the weekly Standard

MARCH 23, 2015 • $4.95

THE DEMOCRATIC MATRIARCHY
NOEMIE EMERY

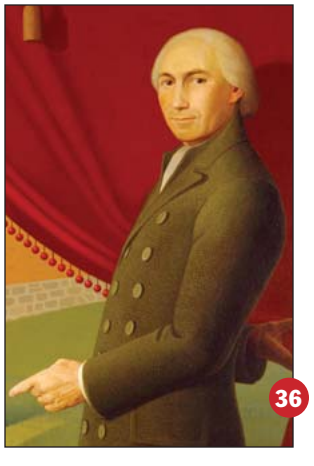
SEE SCOTT RUN

JOHN McCORMACK
on the Wisconsin governor's presidential bid

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

Contents

March 23, 2015 • Volume 20, Number 27



COVER BY GARY LOCKE

A Telling Photo

Readers are no doubt aware that, on the Sunday after the 50th anniversary reenactment of the march on Selma, Alabama, the *New York Times* published a front-page photograph of the marchers. There's President Obama, front and center in shirtsleeves, alongside his wife and two daughters; and there's Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.), whose skull was fractured by a state trooper's nightstick on that memorable day in 1965.

What *Times* readers did not see, however, was former President George W. Bush, also in shirtsleeves, marching beside Laura Bush. They're in the same front row as President Obama, but several feet to the president's left. They do not appear in the *Times* photograph.


"All the News That's Fit to Print"

The New York Times

VOL. CLXIV . . No. 56,799 NEW YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 8, 2015

Work of Selm
'Not Yet Ove
President Sc

Marking Progress
Challenges Since

By PETER BAKER and RICHARD FAUSSET

SELMA, Ala. — As a new eration struggles over race power in America, Pres Obama and a host of politic ures from both parties came on Saturday, to the site of t the most searing days of the rights era, to reflect on ho the country has come and far it still has to go.

Fifty years after peaceful testers trying to cross a b were beaten by police off with billy clubs, shocking th tion and leading to passage landmark Voting Rights A 1965, the nation's first Af

As might be expected, there was immediate suspicion—at least among conservatives—that the *Times* had deliberately excluded the Bushes from the picture. (One of the left-wing talking points for the day was the presence or absence of Republicans in the march.) But the *Times* was quick to defend itself. According to its ombudsman, Margaret Sullivan, "there was no politics in the handling or presentation of the photo." President Obama, as our first black president, would be the natural focus of any commemorative picture, she explained; and in any case, the Bushes were too far from the center of the lineup.

Case closed.

Well, far be it from The Scrapbook to second-guess the professional judgment of the *New York Times*, especially on critical questions of graphic design. And of course, we gladly take the *Times* at its word that it would never depict or exclude an image of George W. Bush in its pages for political purposes. No doubt, it was with genuine regret that the editors examined photographs of the march and concluded sorrowfully that the wide-angle shot including George W. Bush was "a bad picture," in the words of photo editor Michele McNally.

On the subject of that front-page photograph, however, The Scrapbook's attention was directed elsewhere. One recurring theme of the anniversary march was the degree to which America has changed in the past half-century—and changed for the better, as the presence of an African-American president dramatized.

But there is another way of looking at things. In March 1965, the presence of the clergy in Selma was more than conspicuous: The crusade was led, after all, by the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., and a young Unitarian minister, the Rev. James Reeb, died of his injuries a few days after being beaten by racists. By contrast, last weekend, the most conspicuous member of the clergy to be seen in the march was the Rev. Al Sharpton, the racial provocateur, tax cheat, and MSNBC talk-show host, just behind President Obama's left shoulder.

Whether this is a commentary on the present state of the clergy in America, or the troubling prominence of someone like Al Sharpton in the councils of the Democratic party and the White House, The Scrapbook cannot say. Perhaps the editors of the *New York Times* can shed some light on what it all means. ♦

Illiberal Liberals

Liberals have a favorite new legal doctrine. The Logan Act is a federal law enacted in 1799 that, in theory, penalizes American citizens who try to influence foreign governments "without authority of the United States." Even though the law is still on the books, The Scrapbook describes the Logan Act as theoretical because no one's ever been successfully prosecuted for violating it. The last formal indictment of anyone under the Logan Act occurred in 1803, when a Kentucky farmer committed the grievous crime of writing a spirited newspaper article. The entire law is two paragraphs so vague that legal scholars have suggested it would be unlikely to survive constitutional scrutiny should anyone be daft enough to try to prosecute someone under it.

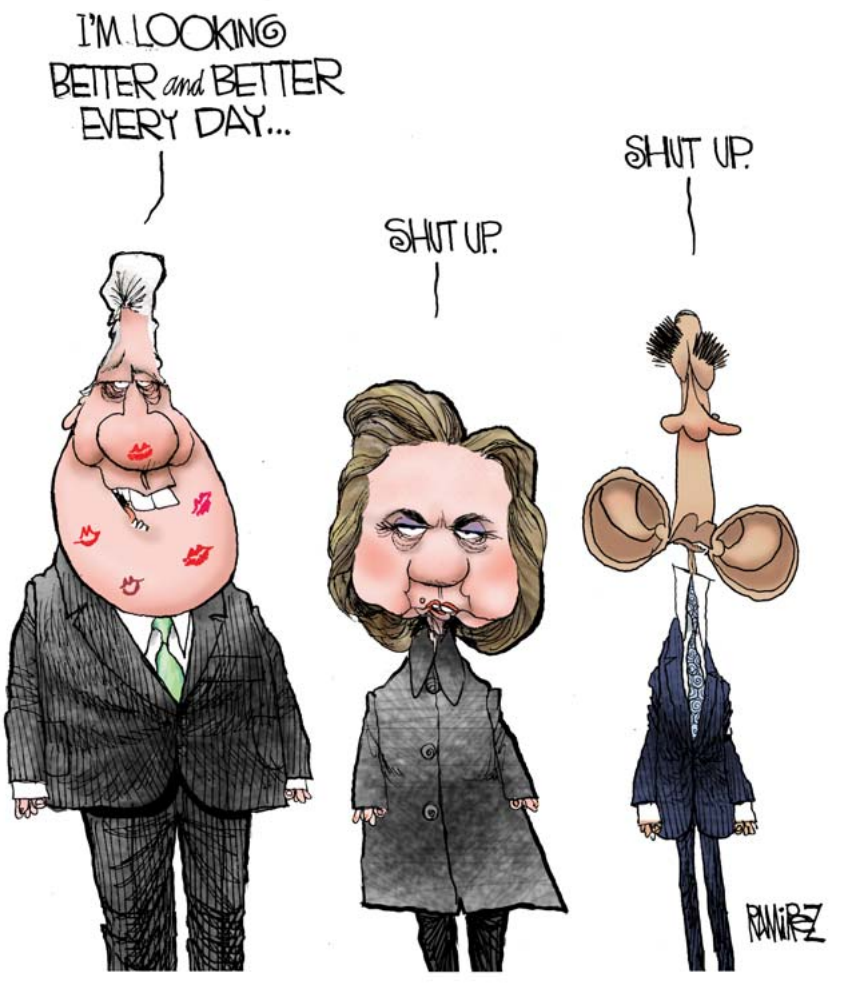
Despite this, liberals are currently engaged in a desperate bid to resurrect the Logan Act. As of this writ-

ing, 240,776 people have signed a petition on the White House website calling for the arrest and prosecution of 47 Republican senators under the Logan Act, for signing a letter authored by Arkansas senator Tom Cotton, expressing concern about the process by which the Obama administration is trying to forge a nuclear deal with Iran. "This is a clear violation of federal law. In attempting to undermine our own nation, these 47 senators have committed treason," reads the petition. Now, violating an obscure federal law is one thing, but last we checked treason is punishable by death.

This effluvium has been bubbling up for some time—indeed, a cursory scan of blogs and social media reveals that Rick Perry, Eric Cantor, John Boehner, Mitt Romney, Jon Huntsman, Mitch Daniels, and George W. Bush (among others) have all been publicly accused of violating the Logan Act in the last few years. Less excusable is how many media outlets—from *Vox.com* to NPR to MSNBC—have picked up this hot new legal theory and alternately amplified the charge or imbued it with whatever fraying credibility the media still possess. And that's exactly what happened following the release of Cotton's letter.

To further illustrate how ludicrous the Logan Act is, the statute doesn't even define what it means to act "without authority of the United States." As American University law professor Steve Vladeck observes, "Although most assume that means without authority of the *Executive Branch*, the Logan Act itself does not specify what this term means, and the State Department told Congress in 1975 that 'Nothing in section 953 . . . would appear to restrict members of the Congress from engaging in discussions with foreign officials in pursuance of their legislative duties under the Constitution.'"

So even if the Logan Act could be applied in some fashion, it's difficult to argue that members of the Senate—who are constitutionally tasked with ratifying treaties—aren't covered by the phrase "authority of the United States."



It's worth noting in this context that the laundry list of incidents in recent decades where Democrats in Congress have tried to directly undercut a Republican president's foreign policy is long and appalling and very much unlike Cotton's benign attempt to remind the president he is obligated to give the Senate some deference. (For more on the Democratic attempts to subvert U.S. foreign policy, see the editorial "A Contrived Controversy" on page 8 of this issue.)

Of course, shortly after Cotton's letter was released, Secretary of State John Kerry conceded that the Iran deal wasn't "a legally binding plan." Far from violating the Logan Act, casting doubt upon the success of informal agreements made by the president with eschatological mullahs is more accurately called "having an opinion" and is protected by a much more settled legal doctrine—the First Amendment.

Still, there's no better illustration of the fecklessness of the Obama administration's foreign policy than the fact that progressives think America-hating Islamic theocrats should be taken at their word, while simultaneously fuming that nearly the entirety of the opposition party in the Senate should be thrown in jail. ♦

The Fact-Checker's Bible

On March 10, Senator Ted Cruz said the following: "On tax reform, we, right now, have more words in the IRS code than there are in the Bible—not a one of them as good." It's no surprise that Republicans in Congress tend to hate taxes and love the Bible, and as Republican rhetoric goes, this is about as anodyne as it gets. The Scrapbook never thought that such a straightforward sentiment would engender controversy, but never underestimate the media's desire to willfully misrepresent and dispute the words of politicians they don't like.

Behold! The *Washington Post*'s Michelle Ye Hee Lee decided to make Cruz's words the subject of the dumbest media "fact check" ever, a prize that regular readers of The Scrapbook know is no small honor:

> This is a nonsense fact, something that is technically correct but ultimately meaningless. Thus it is not worthy of a Geppetto Checkmark but neither does it qualify for a Pinocchio.
>
> Cruz makes the point that tax policies need to be drastically simplified, and many Americans likely would support that sentiment. But such a crude comparison, which provides no nuance or context, doesn't capture why the tax code has become so complex and how it affects taxpayers.
>
> In a way, comparing the raw word count in the tax code to the text of the Bible diminishes the real frustration that taxpayers feel, and the real impact that can occur from improper tax filings. The consequences of not filing your taxes is of far bigger concern than not reading the Bible—legally speaking, anyway. We can't speak to possible eternal damnation.

We don't know about eternal damnation either, but taking a statement that you admit is literally, indisputably true and asserting that it lacks "nuance or context" is a journalistic sin. (For the record, the tax code is about five times as long as the Bible.) As for the perverse notion that Ted Cruz—of all people!—is diminishing the "real frustration that taxpayers feel" by making a plainly understood, folksy comparison to help non-CPAs understand how unwieldy the tax code is—well, that's bizarre at best.

And since when is it Cruz's sacred obligation to "capture why the tax code has become so complex and how it affects taxpayers" with a throwaway line in a campaign speech? The problems of our unholy tax code are obvious enough to ordinary Americans, even if they seem to escape the Obama administration's thoroughly corrupt IRS. It would be nice if "fact checkers" applied extra scrutiny to the government that wastes our tax money and buries citizens in red tape, instead of disingenuously nitpicking the politicians who rightly complain about it.

And if they don't want to be held to basic journalistic standards, then they shouldn't be taken aback when the rest of us note the irony of their complaints about "nonsense facts" and politely tell them to go to hell. ♦

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.

Taken In

On a bright, zero-degree morning last month, as I was happily making my bed in the attic of friends in Brooklyn, I thought with a shudder of Ignác Hrubý. Being a houseguest is one of my joys. It combines security and adventure, familiarity and independence. Having houseguests used to be a joy, too. Until Iggy's visit.

I had never met him. He was a Czech exile who wrote articles for a magazine I worked for in my twenties. In middle age, he lived a life more like that of his contemporaries' children. Unmarried, unattached, poor as a church mouse. Moving from various short-term rentals to stints on colleagues' couches. Writing bilious manifestos. I had to edit them, toning down his passions ("the time-serving buffoon and dilettante Joe Smith" was usually better rendered as "Joe Smith") and then seeing if there was any logic or narrative underneath. Sometimes there was, sometimes there wasn't.

When my boss, Andrew, passed along these changes, Iggy would explode, accusing me of "cowardice and unconscionable dereliction" and urging that I be fired. I was surprised, then, when one Monday morning Andrew told me Iggy was coming to town and had no place to stay. Could I put him up?

"Doesn't he usually stay with you?" I asked.

"Mmm. Ellen says it's not a good week."

"Didn't he use to stay with Greg and Sarah Johnson?"

Andrew mumbled something and looked at the bookshelves.

I called the Johnsons. I heard Greg's wife howl in the background: "Don't do it!" and (oddly, it seemed) "The chicken salad!"

"Sarah won't have him in the house," Greg said. As he hung up, she was yelling, "Tell him about the chicken salad!"

My apartment was cramped, but it had a convertible futon couch in the living room. The refrigerator was full of hot dogs and the freezer of vodka—both of them recommended by their cheapness and versatility. You could eat hot dogs on a bun, chop them into rice or ramen noodles, or drop them into a pot of canned chili. They improved everything. Vodka was the same way. You could drink it with quinine water in the evening or with Diet Coke as a morning pick-me-up, or pour it into a bottle of apple juice and take it to work. Iggy's case that I be fired was not altogether a weak one.

DAVID CLARK

It was 2:30 A.M. when Iggy arrived, in the company of the infuriated front-desk lady. He had a garbage bag half-full of books and clothes (but not deodorant or toothpaste, one inferred). He said he wanted a sandwich to take to bed. We had hot dogs, I told him. He could boil one and eat it with vodka. He said no. His nightly sandwich had become a habit. He'd be up all night without one. So out we walked, past the glowering front-desk lady, to an all-night market in a slum a mile away. At the deli counter, he said, almost in a rapturous whisper: "Give me a chicken-salad sandwich!"

He wasn't kidding about taking these things to bed. They were less a meal than a companion. Every night he would buy one, unwrap it, and lay it on the futon beside him. By morning, half the sandwich would have been kneaded into the sheets by the thrashing of his shoulders and elbows, knees and bum, and the other half would be on the black sweatshirt he never changed.

Iggy made himself at home. He was thrilled to see my stereo. By the end of the second night he had stripped all the knobs. Adjusting the volume, the balance, the bass would ever after require pliers and clamps. The third night he played (and stacked on the gritty floor, and stepped on) the Sinatra records—real vinyl ones—my parents had bought for each other when dating. Sleepless and pacing at 3:30 A.M. on the fourth night, he pulled the whole stereo system off the bookshelf by the headphone cord, shattering the turntable and (when the headphones pulled free) sending the full loudness of the music pouring down the halls ("I've been a puppet! a pauper! a pirate! a poet!" I heard as I sprang awake), occasioning ringing phones, banging on the door, and another visit from the front-desk lady.

Iggy's behavior was probably not the only reason I got evicted from the apartment a few weeks later. It all worked out for the best, anyway. I moved into a new apartment with my smashed-up stereo and my shrunken record collection. I met my wife. With her help I regained my gift for hospitality. Now old friends come to see us all the time. There is a good, cheap hotel just down the street.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

the weekly Standard

A Contrived Controversy

Finally, a debate about Iran. Last week, 47 Republican senators released a public letter addressed to the leaders of the Iranian regime. The letter made what might have seemed a self-evident point: If the Obama administration reaches a deal with Iran, Congress will not be bound by parts of the deal to which it has not assented.

Then, hysteria.

"The letter to Iranian leaders from 47 Republican senators could well destroy critical bipartisanship in U.S. foreign policy for years to come and treacherously undermine the bargaining power of the person constitutionally authorized to conduct American affairs abroad—the President of the United States," wrote Les Gelb, president emeritus and senior fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. "On top of what House speaker John Boehner did by unilaterally inviting Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address Congress, this letter seriously points to one terrible conclusion: a formidable number of congressional Republicans hate President Obama more than they love America."

Hysteria at the Daily News

The *New York Daily News* labeled "traitors" the letter's signatories and its author, Senator Tom Cotton (combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, Bronze Star). Max Fisher at *Vox.com* called the letter "unprecedented" and claimed Republicans were bringing their legislative obstructionism to "the previously sacrosanct realm of foreign policy." John Kerry bellowed that the "letter ignores more than two centuries of precedent in the conduct of American foreign policy." Hillary Clinton claimed that if the senators' objective wasn't to undermine the president, it was to help the mullahs in Iran. President Obama accused senators of forming a "coalition" with Iran's hardliners. NBC News called the letter "stunning" and declared that it signaled an end to the days when politics stopped at the water's edge.

