

**HILLARY'S
CORRUPTION**
JAY COST

the weekly

Standard

AUGUST 24 / AUGUST 31, 2015

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OF FRATS AND MEN

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN



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The Candidate as ‘Heel’

THE SCRAPBOOK can’t pretend to have had a misspent youth. But we did occasionally wallow in the spectacle of pro wrestling. And it’s pretty obviously the case, as a handful of astute observers have pointed out, that Donald Trump is a close student of, and has been deeply influenced by, the dramatic conventions of pro wrestling.

In his creation of a brash, cartoonish persona, his deftness at milking every last drop of publicity from attention-grabbing confrontations, and his talent for creating and stoking melodramatic controversies, Trump is a classic embodiment of that character known in wrestling circles as “the heel”—i.e., the over-the-top villain fans love to hate.

Trump’s friendship and business alliances with the great wrestling impresario and businessman Vince McMahon have been much remarked on. (If your tastes run to that sort of thing, you can find a video of the two of them in the ring together by

Googling “The Battle of the Billionaires takes place at Wrestlemania.”) But as we learned from the

Santana, as “Chico,” proprietor of a taco stand in Tijuana—suggesting that Trump’s high-profile attack on

criminal aliens from Mexico, besides staking out a distinctive position on immigration, may also have been a subliminal homage to the characters he has modeled himself on.

Trump’s high-profile confrontation with Fox News’s Megyn Kelly, beginning in the debate and continuing for days thereafter, was also straight out of pro-wrestling’s playbook of how to promote a prize fight—with Trump playing the heel and Kelly cast in the role of the heel’s



Trump and partner Bobby Lashley, with Stone Cold Steve Austin as the ref, shave Vince McMahon’s head in the culmination of World Wrestling Entertainment’s 2007 ‘Battle of the Billionaires’ bout.

case of Minnesota’s 38th governor, such connections can be as much of a political asset as they are a liability. Before turning to politics, Jesse Ventura famously made his name as, yes, a heel. Indeed, one of Ventura’s well-known heel routines involved mocking a rival, the Texas-born Tito

beloved opposite: “the face.”

One thing for Trump’s opponents to bear in mind is that a heel never, ever apologizes—indeed, notoriety and outrage are what he seeks. If you’re not in a position to body slam him, the best approach is probably to mock and ridicule his manhood. ♦

Up for Debate

Needless to say, THE SCRAPBOOK is strictly neutral on the results of last week’s Republican presidential debate on Fox News. So neutral, in fact, that we won’t even mention any of the highlights—or lowlights, if you prefer—and certainly won’t weigh in on who swept the floor with whom, who embarrassed him/herself, or who should have been invited to this particular gathering but was not.

No, we’ll leave the handicapping to those who spend more time around the racetrack than THE SCRAPBOOK is inclined to do. Our interest is not in

this particular debate but in the institution of presidential debates themselves. Or put another way: Are these televised debates good for our democracy, or not so good?

First, a little history. These encounters are not quite the venerable institutions people seem to believe that they are. The first presidential debates took place as recently as 1960—which is to say, we managed to elect Thomas Jefferson and Calvin Coolidge, and defeat William Jennings Bryan and Adlai Stevenson, without the benefit of candidate debates. Yes, Abraham Lincoln once participated in some famous debates

(1858) with Stephen Douglas, but that was for a Senate seat, not the presidency—and Lincoln lost the race! Moreover, after 1960, there were no more debates until the idea was revived in 1976, pitting Gerald Ford against Jimmy Carter. All of which means that Lincoln, James Madison, Andrew Jackson, both Roosevelts, and Dwight D. Eisenhower were elected to the White House without ever participating in a single debate.

Second, while debates are theoretically intended to reveal the expository skills, and knowledge and judgment, of candidates, they are essentially television performances. What do we

remember of these famous matches? Richard Nixon's five o'clock shadow (1960); the 27-minute audio failure endured by Carter and Ford (1976); George H. W. Bush glancing at his wristwatch (1992); Al Gore advancing menacingly toward George W. Bush (2000). Michael Dukakis was once asked a hypothetical question about his wife's rape and murder (1988), and Jimmy Carter was roundly criticized for mentioning a conversation with his daughter (1980). If there was ever a televised debate that hinged on language and substance—and not on the color of a necktie or projection of personality—THE SCRAPBOOK would like to know about it.

Third, lest we forget, the United States is not a parliamentary democracy but a tripartite system of republican government with a strong executive. The ability to dazzle with verbal fireworks, to engage in witty repartee, to specialize in tear-jerking eloquence or devastating comebacks, is impressive, even essential, in venues such as Britain's House of Commons. But in the White House? Imagine John Quincy Adams being asked about the hypothetical rape and murder of his wife, or evaluating Franklin D. Roosevelt on the basis of whether TV viewers would choose to hoist a beer with him. What sort of Q rating would Lincoln have earned, with his awkward demeanor, hayseed accent, and fondness for shawls?

Finally, while debates are, theoretically, encounters between candidates, the press has steadily promoted itself to partner in the dialogue. In 1960, it could be argued, the questions posed to Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy were largely designed to elicit their views and allow them to challenge one other. Twenty years later, by the time Ronald Reagan was facing a panel of journalists, the formula had evolved into an adversarial procedure: The questions put to Reagan were almost uniformly hostile, and “follow-up” questions were largely a means of prolonging the argument.

That's been the trend ever since, in THE SCRAPBOOK's view, and it raises a couple of questions worth pondering.



Are these slick extravaganzas, complete with cheering galleries, what is meant when we talk about debating the issues? And where is it written that the interests of voters and the health of our democracy are served by verbal skirmishing between candidates and journalists? THE SCRAPBOOK was impressed that last week's “debate” earned unprecedentedly high TV ratings. But to whose benefit? ♦

The Sommers Conversation

The latest star of the online “Conversations with Bill Kristol” (a growing series of over 30 talks, at conversationswithbillkristol.org) is Chris-

tina Hoff Sommers, a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute already famous for her Factual Feminist videos. Almost overnight, her interview became a contender for most-viewed of these wide-ranging, in-depth discussions with eminent thinkers.

No doubt this is partly because Sommers is such an engaging speaker. Her good grace and humor never fail her, however tedious the task of puncturing the latest absurdity of academic feminism. In her talk with THE SCRAPBOOK's boss, Sommers recounts how she got into this groove almost 30 years ago, as a professor of philosophy at Clark University.

Asked by her department chair to work up a course on feminist

theory—and assuming herself to be a feminist—she ordered the leading textbooks on the subject and started to read. What confronted her was a witch’s brew of conspiracy theories, grievance-mongering, and vilification of men, backed up with phony statistics. What shocked her most was these textbooks’ flagrant violation of what she calls “the sacred commandment of college teaching: Thou shalt present both sides of the argument.”

From there it was but a short step—one paper presented to the American Philosophical Society and one article published in the *New Republic*—to Christina’s excommunication from a religion she says she hadn’t known existed. In the ensuing years, her books *Who Stole Feminism?*, *The War on Boys*, and *Freedom Feminism* have cemented her place as a sane and attractive voice for women’s liberty and equality rightly understood—not to mention for integrity in scholarship.

But there’s another reason for Sommers’s online success right now: her celebrity status among Internet gam-

ers. Ever since the Factual Feminist defended gamers against the cultural authoritarians who denounce their hobby as misogynist and violent, she has been embraced as the (mostly young and male) gamers’ mascot. They call her BasedMom. What’s more, this heterogeneous, passionate, brainy, and much-disapproved-of virtual community is turning out to be something seldom seen: a group ready to stand its ground and face down the feminist scolds.

About time. The philosophers had their chance. The academy at large looked away. Government surrendered long ago, with the typical mainstream politician in tow. They are all strangely cowed by institutional feminism’s intellectually slapdash studies proving the oppressed status of the freest women in the world.

So, good for the gamers. If it’s their support that is helping give prominence to Christina Hoff Sommers’s call for reality-based thinking about women’s lives and choices, more power to them. ♦

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Talk to the Hand

The psychic wore a long, red skirt. It swirled when she walked, as if mystically stirred. She plopped down across the table from me, checked her iPhone, and lit a cigarette. After a long drag, she coughed. “I’m Jessica,” she said, pronouncing the name in a thick New Jersey husk.

I glanced at my girlfriend, Nan, who was seated beside me. She didn’t return my look—*proof of regret*, I thought, feeling vindicated.

I didn’t want to be there.

We had been having a thoroughly pleasant, this-worldly Saturday afternoon of shopping when we passed a flimsy, weathered plastic sign that read “\$5 Psychic” in black block letters.

As soon as I saw the sign, I knew what was coming. Sure enough, Nan smiled up at me. “Can we go?” she asked. And like any good Alabama-born, sweet-tea Presbyterian, I said no.

What kind of sucker did she take me for? She told me about a friend who “went to a psychic who predicted everything.”

I countered with a friend who, out of curiosity, walked into a psychic’s booth—and back out again without either a true prediction or his wallet.

Did I invent this story for the purposes of the moment? Yes. Was it “true”? Of course!

But she begged and prodded, and, despite my obvious misgivings, I yielded. If the meek shall inherit the earth, I guess I’ll be fine.

So there I sat, on a sticky leather couch, handing over a \$20 bill to a middle-aged woman double-fisting a cigarette and a can of Diet Coke.

“Which da ya want?” she barked, nodding at a board that, in a past life, could have been the menu at a barbecue joint.

The options: Crystal Ball Prediction, \$40; Tarot Cards, \$30; Palm Reading, \$10; Horoscope, \$5. Horoscopes were easy enough to find on our own time. I said we’d take a palm reading each.

The psychic frowned at our thrift and then glanced at Nan’s palms. Another long pull on the cigarette. “Okay, let’s see,” she said in a bored monotone. “Umm . . . ya surrounded by fake friends.”



It was like sitting backstage with an exhausted, third-rate actress. I’d been expecting a scam, but Jessica’s lack of dramatic effort astounded me. It was clear that, unless we shelled out the cash for the big-ticket items, we were not going to get this woman’s best performance. Or, for that matter, any performance.

The psychic droned on about the shallowness of Nan’s friends. “But stick with *him*,” she said, motioning to me. “He’s very wise.”

At last, I thought. *Now we’re getting our money’s worth!*

She continued, turning to me. “Ya very attractive. Women love ya. And ya flirtatious, but only when ya single.”

I flushed slightly at this, but, thinking it out of place to thank her, merely nodded. She wasn’t done.

“Ya gonna be very successful in business. What are ya majoring in?”

“Poetry,” I replied.

“Oh.” She paused, as if stumped. After a moment’s thought, she said, “Well, ya gonna be a famous poet, then. But ya frustrated because ya parents are pressurin’ ya into . . . what are they pressurin’ ya into?”

“They’ve encouraged me to do whatever I want!” I said.

“Oh.” Another pause. I could almost hear the gears whirring. “So maybe it’s more of a mental thing I’m gettin’ from ya. Or maybe ya frustrated because ya parents don’t have an opinion on ya future!” She leaned back in satisfaction, tapping her cigarette butt on the rim of an empty Diet Coke can.

She went on to tell me about the two sons I would have and the piles of money. Finally, she turned back to my girlfriend, who had been sitting neglected during this string of compliments. “You’ll be happy, too,” she said. “Okay, I gotta run.”

She lit another cigarette and stood up. Nan stopped her, asking, “Doesn’t the palm reading come with a horoscope as well?”

“That’ll be an extra five bucks each,” said Jessica. When we declined, she said, “Okay I’ll give them to ya both for five.” If the fortune-telling business goes under, don’t be surprised to see this woman selling used cars.

We thanked her and said we’d be leaving. As we walked out, she relented and asked us our signs. Nan said, “Aries.” I hesitated. “Sagittarius?”

“Yeah, you two are good together,” the psychic assured us. “Sagittarius is compatible with . . . um . . . Aries, Virgo, and Scorpio. At least I think so. You can look it up online!”

With that, she swept up our crumpled cash and disappeared through a black curtain, leaving only a wisp of smoke and the scent of Marlboro Reds.

WILL BREWBAKER

Does Israel Stand Alone?

“Because this is such a strong deal, every nation in the world that has commented publicly, with the exception of the Israeli government, has expressed support. The United Nations Security Council has unanimously supported it. The majority of arms control and nonproliferation experts support it. Over 100 former ambassadors who served under Republican and Democratic presidents support it.”

President Barack Obama, August 5, 2015

Let’s for the moment ignore the fact that many other countries, especially those with the most at stake, are in fact privately appalled by the Iran deal. Let’s stipulate that Israel stands publicly alone.

So what? If the United Nations Security Council had existed in October 1938, it would have rushed to support the Munich agreement signed with Germany by the P2+1 of the day, Great Britain and France plus Italy. The majority of arms control and foreign policy experts would have supported it. Former ambassadors who had served under Republican and Democratic presidents would have supported it. In fact, while the United States was not a party to the agreement, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made it publicly known that he had cabled British prime minister Neville Chamberlain, “Good man.”

Little Czechoslovakia—not invited to be a party to the negotiations and of course not a party to the agreement—stood alone. And as Churchill put it the next week: “All is over. Silent, mournful, abandoned, broken, Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness. She has suffered in every respect by her association with the Western democracies and with the League of Nations.”

Today, according to President Obama, Israel stands alone. She has suffered from the fecklessness of the Western democracies and the hostility of the United Nations. But all is not over. Israel is not broken and has no intention of receding into the darkness. As Benjamin Netanyahu said in his speech to Congress in March: “Even if Israel has to stand alone, Israel will stand.”

So it does. Writing in the *New York Sun*, Seth Lipsky commented: “President Obama may have mocked the Jewish state for being the only country in the world to oppose the pact of appeasement he’s just inked with Iran. All the greater Israel’s glory, we say.”

But the key point, Lipsky notes, is this: In its opposition to the Iran deal, Israel does *not* stand alone. America stands with Israel—even if the Obama administration does not.

The majority of the U.S. Congress stands against the deal. And so does Army Staff Sergeant (ret.) Robert Bartlett, who was grievously wounded on May 3, 2005, in Baghdad by an improvised explosive device made far more devastating by sophisticated Iranian expertise dedicated to the task of killing and maiming as many American soldiers as possible.

The destruction of Sergeant Bartlett’s Humvee was a feather in the cap of the commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps, Qassem Suleimani. A retired American general officer who served in Iraq commented recently that special forces and drone operatives had Suleimani in their sights several times during those years. They were told by their civilian superiors to refrain from killing him. The general deeply regrets that he and his colleagues were constrained by those orders. Now the Iran deal removes international sanctions from Suleimani personally and from his Revolutionary Guard.

In an ad aired by the group Veterans Against the Deal, Sergeant Bartlett has spoken out. You can watch the ad at vetsagainstddeal.com. You might consider asking your senators and representatives to do so as well.

On August 12, Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, who negotiated the deal with John Kerry, met in Beirut with Hassan Nasrallah, chief of the Iran-funded terror group Hezbollah. Zarif told Nasrallah the deal “created a historic opportunity to . . . face threats posed by the Zionist entity.” Hezbollah has killed Israelis and Jews. It has killed Muslims and Christians. It has also killed Americans. The group took gleeful credit for the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Lebanon, which killed 241 Americans who were in Lebanon to serve as peacekeepers at the request of Arab nations and for that matter the U.N. Security Council.

Members of Congress should be proud to stand against a deal that empowers Iran and Hezbollah, that leaves Iran’s nuclear infrastructure in place and increases the chances of nuclear proliferation, that funds Iranian terror and increases the chances of regional wars. As Sergeant Bartlett said when he first heard about the deal, “I couldn’t believe it. I didn’t want to believe it. The very country that killed so many Americans over in Iraq—I just couldn’t believe it.”

Sergeant Bartlett couldn’t believe it. He’s chosen to fight the deal and try to defeat it. He has the support of the American public. No, Israel does not stand alone.

—William Kristol

Don't Forget Obamacare

The opening Republican presidential debate was a spirited affair, but missing was any serious discussion of Obamacare, the domestic centerpiece of Barack Obama's presidency. The moderators asked only two Obamacare-related questions. One elicited Donald Trump's assertion that a government monopoly over health care "works" in Canada and "works incredibly well" in Scotland. The other prompted John Kasich to defend his decision to expand Obamacare in Ohio on the grounds that "everybody has a right to their God-given purpose." Half of the 10 candidates (including Trump) mentioned in passing that Obamacare needs to be repealed. But no candidate even began to outline a conservative alternative.

We hope that the candidates will soon step up to the plate in this regard. Obamacare costs a fortune at a time when we are \$18.2 trillion in debt. It centralizes power and money in Washington. It declares war on doctors in private practice, who will soon go the way of the milkman unless Obamacare is repealed. It funds abortions with tax dollars. And for the first time in our nation's history, it forces private citizens to buy a product or service of the federal government's choosing, merely as a condition of living in the United States.

In pushing to repeal Obamacare and replace it with a conservative alternative, a candidate would be doing the American people's bidding. A McLaughlin & Associates poll commissioned by the 2017 Project asked 1,000 likely voters (including 37 percent Democrats and only 31 percent Republicans) the following question shortly after the *King v. Burwell* Supreme Court decision, in which the Court ruled in favor of the Obama administration:

Which comes closest to your view of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, commonly known as "Obamacare"?

1. It should remain the law of the land, either in its current form or in an amended form.
2. It should be repealed and replaced with a conservative alternative that aims to lower health costs and help people get insurance.
3. It should be repealed but not replaced with an alternative.

In response, 43 percent said Obamacare should be repealed and replaced with a conservative alternative, while an additional 12 percent said it should be repealed but not replaced. Only 38 percent said it should not be repealed. In other words, with a conservative alternative

in play, likely voters support repeal by a margin of 17 points—55 to 38 percent.

It is not just any conservative alternative that can lead to full repeal. In addition to lowering costs and helping people get health insurance, a winning alternative must be designed so as to cut off the three easiest liberal lines of attack.

First, a conservative alternative must provide an answer to the problem of preexisting conditions—one that, unlike Obamacare's, doesn't undermine the very nature of *insurance*. This requires commonsense protections that allow people to do things like move from employer-based insurance to individually purchased insurance without being charged more for a "preexisting condition" that was previously covered. Similarly, when they turn 18 (or first leave their parents' insurance) people should have a grace period of a year or so to buy insurance without being charged more for a childhood condition that might or might not have been covered under their parents' plan.

Second, an alternative shouldn't alter the tax treatment of the typical American's employer-based insurance. About 170 million people have—and usually like—such insurance.

Third, a conservative alternative must provide an answer for the poor and near-poor who have become newly insured under Obamacare. This means providing refundable tax credits to all people who are not offered insurance by their employer but instead purchase it on their own. These tax credits should not be income-tested and should go directly to individuals and families—not to insurance companies, like Obamacare's subsidies.

A conservative alternative that had its defenses in order in these three areas could then go on offense. For 70 years, the federal government has given generous tax treatment to those who get insurance through their employer, while millions of Americans have gotten no tax break for buying insurance on their own. Obamacare didn't fix this longstanding unfairness in the tax code. A well-conceived conservative alternative would.

This contrast would highlight how burdensome Obamacare is for the middle class and the young. The typical 40-year-old making \$35,000 a year without employer-based health insurance doesn't get a dime in taxpayer-funded Obamacare subsidies. Meanwhile, next-door, someone identically situated but receiving health insurance through an employer gets a tax break. Under the 2017 Project's "Winning Alternative to Obamacare," the 40-year-old without employer-based health insurance would get a \$2,100 tax credit to help buy insurance—and if he or she bought insurance for less than \$2,100, the difference would go into a Health Savings Account. Instead of being compelled to buy Obamacare-approved insurance through a government-run exchange, people could shop for value on the open market.

