the weekly standard

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FLORENCE KING, 1936-2016
ANDREW FERGUSON

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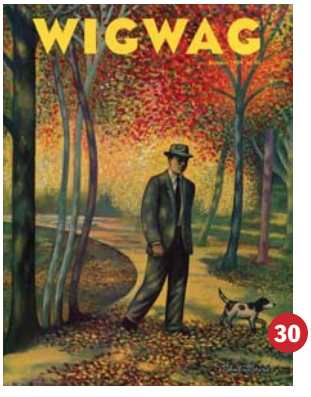


COVER BY DAVE CLEGG

Mabus Strikes Again (Marines Hardest Hit)

If there were any remaining doubts that a grudge is motivating Navy Secretary Ray Mabus's policies dictating gender integration in the Marine Corps, the *Marine Corps Times* has dispelled them, revealing that Mabus sent the Marines a memo on New Year's Day ordering them to make their famously challenging entry-level training—popularly known as "boot camp"—coed. Now, you may be thinking that such a dictate is a natural consequence of the secretary of defense's decision in December to open all ground combat jobs to women, and that may or may not be so.

But here's where it gets personal—indeed, ugly and unprofessional: In his memo, Mabus gives the Marines only 15 days to come up with a plan for how to go about combining male and female training at boot camp, a plan they must implement by April 1.

Fifteen days. Military operations of far less significance and complexity take many multiples of this length of time to plan responsibly, let alone such an unprecedented shift that raises any number of complicated issues. Mabus, a civilian appointee of the Obama administration who served two years in the Navy during the 1970s, has been slinging mud at the Marine leaders who work under him for several months now (see Aaron MacLean's "Ray Mabus Can't Handle the Truth," September 28, 2015), going so far as to suggest that Marine officers were being dishonest in their conduct of a study that raised serious questions about the wisdom of opening ground combat jobs to women.

It was no doubt infuriating to Mabus that the Marines stood their

Ray Mabus

ground and went over his head to ask Secretary Ash Carter directly to allow them an exception. Carter denied the request, a decision the Marines swiftly accepted (the commandant's message to Marines about gender integration concluded with him saying, "We have a decision: it's time to move out"). It is impossible to interpret the decision to demand a "detailed" plan for making recruit training coed on such an absurdly accelerated timeline as anything other than petty retaliation.

But that's not all! Mabus issued a second memo on New Year's, dictating a review of job titles "throughout the Marine Corps" to "ensure that they are gender-integrated . . . removing 'man' from the titles and provide a report to me as soon as is practicable and no later than April 1, 2016." In a confusing twist, the *Marine Corps Times* story that reported this news a few days later also quoted an anonymous "Navy official" who softened the apparent impact of this second memo: "The idea is not to go in there and change the name when 'man' is incorporated as part of the term," the official said. "But when the word 'man' appears as a separate word . . . they want that name to be changed."

So a job title like "reconnaissance man" is now exclusionary and must be changed, but "infantryman" is safe, even though the text of the original memo apparently makes no mention of such exquisite distinctions. Such confusion is surely evidence of haste in the decision-making process, and possibly of backtracking.

The boot-camp order leaves many questions to be answered by January 15. At what level will integration occur? Will Marines be trained to the same initial physical standard, regardless of gender? (Presumably this is not what Mabus wants, as an enormous number of female recruits would fail to meet the existing standards.) One thing is certain: Ray Mabus has been a one-man wrecking ball for relations between the Pentagon's civilian politicos and the Marine Corps. ♦

Hillary and Bill Cosby

Until very recently, The Scrapbook had not thought of any particular connection between Bill Cosby and Hillary Clinton. Of course, both are well known to the public—he as an entertainer, she as a politician—and they share a longtime interest in certain social issues and Democratic politics. You can even find photographs of them standing together exchanging smiles at public events. But that's a fact of life for famous people and not necessarily significant in itself.

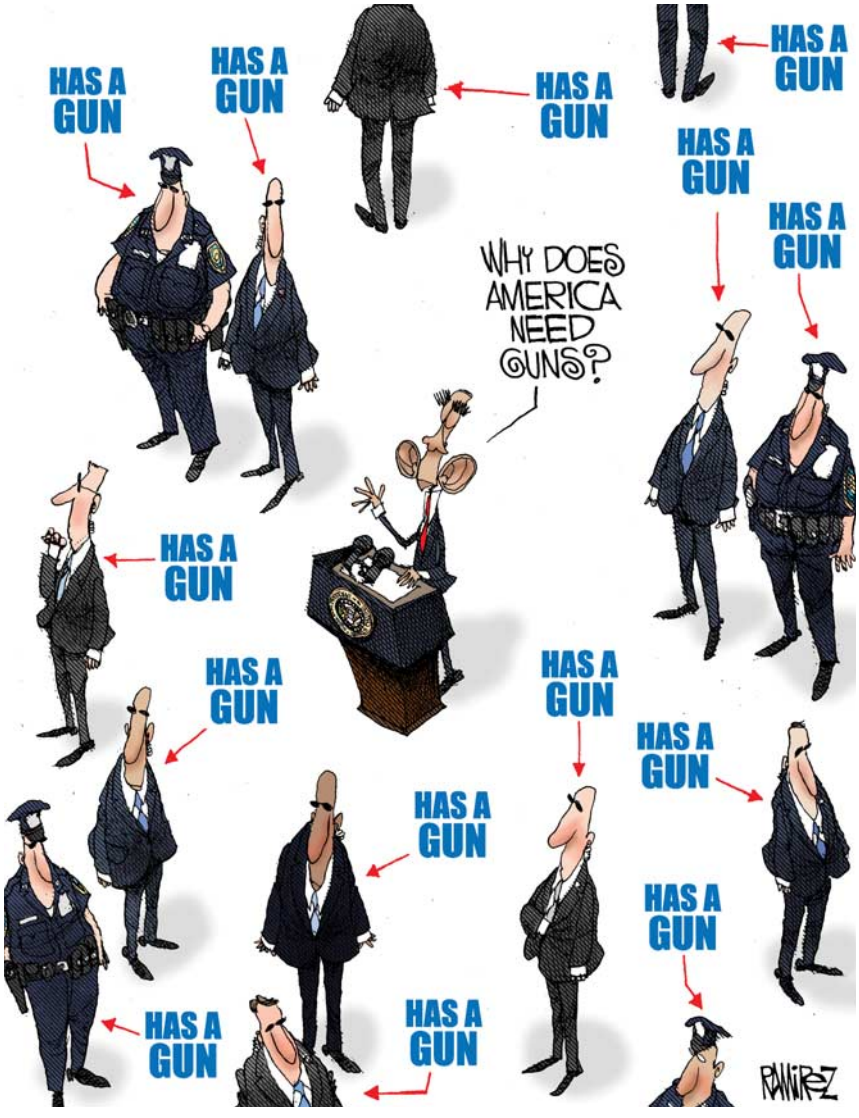
Now, however, Cosby and Clinton share an unlikely connection: sex. Bill Cosby, after decades as a beloved comedian and television actor, stands accused of serially drugging and assaulting women and, as of last week, faces criminal charges in Pennsylvania. Hillary Clinton, by declaring recently that "every survivor of sexual assault deserves to be heard, believed, and supported," immediately revived memories of Bill Clinton's sexual conduct as governor of Arkansas and as president—and of her own hostile attitude toward her husband's accusers.

To be sure, Cosby is presumed innocent until proven otherwise, and the sins of Clinton's spouse do not necessarily reflect on her own fitness for high office. But life can be unfair—and in fact, both Clinton and Cosby now suffer from evolving public attitudes about sex. Over the decades, rumors of Bill Cosby's misconduct seldom

SAUL LOEB / AFP / GETTY

amounted to public accusation, much less legal jeopardy. And public comments about the women who accused Bill Clinton of sexual harassment—"If you drag a hundred-dollar bill through a trailer park you never know what you'll find" (James Carville)—seem especially brutal in retrospect. It seems reasonable to conclude that Cosby benefited, for a very long time, from standards of conduct now deemed archaic. The same might be said of Hillary Clinton's blithe dismissals, in the 1990s, of complaints about her husband's predatory behavior as the product of "a vast right-wing conspiracy."

