the weekly Standard

HUCKABEE, CHRISTIE, AND PAUL—OH MY!
ANDREW FERGUSON

THE OIL BONANZA

. . . and how we can keep it

GEOFFREY NORMAN
IRWIN M. STELZER

FEBRUARY 16, 2015 • $4.95 • WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

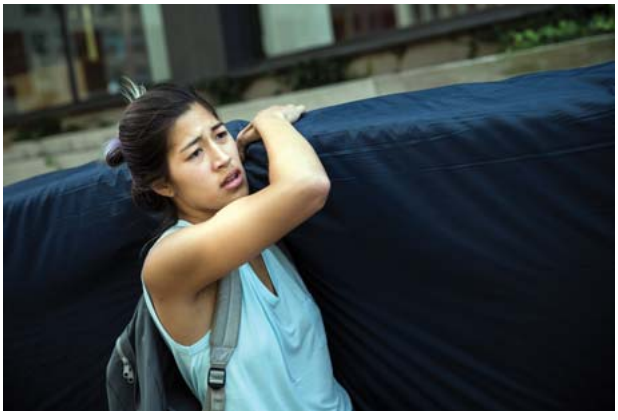
Contents

February 16, 2015 • Volume 20, Number 22

COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

To Carry a Mattress

There were two seemingly unrelated news stories last week that The Scrapbook has been pondering. The first is about another high-profile campus rape story that seems to be falling apart. A student named Emma Sulkowicz turned her alleged rape in August 2012 into an art project, carrying a mattress around the Columbia University campus to symbolize her victimhood after the university had failed to expel her alleged rapist. As a result of her symbolic protest, Sulkowicz has received a great deal of media attention as well as an award from the New York chapter of the National Organization for Women. Last month, Sulkowicz was invited by New York senator Kirsten Gillibrand to attend the State of the Union address, in order to raise awareness of sexual violence on campus.



A senior art project at Columbia

But thanks to some stellar reporting by Weekly Standard contributor Cathy Young (in a piece last week for the *Daily Beast*), we now know that the facts undergirding Sulkowicz's claims of victimhood are weak and that Columbia's "failure" to expel the man Sulkowicz accused looks more than justified. Young reported that the accused man willingly provided reams of communications between the two that appear to document the two contentedly involved in a consensual sexual relationship before and after the supposed rape occurred. While Young didn't definitively exculpate the accused man—that might be impossible—her reporting made it clear that Sulkowicz's accusations were problematic and never should have been given such uncritical acceptance.

The former opinion editor for the *Columbia Spectator* wrote a column subsequently concluding that "we, the members of the campus media, failed specifically with Sulkowicz's story by not being thorough and impartial." Naturally, Young was attacked by the feral online feminist community for her fealty to the facts and accused of "victim blaming." There was the obligatory Twitter hashtag campaign—#TheresNoPerfectVictim—and angry rants abounded. An article in *Salon* accused Young of impeding "the battle to remake the institutions and cultural norms that foster rape and protect rapists."

The second story is the news that Harper Lee is going to publish a second novel. Now there is more than a little controversy surrounding the sudden discovery of her early unpublished novel, but along with it came the usual gushing about how Lee's famous coming-of-age novel influenced many an American childhood and reshaped our perceptions of race for the better. However, it occurs to us, after reflecting on what happened to Cathy Young, that a reassessment of *To Kill a Mockingbird* is probably long overdue.

By the standards of America's angry, young, third-wave feminists, Harper Lee must be America's most beloved rape apologist. What Atticus Finch did in the courtroom to question Mayella Ewell's account of being assaulted by Tom Robinson is a textbook example of what feminists call the "second rape" that occurs when rape victims seek justice. Indeed, one could hardly blame Mayella if she wanted to draw attention to this by dragging a chiffarobe around Maycomb.

And we hesitate to mention disturbing scenes of Dill kissing Scout, a sobering reminder that microaggressions against women begin at an early age. It's probably only a matter of time before this misogynist "literature" is seen for what it is and the push to expunge it from the required reading lists begins in earnest. One hopes the feminist community steady themselves on their fainting couches in preparation for the horrors the next Harper Lee novel likely contains. ♦

GETTY IMAGES / ANDREW BURTON

Martin Gilbert, 1936-2015

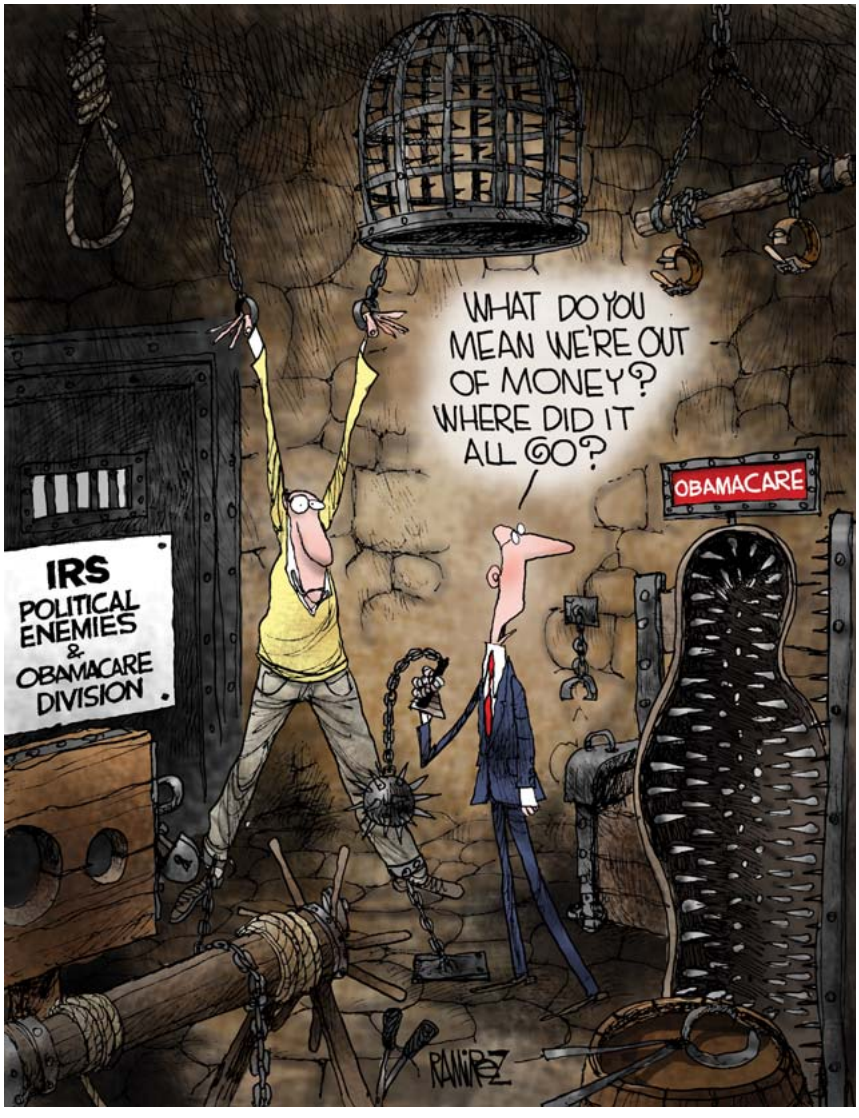
The Scrapbook was saddened to learn last week of the death, after a long illness, of Sir Martin Gilbert, the British historian. He was 78 years old. Sir Martin, whose grandparents had fled to England from czarist Russia after a pogrom, was an Oxford-educated scholar and writer of exceptional fluency and industry. Obituary tributes have made much of the fact that he produced some 80 books in his lifetime—an astonishing record, by any measure—but of course, there was more to his achievement than mere numbers.

Gilbert's multivolume authorized biography of Sir Winston Churchill (1968-88)—begun when Churchill's son Randolph died after completing just two volumes—is not only a detailed and comprehensive record

of the great man's life, but a wise, insightful, and graceful assessment of his career and influence. Lives of Winston Churchill will be written and published indefinitely, but Sir Martin Gilbert's monument is not likely to be superseded.

Like many great historians, Sir Martin was actively engaged with his times as well. A committed Zionist and authority on Jewish history, he helped to establish the discipline of Holocaust studies and explored the long epic of the Jewish diaspora, in Europe and elsewhere. He wrote about British diplomacy, Soviet refuseniks, the first and second World Wars, and the history of Jerusalem. He was a broadcaster, documentarian, and familiar voice on radio and television. Toward the end of his life he served, at the request of his friend Prime Minister Gordon Brown, on the official inquiry into Britain's role in the Iraq war.

Two minor items help to illustrate what Martin Gilbert was like. He had a lifelong fascination with geography and cartography, and all his books were brimming with lovingly rendered maps. And as a traveler he was an indefatigable writer and sender of postcards, sometimes dozens at a time. Above all, he was a gentleman of genius and decency, who wrote hard truths and explained the world he inhabited. ♦



Economics Strikes Again

A poignant notice from the website of Borderland Books, an independent bookstore in San Francisco's Mission District:

> At the beginning of 2014, the future of the business looked, if not rosy, at least stable and very positive. We were not in debt, sales were meeting expenses and even allowing a small profit, and, perhaps most importantly, the staff and procedures at both the bookstore and the cafe were well established and working smoothly.
>
> So it fills us with sorrow and horror to say that we will be closing very soon.
>
> In November, San Francisco voters overwhelmingly passed a measure that will increase the minimum wage within the city to $15 per hour by 2018. Although all of us at Borderlands support the concept of a living wage in principle and we believe that it's possible that the new law will be good for San Francisco—Borderlands Books as it exists is not a financially viable business if subject to that minimum wage. Consequently we will be closing our doors no later than March 31st.

As H. L. Mencken memorably observed, "Democracy is the theory that the common people know what they want, and deserve to get it good and hard." ♦

Brian Williams's Stolen Valor

After years of claiming to have come under fire while helicoptering into Iraq in 2003, Brian Williams, the top NBC news reader, admitted to *Stars and Stripes* last week that the attack had happened to a different helicopter, not the one he was in. In what was perhaps the most gnomic utterance involving a news anchor since Dan Rather and "Kenneth, what is the frequency?" Williams explained to the Pentagon newspaper, "I would not have chosen to make this mistake." He then elaborated: "I don't know what screwed

up in my mind that caused me to conflate one aircraft with another."

The blogger Ace of Spades was one of the first to react to this gob-smacking story, and we're not sure his response to Williams has been improved upon:

> Let me help you out here, Brian. You conflated one aircraft—one you were in—with another aircraft—one you were not in—not due to a "mistake" but due to an age-old reportorial practice called *lying to advance an agenda*.
>
> The agenda here was dressing up a soft, delicate little boy into the sort of iron-stubbled man who looks like he belongs on a battlefield.
>
> So you lied. You claimed you were on one of the helicopters that took fire; no human being could ever confuse "Me" or "Not Me."
>
> Steven Wright makes just that joke—"The other day I was . . . wait, no, that was someone else."
>
> See, Brian, it's funny because we know that confusion about "Me" versus "Not Me" is *not possible*, except in the insane.
>
> So you lied, and over the years you've lied and lied again.
>
> *Trust us*, they lied. ♦

Warthog Pride

Reader Roger H. Madon writes to The Scrapbook:

"What a joy to read 'The Warthog Lives!' by Jonathan Foreman" (from our January 26 issue). "Almost immediately upon my entrance into the practice of law in 1974, upon joining the law firm then known as Sturm & Perl, I became general counsel to Republic Lodge 1987, IAM [International Association of Machinists]. It constituted nearly 5,000 riveters and machinists at Fairchild Republic in Farmingdale, L.I., assembler of the Attack 10, aka the 'Warthog.' Little did I know at the time that this plane would become the loving legend of so many fighting soldiers, grunts to be exact.

"The factory floor was filled with fuselages, wings, wheels, and other assorted pieces of yet-to-be-installed paraphernalia to ultimately become a flying cannon which released 60 tank-piercing titanium shells with one squeeze of the trigger. And the union workers were a proud and professional bunch of hard driving, fast talking, no nonsense men and a few women whose only goal on that floor was to provide to our fighting troops a killer plane in defense of the freedom they and all of us so enjoyed.

"The production line of the A-10 was closed in 1984. I thought at the time how foolish we were as a nation to stop production of such a magnificent and practical plane. Since then I observed with a sense of irony that the A-10 wasn't just going away without a fight. And fight it did. Mr. Foreman's article proved the truth of that long ago observation. Thanks for the memories." ♦

the weekly Standard
www.weeklystandard.com

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

Trophy Summer

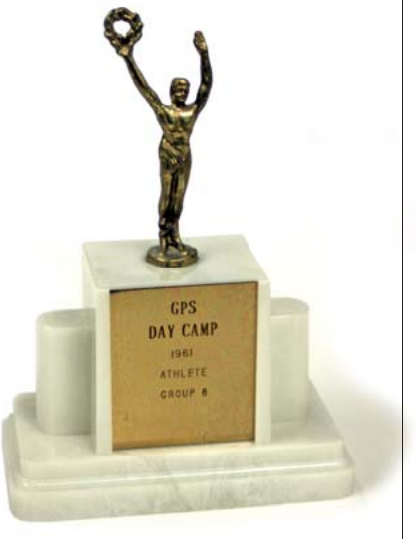
Anyone who has toured a house for sale in the past few decades knows that walking into a child's bedroom is a little like entering a trophy shop. The trophies might be neatly arranged on shelves and tabletops, or strewn haphazardly across the floor; and they might be measured in feet, rather than inches, in height. But whereas trophies by the dozen would once have suggested the home of an Olympic champion—or the lair, at the very least, of a college All-American—today they largely signify participation.

This trend is entirely consistent with our modern doctrine of childhood equality—or, put another way, with Woody Allen's observation that 80 percent of life is showing up. But for those of us whose childhoods ended before the invention of self-esteem, this can be poignant as well. The history of my youthful athleticism is not without its thrills and agonies, its frustrations and occasional triumphs. But for all the heartache and glory, all the bruised bones and victory laps, I have exactly one (1) trophy. Some ribbons and medals as well, to be sure, but just one trophy.

I should begin by explaining that my sporting life was largely dictated by family dynamics. I was a passionate baseball player as a boy: an intimidating left-handed pitcher, competent fielder, and reliable batter. But because my older brother had been that rare specimen—a Little League washout—and was the family trendsetter in these matters, when my turn came, I was forbidden to play Little League baseball. In the meantime, my brother had found success as a swimmer at our local club, and so my fate was sealed.

As it happens, our club had the best swim team in the county, and our coach (female, by the way) was a chlorinated Vince Lombardi. So this meant that summer vacations from school were almost entirely consumed with crack-of-dawn practice sessions and hours of laps, and Saturday mornings were wasted at meets, which we invariably won.

All of this might have been worth the effort if I had given a damn about



swimming, but I did not. I will concede that my aquatic career had its ostensible rewards: I was, briefly, the butterfly champion of our league in my age group, and I later earned money as a lifeguard. But while my body was thrashing its way across a series of pools in the Washington area, my soul belonged to the nearby baseball diamond.

This involuntary commitment to competitive swimming was followed, a few years later, by an equally compulsory tenure as a high school football player. Once again, I revealed myself to be a workmanlike athlete—in one Sidwell Friends-Landon School grudge match, I fractured the leg of a Landon lineman—but my gridiron career was prompted largely by desperation. So hopeless a student was I that my only chance for college, or so my parents concluded, was a football scholarship.

