opening sentence of the *Histories*, he states his purpose:

> Herodotus, from Halicarnassus, here displays his enquiries, that human achievement may be spared the ravages of time, and that everything great and astounding, and all the glory of those exploits which served to display Greeks and barbarians alike to such effect, be kept alive—and additionally, and most importantly, to give the reason they went to war.

Cicero called Herodotus the "father of history." Yet Arnaldo Momigliano, the great 20th-century historiographer of the ancient world, ends his brilliant essay on Herodotus by noting, "It is a strange truth that Herodotus has really become the father of history only in modern times." History, or, more precisely, historical methods, Momigliano explains, finally caught up with Herodotus. Ethnographic research brought a new respect for Herodotus' own early interest in ethnography. Those who did archaeological exploration in Egypt and Mesopotamia found Herodotus' writings on these subjects useful. His writings also became valuable to biblical scholars in their study of Oriental history. Oral history, on which he drew heavily, became a standard tool of modern social science and history. Herodotus was also the first serious historian to give due attention to women. In his *Histories*, he devotes several pages to Artemisia, the queen of Halicarnassus, who commanded the Asian Dorian fleet during Xerxes' attack on Greece. As for his accuracy, Momigliano writes, "We have now collected enough evidence to be able to say that he can be trusted."

About Herodotus' style there has never been any doubt. "The power of his tragic vision of history," wrote Hugh Lloyd-Jones, then-Regius professor of Greek at Oxford, "is enhanced by his possession of literary gifts of the highest order." Lloyd-Jones holds that, apart from Plato and, on occasion, Demosthenes, no prose stylist among the Greeks compares to Herodotus: "His prose is clear, rapid, euphonious, marvelously varied according to variations of his subject matter; he can write in a plain and simple manner, with short sentences loosely strung together, but he can also build up elaborate peri-



Herodotus in Vienna

odic structures making effective use of many poetical words." Charm and style, the two great preservatives for historical and every other kind of literature, Herodotus had in abundance.

Temperamentally, literarily, and methodologically, Herodotus and Thucydides could scarcely have been further apart. Thucydides' strength was in analysis, Herodotus' in description. Concision, dazzling formulation, and intellectual penetration were where Thucydides' power lay, while expansion and sympathy for human difference was Herodotus' forte. Herodotus appears to have been a man of wider tolerance, with a more generous nature and disinterested outlook than Thucydides. Herodotus' motive was pure knowledge; Thucydides, meanwhile, wrote under the cloud of having been exiled for 20 years from Athens because of his failure to arrive in time to rescue the Athenian forces at the Battle of Amphipolis early in the Peloponnesian War.

Thucydides gained greatly on Herodotus in popularity during the Cold War, as his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which chronicles the conflict between Athens and Sparta, found a ready analogy in the clash between the United States and the Soviet Union—at least among people who read history for lessons about the present. Now that that war is over, the analogy is of lessened cogency, and Herodotus' star is rising. Evidence for this is the appearance of three recent translations of the *Histories*, with a fourth—by the English classicist Peter Green—in the works.

Of the two historians, Herodotus had the happier story to recount. Thucydides' was the story of the decline of Greece owing to the internal disputes that brought on the Peloponnesian War; Herodotus' was the rise of Greece through the victory of the greatly outnumbered Greeks over the Persians during the Greco-Persian Wars (ca. 490-479 B.C.). The *Histories* covers roughly 150 years, ending with the Persian defeat at the Battle of Plataea, in Boetia, when the alliance of Greek city-states dealt the coup de grâce to the more than two-million-man army of Xerxes.

Herodotus takes more than 300 or so pages to get around to the Greco-Persian conflict that is the true subject of his work. "But if I may digress here," he writes in the middle of commenting on the hornless cattle of Scythia, "as I have sought opportunities to do from the moment I started this account of my enquiries. . ." These digressions might be irksome were they not so interesting: Herodotus provides portraits of Cyrus, Croesus, Darius, and Xerxes, and recounts the battles of Marathon and Thermopylae, Salamis and Plataea. "Marvelous deeds," as he puts it, are his subject matter.

Strange deeds, too—and odd facts. Herodotus tells of flying snakes in Arabia, mummification and necrophilia in Egypt, the Scythians' use of cannabis, cauterization bringing good health to Libyan nomads, the Per-

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sian custom of burying people alive. He reports on gold-hunting ants in India, why the skulls of the Persians are thicker than those of the Egyptians, the black semen of the Indians and Ethiopians, horses eating snakes, a mare giving birth to a hare, a woman's urine returning to a king his eyesight, the singer Arion being rescued by a dolphin. Was he making these things up, or was he just unable to resist a good story?