As we say, the charges against Bill Cosby are only charges at this stage; and revisiting the history of Bill Clinton's impeachment may be a brief stumble in Hillary Clinton's march to the White House. But The Scrapbook is struck by one salient factor common to Clinton and Cosby: a sense of entitlement. In Cosby's case, it protected a man with a sterling public reputation from the consequences of his private behavior. In Clinton's case, it allowed a woman in public life to advance her career at the expense of other women. Nobody believes in ghosts anymore, but the past can return to haunt you. ♦



Shooting Straw Men

On January 5, President Obama announced various executive actions to tighten gun control measures. Most of the news led with the fact that Obama cried during the press conference. The Scrapbook takes no stand on whether the tears were sincere. We believe the president cares about victims of gun violence, even if his preferred solutions are unworkable or unconstitutional.

What we can't abide is the president's belief that people who disagree with him don't care about preventing violence. "The gun lobby is loud and well organized in its defense of effortlessly available guns for anyone. The rest of us are going to have to be just as passionate and well organized in our defense of our kids," Obama said in his January 1 radio address.

We know Obama is fond of straw men, but even for him this is over-the-top demonization. Do 4.5 million NRA members really think "effortlessly available guns for anyone" are more important than the safety of children? The NRA has never come close to taking a position that guns should be effortless to obtain or that just anyone should be able to buy them. As recently as August, the NRA supported a bill by Sen. John Cornyn that would enhance the national background check system by giving states more funding to keep track of mental health records.

Obama didn't stop there. After he announced his executive actions the misleading rhetoric piled up. "A violent felon can buy the exact same weapon over the Internet with no background check, no questions asked," he said. It is illegal for a violent felon to buy a gun, period. And one can't buy a gun online without going through a licensed firearms dealer who ensures background checks are done.

Now a felon could arrange a purchase online, but that's not really an "online" sale, because by this standard—where the Internet is simply a tool to connect people who meet up later—you can arrange literally any illegal transaction online. There's no way to make such transactions impossible short of shutting down the Internet. We'd better stop right here, lest we give the president any ideas. ♦

Good Riddance

When word got out that Rep. Jim McDermott will be packing it in at the end of the year, House Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi was quick to plump the blustery leftist who has represented Seattle since 1989. He "has been a tenacious champion of hard-working Americans," he "has shown the strength of his progressive values," and he has been (insert trigger-warning here for those sensitive to witless rubbish) "a valuable intellectual resource to the Congress."

Pelosi chose not to mention McDermott's more salient accomplishments: the trafficking in illegal wiretaps and the coddling of dictators (including those at the IRS).

McDermott in Baghdad, 2002

GETTY IMAGES

McDermott made a name for himself—"Baghdad Jim" to be precise—traveling to Iraq during the late days of Saddam Hussein's reign. There he accused the Bush administration of plotting to lie about weapons of mass destruction and made the case that international sanctions were unfair, ill-targeted, and injurious to Iraqi children. Saddam's PR team was gleeful, leading CNN to ask McDermott how it felt "to be used as a propaganda tool against your own country." McDermott pronounced himself very comfortable, indeed: "If being used means that we're highlighting the suffering of Iraqi children, or any children, then, yes, we don't mind being used."

McDermott's Baghdad adventure was paid for by an outfit called "Life for Relief and Development," run by one Muthanna al-Hanooti, who happened to be funding his efforts by selling Iraqi oil. Hanooti would later plead guilty to violating U.S. sanctions. McDermott was not charged.

Nor was he charged, criminally, in the ugly matter of the intercepted Republican conference call. Back in 1996, when the House ethics committee was dogging Newt Gingrich about the tax status of some college classes he had taught, the then-House speaker agreed to resolve the matter by apologizing. But, contrary to the spirit of the agreement, Gingrich got on the phone with a gaggle of GOPers to talk spin. At least one of those on the call was using a cell phone, which is where things got interesting: Quite miraculously, a couple of Democratic activists in Florida found they could hear the call using their trusty Radio Shack police-band scanner. And quite conveniently, they had a tape recorder handy. In a jiffy they had an illegal wiretap going and knew just who to take the tape to: Jim McDermott, who shared it with the *New York Times*.

One of the Republican politicos on the call was John Boehner, who in 1998 sued McDermott for violating his right to privacy. (Boehner was represented by an up-and-coming lawyer named Ted Cruz.) After years of legal wrangling, in 2004 a U.S. district judge found that McDermott had "participated in an illegal transaction when he accepted the tape." After a few more years of wrangling, the judge in 2008 told McDermott to pay a million dollars in legal fees.

McDermott not only participated in the underhanded, he did his best to defend other Democrats caught in the same. At hearings in 2013 to investigate the IRS targeting of conservative groups for special scrutiny, McDermott berated the groups for "asking the American public to pay" for their activities. "None of your organizations were kept from organizing or silenced," the old bully said. "We are talking about whether or not American taxpayers will subsidize your work."

When Nancy Pelosi proclaimed "Jim McDermott has been synonymous with forceful and effective leadership," she might have added, "and synonymous with dirty tricks." ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Florence King (1936-2016)

I never save anything—or rather I save lots of stuff that I don't want while I throw away an equivalent amount of stuff that someday I will. Improbably I've saved a sheaf of letters I got from Florence King, the great journalist and memoirist, and when I heard the other evening that she'd died, at the age of 80, I went and hunted them up, from the back of a drawer in an old file cabinet that otherwise serves as a tomb of useless leavings.

Almost all the letters date from the 1990s, when she and I shared duties as alternating columnists for the back page of the biweekly *National Review*—she wrote for one issue, I wrote for the next. The column amounted to about 800 words a month, for which we were paid pretty good dough. I found the chore difficult, not to say excruciating, and made sure my stablemate knew it. Florence always said she sympathized, but she didn't really. She put sentences on the page the way a gifted gymnast swings her body over a pommel horse or along the parallel bars: invisible effort in service of sheer delight.

"The only thing worse than writing is not writing," she wrote me, hoping to buck me up after some self-pitying complaint of mine. A word of praise from her was enough to keep me going. We corresponded by fax, supplemented by monthly telephone gabbles. Hard as it is to believe, many people back then thought the fax machine would revive the dying art of letter-writing. Instead the fax went away and we got Twitter, also Instagram and Gchat. I wonder what Florence thought of Gchat.

I don't know, because our correspondence, robust as it was, didn't last into the new millennium. The letters survive on the shiny paper that unspooled from my fax machine 20 years ago. My machine would go off in the middle of the night—Florence was a nocturnal animal and her imagination took flight after sunset, when the town was quiet and the bottle of Dewar's near to hand. Suddenly in the dark I'd hear the gears of the fax hitch up, and the scratchy noise of the telephone line would sound, and then the juddering of the paper as each page was pumped out from the paten.

KATHERINE MESSENGER

No matter the hour, I got up to fetch the letter, usually many pages long. I could never wait till morning to see what she had to say, or whether she'd liked something I'd written.

Looking over those letters now I hoped to find passages to quote, to show the range and wildness of her humor, but I'm startled at how salacious they are, how stuffed with unrepeatable gossip and outlandish conspiracy mongering, all of it written in response to my own offerings of the same. There's not much to share with a wider audience. I challenged her euphemisms for Bill Clinton's penis, then much in the news, with euphemisms of my own, and no one, without reading the entire correspondence, can tell whose were bigger.

The best of Florence is in her books anyway, particularly *Confessions of a Failed Southern Lady*, one of the most exquisitely controlled pieces of writing I know of, seamlessly hilarious, nostalgic, ironic, and wise. It tells of an only child growing up in an eccentric family in the 1940s and '50s, and it will last as long as Americans want to know the tactile reality of one part of their past, what it felt like to be someone many years before they were born. Maybe it won't last so very long, after all.