Non-income-tested tax credits would address this inequity in the tax code and revitalize an individual insurance market that the federal government broke. Moreover, an alternative like the 2017 Project's would not only free Americans from Obamacare's heavy-handed mandates but would also save more than \$1 trillion over a decade, while leading to more people having private health insurance than under Obamacare—according to scoring by the politically neutral Center for Health and Economy.

Obamacare must be repealed. With a well-conceived conservative alternative in play, it will be. It is up to the candidates in the 2016 field to show that they could lead us to victory on this most important domestic-policy fight.

—Jeffrey H. Anderson

‘Diversity’ vs. the Law

Wikipedia defines “startup accelerators” as “fixed-term, cohort-based programs that include mentorship and educational components and culminate” in a “demo day” on which hopeful entrepreneurs make pitches to prospective funders. On August 4, President Obama hosted his own demo day, recasting it to serve a policy goal—that of advancing “inclusive” entrepreneurship and employment. In the East Room he met “a diverse group of entrepreneurs . . . including those underrepresented in entrepreneurship like women and people of color,” as the official fact sheet clumsily described them. He heard their startup stories. And in his own remarks the president discussed what government and the private sector, and the high-tech industry in particular, are doing on behalf of this great goal of inclusion.

Seeking to ensure the event's importance, Obama aides christened August 4 the “First-ever White House Demo Day” and promised the second one next year. But without substantial reconstruction, the first-ever demo day deserves to be the last.

What was wrong with Obama's demo day? That it encouraged precisely what the federal civil rights laws prohibit. Which is, of course, discrimination.

Consider the so-called Rooney Rule (first adopted by the National Football League), which requires a company filling a vacancy to interview at least one woman and one “person of color”—meaning an “underrepresented” minority. The president was evidently pleased with the number of companies that have adopted some version

of the Rooney Rule, among them Greenspring Associates, Scale Venture Partners, Amazon, Box, Microsoft, Xerox, Intel, Pinterest, and Zest Finance. But to make race or sex a ground for deciding among applicants such that someone of the “wrong” race or sex is denied further consideration is illegal discrimination.

The pertinent law is Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which applies to both the public and the private sector. Title VII makes it unlawful for an employer “to fail or refuse to hire . . . any individual . . . because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” or to “classify his employees . . . in any way which would deprive or tend to deprive any individual of employment opportunities . . . because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin.”

Those provisions also prohibit preferential or quota hiring designed to correct a statistical “imbalance” of some kind. And yet business practices held up as worthy during the White House demo day include those of Intel, which seeks a workforce that represents “American demographics” by 2020; Global Accelerator Network, which wants in five years to increase the share of women holding executive roles at both GAN accelerators and GAN startups to “parity,” and also to have “the ethnicities of GAN startup founders match the diverse makeup of the United States population”; and NY Tech Meetup, which seeks to increase the “diversity of its membership and of New York's technology sector as a whole so that it mirrors the population of New York itself.”

Reaching those goals could entail using preferences for women and underrepresented minorities, with white men and Asian Americans (though perhaps not Asian Americans who are women) being discriminated against—in violation of Title VII. Unlike for university admissions, the federal courts have never recognized a “diversity” exception for Title VII, and are unlikely to do so.

You would think that someone bumped from an opportunity because of a company's or government's use of race or sex in the quest for “inclusion” might file a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or the Justice Department.

And you would hope, too, that the president of the United States, charged in Article II of the Constitution with taking care that the laws “be faithfully executed,” would not be leaning, as Obama has, on companies to count and benefit by race and sex in order to get their numbers “right,” according to some dubious statistical measure.

That kind of pressure can easily lead to discrimination, and it's hard to imagine given the tenor of demo day that the Obama administration is not perfectly okay with that.

There will have to be an election with the right result before we have a president who faithfully executes one of the nation's greatest civil rights laws.

—Terry Eastland

The Campaign That Never Was

How Mitch Daniels would have run for president.

BY FRED BARNES

The idea of writing a book about a presidential campaign that never happened had not occurred to Don Cogman. He had spent two years trying to get Mitch Daniels, then governor of Indiana, to run for president in 2012. His effort—and it was no small effort—had failed. Daniels had moved on, right out of politics. He'd become president of Purdue University.

Then Cogman, a retired PR executive in Arizona, got a call from Rick Powell, a co-conspirator in the draft Daniels escapade. Powell, the head of global communications at Bloomberg L.P., had heard from a political writer who was interested in why Daniels didn't run.

"I'd thought about writing something," Cogman said. But it was no more than a fleeting thought. He had a large box filled with notes and emails from the Daniels venture. But the stuff was untouched. And what he had thought about wasn't a book anyway. It was a factual account of what he, Powell, and six others had done with such smashing lack of success. Daniels had wanted to run. He was on the brink of running. He believed he could win the Republican nomination. All that . . . before deciding not to run.

"You should write it," Powell told Cogman. "It's part of history."

That was two summers ago. And Cogman was suddenly inspired. He got out the box. He began two months of research. He organized

the materials by subject. He pieced together a chronology, Cogman said, "literally down to the day."

Then he spent the month of August writing. He worked from 7 A.M. to 2 P.M., six days a week. What he pro-



Daniels and family at a 2009 Indiana inaugural ball

duced was an unconventional manuscript. It had lists. One was Cogman's "list of positives" why Daniels should run, 19 of them. It recorded the "basic tenets of an economic growth initiative." It recommended four people to contact about the budget deficit.

As luck would have it, Daniels happened to be in Arizona that September and called his old friend Cogman. They had met 35 years earlier in Washington when both worked for Republican senators, Daniels for Indiana's Richard Lugar, Cogman for Dewey Bartlett of Oklahoma. When they got together in Arizona, Cogman brought the manuscript with him.

"I need to tell you something," he told Daniels. He'd written about "our great adventure." He said Daniels could read it, throw it away, or "make a book out of it."

Daniels took the manuscript

with him back to Indiana. Six weeks later, he got back to Cogman. He was intrigued. "I can't believe you remembered all this," Daniels said. "Have you showed it to Cheri?" Cogman asked. Daniels hadn't. Cheri is Daniels's wife. "You should," Cogman said. But that didn't happen until six months later.

Daniels and Cogman met again in December in New York. Daniels liked the idea of a book. And he knew a publisher, iUniverse, in Bloomington, Indiana. The book was "self-published" last November with an "Afterword by Mitch Daniels." The title: *Run, Mitch, Run: The Hard Decisions One Man Faced for the 2012 Presidential Election*.

Its publication was greeted with near-silence from the newspapers and magazines that review books. There were zero reviews, though two Indiana papers wrote about its existence. Cogman did a few radio interviews. But that was the extent of the publicity. This was not surprising. It was, after all, a book about a presidential campaign that never got started.

Yet *Run, Mitch, Run* is much more than that. It would be an underground classic if it had been around longer. It's already a unique addition to the library of books about presidential races. It tells the story of how eight friends and admirers of Daniels plotted to transport him from Indianapolis to the White House. And what caused them to fail.

There had been chatter about a presidential bid by Daniels for months in 2009. But it was an article by Kimberley Strassel in the *Wall Street Journal* that prompted Cogman to contact Daniels. Strassel had asked Daniels about running for president. "You'll be the first to know, but don't hang around the phone," he said. That comment hadn't dissuaded Cogman. He told Daniels that their mutual friend, Atlanta businessman Tom Bell, was interested in getting

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together to discuss a presidential run.

The upshot was a golf gathering in Augusta, Georgia, home of the Masters, in October 2009. Cogman, Bell, and Charlie Black, a veteran of numerous presidential campaigns, played 36 holes and talked about the presidency over drinks and dinner.

Bell was blunt. He had two questions for Daniels, Cogman writes in *Run, Mitch, Run*. “One, do you think you could do the job of president?” Bell asked. “Not do you want to do it, or do you think you could win, or would you want to go through a campaign, but do you think you could be president? Secondly, do you want to be president? Not do you want to go through a campaign or do you think you could win, but would you want to be president?”

Daniels said he thought he could do the job. He knew the White House. He’d been political director for Ronald Reagan and budget director for George W. Bush. The second question “was a bit more difficult for him,” according to Cogman. He thought he could contribute to the country and “was worried about the direction in which we were headed.” But the impact on his family was a concern. “He wasn’t certain this was a hurdle that could be handled,” Cogman writes. His wife and four grown daughters “would not be enthusiastic.” That was putting it mildly.

When the group met in January 2010 at Cogman’s home in Scottsdale, it had grown to eight, nine including Daniels. It included, along with Cogman, Bell, and Black: Rick Powell; Al Hubbard, chief economic adviser to President George W. Bush and now an Indiana businessman; Bob Perkins, a marketing expert who had worked with Daniels in Washington; Mark Lubbers, a close friend of Daniels and a colleague in Washington; and Eric Holcomb, who had managed Daniels’s reelection as Indiana governor in 2008.

What drew them to Daniels was a belief in his leadership qualities, his

experience in politics and as a top official from 1997 to 2001 at Eli Lilly, the giant pharmaceutical firm, and his virtue of being a straight-shooter. “He was different,” Cogman writes. Daniels was eager to tackle the biggest issue head-on, America’s looming debt crisis. And he would “run to govern,” not just to win. “It would be foolish to go through all you have to go through in a national campaign just to win with no chance of then actually getting something done,” Daniels explained to his friends.

Their effort was extraordinary. In effect, they organized a presidential campaign in waiting. They operated below the political radar. They didn’t



Dinner attendees call for a Daniels run at a GOP fundraiser in Indianapolis, May 12, 2011.

leak. But their secrecy wasn’t total. They put together nearly a dozen “Residence Dinners” with Daniels to discuss big issues with business and community leaders. (Jonathan Martin of *Politico* wrote a lengthy article on the dinners.) “The feedback was overwhelmingly positive,” Cogman writes. “We had people who heard about them and actually requested to be included.” Potential campaign donors were invited. “Part of our goal was to keep their powder dry and not commit to Romney or anyone else,” Cogman told me.

Daniels didn’t make things easy for his hopeful kingmakers. Like most politicians, he turned out to be thin-skinned. In interviews, he often dismissed the notion of running for president. “I really don’t plan to,” he told the *New York Times*. “I’ve been as clear as I know how,” the *Evansville*

Courier & Press quoted him as saying. “I don’t expect to do it, don’t really want to do it.” He told the *Chicago Tribune*’s John Kass, “It’s not happening.” These remarks prompted an email from Black. “Just remember what one of my preachers told me years ago,” he wrote. “You are obligated to tell the truth, but you are not obligated to say everything that is on your mind.”

Cogman concluded the off-the-cuff remarks were “to assure his family” he wasn’t rushing into a presidential race. His wife was a problem Daniels was reluctant to deal with. In Scottsdale, he suggested Cheri could stay out of the campaign if he ran. “I looked at

him and said, ‘Mitch, you’re running for president of the United States, not governor, and they’ll never let you get away with that.’ I don’t think he believed me then.” Cheri Daniels, Cogman writes, wanted to be “doing things normal people do”—things a candidacy and life in the White House wouldn’t allow.

At a December 2010 strategy session, Daniels declared, “Well, I’m about 80 percent” ready to run. Cogman stayed behind after the meeting. He

talked to Cheri one-on-one, making the case for Daniels to run. The matter of her divorce from and remarriage to Daniels “could be handled,” Cogman assured her. She wasn’t persuaded. “There was no wiggle room [in her opposition], not an inch,” Cogman writes. He initially quoted her response, then let her decide whether to keep it in the book. She was “uncomfortable.” He took it out. “I didn’t want to abuse any trust we had,” he said.

The decision by Daniels not to run would not be announced for months. “But in my heart of hearts, I knew we were done,” Cogman writes. His friends were still hopeful. “But they hadn’t seen or heard the absolute resolve in Cheri’s face and voice.” He had. As for Daniels, he explained his decision simply, “I love my country, but I love my family more.” ♦

Ten Is More Than Enough

Meditations, *pensées*, confessions, and *apologia pro vita mea* after having watched the Republican candidates debate. BY P.J. O'ROURKE

If this was meant to be entertainment, all 10 Flying Wallendas refused to walk the high wire, none of the clowns got out of the tiny car, and the elephants just stood around relieving themselves.

If this was meant to be information, Savonarola was piling books on the bonfire of vanities in Florence, children were playing with matches in the Library of Alexandria, and Wikipedia crashed.

If this was meant to be theater of the absurd, it didn't have a patch on a high school drama club production of Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days*.

How much better the debate would have been if it were presented by the World Wrestling Federation rather than Fox News and Facebook. A nine-man Republican tag team could drag Donald Trump around the ring by his hair, assuming it's real. Assuming it's not, they could jam the wig down over the ref's eyes and toss Trump across the ropes into the audience to be swatted comatose by old ladies with handbags who take umbrage at people who look like they do being called fat pigs.

Why would anyone watch the Fox News Republican presidential primary debate, unless they were drinking and lost the channel changer? Which I was and did.

But I had the good fortune to view

the program with my father-in-law—forward artillery observer in WWII, career FBI agent, and retired head of corporate security for a Fortune 500 company. A Republican everyman if ever there was one.

My father-in-law's not firing his snub-nose .38 into the TV screen was an admirable example of GOP primary



Ten suits, with filling

voter self-discipline. But he's deaf and just had a cataract operation. I can hear and see all too well.

And I gather what I heard and saw wasn't even the semi-maybe-important thing that happened on debate day. I didn't give the 5 P.M. Republican candidate "kiddie table" debate a looky-loo. I'll go to the circus, but I won't be ballyhooed into the sideshow to see the Amazing Seven-Headed Creature from the Bottom of the Polling Lagoon.

However, according to my father-in-law, six million other viewers, and 83 percent of Twitter comments, Carly Fiorina took her half-dozen opponents and wiped the floor with them.

"That's a smart gal," my father-

in-law said. "She's tough. Had the answers. Slammed that braggart Trump. Slammed Kerry for giving Iran an atom bomb. She'll take all those women's votes away from Hillary."

My father-in-law follows the stock market. He owns some Hewlett-Packard stock. Hewlett-Packard stock fell 41.3 percent while Fiorina was CEO. My father-in-law giving props to Carly was an admirable example of GOP primary voter self-sacrifice.

This is how suicide blond Donald Trump (dyed by his own hand) committed political hara-kiri—raising a solitary paw when candidates were asked who among them would *not* promise to support the eventual Republican nominee.

Trump poll numbers may look like a college basketball score now, but the self-disciplined, self-sacrificing Republican primary voters would rather plaster their Buicks with "Lean Forward" bumper stickers than have another Ross-Perot-off-his-meds third-party candidate handing the White House door key to the Billary Bandits.

As to the debate's content . . . Well, my father-in-law and I were pretty busy discussing how Hewlett-Packard's stock has failed to recover in the decade since Fiorina was fired.

Also we needed to refill our glasses with the special vitamin that makes Jeb Bush interesting. I guess it makes Jeb interesting. I seem to have been taking a refreshing nap every time Jeb answered a question.

Then I was distracted by the candidates' all wearing the same suit—from the boy's department for Rand Paul and from Omar the tent-maker for Chris Christie. I have that suit too. So does my father-in-law.

What does it mean that Republican men all dress alike? It means we're smart. Smarter, anyway, than Democratic men. We're smart enough to know what we'd look like wearing sandals with socks, cargo shorts,

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backwards ball caps, and Rock the Vote T-shirts.

I was also distracted by the Fox News panelists. Gosh, that Megyn Kelly is a hand-picked peach. Bret Baier, I'm informed by my mother-in-law, is a hunk. (As she put it, "What a nice-looking young man.") And Chris Wallace has the Cary Grant *distingué* thing going, making other men his age (me) look like late-career Wallace Beery. These three should start a Chippendale's for political junkies.

And there was Trump's coif. I'm not going there. Too many have gone there before, including, it would seem, a family of angry squirrels who use Clairol. So I won't delve into the subject—for fear of angry squirrels.

Who scared the other candidates? They didn't pile on Trump. Instead Chris Christie and Rand Paul tiffed. Christie wants government to snoop on our phones. This is not a vote-getter. Chris has the prosecutorial look of someone who'd inform spouses about cell phone records of calls to Monkey Bump Premium Escort Service.

Paul wants government not to snoop. Because Rand Paul is a libertarian. Almost 100 percent of Americans *act* like libertarians. Our free market has Rand's namesake Ayn looking like Diogenes asleep in the barrel. We've privatized the legal code from top hedge fund trades on NASDAQ to bottom round of 9mm magazines in crack dens. We indulge in libertinage that leaves Tiberius blushing. Our individualism is so fulsome it fills Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, Snapchat, and spills into real life. We drive 85 in 65 zones.

But only 11 percent of Americans *identify themselves* as libertarians. This, Senator Paul, is because of what the Fifth Amendment is there for.

Paul is out. Christie is out. Trump is so far out he's cracked his coxcombed head on Yankee Stadium's right field foul pole.

So now we're down to seven. Or eight, if Carly Fiorina gets a dead cat bounce. And that should make the second Republican presidential primary debate . . . Oh, at least as fascinating as the first. ♦

AP / SUSAN WALSH

Obama's Energy Debacle

And what the next president can do about it.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

The late great comedian Milton Berle, when introduced to an enthusiastically applauding audience, would hold up his left hand in a modest gesture as if to say thank you but that's enough, and with his right hand held at waist level encouraged the audience to even wilder applause. President Obama has just



Defending CPP mandates, August 3

accomplished a similar feat. With one hand he has delivered his Clean Power Plan, designed to reduce the use of our own resources of fossil fuels. With the other he has signed off on a deal with Iran that will set the Islamic Republic on the path to dumping between four and five million barrels of its crude oil on world markets every day, further lowering the price of oil and thereby encouraging its consumption. These deals, taken together, replace emissions from U.S. fossil fuel production

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and use with emissions from increased use of Iranian oil. In effect, Obama has transferred pollution permits from our producers to the Revolutionary Guard that controls Iran's oil industry.

The Clean Power Plan for Existing Power Plants (CPP) and its accompanying regulations, all 2,691 pages, is the largest exercise in central planning, outside of Cuba and North Korea, since the collapse of the Soviet Union. It calls for a reduction of 32 percent from 2005 levels in power-plant carbon emissions by 2030. If you agree with the president that climate change is a huge threat to our future, a greater threat than ISIL or Islamic terrorism or Iran's mullahs, and that American reductions will affect total global emissions, setting an emissions-reduction target makes sense. But the CPP goes further, and sets the specific means by which that is to be accomplished.

Natural gas use can increase by only 22 percent by 2022 from 2012 levels and thereafter increase at an annual rate of only 5 percent, and new natural gas plants that replace coal will not count as having reduced emissions. A rejiggering of EPA models resulted in a major increase in the role initially accorded renewables and in our future reliance on the sun and the wind, the one which sometimes shines, the other which sometimes blows, most usually in places far from the existing super-reliable electricity grid. Never mind that both continue to require massive subsidies, which the renewable industry heatedly denies while at the same time coolly lobbying for their continuation.

Sad to say, conservative opponents of such central planning have brought this state of affairs on themselves.