And yet, between these two dispiriting poles, there was one brief interval of joy. For some unknown reason, at age 11, I was given a respite from swimming and sent to the boys' day camp run by the Georgetown Preparatory School. I knew no one, had never heard of the Jesuits, and, as a likely lone Protestant, was initially intimidated by the hearty Latin instructors and middle-aged priests who served as counselors.

To my surprise and delight, however, I found I excelled—almost effortlessly. Those hundreds of hours of laps paid off at the pool, I boxed successfully and learned to play rugby, batted and pitched to my heart's content. Stocky and asthmatic, I had no speed on the track; but I could throw the javelin and shot put a credible distance and held my own on the rifle range and tennis court.

In the company of boys, of course, athletic prowess counts for a lot, and I acquired a nickname and something of a campwide reputation. Better yet, the counselors were a genial lot and liked to quiz me about history and literature and current events. They gave me, in fact, an unexpected measure of pride, made more pleasant by the evident mystification of my mother and father at my sudden prestige. And one momentous afternoon, when the season had ended, I returned home to find the camp director in our living room: He had come to deliver the infinitesimal trophy I seemed to have won—"Athlete"—which remains the principal artifact of that memorable summer.

As trophies go, it isn't much—largely plastic, light as a feather—and I once had to plead with a metal shop in Los Angeles to solder the slight figurine, which had split into two. But as my alluring wife likes to point out, there it sits to this day, on my bureau, 54 years later.

Philip Terzian

the weekly Standard

Breaking Trust

At what point do we—the institution and our nation—lose our soldiers' trust? The trust that we will provide them the right resources—the training and equipment—to properly prepare them and lead them into harm's way. Trust that we will appropriately take care of our soldiers, our civilians, and their families, who so selflessly sacrifice so much.

This was the question Army chief of staff Gen. Raymond Odierno posed to the Senate Armed Services Committee on January 28, and it's one that expresses a point of view rarely considered in Washington: Budgets are moral documents; they express our government's priorities and what we value as a nation.

By this standard, we care less and less about our soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines as military professionals. We have lavished benefits—pay, housing, especially health care—on them endlessly, and we "honor their service" without irony. But we have shortchanged their ability to fight, depriving them of sufficient resources—of personnel, equipment, and training—first to win the wars to which we sent them, then to prepare them for the next conflict.

The 2011 Budget Control Act stands as the moment when we civilians dismissed the needs of the military from our minds. In the divided government created by the 2010 midterm elections (and with us still), President Obama and the Democrats rallied around their core commitment to social entitlements, in particular the health care law they'd sought for a generation, while congressional Republicans vowed never to raise taxes. One of the few points of bipartisan agreement was that defense spending was a chip to be casually played in a game of budgetary poker.

Both the White House and Congress have been unmoved by the consequences of their actions. Even before 2011, the Obama administration had slashed something approaching $500 billion from Bush-era defense plans; the BCA, with its "sequestration" provision, might eliminate another $1 trillion. Under the BCA, the military is shrinking rapidly. Active-duty Army troop strength will fall to about 420,000, barely more than half what it was in 1990. The Navy, once a fleet of 600 ships, is on course to drift down to the mid-200s, while the Air Force, which once had 188 fighter squadrons, will soon have just 49.

Not even the reality of a more violent and chaotic world, it seems, can undo the underlying bargain of the BCA. Even if the administration were right that Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda has been suppressed, the combination of its affiliates and ideological allies in Yemen, in Syria and Iraq, and across large swaths of Africa is hardly an improvement. Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine may be a challenge to the international system and the peace of Europe, but not to the stability of the budget deal. Nor do the Chinese military's boat-and-plane-bumping antics or Beijing's aggressive and destabilizing behavior toward our allies in the region create any groundswell for a Pacific "pivot" with any muscle.

But if there is any one measure of our elected leaders' indifference to upholding the moral compact needed to sustain a volunteer military, it is the decline in combat readiness. The service chiefs regularly testify to Congress and report up the executive chain of command on the state of their services, to little effect. A few highlights from the January 28 hearing, held to "receive testimony on the impact of the Budget Control Act of 2011 and sequestration on national security":

■ Gen. Odierno: "Readiness has been degraded to its lowest level in 20 years. [Two years ago], only 10 percent of our brigade combat teams were ready."

■ Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert: "The Navy's fleet readiness will likely not recover from the ship and aircraft maintenance backlogs until about 2018."

■ Marine Commandant Gen. Joseph Dunford Jr.: "[A]pproximately half of our nondeployed units . . . are suffering personnel, equipment, and training shortfalls. . . . In a major conflict, those shortfalls will result in a delayed response and/or additional casualties."

■ Air Force chief of staff Gen. Mark Welsh III: "Today, just under 50 percent of [our combat squadrons] are fully combat ready. . . . We will not be able to simultaneously defeat an adversary, deny a second adversary, and defend the homeland. And I don't think that's good for America."

Though expressed in the language of military bureaucracy, these are clear cries for help—help now, not in 20 years. The problems that plague the U.S. military are immediate, mostly measures of capacity rather than capability. And note that what's imperiled is not even the globally preeminent deterring and two-war fighting force that had been the standard since the end of World War II. No, in 2012, the administration gave up that requirement for the military, believing Europe would never face a security problem again and hoping retreat from the Middle East would somehow make its problems go away. So inured have our governing elites become to our declining capabilities

that, to paraphrase the late senator from New York Daniel Patrick Moynihan, we've defined defense down.

A professional volunteer military coheres through bonds of trust—internally, among those who serve together, but also externally, between people in uniform and the rest of us. If we are again to put into harm's way many of the same men and women who have served so frequently over the past decade—as we will and indeed are—we must do what we can to preserve their trust in us. We have plenty of resources. It is a moral failure of our self-government when we do not give them what they need.

—Thomas Donnelly & Gary Schmitt

Can't Count on Luck

Every couple of generations, the West gets lucky. The civilizational collapse of the 1930s, in reaction to the Great War and then the Great Depression, could well have led to an unbelievably brutal world dominated for decades by tyrannical communism, barbaric National Socialism, and fanatical Japanese militarism. Winston Churchill wasn't exaggerating in June 1940 when he said that if Britain, which then stood virtually alone, failed, "The whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of perverted science."

We did not so sink. Churchill, and then Franklin D. Roosevelt, and the citizens of the great democracies under their leadership, braced themselves to their duties. So it seemed in 1945 that "the life of the world [would] move forward into broad, sunlit uplands."

Thirty years later, the West was again reeling, seemingly incapable of facing up to an older and less vigorous Soviet Union abroad and soft nihilism and civilizational decay at home. Today, from the safety of hindsight, we tend to minimize that latter threat. But in the late 1970s serious people thought the West could fail. And the West might have, if not for the improbable emergence of Pope John Paul II, and Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan, among others but above all the others. They shaped world history for a decisive decade. And by the end of 1989 the West was triumphant.

But as T. S. Eliot remarked, "There is no such thing as a Lost Cause because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause." Everyone with eyes to see can see that the gained causes of 1945 and 1989 have been slipping away. At home, decadence is flourishing—if decadence can be said to flourish. Abroad, fanatical versions of both Sunni and Shia Islam are on the march, and garden variety authoritarianism—not less dangerous for being commonplace in world history—is thriving. Neither appears to be receding before or being tamed by the globalization of commerce and investment. It is true that none of today's particular threats approaches the danger of Nazi Germany or the Soviet Union—but the Roman Empire fell to barbarism and decadence, not to a great power or a formidable ideology. A world of chaos and brutality, of the proliferation of terror and weapons of mass destruction, seems a not-too-remote possibility for the not-too-distant future.

It's one we're certainly doing as much as possible to ignore, and as little as possible to prevent. Has there ever been a more striking display in our politics today of a fundamental lack of seriousness and deep failure of resolve?

The foreign policy elites are more exercised about a speech by the Israeli prime minister than by an Iranian nuclear bomb. Presidential candidates squabble over vaccines. Prominent journalists invent war stories. Political leaders focus on trivialities. Many conservatives show a remarkable ability to miss the forests—rebuilding our defenses, stopping Iran and ISIS, repealing and replacing Obamacare, and saving the Constitution—while obsessing over the trees—minor policy adjustments, conservative crotchets, and internecine squabbles.

The commentator and former White House denizen David Gergen, a reasonably thoughtful and representative voice of the establishment, realizes things are getting serious. Earlier this week he asked, "How much longer will the world permit the brutality of ISIS? Why can't we go after them harder?"

To which the obvious answer is: "The world" seems ready to permit the brutality of ISIS to go on quite a long while. But we are not the world. Of course we could "go after them harder." But that would presume that we have a president who wants to act.

It was bad in 1935. It was bad, in 1975. It is bad in 2015. More perhaps than in the earlier years, there are impressive leaders elsewhere—from Stephen Harper in Canada to Narendra Modi in India, from Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel to Tony Abbott in Australia. But we have Barack Obama. He has chosen, quite purposefully, to play the role of Neville Chamberlain or at least Jimmy Carter. It's probably too much to hope that he will be succeeded by a Reagan or a Thatcher. Each age has to find its own leader, with his own qualities, suited to his time.

The Republican presidential contest provides us with the occasion for finding such a leader. But we can't find what doesn't exist. We were lucky to end up with Thatcher and Reagan. They themselves benefited from some luck. But they didn't depend on luck. They worked hard, thought big, took risks, and made their own way against the odds. Will any of the candidates prove their worthy heir?

—William Kristol

The I Factor

Presidents and the first-person pronoun: a historical survey.

BY JAMES W. CEASER

From almost the moment President Obama assumed office, observers began calling attention to his unusual proclivity to use the pronoun I. In one of the earliest notices of this practice, an alarmed Terence Jeffrey of CNS News counted 34 I's in the president's speech on the federal rescue of General Motors but, ominously, just one mention of "Congress" and none of "law." Stories documenting Obama's fondness for the personal pronoun have dotted newspapers and blogs ever since. Just last week, a report in *Grabien* charged the president with referencing himself (I or we) 118 times in 33 minutes in his departure speech from India, which computed to a rate of "3.5 Obama references per minute."

It comes as no surprise that most who read the I-meter have been critical of the president. Their calculations are meant to suggest that Obama has crossed a verbal Rubicon, employing the first person more often than any other president. Language, to these critics, clearly matters. Obama's pronominal binging, they assert, bespeaks a dangerous personalism in his view of governance, a boundless narcissism in his psychological disposition, and a peculiar solipsism that demands that his listeners see the world as filtered through his eyes. Typical of this last rhetorical feature, it was charged, is a passage from the president's recent State of the Union address: "I've seen the hopeful faces of young graduates from New York to California; . . . I've mourned with grieving families in Tucson and Newtown; . . . I've watched Americans beat back adversity from the Gulf Coast to the Great Plains." Could these events have taken place, and these sentiments been experienced, if President Obama had not been there?

The president's defenders have reacted to this series of articles with astonishment, wondering at a preoccupation they see as trivial. The repeated exercise of counting words and devising formulae, dressed in a veneer of objectivity, is evidence of the critics' mental derangement. Their behavior is fueled by an irrational antipathy to the president, more sophisticated than, though no different from, the rantings of the birthers. Insofar as there is any factual basis to these findings, defenders argue, it proves nothing more than the presence of a personal linguistic trait or marker, which almost everyone possesses. If ever Obama gets the chance to answer this charge, he can be expected to dismiss it with the simple claim, I am who I am.

Some supporters have gone further, however, and questioned whether the whole case is not overblown. Other leaders, they argue, have also availed themselves regularly of personal pronouns. It is not necessary to go in search of ancient imperial declarations, like Louis XIV's boast "*L'état c'est moi*," to make this point; it is sufficient to compare Obama with past presidents. A quick survey by *BuzzFeed* in 2014 purported to show that in press conferences Obama has been more sparing in his use of personal pronouns (I, me, my, mine, and myself) than most of his predecessors. According to *BuzzFeed*, "Obama is maybe the least narcissistic president since 1945." This means less than Truman, Eisenhower, or George H. W. Bush.

Is there a way of resolving the controversy? Fortunately, the modern research university, fortified by an influx of federal funding for the digital humanities and the analysis of Big

DAVE MALAN

James W. Ceaser is professor of politics at the University of Virginia and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Data, offers the resources for grappling with this question. To be sure, contemporary social science, which is pledged to value-free analysis, must scrupulously abstain from assessing competing normative claims regarding the dangers of self-reference. But it can settle the factual question of the frequency with which such references occur, avoiding both the Scylla of journalistic impressionism and the Charybdis of partisan statistical analysis.

A team of researchers at the University of Virginia's prestigious Laputa Institute of Computational Linguistics undertook a detailed analysis of the use of "I" in spoken State of the Union addresses delivered before Congress. The list of such speeches is long but not comprehensive. The Constitution specifies only that the president "shall from time to time give to the Congress Information of the State of the Union," and after Washington and Adams appeared in person before Congress to deliver their addresses, Jefferson turned to the practice of issuing reports in written form. Jefferson's precedent was followed all the way up to Wilson, who returned in person to the Capitol. Even then, not every president followed suit. President Coolidge delivered his speech in 1923 but, perhaps mindful of his epithet, elected thereafter to keep silent. Hoover also skipped. FDR restored the ritual of appearing before Congress, which for the most part has since been observed. With some minor technical adjustments—counting an incoming president's first speech to Congress as a State of the Union address, and excluding the rare lame-duck address of an outgoing president—the institute team was able to construct a data set consisting of 97 speeches, a respectable N by modern social scientific standards.

The results of the study will almost certainly disappoint President Obama's critics. Researchers were able to determine the average number of I's per speech (41.2), the average for each president, and a serial ranking of the speeches and the presidents. Careful analysis of these measures disconfirms the contention that President Obama is the most I-prone occupant of the Oval Office. That distinction goes not to Barack Obama, but to Bill Clinton, with an impressive average of 102.1 I's per State of the Union address. Clinton also established himself as the master of self-reference by giving the two most I-laden speeches.

The charges leveled against President Obama are not, however, entirely lacking in evidentiary basis. The president places in a strong second position, with an average of 72.9 I's, and he can boast of delivering the speech with the third-highest I total (tied with Clinton) in 2010. In that address, Obama unleashed a festival of I's: "Now, I'm not naïve. I never thought that the mere fact of my election would usher in peace and harmony and some postpartisan era. . . . So no, I will not give up on trying to change the tone of our politics." Obama's State of the Union last month ranks a respectable thirteenth in American history. It is, of course, premature to establish Obama's final status, as he has one more address to deliver. To "catch" President Clinton—if one can allow the metaphor of a competition between the two men—Obama would have to fill his speech with no fewer than 302 I's, an unprecedented, though not inconceivable, feat.