Often he will append to a supposed fact or a story that its origin is in hearsay. At times, he expresses incredulity: "I am obliged to tell the things that are said," he writes, "but I am under no obligation to be persuaded by them." He also holds that his "own responsibility, however, as it has been throughout my writing this entire narrative, is simply to record whatever may be told by my sources."

If a story amuses or edifies Herodotus, he stops his narrative to take as many pages as are necessary to tell it. An example is the tale of the Lydian king Candaules' obsession with the beauty of his wife. So obsessed is he that he regularly tells Gyges, favorite among his bodyguards, how devastatingly beautiful she is, and he insists that Gyges, to see that he is not exaggerating, look upon her naked. Despite the bodyguard's reluctance to do so, Candaules positions him so that he may watch her disrobe for bed without being seen. She does see Gyges, however, and the next day she offers him two alternatives: be executed for his trespass or gain possession of her and ascendance to the throne by killing Candaules. Gyges chooses the latter. The plot to kill the king is successful, and Gyges rules for 38 years. Fully four generations later, the Lydian empire, then under the reign of Gyges' descendant Croesus, is destroyed in revenge for the murder of Candaules. The gods in Herodotus tend to have long memories.

Croesus is another figure who captures Herodotus' imagination. In reward for services rendered, Croesus offers Alcmaeon, the founder of the line of Pericles, all the gold he can carry on his person. Wearing a large tunic and loose boots, Herodotus reports, Alcmaeon

> stuffed his legs with as much gold as his boots could hold, and then, after he had filled the fold in his tunic brim-full with gold, he sprinkled gold-dust over the hair on his scalp, shoved some more into his mouth and left the treasury barely able to drag his boots along as he went.

So amused was Croesus at the spectacle that he provided Alcmaeon with double the amount of gold he had taken.

Herodotus, like Jimmy Durante, had a million of 'em. When the Athenian lawmaker Solon visits Lydia, Croesus, after displaying his immense wealth, asks Solon who is the happiest man he knows, fully expecting the answer to be him, Croesus. Instead, Solon cites an Athenian named Tellus: He "lived at a time when his city was particularly well off, he had handsome, upstanding sons, and he ended up a grandfather with all his grandchildren making it to adulthood." Tellus also died well—in battle—and was honored in death by his fellow citizens. Croesus then asks who is the second happiest man. Solon cites two brothers, young men of Argos, prizewinning athletes who brought honor to their mother and died in full knowledge of their own glory.

The Battle of Salamis

TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

Solon's point is that one can never say that a man is happy, no matter his wealth and other attainments, until one knows that he died content. The fates are full of strange tricks, and "the heavens will often grant men a glimpse of happiness, only to snatch it away so that not a trace of it remains." Unimpressed, Croesus dismisses Solon; yet the Athenian's wisdom is confirmed in the sadness of Croesus' later life, for he would lose a favored son in a hunting accident and his empire would eventually be crushed by the Persians.

"There was never a mortal," Herodotus writes, "who did not, right from birth, have misfortune woven into the very fabric of his life—nor will there ever be. Indeed the greater the man the greater the misfortune." Of Cyrus' son Cambyses, the mad king of Persia who murdered his brother and married his sister, and whose own dagger accidentally pierced his thigh causing his death by gangrene, Herodotus writes, "No man has it within himself to turn destiny aside." In the *Histories*, when a ruler laughs at the misfortunes or presumptions of others, it is only a matter of time before fate wipes the smile off his face and his own—usually horrendous—fall arrives. The only hope for men is to see things as they truly are and not to lapse into negligence, overconfidence, or madness through possession of power. Few political leaders in the *Histories* are able to do so. Herodotus writes:

> I shall . . . proceed with the rest of my story recounting cities both lesser and greater, since many of those that were great long ago have become inferior, and some that are great in my own time were inferior before. And so, resting on my knowledge that human prosperity never remains constant, I shall make mention of both without discrimination.

Herodotus believed that divine agency entered into the affairs of men. Oracles play a strong role in the *Histories*. "I would never presume to challenge the veracity of oracles," he writes, "nor would I accept anyone else doing it, either." For Herodotus there was a higher order, a providence

whose wisdom often surpassed the understanding of mere mortals and whose power did not always work for the benefit of men.