I intend this tribute to be about Florence and not about me, of course, but I will close with a note that complicates the sadness at her death. I loved Florence King. I loved her writing, I relied on her kindness, and I treasured her friendship. It didn't last, though. She was famously changeable. I can trace the arc through my sheaf of old faxes. Some time around 1999, she failed to answer one of my letters. In a week or so I sent another, sliding the pages into the maw of the fax machine and listening for the scratchy sound that meant the fax had gone through. I waited a day and nothing came back. I tried again. After a month I faxed a new letter, full of gossip and jokes, and when I didn't hear from her I phoned her and left a message on her machine. She didn't answer.

Several years later I published a book, and out of nowhere—I was told this long after the fact—she approached the editor of another magazine, an acquaintance of mine, and asked to review it. She wrote a rave, to use a term she liked. It was the kind of implausible praise a writer dreams someone will someday write about him, and I never heard from her again, and I never knew why.

Andrew Ferguson

the weekly Standard

Thank You, Donald

Writing in mid-June, a couple of days after Donald Trump announced his candidacy, we offered the judgment that he should not be our next president: "We're not Trump enthusiasts. We're not even Trump fellow travelers. We're closer to Trump deriders."

And so we unapologetically remain. It would be ungracious not to acknowledge Trump's remarkable standing in the polls six months later. But we see no reason to alter our conclusion that Donald Trump shouldn't be president of the United States. Indeed, Trump's behavior over this period has confirmed our judgment. If back in June we wrote that the rest of the presidential field could use "A Little Touch of Trump," it's fair to say that we've gotten more Trump than we bargained for.

Yet we continue to trust Republican primary voters will not select Donald Trump as the GOP nominee for president. And we continue to believe, as we said at the outset, that more conventional politicians could learn something from Trump. We suggested then that "politics is about dreams as much as it is about deliverables, about pride as much as it's about pocketbooks. Trump understands that. It's not clear most of the rest of the field does." We pointed out then that "Trump understands that many Americans believe winning isn't everything, but it's a good thing. A very good thing. It's not clear most of the rest of the field does." We observed then that "Trump understands that Americans have deep doubts about the competence and probity of our political class. It's not clear most of the rest of the field does." And we wrote then that "Trump understands that it's okay to say something the media elite will shake their collective head at. It's not clear most of the rest of the field does."

It does seem that the rest of the field, under the pressure of Trump, has moved up the learning curve in understanding these points, and more broadly in grasping the mood of the body politic. And so, six months later, while we will continue to believe Donald Trump should not be the nominee, we also offer a suggestion that will perhaps invite ridicule: The Republican party has not been hurt by Trump's candidacy. Indeed the GOP may well have benefited from it.

How can we reach so shocking a conclusion? For one thing, there's simply no evidence the Trumpian interlude has hurt the GOP. The Republican party's overall favorable rating hasn't changed in these last six months. The percentage of Americans identifying as Republicans hasn't declined. Obama's approval rating hasn't gone up. The Pew Research Center regularly asks which party would do a better job on the economy. In July, Democrats held a three-point edge; in December, Pew found Republicans leading by five. In the same Pew polls, Republicans improved from -2 to +2 on handling immigration and from +12 to +14 on handling terrorism.

So there's no evidence of damage to the Republican "brand" from Trump. Nor is there evidence of damage to Republican chances in 2016. Indeed, there is compelling evidence, in poll after poll, that the percentage of Americans intending to vote in November for Hillary Clinton has declined since Trump appeared on the scene. When Trump launched his candidacy in mid-June, Hillary Clinton had a comfortable lead over every GOP candidate in general election polls. Now she's basically tied with the leading non-Trump candidates. The fact that Hillary Clinton, with all of her advantages, does not hold a lead at the beginning of 2016 is a promising indicator for Republican prospects in November.

Obviously correlation isn't causation. Clinton might have sunk if Trump had decided not to run. But we should also point out that Trump recently seems to have done real damage to Hillary Clinton's ability to play the woman card—surely her trump card—by calling out her complicity in covering up Bill Clinton's behavior towards . . . women. Thus Kirsten Powers, who served in Bill Clinton's administration, recently remarked on the force of "Donald Trump's recent broadside against Clinton, in which he chided her for her husband's 'terrible record of women abuse.'" Powers continued, "Whatever Trump's failings, he understands cultural shifts. We are a society that has a blessedly lower tolerance for sexual assault and harassment than in prior years. This is good news for America, but bad news for the Clintons. History has caught up with them at the worst possible moment."

History might have caught up with the Clintons without Trump's help. But perhaps not. Perhaps History—or at least the admonitions of commentators—would in any case have led the GOP to focus in 2016 on appealing to middle America, and on speaking to and for the Silent Majority. But are we confident those admonitions would have had much effect without the urgent spur of the need to compete with Trump? As to whether Republicans should be unhappy about receiving inadvertent assistance from Trump, given how disagreeable he is and how distasteful some of his comments have been, perhaps they can take comfort from Winston Churchill's admonition that "the Muse of History must not be fastidious."

Now all Republicans have to do is make sure the Muse of History does not mischievously produce a Trump victory.

—William Kristol

Incendiary Correctness

'Suddenly there was a hand on my bottom . . . " was the rather atypical headline that ran in Germany's ordinarily conservative daily newspaper *Die Welt* on January 4. It described a riot-like series of sexual assaults and robberies carried out on New Year's Eve in the center of Cologne on the *Domplatz*, the plaza between the city's train station and its world-famous cathedral. The assailants were mostly described as Arab-looking. Thus far 120 victims have filed criminal complaints, two of them for rape. Descriptions of the assaults have appeared in newspapers across Germany. The stories are varied and shocking. ("They made a kind of wall around us," one of two high-school girls surrounded by a gang of youths told the *Remscheider General-Anzeiger*. "They shouted, groped us, reached under our clothes and undid their pants. It was disgusting and humiliating.")

Cologne, New Year's Eve

MARKUS BOEHM / AFP / GETTY

We are witnessing the inevitable turning point in Germany's attitude towards its recent rendezvous with mass immigration, which has brought well over a million newcomers, mostly young men, from the war zones of Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.

The most shocking element of the stories is not their content but the fact that they were not made public until several days after the assaults. The Cologne police appear to have lied to downplay incidents they knew would be politically explosive, reporting on New Year's morning that the celebrations had been "largely peaceful." But the newsweekly *Die Zeit* reported on January 7 that the police had detained 70 men that night, many of whom could speak no German at all, and let them go. One can accept the Cologne police chief's account of his men's thinking: Where officers are overwhelmed by the size of a crowd—a thousand or so versus a couple dozen—the wise tactic is to clear the area rather than try to make arrests. But one cannot understand how the police expected their account to stand up when iPhone videos proving the contrary were lighting up German social media sites and getting hundreds of thousands of views on YouTube.

A scandalous political correctness has descended on Germany. Cologne's mayor Henriette Reker, who became an object of national sympathy when she was stabbed during the mayoral campaign last year, has in recent days been ridiculed for saying that any woman who wants can keep an importunate man at "arm's length." Thomas de Maizière, Chancellor Angela Merkel's interior minister, has criticized those who leap to the conclusion that the attackers had an Arab background. Such rumors can indeed spark baseless hatred, and are not to be indulged uncritically. But in the age of the Internet, it doesn't require a months-long investigation to figure out the truth. Go to YouTube, tap in "Köln" and "Silvester" (German for New Year's Eve), and you will discover a great big crowd of men of Mediterranean background milling about the *Domplatz*.

Since the end of World War II, and largely as a result of it, Germany has been much more restrictive of speech than other Western democracies. It is not, strictly speaking, a country of free expression. It long banned the Communist party, Scientology, and (until last year) *Mein Kampf*. State investigators regularly use video cameras to watch demonstrations for extremism.