The ranking of presidents contains some mild surprises. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who in his first Inaugural Address uttered perhaps the nation's most haunting of all I statements ("But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me"), was overall remarkably reserved in his use of I's, ranking sixteenth and lower than all of his fellow Democrats. President Nixon, though known for his realism, could give way to flights of visionary personal expression, as if he, too, could have a dream: "As I look down that

U.S. presidents by average number of I's in their State of the Union addresses

	PRESIDENT	AVERAGE NUMBER OF I'S PER SPEECH	STANDARD DEVIATIONS FROM THE MEAN
1.	William J. Clinton	102.1	+2.62
2.	Barack Obama	72.9	+1.33
3.	George H.W. Bush	65.8	+1.02
4.	Gerald R. Ford	62.0	+0.86
5.	Lyndon B. Johnson	58.0	+0.68
6.	Richard Nixon	50.3	+0.34
7.	Dwight D. Eisenhower	39.9	-0.12
8.	Woodrow Wilson	39.7	-0.12
9.	Ronald Reagan	39.6	-0.13
10.	George W. Bush	35.6	-0.30
11.	John F. Kennedy	35.3	-0.31
12.	Jimmy Carter	32.7	-0.43
13.	Calvin Coolidge	31.0	-0.50
14.	Warren G. Harding	29.5	-0.59
15.	Harry S. Truman	29.2	-0.58
16.	Franklin D. Roosevelt	23.0	-0.86
17.	George Washington	13.4	-1.28
18.	John Adams	10.5	-1.40
	All presidents	***41.2***	***0***

new road which I have tried to map out today, I see a new America as we celebrate our 200th anniversary six years from now. I see an America in which we have abolished hunger, provided the means for every family in the Nation to obtain a minimum income, made enormous progress in providing better housing, faster transportation, improved health, and superior education."

There is one element from the ranking of presidents that virtually demands comment. It is the stark contrast between the top and bottom pairs. The most highly ranked presidents, the Democrats Clinton and Obama, stand out for being more than a full standard deviation above the mean, while the two lowest, the Federalists Washington and John Adams, are more than a standard deviation below it. These two pairs are located, so to speak, at the antipodes of self-preoccupation. Clinton and Obama together manage to hold 7 of the top 10 places for individual speeches, while Washington and Adams delivered 8 of the 10 bottom-ranking speeches. These differences could have something to do with context. Washington and Adams appeared before small audiences of persons whom they mostly knew—though this is no clear reason not to employ the intimate or familiar first person—while Clinton and Obama held center stage before a much larger body, complete with galleries packed with human props, and spoke to the entire American public.

Even with these factors taken into account, however, it is hard not to consider assigning some of the explanatory power to the different character traits of the men involved. Though known for his personal vanity, John Adams often used the first person to stress a sense of duty, while Clinton's I's wander more freely, hinting at a want of restraint. It is also worth considering whether Washington's I's lean toward the self-effacing, while Obama's suggest self-absorption. To confirm this hypothesis, just try to imagine George Washington posing for a "selfie." ♦

Huckabee, Christie, and Paul

Oh my.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Boy, that didn't take long. Over the span of a few short days in late January and early February, three members of the top tier of Republican presidential candidates demonstrated why they'll never be president. They didn't do anything to disqualify themselves directly, just revealed the traits that will make them appear unsuitable to most voters by the time the campaign really heats up, say, when the presidential election is a mere 18 months away. As it is, all three of them—Rand Paul, Mike Huckabee, and Chris Christie—can pack it in right now and save months of time and tons of money. They'd be doing themselves a favor, and us too.

Huckabee's 15 minutes: Wow, already over.

Consider first the case of Mike Huckabee. He is a former preacher, TV talk show host, and governor of Arkansas. Huckabee seems to want to cement his image in the public mind not as a successful governor of an unsuccessful state but as a preacher and a talk show host. It is a deadly combination. The part of him that is talk show host will, as talk show hosts do, comment on everything that swims into view, especially if it's none of his business. And the part of him that is preacher will comment in a way that will annoy anyone who doesn't share his pious background, which in this age of galloping secularism strikes most people as increasingly esoteric.

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

Huckabee is on a tour promoting a book called *God, Guns, Grits, and Gravy*, in that order. He appears on shows whose hosts and audiences agree with him on almost everything. This too is deadly. The hundred-thousand-plus sales that result from such saturation publicity lull an author into thinking he has many more followers than the hundred-thousand-plus who had the time, inclination, and money to buy the book. More likely it means that he's exhausted his market and has goosed everyone who agrees with him and his book into buying it. Which in turn means that everyone who *didn't* buy his book doesn't agree with him. This segment of the population numbers roughly 320 million.

The book is pretty good, by the way, written in smooth and jokey prose. Who besides Dick Durbin can hate a book that matter-of-factly calls Dick Durbin a "windbag"? There's enough material in its pages, however, to make even some Huckabee sympathizers squirm. In the first few chapters the waste-matter metaphors are laid on a little thick: lots of "sewage" and "filth" are (daintily) discussed. You don't have to like New York—everyone who likes New York has already moved there, thank God—to be a little unsettled by his denunciations:

> it's crowded, loud, hurried, intense, and it just seems like its streets are filthy. Even when the trash gets picked up, you always want to burn your shoes after you've walked the

New York streets because of all the "stuff" that is ever present on the sidewalks.

Travis? Travis Bickle, is that you?

Huckabee's book is now most famous for his denunciations of such sewage-workers as the lip-synching dancer Beyoncé and her repellent husband. Good for Huck! But in his book he uses this as an occasion to comment on how the president and first lady are failing in their role as parents, allowing their teenage girls to listen to the "toxic mental poison" of contemporary music. Bad for Huck: Any parent who is trying to bring up a kid in the crappy culture of 21st-century America faces the same dilemma as the Obamas, and many of them have uneasily resolved it in the same laissez-faire fashion as the first couple. The proper response to such a parent, if any is called for, is sympathy. But no response is called for, since Huckabee wasn't asked.

Our preacher/TV host/governor tried explaining these and other untoward remarks in ways that he evidently hoped would satisfy the moralizers of the mainstream liberal press, and in so doing he only fell deeper in the "stuff." Toward homosexuality, for example, he took what he surely thought would be deemed an enlightened position: He compared it to the use of profanity or alcohol—not a mortal sin, in other words, just a harmless vice; thus managing to alienate partisans of homosexuality and their most dedicated enemies, who may think it's a vice but don't think it's harmless.

There will be much more of this unpleasantness till the unavoidable day when Huckabee withdraws from the race or explicitly chooses not to run. As a talented and competent former governor he might be a plausible national candidate. First, though, he would have to put a sock in the talk show host and the preacher, and the odds are long. Only a certain kind of voter wants to be governed by a professional controversialist. And that voter doesn't have a lot of friends.

Paul

Huckabee manages to avoid hostile interviewers, usually, but they seem to seek out Rand Paul, who over the last few weeks has shown himself unskilled in dealing with them. With his impeccable libertarian credentials, he has posed as a different kind of Republican—uniformed in the post-hipster rig of jeans, dress shirt, and poorly knotted tie, nonjudgmental in all important matters and a bicycle rider by choice. Such people inevitably make overuse of Twitter, and they fall helpless before its awesome power to expose its users' most unappetizing weaknesses.

Enslaved by the need to tweet, Paul and his campaign have shown themselves to be unaccountably and prematurely combative. When his potential rivals Jeb Bush and Mitt Romney had a private but well-publicized meeting, Paul tweeted out a picture of a friendship band inscribed with their names, suggesting that the two former governors were adolescent sweethearts. In the tweet, "friendship" was spelled "frienship," but it's Twitter and who cares. Even the misspelling couldn't disguise the whiff of envy, though: *I didn't want to go to your stupid meeting anyway because you guys are probably in love* . . . Later Paul linked to a mock recording his campaign had got up, depicting sweet talk between Bush and Hillary Clinton. It wasn't quite as funny as a *Saturday Night Live* skit, if you can imagine such a thing. But the lady who imitated Hillary was very good. Maybe it's his mom.

Christie

It's no surprise that a candidate who chooses Twitter to engage his adversaries would be uncomfortable with the longer, more demanding form of a six-minute TV interview with a CNBC cupcake. In this case the interviewer took no time in riling Paul over awkward comments he had made about the responsibility of parents to vaccinate their children. Perhaps he was caught off guard by the revelation that TV news readers can be obnoxious. His inability to control the interview made him petulant. "Calm down here a bit, Kelly," he said. He put his fingers to his lips: "Shhhhhh . . ." *Stop asking these stupid questions.* It's hard to imagine what candidate Paul will do when he's faced with such interrogations several times a day for months at a time. The interviewer asked about running for president, and Paul said, "Part of the problem is that you end up having interviews like this where the interview is so slanted and full of distortions that you don't get useful information. I think this is what is bad about TV sometimes." Back to Twitter.

A thin skin has been a feature of Chris Christie's public life, as well, and over the last several weeks it has been much in evidence. On a "trade trip" to London he made vaccination comments as artless as Paul's, and provoked a similar controversy. His press aide announced that the three remaining press conferences scheduled for his trip would be canceled, because the governor would be taking "no questions." The next day, as he came within shouting distance of reporters, one of them called a question. Christie turned and said (snarled? growled?): "Is there something you don't understand about 'no questions'?"

History records no case in which a Republican hurt his reputation among fellow Republicans by yelling at a reporter; it is always assumed that the reporter deserved it just on general principle. But that's not all that was revealed about Christie in the last few weeks. In London he didn't appear a hardworking public servant losing patience with bleating reporters; he had the air of a plutocrat irked that the little people weren't doing what they were told.

The impression was fortified by a *New York Times* story that appeared

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

a few days earlier. It itemized the governor's taste for luxury, especially when it is paid for by someone else, usually wealthy political allies: elaborate family vacations disguised as trade missions, gilded hotels rooms at $30,000 a night, first-class tickets to concerts and sporting events, and a preference for private jets that feature "exotic wood interiors and a Rolls Royce engine." The governor's high life isn't illegal, as even the *Times* admitted, and it isn't unusual. A seldom-remarked fact of American politics is that people in positions of governmental authority—senators, cabinet officers, governors, ranking members of the House of Representatives, Republicans and Democrats alike—live a life utterly removed from that of the people they rule, with cars and drivers and private jets on call, sumptuous meals and skyboxes stocked with excellent liquor, all for free. They will tell you it's to make the people's business run more smoothly, but they also think it's fitting compensation. Why else would they put up with the rest of us?

Many observers noted the difficulties that Christie's lifestyle would have for his reputation as a populist. Another item from the *Times* story may in the end be more ominous.

"King Abdullah of Jordan picked up the tab for a Christie family weekend at the end of the trip. The governor and two staff members who accompanied him came back to New Jersey bubbling that they had celebrated with Bono, the lead singer of U2, at three parties . . ."

Does America want a president who bubbles for Bono? It's hard to square such behavior with greatness, or even competence, much less good taste. Did FDR bubble for Bing—did Reagan moon over Madonna? The revelation will revive the most harrowing piece of reporting in the Christie literature, in which a writer for the *Atlantic* magazine accompanied the governor of New Jersey to several concerts given by Bruce Springsteen. The writer stood by as Christie hopped up and down, as best he could, and waved his beefy arms, and mouthed the words to Springsteen's tuneless anthems, and then tried, without success, to score a meeting with Springsteen himself. The jets, the meals, the concerts, the parties with celebrity pop musicians—we have at last learned that Christie is neither a populist nor a plutocrat, but a man striving to live out the fantasies of a teenage boy.

The fantasy will come to an end long before he reaches the White House gates. We are a forgiving people, but there are many qualities Americans will not accept in a president. They wouldn't, we can assume, want a professional gambler, a sex offender, a fashion designer, or a collector of 19th-century dollhouses. No race car drivers, stand-up comics, or Esperanto-speakers need apply. Neither, just as reliably, do they want a prig, a prickly, unconvincing hipster, or a 52-year-old man who still plays air guitar. ♦

The Telltale Obama Budget

Liberals may love its priorities. Voters don't.

BY FRED BARNES

Democrats have moved to the left in the Obama era. And if the party's base, President Obama, and Senator Elizabeth Warren have their way, they will move even further to the left in the next two years. Liberals will rejoice, but there's a downside. The Democratic nominee will have a considerably harder time winning the presidency in 2016.

GARY LOCKE

The budget that Obama released last week reflects the shift. It is dominated by liberal policies that Democrats are eager to impose on the country: increased spending, higher taxes, government bigger in scope if not size, refusal to deal with the soaring cost of entitlements, minimal concern about the national debt.

These policies were rejected by voters in November's midterm elections—a nationwide disaster for Democrats. And as John Judis of *National Journal* argues persuasively in an article entitled "The Emerging Republican Advantage," liberal policies have increasingly lost favor with working-class and middle-income Americans and with college graduates who don't have a postgraduate degree.

There's also a paradoxical problem for Democrats. The issues they stress in campaigns poll well, yet aren't of overriding importance to voters. In January, Pew Research asked respondents to choose the issues that should be a "top priority for the president and Congress." Of 23 issues cited, Democratic favorites lagged. Global warming was 22nd, money in politics 20th, and improving roads and bridges 19th.

Among issues favored by Republicans, defending against terrorism was

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at The Weekly Standard.

1st, strengthening the economy 2nd, job creation 3rd, trimming the deficit 6th, and reducing crime 9th. Bolstering the military came in 11th. Seventy-one percent of Republicans said the military should be a top priority, but just 41 percent of Democrats.

Raising the minimum wage offers a telling contrast between issues Democrats hold dear and those that work politically. In a CNN poll in 2014, 71 percent endorsed an increase. But the issue doesn't "drive" the vote. Instead, the economy and jobs matter more. Forty percent of Americans know someone who has lost a job, and 25 percent have taken a second job to make ends meet, according to pollster Neil Newhouse of Public Opinion Strategies. If increasing the minimum wage were seen as the way to improve the economy and spur job creation, "then Democrats would have done a lot better in 2014," Newhouse says.

The Obama budget also puts Democrats on the wrong side of public opinion. It calls for a 7 percent hike in spending in 2016 and nearly $1.5 trillion in higher taxes over the next decade. A Rasmussen poll, however, found only 16 percent want more spending. Fifty-four percent want a cut. And while a tax increase for the rich is backed 49 percent to 41 percent, two-thirds believe that if the wealthy pay more, taxes on the middle class will go up too.

The Fox News exit poll in the midterm elections wasn't encouraging for Democrats either. After six years of a Democrat in the White House, 78 percent of voters said they trust the government in Washington never or only some of the time. And only 22 percent said they expect the next generation to have a better life than we have today.

The Democratic move to the left creates a dilemma for Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy. She needs to create some ideological distance from Obama. "Voters are done with Obama," Newhouse says. But since there's little room on the president's left, she must drift to his right. If she doesn't have a strong challenger for the 2016 Democratic nomination, she'll have the luxury of doing so. She could, in effect, run a general election campaign in the primaries.

But if the Democratic base rebels, a strong liberal opponent is likely to emerge—either Warren, the Massachusetts senator who has a national following, or a Warren proxy. That would limit how far to the right Clinton could go. Or she could lose.

The Democratic nominee in 2016, whether it's Clinton or someone else, will face a less favorable environment than Obama did. Democrats "are being severely undermined by two trends that have emerged in the past few elections," according to Judis. They "have continued to hemorrhage support among white working-class voters," he wrote. And Republicans are "gaining dramatically" among middle-class voters who strongly backed Democrats in 2006 and 2008.