Obama originally proposed a cap and trade plan, which relied on the sort of market forces that Republicans had introduced to make the application of the Clean Air Act more efficient. Once the courts ruled that that act gives the EPA authority to regulate carbon emissions from power plants, conservative opposition to market mechanisms has allowed Obama to rely on regulation to achieve emissions reductions. Rather like Bre'r Rabbit, who disingenuously pleaded with Bre'r Fox not to throw him into the briar patch, Obama pleaded with Congress not to force him to rely on regulation, shrugged when turned down, and fled into the regulatory thicket in which he and his progressive allies are more comfortable than in a marketplace.

Conservatives now are consoling themselves with the thought that when the president goes to Paris in December and presents his plan, he will label it a "commitment" because he dare not submit it to Congress for the approval that a treaty requires. That would allow the next president, assuming it is a Republican every bit as tough as the various primary candidates claim to be, to add to those day-one lists candidates like to recite a notice to the world that the "commitment" of the previous president counts for nothing. That would be neither easy nor wise, since that new president would probably also have pledged to make America's commitments matter again—no more crossed red lines, no more abandonment of allies.

Which seems to have reduced opponents of the plan to wishful thinking. Surely the courts will disallow this grab for control of the nation's energy sector. Perhaps, but there are "definitely novel issues in this case," according to Tim Profeta, director of Duke University's environmental policy institute, making the courts' decisions difficult to predict. Surely the EPA will honor its pledge to allow the states to devise their own plans to meet its emission-reduction targets. But that pledge is to permit states to propose implementation plans that are subject to EPA approval. To believe that approval would be granted to plans

that rely heavily on market-based steps to reduce emissions requires an act of faith that rivals the pope's in the rectitude of his attacks on capitalism. This, after all, is an agency that is committed to the slaughter of the coal industry and has turned on our sensationally productive frackers; that refused to consider the cost of its mercury regulations until forced to do so by the courts and is now proposing to replace power generation with renewables that cost more than twice as much; that counts as a benefit of the new regulations the value of the lives it claims to have already saved by its ozone and mercury regulations; and, unlike any other regulatory agency, is run by a director who has refused repeated requests from the House Science Committee to make available the raw data on which EPA regulations ultimately rely.

It is, of course, possible that the 41 states that are attempting to coordinate their responses so as to minimize total compliance costs will win EPA approval, but this is to rely on the reasonableness of an agency that long ago surrendered its reputation for objectivity and independence from the administration. Its director, Gina McCarthy, has testified that she has "an obligation to the planet"; that the value of EPA rules is not measured in how much they reduce emissions but "in showing strong domestic action which can actually trigger global action to address what is necessary action"; and that she doesn't "need the raw data in order to develop science. That's not how it's done." My guess is that how it is done is with a phone call to the White House.

Conservatives have little time and much work to do to lay the basis for walking away from Obama's plan while at the same time retaining the *commitment* to its goals as enunciated by him in Paris. Our global partners must be reassured that a Republican president will not repudiate the president's goals, but will substitute more efficient ways of meeting them. Assuming, of course, that other nations are keeping their promises so that the American effort is one of many contributors to reducing global emissions, rather than a

futile effort with no significant impact.

Fortunately there is a method at hand to accomplish the twin goals of establishing that American commitments mean something while at the same time retaining our reservations about the climate-change thesis: tax reform. With two major tax inversions announced on August 5—American companies merging with an overseas company and making its foreign headquarters the corporate home for tax purposes in order to flee the American tax system—the pressure for reform is mounting. Add to that the conviction by most conservatives that raising the minimum wage or jiggering the overtime pay regulations, the market interventions favored by Obama and his progressives, will do little to help the beleaguered middle class or to reduce income inequality.

But reducing the tax burden on lower- and middle-class workers just might address what ails them—the failure of their real take-home pay to rise. That can be accomplished by imposing a tax on carbon and using the proceeds to reduce payroll taxes on workers with incomes below some selected level. Conservatives in Congress who do not believe the Earth is about to cook can nonetheless vote for this tax with a clear conscience—they will have done it to generate revenue to help solve problems all Republican presidential wannabees claim they want to solve. If they do so in time to make it part of a tax reform effort, and Obama vetoes it, so be it: The world will know that America under a Republican will follow a different path but to the same end promised by his predecessor. And if Obama plays the pope card in support of his regulatory approach, conservatives who believe in markets can counter with a letter to the president from 170 evangelicals—pastors, professors, and others—supporting "a market-based approach, such as a revenue-neutral carbon tax swap that cuts other taxes." Deciding which approach is more pleasing to the Ultimate Authority is best left to other experts.

Better ideas are more than welcome. ♦

Britain's Moral Panic

Poor Ted Heath.

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

A little over 30 years ago, three generations of the McMartin family, who had run a nursery school in Los Angeles for decades, were arrested, jailed, and put on trial, charged with hundreds of sensational counts of child sexual abuse. Six years later, when no convictions had been obtained, all charges were dropped against them—including against one family member who had languished in jail for five years without being convicted of anything.

Yet the exoneration of the McMartins was only the end of one chapter in a dire story. The case sparked a kind of moral panic across America in the 1980s and '90s, with dozens of day-care workers and teachers being arrested and convicted on lurid molestation and assault charges, local prosecutors earning national reputations for draconian prison sentences, and police departments warning frightened parents about the signs of satanic ritual abuse. The fact that all those convicted and imprisoned in that period were ultimately vindicated, and set free, is proof not so much that a system of justice “works” but that, right or wrong, it can work with fearsome efficiency—even in the service, from Salem to L.A., of hysteria and mob rule. Put another way: Times change, but human nature does not.

Great Britain, for example, seems to be in the grip of a pedophile scare. Of course, pedophilia, like any sort

of sexual abuse, does exist and is a terrible thing; but as with the “rape culture” alleged on American campuses (see Charlotte Allen’s “Of Frats and Men,” page 22), singular events and isolated instances can trigger an irrational response in civil society. In this instance, the catalyst seems to have been the revelation



Edward Heath with Margaret Thatcher, October 13, 1975

that Jimmy Savile, a popular BBC television and radio personality who died at 84 in 2011, had been a predatory sex offender for decades. At the moment, the 85-year-old, Australian-born singer Rolf Harris—best known here for his 1963 novelty hit, “Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport”—is serving a five-year, nine-month prison sentence on 40-year-old “indecent assault” charges; and 75-year-old ex-rock ‘n’ roller Cliff Richard has been the subject of near-constant police attention over sexual allegations (thus far unstated, much less proven) of similar vintage.

England being England, what ties these cases together are complaints that social prominence and political

connections might have protected wrongdoers from the law: The BBC, various police agencies, successive governments, the press, and crown prosecutors have all been accused of conspiring to destroy evidence, suppress stories, and discredit victims. Whether any of this is true has yet to be demonstrated; but in a class-conscious culture, it’s a powerful narrative. Moreover, precisely because such allegations are widely believed, certain segments of the press, innumerable police agencies, and prosecutors are now soliciting stories and pursuing leads with McMartin-like zeal and recklessness. And inevitably, the downward path has led to politics.

Just as French political scandals tend to be about money, British political scandals are usually about sex. And since the 18th century, at least, London gossip has had a long history of identifying houses and streets and buildings as secret meeting places for misbehaving members of Parliament or errant members of the royal family. Some locales, no doubt, have existed in fact. But while current tales, ranging from homosexual trysts to child murders, at the former Elm Guest House in south London and elsewhere, have invoked the names of MPs of all parties (mostly dead but some still alive), as well

as barristers, pop stars, Soviet spies, diplomats, famous athletes, and the occasional Sinn Fein representative, no evidence has yet been produced to suggest that any of these tales are anything but tales.

In fact, the revelation last week that no less than the late Sir Edward Heath, Tory prime minister during 1970-74, is now the subject of vigorous sex-abuse inquiries in no less than seven police jurisdictions might lead either to a wholesale collapse of anything resembling justice—all sorts of incredible stories are now being bruited about in the downscale media and treated with due diligence by police—or, with luck, to a measure of national soul-searching. Just as the

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McMartin case featured allegations of ritual slaughter, sex with animals, and human levitation, details in the Westminster pedophile scandals are now being updated regularly in such venues as ex-MP George Galloway's television program on Russia Today.

Poor Ted Heath, who died in 2005 at 89, was probably destined for such posthumous indignity. The sex life of this icy lifelong bachelor with the solitary avocations of sailing and music, as well as a mild aversion to women but no close male companions, has long been a subject of speculation and no real knowledge. He currently stands accused of seducing an underage boy in 1961 at an apartment on Park Lane in London when he had no such residence—Scotland Yard has since concluded that “no lines of inquiry . . . could proportionately be pursued”—and an unnamed ex-policeman has claimed that a Filipino madam in Heath's hometown of Salisbury once threatened to expose him as a pedophile if she were charged with running a brothel. (She has denied making any such threat.) In the meantime, investigators on the isle of Jersey and in Northern Ireland are pursuing claims that Heath might have kidnapped local children while on sailing visits.

Admittedly, from distant Washington, D.C., the case against an ex-prime minister who cannot defend himself looks astonishingly weak: The accusations are antique, the witnesses are disreputable, the stories are implausible. Edward Heath was a prominent figure in public life in Great Britain for decades, and his movements and whereabouts were far from secret. Of course, it is possible that some credible story, or undiscovered detail of his long life, may yet emerge. At the moment, however, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that the present circus atmosphere has been prompted by the obvious fact that, like any politician, he had his detractors—and by longstanding rumors that he was gay. In any case, though he has been dead now for a decade, Heath's reputation is irreparably tarnished. ♦

P.C. at the Met

Whitewashing *Otello*.

BY JOHN F. BURLEIGH

A recent headline in the *New York Times* announced: “Metropolitan Opera Says Its ‘Otello’ Tenor Will Not Wear Blackface.” Peter Gelb, the general manager of the Met, made clear that the decision not to use any dark makeup on its white tenor Aleksandrs Antonenko in the Met's new production of Verdi's opera is not confined to this production. According to Gelb, “That was a tradition that needed to be changed.”

At first blush, the Met's pronouncement against blackface seems a bit off the mark. If one recalls Plácido

be that this country's protracted blackface tradition of demeaning caricature was so hurtful and deplorable that it poisons any attempt by whites even now to use makeup to depict blacks and perhaps any other ethnic group. Yet one wonders why the makeup worn by Domingo (or Welles, for that matter) should be dismissed as some sort of racist relic. Doesn't Desdemona tell Otello, “from your dark temples I saw the eternal beauty of your spirit shine” (“*Ed io veda fra le tue tempie oscure splendor del genio l'eterea beltà*”)? Aren't the play and opera about race



Plácido Domingo



Laurence Olivier



Orson Welles



Aleksandrs Antonenko

Domingo in the role that he owned at the Met for over 20 years, his Otello was made up as an exotic, swarthy indeterminately North African fellow, not as a black, and one whose skin got lighter with the passing opera seasons. White tenors performing Otello have come to resemble Domingo, or the mildly exotic Orson Welles as Othello in his movie based on Shakespeare's play, more than Laurence Olivier's extraordinary, seemingly West Indian Othello (whose lead few Othellos or Otellos have had the temerity to follow, interpretively or in terms of makeup).

That the Met's Otello won't wear blackface is thus not really the issue, but that he won't wear any makeup at all. The sweeping rationale seems to

relations, and about the limits of cosmopolitanism, even in the Venetian Republic and its outposts? And where the ethnic character of its protagonists is such an important component, isn't it useful, if not essential, in a production of *Otello* or *Othello* to have Otello or Othello appear to the audience the way he appeared to Desdemona, Iago, and the other Venetians?

Apparently not, according to Gelb, who emphasized to the *New York Times* that, in deciding not to use any makeup to suggest Otello's North African roots, his team decided that the new production would instead “be focused on questions of position and power.” Less *Otello*, it seems, and more *Executive Suite*. Gelb's downplaying of Otello's status as “the Moor of Venice” reminds one of Jonathan Miller's line in *Beyond the Fringe*: “In fact, I'm

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DOMINGO, WELLES, AND ANTONENKO: NEWS.COM

not really a Jew. Just Jew-ish. Not the whole hog, you know.” The new production’s *Otello*, it seems, is not really a Moor, just Moor-ish.

My suspicion is that Gelb is skittish about another political controversy after taking slings and arrows from both sides with his decisions to produce, and then cancel the HD theater presentation of, *The Death of Klinghoffer*. I also suspect, especially in light of the nonblackface makeup options that are available, that Gelb is rather less concerned here with offending blacks than he is with avoiding criticism from Muslims and appearing to be a good multicultural citizen. But rather than admit this—which might appear craven, self-serving, and open to ridicule—Gelb has hidden behind the skirts of getting rid of blackface, which really isn’t at issue.

This isn’t the first politically correct sponging of an opera at the Met. In the Met’s current *Madama Butterfly*, the production is awash with various sorts of *Japonisme* (vivid set designs, dancers, and puppets as Trouble, servants, and a dancing Butterfly). Yet Patricia Racette, who has been the Met’s main Cio-Cio San and just retired the role this year, eschewed any Japanese makeup and stripped the part of most Japanese mannerisms, lest she seem too much a clichéd Japanese little woman. The result was that at the center of all this *Japonaiserie* was a feminist Cio-Cio San who seemed to have already become an American woman, even before Act One.

Gelb’s decision is bound to have ramifications for other parts of the Met repertoire. What will become of *Aida* made up to appear like an Ethiopian princess, as the glorious Aprile Millo was a generation ago? How will the “blackamoor” *Monostatos* be made up in the next production of *Die Zauberflöte*? It sure seems that “yellowface” in productions of *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot* is not long for this world. Don’t expect any revivals of Mascagni’s *Iris* or Leonini’s *L’Oracolo* any time soon. And as for Samuel Ramey’s thrilling East Asian get-up in the title role of Verdi’s *Attila*—*sic transit gloria mundi*. ♦

AP / MATT ROURKE

How to Make a Bad Problem Worse

Hillary Clinton’s flawed plan for student debt relief. BY JAMES PIERESON



A few members of Hillary’s target base

Nearly everyone recognizes that student debt has risen to a level that will be difficult to sustain, given the nation’s slow-growing economy and the sagging incomes of too many college-educated Americans. Nearly 40 million Americans carry some form of student debt; more than 7 million are in default on their loans, and many more have missed scheduled payments. The total amount of outstanding student debt is estimated to be \$1.2 trillion, with about two-thirds of this sum underwritten by the federal government.

It is not difficult to figure out the reasons for exploding student debt. On the one hand, high school graduates and their parents understand that a college education is essential for entry into the narrowing world of high-paying professional jobs. College and

university enrollments increased by more than a third between 2000 and 2014, from 15 million to more than 21 million students. At the same time, college tuition and fees have been growing at more than three times the rate of inflation for three decades now and at more than two times the growth in the median family income over the same period. In 2015, the average tuition (plus fees) for in-state students at public universities is in the neighborhood of \$10,000 per year and over \$40,000 per year for students attending private universities. A fair amount of careful research suggests that these soaring costs are partly attributable to the increasing availability of loans encouraged by federal policy.

Hillary Clinton’s new \$350 billion (over 10 years) proposal takes aim at this vast constituency of voters paying off student loans or worried about the costs of taking them on. She says that her proposal will enable most students to meet college expenses

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without taking on loans, a claim that is surely exaggerated in view of the scale and scope of her plan. At best it is a proposal to mitigate the problem somewhat by permitting borrowers to reduce interest rates on current loans and to use the carrot of federal funds to force states to invest more public funds in higher education.

The largest portion of this money (\$175 billion) would go to encourage (bribe) state governments to invest more resources in higher education so that tuition charges can be reduced at four-year institutions and eliminated entirely for two-year community colleges. Under her plan, the Department of Education would make funds available to match state budget allocations for higher education and to reward states that keep a lid on tuition increases. She would also expand work-study programs to permit more students to work off college expenses during their student years. The combined federal and state funds, as much as \$35 billion per year

across the country, would theoretically allow states to maintain tuition at affordable levels for students so that loans would be unnecessary. This is a point worth emphasizing: She is not making tuition “free,” but rather substituting public funds for student-paid tuition.

Total tuition charges at all institutions (public and private) in 2015 will amount to around \$300 billion, plus expenses for books, room, and board. A mix of federal, state, and private scholarships subsidizes a significant portion of this sum. The federal government, for example, spends approximately \$30 billion per year on Pell grants to support tuition and other expenses for more than nine million students from lower-income families. Clinton’s contribution of \$17.5 billion in federal funds per annum would make a dent in this package, but it is hard to see how it would ever allow reductions in tuition and fees to levels that would allow students to dispense with loans.

Appropriations for higher education in states across the country have fallen off by an average of 16 percent since the onset of the financial crisis in 2008. Clinton along with the liberal think tanks associated with the Democratic party claim that this is a major cause of tuition increases at public universities and thus a major source of the student debt crisis. This is a greatly exaggerated claim, however, since student debt was accumulating for decades prior to the financial crisis. The financial crisis may have exacerbated the problem, but it did not cause it.

Clinton should ask herself why so many states found it necessary to cut appropriations for higher education in the years following the financial crisis. The major reason was that governors and legislators had other priorities, among them paying for public employee pensions, meeting federal mandates to pay for Medicaid, welfare, and K-12 education, and finding revenues to meet law enforcement and transportation budgets. It is not hard

EPA’s One-Two Knockout Punch

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

In its final 18 months in power, the Obama administration aims to implement its environmental agenda in a one-two knockout punch by the Environmental Protection Agency. And just who will bear the brunt of EPA’s new rules? American consumers, companies, and states—along with the national economy.

First up is the proposed ozone standard. It would impose more stringent ozone standards on businesses—despite the fact that ozone levels have fallen dramatically, industry is still working to implement the current standard, and technologies do not yet exist to meet the new standard. According to a study by National Economic Research Associates, the rule could reduce GDP by \$140 billion a year, cost \$1.1 trillion in compliance, and result in 1.4 million fewer jobs over the next 25 years.

In addition to being the most expensive

regulation ever issued by the federal government, the proposed ozone standard could give bureaucrats unprecedented control over communities. It would plunge the majority of the country into what EPA calls “nonattainment,” meaning that communities would face enormous regulatory hurdles every time they wanted to build something, and they could even suffer from the withholding of federal transportation funding for highway and public transit projects. The rule could bring local economic development and transportation planning to a grinding halt across the nation.

And then there’s the so-called Clean Power Plan—EPA’s attempt to restructure the U.S. electricity system under the guise of restricting greenhouse gas emissions from domestic power plants. The new standards would drive up electricity costs for businesses and consumers, impose tens of billions in annual compliance costs, and reduce our nation’s global competitiveness. And EPA’s rule is unlikely to reduce global carbon emissions, instead simply shifting them—and

U.S. jobs—to other countries that have not implemented similar restrictions.

What will it take to rein in an agency hell-bent on pushing past the outer limits of its authority? The Supreme Court has reprimanded the EPA twice in as many years for overstepping its bounds. And even though these latest rules are likely to be mired in years of litigation, the White House is pressing ahead, hoping they will take effect anyway.

It is up to the business community, along with partners in industry and at the state and local levels, to show that these rules are not about one president’s quest for a legacy. They are about the fundamental economic future of America. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce will use every tool in its arsenal—including litigation if necessary—to improve, suspend, or roll back these regulatory power grabs that hamper economic freedom and hamstring American competitiveness.



U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
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to understand why higher education has been squeezed out in the keen competition for state funds.

Clinton would now hold out federal dollars to induce states to appropriate more funds for higher education, just as the federal government already does with Medicaid, welfare, K-12 education, and transportation projects. Her proposal would compel governors and legislators either to raise taxes to cover those expenditures or to cut budgets in other areas—or, alternatively, to dispense with the federal funds altogether. The federal government, in short, has contributed to the budget crises in the states through its mandates and matching programs, and Clinton now proposes to address that problem by adding still another mandate and matching program.