Since Merkel expressed Germany's willingness to take in 800,000 migrants last summer, the government has worked assiduously to monitor negative commentary. It first urged newspaper editors to suppress some of the more heated online comments responding to migration reports. In recent months it has sought to do the same with social media. The *Washington Post* recently reported that Germany had reached an agreement with three social networking sites (Facebook, Google, and Twitter) establishing the principle that the sites are to edit their content based on German law rather than company policies.

As a constitutional matter, this is a good thing. The German government is the duly constituted leadership of the German people. It, and not any foreign corporation, is authorized to lay down the law regarding what constitutes a menace to public order.

But the rules that protect minorities from mobs can be used to protect politicians from democracy. There may or may not be an increasing tendency to racism in Germany. But there is certainly an increasing tendency to brand as "racist" positions contrary to the interests of the government.

It may backfire—indeed, appears to be backfiring. People who have so far been patient with Merkel are beginning to worry that the crazy scenes in front of the Cologne cathedral will soon be repeated countrywide. Ten percent now tell pollsters that they would vote for the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party if elections were held today.

It is dangerous to constrict the range of things voters can say about government policies, especially when those policies are—like Merkel's migration policy—irregular, and likely to change the country at its core.

No doubt there is a danger of incendiary reactions when people hear of mobs of Muslim foreigners groping young women in front of the country's most recognizable Christian landmark. But any government attempt to minimize or ignore such events would be a terrible mistake. It would be more likely to whip tempers up than to calm them down.

—Christopher Caldwell

The Oregon Standoff

East of the Cascade Mountains, Oregon is largely bitterbrush and high desert. Virtually no one lives there, and compared with the populous and rainy Willamette Valley to the west, agriculture is difficult. Unless you're from the area—I was raised there—it's hard to appreciate the sense of space, let alone understand the hotly contested land dispute between the federal government and ranchers-turned-militiamen who have occupied a federal building in Burns, Oregon.

Most people on the East Coast have no idea how much land the federal government controls out west. Over half of Oregon is under federal control, and that proportion is much higher in eastern Oregon. (Although it could be worse: The federal government controls 85 percent of Nevada's land.) If you're dependent on the land for your livelihood, as almost everyone in Burns is, you will inevitably have to deal with a federal government not known for being especially accommodating.

The current dispute involves Dwight Hammond and his son Steven, Oregon ranchers who burned 129 acres of federal land. Controlled burns of this size, even on public lands adjacent to private range, are a common land management tool. However, the Hammonds failed to get the necessary permission from the federal government before doing so, and they were also accused of setting the fire to destroy evidence they were poaching deer.

Tried before the U.S. district court for Oregon in 2012, the Hammonds were found guilty of arson on federal property, a crime that comes with a mandatory minimum sentence of five years. But the original trial judge, Michael Hogan, chose instead to sentence the 73-year-old Dwight to three months in prison and the younger Hammond to one year, calling the mandatory minimums unconstitutionally "cruel and unusual." The Department of Justice challenged the sentencing and found a receptive hearing before the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals: And so, after seeming to have done their time, the Hammonds were ordered by U.S. Chief District Judge Ann Aiken to serve the remaining four years dictated by the mandatory minimum sentences.

This injustice was seized upon by the family of Nevada rancher Cliven Bundy—who made national news in 2014 leading an armed standoff with the feds over cattle grazing. Bundy's sons Ammon and Ryan arrived in Oregon in December and by January 2 were leading a group of armed protesters occupying the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge building.

Let's stipulate, as the lawyers like to say, that, on the basic question of whether the Hammonds deserved five-year sentences, the original trial judge had a point. The mandatory minimums for arson on federal property were set by the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, which was passed in response to the Oklahoma City bombing, and the Hammonds are no Timothy McVeighs.

The law has been used to prosecute actual attacks on the federal government, including some in rural Oregon. In 1996, the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) burned a forest ranger station near Oakridge, causing $5 million in damage to a federal building. The next year the group torched a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) facility in, yes, Burns. The ELF also torched a meatpacking plant in Redmond and a car dealership in Eugene and committed all sorts of destructive acts at public and private facilities in Oregon—and elsewhere in the country—between 1996 and 2001.

When 10 members of an ELF terrorist cell were convicted and sentenced in 2007, their prison terms ranged from as much as 13 years to as little as 3. The idea that a couple of naughty ranchers guilty of scorching some high-desert scrubland should be treated like building-burning terrorists is absurd.

Ranchers near Burns have clashed with the BLM and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since the 1970s, harassed, they claim, by a federal government trying to get its hands on private lands in order to expand the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. However, it's far from clear that the excessive sentences for the Hammonds are part of some plot to steal their property, as the Bundys have charged. And many decent and hardworking people in Burns have made it known they don't want out-of-state interlopers and sketchy militiamen fighting their local land-use battles.

This episode is particularly frustrating because it distracts from the Obama administration's aggressive moves to declare western lands off-limits to commercial use—when not attempting outright land-grabs. One example: The BLM is trying to seize thousands of acres from ranchers and other private owners near the Red River in Texas. According to the BLM, dry land as far as a mile from the river counts as the bank of the river, making it federal property.

But national attention is focused, instead, on the Oregon standoff, where the Bundys are doing their best to make legitimate concerns about federal abuse of rural landowners look like the paranoid obsession of kooks and extremists.

—Mark Hemingway

Can Cruz Control Iowa?

Now he wants to be a uniter.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

Cruz speaks during a stop at King's Christian Bookstore in Boone, Iowa, January 4.

Sioux Center, Iowa

Ted Cruz was running a few minutes late for his appearance at Dordt College, having to reply to the latest provocation from Donald Trump without angering the erratic businessman.

Earlier in the day, Trump had wondered aloud whether Cruz might be ineligible for the presidency because he was born in Canada. Cruz has sedulously avoided criticizing Trump, even as he eagerly attacks other candidates. So Cruz once again offered a kind of jocular nonresponse response. He tweeted "My response to @realdonaldtrump calling into question my natural born citizenship?" with a link to the *Happy Days* episode in which The Fonz strapped on water skis and, still sporting his trademark leather jacket, zipped off a ramp and flew half a football field before splashing onto the water below. "Jumping the shark" was added to the American lexicon to indicate the moment something novel or entertaining stops being so. Before his town hall, the Texas senator spoke in an anteroom, seeking to downplay Trump's troublemaking and scolding reporters for asking about the exchange.

No one in the crowd next door seemed bothered by the delay. The audience was a mix of Sioux Center locals and students and faculty from the college, which pitches itself to those interested in a "biblical, Christ-centered education." The school is located in the heart of Sioux County, in the state's deeply conservative northwest corner. If the Iowa caucuses often elevate strong social conservatives, they do so largely because of this part of the state. In the 2012 race, Sioux County gave Rick Santorum 45.6 percent of its votes, with 14.5 percent going to Mitt Romney and 14.4 percent to Rick Perry. (O'Brien County, directly to the east, also gave Santorum 45 percent of its vote, and Lyon County, to the north, was the only county in the state that gave Santorum more—61 percent.) In 2008, Sioux County gave Mike Huckabee 53 percent of its votes, 16 percent to John McCain, the eventual GOP nominee, and 14 percent to Mitt Romney.

Some 2,070 Sioux County Republicans turned out for the caucus in 2012. Probably half as many turned out to hear Cruz on January 4. As they waited for the senator, the audience watched a series of campaign videos. One touted the support of Steve King, the noted immigration hawk and popular Republican congressman from the area. Another featured endorsements from Ginni Thomas, *Daily Caller* columnist and wife of Supreme Court justice Clarence Thomas, and Brent Bozell, chairman of the Media Research Center and a stalwart of the conservative movement. They preceded the fiery introduction of Cruz by Bob Vander Plaats, the prominent social conservative activist and one-time gubernatorial candidate, who holds considerable sway over Iowa's Christian conservatives as head of the influential Family Leader organization. It was just what you'd expect to see at a Ted Cruz rally in Sioux County, Iowa—the men and women who have led fights to ban abortion and preserve traditional marriage, sought to diminish the influence of establishment Republicans who sacrifice traditional conservative principles for business interests, and sometimes worked to marginalize libertarians who don't believe in some of those principles in the first place.