In Book Three of the *Histories*, seven Persians meet to decide on the best form for their government to take. Arguments are made for and against democracy, oligarchy, and monarchy. Although Herodotus was himself anti-despotic in his politics, Darius, who argues for monarchy and will presently become king, wins out. This, though, is quietly subverted in Book Seven, when the deposed Spartan king Demaratus informs the Persian king Xerxes that, whatever the numbers of his men and ships, the Greeks will not desist from fighting, even if the forces against them are a thousand men to one. The best fighters, Demaratus argues, are free men; when they are imbued with a *nomos*, or inbred law, they are compelled to fight on, no matter the odds or conditions. They never surrender. Persian soldiers flee when their leaders go down, but Greeks, and especially Spartans, never do. They fight not for their leaders but out of their hatred of slavery and love of their *polis*. Demaratus proved correct, of course, as the battles of Thermopylae and Plataea demonstrated.

In Herodotus' view, the Persian plan of continuous expansion doomed their empire from the outset. The Greeks, owing to their belief in honor and civic pride, their love of freedom and independence, and their distrust of too-great opulence, were wary of empire—at any rate, empire on the scale that the Persian kings craved. Later, in a period not covered by the *Histories*, the plans of expansion on the part of the Athenians, when they acquired their maritime empire, would in turn doom them, the debacle in Syracuse putting *fini* to all hopes of further expansion. For Herodotus, instability is the rule of life; the fortunes of countries, like those of men, go up and down. "Human happiness," he writes, "never continues long in one place."

The subject of the *Histories* is the richness of human nature in action. Herodotus' philosophy arises out of the plentitude of his details. This philosophy holds men to be perpetually in peril of overstepping their bounds—bounds set by good sense and reinforced by the gods. Those who do not understand this go under. But even those who understand may not necessarily come to a good end. Herodotus provides story after story proving that human justice is not the first order of the gods. He also demonstrates that superior storytelling is not only the most captivating form of history but the most entrancing mode of philosophizing.

Tom Holland's translation of the *Histories* is fluent, readable, nicely paced, and lively. Some would say too lively. Peter Green, in the *London Review of Books*, calls it "uncomfortably chatty." By this he is referring to the sometimes-jarring intrusion of contemporary idiom into the text. So, in the King Candaules story, the king's wife "rumbled" that her husband had planted his bodyguard in her room. When the Lydian king Ardys' attack on a nearby city fails, we read that he is "given a bloody nose." Arion, the man carried to safety by the dolphin, is in his music a "trend-setter" who "raked in a fortune" through his singing. King Croesus, never wanting a justification for warring against others, could always "manage to rustle up some flimsy pretext."

These examples all come from the first 13 pages of the Holland translation. More egregious ones appear throughout the text, as when Xerxes convenes a meeting of Persian noblemen in order "to pick their brains" and then warns his counselors against "bad-mouthing" his guest-friend Demaratus.

This note of contemporaneity, even vulgar contemporaneity, in the Holland translation can be, as I say, jarring; but it is not, finally, marring. Randall Jarrell once said that "a novel is a prose narrative that has something wrong with it." The same may be said of nearly all translations. None exists, no matter how elevated and meticulous the effort, with which one cannot find fault. A small number of great writers cannot be well translated at all; one thinks here of Henry James, and perhaps also Wallace Stevens. An even smaller number are so great that not even a poor translation can spoil them. Herodotus is of this select company. ♦

B&A

Who Done What

Feckless men, reckless women, flawed casting.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Gone Girl
Directed by David Fincher

In the universe according to *Gone Girl*, men are no great shakes: They're inconstant and weak and foolish. But women . . . ah, women. They're smart, resourceful, infinitely clever—and profoundly dangerous. It's lucky for the financiers of this sizzling domestic melodrama on the model of *Fatal Attraction* (1987) that it was based on a bestselling novel by a woman named Gillian Flynn and that the screenplay was written by Flynn as well—because otherwise it would be ripped to shreds by feminists arguing, with some justice, that it is the most misogynistic work of popular culture since, well, *Fatal Attraction*.

The "girl" of the title is Amy Elliott (Rosamund Pike). Her husband Nick (Ben Affleck) comes home to their

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

McMansion on their fifth anniversary to find an overturned glass table and no Amy. As the media turn the story into a national sensation, the police find evidence that Amy's blood had been spilled on their kitchen floor and then mopped up. And as the story progresses, we, the audience, are privy to diary entries written by Amy that detail the degeneration of their relationship.

After a few years working in New York media and living high on the hog in a Brooklyn brownstone, the couple had ended up broke in a McMansion in Nick's depressed hometown in Missouri. He's running an unsuccessful bar with his twin sister; Amy's spending her days reading—and she's getting frightened because it seems like he wants to get rid of her.