The major problem in higher education today is one of cost and expense, and only secondarily who happens to pay for it. American colleges and universities are highly inefficient enterprises that maintain scores of useless, duplicative, out of date, and politically correct programs for no other reason than that there are interest groups on campus that would protest if any of them were eliminated. Too many universities maintain doctoral programs in fields for which graduates have no hope of finding jobs. Many of those programs should be eliminated in the service both of long-run efficiency and educational integrity. Ideally, this kind of streamlining should take place state-by-state and campus-by-campus as governors, legislators, and academic leaders grapple with priorities and limited resources. Yet Clinton's plan would encourage them to put off the day of reckoning in the hope that all programs can be maintained with still another infusion of federal funds.

Clinton's approach is a typical Democratic plan that relies on subsidies, higher taxes, more spending, and cost shifting among participants in the higher education industry. It will do little to encourage innovation, restructuring, and cost cutting among institutions of higher learning. It represents still another example of kicking the can down the road. ♦

The Annals of Corruption

Hillary Clinton's presidential candidacy ranks way up there. **BY JAY COST**

Hillary Clinton is a scandalous candidate for president of the United States. Most people acknowledge this, at least judging by her plummeting poll numbers. A raft of stories gives the distinct impression that she and her husband have been running an elaborate pay-to-play operation. Donations to the Clinton Foundation may have produced favorable State Department policies dealing with Russia-owned U.S. uranium deposits, Haitian relief efforts, and foreign banking interests. Her use of a personal email server while at the State Department, moreover, strongly suggests she has something to hide.

Yet she is still on track to win the Democratic nomination next year. That would be a unique achievement, twice over. She would be the first woman to win a major party nomination—and the first major party nominee ever to have misused his public authority as egregiously as she seems to have.

Of course, there have been scandal-ridden nominees before. The most infamous is James G. Blaine. One of the more prominent Republican orators of the Gilded Age, he was the frontrunner for the nomination in 1876 until his dubious ties to the railroads came to light. Blaine had pushed through Congress a land grant for the Little Rock & Fort Smith Railroad, which in turn rewarded him with corporate bonds. When the company hit hard times, railroad tycoon Tom Scott

bought the bonds back from him well above market value, prompting Blaine to push legislation that helped Scott's Texas & Pacific Railroad. It didn't keep Blaine from finally securing the nomination in 1884, however.

In 1952, vice-presidential candidate Richard Nixon was embroiled in a scandal over a political fund established by wealthy supporters. The *New York Post* claimed it was a slush fund to subsidize Nixon's lifestyle beyond his government salary. In response, Nixon gave his famed "Checkers speech," denying any impropriety and claiming to live modestly. At the end, Nixon admitted receiving a dog as a gift. "And our little girl—Tricia, the 6-year-old—named it Checkers. And you know, the kids, like all kids, love the dog, and I just want to say this right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we're gonna keep it." It was one of the most treacherous moments in American politics, but it was a masterstroke.

The historical record is littered with dubious doings by eventual nominees. John Jacob Astor loaned James Monroe \$5,000 during the War of 1812. As president, Monroe rescinded an order prohibiting foreigners from engaging in the fur trade, which helped Astor enormously. Andrew Jackson tipped off his friends to the invasion of Florida, signaling a potential investment opportunity. Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and a slew of other politicians received money from the Second Bank in the 1820s. James Garfield was implicated in the *Crédit Mobilier* scandal. William McKinley and Benjamin Harrison were close to the Gilded Age's worst political bosses. Alton B. Parker, Democratic

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nominee in 1904, was close to Tammany Hall. Woodrow Wilson allied with the New Jersey Democratic machine to win the governorship in 1910. Harry Truman was part of the Pendergast machine as a judge in Kansas City.

As in the Clinton scandals, it is tough to pin anything on any of these candidates definitively. That is typical of quid pro quo arrangements. The politician can always respond that the quo had nothing to do with the quid—that he acted as he did because of the merits of the case. Unless the FBI sets up an elaborate Abscam-style sting—in which the feds actually catch a politician on the record admitting he will change policies because of the payments being offered—it is tough to demonstrate guilt beyond a shadow of a doubt. Even then, pols can slip loose. John Murtha was caught on tape in Abscam, and his seemingly ambiguous answers allowed him to get off scot-free.

But citizens need not be bound by the same constraints as jurors. The evidentiary standard in a criminal case is so high because the penalty is imprisonment. Here, the “penalty” is a denial of higher office, so our standards can adjust accordingly. And it is a fair bet that while some of the aforementioned candidates were innocent, just as many were guilty.

So back to Hillary Clinton. She may retain plausible deniability for each apparent ethical lapse, but the scope of the accusations suggests we should not leave it at that. It’s what really sets Clinton apart from the pack. Monroe had a suspicious relationship with Astor, and Garfield had a dubious dealing on *Crédit Mobilier*. But with Clinton, there is a wide array of questionable practices, dating back decades. There is Russia, Haiti, and UBS. There is the millions donated to the Clinton Foundation by a Ukrainian oligarch just before the Crimea crisis. There is the strange disappearance of the Rose Law Firm billing records. There is her huge windfall

in the cattle futures market. There is the shady nature of her private email server. With each item, there could have been an unlikely accumulation of causes that made an innocent person look guilty. But it strains credulity to believe that such bizarre circumstances have conspired against her again and again and again. . . and again and again and again. Instead, one cannot help but return to William Safire’s judgment in 1996 that Clinton is just “a congenital liar.”

In this regard, only Blaine rivals



Clinton. While other presidential candidates may have had ethical lapses, Blaine is the only one who, at the time of his nomination, was widely thought to have misused his public authority for private enrichment.

Blaine lost the presidential race, but only by around 1,100 votes in New York state. This narrow margin probably had little to do with the Little Rock & Fort Smith scandal. His opponent, Grover Cleveland, was from New York. And late in the campaign Blaine failed to denounce an ally’s slur against Irish voters. He could very well have won, despite his dubious ethics.

The American people are quite forgiving, or at least pragmatic. They can accept a trainman who receives a bribe, so long as the trains run on

time. Bill Clinton is proof enough of this. He was regularly accused of misusing his public authority during his tenure, all the way up to his final days in office, when he pardoned Marc Rich after the latter’s wife donated lavishly to the former’s presidential library. Yet Bill Clinton remains hugely popular, buoyed by warm memories of the 1990s.

So it is hard to argue that ethics alone will upend Hillary Clinton’s candidacy. But American pragmatism may sink her still. This is not a good time, after all, to be suspected of cronyism. There is widespread belief that the “game is rigged” against average Americans in favor of an elite

caste, a sentiment that unites the otherwise disparate Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements. Clinton’s scandals give the unmistakable impression that she and her husband, with their vast fortune, sit at the apex of this American oligarchy.

Her scandals offer the perfect opportunity to counter the liberal claim that big government is good for the little guy.

Clinton is a living, breathing testament to the tendency of government to favor the rich and well-connected, thereby worsening the economic, social, and political inequality that she complains so loudly about.

This argument will not make itself. It requires a Republican nominee who not only is unquestionably ethical, but who also wants to place Clinton-style cronyism at the center of his or her campaign. The GOP nominee cannot merely recite Clinton’s ethical lapses, but must connect them directly to middle-class stagnation and the growing apprehension that our government is no longer responsive to the needs of the people. If the GOP were to build such a broad narrative around Hillary Clinton’s cronyism and promise to end the corruption she embodies, the party might just win that four-year lease to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. ♦

GARY LOCKE

Of Frats and Men

Ganging up on the Greek system

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Charlottesville, Va.

Elizabeth Minneman, a tall strawberry-blond fourth-year student at the University of Virginia, wearing a stylish elbow-sleeved black dress and black boots, took me on a tour one day last spring of her sorority house, Zeta Tau Alpha, just north of the campus. Zeta, nearly deserted during our midafternoon visit when most of its residents were likely in class, was one of eight Greek houses (five fraternities, three sororities) strung along a Charlottesville street called Madison Lane that fronts onto the Madison Bowl, a vast greensward.

On the opposite side of the Madison Bowl, running parallel to Madison Lane, was Rugby Road—the Rugby Road made infamous last fall in Sabrina Rubin Erdely’s *Rolling Stone* story “A Rape on Campus,” since discredited but still electrically potent at UVA. The story revolved around an alleged gang-rape

of a first-year student named “Jackie” in September 2012 at the massive Phi Kappa Psi fraternity house situated on an incline at the far end of Madison Bowl. Erdely, a *Rolling Stone* contributing editor, asserted that the three-hour-long serial sexual assault by seven Phi Psi brothers while Jackie lay bleeding and helpless amid the shards of a broken glass table, was part of a fraternity initiation ritual. Erdely quoted epigraphically from an antique Glee Club standard titled “Rugby Road,” whose coonskin-coat-era verses celebrated beer-bibbing and seduction, to paint a grim picture of a poisonous fraternity “rape culture” that Erdely argued tainted nearly all of UVA life, up to the highest administrative levels. Erdely’s article maintained that Nicole Eramo, the associate dean of students in charge of handling sexual-assault

issues, had discouraged Jackie from taking action on her rape claim, and that Allen W. Groves, the dean of students, had pooh-poohed concerns about campus sexual assault at a meeting with the university’s trustees (UVA is one of about 100 colleges and universities being investigated for their handling of sexual assault by the Obama administration Education Department’s Office of Civil Rights). Eramo has filed a defamation suit against *Rolling Stone*. On July 29 three Phi Psi brothers who have since graduated from UVA sued *Rolling Stone* for causing them emotional distress by allegedly implicating them in the reported assault.

Subsequent reporting by the *Washington Post*, followed by investigations by the Columbia School of Journalism and the Charlottesville Police Department, revealed that not a single detail of Jackie’s rape story as reported by Erdely could be independently verified, including the party where the assault was supposed to have occurred. “Drew,” the Phi Psi brother who had supposedly lured Jackie into the frat house that fateful night, had apparently

been invented by Jackie well before the alleged rape in an effort to make a male classmate jealous.

Lining Rugby Road and its feeder streets were the rest of the 40-odd fraternity and sorority houses, interspersed with a handful of university-owned buildings. Beyond them, Rugby Road turned into a suburban thoroughfare, winding through the dogwood clumps and daffodil beds of one of Charlottesville’s oldest and most affluent neighborhoods. Some of the Greek chapter houses, built during the late 19th and early 20th centuries in a style that copied the red-brick walls and white-columned porches of Thomas Jefferson’s idiosyncratic architecture for the original campus, had once belonged to the most affluent residents. Now, they were distinctly the worse for wear after well over a century of Greek ownership, haphazard landscaping, and sloppy-student housekeeping. Like many other UVA-affiliated structures, they were mildly defaced with the graffiti tags “Z” and



Rushees visit a UVA fraternity, January 15, 2015.

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“I.M.P.,” symbols of two secret societies that are even more esoteric than the Greek houses themselves. Nonetheless, the dense, barn-colored brickwork and double-story porches lent them a grandeur that seemed indestructible.

The three-story Zeta house was one of the smaller of these faded mansions, housing only about 30 of the sorority chapter’s hundred or so members, but it, too, boasted the red brick and white-painted porch columns that echoed the columns on the façade of the Rotunda, Jefferson’s signature piece of campus architecture. Two fraternity houses, St. Elmo Hall and Phi Gamma Delta, flanked one side of Zeta; on the other side was another sorority house (Delta Gamma), two fraternities (St. Anthony Hall and Sigma Alpha Epsilon), and a third sorority (Alpha Chi Omega). The first thing I noticed about the sorority houses was the front lawns. They looked . . .

different from the lawns fronting the fraternities. The yard décor of the latter mostly consisted of stray beer cans and glistening patches of bare brown earth. The front yards of Zeta and the other two sorority houses boasted clipped green lawns, blooming azalea bushes, nursery flowers in pots, and carefully sited outdoor furniture. The two side-by-side sets of sex-segregated Greek houses presented a vivid, even exaggerated tableau of fundamental differences between human males and human females that one would have a hard time ascribing merely to gender conditioning.



Rushes wait outside a UVA sorority house, January 16, 2015.

FROM THE ‘TOP’ TO THE ‘GROSS’

Inside the Zeta house was further evidence of what it meant to live distinctly on the distaff side of the Greek-life sex divide. The Zeta interior looked like nothing so much as a women’s dormitory on a sedate college campus during the first half of the 20th century: spic-and-span tidy, for one thing. (Zeta employs a full-time cleaning staff—in contrast to many fraternity houses, where the pledges do the janitorial work with predictable outcomes.) The Zeta house was also cozy and cheerful, with sofas, cushions, curtains, and pictures on the walls—and it boasted an actual dining room, where instead of having to patronize the mobbed food courts of today’s typical university dining halls, Zeta members could eat in intimacy meals cooked on the premises by their chapter’s own chef. Living at the Zeta house—in contrast to official student housing or off-campus

apartments—was a privilege reserved for third-year members of the sorority. Minneman, who had technically graduated early, during the first semester of her fourth year, and was taking graduate-level courses toward a master’s degree in public policy, was living on “the Lawn,” twin colonnaded rows of fireplace-graced rooms flanking the Rotunda, designed by Jefferson himself, that are a perk for the highest-achieving students. Yet she ate lunch several times a week at the Zeta house, just to drink in the homey atmosphere and to be with the women she called her “sisters.”

“It’s a group to go back to,” Minneman explained as her reason for going through Greek rush—and choosing Zeta—during the spring semester of her freshman year. “There are 16,000 undergraduates here at UVA, and we have huge classes, sometimes with 500 people. So you’re a

small person in a huge group of people. But now, I have a huge network of 100-plus women that I can relate to.”

A group photo of some of those women, lined up in rows on the front steps of the Zeta house, adorned the mantel in Minneman’s room on the Lawn, which we visited after our tour of Zeta. It was a sisterhood of the non-edgy: attractive young women sporting pastel dresses, enthusiastic smiles, and lovingly brushed blowouts. The atmosphere of

wholesomeness was by design. The National Panhellenic Conference, an umbrella group representing 26 sororities, forbids the possession of alcohol inside sorority houses (and it’s a rule that is strictly enforced at UVA, according to Minneman), except at a limited range of social events where the drinks must be supplied by an outside vendor who can check IDs. Sorority women have complained to the press about the double standard that requires them to travel to men’s houses in order to drink more freely, but the rule has certainly prevented sororities from experiencing the sex-and-booze-related scandals that have plagued fraternities.

The Greek social scene, as Minneman explained it, was a complex socioeconomic hierarchy, and Zeta occupied a rung somewhat below UVA’s “top”—that is, rich girls’—sororities such as Kappa Kappa Gamma and Kappa Alpha Theta, which reportedly tend to recruit their members from expensive East Coast boarding schools. Minneman herself had gone to a public high school in Lakeville, Minnesota, and she had attended UVA as a Jefferson Scholar, part of a selective program that awards merit-based scholarships to the academically talented. The parking lot of the Kappa

Alpha Theta house backed onto the Zeta parking lot, and on moving-in days, the Zeta girls could look down from their windows at the BMWs and Range Rovers of the Thetas and their parents. “There was one girl who arrived in a limousine, and she had a staff of servants carrying her stuff into the house for her,” Minneman said.

If the sorority lifestyle that I glimpsed at UVA seemed redolent of some atavistic version of college life before tattoos, side shaves, irony, and co-ed dorms—so did the fraternity scene, in a diametrically different way that partly reflected the fact that the taboo against drinking that prevailed at the women’s houses did not exist at most of the men’s. Fraternity houses are notorious across the country as the one certain place where underage students of both sexes can find alcohol, because there are always brothers over the legal drinking age of 21 who can supply it, and there is always a welcome mat out for female companionship. Fraternities outnumber sororities about two-to-one at UVA (as they do on many campuses), and it was fraternity culture with its ready booze, not sorority culture, which is officially quasi-dry, that had drawn the baleful attention of *Rolling Stone*’s Sabrina Erdely.

As with the sororities, Minneman explained, there were “top” fraternities at UVA reputedly boasting “Deerfield” demographics (prep school plus money): St. A, Delta Kappa Epsilon (“Deke”), Zeta Psi. There was the “nice guy” fraternity, Beta Theta Pi, which had banned hazing and restricted alcohol use in its house under a “Men of Principle” program the nationwide fraternity adopted in 1998 (it’s a program that has admittedly been more honored in the breach at some chapters). And there were the “gross” fraternities where alcohol use seemed to be a day-and-night affair. At St. Elmo, next door to the Zeta sorority house, “in the middle of the day you can see guys sitting on the roof drinking beer,” Minneman said.

Zeta Psi, which also had a “gross” reputation, had twice lost its official status in recent years. It was suspended in 2002 after several members wore blackface to a Halloween party, and again in 2011, after a pledge nearly died of sodium poisoning in a hazing ritual that included chugging at least a pint of soy sauce. Reinstated in 2013, the Zetes proceeded to outrage progressives on and off campus with a “Bombs Over Baghdad” theme party this past February. Some Iraqi students at UVA circulated a petition demanding that the chapter apologize. The unrepentant

Zetes countered that they had titled their party after a rap classic recorded by Outkast in 2000, several years before the Iraq war. Jia Tolentino, a UVA graduate writing for the feminist website *Jezebel*, devoted a *j’accuse* article to the “country-club-from-hell” Zetes for desecrating the memory of “perhaps the approximately 150,000 civilians who have died as a result of the Iraq invasion.”

‘NERDS VERSUS JOCKS’

Right after the publication of “A Rape on Campus” last November, University of Virginia president Teresa Sullivan suspended all Greek social activities through the end of the semester. The sanction meant little, practically speaking, since exams occupied most of the month of December, followed by a break for the Christmas holidays. Yet the suspension rankled the fraternities and sororities, which complained that they had been subjected to a collective punishment based on the alleged sins of one house. Meanwhile, professors writing on a history department listserv called for the outright abolition of UVA’s entire Greek system. Neeti Nair, an associate professor of history specializing in Hindu-Muslim relations in India, circulated an online petition to that effect. “The suspension of all Greek activity would be a minimum. The abolition of the Greek system would be preferable,” wrote Brad Reed, a scholar of Chinese history.

“I believed the *Rolling Stone* story was true simply because it was so outrageous,” said John Edwin Mason, a professor of African history who had participated in the listserv but didn’t join the calls for abolishing fraternities. “*Rolling Stone* had a reputation for solid journalism, and I thought their lawyers must have been all over that story, not to mention layers of editors,” Mason said. “Had I known what I know now, I would have been more skeptical.” Mason attributed some of the faculty piling-on against fraternities in the wake of Erdely’s story to a “nerds versus jocks” culture war that seems to be universal in academia.

Activists spraypainted a wall abutting the Phi Psi house with such slogans as “Suspend Us” and “UVA Center for Rape Studies.” They heaved bottles and chunks of cinder block through the house’s first-floor windows, leading the brothers who lived there to vacate the premises. An anonymous letter to various news media signed “The students



Students pass UVA’s Phi Kappa Psi house on Rugby Road.

who vandalized the Phi Psi house” declared: “UVA will not be the same after this—we will not allow it.” On the night of November 22, 2014, several hundred students and faculty members chanted and waved signs: “Fratboys Rape.” “UVA Stop Hiding Rape.” “She Trusted You to Do the Right Thing.” A prominent philosophy professor, John D. Arras (who died in March), wrote an open letter to Sullivan, published in the student newspaper, the *Cavalier Daily*, declaring, “I’m sick of the twisted, misogynist, privileged, moronic culture maintained by our Greek system,” which he described as “alcohol-sodden, elitist, and anti-intellectual—i.e., a system that really should have no place at a university with pretensions to seriousness, let alone greatness.” The Faculty of Arts and Sciences, representing the liberal-arts contingent, passed a resolution calling for extending the Greek ban through the end of the 2014-2015 academic year, which would have effectively canceled spring-semester rush.