All of which made the third video at the Cruz rally that much more interesting. In that one, the campaign claims Cruz as the rightful heir to Ron Paul's "Liberty Movement" and showcases several alumni of the Ron

IMAGES: NEWSCOM

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

Paul for President effort who now support Cruz.

"There are a lot of things that impress me about Ted Cruz and the way that he's really picked up the mantle of Ron Paul in a lot of ways," says Joel Kurtinitis, a regional director for Ron Paul 2012 and the founder of Liberty Iowa. He admires Cruz for his commitment to libertarian principles and for taking on the political establishment in Washington. "That's been a consistent message of his—that it's not really a divide between left and right, it's a divide between Washington and the American people. I've seen him lead against unnecessary foreign intervention when he talked about staying out of the Syrian civil war. He led on Internet freedom when net neutrality came up."

Crystal McIntyre, an Army veteran and supervisor from Warren County, recalls her introduction to the Ron Paul movement and, later, to Cruz. "There was this group of people that kept running around—just, 'Ron Paul, Ron Paul.' I'm like, 'Who is Ron Paul?'" she says. "And I remember listening to the first part of his speech and just"—here she takes a deep breath and smiles broadly—"my spirit jumped!"

She first heard of Cruz when he ran for Senate in Texas in 2012 and has been a supporter ever since. "The biggest thing about Ted Cruz was I knew that he had been endorsed by Ron Paul and by Rand Paul."

The video is audacious and aggressive, like the candidate behind it. You can watch all 5:39 of it without realizing that Rand Paul is running for president himself. Other than the brief mention of Rand Paul's support for Cruz's Senate bid, the video ignores him completely. But he's in the race, and the implication is clear: Ted Cruz is the true representative of Ron Paul's ideas in this race, not Rand Paul.

That's bold, but the broader message of the video, and the choice to play it in the heart of Iowa's Bible belt, is equally daring, at least on the surface. Cruz is attempting a forge a winning coalition in Iowa that marries two parts of the Republican party long at war with one another. For decades, off and on, libertarians and social conservatives have battled to influence the direction of the Republican party on a wide range of issues: abortion and gay marriage, tax reform and faith-based initiatives, support for Israel and funding to battle AIDS in Africa, and many more.

Cruz is attempting to forge a winning coalition in Iowa that marries two parts of the Republican party long at war with one another. Currently, what separates these factions on policy is less important than what unites them politically: dissatisfaction with the establishment.

Building yard signs for their candidate, January 4

But in the current political environment, what separates these two GOP factions on policy is less important than what unites them politically: dissatisfaction with the establishment. "Cruz is deftly consolidating the clans of Iowa's anti-establishment right," says Matt Strawn, former chairman of the Iowa Republican party. "The Christian conservative evangelicals, the Tea Partiers, and the libertarian-leaning Republicans. The adhesive for the Cruz Iowa coalition isn't ideological so much as it is his antiestablishment style and the belief that he has the horsepower to take on the political elites and win the nomination."

The enemy of my enemy, politically speaking.

If this arrangement seems unorthodox, it's familiar to Iowans. For several years, the Iowa Republican party has been a messy tangle of internecine fighting, with insurgent groups of Paulites and Christian conservatives making runs at GOP leadership, for elective office, and in the party hierarchy. Without the muscle to effect lasting change independently, these factions have often come together as *ad hoc* evangelical-libertarian alliances in attempts to wrest power from establishment Republicans (or perceived establishment Republicans). Sometimes they've succeeded, sometimes they've failed, but the network remains, and Cruz hopes to ride it to a big Iowa win on February 1.

"It's an odd coalition, but it's not a new one," says an unaligned Iowa Republican strategist. "And it's ready-made for the Cruz campaign, given his views."

The social conservative vote in Iowa could be more fragmented than it has been in the last two cycles, with past caucus winners Huckabee and Santorum running again and Ben Carson remaining a factor. But neither of the previous winners has gotten much traction, with Huckabee at 3 percent and Santorum at 1 percent in the most recent *Des Moines Register*/Bloomberg poll. That poll, taken during the second week of December, had Carson at 13 percent, a precipitous drop from the October poll, which had him at 28 percent. Rand Paul registered just 3 percent, down slightly from his 5 percent in October.

Cruz, meanwhile, rocketed from 10 percent in October to 31 percent in December. And there is no sign that support is flagging.

All of which suggests that however unconventional Cruz's strategy might appear, it seems to be working. ♦

You Snooze, She Wins

That's what Hillary is hoping.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

Des Moines

There's no other way to say it: Hillary Clinton is very boring. The Democratic presidential frontrunner's campaign stops are, too. The members of her traveling press corps look like they'd rather be anywhere else. So do some of the attendees, who shift in their seats starting around minute 10. Even the campaign staffers pace the back of the room or tap inattentively on their iPhones as Clinton drones on about finding a cure for Alzheimer's and universal pre-kindergarten.

At a recent "organizing event" at the State Historical Building, in the shadow of Iowa's capitol dome, Clinton's supporters are getting restless before the candidate's even arrived. Somewhere in the crowd, a chant breaks out. "When I say 'Madam' you say 'President,'" someone orders. "Madam!"

"President!" a diffuse, halfhearted chorus responds. The cheer lasts for just another minute or two, dying down as quickly as it arose. Then, with hardly a warning, the candidate walks onstage, joined by agriculture secretary and former Iowa governor Tom Vilsack and his wife. The audience bursts into applause when they see Clinton, which turns out to be the emotional high point of the evening. Vilsack, by way of introduction, tells a too-long story about inviting Clinton to an embarrassingly small fundraiser in 1998 when she was the first lady and he was the unknown and underdog candidate for governor.

When Vilsack finally passes the microphone to Clinton herself, it's a relief, albeit short-lived. For some reason, Clinton decides to tell her side of the nonstory, regaling the crowd with the mind-numbing details of conversations with her East Wing political team, who assured her Vilsack "doesn't have a chance."

About as exciting as the real thing

She took a gamble and, in an exciting conclusion . . . raised money for him anyway. In the back of the room, a baby starts screaming.

Thankfully, Clinton soon moves on to deliver her stump speech, the main theme of which is: Do you really want to see a Republican in the White House? She tries a laugh line. "Now, I've been listening to our Republican friends who are running for the office. Yeah, it is a little daunting. They are quite—" she pauses, making sure the crowd is paying attention, "—evidence averse." There are some polite chuckles, more than when she used the line in Davenport earlier in the day and felt compelled to tell that audience to "think about it."

Clinton plods through sentences like she's avoiding rhetorical booby traps, which has the effect of giving far too much weight to light observations. In warning against a return to the GOP's "trickle-down economics," Clinton deploys a clichéd aphorism at a glacial pace, as if her audience is hearing it for the first time. "Heaven forbid, you know that old saying? Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me," she says, nodding her head approvingly.

She struggles to transition between topics, and she employs jarring shifts in tone. Often, she lowers the volume and softens her timbre when turning to very serious issues, like our children. "We need enough support to be able to really wrap our arms, both literally and figuratively, around every child, and give those kids a chance to show us what they can do, to make their contributions," she says in Davenport, her voice barely above a whisper, her face twitching at the thought of some kid somewhere not given a chance to make his or her contributions.

Suddenly, she ratchets up the volume and energy. "And then we've got to make college affordable," she shouts, thrusting her index finger outward and upward. "And I have a plan to do that!"

Foreign policy and national security issues make scant appearances in the Clinton stump speech; there's a brief mention of "reaching out" to American Muslims for help fighting terrorism. Mostly, the former secretary of state spends her time hawking a soft liberal agenda on minor domestic issues: autism, drug addiction, mental health, early childhood education. Clinton ticks off the items like she's reciting her times tables.