We'll resist the temptation to attach labels to those making these claims or offer judgments on their love of country. Instead, some perspective:

■ In 1979, Senator Robert Byrd traveled to the Soviet Union during the SALT II talks to "personally explain the requirements of our Constitution" to Soviet premier Leonid Brezhnev. Byrd later wrote: "In Leningrad, I explained that I had come to the Soviet Union neither to praise nor condemn the treaty but to create a better understanding of the treaty in the Senate and to explain to the Soviets the Senate's constitutional role in treatymaking."

■ In the early 1980s, Senator Ted Kennedy secretly approached leaders of the Soviet Union with a proposal: I'll help you with Ronald Reagan's defense buildup if you help me defeat him in the 1984 presidential election. Former senator John Tunney conveyed the offer on Kennedy's behalf.

■ In April 1985, as the Reagan administration sought to limit Soviet influence in Central America, Senator John Kerry traveled to Nicaragua, met with Communist strongman Daniel Ortega, and accused the Reagan administration of supporting "terrorism" against the government there. Said Kerry, "Senator Harkin and I are going to Nicaragua as Vietnam-era veterans who are alarmed that the Reagan administration is repeating the mistakes we made in Vietnam." Kerry's trip followed a letter from a group of House Democrats led by majority leader Jim Wright to Ortega. The "Dear Comandante" letter declared: "We regret the fact that better relations do not exist between the United States and your country. We have been, and remain, opposed to U.S. support for military action directed against the people or government of Nicaragua. We want to commend you and your government for taking steps to open up the political process in your country."

■ In 1990, former President Jimmy Carter secretly wrote to the leaders of the U.N. Security Council nations urging them to oppose a resolution offered by his own country. The existence of the letter was revealed when one of its recipients shared a copy with the White House. President George H.W. Bush was "furious" at the "deliberate attempt to undermine" his foreign policy, according to his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft.

■ In 2002, in the heat of the congressional debate over the authorization of the Iraq war, the second-ranking Democrat in the House of Representatives, David Bonior, traveled to Baghdad with two fellow Democrats to oppose the imminent invasion. Democratic congressman Jim McDermott appeared on ABC's *This Week* from Baghdad to denounce President George W. Bush and

NEWSCOM

propagandize for Saddam Hussein. Shakir al-Khafaji, a well-known fixer for the Iraqi regime and a longtime supporter of Bonior, arranged the visit. The Democrats vigorously denied that they had accepted Iraqi regime funding for the trip. Documents uncovered in postwar Iraq demonstrated that their claim was untrue.

■ In 2007, newly elected House speaker Nancy Pelosi traveled to Syria to meet with dictator Bashar al-Assad. At the time of the trip, the Bush administration was seeking to isolate Assad, whose regime was supporting insurgents in Iraq who were targeting U.S. troops. Pelosi disregarded the administration's request to cancel her trip. Instead, she appeared in Damascus and reassured the world that Assad was eager to be a constructive player in the region and wanted peace with Israel.

Politics long ago stopped at the water's edge. Those who pretend otherwise are either ignorant or intellectually dishonest. Of course, the past behavior of Democrats doesn't justify the Republican letter on Iran.

The letter needs no justification.

Forty-seven elected senators made a fact-based, substantive argument, in public, about a matter of critical importance to the national security of the United States. They did so after the Obama administration fought a bipartisan congressional push for triggered sanctions and restricted the ability of members of Congress to discuss in public the interim agreement with Iran, and after President Obama himself made clear that he would veto legislation intended to force the administration to include Congress. The administration's position is this: Any agreement with Iran will be secret until it's signed; congressional input is unwelcome and may be unpatriotic; and Congress will accept and abide by all terms of the deal whether its members approve or not.

The Framers of the Constitution wisely gave the executive branch the dominant role in shaping the nation's foreign and security policies. But they entrusted those powers to a president, not a king. The arrangement proposed by the Obama administration is not only contrary to the role assigned Congress by the Framers, it's the opposite of what Senators Obama and Biden argued during their presidential campaign in 2008.

The following comes from the Obama campaign website. It spells out the need for congressional approval of a Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq.

> Obama and Biden believe any Status of Forces Agreement, or any strategic framework agreement, should be negotiated in the context of a broader commitment by the U.S. to begin withdrawing its troops and forswearing permanent bases. Obama and Biden also believe that any security accord must be subject to congressional approval. It is unacceptable that the Iraqi government will present the agreement to the Iraqi parliament for approval—yet the Bush administration will not do the same with the U.S. Congress. The Bush administration must submit the agreement to Congress or allow the next administration to negotiate an agreement that has bipartisan support here at home and makes absolutely clear that the U.S. will not maintain permanent bases in Iraq.

This presents an obvious question: Why is it imperative that Congress approve an agreement between the United States and Iraq, an emerging ally, but the president alone can finalize a deal between the United States and Iran, the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism?

Remind us: Who is politicizing national security?

Let's be clear about what's happening here. The feigned outrage from the White House and its supporters is just the latest of several attempts (a) to distract from the evident shift in the Obama administration's position on Iran—from blocking Iran's development of nuclear weapons to managing it, (b) to silence opposition to the deal, and (c) to blame Congress for any diplomatic failure. (Obama said back in mid-January that Congress would "own" any diplomatic failure.)

A final point: The Cotton letter has already achieved its goal. We are, finally, engaged in a serious national debate about the threat from Iran. That is something the Obama administration has avoided for six years. No more.

Unlike, say, John Kerry or Ted Kennedy, and unlike David Bonior and Nancy Pelosi, these senators gave no succor to dictators and despots. Instead, these 47 patriotic senators merely told the enemy a hard truth about American government. A serious administration intent on stopping Iran's progress toward nuclear weapons would use the letter and the concern it conveys as leverage in negotiations.

Instead, they've given us a contrived controversy and an emboldened Iran.

—Stephen F. Hayes

A One-Man Deal

President Obama is headed for disaster in the nuclear deal with Iran. The nearly completed agreement, as best we know, would allow Iran to keep its nuclear infrastructure intact and its centrifuges churning out enriched uranium. The mullahs would be free to build an arsenal of nuclear weapons in as few as 10 years from now. Given Iran's record of cheating on international arms restrictions and hiding nuclear facilities, inspectors would have to be allowed unimpeded access throughout Iran—which the Iranians are certain to refuse. Meanwhile, their ballistic missile program, sponsorship of terrorism, and growing control over Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen would be unaffected. All this is frighteningly far from the

original goal of the negotiations: to require Iran to dismantle its nuclear facilities entirely.

For Obama personally there's another aspect that, should he pursue it, threatens to add an extra blot on his presidency. With so many concessions to Iran and so little to show for them, the deal is bound to be controversial. Few if any Republicans are on board, so it won't be bipartisan. And yet—here's the blot—the president says he won't give the agreement constitutional legitimacy by submitting it to Congress for review and possible rejection. And he's not kidding.

This is a huge mistake. Obama may have to go out of his way to make sure Congress doesn't vote up or down on the nuclear deal. Republicans have drafted a bill to force him to do just that. The House should pass it with votes to spare. In the Senate, there appear to be more than 60 votes, enough to hurdle a Democratic filibuster. That would put the bill mandating a congressional vote on Obama's desk. If he vetoes it—and he says he will—this will turn the agreement with Iran into a one-man deal on the American side.

Obama's intransigence hasn't sat well with Republicans, nor should it have. In a video last week, presidential hopeful Rick Perry declared that "if President Obama signs an agreement that the Congress cannot support, our next president should not be bound by it." An arms control pact that "excludes our Congress, damages our security, and endangers our allies has to be reconsidered by any future president," Perry said. "We must not allow the incompetence of one administration to damage our country's security for years and decades to come."

Then freshman senator Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) stepped in, bringing 46 GOP senators with him. They signed a letter to "the Leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran" informing them that presidents negotiate international agreements, "but anything not approved by Congress is a mere executive agreement." The next president, the letter said, "could revoke such an executive agreement with the stroke of a pen and future Congresses could modify the terms of the agreement at any time."

Obama condemned the letter, and Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont echoed the president's view that it's his deal or war, an unpersuasive claim. Vice President Biden issued a statement saying he couldn't recall any instance of senators sending a letter to foreign leaders. The letter, he said, "ignores two centuries of precedent and threatens to undermine the ability of any American future president . . . to negotiate with other nations on behalf of the United States."

To no one's surprise, Iran's chief negotiator, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, was miffed too. He said the letter was "unprecedented and undiplomatic" and tells us that the United States is not trustworthy. Zarif should know about being untrustworthy. He and his country specialize in it.

What didn't occur to Obama and his team was that the Cotton letter gave them an opportunity to seek a better deal. "Zarif," Secretary of State John Kerry could say, "you've got to help me. Look at that crazy crowd of Republicans I have to contend with. They're whipping up opposition. I'm going to need some concessions or the deal will die." Obama spurned this lifeline.

His approach to Republicans is not to approach them at all. In months of talks with Iran, he's failed to keep GOP congressional leaders abreast of what's going on. The most they've learned came last year when an interim accord that extended the talks to this March was reached. The administration boasted how well it had done in that agreement, prompting the Iranians to release the actual document. It showed Iran had come out ahead.

Congressional Democrats haven't been treated much better. They won't be pleased if Obama forces them to vote on whether the final deal with Iran should be submitted to Congress. Think about it from their angle: An unpopular president wants you to spare him a vote in Congress on an unpopular agreement he's arranged.

Thanks to Cotton, Perry, and Senator Bob Corker (R-Tenn.)—chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the first to propose legislation calling for a congressional vote on an agreement with Iran—for raising the matter of Congress's role. Indeed, it ought to have one. An agreement with Iran cries out for a vote, all the more because the White House regards this deal as its top priority in Obama's second term. Obamacare was biggest in the first term, now it's Iran and nukes.

With a vote, Obama will have to make the case for what he's imposed regarding Iran, even if it doesn't amount to much. He'll have to reveal the rationale behind the go-easy posture he adopted toward Iran, assuming there is one. He's hinted about détente between the United States and Iran. That, by itself, is worth a vote.

—Fred Barnes

The Party of the Furrowed Brow

If you're an establishment Republican, ripples of doubt are intruding on your normal placid contentment.

A special House committee to investigate Benghazi? Gee, is the public still interested in that? Isn't it time to move on? And isn't the chairman, Trey Gowdy, close to . . . shudder . . . the Tea Party?

An invitation to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to speak to Congress? Isn't he kind of a polarizing figure? Couldn't he lose his own election next week? Then how will we look? And wasn't the protocol of the invite sort of mismanaged?

An open letter to the leaders of Iran on the nuclear deal? Isn't that a touch unseemly? A tad presumptuous? A distraction from the serious debate we're carefully teeing up for a few weeks or months from now? And look at all those attacks on Tom Cotton! Why didn't they listen to the cooler conservative heads and grayer Republican beards whose advice has been so helpful in the past?

If brow-furrowing were thinking, the Republican establishment would be geniuses. If hand-wringing were prudence, GOP politicians would be exemplars of Aristotelian virtue. If tongue-clucking were eloquence, conservative elites would be orators for the ages.

But of course Trey Gowdy, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Tom Cotton have done more for conservative principles and Republican prospects in the last few weeks than the brow-furrowers, hand-wringers, and tongue-cluckers have done in years.

How do we know about Hillary Clinton's emails—a revelation that will damage and could even derail her 2016 prospects? From the Benghazi committee headed by Trey Gowdy. Who forced the beginning of a serious debate about the full scope and meaning of the administration's capitulation to Iran? Benjamin Netanyahu. Who stimulated a real discussion of the implications of the administration's failure to go to Congress for approval of the Iran nuclear deal? Tom Cotton and his 46 colleagues.

And who scares the left? Judging from the vitriol, it's Gowdy, Netanyahu, and Cotton. Why? Because they're tough. And because they fight on important issues rather than trivial ones. And because they fight intelligently and strategically. And because they fight to win.

And they may win. The GOP congressional leadership, Republican elites, and some conservative advice-givers, on the other hand, don't much like to fight. Given that they expect, deep down, to lose, they would prefer to do so gracefully, or at least politely.

In provoking the attacks on them, Gowdy, Netanyahu, and Cotton have also done a service. Used to dealing with a feckless opposition and fastidious opponents, the left has flipped out. The infantile and hysterical McCarthyism of the assault reveals, for all to see, the character of today's left. And the failure of respectable liberals to repudiate the left's McCarthyism is also telling.

As a great American writer put it, "Politics ain't beanbag." Republicans and conservatives spend an awful lot of time playing endless variations and ingenious permutations of bean-bag. But it's baseball, not bean-bag, that is the American game. It should of course be played cleanly and forthrightly, and according to the rules. But baseball is hardball. So is politics. Maybe it's time to stop fussing and fretting long enough to learn how to play it.

—William Kristol

Will Rahm Bomb?

A falling star in Chicago.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Difficult, they say, to pass a family business on to the third generation. Proof of this assertion is the business known as the City of Chicago, run by the Daley family for two generations but now turned over to non-Irish carpetbaggers, with no future Daley in view. In the interregnum between Daley *père* (Richard J.) and Daley *fils* (Richard M.), a few interlopers ran the joint: Harold Washington, a machine hack named Michael Bilandic, and Jane Byrne, who got into office because of Bilandic's failure to shovel the snow from the streets, thus conferring on the city's only female mayor the quite appropriate title Snow Queen.

Rahm Emanuel, the current mayor, who is ensnared in a runoff election he ardently wanted to avoid, and who vastly overspent his four earlier rivals in seeking to do so, is in some ways symbolic of the new Chicago, at least of its white population. Emanuel grew up on the city's prosperous North Shore, the son of a physician. After working for various Democratic party causes, then serving on the staff of Bill Clinton, he ducked briefly into finance. After four years (1998-2002) running the Chicago office of an investment firm called Wasserstein Perella, he removed himself from the financial wars. He did so having walked away with a personal profit of more than $16 million, which only goes to show that with the right political connections one need not waste two dullish years acquiring a silly MBA. Emanuel was on the board of directors of Freddie Mac during part of that time, a bad period for the agency, which was visited with scandal. Three quick terms in Congress preceded Emanuel's hitch as Barack Obama's chief of staff. Rumor had it that he left the White House because Obama family confidante Valerie Jarrett diminished his effectiveness. A more likely reason is that his own ambitions were too grand to be content with the job.

Now that Chicago has lost much of its industrial base, the city is less and less working class in character. Where Chicago isn't preponderantly black or Hispanic, it tends to be youthful and prosperous. Young couples have moved into and refurbished drab working-class neighborhoods. The old notion of the city as a collection of ethnic neighborhoods, at any rate of neighborhoods lived in by white ethnics, is now obsolete. Demographically, Chicago isn't even any longer predominantly white. Roughly 32 percent of the city is black, and another 31 percent Hispanic, along with 5 percent Asian.

The Emanuel-Garcia runoff finds Chicago voters nicely divided. Chuy Garcia is no charmer, but in the charm category Emanuel suffers an even greater deficit. His act—a Jewish Jimmy Cagney, with profanity added—has not won him lots of extra friends.

In this runoff, Rahm Emanuel's opponent is a man named Jesus "Chuy" Garcia. (Chuy is pronounced Chu-wee; Chu-wee Garcia sounds like nothing so much as a 10-cent cigar.) Garcia is a man in his late fifties who has been a state senator, a city alderman, and a Cook County commissioner, three great forcing houses of local corruption. A boy with whom I went to high school, after a long and undistinguished career in the Illinois state senate, for example, has been able to finagle himself an annual pension in excess of $170,000. Because of such antics, pervasive in if not part of the system, Illinois has fallen into deep debt, and *USA Today* has judged it "the worst run" state in the country—do I hear laughter coming out of Mississippi?—while Chicago's bond rating, owing to $20 billion in unfunded pension obligations, has now fallen a mere two levels above junk bonds.

The Emanuel-Garcia runoff finds Chicago voters nicely divided. Chuy Garcia is no charmer, but in the charm category Emanuel suffers an even greater deficit. His act—a Jewish Jimmy Cagney, with profanity added—has not won him lots of extra friends. Appearing nightly on local television, he resembles nothing so much as that annoying student who is always raising his hand but never has convincing answers. What you see in Rahm Emanuel is what you get, and what you get is raw ambition. In his case you get the strong sense that he wants to succeed as mayor not so much for Chicago but for himself, so he can move on to the United States Senate, to a major cabinet post, to, who knows, *keyn eynhore*, the presidency. Rahm Emanuel, clearly, is in business for himself.

His campaign counselors recognize Rahm has a humility problem. (How can't I be humble, he once responded, I live with teenagers and a wife?) In the expensive effort to combat this, a current television ad has him, in cashmere sweater and open-collar shirt, sparse gray hair nicely poofed and moussed, confessing that he knows he sometimes rubs people the wrong way, speaks too quickly rather than listens, comes off as overly aggressive. But, he goes on in the ad to say, he really can't help it; if he is guilty of all these things, it is owing to his ardor to solve the problems of our fair city.