“We’d get five or six emails every day during the first one or two weeks after the [*Rolling Stone*] article appeared calling for UVA to abolish fraternities,” said Russell Bogue, a third-year student and Beta brother who had been an opinion editor at the *Cavalier Daily* that fall. “One of them said in all-caps, ‘FRATS. POWER. RAPE.’ One of them said that UVA should hire 27 bulldozers and raze Rugby Road to the ground and then salt the earth.” According to Bogue, the *Cavalier* staff, sharing the shock and shame that Erdely’s story had generated among undergraduates, engaged in a kind of embarrassed self-bowdlerizing during those early weeks that refused to admit the possibility that Erdely had gotten it wrong. “We got a letter saying that the *Rolling Stone* story was absurd,” Bogue said. “But we didn’t publish it. There was a huge amount of peer censorship. There was no toleration of dissent—so no one speaks out, and you look poorly on someone who did dissent. They want to hear that you’re also morally outraged.”

In January the university announced a sweeping new policy designed to oversee the consumption of alcohol inside Greek houses as a condition for allowing them to resume their social functions. The new rules, which UVA styled a “Fraternity Operating Agreement,” require beer to be served in cans instead of from the kegs that have seemingly been part of fraternity culture since time immemorial, and for all parties to be registered with the university well in advance. “Sober monitors” must be present at all fraternity

parties; one of their jobs is to pour any wine that is served. Like the earlier ban on social events, the “agreement,” which the frats were obliged to sign or else lose their official status, infuriated their members, who pointed out that not only were they subjected to a blanket punishment, but that the party for which they were being punished had from all evidence been purely imaginary. “We’re living with it, but it’s really unfair. They’ve singled us out with a policy that doesn’t apply to any other campus organizations,” a young man who identified himself as a frat member told me as I was crossing the campus.

Several national sororities forbade members of their UVA chapters to attend fraternity parties on Boys’ Bid Night, a rush event in which young women typically go from house to house meeting the new brothers and sharing drinks. About 2,000 UVA women signed a protest petition complaining that they ought to be allowed to choose for themselves which social events to attend.

And in March UVA announced a tough new “yes means yes” policy on sexual assault that seemed to define as punishable “sexual contact” any intentional touching of someone else without first obtaining that person’s consent.

Teresa Sullivan declined my request for an interview. “It’s been a tough year at UVA,” university spokesman Anthony P. de Bruyn said. (A second-year student, Hannah Graham, had been brutally murdered in the fall of 2014.) Yet a heavily attended campus speech during my April visit where Sullivan provided the introduction offered a clue about her thinking and that of other UVA administrators.

The speaker was Elizabeth Armstrong, a sociology professor at the University of Michigan and coauthor of a 2013 book, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality*, a study of class tensions in a freshman women’s dorm. In her take-no-prisoners speech, however, Armstrong seemed to have decided that fraternity houses and fraternity parties had been the major source of her book-subjects’ problems. Armstrong described Greek social structures as hotbeds of racism, elitism, out-of-control drinking (leading to what she called “party rape,” where no one can remember what happened), and ill treatment of women in general (who nonetheless, as Armstrong conceded, flock to fraternity events clad in their cocktail dresses). For example, Armstrong said, “at fraternity houses, the women’s bathroom is always really, really filthy.” She continued:



UVA rector George Martin, center, with university president Teresa Sullivan, right, during a board of visitors meeting about sexual assault, November 25, 2014

“These are large parties, the attendees are socially similar and highly concerned with status, there’s alcohol everywhere, and the parties are either male-controlled or out of control.” Even the party themes—“Playboy Mansion” or “boss and secretary”—are “male-dominant,” Armstrong maintained. “They tried to get women to come to their parties in as little clothes as possible.”

Declaring that “education is not enough” and “the time has come for a public-health approach,” Armstrong urged colleges to take drastic steps to “reform” fraternities (if not get rid of them entirely): make their houses go dry, ban students from living there, and more or less force undergraduates to socialize with classmates of different races and classes. Looking pointedly at Sullivan, Armstrong said, “I would love to see the presidents of all the universities systematically get together to push back against the system over the next 20 years.”

Sullivan’s response that day, while not exactly endorsing Armstrong’s proposals, was not a ringing endorsement of the Greek presence on campus, either. “Public and private institutions are different,” she said, choosing her words with care. “At Amherst you can say, ‘You’ll be shut down unless you do this.’ Here, we don’t own their houses. They’re off-ground. And we’re a public university, so there’s a right to free association that doesn’t exist at private colleges.”

It is difficult to reconcile the Death Star portrait of Greek houses that Armstrong painted (although she was certainly correct about frat-house restrooms) with the impressions I gained on the UVA campus talking to such poised Greek achievers as Minneman, Bogue, and several others. Their reputation for juicing and partying notwithstanding, members of fraternities and sororities pull ahead of their non-Greek classmates in nearly every category. Although mean Greek grade-point averages, at least among men, are only marginally higher than those of non-Greeks—2.91 compared with 2.89, according to the North American Interfraternity Conference, which represents 74 fraternities in the United States and Canada—the four-year graduation rates of Greek men and women are nearly 5 percentage points higher than those of non-Greeks, according to a 2014 study from the University of Tennessee. Furthermore, members of fraternities and sororities are more likely than nonmembers to participate in student government and other extracurricular activities, according to the

report. Nearly all Greek houses have “adopted” charitable causes, and fraternities and sororities raise about \$7 million a year for various charities. They also donate generously to their alma maters. Gifts from fraternity and sorority alumni account for 50 percent of all alumni donations—a fact that irritates fraternity foes, who argue that the gift-giving makes colleges hesitant to crack down on out-of-control Greek activities.

Another 2014 study jointly conducted by Gallup and Purdue University found that college graduates who had belonged to fraternities and sororities tended to feel more engaged and happier with their jobs and to have stronger relationships with family and friends than their non-Greek counterparts. They were also in better physical health, the study found. Behind these glowing numbers is undoubtedly an element of self-selection: Greek societies tend to attract and recruit “joiners” who are socially adept—the same kinds of people who typically do well in business, politics, and family life after graduation.

Still, attacks on fraternities—and, to a lesser extent, sororities—long predated the rise of the progressive warriors who set the mood in Charlottesville for months after Sabrina Erdely’s story appeared. And it’s not hard to see why, as the well-reported frat excesses at UVA and else-

where encapsulate every irritant that political liberals—and even many conservatives—might find objectionable about the Greek system: licentious partying, reckless hazing, execrable taste, and, perhaps most significantly, an insistent nose-thumbing at the pieties of political correctness. Greek houses represent a rival source of social authority for students that is beyond the control of the administrators who believe that it is their job, not that of bands of undergraduates, to set the tone of campus culture.

THE RISE AND FALL AND RISE OF FRATS

Fraternities had their origins during the late 18th and early 19th centuries as debating and social societies on American college campuses, which were then all-male. The very first Greek-letter fraternity was Phi Beta Kappa—now strictly an academic honor society—founded in 1776 at the College of William and Mary as the successor to a 1750 entity called the Flat Hat Club, to which Thomas Jefferson had belonged as a



Crushed cans outside Phi Kappa Psi, December 6, 2014

student there. The first strictly social fraternity, Kappa Alpha, began at Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., in 1825, setting a template for organizations based on notions of brotherhood, ritual, tradition, and secrecy.

Sororities came later, during the 1850s, and they began to flourish only during the latter half of the 19th century as co-education became the undergraduate norm in America, especially at the brand-new state land-grant universities. Then as now, sororities tried to monitor closely the academic and personal lives of their members, offering havens from the impersonal nature of large institutions, support systems for women determined to prove that they could excel alongside men, and an opportunity to find mates among the high-status young men who tended to populate fraternities. The college-nostalgia standard “The Sweetheart of Sigma Chi,” written in 1911 by two undergraduates at Albion College in Michigan, celebrated a co-ed who was the “sweetest” of all the girls on campus. To this day, “pinning” ceremonies, during which a brother gives his fraternity pin to his sorority girlfriend, are an important part of Greek life. Pinning seems to represent a Princeton Mom’s dream of snagging a husband on campus before graduation—because significant numbers of pinned undergraduate couples reportedly go on to get married.

Fraternities like to boast that every president except two after 1825 belonged to a fraternity. This is probably an exaggeration, but at least 20 presidents, from Jefferson on down, have been either collegiate or honorary members of Greek-letter societies (that list includes Bill Clinton and George W. Bush, although not Barack Obama). Various first ladies, including Eleanor Roosevelt and Barbara and Laura Bush, have had sorority affiliations. In the 113th Congress, which ended in 2014, 24 percent of House members and 39 percent of senators had Greek affiliations in college, according to the North-American Interfraternity Conference. Some 31 percent of Supreme Court justices have belonged to fraternities, and of the CEOs heading the top 10 Fortune 500 companies in 2014, five were fraternity men.

Even during the heyday of Greek life, college administrators regarded the exclusivity and secret-society status of fraternities as implicit threats. Harvard had abolished fraternities during the 1850s, although their social niche was quickly filled by equally exclusive and equally secretive “final clubs” operating off campus. In 1876 the president of Purdue began requiring all applicants to sign a pledge that they would not join any Greek-letter or other secret organizations. The rule fell, in 1882, after a Purdue applicant who was already a member of the Sigma Chi fraternity successfully sued the university to gain admission. Stanford banned sororities in 1944, acting on complaints from female students that only one in five young women who rushed were admitted into

the handful of women’s houses on the Stanford Row.

During the first half of the twentieth century, a supposed golden age of Greek-letter life, fraternity chapters across the country were nonetheless regularly banned or suspended from campuses for drinking and hazing accidents. Dangerous hazing practices certainly weren’t limited to fraternities, but because initiation and the ritual humiliation of pledges was—and is—a central rite of passage at many Greek houses, hazing fatalities became associated with frats. Hank Nuwer’s *Broken Pledges: The Deadly Rite of Hazing* (1990) described a not-infrequent initiation mishap of the 1940s and 1950s: pledges killed by passing cars after being dropped off at night on country roads far from campus. A Phi Beta Pi pledge at St. Louis University died in 1945 after other fraternity members coated his naked body with flammable substances and passed an electric current through him. In 1959 a Kappa Sigma pledge at the University of Southern California choked to death on a slab of liver force-fed him by his brothers.

In 1962, Williams College, an elite private liberal-arts institution in Massachusetts that was then all-male, took the radical—and highly controversial—step of completely abolishing a fraternity system that had been in place since 1833, replacing the 15 Greek houses on the campus with a college-operated dormitory and dining system. A lengthy report issued by Williams’s board of trustees listed a number of reasons for the ban. Chief among them was the sense of social isolation and second-class status felt by the small minority of students who were excluded from the fraternities that accounted for 94 percent of the student body and 44 percent of student housing. The report cited other reasons as well: perceived demoralizing social stratification among the fraternities themselves, the high cost of dues and other Greek-related expenses, the fact that fraternity social events such as rush week and initiation crowded out academics, and a lack of college control over “public and private conduct and the use of alcohol.”

Unmentioned in the report—but undoubtedly on the minds of the trustees—was the fact that the oldest and most prestigious fraternities at Williams and elsewhere, associated with boarding-school exclusivity, had only recently started admitting Jewish members, and almost none of them admitted blacks, at a time when racial integration was becoming an important cause on campuses. Explicitly Jewish fraternities such as Sigma Alpha Mu (“Sammy”) and Zeta Beta Tau (“ZBT”) had come into existence at the turn of the 20th century in reaction to this exclusion, and although they, like the WASP houses, now admit members of all faiths, they retain their Jewish identity. Similarly, African Americans set up their own Greek system, the “divine nine,” as it is still called (five fraternities, four sororities). Racial segregation or near-segregation persists

in Greek houses—a fact much commented upon by fraternity opponents—but one that seems also to be owed to the preferences of black, Latino, and other minority students themselves. “Greek life provides a space on campus for students of color,” a young African-American woman commented at Armstrong’s UVA lecture. Russell Bogue told me that the UVA’s Betas “would love to have some black pledges” but the students the chapter had tried to recruit had chosen to affiliate with black houses instead.

The phasing out of fraternities was the most divisive event that had ever occurred at Williams, with many angry alumni cutting off donations. Yet the general feeling was that Greek life was on its way out anyway, an anachronism in a postwar age when college admissions were becoming increasingly meritocratic and student bodies drawn from a wider swath of the population than the affluent upper- and upper-middle-class youth who could afford to indulge tastes for partying, social snobbery, and esoteric rituals.

During the radicalized 1960s and 1970s, Greek life did go out of style, especially at elite private colleges and universities where anti-Vietnam war activism and progressive egalitarianism set the cultural tone. Fraternity membership dropped precipitously during the hippie decades (sororities weren’t so badly hit), with some chapters closing entirely amid mounting debt and dwindling numbers and others giving up their houses. College administrators did little to halt the trend and were sometimes accused by fraternity advocates of using Greek-house debt as a mere excuse to shut down the houses. Administrators at Yale began requiring all undergraduates to purchase a full meal plan, which made Greek-house dining rooms redundant, and by 1973 the last of Yale’s fraternities had folded.

Starting in the 1980s, as radical campus culture abated, at least among undergraduates, and many states, under threat of loss of federal highway funding, boosted their drinking ages from 18 to 21, Greek life began to make a comeback. At Stanford, whose row once boasted 36 Greek-letter houses, there are now only 9, representing 6 fraternities and 3 sororities (the latter were allowed to return in 1977 after mounting a challenge under Title IX, the federal antidiscrimination-in-education law)—but there are also 17 “unhoused” fraternities and sororities engaged in a long-running struggle with administrators to allow them

to occupy campus facilities. Yale has also seen the return of 13 fraternities, plus 5 sororities. At Harvard, which established a residential “house” system during the 1930s that was supposed to combat social stratification, at least 6 fraternities and 4 sororities have emerged in recent years, even though the school deems them “discriminatory” and has refused to grant them official recognition.

These revivals are part of a national trend. According to the North-American Interfraternity Conference, the number of frat members has been rising by 4 percent a year for the past decade, up to more than 370,000 undergraduate members in about 6,100 chapters on 800 campuses currently. The National Panhellenic Conference reports a similar decade-long increase in sorority members: up to 140,000 undergraduates nationally in 3,200 chapters.

At the same time, however, Williams set a powerful example for administrators and trustees at other private institutions in the Northeast, who perceived Greek houses as loci of retrograde elitism that undermined the democratic and diversity-respecting campus culture high-minded college bureaucrats were seeking to implement. Amherst abolished on-campus fraternities in 1984. Colby College in Maine quickly followed suit. Middlebury College in Vermont

got rid of its fraternities more gradually, terminating fraternity dining in 1979, requiring chapters to admit women in 1990 (which effectively divorced them from their national organizations), and in 1991, ending their residential status by requiring all first-year students to live in one of five co-ed “living-learning communities.” Some Middlebury fraternities survived as purely social houses, others dissolved, and the Deke chapter trashed its house in protest against the new rules, got kicked off campus, and then went defiantly underground. Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, ordered its fraternities to admit women in 2012, effectively neutralizing their identity.

In 1969 Rutgers anthropologist Lionel Tiger published his bestselling *Men in Groups*. In that book, still in print, Tiger coined the now-commonplace term “male bonding” and essentially invented the field of evolutionary psychology (it wasn’t called that back then), by comparing male humans to other male primates and noting similarities in behavior that could be attributed to a common evolutionary trajectory. Tiger’s book was denounced by many feminists because



A woman dances for Sigma Chi members at the University of Georgia during a contest to choose a chapter sweetheart, 1941.

RALPH MORSE / THE LIFE IMAGES COLLECTION / GETTY

it explored biological and psychological differences between the sexes whose very existence feminists denied, and it also argued, feminists believed, that men were innately superior to women. Tiger contended that the primeval male social arrangement was the hominid hunting pack. His theory presupposed that human males were naturally violent and aggressive (necessary traits when most food consisted of prey on the run), and that their social arrangements were marked by a struggle for dominance. But there was a concomitant male need for social cooperation within the pack, which meant that men needed to form intense relationships with each other, just as men and women needed to form intense relationships for reproductive and family-raising purposes. Hence the development of the tightly woven, rigidly hierarchical all-male social structures that characterized military, political, occupational, business, and religious life from Paleolithic times until the women's movement of the 20th-century West.

Women were excluded from the primeval hunting pack because childbearing and child-nurturing interfered with the crucial-to-survival-business of pursuing and killing animals—and also because their presence would inevitably instigate sexual competition among men that would undermine the pack's cohesion, Tiger argued.

In a chapter devoted to male secret societies, Tiger discussed fraternities in unflattering terms (the Canadian-born Tiger had not belonged to one as an undergraduate at McGill). He described fraternities' often gruesome and humiliating initiation ceremonies as "part of a male-male 'courtship' pattern tied to a tendency for males to seek status among other males, to form groups with them, and to value highly the corporate 'presentation-of-self' to the community at large." In other words, the pledges proved their courage and loyalty to the group by enduring the ritual sadism without complaint, and the fraternities in turn proved their high status and exclusivity by making the ceremonies as brutal and demanding as possible. Many initiation practices, at least as Tiger observed them more than four decades ago, involved quasi-homoerotic elements, such as actual or simulated branding of the buttocks. (Tiger noted, however, that the indignities paled by comparison to military boot-camp ordeals that sometimes resulted in recruits' deaths, and to the excruciating and often bloody puberty rituals of a range of non-Western societies.) Sorority initiation ordeals were relatively tame, Tiger observed, typically requiring pledges to wear silly costumes, memorize lists of information, and perform tedious or annoying chores for their older sisters. (The National Panhellenic Conference now bans hazing—as does the black-Greek National Pan-Hellenic Council—which is illegal anyway in 44 states, but forms of it continue covertly in many houses.)

"Men have this urge, this need to dominate," Tiger,

now age 78 and retired from Rutgers, said in a telephone interview. Despite its violent connotations, he pointed out, male aggressiveness has a positive social function: "It performs a central role in protecting the group. Men protect women, and women protect children. The fact is that the sexes are really different, and you want them to be different." In *Men in Groups*, Tiger observed an additional aspect of fraternities and other esoteric organizations: "One general characteristic of secret societies, I have noted, is that they excite the hostility of established authority," he wrote. "[W]here secret societies are not openly sanctioned—particularly by the dominants of the communities involved—the combination of secrecy and bonding appears to be an unambiguous inducement to hostility."

FEMINIST HOSTILITY

The hostility they inspire has aroused admiration, sometimes outright, sometimes grudging, for fraternities' antinomian ethos, even among ideological liberals. In a rave four-star review of *National Lampoon's Animal House*, film critic Roger Ebert wrote in 1978: "Bluto [famously played by John Belushi] and his brothers are engaged in a holding action against civilization. They are in favor of beer, women, song, motorcycles, *Playboy* centerfolds, and making rude noises. They are opposed to studying, serious thought, the Dean, the regulations governing fraternities, and, most especially, the disgusting behavior of the Omegas—a house so respectable it has even given an ROTC commander to the world." The brothers of *Animal House* were politically incorrect *avant la lettre*, and their insouciant nose-thumbing at long-faced campus administrators has been credited—probably excessively—for initiating the revival of student interest in Greek life during the 1980s. The movie also, as might be expected, contributed to a widespread public perception that Greek life consisted solely of class-cutting and toga parties.