> I will defend marriage equality and work to end discrimination against the LGBT community. I will defend voting rights and make it absolutely a priority, whether it's through Supreme Court appointments or a constitutional amendment to get rid of *Citizens United* and its pernicious effects on our election system. I will work for criminal justice reform and take on the problems of systemic racism in our criminal justice system and end the era of mass incarceration. I will defend workers' rights and union rights because that helped to build

SCOTT OLSON / GETTY

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the American middle-class and we need to keep it going. I will continue to work for comprehensive immigration reform with a path to citizenship. I will defend Social Security against privatization. I will defend Medicare against voucherization. I will do everything I can to reform and fix our VA system, but I will not let the Republicans privatize it and take away veterans' right to care.

If Clinton's dullness isn't deliberate, it's certainly convenient, serving the campaign's desire to make as little news and noise as possible as she trudges through a mildly competitive primary season on her way to the nomination and the media stay focused on the much more entertaining Republican race. In fact, Clinton is running a conservative campaign, in strategy if not in politics. That explains why, in Davenport, she talks fondly of the good times of her husband's administration and promises to defend the gains made under Barack Obama. While Obama-era Democrats brashly boast that their chief policy achievement, the Affordable Care Act, is here to stay, Clinton strikes an almost reactionary chord.

"The Republicans just want to undo what Democrats fought for for decades and what President Obama got accomplished," she says. "So we need a president, just as President Obama will, to veto that. But if there's a Republican sitting there, it will be repealed, and then we'll have to start all over again."

And that's the biggest fear Clinton's even-keel campaign hopes to stoke in 2016: Voting for the other side would be a radical departure, a disruptive shake-up that will force us to "start all over again." It's a direct counterargument to the revolutionary populism not only of Donald Trump in the GOP but of Bernie Sanders in her own party. Clinton is counting on Democrats this primary season and swing voters in November to opt for playing it safe.

In a tumultuous time at home and abroad, with a third Democratic term on the line and a Republican primary out of control, Clinton's may be just the winning strategy. But it sure is boring. ♦

NEWSCOM

Permanent Revolution

Iran's aggression continues.

BY LEE SMITH

The attacks on Saudi Arabia's two diplomatic missions in Iran—which came in response to Riyadh's execution of a Saudi Shiite cleric—are perhaps best understood as yet another skirmish in the Islamic Republic's long war against the regional order and the international order, both underwritten by the United States. In other words, the mullahs' revolution marches on.

The Saudi embassy burns in Tehran, January 3.

The 1979 takeover of the American embassy in Tehran wasn't just a symbolic gesture. It was the Islamic Revolution's founding act. The goal of any revolution is to overturn the existing order, and the order of the Middle East is Sunni, the majority Muslim sect. The revolution meant to tip the balance of power on behalf of the region's minority population, the Shiites, for the first time in history.

The problem for the newly born Islamic Republic was that the regional order was backed by a superpower that had forged an alliance at the end of World War II with the Persian Gulf's major Sunni state, Saudi Arabia. One purpose of the 1979 takeover was to show the Saudis and their Sunni allies that the United States was a paper tiger. If America, in the words of Ayatollah Khomeini, couldn't do a damn thing to protect itself, how could it protect Riyadh?

Further, laying siege to a diplomatic mission, violating laws and norms dating back centuries, was an attack on the international order as well. The takeover was early evidence that the Tehran regime had intentionally set itself at odds with the nation-state system, also enforced by the United States through numerous allies and institutions as well as through its worldwide military power.

The revolution's central tenet holds that the political ideas and decisions of the chief religious leader, the supreme leader, are binding and transcend borders. All believers—whether in Iran or elsewhere around the world—were to be loyal to the supreme leader, who would in turn care for them. Exporting the revolution (starting in Lebanon, via Hezbollah) meant not only projecting Iranian power but also destabilizing nation-states, especially rivals like Saudi Arabia.

And thus we come to the strange case of Nimr al-Nimr, the Shiite cleric whose execution two weeks ago served as the pretext for Iran's setting fire to the Saudi missions. According to Saudi documents, Nimr incited Saudi Shiites to wage violent attacks

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against security forces and others, and called for Shiite regions to secede from Saudi Arabia. Through his words and actions, Nimr identified himself less as a dissident than as an Iranian agent working to destabilize Tehran's rival. When Iran in turn claimed him, a Saudi citizen, as a protégé, the revolutionary regime sought to assert itself as the final arbiter in all Shiite matters regardless of borders and sovereignty. Together with the subsequent attacks on the Saudi missions, these are simply the latest gusts of the Iranian regime's revolutionary winds.

"The pro-Iran advocates and supporters of the nuclear deal keep saying that Iran has changed," says Tariq Alhomayed, a Saudi columnist for the pan-Arab daily *Asharq al-Awsat*. "But the same regime that was responsible for the 1979 takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran is the same regime behind the attacks on Saudi diplomatic facilities in Tehran and Mashad."

The clerical regime hasn't changed—but America has. President Obama has said that the United States shouldn't take part in a sectarian war. White House officials have let on that it's wisest for the United States to stand aside while extremists from both sects kill each other off. But the administration has effectively sided across the region with Iran and its allies, including Hezbollah and Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq, and even the Revolutionary Guard Corps itself, providing air cover for the operations of Quds Force chief Qassem Suleimani in Iraq. John Kerry has finally admitted that the administration has no interest in toppling dictator Bashar al-Assad, Iran's ally in Damascus. As Obama has explained, the White House acknowledges Iranian interests in Syria—which happen to include shipping missiles to Hezbollah to point at Israel.

With the Nimr affair, the Obama administration again showed its preference for Iran. After the Saudi embassy and consulate were torched, the first statement the State Department released made no mention of the attacks but questioned the wisdom of executing Nimr. Officials were eager to put distance between the United States and the Saudis, claiming the administration had tried to dissuade Riyadh but to no avail.

Why was the White House effectively backing Iran's position, a self-arrogated "right" to have a say in the fate of a citizen of another country? After all, Iranian foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif tells Kerry that the fate of Iranian-American *Washington Post* reporter Jason Rezaian is none of America's business since he's an Iranian national.

"Shortly after they started getting questions about the incident, the administration began furiously briefing reporters against the Saudis," says Omri Ceren, an analyst with the Israel Project. "It's difficult to think of any other country, with the obvious exception of Israel, that's ever received that kind of treatment from the White House's communications team." Large parts of the American press and foreign policy community took their cue from the White House and went on the offensive against Saudi Arabia. The fundamental theme was that Americans share many values with Iran, but not with the Saudis. This, though neither Riyadh nor Washington are in the habit of directing their citizens to attack embassies.

John Kerry has finally admitted that the administration has no interest in toppling dictator Bashar al-Assad, Iran's ally in Damascus.

Saudi Arabia is an often trying U.S. ally, unfree, a violator of human rights, with private citizens who back terrorism. But for the last decade, Saudi Arabia has been a partner in the war on terror. Most of the 46 others executed with Nimr were Sunni Islamists, including al Qaeda members. "Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef has an impeccable record in fighting Islamists," says Hussain Abdul-Hussain, Washington bureau chief of the Kuwaiti newspaper *Al Rai*. "Now Saudi has its Islamists on the run and sees Iran as the main threat they have to deal with."

Abdul-Hussain says that this new policy focus is also partly due to the difference between the former king, Abdullah, and the current ruler, Salman. "Abdullah didn't want to get involved in regional politics. But with Salman, the White House has asked the Saudis to do so many things and carry the ball on their own—whether it's Syria, Yemen, or to stand up to Iran. But now the administration is saying they don't like it that way. If you're Saudi, it seems that no matter what you do, the Americans won't like it."

What's especially peculiar about the White House's attitude, says Abdul-Hussain, is that the Saudis are a status quo power that, in its foreign policy, essentially plays by Western rules. "They believe in the nation-state. For instance, they gave the Lebanese Army billions of dollars to buy weapons from France in order to buttress a national institution. The Iranians are a militia state that supports militias around the region. In Iran, the supreme leader is more powerful than the president, the IRGC is stronger than the army."