Judis's analysis is striking because he had predicted, in a book he co-authored in 2002 entitled *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, a new era of Democratic dominance. "After the 2008 election, I thought Obama could create an enduring Democratic majority by responding aggressively to the Great Recession in the same way that Franklin Roosevelt had responded in 1933 to the Great Depression," he wrote. "Obama, I believed, would finally bury the Reagan Republican majority of 1980."

In retrospect, "that analogy was clearly flawed," Judis concluded. "It now appears that, in some form, the Republican era which began in 1980 is still with us. Reagan Republicanism—rooted in the long-standing American distrust of government, but perhaps with its roughest theocratic and insurrectionary edges sanded off for a national audience—is still the default position of many of those Americans who regularly go to the polls."

There's another way of explaining the Republican recovery. Voters twice elected Obama, then watched what he and his liberal policies produced. Many didn't like what they saw and did what voters often do. They changed their minds. ♦

The Rise and Fall of the Parties

The Democrats should be worried.

BY JAY COST

Our perceptions of current events are so conditioned by the 24/7 news cycle that we are wont to think of political time in tiny increments. For instance, Barack Obama is up in the polls over the last few weeks, so he is "winning," in some ephemeral sense. Congressional Republicans are struggling to coordinate on issues like immigration and abortion, so they are "losing."

But we can take a broader view, much as economists do with the economy. There are the weekly reports on unemployment claims, noisy data that give some sense of the ups-and-downs of the private sector. Then there are monthly jobs data, as well as quarterly GDP results. Finally, economists can get a sense of where we are over the course of years in the broader business cycle. Such a big picture view is also possible in politics. Though it is easy to miss amid the relentless tweeting and cable news chatter, the long view can still be quite illuminating.

Think of a political cycle as akin to a business cycle—dating it from the moment a party acquires the White House to the moment it concedes the presidency to the opposition. Such political cycles are almost embedded by design in our two-party system with quadrennial elections. And since the end of World War II, each has had quite a bit in common with the others.

In the postwar era, political cycles have often mimicked the actual business cycle. More often than not, when a recession occurs, the voters respond by handing power to the opposition. Something like this happened in 1960, when back-to-back recessions helped John F. Kennedy narrowly edge Richard Nixon. A nasty recession in the mid-1970s, combined with the Watergate scandal, helped Jimmy Carter defeat Gerald Ford in 1976; another recession aided Ronald Reagan four years later. Bill Clinton's slogan "It's the economy, stupid" would have been stupid indeed were it not for the recession of 1990-91. And of course the 2008 contest might have been a very different affair were it not for the recession and financial panic that fall.

Cheer up—they're already sick of me.

The overlap is not 100 percent. In 1972 Nixon was overwhelmingly reelected despite a (relatively mild) recession on his watch in 1970. There was a particularly nasty recession at the start of Ronald Reagan's first term, but it was followed by such a dramatic recovery that he too won a huge reelection. George W. Bush entered office in recessionary conditions, followed by a prolonged "jobless recovery," yet still won in 2004. Furthermore, sustained growth is no guarantee a party will retain power. There was no recession in 1968 when Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey, nor was there a contraction in 2000 when George W. Bush defeated Al Gore.

This partly explains why Republicans feel bullish about 2016. One does not need a recession for power to transfer from one party to the other. More often than not a party's hold on the White House expires after eight years. Since FDR and Truman, only once, in 1988, did a political party retain power for three straight terms. And 1988 was really an extraordinary confluence of good luck for the incumbent party. The nation's economy quickly sloughed off the Wall Street downturn of 1987 to post an impressive growth rate of 4.2 percent. Tensions with the Soviets had largely waned. The Iran-contra scandal did not come close to damaging the reputation of George H.W. Bush, who ran a competent campaign. And the Democrats nominated a cold fish in Michael Dukakis.

What makes political cycles especially interesting, and adds a wrinkle to the foregoing analysis, is the electorate's *relentless hedging of its bet* on the majority party. Almost as soon as a new president is elected, the defeated opposition starts down the comeback trail—in Congress, as well as in governors' mansions and state legislatures all across the country. Not always, of course, but the pattern is clear.

Sean Trende and David Byler of *Real Clear Politics* have produced an interesting metric of party strength, combining the standing of each party in the White House, Congress, governorships, and state legislatures. Their data indicate that there have been seven full political cycles in the postwar era (from Eisenhower to George W. Bush). In five of them, the dominant party's first White House victory was its high-water mark. In the other two, it was the reelection four years later. After that, the opposition party began improving, often substantially.

So voters hedge—quite aggressively.

Jay Cost is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard. *His new book,* A Republic No More: Big Government and the Rise of American Political Corruption, *is forthcoming from Encounter Books.*

This makes intuitive sense, at least when we think about the narrow 15 percent of the country that swings elections. Suppose you are a low-information voter in the middle of the electorate. You are unclear about the details of the major party's policy programs, let alone whether their ideas will have the promised effects. Arguably, the smart move is to force the president to deal with the opposition party by electing the latter to as many subpresidential offices as possible. That way, at least in theory, you can keep policy from going wildly off the rails. Maybe—as with the budgetary and tax compromises in the 1980s and 1990s—you can actually force Washington to get some stuff done.

What Democrats need to worry about is that the hedging does not really stop. No political party in the postwar era has improved its standing after its first presidential reelection, at least not until *after* it loses the White House. And in the one postwar instance of a party holding the White House for a third consecutive term (1988), Republicans were still left slightly worse off across all subpresidential offices. The GOP held the White House that year, kept the same number of Senate seats, and picked up a few House seats. But the party lost two governorships and multiple state legislative seats.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results, but the inference is straightforward: For a political party to relive its old glories, it has to lose the presidency. It has to become the party that voters use as a hedge, rather than the party they hedge against.

Another interesting observation from Trende and Byler's data is that, contrary to proponents of the "Emerging Democratic Majority" thesis, which holds that a coalition of the "ascendant" will drive ever-larger Democratic margins, there has been a trend toward the GOP over the last 30 years. Beyond the ebbs and flows of the cycles, the GOP has been steadily improving its national standing. Its low points in each political cycle are not as low as they used to be, and its high points are higher.

Consider the most recent low, in 2008. Per Trende and Byler, the GOP was still in a slightly stronger position in 2008 than it was after its 1992 rout. And it was substantially improved relative to 1978, 1976, 1964, 1962, and 1960. In fact, the GOP's net standing in 2008 was similar to 1966, which is remembered as a comeback year for the Republican party.

Meanwhile, the party's highs are getting higher. Across all subpresidential offices, the GOP today holds a greater share of power than at any time since 1928. And no other cycle in the postwar era comes close to 2014 in terms of Republican subpresidential strength—not in Congress and certainly not in the state capitals. Below the White House, the GOP's current standing rivals historical blowouts like 1928, 1894, and 1860.

Remember all this next time you read an article about how the Democrats are on the rise. The reality is that the transfer of power in 2008 was entirely predictable, given the economic downturn and the fact that the GOP had already controlled the White House for eight years. Meanwhile, Barack Obama's high-water mark—a seven-point victory over John McCain—was less than the high points for Eisenhower, Kennedy/Johnson, Nixon/Ford, Reagan, and Clinton. Moreover, Obama's presidential victory has led to a GOP resurgence in lower offices on a scale that only octogenarians have ever seen before.

We are now in the seventh year of a Democratic cycle. So what is the Democrats' best case scenario? While there is never a guarantee, a Democratic presidential victory in 2016 might facilitate some gains down-ballot, but these would likely be muted. Although it is quite possible that the Senate could return to the Democrats, it would be quite unlikely for them to win the 29 House seats needed to reclaim a majority in the lower chamber. Moreover, most governorships will not be up for grabs. While gains in state legislative seats would probably follow for Democrats, it is unlikely that they would come in large numbers.

Flash forward two more years, to 2018, and Democrats would *still* face the voters' relentless impulse to hedge—which would probably facilitate Republican gains. Given the landscape in the Senate in 2018—where Democrats will have to defend a mind-boggling 25 of 33 seats—Democratic losses could be substantial in the upper chamber.

And there remains the specter of a recession. Economists are not projecting a downturn in 2015 or 2016. (As late as September 2008, economists polled by the *Wall Street Journal* still thought that the economy would grow at a 1.5 percent rate that year!) But a recession will come sooner or later. If the past is a guide, we are probably closer to the start of the next recession than we are to the end of the last one. What will Democrats do if they hold the White House during the next economic downturn?

The answer is simple: *They will lose*.

Like death and taxes, political parties with a grip on the White House eventually give it up. If it does not happen because of war, scandal, or a general desire for change, the inevitable turning of the business cycle will bring it about.

So where do things stand now? The Democrats have been routed on the subpresidential level, leaving them in as weak a position as they have faced in generations. Worse, they probably cannot start seriously rebuilding until they cede the White House to the GOP, which by then will probably sport historically strong margins in the subpresidential offices.

Note that very little of this has to do with the triumph of conservatism over liberalism or vice versa. Voters tend to toss incumbent parties out of the White House when the economy sours, and prior to that point they tend to favor the opposition for the rest of the electoral offices. These forces combined to rout the GOP in 2008. It is now the Democrats' turn to worry about their inevitable fall from grace. Maybe they can delay it past 2016, but it is coming. ♦

Things Fall Apart

Twenty-five years after communism, Central and Eastern Europe are in trouble. BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

Warsaw

In 1932, the year Lithuania's elder statesman Vytautas Landsbergis was born, Europe was starting to come apart. Several countries, led by Greece, were defaulting on sovereign debts. In the north, a fascist coup nearly succeeded in Finland. To the south, an antisemite named Julius Gombos became prime minister of Hungary. The National Socialist German Workers Party (aka the Nazi party) won 36 percent of the vote in Prussia. As 60 hopeful nations met in Geneva for a world disarmament conference, an Austrian named Adolf Hitler was in the process of obtaining German citizenship.

Landsbergis, much like the late Václav Havel—the Czech playwright turned president after the collapse of communism a quarter-century ago—has led one of those improbable lives Communist rule seemed to spawn. The son of a famous Lithuanian architect, Landsbergis was a professor of music during the Soviet era. Before that, as a young boy he had lived through fascism (his family sheltered a Jewish teenager in the early 1940s). Like Havel, Landsbergis entered politics out of obligation and necessity. He was fiercely anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. And like Havel in Czechoslovakia, Landsbergis became Lithuania's first head of state after independence from the Soviet Union in 1990.

Today, Landsbergis thinks freedom and peace in this part of Europe are again in jeopardy. He believes in deterrence, pure and simple. At a conference of the Transatlantic Renewal Project in Warsaw, he urges the West to convey to Russian president Vladimir Putin and associates that aggression "will end with them hanged at Red Square." If you have Landsbergis's biography, you see no point in beating around the bush. In January 1991, he witnessed the Kremlin backlash against Lithuanian independence, with Soviet forces moving against civilians in the capital, Vilnius, and several other cities. Thirteen Lithuanians were killed and nearly 1,000 injured.

Polish troops on exercise in western Ukraine, September 2014

Today, the Baltic nations of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia feel vulnerable. After the events in Ukraine—and still remembering Russia's 2008 invasion of Georgia—they fear that Moscow may use energy, espionage, "little green men" (masked unmarked soldiers in green army uniforms), and other means to destabilize their young democracies. Estonia and Latvia have significant ethnic Russian minorities, 25 percent and 28 percent, respectively. In fact, Russians make up roughly half the population of the Latvian capital, Riga. It's unclear whether NATO has specified what nonconventional forms of aggression would trigger article 5 of the NATO treaty, under which member states regard an attack on one as an attack on all. In 2007, Estonia suffered a massive cyberattack thought to have originated in Russia. The country's banks and media, government and parliament were thrown into disarray. In this part of Europe, countries not members of NATO are getting jittery as well.

The Swedes are sensitive. Over Easter last year, Russian aircraft simulated a bombing raid on Stockholm. More recently, a submarine thought to be Russian turned up in the waters off the Swedish capital. "The Russians," one Swedish official tells me, "are deliberately trying to undermine the confidence of our armed forces." There's not much confidence in those armed forces to begin with. Since the end of the Cold War, the Swedish Air Force has scaled back by 70 percent, the navy by 80 percent, and the army by 90 percent, from approximately a half million soldiers to 50,000 troops. According to a 2013 poll, 6 percent of Swedes believe their country can defend itself. While Sweden's center-left government opposes NATO membership, for the first time more Swedes favor, rather than oppose, joining the alliance.

The Finns are pensive, too. In Finland, which shares an 800-mile border with Russia and where incursions by Russian aircraft are now a weekly occurrence, Prime Minister Alexander Stubb said in September, "We should have become a [NATO] member in 1995 when we joined the EU."

Like Landsbergis and others in the neighborhood, the Finns are marinated in history. Back to 1932: In that year the country signed a nonaggression pact with the USSR, only to see it unilaterally renounced by the Soviets before the decade was out, when Soviet forces shelled one of their own villages and claimed Finland was

NEWSCOM

Jeffrey Gedmin is chairman, global politics and security, at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service; codirector of the Transatlantic Renewal Project; and senior director, Blue Star Strategies.

responsible. "Everything is possible, nothing is to be excluded," says Landsbergis of the situation today. It was incidentally a Finnish magazine, *Suomen Sotilas*, that first noticed that those mysterious soldiers in Crimea—the men in green without insignia—happened to be carrying the full suite of weapons and equipment exclusive to Russian special forces.

It's not hard to understand why parts of Scandinavia and the Baltic countries are anxious. Poland has been a strong supporter of Baltic defense, and very tough on Russian actions in Ukraine as well. The other three Visegrad countries, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary, all have been less resolute on anything having to do with Russia. Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orban, who gets low marks from human rights groups like Freedom House on media freedom, at first answered the crisis in Ukraine with silence, then an expression of neutrality ("Hungary is not part of the conflict"), and finally a position of carefully constructed ambiguity. Orban likes to fault Moscow and Kiev in equal measure, while expressing concern about Kiev's treatment of ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine (there are about 156,000 ethnic Hungarians in the country, most holding Ukrainian and Hungarian citizenship).

Further south, the challenge for the alliance looks even more daunting. There's Russian bluster and intimidation. Last spring, NATO member Bulgaria put its air force on high alert some 30 times during a period of two months in response to a surge in Russian military aircraft flying near its borders along the Black Sea. In May, Russian deputy prime minister Dmitry Rogozin tweeted about NATO member Romania: "Upon U.S. request, Romania has closed its air space for my plane. Ukraine doesn't allow me to pass through again. Next time I'll fly on board Tu-160." The Tu-160 is Russia's largest and most advanced strategic bomber. In September, Moscow's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov termed the prospect of NATO membership for additional Balkan countries—Croatia joined the alliance in 2009—a "provocation."

Moscow has energy as a weapon to bring countries to heel. Like most of the former Soviet bloc, southeastern Europe is heavily dependent on Russia for its natural gas. The region suffered shortages in 2006 and 2009 when Moscow cut off supplies transiting Ukraine. But a good portion of the region's vulnerability stems from homegrown problems.

After communism's demise we thought that by enlarging NATO and the EU to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, west European zones of security and prosperity would rather seamlessly extend eastward. By some measures, of course, NATO and EU expansions have both been successes. For anyone who thinks NATO enlargement is the source of current Russian aggression, ask yourself what peace and security would look like across the region if the 12 countries that have joined since 1999 had been left to float in a gray, neutral zone between Vladimir Putin's Russia and the West. And indeed, the prospect of NATO and EU accession required candidate states to prove seriousness in areas including democracy, rule of law, human rights, respect for minorities, and market economics. There was progress.