These problems have been serious. Gang killings have been the most obvious in engaging the media's attention. In the defining deviancy down

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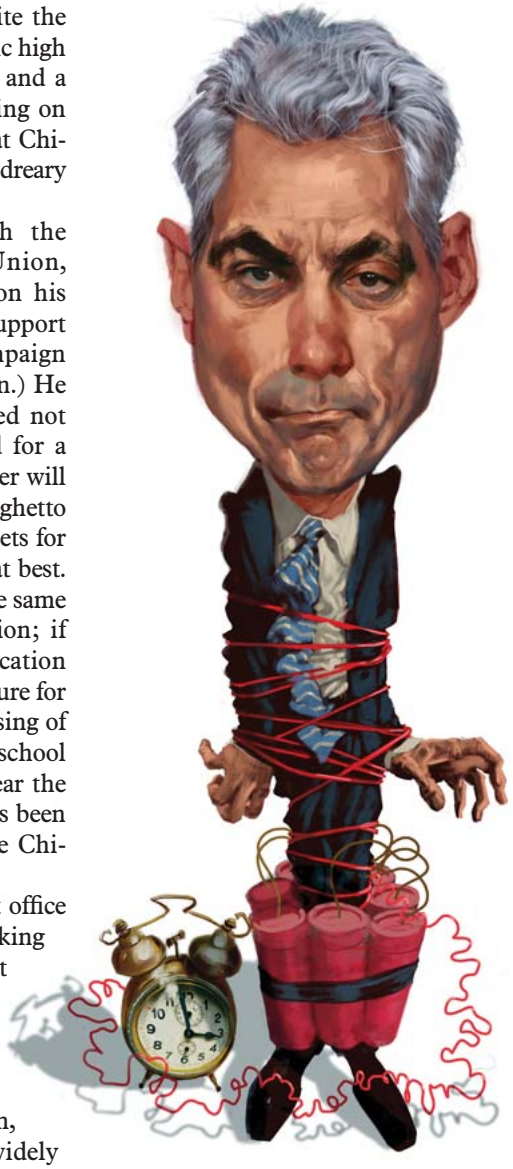
department, last year there were fewer murders in Chicago than in a decade, yet there were nonetheless more than 2,000 shootings. Programs to get guns off the streets have been largely unavailing. Putting more police on foot in the more hazardous Chicago neighborhoods hasn't turned the town into fifth-century Athens. Budget deficits are not easily wiped out. Despite the occasional success story—a public high school with a low dropout rate and a high percentage of students going on to college—everyone knows that Chicago public schools are generally dreary when not outright dangerous.

Emanuel has clashed with the strong Chicago Teachers Union, which took political courage on his part. (Much of the financial support for Chuy Garcia's runoff campaign is said to come from that union.) He has closed 50 schools he judged not doing the job, and has argued for a longer school day. What the latter will do, apart from keeping kids off ghetto streets and away from stray bullets for a few hours more, is debatable at best. If schools are failing, more of the same seems a less than happy solution; if anything, more wretched education seems merely extending the torture for most kids. These steps—the closing of schools, lobbying for a longer school day—have made Emanuel appear the enemy of unionism, or so he has been relentlessly portrayed in all the Chicago Teachers Union's agitprop.

Before Richard M. Daley left office he cut a terrible deal with a parking meter company that for the past five years has cost Chicagoans three and four times more to park on city streets than they had earlier paid. The new parking machines—known, bitterly, as Daley boxes—are widely detested. ("Curse you, Richie," I mutter, every time I load a pound or two of quarters into one of these machines.) Nothing the city can do to break this contract, as Rahm Emanuel has repeatedly said, but he has added insult to this injury by installing red-light cameras round the city that result in $100 fines for what are often the most dubious violations. Everyone knows that the primary reason these cameras are in place is not for safety but for raising revenue, and everyone who has been stung, quite properly, resents them. Under pressure from the Garcia campaign, Emanuel has removed 50 of these cameras. Garcia promises to remove them all.



THOMAS FLUHARTY

George Orwell remarked that nothing makes a liberal more nervous than being outflanked on his left. A liberal all his life, Rahm Emanuel now finds himself in this embarrassing position. He is featured by his opponents as the spokesman for corporate interests, the big money, the famous 1 percent that is now said to control this country. In the opposition view, this election features Rahm the Plutocrat versus Garcia the People's Friend. Such ultra-progressive outfits as MoveOn.org, the Howard Dean-founded Democracy for America, and the Progressive Change Campaign Committee are raising funds and working social media on behalf of Garcia's campaign. In a standard utterance, Dan Cantor, national director of a group called the Working Families Party, announced: "Rahm Emanuel is betting that he can raise enough campaign cash to hide his record of taking from working families to give to the rich."

Worse news for Emanuel, Republican (from Illinois) senator Mark Kirk has come out in support of him, arguing that Chicago's fragile financial condition needs a man with more financial sophistication than Garcia is likely to possess: "The people who are running against Rahm don't have the gravitas with the bond market. I would worry about the value of the Chicago debt if Rahm was not elected." Kirk went on to suggest that without Rahm Emanuel at the helm the city could possibly sink into the urban slough of utter despond of hopeless Detroit. Bruce Rauner, the newly elected billionaire governor of Illinois, has all but seconded the motion, claiming he wasn't endorsing a candidate, but adding, "look at who's financially sophisticated to deal with the issues, who's ready to stand up . . . and fight for the taxpayers in the city and take on some of these government union power issues. The voters got to decide . . . but they better look at it [carefully] because Chicago financially is going down the drain." Given his opponent's argument that he is already in the pocket of the major corporations and financial institutions, with friends like Kirk and Rauner, Rahm Emanuel needs no enemies.

The most recent poll has Emanuel with a 42.9 over 38.5 lead on Garcia. Garcia's campaign, let it be said, is less than inspired by great issues. He wants the seats on the city's board of education to become elective rather than mayorally appointed; he promises to eliminate the red-light cameras;

he insists an additional thousand policemen be hired. Where the money for these policemen will come from no one knows, though a wag—me, actually—has suggested it might come from the $16 million the Chicago Bears would save if they cut Jay Cutler, their erratic quarterback.

In the actual election, which takes place on April 7, the assumption is that whites in the city will go for Emanuel, Hispanics for Garcia, both pretty much down the line. If so, this throws the election into the hands of the city's blacks. The old racial cliché has it that blacks do not cotton to Hispanics who, as a group, have shown more progress than they. Rahm Emanuel is taking no chances that this cliché will hold up, and has been madly pursuing the black vote. He is never shown on television without an ample supply of blacks in proximity. He works southside Elevated stations, greeting black commuters. He is frequently shown kissing black women, doing the Obama shake-and-hug with black men. He has done everything possible to win the black vote but fall into the deathly embrace of Jesse Jackson. There are some things—not, true, many—even politicians won't do.

Local elections, especially where one's political party is not involved—and in Chicago it hasn't been in my lifetime—often leave one with one's antipathies nicely divided. So many must feel once again this time round. Always pleasing to see strong but empty ambition of the kind that propels Rahm Emanuel go down in flames. On the other hand, no one wants a hack of the low caliber of Chuy Garcia rewarded or put in charge of a great city. Willie Wilson, a black multimillionaire who never got past the seventh grade in school and was defeated in the earlier mayoral election, said on television that he'll vote for Garcia but if his supporters wish he might endorse Emanuel. Endorse a candidate but not vote for him? A contradiction? No doubt. If the law of contradictions were enforced, the jails of course would overflow. Yet some elections, such as this one for mayor of Chicago, might just require the suspension of that law. ♦

Past Their Expiration Dates

Did Jeb and Hillary wait too long?

BY JEFFREY H. ANDERSON

The consensus across America, and perhaps especially along the I-95 corridor, seems to be that Jeb Bush and Hillary Clinton are on a nearly inevitable collision course, with one or the other poised to be declared president-elect on November 8, 2016. At a minimum, they are viewed as the frontrunners—or, in Bush's case, the co-frontrunner—for their parties' nominations. At the same time, most Americans don't seem to view either Bush or Clinton as a particularly fresh, exciting, or desirable candidate or as among the most relevant thinkers, speakers, or actors on the biggest issues of the day.

Jeb on his first election night, November 1998 . . .

Something, it would seem, has got to give. Either the citizenry will learn to love—or at least to like—the latest iteration of Bush-Clinton, or the two candidates' aura of inevitability will soon vanish. History suggests that the second scenario is the more likely—for Bush and Clinton are each trying to break a political pattern that has remained intact for more than 150 years.

Presidential hopefuls seem to have about a 14-year shelf-life once they acquire a position of national prominence. Jonathan Rauch wrote on this phenomenon a little over a decade ago and credited an unnamed government employee—who he now confirms was George W. Bush speechwriter John McConnell—with having been the first to see this trend. The theory advanced herein is a variation on the one that Rauch wrote about and is based on McConnell's original insight.

With just 5 exceptions, the 38 men in our nation's history who have been elected to the presidency (as opposed to ascending to it without ever being elected in their own right) have all first been either elected senator, governor, or vice president or appointed cabinet secretary. Four of the 5 exceptions have been commanding generals who were national military heroes: George Washington, Zachary Taylor, Ulysses S. Grant, and Dwight Eisenhower. The fifth was Abraham Lincoln, a former House member and the foremost spokesman on the preeminent issue of his day.

In other words, Americans seem to have rather specific notions of what jobs they want their presidents to have held before entering the White House, and those requirements have remained surprisingly constant across more than two centuries. (Ben Carson, therefore, appears to have his work cut out for him.)

But Americans also seem to want people to move up or move out. At least

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IMAGES: NEWSCOM

that's how things have played out since the Civil War. From the moment someone has first been elected or (in the case of those who become cabinet secretaries) appointed to a presidential steppingstone position, he's had 14 years to get elected to either the presidency or the vice presidency, or else he's never been elected president. Since 1860, there have been no exceptions.

(Those who succeed in being elected vice president within the 14-year window are no longer on the clock and can potentially remain viable presidential candidates for some time to come. It took Richard Nixon only 2 years to move from senator to vice president, but 16 years to move from vice president to president.)

The 14-year rule is bad news for Hillary and Jeb. In 2016, Clinton will be 16 years removed from first being elected to the Senate from New York. Bush will be 18 years removed from first being elected to the governorship of Florida.

Across the past 150 years of presidential history, nobody has ever moved that slowly from Point A to Point B. James Garfield was elected president the same year he was first elected to the Senate. (He never even began his Senate term.) Grover Cleveland and Woodrow Wilson were elected president (and Theodore Roosevelt, Calvin Coolidge, and Nixon vice president) two years after first being elected governor or (in Nixon's case) senator. And William Howard Taft, Franklin Roosevelt, and Barack Obama were elected four years after first becoming secretary of war, governor of New York, and senator, respectively.

At the other end of the spectrum, late-bloomers Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton were each elected president 14 years after first being elected governor. Since 1860, that's the longest anyone has taken.

Over that same span, the 14-year rule has usually applied even in relation to initial election to the House. Lincoln, the outlier in not having filled any presidential steppingstone position, was elected president 14 years after being elected to his single term in the House. John F. Kennedy, Nixon, and George H.W. Bush all went from election to the House to election as president or vice-president within 14 years. Indeed, among former House members who have been elected president in the last 100 years, only Lyndon Johnson wasn't elected vice president or president within 14 years of his initial election to the House.

So even before considering that Hillary Clinton would become president 24 years after she became first lady, or that Bush is trying to achieve the fourth family victory in a presidential election in the last eight contests, Clinton and Bush are trying to defy historical norms. That is to say, people don't have to be particularly bothered by the idea of political dynasties to sense that Hillary and Jeb themselves have been around a long time.

. . . and Hillary on hers, two years earlier

Hillary, of course, became secretary of state in the interim. And there is actually a fair amount of precedent for being elected president more than 14 years after first holding a presidential steppingstone office if one has become secretary of state in between—but you have to look back before the Civil War to find it. Thomas Jefferson, James Monroe, John Quincy Adams, and James Buchanan all took this route, the last of them in 1856. (And even without having been secretary of state, William Henry Harrison and Franklin Pierce went 16 years between first getting elected to the Senate and getting elected president, but they preceded Buchanan.) So the question is, after 160 years, will voters be ready for Hillary?

At least Hillary can take some comfort in antebellum precedent. Bush, who was first elected governor in the late 1990s, is trying to do something that no one has done in all of American history: get elected president 18 years after first being elected to a presidential steppingstone office, without becoming secretary of state in the interim.

Nor are Clinton and Bush the only potential candidates who are trying to defy historical norms. As of 2016, it will have been 18 years since Mike Huckabee was first elected governor and 22 years since Rick Santorum was first elected senator.

Based on history, then, the smart money would seem to be on one of the prospective candidates who were first elected to a presidential steppingstone office less than 14 years before 2016: Ted Cruz (elected 4 years prior to 2016), Mike Pence (4), Rand Paul (6), Marco Rubio (6), Scott Walker (6), Chris Christie (7), or Rick Perry (14, as Perry took over from Governor George W. Bush in 2000 but was himself first elected governor in 2002) on the Republican side; and Elizabeth Warren (4), Martin O'Malley (10), or Jim Webb (10) on the Democratic side. Joe Biden doesn't meet the 14-year standard, as it took Slow Joe 36 years to get from the Senate to the vice-presidency—22 too many. (Al Gore, however, does qualify, having gone from senator to vice president in 8 years, thereby making himself more or less permanently eligible for voters' consideration.)

Of course, historical patterns can be broken. When George H.W. Bush was elected president in 1988, he became the first man since John Adams to do so with the vice presidency having been his sole presidential steppingstone office (although CIA director nearly qualified), thereby breaking a streak of 192 years. Still, American history provides a great deal of support for what appears to be the widespread popular sense that Hillary Clinton and Jeb Bush are both past their political prime. And it suggests that the general consensus about their inevitability isn't inevitably right. ♦

Dislodging ISIS in Iraq

The lessons from Tikrit.

BY GARY SCHMITT

Iraqi defense minister Khalid al-Obeidi, center, arrives in Tikrit, March 12, 2015.

AP / KHALID MOHAMMED

What does the likely victory of Iraqi forces retaking Tikrit from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria tell us about the current U.S. military strategy in Iraq?

The first and most obvious point is that ISIS is not some indomitable foe. Yes, it's a terrorist "state" of the worst sort, but as a military matter, it's not ten-feet tall. If the campaign succeeds in capturing back the city—and there is every reason to believe it will—it will have been accomplished largely with a gaggle of Iranian-backed Shiite militiamen, at most a brigade of regular Iraqi troops, and a few Sunni tribesmen—not exactly a first-world fighting force. And it will have been done absent the almighty destructive power of the United States Air Force.

The battle over one Iraqi city is hardly conclusive evidence of how one might expect a longer-term effort to go, but it does strongly suggest that President's Obama's view that this "is going to be a long-term campaign" is more a sign of what the White House is willing to do than of what could be done. It's hardly news at this point, but the president's estimate is less an accurate assessment of a foe than a reflection of the president's own determination to put off hard decisions. As the three-year timeline proposed in his draft authorization for war against ISIS suggests, it is also a matter he would like to push off to the next occupant of the Oval Office.

With sufficient American "boots on the ground"—say, an Army division's worth—and an intensified air campaign, ISIS would soon be on its heels, and possibly even routed. If foreign security services want to stop the flow of young recruits into ISIS's ranks, the best possible strategy would be to turn ISIS into a losing cause. Theology might make martyrdom an attractive alternative in theory, but, in practice, most want to think their ultimate sacrifice helps the winning side.

It's also worth noting that the conflict has not turned into a deeply embedded insurgency of the kind that took hold of Iraq in the fall of 2003 and required tens of thousands of American soldiers to address with "the surge" in 2007. If anything, in the face of an ISIS regime that tends to brutalize its occupied population even more than the predations of former Iraqi prime minister Nuri al-Maliki's sectarian security forces did, most Iraqi Sunnis still seem prepared to accept a Shiite-majority government in Baghdad if they feel moderately secure and if American forces are there to ensure that's the case.

The reluctance to deploy American forces is typically justified on the grounds of America's "war weariness." Yet that weariness now seems to reside largely in the country's governing circles and not in the general population. In one recent survey of registered voters conducted by Quinnipiac University, nearly two-thirds of respondents thought that U.S. ground troops should be deployed in an effort to address the threat posed by the Islamic State. And, indeed, it is a threat. But we shouldn't confuse ISIS's potential effectiveness as a terrorist organization with its ability to hold ground as a conventional military force. Nor should we forget that the best way to reduce that threat is to take away the safety provided by the group's rule over large swaths of Iraq and Syria.

The danger is that by not seeing ISIS for what it is, Washington is inviting a dynamic that can only complicate options in the future. Slow-rolling the campaign against ISIS will inevitably give Iran ever more say in Iraq as it provides the support and leadership Baghdad needs to reclaim Iraqi cities and territory. This can only increase the difficulty of peeling back whatever tacit support Iraqi Sunnis are giving ISIS now as they see a coalition of Iranian-backed Shiite forces dominate the military campaign against the Islamic State.

Again, none of this is necessary. As the fight over Tikrit shows, a serious American-led campaign to oust ISIS from Iraq is well within our and the Iraqi military's capabilities. Success in Iraq doesn't have to wait until next year, or the year after. It's within our grasp today if only the president were willing to seize the opportunity. ♦

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A Blueprint for Failure

How enemies become friends—and vice versa.