Exporting the Islamic Revolution means replicating that system elsewhere. In Lebanon, Hezbollah is stronger than the army. Hassan Nasrallah, the head of Hezbollah, makes foreign policy, not the Lebanese prime minister. "Iran is doing the same in Iraq," says Abdul-Hussain, "where they back the popular militias, which are stronger than the central government in Baghdad."

It's hardly a surprise that the regime in Tehran continues to violate international laws and norms, laying siege to diplomatic missions and testing ballistic missiles in violation of U.N. Security Council resolutions. The revolution has always aimed to overthrow the existing order of the region and the rest of the world. What's striking is not just that the White House has turned on so many American regional partners, from Israel to Saudi Arabia, or that it's undone an American system that took 70 years to build, but that it so often ends up taking Iran's side. ♦

Classical Gasbags

A handbook of political catchwords.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Civil discourse, Roman style

Ronald Syme—actually, Sir Ronald Syme—is not a household name in America, but perhaps it ought to be. Syme (1903-1989) was a New Zealand-born classicist, later an Oxford don, who is in many quarters regarded as the greatest historian of ancient Rome. He wrote a biography of Sallust and a two-volume biography of Tacitus, who, in the time of the emperors, was himself the greatest historian of Rome. With a book called *The Roman Revolution* (1939), Syme turned round the standard interpretations of Roman history, demonstrating that Augustus, the first undisputed monarch of Rome, was, in his pretensions to restoring the Roman Republic, a brilliant fraud. As for the Roman constitution, Syme called it "a screen and a sham." No one has come along since to disprove his bold claim.

I was reading *The Roman Revolution* when I came across the chapter "Political Catchwords," and realized that it is a vade mecum, a guide or handbook, on the use of the language of politicians, one that belongs alongside George Orwell's "Politics and the English Language." Syme's "Political Catchwords" is perhaps better than Orwell's justly famous essay in that it supplies a context for the way political catchwords are used. The context is the time of the rise of the young Octavianus, later to be known as Augustus, as he aligns himself with various factions in Rome to defeat, first, the assassins (Brutus, Cassius, et al.) of his adoptive father Julius Caesar, and then Marcus Antonius (or Mark Antony), all on his way to a forty-year reign that put paid to the Roman Republic.

The time was one, Syme tells us, in which persons, not programs, came before the people for judgment; it was a time, also, without laws against slander or libel. Everyone accused everyone else of anything and everything. The law of contradiction was suspended. "Marcus Antonius [for example] was not merely a ruffian and a gladiator, a drunkard and a debauchee—he was effeminate and a coward." The want of distinguished ancestors, or the stain of having had family in trade (or worse yet, on the stage), the shame of a municipal origin outside Rome—anything and everything could be used against an aspiring politician. Syme rather regrets the end of this free-for-all with the end of the Roman Republic and the emergence of emperors, which saw all power pass to one man and freedom of speech curtailed. "That was not the worst feature of monarchy," he writes, "it was the growth of servility and adulation."

Until such time, hypocrisy, dissimulation, self-acclaimed virtue were, rather as in our time, the order of the day in the public utterances of politicians. Syme reports that Senator Piso, for example, "to public view seemed all eyebrows and antique gravity," while in reality he was "rapacious and obscene." (Match him up with a contemporary senator at your convenience.) The people were supposed to be ultimately sovereign, but in fact "oligarchy ruled through consent and prescription." In our day it could be argued that anyone who has served more than two terms in the U.S. Senate qualifies as a modern oligarch.

But the key, one might say the Orwellian, point is that in Roman times "vocabulary was furbished up and . . . the relation between words and facts was inverted." Everyone, each party, claimed *libertas*, or liberty, for its side. The word, Syme reports, "was most commonly invoked in defence of the existing order by individuals or classes in enjoyment of power and wealth," but everyone enjoyed its use. "Nobody ever sought power for himself or the enslavement of others without invoking *libertas* and such fair names." All but the rarest of politicians was in business for himself.

Next in common use was the word "peace." To attain that lofty and pacific goal Roman political figures of the day were all-too-ready to kill—sometimes in vast numbers.

Love of country was the standard

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under which all Roman politicians marched. Patriotism was not merely the last but also the first refuge of political scoundrels. However different their discrete views, Roman political figures claimed to be willing to die (though they much preferred the other fellow to do the dying) for love of country. Behind their actions Cicero, Pompeius, Crassus, Caesar, all asserted the noble motive of patriotism. "The dynast Pompeius," Syme writes, "sacrificed his ally Caesar to the oligarchs out of sheer patriotism. Octavianus, to secure recognition and power, was ready to postpone for the moment a sacred vendetta [against Caesar's murderers]: his sincere love of country was loudly acclaimed."

Then as now, politicians rushed to claim that true virtue lay with them. "There was no limit," writes Syme, "to the devices of fraudulent humanitarians or high-minded casuists." Does the following, for example, resemble a contemporary politician's relentless invocation of executive privilege: "Extraordinary commands were against the spirit of the constitution—but they might be necessary to save the State. Of that the Senate was supreme judge. What if it had not lent its sanction? Why, true patriots were their own Senate."

Orwell concluded his "Politics and the English Language" by noting that "Political language—and with variations this is true of all political parties, from Conservatives to Anarchists—is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." He added that one cannot change all this immediately, but one "can at least change one's own habits, and from time to time one can even, if one jeers loudly enough, send some worn-out and useless phrase . . . into the dustbin where it belongs."

Over the past twenty centuries, as Ronald Syme makes splendidly clear, we haven't had much luck in doing so. ♦

Hillarynomics

As incoherent as you'd imagine.

BY FRED BARNES

Hillary Clinton says she comes from "the Clinton school of economics." It's her way of identifying with her husband, Bill Clinton, and suggesting that if elected president she would duplicate the economic success of his presidency.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Given what she's proposed in her campaign for the White House, the chances of this happening are practically nonexistent. Her policies are closer to those of socialist senator Bernie Sanders, her rival for the Democratic presidential nomination, than to Bill Clinton's.

She is against nearly everything her husband either signed into law or benefited from in the 1990s. He raised income tax rates in his first year in office, the top rate increasing from 31 percent to 39.6 percent. But after Republicans captured the House and Senate in 1994, he backed away from tax hikes.

Hillary Clinton's campaign is focused obsessively on higher taxes for the wealthy. "I want to make sure the wealthy pay their fair share, which they have not been doing," she said in December during the third Democratic debate. "I want the Buffett rule to be in effect, where millionaires have to pay 30 percent tax rates instead of 10 percent to nothing in some cases." She has promised to unveil more proposed tax increases on the affluent this month.

That's just for starters. In 1997, Bill Clinton agreed to cut the tax rate on capital gains from 28 percent to 20 percent. Now, Hillary Clinton has an elaborate plan to raise capital gains taxes, nearly doubling the current 23.4 percent rate for wealthy investors. This would be counterproductive, since lower rates tend to generate more private investment.

Bill Clinton, with help from congressional Republicans, won passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a boon to economic growth. She supported it. And as secretary of state, she called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) the "gold standard" of free trade treaties. In October, however, she flipped, declared her opposition, and joined her husband's protectionist foes. On the other hand, "One of the planks in her small business proposal is to expand 'access

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to new markets,' which seems to contradict her newly found opposition to TPP," noted economist Richard W. Rahn in the *Washington Times*.

Neither of the Clintons is likely to admit it, but the economy in the 1990s was aided by Republicans. They not only curbed spending, but also killed Hillarycare, the health care program envisioned by First Lady Clinton. For Bill Clinton, this was a stroke of good luck. It would have been as much of a drag on his economy as Obamacare is now—and would continue to be during a Hillary Clinton presidency.

At an Iowa event in December, she claimed her husband and President Obama "each inherited economic problems from their Republican predecessor," according to the *New York Times*. This was true in Obama's case, but not in her husband's.