The trouble is that while institutional change has come relatively quickly to this part of Europe, cultural change—habits, values, and behavior—have been slower to evolve. Put corruption atop the list. It's a serious problem across post-Communist Europe, but it's particularly acute in the south. Poland, Lithuania, and Latvia rank 35, 39, and 43, respectively, on Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index. Compare that to Macedonia at 64th place on the same scale, Bulgaria and Romania at 69th (tied with Greece), and Montenegro at 76th. In case you were wondering, the starkest contrast is between 26th-ranked Estonia and fellow NATO member Albania, which, at 110, rivals Ecuador and Ethiopia in levels of corruption.

Shallow democratic roots, weak rule of law, and media that are frequently neither independent nor especially responsible are now pervasive throughout southeastern Europe.

As elsewhere on the continent, populism keeps popping up, but with arguably more extremist tendencies. And corruption seeps into everything, making countries "ungovernable or governable by somebody else," as Bulgarian analyst Ivan Krastev puts it. In fact, NATO's southern flank—including alliance members Greece, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, and Albania—is in danger of sliding into serious crisis.

What does it mean for NATO, if this part of Europe falls apart? How will it affect the alliance if significant portions of Central and Eastern Europe become absorbed into Russia's sphere of influence? The latter is exactly what's already happening with the EU's "Eastern Partnership" countries of Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Does anyone believe that Moscow will be satisfied once this band of territories is fully incorporated? Twenty years ago we spoke of "Europe whole and free" and were convinced that new freedom-loving NATO members from the formerly Communist east would revive and reenergize the alliance as a whole. That work was never completed.

People like Vytautas Landsbergis feel it in their veins: History is back. Vladimir Putin's Russia is not the Soviet Union. It is not spreading a global ideology, nor does it have the capability to project power around the world as the USSR once did. Putin's economic fortunes appear to be dwindling, what's more, and that's an opportunity for the West. But up until now, Putin has proved a master at playing a weak hand as if it were strong. For the last decade and a half, the West has done mostly the opposite and as a result has squandered many of the gains of the 1990s. We still urgently need three Ds—deterrence, democracy, and (economic) development support for our allies in Central and Eastern Europe—in order to recover the project of building Europe whole and free. ♦

Paradox at the Pump

The politics of oil

By Geoffrey Norman

"We can't just drill our way to lower gas prices." As recently as two years ago, that's what the president was saying—with his usual self-assurance—about the nation's dependence on foreign oil and on oil in general. And he wasn't the only one. The line was widely echoed on the political left, where the instinctive feeling is that petroleum is poison. It helped that the opposition, led by archvillainess Sarah Palin, was meanwhile chanting, "Drill, baby, drill."

What more proof was needed?

The conventional wisdom among those who like to believe they never think conventionally was that drilling was futile. It would never produce sufficient quantities of oil to keep up with demand and, anyway, no such amount of oil even existed. The supply of oil was finite, and we had arrived at a point of diminishing returns, called "peak oil." Henceforth, it would require more and more effort and expense to bring up less and less oil.

Thanks for trying to kill off our domestic producers.

No drilling our way out of this impasse! It was time to move on to the next thing and to leave oil and its attendant sins, wickedness, and dirtiness behind. It was the dawning of the age of clean energy. And not a minute too soon, either, if we were to avoid planetary catastrophe.

There turned out to be two problems with this vision of oil and its place in the world. First, it was wrong. We could, and did, drill our way to lower gas prices. There was more oil than we thought, and new technology provided ways to get at it. And second, big events like the peaking of oil production take a long time to develop and impose their effects. Politicians, even the big thinkers among them, operate on shorter time spans. These are known as "election cycles."

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

We all know, by now, that in the United States there has been a tremendous boom in oil production and, hence, its supply. It has come about as the result of techniques known colloquially as "fracking," which were not developed through any long-term federal initiative. And the oil was pumped out of ground that was mostly in private hands. It was all a market phenomenon.

This boom resulted in, among other things, direct employment. Much of the job growth in the long and exceedingly slow recovery following the great recession has occurred in oil drilling states like Texas and North Dakota. This increased U.S. oil production has also fed a worldwide increase in supply that has driven the price of gasoline down dramatically—from the neighborhood of $4 a gallon to just over $2. And this, in turn, has led consumers (many, if not most, of whom are also voters) to feel more optimistic about the economy. Gasoline, after all, is the only price that they can follow every single day merely by looking at the signs along the road as they drive. Cheaper gas means more money for other things. And there are those ancillary effects, like the reduced cost of getting goods to market.

Hard to find anything not to like about increased oil production and cheaper gasoline, especially if you are a working man or woman trying to get by in an era of high unemployment and nonexistent wage growth. For you, the American oil boom is something to celebrate.

Not so much, though, if you belong to that segment of the political class that was, not so long ago, confidently saying that we couldn't "drill our way . . ." You don't necessarily have to say you were wrong. Nobody expects that. President Obama has, in fact, finessed things rhetorically so that he sounds like he is taking credit for the lower price at the pump and all those new jobs. In politics, there is no shame in being shameless.

But the problems don't stop there.

The challenge now will be to square a hatred of oil and all its works with the blessings it brings to the average

NEWSCOM

American. The hatred is real and almost embedded in the DNA of the true believers, and it is nothing new. The Texas oilman has been the stock villain in so many bad movies and books that you can see him coming in the opening scene or the first chapter. He will drive a car that is too big and have a wife/mistress who is too blonde, and he will keep her around mostly as an adornment since his real love is guns. Check out Chris Cooper in *Syriana*, a movie that starred Matt Damon, who went on to top billing in an antifracking number called *Promised Land*. That movie was partially funded with OPEC money, so it is double good news that it bombed. But the loathsome oilman isn't going away as a Hollywood stereotype.

Playing to the oil-is-evil crowd is easy enough for Hollywood, which can afford the occasional film turkey. Positioning for a politician on the left end of the spectrum, though, is trickier. President Obama, for instance, seemed to be taking credit for the oil boom in his recent State of the Union address, boasting, "We believed we could reduce our dependence on foreign oil and protect our planet. And today, America is number one in oil and gas . . . and thanks to lower gas prices and higher fuel standards, the typical family this year should save about $750 at the pump."

But . . . he will veto, he says, any bill that would result in construction of the Keystone pipeline, the purpose of which is to move oil that is going to come out of the ground no matter what he does. So the veto is not meant to stop extraction but as a symbolic defiance of oil.

It is meant to capture the Matt Damon vote.

Shortly after the State of the Union, the president flew to India, then detoured to Saudi Arabia to attend the funeral of that nation's king. Now, Saudi Arabia has been happily holding the United States—and much of the industrialized world—hostage to its abundant oil for decades. There was no spontaneous outpouring of grief in the United States upon the news of King Abdullah's demise. The president did not detour to Riyadh to convey this nation's respect.

It was a gangster funeral, recalling that famous scene toward the climax of *The Godfather*. The racket in this case wasn't prostitution, drugs, the numbers, etc. It was petroleum.

The kingdom and the United States are, in fact, in the early stages of an oil price war, which at least one spokesman for the Sierra Club is hoping the Saudis might win. Paul Rauber wrote recently in the organization's periodical, *Sierra*, that while Congress might back the Keystone pipeline, "Environmentalists are depending on President Barack Obama's veto pen to block the project—at least until the State Department issues its final ruling in the matter. But we have another, even more potent ally in the fight: the House of Saud. Rather than cutting back production in order to stabilize oil prices, the world's largest oil producer is keeping its petroleum taps wide open, hoping to drown upstart competitors in Canada, North Dakota, and Russia in a sea of cheap oil."

No question just which side in this contest the Sierra Club constituency is on. And it is true that while we seem able, at last, to drill our way out of dependence, the Saudis seem willing to pump profligately and sell cheap, hoping to drive the new American producers, using their relatively expensive techniques, out of business. After which, the Saudis can slowly ratchet the price back up into a range where they can comfortably afford the luxuries to which they have become accustomed.

Most Americans probably have had enough of the Saudis and their oil cartel—enough of the bowing and scraping before the oil princes whom we seem obliged to refer to as 'our good friends, the Saudis.'

So the president may have felt he needed to hedge his bets. Given the choice, most Americans would probably prefer that the president tell the Saudis that they do so at their own peril and encourage our own, domestic producers to frack away. They have had enough of the Saudis and their oil cartel. Had enough of that part of the world and the endless pursuit of that statesman's chimera, stability. Enough of the bowing and scraping before the oil princes whom we seem obliged to refer to as "our good friends, the Saudis." This is something the current president has in common with his predecessors. President George W. Bush and his retinue used the locution routinely, and it was enough to make you grind your molars. Of course, Bush also liked to say Americans were "addicted to oil." The insult reveals a lot. What junkie is not humiliatingly, slavishly dependent on his dealer? And why should he not be patronized?

But millions of Americans don't see it like that. Never did. To them, the problem is not that we are "addicted" to oil but that we've had to depend on others—especially hostile nations, like Venezuela and Saudi Arabia—for our supply of it. In this view, oil is good but you need to consider the source.

In fact, there is a sort of composite American voter whose economic satisfaction can be measured roughly by the amount of oil he uses, directly and indirectly, in the

living of his life. He likes having his own car rather than being dependent on mass transit. He likes living out of the city in a house that is heated, if not by an oil-burning furnace, then by one that uses natural gas, the supply of which has boomed thanks to fracking.

He might have a yard the upkeep of which means that he can justify owning some tools that are powered by two-cycle engines. He might have an ATV or a snowmobile, depending on the weather and terrain where he lives. Could be he is a fan of NASCAR, where the burning of gasoline has an almost sacramental aspect.

For this cohort of Americans, consuming oil is a measure of economic health and well-being, not of craven addiction for which they must submit to lectures from their betters in the political class.

Of course, their betters like oil, too, but are ashamed to say so. Imagine if some global council of wise elders were to proclaim that a first step on the way to becoming an oil-free world would be an agreement where the rubes would give up NASCAR and gas hog pickups in exchange for the swells scrapping their private jets and learning how to fly coach. Which side would blink first?

According to Jonathan Allen at *Bloomberg*, "Hillary Clinton took more than 200 privately chartered flights at taxpayer expense during her eight years in the U.S. Senate, sometimes using the jets of corporations and major campaign donors as she racked up $225,756 in flight costs." The money, of course, doesn't matter if you belong to the 1 percent. But all that flying represents a lot of Jet A burned and a lot of carbon dioxide left around, like highway litter, in the upper atmosphere.

But it isn't likely that private jets will be going away, it being a measure of status to own one and lend it out to those less fortunate, like ambitious members of the political class, when you are not using it to swing over to Paris for lunch.

President Obama himself lives a sumptuous oil-fueled life. He made that flight to India on what is, essentially, his private 747. He is chauffeured around in up-armored limos that test very low on the EPA's gas mileage standards. His non-oil-based activity is pretty much confined to riding electric golf carts on the weekend.

The challenge for him, and for politicians whose core constituency believes that we are, indeed, addicted to oil and that the world will not survive this dependency, is to keep those private jets flying and get the price of oil back up to a point where it becomes painful again to fill up the tank on the vehicles—even the fuel-efficient ones—that ordinary souls use to commute to work. And, by the way, somehow do it without snuffing out those first green shoots of economic good news for that middle class that the left element of the political class has so recently discovered and about which it cares so much. Chiefly, of course, because it cares about its own survival.

So far, the president is attempting to have it both ways. He is taking credit for the good economic news brought to us courtesy of fracking. His administration has opened coastal areas from Virginia south to Georgia to offshore exploration and drilling while simultaneously attempting to put a huge area in the high north of Alaska off limits. And then there is that Keystone pipeline, which has become the symbolic battlefield objective in the war between available oil and notional renewables.

The president will be obliged to deal with the political tensions that come with cheap and abundant American oil for only another two years. And in his comfortable retirement he will never need to know the price of a gallon of regular. But the anti-oil constituency will be around long after he is gone. Just as it was around long before he—and fracking—arrived on the scene. This constituency has been prophesying doom from, and for, oil for years now and promising salvation if we can just give up our wicked ways and embrace renewables. Nearly 40 years ago, Amory Lovins, patron saint of renewables, wrote, "Recent research suggests that a largely or wholly solar economy can be constructed in the United States with straightforward soft technologies that are now demonstrated and economic or nearly economic."

We're still waiting, and cheap oil means the waiting will go on that much longer. As the *Boston Globe* reported in late January, "Just 2 of 12 qualified bidders participated in the auction Thursday by the federal Bureau of Ocean Energy Management to sell wind development rights for a 1,161-square-mile swath of ocean about 14 miles south of Martha's Vineyard. Two of the four leases did not receive any bids."

Falling energy prices were blamed for this lack of interest.

But if the age of renewables is still not upon us, cheap oil makes the waiting a whole lot easier to endure. And we may need the extra time to do a little more basic engineering. So far, nobody has been able to explain how hedge fund managers will be able to fly to Switzerland for global economic conferences in wind-powered airplanes. Gliders, perhaps. Or why, despite lavish taxpayer subsidies, GM can't make an electric automobile that succeeds in the marketplace.

But it has been established—empirically and conclusively—that we can "drill our way out of this problem." For millions, what that means is "no problem." But for those in politics who would capture the large, rich, and dedicated anti-oil constituency, it means many more problems. It won't be easy to make people pay $5 a gallon again. And it's impossible to make them pay up and like it. ♦

How to Keep Our Oil Bonanza

Time to counter the Saudis with a tariff?

By Irwin M. Stelzer

We are in a war with Saudi Arabia—and losing. The Saudis aim to regain substantial control of our oil supply by driving from the industry many of our shale-oil-producing frackers who have reduced the power conveyed to the kingdom's rulers by the underground ocean of oil on which their palaces sit. And we seem prepared to let them do just that, by failing to do what is necessary to prevent a reversal of the major strides we have made to get out from under the boot of an avaricious oil cartel. Recall: That cartel is composed largely of countries that use their funds to sponsor, directly or indirectly, terror attacks on our country, and is led by Saudi Arabia, which uses its oil revenue to fund hate-teaching madrassas. As things now stand, if prices remain low we will find ourselves once again waiting for the Saudis to decide how much we should pay for oil, and watch the increased revenue from a price recovery flow into the Saudis' overstuffed coffers, rather than being used to lower taxes here at home on work and risk-taking, providing relief for the middle class about which both parties profess such concern.

The application of our world-class technology to the drilling and production of crude oil produced what has come to be called the fracking revolution. U.S. production of crude oil increased 80 percent between 2008 and the end of last year, or by 4 million barrels per day. That increase is more than the *total* output of any OPEC country with the exception of Saudi Arabia. Until our drillers began extracting oil profitably from places previously thought to be beyond the reach of the drill bit, the Saudis controlled enough of the world's oil production and reserves to have the power to set ceilings and floors within which the price of oil could fluctuate. They didn't always use this power perfectly, but by and large sufficiently to assure crude oil prices—generally around $100 per barrel in recent years—that included significant monopoly profits. Perhaps even more important, the cartel led by Saudi Arabia had its hands on the spigots that could be turned off if some aspect of American foreign policy proved sufficiently distasteful to these Middle East autocracies and their fellow travelers. Of course, U.S. policymakers have long known that, and factor that risk into their policy decisions; witness President Obama's decision to cut short his trip to an important ally in order to pay homage to the departed King Abdullah, after failing to find an opening in his schedule to pay his respects to the fallen satirists and Jews of Paris.