BY GABRIEL SCHEINMANN

A half-century of estrangement is over, President Obama declared late last year, in a surprise announcement that he was transforming U.S. policy towards Cuba. Having broken the ice, the administration hopes that normalizing diplomatic relations and lifting the economic embargo will, as the recently released National Security Strategy explains, "enhance our engagement in our own hemisphere, where there are enormous opportunities to consolidate gains in pursuit of peace, prosperity, democracy, and energy security." Actually, it's a geopolitically insignificant decision—except for the pattern it continues, one we would do well to recall as the deadline for a deal with Iran looms.

Reciprocal restraint, Putin-style: Russian tanks in eastern Ukraine, February 2015

Obama's approach to the world can be summed up with the title of a single book: *How Enemies Become Friends: The Sources of Stable Peace*. Influential Georgetown professor Charles Kupchan published it in 2010 and now serves the president as senior director for European affairs on the National Security Council (on which he also served during the Clinton administration). Contravening conventional wisdom, Kupchan argues that "deft diplomacy, not trade or investment, is the critical ingredient needed to set enemies on the pathway to peace." The Russian reset, the two-plus years of nuclear negotiations with Iran, the 18 months of secret talks with Cuba: The administration clearly agrees that diplomacy, not shared interests or values, can overcome longstanding barriers.

Kupchan outlines a four-step transformation sequence to turn enemies into friends, one the White House has followed to a tee: unilateral accommodation, reciprocal restraint, societal integration, and the generation of new narratives and identities. States remove a threat by "exercising strategic restraint and making concessions to an adversary" as a way to signal benign intent. To indicate the seriousness of the gesture, the concession needs to be "unusual and costly," such as "backing down on a border dispute or unilaterally withdrawing forces from a contested area."

Evidence of the Kupchan approach is ubiquitous. Towards Russia, the unilateral accommodation included accepting Russia's occupation of Georgian territory, giving up American missile defense plans in Eastern Europe, and agreeing to a massive reduction in America's nuclear arsenal. For Iran, it involved removing the credible threat of U.S. military force and recognizing Iran's right to enrich uranium despite U.N. Security Council resolutions and regular Iranian perfidy. With Cuba, Obama is using his executive powers to normalize relations and weaken the embargo as much as he can but not requiring an end to repression there.

Kupchan's book does not seem to have been translated into other languages because none of America's adversaries has taken step two, reciprocal restraint. China continues to bully its neighbors, Russia has invaded Ukraine and backstopped Bashar al-Assad's regime, which in turn has murdered 200,000 people, and Iran, while cheating on its interim nuclear commitments, now boasts of controlling four Arab capitals, Baghdad, Beirut, Damascus, and Sanaa. This uncooperative behavior has not led the administration to rethink its approach of treating enemies as friends. America finds itself partnering with China, Russia, Syria, and Iran to solve problems those countries themselves have caused.

Putting Kupchan's theory into practice was bound to fail. He points to the Iroquois Confederation, the Anglo-American rapprochement, the European Union security community, and the Swiss Confederation as his successful cases. Such transformations, Kupchan writes, can only occur when three conditions exist between the two parties: institutionalized restraint, compatible social orders, and cultural commonality. Vladimir Putin's Russia, Xi Jinping's China, Assad's Syria, the mullahs' Iran, and the Castros' Cuba hardly fit the bill.

The White House does not seem to believe its strategy comes with costs. As Obama said about America's Cuba policy, "these 50 years have shown that isolation has not worked. It's time for a new approach." But the Kupchan approach has done real damage. Not only have the administration's unilateral accommodations encouraged additional bad behavior, they have also caused huge rifts with allies caught in the crosshairs. Obama's weak response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine led Poland's then-foreign minister to

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bemoan that the "Polish-U.S. alliance isn't worth anything." Similarly, the administration has infuriated Saudi Arabia with a series of decisions, from the chemical weapons red-line climb-down in Syria, to the suspension of military aid to Egypt, to the unveiling of the interim nuclear deal with Iran—all of which the Saudis reportedly learned from CNN.

Which brings us to the public spectacle that is Obama's relationship with Benjamin Netanyahu. With Cuba as yet another example, the Israeli prime minister's ultimate fear is that Obama is willing to sign any nuclear deal with Iran—no matter what it entails—because any deal will set the U.S.-Iranian relationship on a transformative path. Recognizing and legitimizing an Iranian nuclear capability is precisely the sort of "unusual and costly" concession Kupchan says is necessary to turn an enemy into a friend. Israel isn't just worried the pending deal will do little to halt Iranian nuclear plans; it could be the conduit through which the United States begins to treat Iran as a regional partner rather than its supreme regional adversary.

As with the president's other olive branches, the attempt to transform Iran from an enemy to a friend will likely fail. We've seen no evidence of forthcoming reciprocal restraint from the mullahs. Continued Iranian support for murderous actors such as Assad and Hezbollah or persistent violations of nuclear commitments could well force this administration, or the next one, to reverse course. When that happens, however, we will not be able to return to the status quo ante. Allies, such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, will have made their own choices in the interim about how to secure their interests, which now stand in opposition to the budding U.S.-Iranian concert. Netanyahu's speech made this clear. One can easily imagine a situation in which Israel and Sunni states decide to take on Hezbollah and Assad directly, only to be opposed jointly by Washington and Tehran. Not only will the United States have failed in turning enemies into friends, but it will have lost friends in the process. ♦

Nowhere Left to Go but Up

Reviving the California GOP.

BY MATTHEW FLEMING

Sacramento

Praise for the California GOP's recent signs of life gets heaped on Chairman Jim Brulte. But to hear him tell it, the credit goes to party leaders who pitched in to walk precincts and county chairs whom he wants to empower to recruit, to fundraise, to win.

Brulte was reelected at the party's convention at the end of February, and while it would be easy to nitpick the California GOP's problems and the weirdness that tends to flock to conventions, the commitment to Brulte is promising.

The party began the year with around $1 million in the bank. Republicans last fall beat back the Democrats' supermajority in both chambers of the legislature with a delegation that's grown increasingly diverse. They won in blue districts, creating inroads in traditional Democratic strongholds—like Los Angeles County and the outskirts of the Bay area.

Democrats still have dominant majorities in the legislature and hold every statewide office and major advantages in voter registration. Ambitions were kept in check at the convention. There wasn't a lot of talk about winning the retiring Barbara Boxer's U.S. Senate seat in 2016. Republicans will certainly take a shot—Rocky Chavez, an assemblyman from San Diego County, has already announced his candidacy. But it will be a costly, uphill battle.

What was discussed frequently at the convention? Success, and how to create more of it.

Matthew Fleming is a reporter in Los Angeles.

I met Brulte at a Panera Bread in Fontana, just days before the convention. He walked up with the sartorial splendor of a southern Californian—camp shirt, jeans, and black cowboy boots. He towered over me like the San Gabriel Mountains over the city. He was finishing up his campaign for a second two-year term as chairman. He seemed to be in a good mood and offered to pay for lunch, which I declined. He joked that a reporter won't accept lunch during a one-on-one interview, but eating the free food in the press room at a convention is done with no remorse. Touché.

Brulte doesn't speak with the media often. He shies from ideological disputes, and prefers that candidates and elected officials do the talking. He is more comfortable doing the "nuts and bolts" work, and tries to be a sobering voice. "I'm not going to be the happy talk guy, who tells you everything is great and leads you into an election cycle and loses," Brulte says. "Which, by the way, we'd been doing for a number of years."

Since becoming chair in March 2013, he's focused on rebuilding from the ground up. "You start by diagnosing accurately where we are as a party," Brulte said. "We are a party that for the last 35 years, 37 years has been in a rather significant decline."

Brulte, a former Republican leader of both chambers of the legislature, became chair when the party had hit bottom. It was in debt—owing between $800,000 and $1.3 million—voter registration had dipped to 28 percent statewide, all statewide offices were blue, and the Democratic grip on the legislature was about to become a supermajority stranglehold.

"Triage" is how Brulte described his first year. Few records had been kept, technology was outdated, and even simple data entry was performed multiple times. "We had to put systems in place," he said. "They weren't tracking anything. But we track everything. Goals have to be measurable . . . otherwise they're just ideas."

The party started tracking its own demographics, showing almost an even split between men and women, with a slight advantage to the fairer sex. Latinos are the largest minority group at approximately 14 percent, and about one-third of the party is of minority status. That meant more work with party allies like GROW Elect and the California Women's Leadership Association, which cultivate Latinos and women, respectively, for public office and other leadership positions.

Women were elected as Republican leaders in both chambers of the legislature: Kristin Olsen in the assembly and Jean Fuller in the senate. Janet Nguyen became the first Vietnamese American to serve in the state senate, while a Taiwanese-American woman and a Korean-American woman were both sent to the assembly. In Orange County, long the conservative bastion of southern California, Republican Asian Americans hold a majority on the County Board of Supervisors.

"Winning elections is not all that difficult," Brulte said. "In a neighborhood election, the candidate who most looks like, sounds like, has the shared values and shared experiences of the majority of the people in the neighborhood tends to win. One of the problems facing Republicans in California is that they haven't noticed the demographics of California have changed."

Possibly the most significant move at the convention came when the LGBT group, the Log Cabin Republicans of California, was overwhelmingly approved by party delegates as a chartered volunteer group, giving them a seat on the executive committee and a few delegates at the convention.

Over the next year, Brulte and other party leaders will push to empower county parties, training them to communicate their message effectively, to recruit volunteers, and to raise money. Success will be gauged by "more Republican elected officials in California than there are today," Brulte said.

Republicans held the governorship for most of the 20th century. Brulte said that donors got used to Republican executives, but when Democratic governor Jerry Brown was elected in 2010, the money dried up. County parties had become dependent on the state party for funds and then fell on hard times, so they needed to be weaned off state party support.

AP / RICH PEDRONCELLI

Brulte speaks to media after his election as party chairman, February 27, 2015.

"We are the conservative party in America," Brulte said. "We're the party that believes welfare should be a temporary state, not a permanent lifestyle. When you do something for someone that they are capable of doing themselves, you run the risk of creating a dependency."

Brulte and other leaders point to the success of certain counties. In Ventura (home of the Reagan Presidential Library), all six countywide offices are held by Republicans, despite a five point voter registration deficit.

Mike Osborn, the county chairman, credited their success to simple technological advancements and voter engagement. "We turn our people out in droves," Osborn said. "We make up for a lack of registered voters in turnout."

In San Diego, Kevin Faulconer is the relatively new mayor, despite a 13-point deficit in voter registration. San Diego County chairman Tony Krvaric said they are focused on registering voters, raising money, recruiting volunteers, running and endorsing candidates, and getting out the vote. They try to abstain from fighting over issues. Like Brulte, he believes it's for candidates and elected officials to do.

"We're not the platform police," Krvaric said. "A Republican on their worst day is better than a Democrat on their best day. We have a platform, we know what it says, and people can disagree. If you're willing to walk a precinct, you're welcome in San Diego."

But neither county has escaped the erosion of enthusiasm for political parties by the state's voters. Both parties have suffered, but Democrats have dropped only four points since 1998, while Republicans have dropped eight.

Conventions produce distractions: Floor fights on whether the term "immigrant" is too PC, young women in dresses that appear to be oversized belts, or a guy in a chicken suit and an Obama mask demanding "we turn Barack Obama into a lame duck."

Instead, the biggest takeaway from the convention was that the party has its swagger back. Republican assembly leader Kristin Olsen spoke of a recent McClatchy article that cited a Democratic task force calling Democrats a "confused" party with a "muddled message" and an "inability to turn out enough of its loyal voters." She reveled in the fact that Democrats, for once, were the ones being called out.

And even the press seemed happy—with the snacks in the press room. "Democrats need to get on board," said one reporter. As I washed down a red velvet cupcake with yet another cup of coffee, I recalled what Brulte told me at Panera. It was Brulte's idea to feed the press in the first place. Fortunately for California Republicans, that wasn't his only good idea. ♦

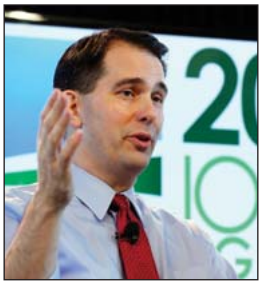
See Scott Run

Does the road to the White House start in Wisconsin?

By John McCormack

Urbandale, Iowa

Scott Walker is running for president, but he can't say that just quite yet. "I hate the word 'explore,'" he tells a group of activists at a private meeting in the strip mall offices of Our American Revival, the political organization through which Walker is exploring a presidential bid. Walker says that lawyers tell him he has to use that word when discussing his "likely campaign" in order to avoid running afoul of campaign finance rules. In case there's any doubt about how likely that campaign is, Walker concludes his remarks by saying, "We're going to beat Hillary Clinton."



Walker in Iowa, March 7

Walker seems to have a clear idea of the kind of race he'd like to run against Clinton if he becomes the GOP nominee. He told supporters in Iowa that "the pathway to a Republican presidency is going to come through the Midwest. And I'd like to think we have a shot in Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan." After the event, Walker told me the strongest argument against a Clinton presidency is that "she embodies Washington, and I think most Americans regardless of party are fed up with Washington." According to Walker, Americans want "somebody who's got a fresh new approach, who is outside of Washington."

In case you hadn't noticed, Scott Walker is not from Washington. For over a month, the governor has been sitting atop the field of Republican presidential contenders because he is best known for spending the last four years fighting—and defeating—Democrats and Big Labor in Wisconsin. His chief GOP rivals, by contrast, have waged prominent political battles against large numbers of fellow Republicans—Jeb Bush on immigration and education, Rand Paul on national security, Ted Cruz on the 2013 government shutdown, and Marco Rubio on immigration.

It's very early, but according to two recent polls Walker now holds a double-digit lead in the Iowa caucuses. It's still a wide-open race—the frontrunners are polling in the high teens—but Walker is neck-and-neck with Jeb Bush in national polls and in the early primary states of New Hampshire and South Carolina. If Walker is going to go all the way, he'll need to overcome a number of obstacles (more on that later). But despite a barrage of media criticism over the past month, Walker remains well positioned to win the nomination.

The most promising finding for Walker in recent polls is that his support is broad. According to a Quinnipiac poll of Iowans, he drew support evenly among Iowans who call themselves "very conservative" and "somewhat conservative," with less support from "moderate or liberal" Republicans. And a national NBC/*Wall Street Journal* poll found that 53 percent of Republicans could see themselves supporting Walker, while only 17 percent could not. The same poll found that 49 percent of Republicans say they could support Jeb Bush, while 42 percent said they could not.

Walker shot to the top of the polls faster than anyone, including Walker, had expected. The immediate cause of his rapid rise was a speech delivered at the Iowa Freedom Forum on January 24, less than three months after Walker had won reelection. Going into the speech, many thought Walker might end up struggling, as Tim Pawlenty, another Midwestern governor said to lack charisma, had in 2011. Pawlenty tried to compensate by bashing brie-eating liberals before crowds of conservatives and mentioning Lady Gaga and Charlie Sheen to College Republicans. He dropped out of the 2012 race before a single vote was cast.

But Walker was able to thrill the crowd in Iowa simply by telling his story about fighting the labor unions in Wisconsin—about the 100,000 protesters who occupied Madison, the death threats he received, including one that vowed to "gut your wife like a deer," and how the prayers of Iowans and other Americans helped him get through it. Walker's speaking style was lively and personable, but there was nothing particularly exciting about it.

In his stump speech, Walker embraces the fact that he's an ordinary guy. The son of a Baptist preacher and a part-time secretary, Walker was born in Colorado Springs and lived in Iowa during his early childhood before moving to Delvan, Wisconsin, a town of 7,000. Walker talks about growing up without much money and working the jobs that normal kids have, washing dishes at the Countryside

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John McCormack is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

restaurant and later flipping hamburgers at McDonald's to pay for college. Like anyone living in a middle-class Milwaukee suburb, he shops at Kohl's, a Wisconsin-based department store, and has a funny story about how his wife taught him to shop for deals. When Walker tells these stories in his stump speech, he's usually wearing a blue shirt and red tie, the uniform of ordinary guys (at least Republican ones) in semiformal settings.

Walker sometimes includes a line about how he loved reading about the Founding Fathers as a child. "To me they were like superheroes, bigger than life," Walker said during his speech to the Conservative Political Action Conference outside of Washington, D.C. But when Walker finally had a chance to visit Independence Hall in Philadelphia some years back with his wife, Tonette, it dawned on him that the Founders were just "ordinary people who did something quite extraordinary."

Do you know who isn't an ordinary person? Hillary Clinton. "Saying you're broke when you've got two homes, or you're making a quarter of a million dollars a speech, or you haven't driven a car in 18 years, those are all things that I think further embolden that theory that someone like Hillary Clinton who is of Washington—who lives in Washington, who worked for the last term for President Obama in Washington, who served in the Senate in Washington, who lived in the White House in Washington, who spent the early days of her career in Washington—this is someone who embodies Washington," Walker told me during our March 8 interview. (Like an ordinary guy, Walker sometimes says a word like "embolden" when he means "emphasize.")

Walker has accomplished some extraordinary things over the past four years governing as a conservative and winning three gubernatorial elections in a swing state. But if he's going to get a shot at challenging Clinton, he'll need to develop a serious agenda that can carry him through the Republican primaries. One of the biggest question marks about a Walker presidential campaign is whether he'll be knowledgeable and conversant in foreign affairs. When I asked Walker last August how he stayed informed on foreign policy, he said he mostly read about issues related to state policy but kept abreast of foreign affairs mainly by reading the *Wall Street Journal* cover-to-cover every day and the work of The Weekly Standard's Stephen F. Hayes.