At the same time, the professors and college administrators who were already hostile toward fraternities got a new set of allies: campus feminists who saw a direct link between Greek life and the kind of supposedly widespread sexual assault of women on campuses that eventually caught the attention of the Obama Education Department. It was at this juncture, as UVA's scorched-earth reaction to the *Rolling Stone* story illustrates, that the war against fraternities began in deadly earnest. In 1990 Peggy Reeves Sanday, an anthropology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, published *Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privilege on Campus*. The book centered around a young woman whom Sanday called "Laurel," who had gone to a party at the Alpha Tau Omega house at the University of Pennsylvania during the spring of 1983 and had serial sex with five

or six of the brothers in an upstairs bedroom. She had been drinking heavily and had taken LSD before the party, and witnesses described her as dancing provocatively and also acting disoriented. The next day, after some ATO members were overheard bragging about their sexual escapades with Laurel, a friend concluded she had been raped—unable to consent to the sex because she was incapacitated—and Laurel eventually alerted the campus Women’s Center and other administrators. Penn temporarily suspended the fraternity apparently on grounds that it had violated a university ban on students’ acting “immaturely.” Laurel never went to the police, and no criminal complaint was ever filed.

Sanday’s book made observations about the social dynamics of male Greek houses similar to those of Lionel Tiger, including an extensive description of humiliating initiation practices that focused on buttocks and genitalia. Instead of Tiger’s evolutionary approach, however, Sanday adopted the psychoanalytical theories of Jacques Lacan, a French postmodernist neo-Freudian and the man responsible for making the word “phallogocentric” a commonplace of trendy academic discourse. Sanday argued, mostly on the basis of anecdotes told to her, that “pulling the train”—men having sex sequentially with the same female—was a commonplace occurrence on college campuses, especially at fraternity houses where bottomless quantities of liquor flowed and hookups, often with “little sisters” (a frat-house euphemism for groupies) and sometimes right in front of other brothers, occurred with astonishing frequency. She contended that such episodes of communal sex, which she called “gang rape,” were essential to “fraternal bonding,” as drunk and conflicted young men tried to expunge their homoerotic feelings. “The woman plays the role of ritual scapegoat who receives the brunt of collective male sexual aggression that would otherwise turn a group of privileged heterosexual males into despised homosexuals,” Sanday wrote. Her book, homing in on gang rape and fraternity initiations, was just a hop, skip, and a jump away from the story about “Jackie” that Sabrina Erdely told in *Rolling Stone*, in which the supposed gang rape was the fraternity initiation.

A 2004 book, *Pledged: The Secret Life of Sororities*, by journalist Alexandra Robbins, who had passed herself off as a sorority sister at an undisclosed Texas campus so that she could report on female Greek life from the inside, was a more readable but equally censorious bookend to *Fraternity Gang Rape*. As Sanday had done with fraternities, Robbins faulted sororities for covertly encouraging illegal and excessive alcohol and drug use despite official policies (Robbins described “pre-gaming” for parties with vodka shots as a near-universal practice in sorority houses). She also indicted the sisterhoods for focusing ruthlessly on looks, especially the looks of their prospective pledges (Robbins claimed there was an “eating disorder epidemic”);

for tolerating high levels of casual racism; for obsessive preoccupation with male attention and competition for boy-friends; and for relentless wealth-based social snobbery. A female reader of Robbins’s book might observe that what she was actually chronicling were the pet sins and foibles—superficiality, cliquishness, status-jostling, and throat-knifing competitiveness just underneath the sisterly hugs—of all “women in groups” at their worst, not just sororities, but Robbins was having none of this. “What if sororities focused their energies on something more than mixers and Greek Week floats?” she queried.

Sanday’s *Fraternity Gang Rape*, updated in 2007, contributed to a growing tendency, encouraged by campus women’s centers, progressive politicians, and feminists in academia and the media, of conflating drunken sex regretted the next morning (almost invariably by the female partner) with violent rape. Colleges that celebrated annual “Sex Weeks,” “healthy” commitment-free hookups, and young men and young women living cheek by jowl in coed dorms suddenly found themselves dealing with claims put forth by feminists that astonishing percentages of college women were assault victims, typically when incapacitated by alcohol. A widely cited 2007 study funded by the Justice Department concluded that one in five female students endured sexual assault during her undergraduate years. (That figure was contradicted by an in-house Justice Department report in 2014 finding that the actual rate was more like 6.1 assaults per 1,000 female students, lower than the rate for noncollege women, but the “one in five” figure remains in common currency among liberals, even cited recently by Obama himself.) The 2007 study also asserted that fraternity men—along with college men who had participated in aggressive sports in high school—were far more likely than their non-Greek and nonathletic counterparts to engage in “sexual assault and sexual aggression.”

Furthermore, there have been just enough documented incidents over the years of actual rape inside fraternity houses to lend credence to allegations of a pervasive frat-house rape culture. In 1984, for example, Liz Seccuro, then a 17-year-old UVA freshman and a virgin, was raped inside the Phi Psi house by at least one fellow student after passing out at a party, possibly from a date-rape drug slipped into a drink. Twenty-one years later, in 2005, Nevada real estate agent William Beebe wrote a letter to Seccuro apologizing for the assault as part of his Alcoholics Anonymous 12-step program. Beebe, then a UVA student, had been living in the Phi Psi house in 1984. Seccuro alerted law enforcement, Beebe pleaded guilty to sexual battery in 2006, and he served a brief prison term. Seccuro became an antirape activist and in 2011 published a book, *Crash into Me: A Survivor’s Search for Justice*, about her ordeal and its aftermath. In an op-ed for the *Wall Street Journal* focusing

on Securo's book, *Atlantic* writer Caitlin Flanagan, who had enrolled at UVA in 1982, two years before the rape, described herself as so freaked out by a visit to Rugby Road on the fourth day of the fall semester that she promptly dropped out of UVA: "At once august and moldering, [the frat houses] seemed sinister, to stand for male power at its most malevolent and institutionally condoned."

Flanagan summed up fraternity culture, which she called on college administrators to "shutter," in lurid Sunday-esque terms: "The Greek system is dedicated to quelling young men's anxiety about submitting themselves to four years of sissy-pants book learning by providing them with a variety of he-man activities: drinking, drugging, ESPN watching and the sexual mistreatment of women." She followed this indictment with a 15,000-word cover story for the *Atlantic* in February 2014, ominously titled "The Dark Power of Fraternities." There was plenty of tut-tutting at testosterone-ish Greek mores, but very little of it actually dealt with sexual assault. Most of the incidents Flanagan described—largely taken from the case files of Douglas Fierberg, a flamboyant Washington, D.C., trial lawyer whose lavishly produced website announces that he specializes in representing "victims of school violence"—involved the sometimes comic, sometimes tragic consequences of combining too many Big Red Cups with too little frat-house basic maintenance: falls from upper-story windows, collapsing decks, and so forth.

Indeed, in all her 15,000 words, Flanagan discussed in detail only one sexual assault that could be characterized as fraternity-related: the violent rape of a Wesleyan University freshman (and eventual client of Fierberg's) known only as "Jane Doe" in an upstairs room at the Beta House while attending a Halloween party in 2010. The assailant, John O'Neill, was neither a member nor a student, but a mother's-basement-dwelling former high school buddy of a Beta brother who had wandered into the party. Jane Doe promptly reported the incident to a Wesleyan dean, then went to the police at the dean's urging. O'Neill was arrested, pleaded guilty to several assault charges, and went to prison. In 2012 Jane Doe sued Wesleyan and the fraternity for \$10 million (that was how Fierberg got involved), alleging that Wesleyan had violated Title IX by refusing to issue warnings or take action that could have prevented the crime. She claimed that the Beta chapter at Wesleyan had a reputation as a "rape factory." (Wesleyan settled that lawsuit for an undisclosed amount in 2013.) Even Flanagan had to concede that the Beta brothers had been in no way responsible for O'Neill's crime and had acted exemplarily in its aftermath, cooperating fully with law enforcement to track

him down. Yet she could not resist a sarcastic aside that the Beta chapter had "followed the standard playbook" when it expressed sympathy for victims and reiterated a no-tolerance policy regarding sexual assault.

The 2010 assault at the Beta house was a chapter in a long skirmish between liberal Wesleyan administrators determined to bring the college in line with the anti-Greek ethos that prevailed at other elite New England liberal-arts institutions, and the members and alumni of Beta itself. In 2005 the then-president of Wesleyan, Douglas Bennet, had ordered all Wesleyan-affiliated fraternities to allow female students to reside in their houses (they didn't have to make them members) or lose their status as "program housing" (Wesleyan requires nearly all its undergraduates to live in either dorms or university-approved dwellings). Beta, whose house was not actually on the campus, was the only holdout—which meant the college and its campus police force had no oversight over activities inside the house. A

standoff lasting several years followed as Bennet and Michael S. Roth, Wesleyan's president since 2007, tried to cajole and then threaten Beta back into the "program housing" fold. After the Jane Doe incident, Roth issued an edict barring Wesleyan students from so much as visiting organizations not officially recognized by Wesleyan. This led to "Free Beta" rallies and a protest from the campus-free-speech organization FIRE (Foundation for Individual Rights in Education). Eventually there was a truce, with Beta agreeing to return to program

housing and to accept Wesleyan oversight.

Yet in September 2014, Wesleyan once again banned its students from the Beta house, after an apparently intoxicated (allegedly from drinks served by Beta) female sophomore attending a Beta party fell out of a third-story window and was severely injured. Beta's national organization suspended the Wesleyan chapter, which was already on probation. On September 22, Wesleyan's trustees voted to give the school's fraternities a three-year deadline to become co-ed or shut down.

The rolling debacle at Wesleyan was the kind of perfect storm that lent credence to calls by the liberal media, especially after Erdely's *Rolling Stone* story, to close down fraternities lock, stock, and barrel. Yet while study after study shows that fraternity men and sorority women drink more heavily than their non-Greek counterparts—their off-campus houses and apartments are the chief venues at which college students under age 21 get access to alcohol—the National Institutes of Health has pointed out that underage binge drinking and beer-pong culture are problems that extend far beyond the Greek system. Similarly, hazing is



William Beebe is led from court in Charlottesville, January 17, 2006.

AP / THE DAILY PROGRESS / BRADY WOLFE

by no means limited to frat houses, and indeed one of the most egregious recent hazing fatalities involved the beating death of a drum major by other members of the Florida A&M band during an initiation ritual that got out of hand in 2011. And certainly the putative campus “rape culture” decried by feminist activists is by no means a Greek phenomenon. The much-publicized alleged rape in her dorm room that prompted Columbia student Emma Sulkowicz to carry a mattress around campus in protest had nothing to do with fraternities.

‘THE LOU VERSUS THE EMO HIPSTER’

Most reported incidents of Greek-house misconduct don’t involve anything remotely resembling rape—and they are statistically rare in a nationwide undergraduate Greek population of 750,000—but they do involve enough vandalism, poor taste, out-and-out racism, and occasional tragedy to make it understandable why a Greek-hostile press has pounced on them with glee. In May, for example, Penn State kicked the Kappa Delta Rho fraternity off campus for three years after discovering it had maintained a Facebook page featuring photographs of nude, unconscious women. In March the University of Oklahoma closed the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house and summarily evicted its members after a video surfaced online in which SAE members chanted anti-black language and vowed never to admit African Americans into their fraternity. Clemson University threw the Sigma Phi Epsilon fraternity off campus for five years following a pledge’s fatal fall from a bridge during an alleged September 2014 hazing mishap. Universities investigated or suspended at least 80 fraternities in all during the 2014-2015 academic year, 30 of them during March 2015 alone, according to the *Huffington Post*.

Some of those summary punishments have raised questions about overkill, particularly in instances where the worst the fraternity members have done is engage in highly offensive speech. The SAE incident at Oklahoma is an example. In an op-ed in *USA Today*, Robert Shibley, executive director of FIRE, pointed out that the University of Oklahoma is a public institution, meaning that First Amendment protections against censorship came into play. “Instead of government crackdowns on a viewpoint, it is far better to let the marketplace of ideas determine the social consequences for racist speech,” Shibley wrote.

During the fall of 2010 Deke pledges at Yale enraged campus feminists when they were obliged, as part of hazing, to march past a dorm that housed freshman women, chanting “No means yes, and yes means anal!” It is unlikely that the chant actually caused any of the women to fear harm—and Yale also has a longstanding guarantee of free expression for its students—but Yale College’s then-dean, Mary Miller,

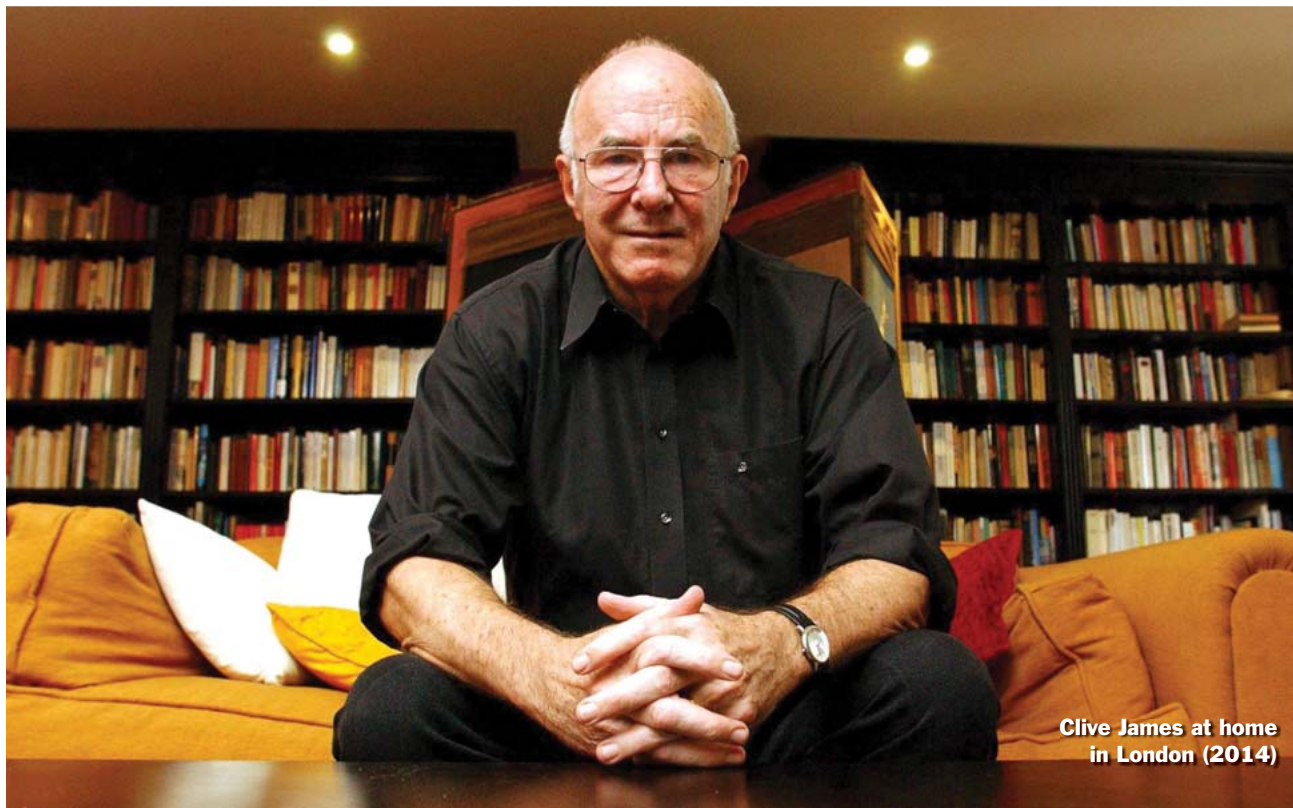
first called for permanent banishment of the Dekes, then, in 2011, settled on a five-year suspension. A feminist magazine had described the 18-year-old pledges as “a moving gang of men, chanting in deep, throaty voices for sexual assault.”

Deep, throaty voices. That’s a description of men, period. “Certainly there’s plenty of excessive drinking and misogyny in fraternity houses,” said W. Bradford Wilcox, a sociology professor and director of the National Marriage Institute at UVA. “These are expressions of maleness in its worst manifestation: drinking, promiscuity, and risky behaviors. But there’s a flip side: There’s a real sense of fraternity, of male friendship and camaraderie that can’t be found elsewhere on campuses. So there are pockets of fraternity life that have some kind of redeeming value.” Wilcox continued: “What we don’t have is a publicly articulated notion of gentlemanly behavior, the old *GQ* model. We’ve lost that, and instead we have the lout versus the emo hipster as our only models of manhood. Our culture has forgotten the pro-social masculine ideal.”

In January, as the *Rolling Stone* story was unraveling, Kenneth G. Elzinga, a longtime economics professor at UVA who had never previously gotten involved in campus politics, was so appalled by what he considered to have been a “scandalous” rush to judgment against Phi Kappa Psi by his fellow faculty members that he invited the entire new Phi Psi pledge class of 18 men to his home. He also wrote a letter to the brothers of Phi Psi and their president, Stephen Scipione. “I encourage you to be the kind of men who express maturity and good judgment now that the story has been shown to be a tissue of lies,” Elzinga wrote. “What would it look like if Phi Kappa Psi were known, not only at UVA but elsewhere, as a band of brothers whose reputation in alcohol and drug use, and whose reputation in how women were treated by the brothers, whose conduct in manifold ways, as individuals and collectively, was held up and admired?”

“My wife said they were one of the nicest group of boys we have ever had over here,” Elzinga told me as we sat in his office.

That was on a Thursday. The next day, Friday, I walked past the Phi Psi house on its promontory overlooking the Madison Bowl. The insulting graffiti had been scrubbed away when the brothers moved back in, but I couldn’t help noticing the weeds sprouting from the bases of the four Jeffersonian columns towering over the front porch. Glass shards and pop tops flecked the dirt path in front of the house. Black trash sacks bulged in clusters on two of its sides. A window propped open by a two-by-four displayed a hanging pair of khaki trousers and a shirt. On the porch between the columns: several large plastic cups and an empty green bottle with the label “André.” It was another tableau. ♦



Clive James at home in London (2014)

All Booked Up

At the end of life, reading as therapy. BY THOMAS SWICK

All writers begin as readers, and the majority, the ones worth reading, continue life as more prolific readers than writers—especially, it seems, as they age. “In my seventh decade I feel a new haste,” Larry McMurtry wrote in *Walter Benjamin at the Dairy Queen* (1999), “not to write, but to read.” As Clive James writes in his introduction here, in a line that evokes the child hiding under the covers with a flashlight and book as much as it does the grizzled bibliophile: “If you don’t know the exact moment when the lights will go out, you might as well read until they do.”

Thomas Swick is the author of A Way to See the World and Unquiet Days: At Home in Poland.

Latest Readings

by Clive James
Yale, 192 pp., \$25

James, in his eighth decade but with a diagnosis of terminal leukemia, combines his need to read with—happily for us—a desire to write about what he’s reading. Earlier this year he published *Poetry Notebook: Reflections on the Intensity of Language*, a learned and entertaining look at “the form of writing,” he wrote, “that has always mattered to me most.” *Latest Readings*, as the title suggests, is more of a grab bag, reflecting the predictable interests of an omnivore critic, poet, essayist, memoirist, novelist, translator, travel writer, war buff, and erstwhile

television host. Freed from the single-subject focus of his poetry book, James bounces (may we all be so mentally agile as our bodies fail) from Hemingway to Conrad, Kipling to Speer, Naiman to Jake Eberts and Terry Iott, whose cowritten and exquisitely titled *My Indecision Is Final* (1990) James considers one of the finest books ever written about show business.