Or does he? *Gone Girl* the novel has been an enormous success since its publication two years ago because of the corkscrew cleverness of Flynn's plotting. The book features not one, but two unreliable narrators who hide pertinent information from their nearest and dearest—and from the reader as well. Part of the pleasure of reading the book is watching those narratives unravel and reconstitute themselves as the facts start coming clear.

Ben Affleck: 'It's easy to forget what a subtle actor he can be.'

Affleck has played this part before, notably in a terrific 2002 film called *Changing Lanes*—a curdled pretty-boy WASP whose easy charm masks his soullessness and emptiness. It's easy to forget what a subtle actor he can be, given that (a) he's made his name more as a director over the past few years with the Oscar-winning *Argo* (2012); (b) he seemed to have ruined his good name by starring in horrific junk like *Gigli* (2003) and *State of Play* (2009); and (c) he sounds like an inarticulate boob when he talks about anything serious, as he did the other week getting into a fight with Bill Maher on HBO over radical Islam.

Flynn was blessed to have the extraordinarily sharp director David Fincher take the helm of the movie. The immensely controlled Fincher, whose previous work includes *The Social Network* (2010) and the brilliant *Zodiac* (2007), properly sees Flynn's story as an update of a classic film noir and had the movie filmed entirely in shades of gray—until a climactic scene takes place in a house that is suddenly lit up with bright yellow color, which conveys a mood of unmistakable horror. Technically, this is filmmaking of a very high order.

Fincher cast the supporting roles superbly, with the Cheshire-cat comedienne Missi Pyle doing an amazing turn as a Nancy Grace-like TV host and a stage actress named Carrie Coons memorable as Nick's loving and downbeat twin sister. The revelation, though, is Tyler Perry, the writing-directing-acting mogul responsible for a string of highly successful, somewhat amateurish, and wildly overdone movies aimed at the African-American audience. Perry plays an attention-grabbing criminal defense attorney and is so charismatic and entertaining that he gives the movie a jolt of relaxed energy every second he is on screen.

For a while, it seems as if *Gone Girl* might achieve classic status, but it runs aground toward the end for two reasons. First, the plot takes two ridiculous turns (as it does in the book) that violate the central quality of Amy's character: her meticulousness. Second is the casting of Rosamund Pike as Amy. Reese Witherspoon was originally going to play the part, but Fincher didn't want her and thought she was too old.

That was a terrible mistake, because Amy is supposed to be alternately lovable and cold—Meg Ryan from *When Harry Met Sally* . . . combined with the bunny-boiling Glenn Close. While Pike excels at the latter, she has no clue how to convey the former. Witherspoon, a far more interesting and resourceful actress, might have. Fincher was apparently so eager to evoke Alfred Hitchcock, down to the blonde hauteur of Grace Kelly and Tippi Hedren, that he went for the surface rather than the chops. As a result, *Gone Girl* is all ice, no fire, and therefore it never delivers the visceral punch *Fatal Attraction* still does more than a quarter-century after its release.

This cautionary tale of a sap who faces the death penalty as a result of society's misunderstanding of the evil that women can do is being sold as a movie about the mysteries of marriage. If it is, it could almost serve as a manifesto for one of those lunatic men's-rights organizations that claim the deck is stacked against anyone with an XY chromosome. ♦

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

"An Inconvenient Protest [in Hong Kong] for Both China and the U.S."

—New York Times, *October 3, 2014*

PARODY

In Congress, July 4, 1776

When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, it is the view of these devoted colonies that such a people ought not proceed with such dissolution, as it is sure to be most inconvenient, for both dissolutor and dissolutee alike.

Though we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, etc, etc, etc, it is important to commemorate to oneself that what are taken as rights in one land, may be taken as offenses in another, and that in some distant suzerainty, a Prince of Milan or a Sultan of Arabia or an aged Hegemon in the Orient, would take umbrage should we importune him to honor the "rights" to which we lay claim. Still and more, though we believe that to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, when we take pause to deliberate upon on this particular design, it appears a scheme apt to present abundant procedural complexitudes and confoundments, not to mention interminable disputation and quarrel upon what rightly constitute "just powers." Thus, say we, when any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, though it may be the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, forbearance, prudence, and good sense should play sovereign to our rash and hasty lust, our injudicious itch for independence. For, having at once declared such independence, having dissolved our bands thusly, with consideration only for the governed, and not at all for the governor and his disposition, well, then where shall we find ourselves? At odds with reason, to be sure, having discarded and trod upon both the sentiment and the judicious counsel of the King, the Baron, and, of course, the Diplomat, who