As he gears up for a presidential run, Walker has met with a number of foreign policy experts, including former secretaries of state Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, General Jack Keane, former senator Jim Talent, and former deputy national security adviser Elliott Abrams. Walker also said he holds frequent, soon-to-be daily, policy briefings with his recently hired foreign policy staffer Mike Gallagher, who worked on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and served two tours in Iraq as a counterintelligence officer. "I used to, before about a month ago, get up at 6:00 and run for half an hour, so one of the things I talked to Gallagher about was maybe Skyping in or Facetiming in while I was running and just doing the briefings at that point," he said. We'll know during the primary debates, which begin in just five months, if Walker has devoted enough time to mastering foreign policy.

Bit by bit, Walker is becoming more confident taking positions on foreign affairs. In our interview he expressed support for the first time for arming Ukraine. "Putin is in a position where he is very much invoking Lenin's old adage that you probe with bayonets, and if you find mush you advance, and if you find steel you withdraw," Walker said. "That doesn't mean we're fighting the war for them, but there are significant things we can do beyond what we're doing, and lethal aid has got to be a part of it."

But he remains undecided on a number of issues. When I asked Walker if any laws governing the National Security Agency need to be changed—a question that divides libertarians from the rest of the GOP—he said, "I think we probably need some more time examining the various—or talking more to the experts out there. My instinct is I think a fair amount of the concern, which I think is highly warranted, has come not so much just from the legal authority of the NSA, but of the incompetence of this administration overall. . . . Remember that a lot of this came up about the time that the IRS/Tea Party stuff came out."

When I asked Walker about tax reform, he brought up the plan recently introduced by Mike Lee and Marco Rubio (a potential 2016 rival) and praised it. "I'm intrigued by what Senators Lee and Rubio put out the other day. I think there's some real traction to that package," Walker said. "I don't know if that's exactly what we'll embrace. I like the idea of a more fair and simple tax code."

It's not clear to what extent Walker hasn't had time to develop concrete views on national policies and to what extent he's simply trying to avoid taking positions that could be attacked by other Republican contenders.

At the Iowa Agriculture Summit on March 7, Walker may have disappointed his conservative base for the first time by coming out in favor of continuing the Renewable Fuel Standard (RFS), a mandate that boosts ethanol producers, but eventually phasing it out (without specifying a deadline). A gradual phaseout was widely praised by conservatives when Pawlenty embraced it in 2011, but when Walker took effectively the same position it shocked a number of conservatives, and not without reason.

In 2006, Walker opposed a proposed state law that would require gas to contain 10 percent ethanol, calling it a "big-government mandate." Walker told the *Milwaukee Daily Reporter* at the time: "The free-enterprise system must drive

innovation to relieve our dependence on foreign oil, not mandates from the state or federal government." Walker's position now—that the federal RFS should be kept until technology at gas pumps allows consumers to choose gas with or without ethanol—was "definitely an evolution on his part," says Charlie Sykes, a conservative talk radio host in Milwaukee.

Walker's flip-flop on ethanol may have stung some of his admirers so badly because Walker's battles with Big Labor had left many with the impression that he is a conservative purist. But Walker has always had a pragmatic side. His 2011 bill that pared back the collective bargaining power of public unions exempted police and firefighters. The exemption was defended as a public safety measure but widely seen as a political necessity. "That's one where I think he was savvy. He knew if you're going to take on something that big, you don't take on first responders," says Sykes, a keen observer of Wisconsin politics. In 2011, Ohio included police and firefighters in a law that limited collective bargaining. The Ohio law was repealed by a 23-point margin in a referendum before it even took effect. (Walker's law was also unpopular in theory—a strong majority of Wisconsinites opposed it after passage—but it became popular following its implementation.)

Walker also triangulated against public sector unions by allying himself with private sector unions. "I have no interest in a right-to-work law in this state," he said in 2012. "The reason is private-sector unions are my partner in economic development." Walker never promised that he wouldn't sign a right-to-work bill if it landed on his desk, but he did pledge during the 2012 debate that it would never make it to his desk. As late as October 2014, Walker told the *New York Times*, "No, we're not going to do anything to do with right-to-work."

Walker's decision to sign right-to-work legislation in March 2015 has been interpreted in the press as an effort by Walker to remind the Republican base why they love him. But that's not what happened. "There was no question that he did not want to take this up. He dragged his feet quite a bit on all of this, constantly saying it was a distraction," says Charlie Sykes. "The initiative for this came from the legislature." Sykes added that Walker "was smart enough to recognize this thing was leaving the station. He wasn't driving it but he got on."

Walker may not be a conservative purist, but he is very conservative. Harry Enten of the numbers-crunching website *FiveThirtyEight* tried to quantify Walker's conservatism with data from Stanford political scientist Adam Bonica. The answer: Walker's about as conservative as he possibly could be. "Of all the Republican governors running for reelection in 2014, Walker is the most conservative compared with the type of governor you'd expect was elected based on the 2012 presidential vote," writes Enten. "Based on Walker's ideology and the ideology of the incumbents running in 2014, you'd expect him to have been a governor of a state that Romney won by about 13 percentage points (Montana, for example) instead of one [Romney] lost by about 7 percentage points."

Wisconsin hasn't voted for a Republican for president in 30 years, but it's a fairly swingy state in both presidential and midterm elections. George W. Bush lost it by less than 1 point in 2000 and 2004, but Barack Obama carried it by 13 points in 2008 and 7 points in 2012. Democrats took the governor's mansion in 2002 (a good GOP year) and held it in 2006 (a good Democratic year) before it swung back to Walker. In his 2012 recall election, Walker held onto his seat by a 7-point margin even though, according to the exit poll, those who showed up to vote preferred Obama to Romney by a 7-point margin.

Walker says his theory is that swing voters are highly cynical and like candidates who will fight for big ideas. Walker proudly touts cutting income taxes and property taxes, expanding school choice, and passing pro-life legislation. But sooner or later he's going to be challenged from the right, particularly in Iowa and primarily over his record on immigration and social issues.

On amnesty for illegal immigrants, Walker says he's had a conversion experience. "My view has changed. I'm flat out saying it. Candidates can say that. Sometimes they don't," Walker told *Fox News Sunday* host Chris Wallace. But Walker doesn't seem to be a very zealous convert.

On March 8, I asked Walker if he thought the 2013 immigration bill that passed the Senate—the "Gang of 8" bill prominently backed by Marco Rubio at the time—amounted to amnesty and what parts of the bill he opposed. Walker didn't criticize any specific provision and began talking about his support for border security and a national e-Verify system. But did he consider the bill amnesty? "Well, that's a concern I've had. I said even then I didn't support the Gang of 8 legislation," he said.

Some social conservatives have been concerned by Walker's statements that he's focused on economic issues when he's asked about social issues. But Walker says he's been misunderstood. Last August, I asked him if he supported a so-called truce on social issues. "No," he replied. "People shouldn't misread my comments about focus as being that I don't care about them. I think they're important issues. I'm pro-life. I've been pro-life, I'll continue to be pro-life. I don't apologize or back away from that position. I voted for the constitutional [marriage] amendment in 2006, I haven't changed my position on that. In fact, I'm in court with the attorney general upholding the constitution of the state of Wisconsin."

When federal courts invalidated Wisconsin's marriage

amendment, Walker told reporters that "for us, it's over in Wisconsin." He added that "others will have to talk about the federal level." When I asked Walker if he would support a constitutional amendment that would prevent the federal government including the courts from invalidating state marriage laws—legislation Senator Ted Cruz has called for but has not yet introduced—Walker replied with a smile: "If Ted Cruz is proposing that, then that would be a very compelling argument that we need a champion for that in the United States Senate to get that through. And that's all the more reason why people should retain him in the Senate." He emphasized that governors and presidents play no formal role in passing amendments.

Would Walker work to rally public support behind such an amendment? "In terms of the constitutional amendment, I'd have to look at what he's proposing," Walker replied. "As governor, I haven't gotten involved in constitutional amendments because I don't sign them. In this case, I'd imagine we'd have our hands full with other issues. But I do believe the states are the place where that should be settled."

Some of Walker's critics have alleged that he went soft on his pro-life position during the 2014 election. New Jersey governor Chris Christie took a thinly veiled swipe at Walker to that effect during his remarks at the Conservative Political Action Conference. "I don't change my mind. I stick with where I've been," Christie said. "So when you're pro-life in 2009, you don't cut a commercial four years later . . . [that says] that you're less than that."

In Walker's now-controversial TV ad, which was made in response to a big EMILY's List television ad campaign claiming that he was trying to make all abortions illegal, he looks directly into the camera and says he's pro-life, but describes the laws he's passed as "legislation to increase safety and to provide more information for a woman considering her options. The bill leaves the final decision to a woman and her doctor." Walker has been criticized for embracing pro-choice catchphrases. But what he said was true, and pro-life activists have long argued for health and safety regulations and ultrasound laws as the kind of commonsense proposals people should support regardless of their position on the legality of abortion. "We were very pleased to see that he had a response to the ads by pro-abortion groups," Heather Weininger of Wisconsin Right to Life told me. "The people who are upset are not the audience he was speaking to."

Walker caused some concern among activists when he was asked on *Fox News Sunday* if he supported any legal restrictions on abortion, and he didn't reply with any specific examples. Two days later, Walker endorsed efforts to ban abortion after the fifth month of pregnancy, the point at which infants can feel pain and survive if born prematurely. "I think most Americans agree with me," Walker told me. "That's something strong that can be done. Some people want to talk about things in the hypothetical. We try to do or talk about things that can save peoples' lives."

Although he's led the GOP presidential pack for over a month, Walker hasn't yet been directly attacked by any of his likely rivals. And he may have one unexpected secret ally to thank for that: the mainstream media. Press coverage of Walker over the past six weeks has ranged from the merely hysterical to the completely bogus.

Gail Collins of the *New York Times* wrote a column that claimed Walker was responsible for hundreds of teacher layoffs that occurred in June 2010. Walker didn't take office until 2011. The *Daily Beast* ran an article claiming that "Scott Walker wants to stop colleges from reporting campus sexual assaults to the government." The university had requested a redundant reporting program be canceled; the *Daily Beast* story was retracted. Liberal writer Katha Pollitt wrote on Twitter that Walker was a pro-life hypocrite because he fathered a love-child in college and pressured the woman to get an abortion. She linked to an obscure blog that made the allegation before the 2012 election. The claim had been refuted hours after it was posted.

Many of the major stories that have dogged Walker have had the tone of an inquisition—entirely concerned with what went on in the heart and mind of Walker but divorced from any public policy question. Did Walker "believe in" evolution? Did he believe Obama loved America? Did he believe Obama was a Christian?

Walker said that these questions didn't merit comment, so he didn't answer them. And heads exploded. The mood was best captured by the *New Yorker*'s John Cassidy, who called Walker an "odious politician whose ascension to the Presidency would be a disaster." What clearly made him most concerned was that for "all his awfulness, Walker is a serious contender."

Throughout his career, Walker has been lucky in his enemies. In 2002, he was first elected Milwaukee County executive following a pension scandal by his Democratic predecessor. In 2011, union protesters might have killed the legislation at issue if they hadn't behaved so outrageously. Now, over-the-top attacks from the press could help endear Walker to voters.

Hillary Clinton is leading Walker and the rest of the potential GOP field in head-to-head polling matchups. On the other hand, the latest *Wall Street Journal* poll asks voters if they think it's more important to choose a president who is "more experienced and tested" or one who will "bring about greater changes" to current policies. "Change" beats "experience" 59 percent to 38 percent.

If there's ever a time for an "outsider" to defeat someone who "embodies Washington," 2016 would seem to be it. Scott Walker certainly thinks so. ♦

Woman's Day

The Democratic matriarchy

By Noemie Emery

'A matriarchy is a social organizational form in which the mother or oldest female heads the family. . . . It is also government or rule by a woman or women," runs the entry in Wikipedia, adding helpfully that it can be a description for a society in which "the culture centers around values and life events described as 'feminine,'" or in which "women's power is equal or superior to men's." If this reminds you of the modern-day Democrats you are not mistaken, as over the course of the last few decades the party has transformed itself into an estrogen entity, run by and increasingly for elderly women, focused heavily on what are described as "gender-themed issues," with men in retreat, and nary an Alpha Male in sight.

What happened to the party of Andrew Jackson, John Kennedy, and Franklin D. Roosevelt; the frontiersmen and the midcentury's hot and cold warriors, whose exploits as recently as the Ford-Carter contest led a bitter Bob Dole to complain of "Democrat wars"? It is a long story and often a strange one, and the ultimate twist has been this: In 2008, Hillary Clinton lost her bid to become the first female president, beaten by Barack Obama, the mixed-race Hawaiian who became the first nonwhite president, but whose policy choices in health care and other domestic concerns caused upheavals in party dynamics that made feminists *the* dominant voice. How did this happen? Let us look back and see.

Once upon a time, the Democrats were almost *the* warrior party, the one that led the country into both of the world wars (Woodrow Wilson reluctantly, but Franklin Roosevelt always ahead of the country's opinion), the party that crafted the response to the Cold War under the guidance of Harry S. Truman, the party of John Kennedy, who on foreign policy ran to the right of every Republican he ever contested and claimed that Dwight Eisenhower had not armed the country enough. But in the mid-'70s, it became at once the antiwar and pro-feminist party, and such it has been ever since. In 1972, George McGovern cried, "Come home, America!" and was trounced by Richard M. Nixon; Jimmy Carter ran as a former naval officer (and protégé of the hard-bitten Admiral Hyman Rickover), but by 1980, when he faced Ronald Reagan, a series of defense cuts, unfortunate statements ("inordinate fear of communism" being just one of them), and the Iran hostage crisis, in which he seemed both hapless and helpless, had established his role as a wimp. In 1988, Michael Dukakis posed in a tank, in which he looked ludicrous, and a series of poor decisions on crime and punishment issues suggested he had no inclination to take on aggressors, whether at home or abroad.

George H.W. Bush, who succeeded Reagan and had been his vice president, presided skillfully over the fall of the Communist empire, but it was his decision to eject Saddam Hussein from the Kuwaiti oil fields that carved the two parties' new stances in stone. It was in May 1991 that Christopher Matthews (not yet an MSNBC hothead) wrote a prescient column, "Mommy's Love and Daddy's Protection," that described the Democrats as the Mommy party, taking care of health care and Social Security, and the Republicans as the Daddy party, taking care of war and peace, crime and punishment, and keeping the wolf from the door.

How allergic the Democrats had become to even the thought of armed power was shown at a leadership retreat of the party of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy. Wrote Matthews: "A meeting of liberal Democrats in Chantilly, Virginia, on January 26—10 days into the Persian Gulf war—focused on matters close to home: health care, employment fairness, reproductive rights. A handout scolded attendees not to stray beyond the water's edge but to stay fixed on domestic social worries like 'national health programs.' . . . The biggest applause line was a pitch for national health insurance [from Edward M. Kennedy]."

This is the party that was more than ready the following year for Bill and Hillary Clinton, the first presidential couple of the feminist era. They were the first couple in which the wife had a postgraduate degree (from Yale Law School) and was a careerist on a par with her husband, the family breadwinner while they were in Arkansas, and regarded by many as the tougher one of the two. Though a womanizer on the scale of John Kennedy (most Kennedy wannabes pick the wrong traits to emulate), Clinton evaded war service where Kennedy sought it, focused on the domestic, not the foreign, agenda, and radiated the feminine virtue of empathy, as opposed to a manly resolve. For the first time,

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the feminist agenda was pushed to the forefront of national policy via quotas—the slot of attorney general was reserved for a woman—the all-out embrace of abortion rights, and the championing of Anita Hill in the charges she brought against Clarence Thomas in his confirmation hearings the year prior to the election. Those hearings had mesmerized and then split the whole country, and led Democrats to dub 1992 the "Year of the Woman," in which four female Democrats entered the Senate (where some remain to this day). Hillary herself would arrive in the Senate eight years later (with the help of sympathy resulting from the intern sex scandal that brought on Bill's impeachment), from which everyone expected her to ascend to the presidency, much as the couple had planned decades earlier while still back in Arkansas. But "Hillary's turn" would be deferred for eight years by Barack Obama, when her gender card was trumped by his bid to become the country's first nonwhite president (and by his superior campaigning skills). But ironically, it was his tenure in office that would complete his party's move towards becoming the party of women, to an extent that no one could ever have dreamed.

Girls' club: Democratic senators discuss the farm bill, January 2014.

Obama's first run in 2008 was based on the theme that he was the Messiah, the magical son of a mixed-race union, come to lead the country past its divisions and into a mystical state of harmonic convergence, both in the nation and world. But alas, his far-left agenda sparked partisan warfare, and by 2012, when he ran in his second election, hope had long vanished, change appeared threatening, his health care legislation proved very unpopular, and he had few achievements of which he could boast. As a result, his campaign consisted of attacks on his rival, who turned out to be a poor politician, and the "war on women" that he accused Republicans of waging.