This book has no theme other than the inexhaustible and inextinguishable pleasure of the written word. Even in his weakened condition, James prefers the act of reading to that of listening to a text, noting that actors performing on audio books often get carried away with their own voices and ignore things, such as punctuation, that mean a great deal to writers with ears. Authors make much better readers of their own

NEWS.COM

words, but James still prefers moving his eye (because of cataract operations, he can now use only one) back and forth across a page.

Much of the time, that eye is passing over familiar terrain, as James is a voracious rereader. And he is dauntless in the face of bulk and borrowed time, revisiting not only Evelyn Waugh's *Sword of Honour* trilogy (1952-61) but Anthony Powell's *A Dance to the Music of Time* series (1951-75), a work that even people with ample time ahead of them, and two good eyes, often feel they don't have time for. But thanks to James's bookish recklessness, we get to hear that Powell is "good on the significance of the passing moment, his key message being that it doesn't really pass, but is incorporated into the texture of your reflections just as thoroughly as the ecstasies and disasters, and perhaps even more so." And he points out a flaw in this magisterial achievement, which is that Powell completely ignored "the shift of power in the direction of the Americans."

He doesn't mean literary power. Except for Ernest Hemingway, whose measure is taken both at the beginning and at the end of the book, the American authors who interest him here are mostly journalists and people in show business (not unwisely, perhaps, since our pop culture, as James suggests, has had greater global influence than any of our Pulitzer Prize winners). When the former write about the latter, at least in the case of Bob Woodward, James is not charmed: "[His] book about John Belushi, *Wired*, was so misleading—he treated the crack-up of a comedian as if it were the fall of a president—that it made me suspect the emotional veracity (not the veracity: he checks his facts until they weep with boredom) . . ."

In his pantheon of books about the film industry, he places, along with *My Indecision Is Final*, Steven Bach's *Final Cut* (1985)—about the *Heaven's Gate* debacle—and Julia Phillips's *You'll Never Eat Lunch in This Town Again* (1991). Before closing the "Women in Hollywood" chapter, he introduces us to one of his favorite

blogs about movies: *Self-Styled Siren* by Farran Nehme.

Such are the rewards of reading the preternaturally well-read and, in this case, jack-of-all-genres. James appears to be at home everywhere. He is as knowledgeable about World War II aircraft as he is about Shakespeare, whose complete works he used to take with him on planes. He writes as easily and approvingly of Philip Larkin as he does of Alan Brooke, chief of the imperial general staff during World War II and the man, according to James, who deserves the credit for D-Day (and, in

As Clive James writes in his introduction here, in a line that evokes the child hiding under the covers with a flashlight and book as much as it does the grizzled bibliophile: 'If you don't know the exact moment when the lights will go out, you might as well read until they do.'

large part, for keeping Eisenhower and Montgomery on speaking terms). He extols Olivia Manning, whose Balkan and Levant trilogies gave him the rare pleasure of a late-life discovery.

Yet James's two giants, at least among writers of fiction, seem to be Hemingway—who fascinates as much through what he created as through how he self-destructed—and Joseph Conrad, "who reached political adulthood before any of the other writers of his time, and when they did, they reached only to his knee." James notes that Conrad wrote of the torturer Necator in *Under Western Eyes* (1911), "What troubled me most in dealing with him was not his monstrosity but his banality"—and identified a phe-

nomenon that, half-a-century later, Hannah Arendt would make famous.

This book possesses an undercurrent of brave, unsentimental reflection; the author is intermittently philosophical and, in the face of death, funny. He writes of watching *Heaven's Gate* (1980) and "feeling my life growing shorter in a way that I don't feel even now, when it is." Hugh's bookstall in Cambridge, England, where James now lives, is a recurring character, and we see the frail regular weighing his still-active desire to acquire against his diminishing ability to carry (let alone store) what he has acquired: "The childish urge to understand everything doesn't necessarily fade when the time approaches for you to do the most adult thing of all: vanish." When he writes of Hitler's "aesthetic passion"—in his Berlin bunker admiring Speer's scale model of the future capital—he adds, knowingly, "As can so easily happen for a man in trouble, art was an escape route."

Because of a thrombosis in the first year of his illness, James still takes daily walks of 30 minutes. If forced indoors by inclement weather, he reads while he walks, often poetry (Kipling's, because of the "march rhythm," being especially good). Less ambulatory, he reads a biography of Gabriele d'Annunzio, "an almost entirely worthless individual," and one of Florence Nightingale (having entered the world of nurses, he takes an interest). We see him in the hospital looking on apologetically as a friendly nurse mops up the mess created when the bag attached to his catheter breaks. He wonders if all his writings taken together have ever been "as useful to the world as her kindness."

It's a humbling doubt in a book whose subject is the importance—the essentiality—of books. But for readers, at least, it's an eminently dismissible one. *Latest Readings, Poetry Notebook, Unreliable Memoirs* (1980), *Brilliant Creatures* (1983), *The Dreaming Swimmer* (1992), *Opal Sunset* (2008), and all the others will outlive the patient and the nurse and will fill generations to come with knowledge, insight, laughter, an understanding of art, and an appreciation for life. ♦

Class Action

Eminent domain as social enforcer.

BY JUSTIN TORRES

It's a rare constitutional law case that has something for everyone to loathe. But 10 years ago, the Supreme Court sparked a singular moment of bipartisanship when it held, in *Kelo v. City of New London*, that states can take property from one owner and give it to another to redevelop for a higher, better (read: more lucrative) use. Conservative property rights advocates, liberal civil rights groups, and almost everyone in between denounced the opinion, and states passed dozens of laws rejecting its central holding. Federal courts and legal writers are still working out the ramifications of the case.

Ilya Somin has now written what is likely to be the definitive legal analysis of *Kelo*, its aftermath, and its future prospects. Somin builds on earlier accounts and adds interviews of his own (with, for example, insiders within the New London Development Corp., the nonprofit corporation that was chartered by the state of Connecticut to guide redevelopment of the city of New London, which had fallen on hard economic times after manufacturing interests left town).

The NLDC was headed by Connecticut College president Claire Gaudiani, who was married to a high-ranking official at Pfizer, then the world's largest pharmaceutical company. In 1997, after negotiating with the NLDC, Pfizer agreed to build a \$300-million research facility on an old industrial site in Fort Trumbull, a waterfront New London neighborhood, in exchange for a 10-year property tax abatement. The

Justin Torres is an attorney in Washington.

The Grasping Hand
Kelo v. City of New London
and the Limits of Eminent Domain
 by Ilya Somin
 Chicago, 336 pp., \$30

company had an additional condition: The city had to condemn 90 acres of property surrounding the Pfizer site and transfer it to private developers to build a high-end housing development, hotel and conference center, and river-



Disassembling the Kelo house (2007)

walk shopping district for the benefit of Pfizer employees.

Such “private-to-private” redevelopment takings are surprisingly routine. In common law, the state has the power of eminent domain to make improvements for “public use.” The Fifth Amendment guarantees property owners “just compensation” for such takings. In the 1800s, private companies were given the power of eminent domain to build railroads, until abuses caused Congress to rein in the practice. But starting in the 1940s, possessed by the New Deal enthusiasm for central planning, cities began to take “blighted” proper-

ties and give them to private entities to clear out slums.

The Fort Trumbull plaintiffs found top-flight legal representation with the Institute for Justice, the libertarian public interest law firm. The lawyers at IJ took the case to the Supreme Court, which sided with New London in a 5-4 decision. The reaction was an uproar: Polls showed that as much as 80 percent of the public disagreed with *Kelo*, which “generated more public attention than all but a handful of other Supreme Court rulings.”

Thirty-seven states passed laws restricting redevelopment takings, but Ilya Somin’s analysis finds that at least 22 of these laws “are largely symbolic in nature, providing little or no protection for property owners.” Perhaps the most important outcome of *Kelo* was the opening of the public’s eyes to the cozy relationship among developers, planners, and local government officials—and how broad their latitude was once they decided someone else could make better use of your property. The decreased numbers of redevelopment takings in the past decade suggests that the outcry made public officials wary—making *Kelo* an important, though incomplete, victory for property rights advocates.

The Grasping Hand is excellent at laying out the political and doctrinal developments that led up to *Kelo* and at canvassing the backlash and legislative response to it. Its most useful section is a chapter on potential reforms to redevelopment takings that could blunt some of the injustice they inflict on property owners, such as giving special protection to homes, increasing the compensation received by homeowners, and subjecting takings to heightened legal scrutiny under state law. Perhaps the most important reform that states could undertake would be to require more rigor in the economic analyses used to justify large-scale redevelopment, since so many of these projects fail to generate the promised revenues. That includes the Fort Trumbull project, where Pfizer

eventually pulled out: The bulldozed 90 acres now sit denuded of houses, overrun by feral cats.

Somin notes that property takings for private redevelopment end up lining the pockets of developers and the politically connected while disproportionately burdening the poor and minorities. That's one of the reasons *Kelo* made strange bedfellows of IJ and the NAACP. In fact, *Kelo* has only one real set of supporters: legal academics, who defend its deference to planners and politicians.

The continued defense of *Kelo* by the professoriate—a group normally inclined to side against corporate interests—suggests that the case had less to do with corporate greed than with social class. Somin is fair-minded about the motives of the NLDC; he concludes that the group really was motivated by the public interest. But even if one imagines that Claire Gaudiani was not swayed by her family's connection to Pfizer, it seems clear that she was moved by something more fundamental: the bias among upper-middle-class elite professionals against a certain kind of neighborhood.

One of the most revealing comments made during the entire litigation was Gaudiani's disparagement of the homes in Fort Trumbull as "ugly and dumb." Fort Trumbull was no slum, but the neighborhood *had* seen better days: The houses were working-class, modest—and perhaps just this side of tacky. So they had to make way for the kind of houses and neighborhoods favored by "creative-class" urban and inner-suburban professionals, among whose ranks are numbered most college presidents, law professors, and federal judges: dense, walkable neighborhoods close to high-end commercial outlets, with well-appointed houses on smaller lots, populated by people like them.

Pfizer's corporate money alone may not have been enough to force the residents of Fort Trumbull out of their homes. But yoked to upper-middle-class judgments about what kind of neighborhood is smart and beautiful as opposed to ugly and dumb, it was unstoppable. ♦

BCA

Power Coupling

A Victorian alliance of love and politics.

BY JAMES BOWMAN

On the first page of this enjoyable double biography, Daisy Hay quotes the Mister-half of her titular couple as having said, "Read no history: nothing but biography, for that is life without theory."

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881) could hardly have foreseen a world like ours,



Mary Anne Disraeli

in which there is no longer any such thing as life without theory. All of our lives nowadays are judged by, or filtered through, one sort of theory or another, among the most prominent of which is the feminist theory that the personal is political and that history itself should be seen through the prism of the gradual emancipation of women from traditional assumptions about their sex, which amounted (and in many cases still amount) to bondage and oppression.

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

Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli

A Strange Romance

by Daisy Hay

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 320 pp., \$27

Daisy Hay herself is naturally no prisoner of such beliefs, but rather she is in thrall to the liberationist version of 19th-century social history and, therefore, of the domestic history she has chosen to relate here, which is thick with its assumptions. Thus we learn of Mrs. Disraeli that "Mary Anne's activities were constrained by a bourgeois middle-class morality that emerged in the early decades of the nineteenth century and bloomed during Queen Victoria's reign." Put like that, it must have seemed obvious to the author to add that "Mary Anne wanted more"—even though her documentation suggests the only thing Mary Anne wanted "more" of was attention from her (first) husband.

The outline of her story can be found in Robert Blake's classic biography of Disraeli, now nearly a half-century old. Mary Anne Evans, born with the same name as her great contemporary, the novelist George Eliot, married a wealthy man with the same name as another great novelist of the *next* century, one Wyndham Lewis. The owner of an ironworks in South Wales, Lewis bought his way into Parliament and then, urged on by his wife, bought the second seat for the same constituency of Maidstone, in Kent, for his (and her) young protégé, Benjamin Disraeli. When Lewis died suddenly of a heart attack a few months later, Disraeli, already best known as a novelist, began an assiduous courtship of his widow.

Mary Anne was 45 at the time and

12 years older than he, but Dizzy (as she seems to have been the first to call him) had had a string of relations with older women whom he had invited to mother him, as he now did the childless Mary Anne. She was pleased to do so. In the aristocratic circles in which he was already moving, Disraeli was widely regarded as being rather vulgar, and Mary Anne also had a reputation as a “rattle” (chatterbox) with a fondness for extravagant dress. Disraeli, who was deeply in debt, acknowledged to his wife that he had been first attracted by her money; but all the evidence of the voluminous lifelong correspondence between the two, which has been preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, supports his (and her) claim that the two soon grew to be deeply in love.

Daisy Hay fills in the details of the Disraelis’ domestic life that Robert Blake left out, mainly by generously quoting from their correspondence. Dizzy often wrote to Mary Anne several times a day when he was in Parliament and she in their home at Grosvenor Gate (modern day Park Lane) in London, or at the country estate they bought at Hughenden in Buckinghamshire. But Hay has also dug deeply into the writings of the couple’s contemporary acquaintances, including those of Disraeli’s sister, Sarah, who was his preferred confidante through the early years of his marriage. Hay’s labors are likely to persuade even those without much time for feminist theory that the retelling of the story of such a famous and historically important man from the point of view of the women whose company he so often preferred adds richly to our store of knowledge about him.

At least part of the reason for this is that Benjamin Disraeli was among the earliest democratic politicians to see that his private life could be turned to electoral advantage. To be sure, what carried this Jewish outsider—as he was still widely seen to be, in spite of his father’s having had him baptized at 13—to the top of 19th-century British politics was his own considerable talent as speaker and parliamentarian. But it helped to be able to represent

himself to the public as the uxorious husband he seems actually to have been in private life—not least with Queen Victoria, who, after hesitating at first to accept him as a cabinet minister, ended up in widowhood liking him better than Disraeli’s great rival, William Gladstone. Hay recognizes that the love story of Mr. and Mrs. Disraeli was presented to the public with a political purpose in mind, but she makes rather too much of the fact.

Their story is history. . . . But it is also fiction. . . . This book is about the way in which the Disraelis conjured their romance into being in a world thick with stories. In their youth they read versions of themselves in the epistolary novels of the late eighteenth century; in the 1820s and ’30s they saw their aspirations reflected in the silver-fork novels Disraeli and his literary contemporaries produced at great speed. They were middle aged when the Victorian novel came to maturity in the 1850s, the literary form that finds drama in the everyday. Theirs was thus the great age of fiction, when the novel made a romance of reality and turned ordinary men and women, living ordinary lives, into heroes and heroines.

As with the glibly invoked “bourgeois middle-class morality” of the 19th century, one feels that Daisy Hay is getting a bit far afield from the sorts of things the people she is writing about could have thought or said. There is certainly warrant for supposing that Dizzy and Mary Anne contrived to present a certain image of themselves and their marriage—a popular “narrative” as today’s theorists would put it. But the same has been true of nearly every politician for the past two centuries. It is a mere banality to make such a point of it, or to allow it to imply (as it doubtless will to some people) that the story is untrue or their love somehow inauthentic.

Although they do not seem overly intrusive, there are other annoyingly anachronistic bits of literary analysis imported from the 21st century. It would probably be expecting too much to be spared a reference to Coventry Patmore’s 1854 narrative poem *The Angel in the House*, but there is no rea-

son to treat it (as Daisy Hay does) as if it were written for the sake of idealizing Mary Anne herself as the ideal Victorian wife. The poem, which was hardly known during her lifetime, is said to be symptomatic of how “In death Mary Anne was fictionalized. . . . Any sense that she had an emotional existence of her own or that the happiness attributed to her might be more complicated than appeared was subsumed into a vision of Victorian womanhood.”

Pretty clearly, that “vision” is more Hay’s own than it was the Victorians’, who were also “more complicated” than she allows. “The Angel in the house probably never really existed,” Hay adds helpfully, although the angel’s probable nonexistence is also said to have made Mary Anne into “a symbol of a woman she had never been, and a heroine for a dying age.” The dying age, of course, didn’t know that it was dying, and the praise heaped upon Mrs. Disraeli on her death in 1872—after Disraeli had persuaded the queen to create her a peeress in any spirit of historical contingency. She died a woman much admired, not only for what she was but also for what she wished to be known as: the romantic figure and loving wife that the book’s evidence shows us “really existed.”

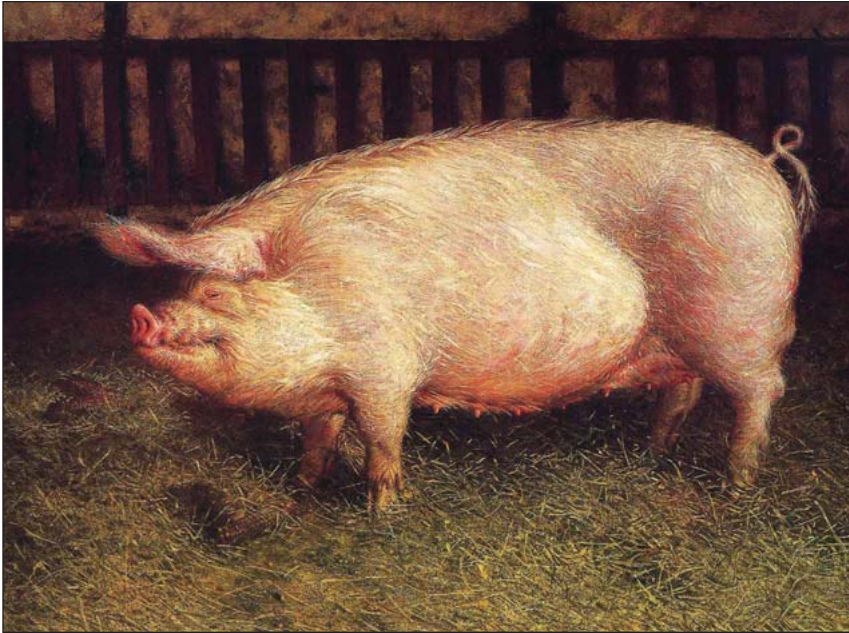
More interesting to me—and, I suspect, to most readers—will be the narrative itself, as it was known to their contemporaries and accepted by them, largely without the need to speculate about the means and purposes of its invention and sustenance. In the words used to describe this not-quite-story-book marriage by Mary Anne’s obituarist in the *London Times*—words with which Daisy Hay herself chooses to end her joint biography—“We are glad to believe . . . that the romance of real life often begins at the point where it invariably ends in fiction.”

That is to say, with marriage. Touching as that tribute to the Disraelis is, it is also a moving reminder of those long-dead days when journalists wrote of what they were glad to believe and not just what they were regretful, indignant, proud, outraged, or horrified to believe. ♦

Hogs in Whole

Mankind has yet to meet the pigs halfway.

BY TEMMA EHRENFELD



Portrait of Pig by Jamie Wyeth (1970)

Ask which domesticated animal is most like humans, and the answer comes quickly: “Dogs!” Like us, dogs live in hierarchical packs, thrive on affection, and are smarter than the average cow, sheep, or goat. Yet all this is also true of the pig.