Fracking so increased our domestic oil supply that OPEC's pricing power could survive only if the Saudis made proportionate reductions in their own output. This, the kingdom decided not to do, for two reasons. First, its fellow cartelists, far more dependent on current oil revenues than the cash-rich Saudis, refused to cut their own output to bolster the impact of any Saudi cutback. Second, the Saudis decided to take the long view and liberate themselves from the ongoing threat of new supplies coming from the United States and elsewhere, by keeping prices low enough, long enough to eliminate higher-cost, less well-heeled competitors. In a drawn-out price war, the warrior with the lowest production cost and huge currency reserves—the Saudis' stash is estimated at $740 billion—will surely be around long after higher-cost producers have been driven from business, especially those, like many frackers, dependent on bank credit and on repeated infusions of debt and equity capital.

Longtime Saudi oil minister Ali al-Naimi, who has retained his post under King Abdullah's successor, insists in his public statements that the production cutbacks needed to prevent a further fall in prices, and to bring them back to levels more acceptable to the kingdom's rulers, should come at the expense of the world's higher-cost producers. That is a signal to his cartel colleagues to hang in there until the Americans sheath their drill bits. A pricing assault such as the Saudis have launched, followed by the clear intention and ability to recoup losses after competitors have been eliminated, is regarded by many economists and lawyers as predatory pricing, illegal in this country.

The near- and longer-term course of oil prices is difficult

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard *and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

to predict; witness how many forecasters failed to foresee the more-than 60 percent drop in crude prices in a mere seven months. Most experts are guessing that prices will remain relatively low for the balance of this year and probably into the next, notwithstanding recent upticks. OPEC is expecting an oversupply of about two million barrels per day, more than 2 percent of world output, in part because it will keep its valves open, and in part because some cash-hungry shale producers can still cover operating costs.

Slower growth in China and virtual stagnation in the eurozone will dampen demand. And, at least so far, there are few signs that the use of energy is rising significantly in response to lower prices: Even though the fleets of SUVs flying off dealer lots will be hitting the roads, their impact is likely to be offset as the industry gears up to meet the draconian new fleet-wide Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE) standard of 54.5 miles per gallon by 2025.

With demand unlikely to grow enough to bail out higher-cost producers, the lower prices that are likely to prevail will do what lower prices always do: squeeze higher-cost producers. America's frackers are not the only producers the Saudis have in their sights as they battle to regain control of crude prices. Major oil companies operating in the North Sea, afflicted by high taxes and the high costs of maintaining their old fields, are also finding it impossible to maintain the level of activity that $100 oil supported. Experts have told the *Wall Street Journal* that some 1.4 billion barrels currently being considered for investment might just remain where they are—under the North Sea—unless prices rise substantially.

But the Saudis' main target is the U.S. fracking industry. Schlumberger and Halliburton, suppliers to the oil industry, report that spending by their North American customers is dropping by 25 percent or more. Martin Craighead, CEO of Baker Hughes, which late last year accepted a $27.9 billion takeover from Halliburton, says the 7 percent drop in oil rigs working in America has taken the total to the lowest level in three years. In North Dakota, the second-largest oil-producing state behind only Texas, some 47 rigs have been idled, a drop of 25 percent. Time is running out on U.S. producers. The Saudis, of course, are not entirely unaffected: They have idled one rig.

When the Saudis went to war against shale, they were guessing that prices of around $70 per barrel would cause a slowdown in production. They undoubtedly are surprised that some producers say they can keep *existing* wells running at prices as low as $30 per barrel. But absent further technological breakthroughs there will be little investment in new wells at current prices. Indeed, even if prices do recover to close to $100, investors, seeing that the Saudis mean business when they say they and their colleagues will eliminate threats to their control of oil supplies, will find safer places for their money. Once the victim of successful predation, twice shy about taking on the predator.

This means that the Saudis are winning what turns out to be a longer war than they had hoped. This, even though they have to add the cost of the exorbitant welfare state that bribes dissidents into acquiescence, to their low cost of production, which means that in the long run they probably need $90 oil if the regime is to survive. But that's the long run. Saudi reserves are sufficient to get them through the short run, and in the long run most frackers will be dead.

The policy implications of their demise for our economy, and for national security, are profound. Lower crude prices have transferred wealth from bad guys like Russia and Iran, and from unstable countries such as Nigeria, which depends on oil for 95 percent of its exports and 75 percent of government revenues, to American and European consumers. These prices have deprived Iran of funds it badly needs to keep its economy functioning and its nuclear program rolling, increased pressure on the sanctions-hit Russian economy, and if sustained will put pressure on Saudi Arabia to think again about the generosity of its funding of hate-spewing Wahhabi clerics (it was, remember, mostly Saudi men who took down the World Trade Center).

Meanwhile, that wealth transfer has been a boon to consumers, who are using their newfound bonanza to shore up their balance sheets and to indulge in a bit of discretionary spending. Motorists can expect to pay an average of $2.33 per gallon to fill their tanks this year, about $1 per gallon and $750 per household less than in 2014. Throw in an additional $750 for those who heat their homes with oil, and the savings move from nontrivial to significant. True, thousands of oil workers and shareholders, those who serve beer and sandwiches to roustabouts in North Dakota and upscale meals in Houston, and banks that lend to smaller producers are hurt by the fallout. But there is little doubt that in America the winners far outnumber the losers.

Unfortunately, the wealth transfer from bad guys to us deserving consumers will be reversed if the Saudis win this war. Which they will, unless we take as long a view as the Saudis. In the long run it is in the interest of the American economy and national security to keep the power of the Saudis and their colleagues over us at a minimum. That power cannot be reduced to zero, except in the unlikely event that oil follows what seems to be the place environmentalists intend for coal—into the dustbin of history, with the wind always blowing and the sun always shining. But that power can be reduced if we develop policies that help to keep the American oil industry growing and profitable, even at short-run cost to consumers. "Defense," said Adam Smith when considering restrictions on free trade, "is of much more importance than opulence," and a bit of

insurance against oil supply disruptions and price spikes is of more importance than a few cents on the price of gasoline. Especially when lower prices today, if they devastate our oil producers, mean higher prices in the long run.

This brings me, with considerable reluctance, to suggest a protective tariff; protective not of the special interest of the oil industry but of the national interest, with the oil industry merely a collateral beneficiary of a policy that might be of significant benefit to us all. The question is not whether a tariff on imported oil would create some undesirable consequences: It will. The question is whether it would create fewer undesirable consequences than a return to the days of unchecked Saudi power, especially if the regime comes under increasing pressure to give kindlier consideration to the needs of Iran than it has been inclined to do in the past.

A tariff could be set so as to vary inversely with the price of oil. It could set a floor of perhaps $65 per barrel, low enough to encourage continued improvement in the efficiency of the American industry, high enough to allow its survival in the face of Saudi cuts below that level. The industry rule of thumb is that a $10 rise in the price paid for crude oil in the United States would result in something like a 24-cent increase in gasoline prices. Is that a great deal of what Smith called "opulence" to give up, especially since the lower price we now enjoy would only be available in the short run if the Saudis regain pricing power? And it may well be that such a tariff could be coupled with a termination of subsidies to producers of oil, gas, nuclear power, wind, solar, and other energy sources—all of which would benefit from the tariff—leaving U.S. taxpayers about even. In any event, the tariff should hit higher-income owners of energy-consuming big cars and houses harder than families living in smaller houses and driving smaller cars, a form of redistribution, being based on energy prices, that even the sturdiest conservatives might find tolerable.

The Saudis would hate it. And we are told that we need their help with security operations and other matters. But encircled as they are by Iran and its proxies, they need us even more than we need them, making their security services unlikely to pout, sulk, and refuse to share information merely because we are protecting our oil industry from their oil policies.

Better ways of preserving our current respite from enslavement to a group of oil producers that do not wish us, or our wells, well are welcome. ♦

Thomas Cromwell (Ben Miles) and Anne Boleyn (Lydia Leonard) in 'Wolf Hall' (Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 2014)

The King's Good Servant

Thomas Cromwell and the price of loyalty. BY J.J. SCARISBRICK

Thomas Cromwell
The Untold Story of Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant
by Tracy Borman
Atlantic Monthly, 464 pp., $30

For eight hectic, bloody years (1532-40), Thomas Cromwell dominated English political life. Prodigiously hardworking—he must have slept even less than did Margaret Thatcher—hyper-astute, and undoubtedly driven by a profound vision of what England could and (he believed) should become, he made a more enduring mark on the heart, mind, and face of his homeland than did perhaps any minister of the crown before or since. And because he left behind enormously more paper than any previous royal minister—a huge correspondence, memos galore, draft statutes, "remembrances" (to-do lists), etc.—we can watch him at work day by day and almost hour by hour.

That is what this accomplished book does. Its subtitle, *The Untold Story of Henry VIII's Most Faithful Servant*, which one suspects was the product of considerable head-scratching, invites the retort that, to be fair, others have told—or have tried to tell—the story before, notably R.B. Merriman in two fat volumes published in 1902, and several others since. And even as this book was being written, Hilary Mantel was publishing her highly acclaimed, fiercely opinionated historical novels with Thomas Cromwell as the centerpiece.

What Tracy Borman has to offer is a long-overdue update on Merriman and his successors, and a much surer guide than Hilary Mantel provides. Borman has immersed herself in the sources, disentangled numerous knots,

ASSOCIATED PRESS

J.J. Scarisbrick, professor emeritus of history at the University of Warwick, is the author of Henry VIII.

and let her dramatis personae speak for themselves. Her Cromwell is a complex character: cultivated and witty, devoted to his wife and family, capable of remarkable acts of loyalty to friends and kindness to individuals (especially widows in distress); yet power-hungry, paranoid, and ruthless, and a craven servant to his increasingly paranoid and ruthless master, Henry VIII.

He feathered his nest greedily, salting away huge wealth in cash and amassing an enormous amount of property. He masterminded the judicial murders of Thomas More and John Fisher, the only cardinal ever to be martyred. He hired assassins in unsuccessful attempts to get rid of another cardinal, Reginald Pole, who would become archbishop of Canterbury but was then a fugitive in Italy. With Henry VIII's eager connivance, Cromwell also procured the first-ever execution for treason of a woman (one Elizabeth Barton, who had rashly prophesied Henry's fall) and of an English queen, Anne Boleyn, who was beheaded on trumped-up charges, together with her brother and four close friends.

He had monks and friars butchered, and was merciless in hunting down opponents, real or imagined, of the Henrician regime. By the time he himself was cast into the Tower of London, there were probably more political prisoners there, male and female (including Reginald Pole's mother), than that grim prison had ever held.

Tracy Borman unravels the story of Cromwell's rise to power skillfully. I think she gets Anne Boleyn right, even if the claim that she was a devout Protestant is a bit hard to swallow. Cromwell's constant battle with other ministers, like the duke of Norfolk, who sneered at him for his low birth and fiercely resented his power, and Stephen Gardiner, bishop of Winchester ("Wily Winchester"), who loathed him for his assault on the old religion, is vividly dissected. As is the crucial role those men played in bamboozling a capricious, Stalin-like king into suddenly dumping Cromwell. They got him with wild charges of treason and radical heresy—just before he could get them into the Tower.

Cromwell was there only a few days, and his was a ghastly end: the once-mighty minister sobbing "mercy, mercy, mercy," pleading "piteously on my knees prostrate . . . with heavy heart and trembling hand . . . a most miserable prisoner and poor slave"—but to no avail. On the day he was executed, a bloated, unrepentant Henry married his fifth wife, the niece of the duke of Norfolk. The latter's victory was complete, but only for a while: That niece lost her head within 24 months, and Norfolk himself was in the Tower when Henry died.

So far, so good. The trouble is that this is essentially the inside story: the story of infighting and the cruel realities of Tudor politics. Borman is not

Thomas Cromwell by Hans Holbein the Younger (1532-33)

interested in the larger picture. Leave aside the fact that theology is not her strong suit, or that she says such things as that Henry promised to build "many new churches and cathedrals" with the spoils of the monasteries (which he certainly did not) and that their lands were sold off to "nobles" (which is very simple-minded). Surely it is at least worth remarking on the cultural cost of the often-magnificent churches and other buildings that were torn down or gunpowdered, the countless statues and stained glass windows that were smashed, and the precious libraries that were gutted.

The Reformation that Cromwell and his master promoted did much to cut off England from the rich culture of the High Renaissance. In many ways, it was an enemy of it.

Sixty years ago, the Cambridge historian Geoffrey Elton threw a hand grenade, so to speak, into Tudor history with his radical reassessment of Thomas Cromwell's place in England's political evolution. His boldest claim was that Cromwell wrought an administrative revolution by taking "government" out of the royal household and giving it an independent bureaucratic existence, not least by setting up new "courts" (i.e., departments of state) to deal with revenues generated largely by Henry's assault on the church: It was a decisive move, Elton claimed, from "medieval" to "modern."

Elton then went on to argue that Cromwell was committed to "modern" centralization and had a "modern" view of the power of statute—namely, that it can do anything, including declare a king head of his church and abolish monasticism, tackle poverty and urban renewal, direct the nation's trade and agriculture, and so on. There had been nothing quite like it before, Elton claimed, and would not be again until the 19th century.

The first part of "Eltonism" is the weakest, the most overstated. The great departments of state—the Chancery and the Exchequer, for instance—had long since moved out of the royal household into freestanding roles. Cromwell's innovations really did not amount to much. But the second argument is more compelling. Although Thomas More beat Cromwell in introducing the first Poor Law in English history, Cromwell undoubtedly had a remarkable grasp of what central government could and should achieve. Curiously, Borman cites the first part of Eltonism (briefly) and has apparently swallowed it whole, but does not focus at all on the second, the one that really matters.

So if you want the inside story of Thomas Cromwell—elegantly done and without the Hilary Mantel histrionics—this is the book for you. But if you want the larger picture, one that shows Cromwell's place in English history, you must look elsewhere. To be fair, Borman would probably agree with that verdict. ♦

B&A

Heads Over Heels

Decapitation: the good old days.

BY JAMES BOWMAN

To judge by what is fittingly called the "head shot" of Frances Larson on the jacket of her book, she is a young and pretty woman with a remarkably long neck. If one were a headsman—that is, if headsmen were still plying their ancient trade, outside the desert wastes of Iraq and Syria and Saudi Arabia—one might well be licking one's lips while thumbing the blade of one's axe.

All the more so, perhaps, as *Severed* must be the definitive work on the detachment of heads from bodies in the pre-ISIS era (jihadist beheadings are only cursorily treated). But if Larson's head, so precariously seated, is filled with horrified thoughts on the subject, you wouldn't know it from the dull tone of clinical detachment she employs, or the muddy half-tone illustrations that save this volume from accusations of tastelessness—and the publishers from unnecessary expense.