Much was made of the plight of a fictional "Julia," whose journey through life was cushioned at every turn by the benevolent hand of the federal government, and of a very real Sandra Fluke, a 30-year-old student of Georgetown law school, who complained that conservatives were trying to bankrupt her and ruin her life by forcing her to pay for birth control pills. It was the first time "women's issues" had played such a central role in a major election, and it was enough to keep Obama safely in office, though with a sizable fall-off in votes. But the midterm elections in 2014 were a whole other story: The implementation of Obamacare in 2013 had kicked off another fierce round of resistance, and the explosion of ISIS in mid-2014, after Obama bragged he had ended two wars in the region, brought his foreign policy failures to light. This was an election that did not want for issues, but while Republicans attacked on a whole range of matters, Democrats fell back again on the "war on women" as the one card they thought they could play. As in 1991, with the Mideast on fire, they were told "not to stray beyond the water's edge but to stay fixed on domestic social worries," which this time meant subsidized access to abortion and birth control, and turned out not to worry women as much as was hoped. Hillary Clinton campaigned for "choice" with a long list of imperiled liberals, and helped save just one of them (Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire), while Kay Hagan, Michelle Nunn, Alison Lundergan Grimes, and numerous males were soundly defeated. Sandra Fluke, the poster girl of the previous cycle, lost her bid to attain a California state office; Wendy Davis, who stood firm in pink sneakers for late-term abortion, lost women in Texas, and the whole state, by about 20 points. In their second disastrous midterm in a row, Democrats had massive losses in the Senate, the House, and on the state level, and were at their lowest point since before the Depression. But what was bad for the party was very good for the feminists in it: It had become at long last the matriarchs' party, with an issue-set focused on gender-themed matters, and with Hillary Clinton as the designated successor (and Elizabeth Warren her only rival), with no male of comparable standing in sight.

After George W. Bush's reelection in 2004, Democrats launched a 50-state strategy, trying to pick candidates for both chambers of Congress who stood a chance of winning in the places they came from, which meant picking centrist or even conservative Democrats for contests in red or purple districts and states. This paid off for the party in 2006, when the war in Iraq times Katrina created a wave, and paid off again two years later, when the fiscal collapse swept them into office on a wave of still higher dimensions, with a filibuster-proof 60 seats in the Senate and a still greater edge in the House. But the effect of Obama's unpopularity in the two midterms that followed was to undo and reverse all these triumphs, peeling away, by 2015, 69 seats in the House, 13 seats in the Senate, and 11 statehouses, along with massive losses in

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the state legislatures, from which candidates for Congress and governorships usually emerge.

Some women (and some women candidates) did of course lose, but the net effect of these years was to wipe out a generation or more of male politicians, especially those who tended to occupy spaces close to the center, where most presidential elections are fought. The Democrats who survived were from small states or blue states, and seen as much too left-wing to prevail in a national contest. And the party that was left when the dust settled was both very female and old. The few notable men left whom people might recognize had begun their careers in the '60s or '70s, such as Vice President Biden (elected to the Senate in 1972); Secretary of State John Kerry, who became an antiwar leader in the early '70s; Senate minority leader Harry Reid, now in his 70s; and Governor Jerry Brown of California, 77 in April, who began his first stint as governor when he succeeded Ronald Reagan in 1975.

Amid this desert, Hillary Clinton stood tall indeed, but she too had mileage—she will be 69 in November 2016—and the handmaidens around her were older still: House minority leader Nancy Pelosi (74), Senator Dianne Feinstein (81), and Senator Barbara Boxer (74). And should Hillary face competition, it is likely to come from the female or old: Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, 73 and a Socialist, or Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts, famous for being 1/32 Cherokee and a spring chicken of just 65. The only one younger is Martin O'Malley, 52, a former Maryland governor, lackluster at best, who can legitimately be labeled a failure, as his lieutenant governor lost when he ran to succeed him, even though Republican governors in Maryland are as rare as blue moons or hen's teeth. The mere fact that O'Malley can be thought of as a potential contender tells you all you need to know about the current generation of Democrats, which is that their Alpha Male quotient is zip.

Save for Obama—a metrosexual if ever there was one—male stars in the party are few. While Republican politicians these days are often *too* interesting—every day, John McCain, Ted Cruz, or Rand Paul seems to be raising hell just for the hell of it—it's not certain the average citizen could pick a Democratic senator out of a police lineup, and there's no reason he should. To a man, they seem to be small, pale, and liberal, eager to follow the lead of their feminist masters, even when it's not clear that they should. Last year Mark Udall of Colorado, known to his state as a rangy outdoorsman, meekly took the advice of his handlers to run his campaign on the "war on women" theme dear to the feminists, banging the drum on abortion, even as the liberal *Denver Post* called him out and a female reporter mocked him as Senator Uterus. Having entered the race close to a shoo-in, he lost by two points.

Is there a light at the end of this tunnel? Well, there is James Webb. Recruited to run in the 2006 cycle, when Democrats were trying to expand their party, he scored a surprise win in Virginia after unlucky George Allen uttered "macaca," and he scraped into the Senate by less than a point. Even then, he was an outlier in his own party.

A self-styled Jacksonian (Andrew, not Jesse), a decorated Marine who called his memoir *Born Fighting*, a secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration, Webb was a typical Democrat of the FDR-Truman-JFK persuasion. "An economic populist. A national security hawk. His Democratic politics are less concerned with social groups than with social equality (of opportunity, not outcome)," in the words of David Paul Kuhn, and he understands the problems of working-class voters, which might be just what the Democrats need.

Of course, most Democrats don't see it that way and recoil from his opposition to "climate change," quotas, and affirmative action based on anything other than need. Another reason may be that he's simply too male for a party whose ideal seems to be Kirsten Gillibrand, the soignée New Yorker who became a feminist heroine when she wrote a memoir complaining that some years ago some old senator called her "porky." What are the chances a party like this will nominate a man who lives in the world as it is, and not one where transgender concerns are called a priority? Gloria Steinem once said a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle, and Democrats have decided this goes for their party. Some day they may regret having made the male animal persona non grata. But that moment has not happened yet.

Clearing the field of the Alpha Male menace was not the only thing Obama did for or to the feminists in his party: He also brought into politics a huge tidal wave of nonfeminist women, the last thing that he and his allies ever thought possible. First, John McCain's surprise pick of Sarah Palin was enough to throw Obama's campaign badly off balance for a time; then, Obama's overreach on health care helped bring a flood tide of conservative women into politics. Democrats were familiar with the older conservative archetypes such as Phyllis Schlafly; they were familiar with the female Republican moderate, often from Maine, who was kinder and gentler than her more dogmatic male colleagues; they were prepared for the "church ladies" who proved easy to satirize. They were not prepared for Kelly Ayotte, Susana Martinez, Nikki Haley, Kristi Noem, Mia Love (the black Mormon from Utah), Air Force veteran Martha McSally, Joni Ernst, or Elise Stefanik (the youngest woman ever elected to Congress), only a few of the young, diverse, feisty, and very formidable conservative women who came in with the 2010 and 2014 elections.

In 2011, *Slate*'s Hanna Rosin took a look at this new

kind of female conservative and found nothing to ridicule. She found instead that the Tea Party, often described as the last stand of the embattled male redneck, was by and large "an insta-network for ambitious women . . . aspiring candidates who could never get traction" and who might have been sidelined for years in the traditional two-party system, to crash the political heights from outside. Many got their start as insurgent reformers, battling the powers that were inside their own party, and were light years removed, in mindset and background, from the feminist corps on the left. They were often not from the coasts, but from the South and interior; they had not gone to Yale; they had backgrounds in farming or as small-business-women; they were (often) pro-life, though this was not their priority; they pushed not for bigger and better government programs but for reductions in taxes and in regulations; and, where feminists were quick to declare themselves spokesmen for all women, they had no use at all for identity politics, and even denied they exist. Haley downplayed her ethnicity and gender, Rosin wrote of the South Carolina governor's first campaign, when she said, "We are going to make history on Tuesday, but it's not history because there's the first female governor. . . . It's history because South Carolina will show what a good government looks like."

Thus, at their moment of prime party power, feminist Democrats are confronting a rival force in the opposite party that produces large numbers of strong female political figures, while denying the existence of a specific women's political consciousness. This creates a problem for Hillary feminists, as when Hillary said a place in Hell is reserved for women who don't "help other women," though Hillary herself naturally failed to help Republicans like Mia Love, Martha McSally, and Joni Ernst when they ran and won against men. Indeed, she went to Iowa to campaign for Bruce Braley, who ran against Ernst. Does Hillary think she herself deserves a hellish fate? And if she doesn't—why not?

How are Democrats taking this unexpected development? Not all that well. In *City Journal*, Kay Hymowitz catalogued the reaction among feminists to Sarah Palin's emergence, ranging from "turncoat bitch" to "insult to women" to "what I feel for her privately could be described as violent, nay, murderous rage." Gloria Steinem dismissed Republican women as "female impersonators," charging that many oppressors like to find and bribe victims who are willing to turn against their own kind. But this is hard to maintain when so many rise at one time from so many places—surely the Koch brothers can't pay for *all* of them?

Meanwhile, the matriarchs' party has to face the fact that while it has many more women in Congress, the Republicans have many more prominent women, more rising stars, more women governors, and more plausible candidates for national leadership. Save for Hillary and 81-year-old Dianne Feinstein, no female Democrat has the foreign policy chops of Senator Kelly Ayotte, who has made herself an authority on security issues. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Kirsten Gillibrand are also mentioned as potential national candidates, but their résumés are short on the commander-in-chief type of issues. Gillibrand is mainly known for sexual assault legislation, and for having invited as her guest to the most recent State of the Union a Columbia University undergrad who achieved notoriety by carrying her mattress around campus to protest the unfavorable resolution of a charge she brought that a classmate had raped her. This is not the background of your usual aspirant to the office once held by cold warriors such as Truman and Kennedy, to say nothing of generals like Washington, Eisenhower, Jackson, and Grant.

Have Democrats finally become the matriarchs' party, at just the wrong moment in history? Can a party survive without Alpha Male figures?

But Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy would never know their old party, which of course is no longer theirs. Hillary Clinton, who in 2008 ran as the candidate tough enough to answer the proverbial 3 A.M. phone call—though when the call really came she was missing in action—now plans, says Donna Brazile, to "run as a woman" (though what else she could run as is open to question), emphasizing her new role as a grandmother, and other gentle and fuzzy delights. She, Brazile tells us, "is comfortable talking at length about her own experiences being pregnant and giving birth while working as a partner in a law firm, and using that as a launching pad to discuss the importance of women in the workforce both here and around the world." The question is how much voters will want to hear all this in a world in which our geopolitical enemies are growing much stronger, Russia and ISIS are both on the move, Jews are shot in the most civilized cities in Europe, Christians are beheaded, and Muslims of the wrong kind burned alive.

Have Democrats finally become the matriarchs' party, at just the wrong moment in history? Can a party survive without Alpha Male figures? Where will the Democrats find them, assuming they want to? And how will the feminists face the onslaught of the new corps of contra-feminist women, who take their cues from Margaret Thatcher, not Gloria Steinem, and, *vide* Carly Fiorina vs. Hillary Clinton, aren't shy about calling them out?

These and other questions cry out for an answer, before we find out if Mother Knows Best. ♦

Dalton Trumbo (in glasses) addresses his admirers, Penn Station, New York (1950).

Idiots' Delight

The persistent mythology of the Hollywood Ten. BY HARVEY KLEHR

The Hollywood Ten, a group of screenwriters and directors who briefly went to prison in 1950 for contempt of Congress when they refused to answer questions about Communist party affiliations from the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), have, in the past few decades, become cultural heroes. The movie industry, consumed by guilt for its blacklisting of uncooperative Communists and ex-Communists, has produced a slew of apologias. Blacklistees have received honors and awards and been hailed for their courage and unflinching dedication to free speech, while cooperative witnesses, most notably the late director Elia Kazan, have been excoriated for their supposed moral lapses in truthfully testifying about communism in Hollywood.

Dalton Trumbo
Blacklisted Hollywood Radical
by Larry Ceplair and Christopher Trumbo
Kentucky, 716 pp., $40

The most interesting and controversial member of the Hollywood Ten was screenwriter Dalton Trumbo (1905-1976). The highest-paid writer in Hollywood when he ran afoul of HUAC, Trumbo has been widely credited with breaking the blacklist in 1960, when he received screen credits for writing both *Spartacus* and *Exodus*. With his acerbic wit, pugnacious personality, and withering insults, he managed to enrage, at different times, not only Hollywood conservatives but his own comrades as well.

This massive new biography, begun by Trumbo's son and completed, after his death, by historian Larry Ceplair

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Harvey Klehr, the Andrew W. Mellon professor of politics and history at Emory, is the author, most recently, of The Communist Experience in America: A Political and Social History.

(coauthor of an earlier history of communism in Hollywood), is, at turns, fascinating, enlightening, and contradictory. While it succeeds in portraying a man who was hardly a Stalinist automaton, it does suggest, against the authors' intentions, a talented screenwriter who was a political idiot.

Of Swiss and Scottish ancestry, Dalton Trumbo was born in 1905 and grew up in Grand Junction, Colorado, in a Christian Scientist household. He dropped out of college after one year, when his family's financial situation deteriorated, and moved to Los Angeles, where he worked in a bakery on the night shift for eight years, supporting his mother and two younger sisters. Obsessed with making a career and money as a writer, he suffered rejection after rejection before latching onto a part-time job writing movie reviews. His breakthrough came in 1934, when he was hired as a reader at Warner Brothers, published a novel, and had several short stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Ambitious and self-promoting, he soon got a screenwriting contract and became active in the fledgling Screen Writers Guild. His ascent was rapid: In 1938, he received eight screen credits, wrote a play that was briefly staged in New York, wrote his only successful novel, *Johnny Got His Gun*, and got married.

Although hailed as a powerful antiwar statement, *Johnny* was morally simplistic and politically incoherent. Even Trumbo wound up repudiating its message before readopting it when it suited his politics. The main character, a horribly disfigured World War I soldier, delivers an affecting but unrealistic message: If little people refuse to fight, wars will not occur. Trumbo later denied that he was a pacifist, telling the FBI in 1944 that he only opposed "jingoistic wars" and that the current conflict was a "people's war." By the time he directed a film version of *Johnny* in 1970, it was intended as an attack on American involvement in Vietnam.

When Trumbo wrote the novel, he was not yet a Communist; at the time, the party opposed pacifism. But when it was published, just after the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed in September 1939, it was serialized in the *Daily Worker* and hailed for its antiwar stance. Trumbo remained opposed to World War II, he later told the FBI, until June 22, 1941, the day Germany attacked the Soviet Union (although he also later insisted that he did not support American involvement until Pearl Harbor). Prior to the Nazi German invasion of Soviet Russia, he had argued that the conflict was not between "evil and righteousness" and that there was little to choose from between Churchill's England and Hitler's Germany. In fact, he argued, the blood of a German soldier was just as precious as that of an Englishman or a Pole.

Those disfigured in a people's war were, presumably, part of the price to be paid for defeating tyranny, while those Jews turned over to Hitler in 1939 were a small price to pay for avoiding battlefield casualties. Trumbo's moral compass was clearly revealed in a 1943 meeting with the FBI, when he offered to provide agents with information about pacifists and other war opponents who had written him admiringly about *Johnny* and discussed ways to spread its message more widely. When the interests of the Soviet Union were at stake, Trumbo believed that informing on political dissidents was a necessity.

Ceplair claims that Trumbo did not formally become a Communist until 1943, joining because several of his close friends—Hugo Butler, Michael Wilson, Ring Lardner Jr., and Ian Hunter—were members, not because of the party's dogma. By Ceplair's account, Trumbo was not a very dependable member, avoiding meetings and accepting party *diktats* but hardly being enthusiastic about them. Trumbo, Ceplair insists, was a Communist who did not believe "all the dogma and every pronouncement of the organization." He was never "an apparatchik, an automaton, or a robotic follower of dogma," nor was he even much interested in the Soviet Union.

But Ceplair provides numerous examples of a man faithfully toeing the party line. Trumbo went along with Earl Browder's expulsion as president of the American Communist party in 1945 with not a murmur of protest. In fact, he opined that in a contest between Lenin and Browder, he preferred to believe that "Lenin was right." When his friend (and later Hollywood Ten comrade) Albert Maltz faced party demands that he repudiate an article in which he had argued for more autonomy for artists in the face of the party's ideological strictures, Trumbo avoided taking a public position but privately wrote critically about Maltz. After Maltz recanted, Trumbo gave a speech in which he insisted that screenwriters had to produce progressive works. He wrote proudly that Hollywood had not "produced anything so untrue and reactionary" as the publishing industry, which had brought out volumes by Arthur Koestler, Jan Valtin, John Dos Passos, James T. Farrell, and Leon Trotsky, most of whom had denounced the Soviet Union and not "free speech." He regularly slandered his anti-Communist opponents in the Screen Writers Guild as "fascists"—and with far less justification than their claims that Trumbo was a Communist. For good measure, this heroic champion of free speech, while editor of the Screen Writers Guild magazine, kept anti-Communist articles from appearing.