Far from the farm, we have forgotten our friend, and *Lesser Beasts* brings home the full force of the word “lesser.” A journalist and historian by training, Mark Essig tells a story that reads a bit like a morality fable about animals, like those from Aesop or *Animal Farm*. In a clear and charming voice, he provides the science and history of pigs in human civilization and reveals, along the way, the snobbery at the root of much of human evil.

Wild pigs ate acorns in the forest. They domesticated themselves in our

Temma Ehrenfeld is a writer in New York.

Lesser Beasts

A Snout-to-Tail History of the Humble Pig

by Mark Essig

Basic Books, 320 pp., \$27.50

first villages, eating human sewage. At the dawn of agriculture in the Near East, when the ruling dynasties fell into chaos and interdependent herding systems failed, villagers survived on pig meat. Pigs turned waste into meat and sustained the poor.

That’s an alchemy worthy of gratitude, at least, if not worship. Instead, pigs became the symbol of all that was despised. According to a report from Herodotus, an upper-class Egyptian man, after brushing accidentally against a pig, “rushed into the Nile fully clothed to cleanse himself.” In India, the Hindus beatified the cow, associated with the rich.

Remember that these ancient people didn’t have our knowledge of hygiene and disease; pig meat wasn’t especially unsafe. In his discussion of the origins of *kashrut*, for example, Essig notes a consensus among scholars that trichinosis wasn’t the problem. For Jews, the issue was that pigs, like us, are omnivores. (In fact, our meat tastes similar enough that Maori and Polynesian cannibals have referred to humans as “long pig.”) Adam and Eve were vegetarian; the Jews could do the next best thing and eat only vegetarian animals, those that chew the cud and so keep themselves pure enough for the temple. The subsequent Muslim prohibition may have been a form of class control, since pigs gave the poor an independent food supply.

In Essig’s account, the low status of pigs seems really about status, not cleanliness. In medieval times, pigs ate the corpses of executed heretics, suicides, and other “lesser” creatures that were thrown out to rot. In the same period, Christians derided Jews, the people who didn’t eat pork, as pigs, while they ate the pigs that ate the corpses.

Pigs do the hard, early work. Only with pigs could we have conquered the Americas, Essig maintains, describing how pigs came to the Dominican Republic, carried by Christopher Columbus himself:

Sheep, like wheat, wilted in the damp heat. Cattle showed more promise but would need a few generations to acclimate. . . . Pigs never missed a beat. As soon as their cloven hooves landed in the soft jungle mud of the Caribbean islands, they started eating and breeding.

In 1609, a ship on a mission to bring supplies to starving colonists in Jamestown ran aground near Bermuda. The stranded sailors were overjoyed to find pigs, “descendants of a batch left by the Spanish a century before.” Pigs fed the Spanish soldiers, trailing along at the rear of their columns. Later, “pork served as food for colonists and a commodity for export, while the pigs themselves became a pestilence, helping to drive away the

native peoples and clear the land for the English.” To this day, the Southern states still honor that pioneer diet, based on corn transmuted into bourbon and pork barbecue.

Americans are crueler to pigs now that we don’t need them to survive. Essig isn’t preachy, though; I’m taking on that job. Making his case against today’s standard commercial facilities, he remains calm and sticks to facts. Sows now spend nearly all of their lives in two-by-seven-foot crates, something like an airplane seat. “Sows cannot walk or even turn around,” he writes.

They cannot groom themselves or interact with other sows. They can only stand up, lie down, eat, and defecate. . . . Cruelty is built into the system. . . . If the history of the pig tells us nothing else, it is that these animals can make do just about anywhere, eating just about anything. Thus far, however, pigs have failed to adapt to tiny crates, crowded pens, slatted floors, and ammonia-saturated air.

In his memoir *A Leg to Stand On*, Oliver Sacks tells the story of breaking his leg while alone on a mountain. Afraid for his life, he recalls seeing a small animal on the road,

with a broken back, hoisting its paralyzed hindlegs along. Now I felt exactly like that creature. The sense of my humanity as something apart, something above animality and mortality—this too disappeared at that moment, and again the words of Ecclesiastes came to my mind: “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other . . . so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.”

If you’ve seen the movie *Babe* (1995), about a sweet-tempered pig who beats sheepdogs at a herding competition, you may remember the chilly humor of the moment when a fluffy cat—the indoor kind—viciously hisses at Babe: “They call you *pork*.” Showering love on pets and consuming tortured livestock makes no sense. Our attitude is arbitrary and unjust in the usual way: dividing the world into greater and lesser, us and them, and treating “them” horrifically. ♦

BCA

A Farewell Brief

Any message in a valedictory novel?

BY JONATHAN LEAF

In 1967, Milan Kundera was the most famous writer in Czechoslovakia. His novel *The Joke*, probably his best, had run through a printing of 150,000 copies—in a nation of 15 million. Among the century’s masterworks, *The Joke* exposed the incessant absurdity and routine vindictiveness inherent in a society commanded by Communist apparatchiks, demonstrating how life under



Milan Kundera (2010)

such tyranny turns our best impulses, feelings of love and devotion, toward resentment and enmity. Kundera was a national hero.

Yet just one year later, Soviet troops invaded Prague, and Kundera was stripped of his Communist membership and dismissed from his job. His books were removed from all stores and libraries. He became a nonperson. The rebuilding of his life commenced with his flight to France in 1975.

What many Americans interested in his work may not realize is that this was the second time Kundera had been thrown out of the party; he had been tossed once before when he was a student. They may also not know

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The Festival of Insignificance

by Milan Kundera
Harper, 128 pp., \$23.99

that Kundera was a literary celebrity in Czechoslovakia prior to becoming a novelist, and that he had, at different times, been publicly in sympathy with the Communist regime and in conflict with Václav Havel and other anti-Communist Czech intellectuals. Most startling, it was recently revealed that Kundera was a police informer in his youth, and had once denounced a man who served 14 years of hard labor because of his betrayal. (Kundera has denied this, but it’s conclusively shown by released Czech police files.)

Nor are these the only abrupt transformations that have taken place in his life. In recent decades, Kundera has assumed a French identity and now writes in his adopted language. This means, among other things, that he is requiring his translators to work from authorized French translations of his earlier novels rather than from the original Czech versions. And in still another way, Kundera’s public image stands at cross-purposes to the actual figure: In his private life, he seems to be nothing like the philandering alter egos found in his novels.

So is Milan Kundera a deserving idol or a scapegrace?

The question arises, yet again, with the publication of his first novel in 15 years. *The Festival of Insignificance* seems to be meant as a valedictory for its 86-year-old author. But that is not to say that it is anything like Shakespeare’s *Tempest*, say, a triumphant leave-taking that draws the curtains before an audience of admirers. *Festival* is akin to

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other late-career Kundera novels, such as *Immortality* (1990), tales both dreamlike and absurd. At one point in *Festival* Joseph Stalin himself appears in a Paris park and begins shooting at a statue of Marie de Medici! But not all these fanciful scenes have the impact that Kundera might wish: The characters are forgettable, and his preoccupation with young women's exposed midriffs suggests literal navel-gazing.

Still, as with all of Kundera's writing, there are poignant moments along with imaginative aperçus. And it's a quick read. The difficulties arise from the author's beliefs. Kundera has often said that the novel need not follow the path laid out by the 19th-century realists. A devotee of the *philosophes* such as Diderot and of the art of the 18th century, he yearns to retrieve its lightness, its mock irony, and view of life as something that ought to be free of a totalizing politics. Kundera's idealized period is a civilized society free of the universal kitsch of mass media and government propaganda.

Yet there are problems with this. First, Kundera ignores the lessons of his own best work. Always credible, and sometimes rich in detail, novels like *The Joke* and *Life Is Elsewhere* (1973) took advantage of the tools of realism to move and involve. And Kundera's perception of the past is untidy: The period before the French Revolution, after all, was the era of Jean-Baptiste Greuze's bathetic paintings and Voltaire's unintentionally campy tragedies. Nearly all its most admired novels, from Richardson's *Pamela* to Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther*, are drenched in kitsch.

Then there's the unwelcome fact that Milan Kundera appears to have crafted a portrait of himself, not wholly accurate, as a faithful martyr for freedom, even as he denounces falseness and cheap emotion. Perhaps the right take on a great artist with scars both front and back is found in a view of the institution that the *philosophes* especially mocked, organized religion: "Judge not that ye be not judged." That, of course, applies to the man. And for the artist? Let us look back to his best days and tip our hat. ♦

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Screen Shots

A real-life Hollywood mystery remains unsolved.

BY JON L. BREEN

Among classic American murder cases, the 1922 shooting death of Hollywood director William Desmond Taylor is one of the most intriguing. Although Lizzie Borden's axe murders, the assassinations of Kennedy and Lincoln, the Lindbergh kidnapping, and the O.J. Simpson trial continue to inspire retelling and speculation, these cases are all generally regarded as solved. But no one knows for sure who fired the shot that brought down the handsome and well-liked Taylor, an admired and influential figure in the film community, albeit with a shady past.

Early on the morning of February 2, 1922, Taylor's valet Henry Peavey found the director dead in his apartment at the fashionable Alvarado Court. Peavey's screams awoke the neighbors, including actor Douglas MacLean, his wife Faith (who would prove an important witness), and Charlie Chaplin's leading lady, Edna Purviance. Colleagues from the film industry got to the scene ahead of the police, who were already in thrall to the power of the studios and whose first representative on the scene could find no evidence of a crime. Fellow employees at the Famous Players-Lasky studio were ordered by the general manager to search Taylor's bedroom and remove anything written. A series of recent Hollywood scandals made it important not to provide ammunition for another.

Taylor was born in Ireland in 1872 as William Cunningham Deane-Tanner, the son of a retired British Army officer. Coming to America in 1890 to work on a Kansas dude ranch, Taylor later moved to New York, married,

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Tinseltown

Murder, Morphine, and Madness at the Dawn of Hollywood
by William J. Mann
Harper, 480 pp., \$27.99

and entered the antiques business. In 1908, he suddenly deserted his wife and daughter. After some time mining for gold in Canada and Colorado, he became a stage actor and began his career before the camera by starring in the 1914 feature *Captain Alvarez*.

Taylor's subsequent directing career was interrupted by a year as a Canadian military volunteer. (He joined in 1918, near the end of the Great War, and continued into 1919.) Returning to Hollywood, he became a leader in the defense of the fledgling film industry against charges of immorality, and he was especially concerned with stamping out narcotics use. Though he had relationships with women, Taylor was bisexual, and his lover at the time of his murder was a set designer named George James Hopkins, who would later win multiple Oscars.

Most notorious unsolved murder cases, such as the Jack the Ripper crimes and the Black Dahlia killing, make for unsatisfactory whodunits since the accused is usually someone unknown to all but a few. The William Desmond Taylor case is an exception: The chronicler can introduce a large cast of possible suspects and attempt to fix guilt on someone known to most readers. Here, William J. Mann does not reveal his murderer-candidate until his closing pages, and up to that point, he misdirects the reader's suspicions in the best mystery-novel fashion.

Prior to *Tinseltown*, there were at least

five full-length volumes about the Taylor case. Samuel A. Peeples's *The Man Who Died Twice* (1976) is fiction closely based on fact, a time-travel variant in which a Los Angeles cop is shot by a fugitive in the present and wakes up in 1922, at which point he gradually realizes that he has entered the body of a still-living William Desmond Taylor and determines to prevent the crime he knows is coming. This preposterous premise is brought off remarkably well, and the main figures appear under their real names, with the exception of the one pegged as murderer. (Caution about potential lawsuits can compromise the whodunit element.)

Sidney D. Kirkpatrick's *A Cast of Killers* (1986) is nonfiction, but with its volume of reconstructed dialogue, it reads more like a novel. It is based primarily on the notes and manuscripts of director and amateur sleuth King Vidor, a Taylor contemporary, who chose the same culprit Peeples fingered under an alias: Charlotte Shelby, the mother of actress Mary Miles Minter. By some accounts, Robert Giroux's *A Deed of Death* (1990) was written specifically to counter the claims of Kirkpatrick. Giroux doesn't name the killer, but his well-argued theory is that a hired assassin in the pay of illicit drug interests was sent to kill Taylor because of his efforts to reduce the Hollywood narcotics trade.

The most valuable pure reference source on the case is Bruce Long's *William Desmond Taylor: A Dossier* (1991), a compilation of official documents and contemporary newspaper accounts. It also includes sections of possible errata in Kirkpatrick and Giroux. Long even maintains a website devoted to the case.

Generally derided as the weakest Taylor volume is Charles Higham's *Murder in Hollywood: Solving a Silent Screen Mystery* (2004). Higham offers more on Taylor's early life than do other sources, plus background on figures remotely related to the mystery, as a means of padding out his thin volume. Much attention is paid to false confessions, off-the-wall suspects, and

various rumors. Higham's unlikely suspect is not the mother of Mary Miles Minter but the actress herself.

Tinseltown is the best and most fully documented of the lot, offering a thorough account of the main characters, the event itself, and the aftermath, while broadening the scope to the troubled Hollywood scene of the early 1920s, centering on the machinations of the ruthless mogul Adolph Zukor, touching on the case of Fatty Arbuckle and other sex- or drug-related scandals, and detailing the appointment of former postmaster general Will Hays as a reformist Hollywood "czar."

The Taylor case usually focuses on three women: Mabel Normand, the brilliant silent-film comedian who was a close friend and visited the director on the night of his death but was never a serious suspect; Mary Miles Minter, Higham's unconvincing candidate, a screen ingénue in the Mary Pickford mode who was besotted with Taylor and claimed he loved her as well; and Charlotte Shelby, Minter's controlling mother, who has been the most frequently mentioned suspect.

To these three Mann adds a fourth: the ambitious actress Margaret Gibson (1894-1964), known as Gibby, who amassed about 150 film credits between 1913 and 1929, adopting the stage name Patricia Palmer around 1918. Gibby didn't mind resorting to prostitution or participating in blackmail and extortion schemes to finance her up-and-down career, and she had at least some passing connections to Taylor. But where most statements here are presented as fact and buttressed by source notes, points about Gibby often include the usual speculative hedges: "maybe," "quite possibly," or "may well have been."

Some possible interpretations are advanced as questions rather than statements. The reader has the occasional sense that Gibby is being shoehorned into the narrative; but if the chapters about her are often the least interesting, they do include some surprising tidbits.

A hanger-on among her criminal associates was the western actor Leonard Clapham, who later took the name Tom London and was said to have appeared in more movies than any other performer. (His most memorable role was probably as Sam, Katy Jurado's right-hand man, in 1952's *High Noon*.)

While some books about classic unsolved crimes rise or fall on the quality of the solutions they advance, *Tinseltown* is not one of them. Mann's answer to the question of who killed Taylor is well-argued and plausible, if not necessarily airtight; but his portrait of the time and people involved is central to the book's value.

The most interesting villain is Zukor, who began as an East Coast exhibitor in competition with Marcus Loew and became the most powerful mogul in Hollywood, founder—with Jesse Lasky, Samuel Goldwyn, and Cecil B. DeMille—of Famous Players, the predecessor of Paramount. A stern, unsentimental businessman, Zukor was called "Creepy" behind his back by employees. He torpedoed Mary Miles Minter's career, not because of her connection to the Taylor case but because he wanted to avoid raising her inflated salary, and he threw Fatty Arbuckle under the bus, demanding that his pictures be banned even though they were making money. (Following his acquittal on rape and manslaughter charges, Arbuckle was embraced by most of his fans and well-liked by Hollywood but was undone by pressure groups.)

Among the most sympathetic figures here is Mabel Normand, an intelligent and talented woman who battled a drug problem and whose early death is rendered even more tragic by the fact that her final years were not as miserable and wasted as usually depicted. Will Hays emerges as an honest, principled public servant who walked a fine line between his impulse to do the right thing and his loyalty to the moguls who hired him. As for Taylor, he appears to have been a man of honor and dignity who made up for some of his early lapses, including restoring contact with (and supporting) his deserted family and at times approaching the heroic stature his contemporaries saw in him. ♦



William Desmond Taylor (1914)

Another Op'nin, Another Show

But is anyone noticing? BY JOHN PODHORETZ



Robert Frost speaks with Dartmouth students (1947).

Right now, in New York, the big news is the Broadway opening of a musical biography of Alexander Hamilton told in hip-hop. Such a deliberately anachronistic retelling of American history is automatic grounds for deep skepticism. And yet the chorus of raves for *Hamilton*—which extend from Barack Obama to the *Wall Street Journal*'s Terry Teachout, and even to Brian Anderson, the brilliant editor of the conservative Manhattan Institute's *City Journal*—has generated a kind of cultural excitement that itself seems anachronistic. And that's making me a little sad.

I haven't seen *Hamilton*, and may not get a chance to see it for a year, given its \$35 million advance; but it's not my inability to get a ticket that has brought this sadness upon me. It's the fact that so little of what's made these days, or written these days, or filmed these days, or performed these days, seems to provoke the kind of anti-

patory thrill that once went hand-in-hand with being a serious customer, consumer, and enthusiast of culture.

This is not just true of the theater, which is certainly a shadow of its former self in this regard; the last Broadway presentation to cause such a commotion was Mel Brooks's musical version of *The Producers*, and that debuted 14 years ago. It is true of books as well.

The novelist Jonathan Franzen has published two enormously popular and critically heralded novels in the past 15 years, *The Corrections* and *Freedom*. I'm not a fan of either, but if one had to make a list of the most important American writers, he would surely be at, or near, the top. Franzen has a new novel coming out in September. It's called *Purity*. It will be out in a few weeks. There is no buzz about it anywhere. In times past, the release of a new Bellow or a new Updike or a new Pynchon would be stimulating gossip and advance discussion and all manner of talk in cultural circles for weeks, if not months, beforehand. That just doesn't seem to be the case any longer.

Is there a recording artist at present whose new album might elicit the sort of tingling expectancy that a new Paul Simon or Talking Heads record would have in its day? For those with more highbrow tastes, is there a classical artist whose participation in a new recording of Wagner's *Ring* cycle, or a new interpretation of Bach's *Brandenburg Concertos*, might be the talk of the town?

I remember when, in the early 1980s, Americans for whom the visual arts were profoundly important could talk of little else than the German monumentalist painter Anselm Kiefer—and this at a time when it was simply taken for granted that a cultured person was familiar with the works of the Abstract Expressionists and the post-modernists that followed them. To put it most plainly: How many living painters are household names the way Jackson Pollock was? The answer, of course, is that there isn't a one.

This summer, everyone in New York has been lining up to see the insides of the new, \$400 million building housing the Whitney Museum of American Art, but it's doubtful that more than a handful could have identified the painters or sculptors whose work they strolled by. As Michael J. Lewis wrote in "How Art Became Irrelevant," his magnificent essay in the current issue of *Commentary*: "For a generation or more, the American public has been thoroughly alienated from the life of the fine arts while, paradoxically, continuing to enjoy museums for the sake of sensation and spectacle, much as it enjoyed circuses a century ago."

It's not that today's painters deserve to be household names, or that a new Franzen novel deserves to have customers lining up at midnight to buy it the way kids lined up to buy each Harry Potter book. But there is something deeply depressing in the fact that, increasingly, the arts seem to be losing their power to capture our attention. And that is because they no longer hold out the hope that, by providing us an intellectual and emotional guide map, they can help sate our aesthetic hunger—the hunger we all have to understand our own experiences and lives by seeing things anew through the eyes of others. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary*, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD's movie critic.

“Trump defends record on women’s issues: ‘I cherish women. I want to help women.’”

—Washington Post, August 9, 2015

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