In the days when public executions were a form of entertainment, beheadings were a rare treat outside of post-Revolutionary France, reserved for the most aristocratic of criminals. Common folk had to make do with hanging, which took longer and presumably involved more death-agony for the victim, though that was sometimes disputed. After the advent of the guillotine, science—or what went under that name—devoted some of its investigatory zeal to an unsuccessful attempt to determine how long the victim retained consciousness after the presumptively fatal blade had fallen.

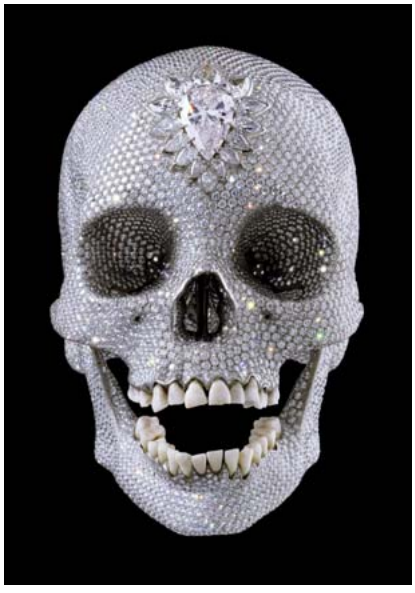
Frances Larson generally disapproves of such 19th-century scientific curiosity, which also manifested itself in such pseudosciences as craniometry and phrenology, and of harvesting in its name, as European imperialists once did, vast numbers of skulls from their subject races. Her own curiosity is thus made safe by a *cordon sanitaire* of academic jargon about imperial "objectification" of such people. The reader in search of titillation must also sit through a certain amount of psychologizing about the dehumanizing processes that typically take place in war. Who knew?

There is no indication whether or not a World War II sailor named Thomas J. "Horrible Swede" Larson was any relation of the author, but he seems to have had an unusual degree of self-awareness about his principal avocation when he wrote that "a guy is pretty far gone when he begins to collect enemy skulls." In some ways, the most memorable of the book's illustrations is a photograph from *Life* (1944) of a girl with a smile and ribbon in her hair pensively regarding a "Jap" skull sent home to her as a souvenir from New Guinea by her naval boyfriend. Yet it is interesting, really, because of its rarity. Along with the contemporaneous presentation by a congressman to President Roosevelt of a letter opener fashioned from a Japanese arm bone, it created such a public outcry that there was an official crackdown on souvenir-taking—and photographing. Like the disciplining of General Patton for slapping a shell-shock victim, this seems to foreshadow our more tender-minded attitude of today, which, along with a stern disapproval of the more unabashed curiosity of our ancestors, is everywhere present in this volume.

To that attitude, and "curiosities" like the detached heads of foreigners, we owe the foundation of many of the modern, but now more tasteful, museums in which we are fortunate enough to while away so many happy hours. Larson suggests that we had better enjoy them while we can, however, since the recent return of Maori skulls harvested in New Zealand for the edification of Europeans and Americans is said to have led to the re-sacralization of museums or parts of museums in that country, making them into places not for "curiosities" but for the descendants of the deceased and dismembered to venerate their restored bones.

"The very definition of a museum is shifting as people are given the space to honor their dead," Larson writes. And that, I suppose, is a development to be welcomed, although I would have found a history of that evolution of public sensitivity more interesting than the dreary catalogue of Stakhanovite skull-collecting by 19th-century

Severed
A History of Heads Lost and Heads Found
by Frances Larson
Liveright, 336 pp., $27.95



Damien Hirst's 'For the Love of God' (2007)

WENN / NEWSCOM

James Bowman is a resident scholar at the Ethics and Public Policy Center and the author of Honor: A History *and* Media Madness: The Corruption of Our Political Culture.

empire-builders that *Severed* at times threatens to become.

Not that a compensating dullness for its potentially overexciting subject matter prevents the book from offering many fascinating facts to the merely curious. One thing I learned is that, in the head-happy 19th century, Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and heaven knows how many other great men of the period (and before) were posthumously beheaded in order to supply a private and illegal demand for the skulls of geniuses. The motivation for head-collecting alone makes for a fascinating bit of social history, especially when contrasted with the eventful history of the posthumously decapitated, but possibly supposititious, head of Oliver Cromwell, pictured as it is here being held up, seemingly on a stick, in 1949 by Canon Horace Wilkinson. (His family owned the head for a century-and-a-half before it was finally buried in the chapel at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, in 1960.)

We also learn, though hardly for the first time, that much of the suspicion with which science was regarded before the last century was due to early scientists' ghoulish interest in salvaged bits of dead people, which they acquired by employing the services of "resurrection men" who made a living out of plundering graveyards. Larson omits, however, any account of the two Irishmen, William Burke and William Hare, who, in Edinburgh in 1828, did much to inflame public hysteria against would-be students of anatomy by killing 16 of their specimens *before* they could reach the cemetery.

Today, there is apparently no shortage of public-spirited types willing to donate their bodies to science, and the mixture of affection and reverence felt by student physicians for the cadavers provided for their education makes for one of Larson's most interesting, if least sensational, passages. It suggests that she could have done without the attention given to a publicity-seeker like Damien Hirst, pictured at age 16 grinning next to the head of a dead man in a morgue in Leeds. Oddly, there is no mention of that artist's *For the Love of God* (2007), consisting of a human skull to which are glued 8,601 polished diamonds. It is not the skull, apparently a relic of the head-hunting days of 200 years ago and picked up in a shop in Islington, but the diamonds that are said to have been "ethically sourced."

The contemporary equivalent of the head-crazies of the 19th century is those who seek a different, if even more elusive, sort of immortality—those who have their heads frozen in the hope of being thawed out and attached to more serviceable bodies, either mechanical or organic, at such time as medical science shall have advanced to the point of being able to do such an appalling thing. I would have liked a bit more about this, but Larson does point out some of the ways in which the owners of these disembodied heads might not quite have thought through their plans for self-resurrection. If *Severed* could have used more of this and other matters that its author must have seen as yielding too much to the morbid curiosity of the first head-collectors, at least it shows that she's got a good head on her shoulders. ♦

B&A

Love Thy Neighbor

Being a good citizen and good Christian at the same time. **BY JOSEPH LOCONTE**

If liberal and secular-minded people want a glimpse into the dark and baleful agenda of American evangelical Christians, they should read this book. What they'll find may shock many of them to the core.

The old model of evangelical attempts to transform American society, Greg Forster observes, focused obsessively on politics: to promote Bible-based morality through the ballot box. But that approach is effectively dead. "The time is ripe," he writes, "for a new model of Christian citizenship to emerge." So what model does Forster, a political scientist and program director at the Kern Family Foundation, have in mind? Evangelistic crusades? Calls for national repentance? Perhaps the creation of Squads to Promote Virtue and Suppress Vice, modeled on those in Saudi Arabia?

Joy for the World
How Christianity Lost Its Cultural Influence and Can Begin Rebuilding It
by Greg Forster
Crossway, 320 pp., $18.99

Far from it. Evangelicals have squandered their cultural capital, Forster writes, because they have tried to reclaim a standing in American culture they never had. The American Founding was a mix of fragmented religious (and not-so-religious) voices: "Many Americans resent evangelicals," he says, "because they perceive us as thinking we have a right to rule them." What is required, instead, is something as old as the Christian church itself, what Forster calls "generous neighborliness." By this he means the cultivation of Christian citizens who look for ways to sacrificially serve their neighbors, to solve common problems, and to help their communities flourish: "How can we be the kind of neighbors who make others say, 'I can't imagine this place without you?'"

Joseph Loconte, associate professor of history at the King's College in New York, is the author of the forthcoming A Hobbit, a Wardrobe and a Great War: How J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis Rediscovered Faith, Friendship, and Heroism in the Cataclysm of 1914–1918.

Scary stuff? For those who cannot imagine an evangelical as a good neighbor, Forster's study is a bracing challenge to abandon prejudices about the ultimate aims of those who take the Bible seriously. His main audience, though, is fellow believers: Forster offers them a vision of Christian citizenship rooted in Scripture and the best practices of the historic church.

At the same time, this hopeful book is informed by a deep grasp of the nature of the modern democratic state. Elsewhere in his writings, Forster has grappled with the challenges of religious pluralism and the quest for a just society. Trained as a political philosopher—he earned his doctorate at Yale—he has worked as an activist and written important works on politics, education, and religious freedom. Indeed, few evangelical authors today have thought as carefully—and wisely—about the civic and political obligations of Christians in American society.

Norman Vincent Peale (1966)

American believers need to realize, Forster writes, that they are members of a God-given civilization, called to play a constructive role in all of its cultural activities—politics, economics, education, arts, sciences, and so on. If they insist only on condemning what they don't like, they will cut themselves off from a shared cultural life: "I think the failure of the American church to affirm the goodness of civilizational life," he declares, "is our greatest failing today." Nevertheless, he has no progressive illusions about the condition of Western civilization or American society. Jesus sent his followers into a state of exile—into the wreckage of a deeply fallen and dysfunctional world. This is the permanent condition of the church in history. One of the tragedies of the Christian church is its tendency either to forget this fact—to accommodate its beliefs and practices to the surrounding culture—or to retreat into a monastic zone of isolation. As Forster warns:

> We must keep alive God's message and ways, but we cannot think of ourselves as a separate civilization. Because the church has a mission within every human civilization, we must build godly lives within our home civilization rather than trying to cultivate a separate one. That means working hard to contribute to the well-being and flourishing of our civilization. Otherwise we're not loving our neighbors.

One realm of civilizational life that needs greater Christian influence, he argues, is the economy, because the economy is critical to everything that happens in society. Many Americans have "debilitating moral doubts" about our economic system. Why, he asks, should we work hard and play by the rules in an economy where scoundrels succeed and slackers get a free ride? Liberals and conservatives tend to view the economy in purely materialistic terms. They make growth, security, and prosperity ends in themselves. They exalt enlightened self-interest. They tell us that productive work is the fundamental source of human dignity.

But for Christians, Forster insists, this materialist view is a lie. The modern economic man is prone to workaholism, envy, greed, anxiety, and a host of other ills. The great cultural task for Christians is to become, broadly speaking, innovative entrepreneurs: people who are not only more productive in their work than are their unbelieving neighbors, but also more creative, generous, honest, and humane: "The whole life of a person has to turn away from selfishness and serve God and neighbor." Like the early Protestant reformers, Christians must truly regard their work as a divine calling, a crucible for character and a conduit through which to benefit and bless those around them.

> Our neighbors won't find our message plausible until they see, in practice, how hard work and humanely productive companies are a blessing. Ordinary cultural contact with Christians is how that will happen, but only after Christians themselves change the way they live.

Why, in the end, have American Christians lost so much of their cultural influence? James Hunter's *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (2010) created a stir by chastising Christians for their populism and failure to think strategically about the centers of cultural power. But Hunter is hobbled by his heavily sociological approach and needlessly dismissive tone. Forster's response is a more generous and mature reflection on the nature of civic and political life. Most important, he anchors his arguments in a Christian critique of the double-edged nature of human culture—its achievements as well as its darker tendencies.

Joy for the World reminds believers that they cannot be agents of transformation unless they, themselves, have

been transformed by what Forster calls "the joy of God." Here is a fresh recasting of historic Christian teaching: The grace of Jesus permeates every aspect of human life. This is not, Forster emphasizes, a technique or a cultural strategy; it is a supernatural thing, the flourishing of the person in mind, heart, and life in the power of God's Spirit: "Only the supernatural joy of God in its totality can really make us distinct, because only the Spirit can create it."

Forster stands squarely in a distinguished stream of Christian reformers that includes Erasmus and his "philosophy of Christ," Luther's "theology of the cross," Locke's "Gospel of peace," and Wesley's "recovery of the divine nature." Each returned to the core message of Jesus, the Word that helped to rescue and renew a society in crisis. "A true Christian lives and labors on earth not for himself but for his neighbor," wrote Luther. "Therefore the whole spirit of his life impels him to do even that which he needs not do, but which is profitable and necessary for his neighbor." Forster insists that "the joy of God" not only offers the surest path to a society—and a civilization—where peace and flourishing are everyday realities; it represents the longing of the human heart, the place where the City of Man is finally and permanently transformed into the City of God. ♦

B&A

'Bondage' Revisited

The novel that has everything except critical respect.

BY JONATHAN LEAF

Critics, often, are merely bad historians. And just as poor recorders of the past repeat tattered untruths about Christopher Columbus or the Industrial Revolution without bothering to investigate their warmed-over gaffes and inaccuracies, so do arbiters of literature echo the nonsensical opinions of earlier decades. I think of this whenever I pick up W. Somerset Maugham's *Of Human Bondage*, which was published exactly one century ago. Still among the novels most read by educated people, and surely among the most powerful ever composed, it is almost never taught in schools or colleges, and it is derided by the intelligentsia. What is it about *Of Human Bondage* that appeals to so many—and yet is disdained so widely?

Some of the problem is that there is a great deal of accumulated error about the novel and its author. Born in 1874, Somerset Maugham had one of the longest writing careers on record. When his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897), appeared, Maugham was a rival and contemporary of Rudyard Kipling. Not quite a generation later—after Maugham had become the first playwright to have four plays running simultaneously in the West End—*Of Human Bondage* was recommended for American publication by an unknown editorial assistant named Sinclair Lewis. Thirty-two years after *that*, when Maugham's superb short story collection *Creatures of Circumstance* came out in 1947, he was competing with John Cheever, and he was publishing essay collections and monographs up through the late 1950s. He died in 1965, five years after Albert Camus and four years before Jack Kerouac.

W. Somerset Maugham (1912)

MARCH OF TIME / THE LIFE PICTURE COLLECTION / GETTY IMAGES

Such tenure offered him time in which to make money and enemies, and he acquired a mother lode of each. One particularly fierce band of foes was composed of the great number of Communist fellow-travelers, the set that dominated tastemaking during the interwar period. The cause of their enmity lies in a now-forgotten but prescient Maugham novel entitled *Christmas Holiday* (1939). Its story concerns a young Englishman on vacation in Paris who runs into an old friend, a journalist who wishes to be the secret police chief in a future Communist regime. Unabashedly bloodthirsty, this would-be Dzerzhinsky predicts that a barbaric war is coming and believes that, while he places himself behind the Soviet cause, the differences between the Nazis and Bolsheviks are largely semantic. Motivated in equal parts by resentment and desire for power, this journalist is depicted too honestly to have not gravely wounded the feelings of his confreres.

The most influential attack on Maugham was a withering 1946 piece by Edmund Wilson in the *New Yorker*. Yet while the article has had a vast influence, it is also a compendium of errors. Wilson had two prompts: First, Maugham had just given an address to Congress and had provided the members with an inscribed copy of *Of Human Bondage*. And second, he had permitted the publication of a revised version of an early novel, *Then and Now*, which he had written in his mid-20s and rightly dismissed as inferior. Wilson, however, reviewed it as a new

Jonathan Leaf is a playwright in New York.

work—and something that no person of Maugham's maturity should have written. Still devout in his Marxism, Wilson explained that, while many people had told him that he ought to take Maugham "seriously," he could not, citing Maugham's (obviously correct) observation that no one read Marcel Proust any longer for his incorporation of Henri Bergson's philosophy but rather for his characters and social portraiture. Wilson wrote off Maugham as unworthy of serious status in literature, and yet, in his diaries, he admitted what was implicit in his review: He had never actually *read* any of Maugham's major novels.