In his opening statement to HUAC, Trumbo compared the political atmosphere in Washington to Berlin in 1933. Throughout the early Cold War, he blamed the United States for fostering repression around the world, for ignoring Eastern European purge trials, for Soviet anti-Semitism, and for military aggression, mindlessly repeating the mantra that America alone impeded the "free interchange of ideas." Neither the rhetoric nor the tactics of the Hollywood Ten endeared them to liberals whom they expected to support their right to belong (secretly) to an organization that denounced liberals as fascists. Basing their refusal to testify on the First Amendment instead of the Fifth Amendment, they were rebuffed by the Supreme Court, went to jail for contempt of Congress, and were blacklisted by the studios.

Dalton Trumbo made a very comfortable living even when he was blacklisted. A fast and compulsive writer, he churned out scripts at a prodigious rate while formally barred from Hollywood between 1954 and 1960, either writing or consulting on 60 screenplays, using more than a dozen pseudonyms and "fronts." Independent Hollywood producers willingly paid cut-rate prices to get his talents. Most of his work was formulaic, but he also wrote *Roman Holiday* (1953), *The Sandpiper* (1965), and *The Brave One* (1956), for which "Robert Rich" received a screenwriting Oscar in 1957. One unwitting producer tried to hire Rich and threatened to go to another screenwriter—yet another Trumbo front—if his price was too high! By the end of the decade the blacklist was crumbling, and Trumbo received credit under his own name for *Spartacus* and *Exodus*.

Well-paid as he was, particularly after the blacklist ended, Trumbo was in constant financial trouble, spending everything he earned and then complaining that he had to accept more hack jobs instead of devoting himself to novels. A 26-month sojourn in Mexico with several of his fellow blacklistees after his release from prison contributed to his financial woes. A financially disastrous production of *Johnny Got His Gun*—designed to show that "all wars [including World War II] are irrational"—ruined him: His house went into foreclosure, he had to pawn his wife's jewelry, his retirement accounts were drained, and he was pursued by the IRS.

Despite his success as a screenwriter, Trumbo despised what he did and yearned to write novels instead. About screenplays, he wrote his wife: "[B]asically, I hate them." Appealing to Nelson Algren to serve as a front while he was blacklisted, Trumbo told Algren that screenplays involved "a combination of prose and construction and sentimentality and vulgarity that appalls even me, who am used to it. . . . Hollywood is a vast whorehouse."

Trumbo had quietly left the Communist party around 1947-48, but he remained committed to its worldview and was critical of those who publicized their defection. He rejoined the party in 1956, in solidarity with the California Communists convicted under the Smith Act, but resigned again after a few months. Most of his complaints about the party, even those uttered publicly, were procedural, not substantive: He criticized its secrecy, its tedious meetings, and its lack of loyalty to the Hollywood Ten. Even the experience of being accused of chauvinism for a politicized script being considered for production by a group of his blacklisted friends—it praised North Korea—could not convince him that the Communist Party USA and its intolerant, narrow-minded minions were poor pillars of support for freedom of speech. He did enrage his old comrade Maltz by proclaiming that he bore no animus for those in Hollywood who had informed; they, too, were victims of HUAC.

Despite resurrecting his screenwriting career after 1960, Trumbo's politics remained just as nutty as before: He refused to denounce communism, continually attacked anticommunism, called the United States "fundamentally racist," and dabbled in Kennedy assassination conspiracy theories. Before he died in 1976, Trumbo summarized his talents and their limits in a handwritten note that Larry Ceplair found in Trumbo's archive: "God put me in a position to make a fool of myself, but no one expected me to take such glorious advantage of it." ♦

B&A

Join the Argument

The irresistible rise of the Federalist Society.

BY ANDREW BUTTARO

A visit to a law school decades ago and a visit today would reveal strikingly different campuses. Before the 1980s, legal ideas generally considered conservative or libertarian were rare, and their defenders were regarded as borderline eccentric. Today, the environment is far more hospitable. Professors of conservative persuasion teach at the nation's finest law schools, and market-based doctrines, such as law and economics, have created new fields of scholarship. Once, students who espoused conservative views in elite law school classes ran the risk of being marginalized. No longer.

Perhaps the biggest spur for this transformation has been the Federalist Society. Formed in 1982 in New Haven, it now boasts more than 40,000 members, hundreds of student chapters, and lawyer groups in dozens of cities. Four justices of the Supreme Court are considered friends of the organization—and a fifth is, at least intermittently, receptive to the group's ideas. In a number of momentous cases, the Court has adopted arguments from the Federalist Society's band of "citizen lawyers" to reshape broad swaths of constitutional thinking.

Amanda Hollis-Brusky, who teaches politics at Pomona College, here unpacks the strategy behind the Federalist Society's success. For readers in search of a general history of the organization, this is not it: Steven Teles's *The Rise of the Conservative Legal Movement* (2009) charts that story. But Hollis-Brusky picks up where Teles left off, describing the Federalist Society's influence

Ideas with Consequences
The Federalist Society and the Conservative Counterrevolution
by Amanda Hollis-Brusky
Oxford, 264 pp., $29.95

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in four key jurisprudential areas: the Second Amendment, political speech, the commerce clause, and state sovereignty. She argues that leading members of the Federalist Society network have been instrumental in reshaping the law in these fields and have been particularly effective where the "doctrinal distance"—the gap between existing jurisprudence and that preferred by the organization—was greatest. The history of the commerce clause and the Second Amendment provide the best support for her contention.

For nearly a century and a half, the commerce clause was understood to convey a relatively limited grant of authority to the federal government, in keeping with the "enumerated powers" understanding of the Constitution. During the New Deal, this restriction came into obvious tension with Franklin Roosevelt's more activist vision of national power, and battles with the Supreme Court marked much of his early presidency. Ultimately, Roosevelt won, and the legacy of this conflict persisted for decades as the Court refrained from striking down any law on commerce powers grounds.

Reflecting on this state of affairs at a 1994 Federalist Society event, Charles Cooper lamented that "it is no exaggeration to say today that there is almost no human commercial endeavor that cannot be brought within the Congress's commerce powers as construed by the Supreme Court." Federalist member Lynn Baker sardonically referred to Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3 as the "Hey, you-can-do-whatever-you-feel-like clause." Both views were as accurate as they were despairing.

Against this background, the Court's striking down of the Gun-Free School Zones Act on commerce grounds in *United States* v. *Lopez* (1995) came as something of a shock. Hollis-Brusky notes that the case "did not attract widespread Federalist Society network participation." But if the Federalist Society was originally caught flatfooted, it deftly moved to make the most of the changed judicial climate: *United States* v. *Morrison* (2000), a commerce clause challenge to the Violence Against Women Act, was shepherded before the Court by leading Federalist members. These attorneys supplied crucial intellectual ammunition through amicus briefs, inviting the Court to double down on its previous decision. The result was the second resounding win in five years for proponents of more limited commerce powers. A constitutional restriction once written off as a dead letter was granted a renewed lease on life.

A similar tale could be told about the Second Amendment. In 1965, the future Seventh Circuit judge Robert Sprecher regretfully noted that "the rights of the individual citizen would be little different today if the Second Amendment did not exist." The Supreme Court had interpreted the amendment into oblivion, deeming it to apply only to the federal government, not the states, and holding it to refer to a collective right to bear arms rather than an individual one. In the early 19th century, Justice Joseph Story had described the right to bear arms as "the palladium of the liberties of a republic," but a century later, the same right was an artifact.

This troubled a coterie of Federalist attorneys and inspired a campaign to resurrect the neglected amendment. One of the ripest targets lay close to home, in the form of the sweepingly restrictive gun laws of the District of Columbia. The litigation team painstakingly designed and framed the case against the city and carefully groomed the plaintiffs suing to overturn the law. Fortuitously, a Federalist-friendly judge penned the appellate court opinion, and the predicate for a Supreme Court decision was laid.

The Court's opinion in *Heller* v. *District of Columbia* (2008) was the product of these years of intellectual legwork and strategizing, and it did not disappoint: Writing for the majority, Justice Antonin Scalia in his historically minded opinion held that the Second Amendment protects an individual right to bear arms, and that Washington's handgun ban infringed upon this constitutional right. The decision was a watershed. Two years later, the Court struck a similar ordinance in *Chicago* v. *McDonald*. In short succession, the Supreme Court had unequivocally supported a constitutional right that, decades earlier, few mainstream thinkers had believed still existed.

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Chief Justice John Roberts at a Federalist Society dinner (2007)

While *Ideas with Consequences* is well-researched and consistently argued, it is not without flaws. First, Hollis-Brusky repeatedly contends—really, it is her thesis—that the Federalist Society constitutes a "political epistemic network," or PEN. While perhaps of interest to political scientists, such academic jargon comes across as needlessly convoluted and distracting. And reliance on this academic construct leads to tangled sentences such as this: "[The PEN] does not adequately account for the politically constructed dimensions of legal knowledge, legal authority, and the path-dependent nature of legal precedent."

Second, although she largely avoids

conspiratorial generalizations about the Federalist Society's influence, Hollis-Brusky sometimes slips into the easy language of the organization's critics. She claims, for instance, that Federalist Society lawyers helped "fabricate out of whole cloth" a Tenth Amendment law regarding state sovereignty. This performs the impressive feat of simultaneously giving too much credit to contemporary attorneys and too little to the Constitution's Framers, who, to state the obvious, wrote the Tenth Amendment in the first place.

On balance, however, this is an excellent account of how an ambitious, and intellectually fearless, organization has proved to be remarkably talented at facilitating constitutional change. Acknowledging that fighting entrenched orthodoxy wouldn't be easy, the Federalist Society's founders joked that "Rome wasn't burned in a day." But even if the old legal orthodoxy isn't quite in embers, its defenders dare not fiddle. ♦

B&A

One Unsparing Eye

F.R. Leavis and the life of literature.

BY THOMAS L. JEFFERS

"I can be pretty handy in a roughhouse." So said F.R. Leavis, all five-foot-six, 125 pounds of him, when offering to support some of his arty students at Downing College, Cambridge, whose protest meeting during the Suez Crisis of 1956 was threatened by members of the Boat Club. We may have trouble imagining this bantam don putting any oarsman against the wall, but in a literary critical fight there was, at midcentury, no one better.

Leavis (1895-1978) taught at Downing from the early 1930s until 1962; he wrote brilliant books like *Revaluation* (of poets, 1947) and *The Great Tradition* (of novelists, 1948), and, most important, he edited *Scrutiny* (1932-53), the indispensable quarterly of those decades. By 1964, though, David Holbrook, a left-oriented Leavisite, wondered if the campaign wasn't over: "When I see old Leavis walking along Trumpington Street with a glazed look of denying the rest of the world on his face, then I recognize the dangers."

The dangers, that is, of disdaining the rest of the world's pop culture, which that year saw hits like *Mary Poppins* and *My Fair Lady* in movies and John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and Saul Bellow's *Herzog* in fiction. The bag was mixed enough to invite *some* respectful attention. Still, the aim of criticism—what T. S. Eliot had called "the common pursuit of true judgment"—hadn't changed. For a loyal Leavisite such as Holbrook, life was too short for "'pop'-chasing."

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Leavis's friend at Cambridge, may have chased a little pop by going to the movies when he tired of the philosophical investigations that made him famous, but Leavis declined "intellectual slumming" of any sort. If he got winded, he put Schubert on the gramophone or read a neglected classic. We wonder which: He notoriously, and sensibly, insisted that some classics *should* be neglected—many titles in Robert M. Hutchins's "Great Books" series, for instance, which sold by the crate along with sets of the *Britannica*. Not only would Leavis "never read them," but, since they included such nonliterary tomes as Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* and Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, it seemed safe to say that Hutchins himself hadn't read most of them, either.

To help students and self-improving adults, Leavis had to point to the great books that *are* essential, the products of the creative imagination—poems, plays, and novels—that had grown out of the living speech of the past and that, crucially, could contribute to the living speech of the present.

Actually, though, the speech of the present wasn't very "living." That diagnosis had begun to take root in the late 1920s, when, as Christopher Hilliard recounts in his finely researched, wide-ranging book, the English degree was established at Cambridge. I.A. Richards's lectures in "practical criticism" revealed the subjective maunderings in students' responses to poems they hadn't seen before, by poets whose names were withheld. Blinkered by "stock responses," students clearly didn't know "how to read," the phrase used by Ezra Pound in a 1931 pamphlet and echoed the next year by Leavis in *How to Teach Reading*. "Cambridge English" became synonymous with tactically delimited "close reading," and, under Leavis's inspiration, it could be distinguished from the New Criticism in America, with its seemingly inexhaustible attention to "the words on the page." Leavis's close readings were in the service of "sensibility," notably the moral sense, and "value judgment," assessing the play of words and sensibility in a given work and ranking it in relation to others.

Hilliard also covers the "culture and environment" concerns that preoccupied Leavis, Denys Thompson, L.C. Knights, and other early *Scrutiny* critics, whose students went on

English as a Vocation
The 'Scrutiny' Movement
by Christopher Hillard
Oxford, 320 pp., $100

Memoirs of a Leavisite
The Decline and Fall of Cambridge English
by David Ellis
Liverpool, 160 pp., $65

Thomas L. Jeffers, who teaches English at Marquette, is the author of Norman Podhoretz: A Biography.

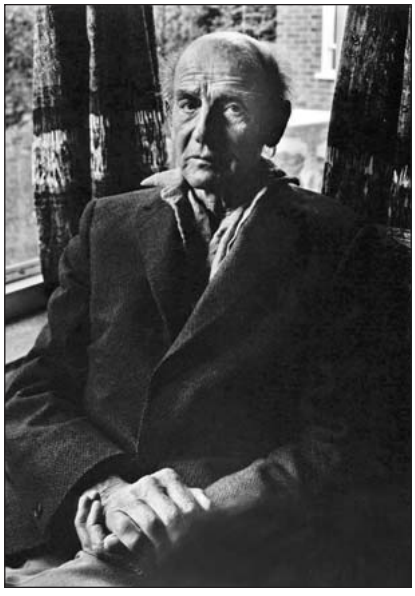
to found not just English programs but also media studies programs in British and Commonwealth universities. By "culture" Leavis meant something high—what, in mid-Victorian days, Matthew Arnold called "the best which has been thought and said." By "environment" Leavis meant the modern conditions distracting the many from attending to culture—the "tradition"—and discouraging the few from creating worthy additions to it.

The Scrutineers understood Eliot's diagnosis of the peril that culture was in: If, wrote Eliot, "the natives of that unfortunate archipelago"—Melanesia—were "dying from pure boredom" because they had no felt connection to the "cinemas," "gramophones," and "motor cars" that modern civilization had imposed on them, the same could happen to people in the industrialized West, "when electrical ingenuity has made it possible for every child to hear its bed-time stories through a wireless receiver attached to both ears."

Tracing the origins of industrialization to the "dissociation of sensibility"—the separation of intellection and feeling—that Eliot perceived in the early 17th century, Leavis argued for the superiority of John Donne over John Milton, George Eliot over George Meredith, and D. H. Lawrence over James Joyce. These positionings didn't derive from any specific "literary values." They were "judgments about life"—the superior authors' sensibilities being more unified than the competition's.

Leavis could sound tiresome, in his final decades, when he would talk about how "'life' is a necessary word; life is concretely 'there' only in the living individual being," and so on; but he was right. The state existed for the citizen, not the other way round. Abstractions were usually unhelpful when they weren't simply meaningless. What counted were relations between individuals—and creative writers, having dramatized those relations, were our best guides to understanding the emotions and ideas animating the action. Only with such concrete understanding can moral discrimination become significant.

Leavis modeled teaching and writing in this spirit for, by Hilliard's count, no fewer than 355 students who read (majored in) English at Downing from 1932 to 1952. The vast majority of them went on to careers in secondary education, though some worked at the red-brick or white-tile universities of Great Britain, at universities throughout the old empire, or in numerous outreach programs for nonacademic people, usually women, who socially and intellectually wanted to "read up." Oxbridge proved impregnable to Leavisites, however, and Leavis himself, in his redoubt at Downing, was



F.R. Leavis (1975)

commonly scorned and persecuted by the genteel, often Bloomsbury-connected pooh-bahs at the older and richer Cambridge colleges.

David Ellis's marvelously engaging memoir relates that the career of a Leavisite could be lonely, especially with the rise of "theory" in the 1970s. Studying with Leavis just before his retirement, Ellis discovered that the opposition no longer consisted of philologists (Anglo-Saxon remained part of Oxford's English degree to keep it from going "soft"), biographers tone-deaf to their subjects, or clever poem-crackers for whom analysis seemed an end in itself. The new theorists were initially structuralists ("What is the grammar of the language?"), then deconstructionists ("How can the text's apparent meaning be flipped and shown to be something quite different?"), and, finally, under the aegis of cultural studies, ideologists ("Where does the text reveal the oppression based on gender, race, class, or sexual preference that's made our history a nightmare from which we still haven't awoken?").

This politics-by-other-means cadre is currently in the saddle.

Not that Ellis is against liberating the oppressed. It's merely that "when a great novel or poem is used to support some generalization about culture, the qualities which make it worth reading tend to be ignored." Granted, the *Scrutiny* critics could be said to have initiated cultural studies: Literary criticism, for them, quite naturally led to other areas of inquiry, such as history, religion, ethics, sociology, politics, and so on. Except Leavis insisted that two years of training in criticism had to come first.

But how, as the precious Downing years receded, was a teacher to keep such training going? What Ellis found was that, lost between classes too large to supervise close reading and a civilization addicted to the hallucinations of pop, students and teachers alike preferred to skip directly to easy generalizations about fashion, sexuality, rap music, sports, performance art, or whatever. Ellis himself resisted the trend, but with difficulty.

He recalls the eyes of students at the University of Kent, where he spent most of his career, glazing over when he tried to convey the Elizabethans' excitement at the opening of *Henry IV Part Two*, in which "a huge fat man trundled onto the stage followed by his tiny page" and demanded, "Sirrah, you giant, what says the doctor to my water?" It "must have brought the house down," for the audience would have known Falstaff from part one of *Henry IV* and agreed that Rabelaisian jokes could be hilarious. The students, however, could see only "a dirty and intemperate old man." This left "no more to be said," as the sensibility on which an intelligent reading of Shakespeare depends had apparently vanished.

PAUL JOYCE / NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY, LONDON

A teacher in this situation can feel like a Nowhere Man, but he must remind himself that, with regard to the verities of the human condition, it's really his students who are nowhere. And to get *some*where, they need introduction, through literature, to "feelings, attitudes, and thoughts which they [will] not otherwise" know. Shakespeare too hard? Try, say, Tennessee Williams (not worrying about Leavis's probable contempt for him) and gradually—it'll take a long time—move back to the Bard's "dramatic poems."

What are English departments up to these days? As ever, the largest number of students sit in composition classes, which try—with, as every white-collar employer knows, uneven results—to foster the ability to speak and write fluently about matters they don't fully understand. It's a "marketable" skill like any other. Literature (more truly, cultural studies) classes, for their part, are often skimming poems and stories—no need for them to be traditionally canonical—and extracting a few talking points about "there they go again" maleficence and "Yes We Can" hope. Fluency, assuming it's been achieved, can be carried into any sort of symbolic-analytic work; what the professors are really banking on is that, wherever students go, the political takeaway—learning "diversity and tolerance through literature"—will stick.

When, in 1962, Leavis attacked C.P. Snow in the then-famous "two cultures" debate—the sciences vs. the humanities, principally literature—he quoted Snow's statement about rapid industrialization in the Communist countries having proven how "common men can show extraordinary fortitude in chasing jam tomorrow." The banality of "chasing jam" was proof, for Leavis, of an incapacity for serious reflection, or for writing fiction. Substitute "social justice" for "jam," and you have today's version of Snow's position, which, in his late writings, Leavis labeled "technologico-Benthamism," a utilitarianism dependent on science for the delivery of the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

Despite Leavis's nostalgia for a pre-industrial "organic community"—"the life of the Working Class" in Dickens's England: how "they talked . . . they might die from typhus tomorrow, but they lived"—he realized that there was no going back, and he carried no brief against modern medicine, labor-saving machinery, or the opening of careers to all talents. His conviction was simply that the chances for English culture depended on something else: a continuity with the creative imagination's most vital achievements in the past. The authority of religion having dwindled, the sole link to the past was through language ("they talked . . . they lived"), and we can get at *that* only through literature.

The Leavisites weren't conspiring with England's plutocrats, the 20th-century equivalents to Arnold's "Barbarian" aristocrats; they were Arnold's "clerisy," an intellectual elite without whom (as Ellis says) we will get "a future in which the only way to decide questions of value would be by counting heads." Great literature does, in principle, belong to *all* the "heads"—that was the breakthrough conviction of the students from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds who, starting in the Depression, found Leavis's mode of criticism so bracing. But identifying and incorporating that literature is a matter not of voting but, again, of training.

Students think they "like" sensationalist bestsellers. The Leavisite teacher is obliged to show them that they are "misinformed." After all, the function of criticism is, along with Eliot's pursuit of true judgment, "the correction of taste."

Wittgenstein once told Leavis that "he had more character than intelligence."

> Affecting to have been outraged by this remark [Leavis] would describe in a semi-humorous manner how he had been tempted to knock the great philosopher down. Yet he did not fail to add that Wittgenstein had immediately gone on to say that "intelligence can be picked up in the street."

Exactly. The source of character lies elsewhere. ♦

B&A

Abraham's Fathers

Tracing the path from 1776 to 1861.

BY WILLIAM MCKENZIE

Founders' Son
A Life of Abraham Lincoln
by Richard Brookhiser
Basic, 376 pp., $27.99

Abraham Lincoln was a remarkable leader in so many ways it is only natural that shelves upon shelves of books have been written about our 16th president. The first Republican president was an astute politician who knew how to include his opponents on his team. He of log cabin fame knew how to use his humble background to his advantage, as his Honest Abe image conveyed. The savior of the Union even got away with muzzling major newspapers and restricting civil liberties.

Since he is well-chronicled, and often mythologized, it is hard to expand our understanding of Lincoln. But Richard Brookhiser does an expert job of finding new room. A biographer of Founding Fathers such as George Washington, James Madison,

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and Alexander Hamilton, Brookhiser details one of the more unheralded aspects of Lincoln's success as a political leader, reporting on the influence of the writings, thinking, and leadership of the Founders on Lincoln as he evolved into a national figure.

Today, of course, we still pay homage to the wisdom and skill of our Washingtons, Madisons, and Franklins; in Lincoln's day, though, the Founders were relatively fresh figures. Only recently had the passage of time removed them from national life. For Lincoln, these men were not distant figures. And, as was usually the case with Abraham Lincoln, he learned about these imperfect yet transformative leaders through books.

Brookhiser recounts how Lincoln, as a young boy, read Parson Weems's *Life of Washington*. This biography, popular at the time, contained the fabled story of young George not lying about that cherry tree.

But more important, Weems captured Washington's sense of responsibility as he moved from farm life to leadership when duty called. Lincoln latched onto Washington as a man of action: "This was the Washington who thrilled Lincoln," writes Brookhiser.

Indeed, Lincoln knew Washington so well that he could recount the general's moves in the Battle of Trenton with great clarity. As he headed to Washington, D.C., for his own inauguration in 1861, Lincoln stopped in Trenton. There, he addressed both houses of the New Jersey legislature and, speaking to the senate, recalled Weems's description of the battle.

He also identified himself, in that address, with Washington's defense of liberty at Trenton and on other battlefields: "Washington and his men had defended liberty," Brookhiser writes. "Lincoln and the nation must be ready to defend her again. Washington's task was now his."

George Washington was not the only formative figure for Lincoln, whose weak relationship with his own father leads Brookhiser to surmise that Lincoln's interest in the Founders had something to do with finding a father figure. Lincoln also paid attention to revolutionaries such as Thomas Paine. To be sure, he mostly went the other direction from Paine politically, but Lincoln admired his style.

> Paine had the punch of an editorial writer, with the clarity and speed of a good reporter. This made Paine important to Lincoln the future writer and speaker. Lincoln already knew how to tell stories; Paine showed him how to make and win arguments.

Lincoln also studied the life and works of Henry Clay, the Kentucky legislator who (although not a Founder) authored the Missouri Compromise and taught Lincoln the significance of the Fourth of July. The Declaration of Independence, writes Brookhiser in capturing Clay, set forth the idea that "all men yearn for liberty, and as men, deserve it." The trick, of course, was translating that into reality in a nation divided over slavery, and here Lincoln went with Clay the compromiser and strategist over the abolitionists and their radical tactics.

Lincoln liked Clay for another reason as well: Henry Clay thought a lot about what we today call infrastructure, and "Clay's vision, which he called the American System, was an interlocking structure of internal improvements, a national bank, and protective tariffs," writes Brookhiser. Lincoln would support canals, roads, and other internal improvements in his home state. He would also back the Second Bank of the United States against Andrew Jackson. We tend to think of Lincoln as a man who spoke of grand concepts such as the perils of a house divided, but he was also interested in making things work.

Founders' Son shows how a young man far from the center of power took the time to study the big ideas that shaped our country and how he saw the Founders' values as a means of solving problems. Lincoln's devotion to understanding the past as a way to shape the future is an important witness for any aspiring leader, whether in politics, business, the military, or any other endeavor: Take the time to learn, know what you believe—and know what you *don't* believe.

"Parson Weems' Fable" (1939) by Grant Wood

AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Lincoln succeeded as a leader for numerous reasons, but he certainly did so because he had studied how to become one. As it happens, the presidential centers of Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush, Lyndon Johnson, and George W. Bush (where I work) are

currently collaborating on a project to help develop leaders. Abraham Lincoln had no such opportunity, only his books about giants like George Washington. But those books raised the sights of an ambitious young man from the Middle West, and for that influence, we can all be grateful. ♦

B&A

On Stagecraft

The players, strutting and fretting, make a difference.

BY JONATHAN LEAF

Why Acting Matters
by David Thomson
Yale, 192 pp., $25

Literary critics have one big fault, and film critics have another. The best critics of the novel undervalue storytelling even as they push the merits of literary gruel: dull, highbrow tomes filled with "ideas." The result is excessive praise for *Mrs. Dalloway* and not enough for *The Natural*, huzzahs for *Gravity's Rainbow* but not for *The Jungle Book*.

Film critics have the opposite fault. Because most start out as idolators, even the best of them often struggle to view and judge the medium as an art form. This attitude marred the often-brilliant criticism of Pauline Kael, and it also affects the work of David Thomson. Yet Thomson's strengths are many, and his writing overflows with compassion, wide experience of life, and cultivation. Those traits are all on display here.

Thomson does not approach his subject in any systematic or formal way. If you know he wrote a book in 1987 on Warren Beatty that alternated between reported commentary about the subject with a surrealistic novel about Hollywood, you are unlikely to be surprised that Thomson attacks the subject of acting sometimes discursively and sometimes novelistically. Two particular figures of interest are Laurence Olivier and Marlon Brando. Thomson rightly notes that although those two men are usually associated with conflicting schools of acting (traditional vs. method), neither can be easily classified. Thomson uses the pairing to identify not only the qualities we associate with great acting but the qualities that characterize great actors.

Inevitably, this involves some disparagement. Narcissism, manipulativeness, emotionalism founded in a poor sense of reality and, possibly, of self: These are defining aspects of the best performers. The actor who offers us the most soulful interpretation of a part frequently has the least understanding of himself, or of others.

Thomson makes no claim that acting is a moral endeavor; it is a profession that interests him and that serves as a vehicle for grasping the basic problems of life. In this sense, acting as a vocation isn't a metaphor simply for life but for a more distilled version of it. The actor is Everyman, and through his choice of work, he faces the vexing problems others do in more absolute fashion: the need to articulate a presentation of oneself to find work, the loss of opportunity tied to the passing of youth, the uncertainty of love in an atomized world.

In what respect is *Why Acting Matters* less than satisfying? The difficulty is that Thomson isn't concerned with what acting says about us; he remains, rather, an iconographer. The author of works on Gary Cooper, Bette Davis, and Nicole Kidman, he is fascinated by the glamour of the screen star over and above his or her expressive truthfulness. Thus, toward the end of the book, we find him gushing about Julia Roberts. While Thomson knows that Roberts is much closer to a screen personality than a great, or even good, actress, he is worshipful about her appearance in *Pretty Woman* (1990). Why? Because she was "gorgeous beyond belief where 'gorgeousness' was a mainline into one's hopeless desires."

> I doubt that she could do Hedda Gabler or Tracy Lord out in the open. But her quality as an actress is not quite the point here, just as I finally feel that performance is a more important or generative venture than differences of quality. If acting is an attempt to which most of us are vulnerable in real life, it hardly matters whether we are doing a good job or a bad job.

This may qualify as philosophy, but it's vacant criticism. And as anyone who works with actors will tell you, the quality of the acting matters as much as the difference between fresh mozzarella and Cheez Whiz.

Think of *The Graduate* (1967). When Mike Nichols was casting the movie, he considered three actors for the part of Benjamin Braddock: Robert Redford, Charles Grodin, and Dustin Hoffman. Those who have read the novel on which the film is based will know that Redford was closest to the role; and Nichols knew from directing him on Broadway how skilled he could be at romantic comedy. And who doesn't know Grodin's capacity for farce? But consider how forgettable *The Graduate* would have been with either Redford or Grodin. While Dustin Hoffman lacked the charisma, the generative power, of Robert Redford, he had a rare subtlety combined with a capacity to suggest complex feelings. When Anne Bancroft tries to seduce him, we laugh—but also grasp the pathos. We feel Benjamin's discomfort and shame even as we find the humor in his flimsy confidence.

There's no substitute for this, and Nichols deserves our admiration for casting a short, plain unknown in the role when a hack director might have settled for a lesser, more bankable talent. And that is why acting matters. ♦

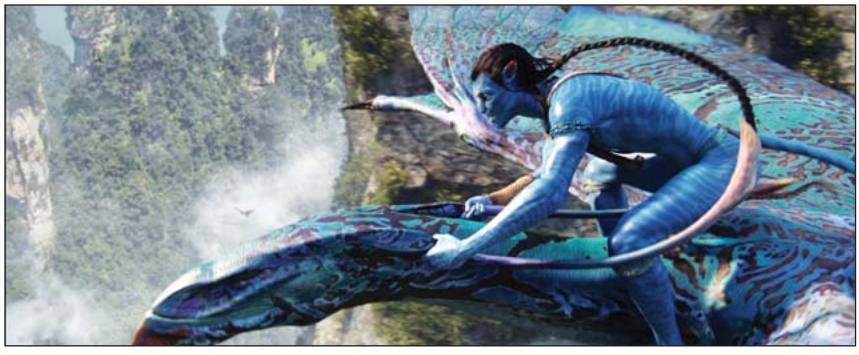
Jonathan Leaf is a playwright in New York.

B&A

Doomsday Machine

Moviegoing heads for the exit.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Will we ever grow weary of this?

Will anyone go to the movies 25 years from now? Will there even be movie theaters 25 years from now? These are not idle questions. New research from the Motion Picture Association of America shows how the moviegoing audience of those between the ages of 25 and 39 has contracted precipitously—dropping almost 25 percent over the past four years.

Moviegoing is like any habit: Break it, and you're not likely to go back to it. The habit is being broken. The business relies on those who go to theaters at least once a month. Such people are responsible for more than half the tickets sold in any given year. They now make up a mere 11 percent of the overall audience, and they're getting older. Ticket sales to Americans over 40 are rising. Ticket sales to Americans between the ages of 21 and 40 are falling.

If this trend is not reversed, and it's hard to see how it will be, two things will happen. The importance of frequent moviegoers will rise for the cinema's bottom line because the number of people who go rarely or don't go at all will rise. But those frequent moviegoers will begin to recede in numbers over time because they will (alas) begin, literally, to die out.

Hollywood is not really interested in this long-term crisis because its decision-makers are focused on maximizing profits over the next five years—since they have stock prices to defend and their own jobs to protect. And so they resort to very expensive and superficially effective Band-Aids to stanch the bleeding. A few studios have already laid out incredibly precise production schedules for their big-ticket franchise pictures stretching into the next decade. Marvel's timeline features no fewer than 19—yes, I said 19—movies. Five new *Star Wars* movies, one a year beginning this Christmas, are on the way. James Cameron is making three *Avatar* sequels for all those who couldn't get enough of 10-foot-tall blue cartoon men connected to their flying dinosaurs with fiber optic cables that come out of their heads.

All this seems foolproof now, and many of these offerings will have colossal opening weekends when they arrive. But what if tastes change over the next few years? All genres eventually go cold, at least for a time; so it will be for superheroes and science fiction. What if the first *Star Wars* reboot is dreadful and fails to whet appetites for its successors? What if audiences grow weary of the Avengers? Most important, what if people who really do go to the movies just start getting too old to watch Robert Downey Jr. aiming one-liners at his pet robot?

Hollywood is doing almost nothing as an industry to produce fare that will turn interested youth into the frequent moviegoers of the future. It knows a successful animated children's film is sheer gold (Pixar and *Frozen*)—but it does almost nothing for youngsters over the age of 10 but produce the occasional indifferent movie set in a school that looks nothing like theirs. One *Hunger Games* movie a year means one ticket sale a year to a teenage girl; it doesn't turn her into a moviegoer. Even more notably, there's very little that might appeal to parents and their children alike.

Forms of entertainment become obsolete over time, or are superseded by vastly more popular forms. The problem for those of us who love going to the movies is this: Movies are supported by an incredibly expensive infrastructure. Each major film is an artisanal product, handmade by hundreds of technically adept people. And while there's been a revolution in filmmaking that allows people to make movies very cheaply, and a great many wonderful ones have come out of that revolution, those films lack the seductive gloss and hypnotic glitter that really captivates.

It's not just the millions per picture that are needed to make the movies sparkly and fancy and fun. It costs more to advertise them because it's harder to make people aware that they even exist in the cable/Internet universe. Also, theaters are built on real estate that grows more valuable over time, luring developers because of the size of their footprint. Money has to be spent on theater upkeep or the seats will grow uncomfortable and the bathrooms skeevy. And if they grow less valuable because fewer people use them, and they don't generate the profits at the concession stands that really support them, those theaters will be sold or will close.

The future is bleak for moviegoers. But the thing is, once that future arrives, it won't seem bleak because there won't be enough of us left to mourn. Besides, we'll all have canes. ♦

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

"Clinton, the presumptive frontrunner for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination, has been on the defensive for relying solely on a private email account to conduct business as secretary of state. She also used a private email server traced back to her family home in New York."

—Washington Examiner, *March 9, 2015*

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