Leslie Howard, Bette Davis in 'Of Human Bondage' (1934)

EVERETT COLLECTION

Maugham had few writer-friends, and few of them stepped forward to defend him. The damage was done—and it was magnified by the animus of the modernists and aesthetes.

The plaints of the modernists are akin to those rendered against Bach in his lifetime: Maugham had written in the same period as Virginia Woolf and James Joyce; was it not an indictment that had he not adopted their avant-garde methods? More compelling is the claim that he lacked a good style. One problem with this, though, is that Maugham had a number of styles. Most of his plays are imitative of Oscar Wilde, but his short stories are usually written in the third person and are meant to be read in a single sitting. As such, they aim for maximum readability and deliberately employ some of the clichés to which their characters would have been unconsciously drawn in their thoughts and expressions. By contrast, several of his novels, written in his own voice, are sententious and elegant, dressed up in part by the suggestions of his friend Edmund Gosse.

For *Of Human Bondage*, Maugham used a style that he never employed again: Purposefully avoiding adjectives, he aimed for supreme transparency and directness, a modern evocation of Caesar's *Commentaries* brought to an account of Parisian garrets and tatty East End restaurants. This is a novel that has been lived. Although description is kept to a minimum, we see and know the central characters, Philip and Mildred, as much as any in fiction. Philip's masochism, which draws him towards the rapacious waitress who takes his money and repeatedly humiliates him, is depicted without reserve. The hero's skin is pulled off by an author who wishes to instruct his readers and steer them away from his own missteps.

Most critics have focused on the influence of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, in the sense that this is a coming-of-age story. But a more profound, if less obvious, influence is Leo Tolstoy. Like Tolstoy, Maugham had been orphaned in childhood and sent to live with relatives, had seen an older sibling die young, had been trained to read and speak French over and above his native tongue, and, in early manhood, had taken up an occupation other than literature. These experiences gave Maugham what they gave Tolstoy: keen ambition, an ever-present consciousness of tragedy, deep feeling for the importance of precision in writing, and a broad experience of life apart from the narrowness of the literary world.

For Maugham, his first calling had been medicine—and it is to medicine that his hero eventually turns after an unsuccessful attempt to paint in Paris. Familiar with medical settings, Maugham describes London clinics faithfully and accurately, just as Tolstoy used his own time as an officer in the Russian Army to inform his fiction. Maugham emulated Tolstoy in other ways as well: Recognizing that a third-person narrator who guides the reader directly may provide a stronger authorial voice, he followed Tolstoy's example in freely violating the principle of "show, don't tell." Like Tolstoy, Maugham also deliberately avoided simile and metaphor; literary artifice is stripped away.

The first section of *Of Human Bondage* concerns Philip's youth: We see him orphaned, and learn about his clubfoot. Then we step alongside him as a painfully self-conscious student in a public school, at a university in Germany, and as an artist in Paris. His deformity is a recasting of the struggles Maugham faced in these same locales because of his childhood stammer and his homosexuality. The hero's indigence as a bohemian parallels Maugham's own youthful poverty in Paris; a female friend's suicide in the novel is closely based on the suicide of an older brother. A boy to whom Philip is attracted at school, whose last name is Rose, appears to have been based on an actual boy Maugham knew—also named Rose.

The second section deals with Philip's relationship with Mildred. It is nearly certain that this recounts a self-destructive relationship that Maugham himself had with a man—and Mildred is described in androgynous terms. But this shift hardly minimizes the relationship's impact, or its effectiveness in warning others naturally drawn to cruel and indifferent lovers. Here, too, Maugham follows Tolstoy's advice that fiction should have a didactic function. The final section depicts Philip's return to life after his affair with Mildred; it is the one section that is not especially autobiographical and is probably the weakest.

Of Human Bondage persuades us of a real and particular series of places, and draws us towards an intensely realized group of characters. It also pulls us into a realm where the unconscious mind's most intimate fears and desires are alive, providing at once quotidian detail and something almost mythical. That's what great novels do. ♦

B&A

Order on the Court

The roar of the crowd—and the end of tennis?

BY DANIEL ROSS GOODMAN

Novak Djokovic at Wimbledon (2014)

Every generation has its geniuses, but some endowments of genius are greater than others. As Harold Bloom once wrote, we can assume that we'll see another Stravinsky or Louis Armstrong, a Picasso or Matisse, a Proust or even a James Joyce. But "to hope for a Dante or Shakespeare, a J.S. Bach or Mozart, a Michelangelo or Leonardo, is to ask for too much, since gifts that enormous are very rare." Little did the world of Renaissance Italy know that the likes of Michelangelo, Leonardo, and Raphael would never grace this planet again.

Do we know genius when we see it? I don't know. But I do know that when we witness what may be once-in-a-generation genius, we should treasure these glimpses, for we can never be sure if we will see anything comparable again. As in art, so in tennis: The 1970s had Borg, Connors, and McEnroe, and the 1990s had Sampras, Agassi, and Courier. But the tennis world has never seen a trio the likes of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, and Novak Djokovic before, and it may never see such a terrific triad again.

Federer's superlatives have already been limned by the late David Foster Wallace, and Nadal's talents have been widely appreciated for the better part of a decade. Djokovic, however, has not yet had his moment in the sun. For various reasons—lack of sustained success, a hard-to-pronounce name, an occasionally abrasive, McEnroe-esque temperament—the "Djoker" has yet to be fully embraced by fans. He doesn't have the puissant panache of Nadal, nor does his game possess the balletic beauty of Federer; but Djokovic has every shot in the book, is a shade quicker than Nadal, is more consistent from the baseline than Federer, and has the greatest return game since Andre Agassi. Indeed, Djokovic may be the most talented of them all. After upending Federer in an epic Wimbledon final this past summer—and in spite of his anomalous lapse against Kei Nishikori at the U.S. Open—the Djoker is on the cusp of surpassing tennis's Bach (Nadal) and Mozart (Federer). Now, fresh off his fifth Australian Open championship, Djokovic is poised to become the tempestuous Beethoven of tennis—exactly at the moment, though, when we may be losing the opportunity to appreciate his genius.

In recent tournaments, the United States Tennis Association has permitted increased crowd noise during matches. Tennis, it is said, needs to become more "fan friendly," and one of the ways it can do so is by allowing more noise during matches. "Let us have crowd noise during matches," so the thinking goes, "let us be like all other sports." As it happens, while many players are perturbed by the development, the mercurial Djokovic supports it. He feeds off the fans in a fashion not seen since John McEnroe. But while allowing more mid-match

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Daniel Ross Goodman is a writer and rabbinical student in New York.

crowd noise could benefit Djokovic, in an ironic twist, it would also detract from fans' ability to appreciate him. Increased mid-match noise would deprive tennis of the one element that makes it unique.

Tennis is no mere game; more than any other sport, it resembles art. Spectators observe the sport in serene silence: It is the only sport that does not allow crowd noise during in-play competition—my apologies to golf, but a game in which the greatest amount of physical exertion consists of gently strolling along finely manicured lawns cannot be considered a "sport"—and it is this very absence of noise that, like attending a symphony or an art exhibition or reading a book in a library, endows tennis with a mesmerizing, meditative quality. It is not for nothing that tennis was the sport of Nabokov, and of Humbert Humbert. It was also the sport of Shakespeare and *Henry V*'s Hal, Philip Roth's Neil and Brenda in *Goodbye, Columbus*, and John Updike's concupiscent pairs in *Couples*.

In *Henry V*, Prince Hal ridicules the Dauphin's gift of a container of tennis balls with this well-placed cross-court shot:

> *When we have matched our rackets to these balls,*
> *We will in France, by God's grace, play a set . . .*
> *Tell him he hath made a match with such a wrangler*
> *That all the courts of France will be disturbed*
> *With chases.*

The way in which Updike and Nabokov wrote about tennis almost made it seem as if the sport was created for writers. Here is Updike describing a seemingly simple exchange of groundstrokes and serves:

> Sheen skated on the green composition court. Angela served; her serves, though accurate, lacked pace and sat up pleasantly fat to hit. Georgene's return, one of her determined firm forehands, streaked toward Piet as he crouched at the net; anger had hurried her stroke slightly and the ball whacked the net at the height of his groin and fell dead on her side.
>
> "Fifteen love," Angela called and prepared, on tiptoe, to serve again.
>
> Piet changed courts. . . . Angela, having laughed and lost rhythm, double-faulted.
>
> "Fifteen all," she called, and Piet faced Georgene again. A fluid treacherous game. Advantages so swiftly shifted. Love became hate. *You give me my shape.*

A certain something about tennis seems to speak to the soul of the literary sensibility. Perhaps it's the *sauve qui peut* solitude (at least in singles) that conjures the sort of aloneness necessary for reading and writing. Perhaps it's the introspective, interiorized, coachless aspect of the sport. Perhaps it's the way in which the court resembles a blank page: Writers, like tennis players, must create art within the borders of this space, with the tools of their crafts—gleaming groundstrokes, grammatically correct sentences—and the mental fortitude of monks. Maybe this is why, in *Infinite Jest*, David Foster Wallace wrote that tennis (like the act of writing itself) is less an interpersonal agon than a battle against the self:

'A Rally' by Sir John Lavery (1885)

> The true opponent, the enfolding boundary, is the player himself. Always and only the self out there, on court, to be met, fought, brought to the table to hammer out terms. The competing boy on the net's other side: he is not the foe: he is more the partner in the dance. He is the what is the word *excuse* or *occasion* for meeting the self. As you are his occasion. Tennis's beauty's infinite roots are self-competitive. You compete with your own limits to transcend the self in imagination and execution. Disappear inside the game: break through limits: transcend: improve: win. . . . You seek to vanquish and transcend the limited self whose limits make the game possible in the first place. It is tragic and sad and chaotic and lovely. All life is the same, as citizens of the human State: the animating limits are within, to be killed and mourned, over and over again.

In no other sport except tennis can crowds go from delirious excitement after a thrilling 30-shot rally to total silence at the start of the next point to boisterous cheering, and back to courteous quiet again. Tennis is the only sport that combines elite athleticism with elite etiquette, and this very uniqueness is now being threatened by the democratizing hordes at its gate.

"The greatest curse brought down on us by technology is that it prevents us from escaping the present even for a brief time," wrote Stefan Zweig. "Previous generations could retreat into solitude and seclusion." We, however, seem doomed to the specific scourge of our time: the inescapable, incessant stream of audiovisual stimuli in which we swim every day. Tennis used to be the one sport perfectly suited for spectators seeking an escape from the intrusions of noise and technology. Now, even the tennis court is being threatened with an aural deluge.

Would it really be so bad if the one sport that most closely resembles an art—an unscripted performance art confined within the canvas of the court—were to be maintained and appreciated as it is? The absence of mid-match noise is the very meditative quality that allows us to appreciate our transcendent 21st-century tennis geniuses for the artists-with-rackets that they are. Take silence away from tennis, and you take away the artistic essence. Take silence away from tennis, and you take away its soul. ♦

B&A

Mapping the System

There goes the neighborhood, but in what direction?

BY THOMAS VINCIGUERRA

Researchers at Cambridge and the Complutense University of Madrid recently suggested that two planets larger than Earth might exist in the solar system, beyond the orbits of Neptune and Pluto. Skywatchers are atwitter, as well they should be. If true, this is major news.

But the scientific importance of this hypothesis may matter less than what it means on a gut level to you and me on terra firma. For the announcements, if borne out, reflect our evolving view of the firmament—and, therefore, of ourselves.

Humankind's notion of the solar system has always been a work in progress. The geocentric ancients knew only of our neighbors from Mercury through Saturn. Who among them could have imagined that Uranus would be discovered in the 18th century, or Neptune in the 19th? Not that we of the 20th and 21st centuries are much brighter: As a child of the 1960s and '70s, I grew up thinking that nine planets was the norm. Through textbooks and field trips to the Hayden Planetarium, I received the conventional wisdom that Pluto was the runt of the litter, a stony oddball bringing up the rear behind four gaseous giants.

Today, I don't know what to think. For some years, various learned outfits have steadily downgraded Pluto, alternately classifying it as a "trans-Neptunian body," a "Kuiper Belt object," and a "dwarf planet." It was also once gospel that poor Pluto had no moon. Then, in 1978, its satellite Charon was discovered, and several others have since been spotted. Within the past month, the first spacecraft that we have rocketed to Pluto, NASA's New Horizons, began snapping pictures. Surely these photographs will reveal further perplexities.

NASA spacecraft, Pluto, and moon (2015)

Confusion exists in other planetary arenas. For centuries, we Terrans believed that Saturn alone came equipped with rings. But in the 1980s and '90s, we learned of the rings of Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune. We learned, too, of the weird orientation of Uranus—a heavenly body that, as the phrase goes, "got knocked on its side."

And who knows what to make of Eris, currently deemed a dwarf planet larger than Pluto and even more distant? Or Ceres, once classified as the biggest asteroid in the famous belt between Mars and Jupiter but now upgraded (as opposed to Pluto's downgrading) to dwarf planet status? Perhaps NASA's Dawn spacecraft, which last month began its close-up examination of Ceres, will enlighten us.

Admittedly, none of this taxonomy and categorizing has much to do with our waking lives. As far as most of us are concerned, we merely care about what mischief Luna could wreak on our tides and whether we might glimpse the morning or the evening star. (That's Venus to you Earthlings.) Just the same, our continually changing view of the solar system is weirdly profound. Somehow, not quite knowing what's hovering above our heads—quite closely, in cosmological terms—is both tantalizing and unsettling, shifting as it does our view of how we fit into the cosmos. This isn't, after all, a matter of super-distant objects like galaxies or novae or nebulae. We're talking about our fellow travelers who are whirling around our warm, comforting buddy Sol.

The research into the theoretical trans-Plutonian planets is still preliminary. And the Cambridge and Madrid scientists may well be proved wrong. They wouldn't be the first. The 19th-century French mathematician Urbain Le Verrier argued vehemently for a planet he called "Vulcan," which orbited between the Sun and Mercury. He was famously in error; no evidence has ever emerged that Vulcan exists. Still, even the possibility of unseen orbital companions can't help but give us pause.

Parenthetically, it's fun to consider the potential nomenclature of the latest would-be planetary gatecrashers. For the moment, they are being dubbed Planets X and Y. If confirmed, they'll almost certainly be accorded suitably dark and classical names. "Lethe" is one that comes to mind.

In any event, the astronomical research that is currently making headlines would seem to indicate that the process of local planetary discovery is destined never to end. Arthur C. Clarke put it well, albeit inadvertently, in his novel *2001: A Space Odyssey*, when he wrote that Jupiter "was constantly capturing short-lived moons from the asteroid belt and losing them again after a few million years. Only the inner satellites were its permanent property; the Sun could never wrest them from its grasp."

Similarly, we capture notions of our solar system and lose them after a time. But never wrested from us is the music of the spheres—as well as our quest to understand it. ♦

NASA / JHU APL / SWRI / STEVE GRIBBEN

Thomas Vinciguerra is the author of the forthcoming Cast of Characters: Wolcott Gibbs, E. B. White, James Thurber, and the Golden Age of The New Yorker *(Norton).*

"Unpaid interns: An endangered species?"
—Politico, February 1, 2015