A legacy of President Reagan's deep tax cuts, sweeping tax reform, and relief from excessive regulation was an economy prone to robust growth that lasted well into the Clinton years. In contrast, Clinton left his successor, George W. Bush, with a mild recession. If Hillary Clinton succeeds Obama, she would inherit a weak and overregulated economy and soaring public debt—still more reason why her prospects for matching her husband's record are meager.

She says she will propose tax breaks for small business and tax credits for low-income Americans. That's fine. More broadly, "we have to do more to incentivize profit sharing," she said in the debate. She failed to mention any incentives to profit-making itself or investment, which has lagged under Obama.

Hillary Clinton has burdened herself with a risky promise: Anyone earning less than $250,000 a year should be exempt from a tax increase. "No middle-class tax raises," she said at last month's debate. "That's off the table." A tax hike won't be needed, she said, "because I don't think we should be imposing big new programs that are going to raise middle-class families' taxes."

Yet she is proposing a whole series of big new programs. She favors universal pre-K schooling, a $350 billion debt-free college plan, worker training, $275 billion in infrastructure spending, and increased Social Security benefits for widows and single women. The Clinton campaign has put no price tag on these plans. But the cost of 17 new and expanded programs was calculated by McClatchy Newspapers to be at least $1.1 trillion over 10 years.

Can all that be financed solely by raising taxes on those with incomes of more than a quarter-million? Probably not. Something would have to give, the programs or the tax pledge. My guess is that both would.

She is clever enough to come up with a scheme for doing this. Eager to raise more revenue from capital gains, she came up with an excuse. Too many investors hold stocks for too short a period, jeopardizing the long-term health of the economy, she said. Her remedy is to boost the tax bite on short-term gains taken by those in the top income tax bracket.

The problem is there's no need for this. The long-term future of the economy is being looked after quite adequately. Last year, for example, spending on research and development accelerated "at its fastest rate in fifty years and is at an all-time high as a percentage of GDP," business columnist John Cassidy noted in the *New Yorker*.

To achieve her goal of increasing take-home pay for middle-income Americans, Hillary Clinton isn't looking to growth. She wants the rich and corporations to fund a wealth transfer. The money would come from higher income taxes and in the form of wage hikes and price controls on things like prescription drugs.

In Hillary Clinton's case, "growth" is a talking point. And she talks about it a lot. "If we don't get the American economy moving and growing, we're not going to recognize our country and we're not going to give our kids the same opportunities that we had," she said in the debate. If it falls to her to produce a growing economy, heaven help us. ♦

Stranger than Fiction

Hollywood gets Benghazi right.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

"This is a true story." Those words appear onscreen to open *13 Hours*, the major motion picture about Benghazi, in theaters on January 15. And with them, director Michael Bay announced that he is taking sides in the long-running debate over the attacks there on September 11, 2012.

For three years, the White House and its defenders in the media have characterized the Libya raids as a tragedy, a series of unfortunate events that were utterly unpreventable and for which no one is much to blame. Many of those who were on the ground in Libya, CIA contractors and diplomats alike, see them as something quite different. To them, Benghazi represents bureaucratic indifference and incompetence before the attacks, deadly governmental indecision and fecklessness during the attacks, and official deception and dishonesty after the attacks.

This is their story. And the fact that it's a story familiar to readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD indicates that Bay, the man behind the blockbuster *Transformers* movies, has taken sides in a way

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that one might not expect from a successful Hollywood director.

The movie is based on the book of the same name, written by Boston University journalism professor Mitchell Zuckoff with five CIA contractors who participated in the many battles in Benghazi that night. The authors announced in the book's introduction that they had sought to avoid the politics of Benghazi in favor of a fact-based account of what happened during the 13 hours of fighting there. And while the film tracks the book's narrative closely, Bay's depiction of the sense of abandonment felt by those men, as they wait for help that never arrives, heightens the outrage.

13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi, as the film is titled in full, begins as CIA contractor Jack Silva leaves his family for Libya. Upon landing in Benghazi, Silva and a fellow contractor embark on what ought to be a routine trip to the CIA's secret annex. But as they make their way through the cluttered streets of Libya's second-largest city, a hostile gang of locals forces their vehicle to a stop at gunpoint, leading to a tense and chaotic exchange of lethal threats. They are allowed to pass, rattled but unharmed. It's a temporary reprieve.

The story is told largely through the eyes of Silva, played brilliantly by a bearded and newly bemuscled John Krasinski (best known for his role as the affable and sarcastic Jim Halpert on *The Office*), and four other CIA contractors—Mark "Oz" Geist, John "Tig" Tiegen, Kris "Tanto" Paronto, and "Boon." (Geist, Tiegen, and Paronto have spoken previously with *TWS* about their experiences and served as consultants on the movie.)

The film documents the contractors' concerns about security before the assault on September 11, 2012, making clear that the attack was not an isolated incident but the culmination of a long series of hostilities directed at Western targets. Even before the events of that day, viewers are led to understand the difficulty of distinguishing friend from foe. The February 17th Martyrs Brigade, a Libyan militia the State Department engaged and ostensibly the good guys, is filled with shady characters, some of whom seem to know well in advance the plans of the jihadists who attack the diplomatic compound and the CIA annex. Hours before the attack begins, members of the local police force are observed conducting surveillance on the compound. Throughout the hours of fighting at both sites, when the Americans trying to repel the attacks see large groups of dark-skinned, heavily armed men show up to the battle, they cannot determine whether the new arrivals are there to help them or kill them.

This inability to distinguish friend from foe is disorienting in an extraordinarily powerful way. The vulnerability the disorder evokes is almost overwhelming, even as you sit safe in a theater eating your buttered popcorn and drinking your oversized Coke.

John Krasinski as Jack Silva

As the battle intensifies, the sense of helplessness produced by this confusion about the enemy is replaced by a growing outrage over the indecisiveness and willful impotence of the U.S. government. As the CIA contractors at the annex stand by their loaded vehicles and listen in real time to the desperate pleas for help from Americans under siege at the diplomatic compound, the CIA station chief repeatedly tells them they cannot go. Each time they call to Washington for help, even just to request a flyover, they're given excuses, not assistance. When a small team of security officials arrives from Tripoli, they're told to hold at the airport rather than rush to join the fighting. Pleas to the Pentagon for military reinforcements are rejected—again and again.

In one of the most affecting scenes, Bay cuts briefly from the bedlam of the fighting and the desperation of the CIA contractors to a shot of U.S. fighter jets spinning their engines on an airstrip in Aviano, Italy. American power, idle.

The film never mentions Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama. But in subtle ways, it makes clear their weakness and dishonesty. The YouTube video that they would blame for the attacks is mentioned only in passing in a news report about Cairo airing in the background at the CIA annex. Between exchanges of gunfire and mortar rounds, one U.S. official reports to others that the State Department has assigned blame for the attacks to the al Qaeda-linked fighters of Ansar al Sharia. Another official expresses bewilderment at claims from Washington that there had been a demonstration before the attack began. And the entire film renders absurd the notion that the attacks were not planned.

So what is the likely political impact of the movie, if any? For months, there has been speculation the film could damage the presidential prospects of Hillary Clinton. That's possible. It's certainly an effective critique of the Obama administration's misadventures in Libya and culpability in the Benghazi disaster.

But if the film has any political impact, it seems far more likely to be on the Republican primary. It's not hard to imagine that there could be considerable overlap between the people who choose to see *13 Hours* in its opening weeks and those who vote in the Republican primaries over the next several months. And that would likely lead to a boost for Donald Trump and Ted Cruz.

Two dominant themes emerge from the film: (1) In the chaos of post-Qaddafi Libya it was impossible to distinguish between good guys and bad guys. And, for that reason and others, (2) the U.S. government isn't very effective in its efforts to create order out of the inevitable instability that results from removing dictators.

These are arguments that have been central to the foreign policy case made by both of the GOP frontrunners,

PARAMOUNT PICTURES

albeit with vastly different levels of sophistication. Trump's call for a temporary ban on all Muslim immigration is a crude and offensive amplification of that first theme: It's impossible to identify good Muslims and weed out the bad ones, so ban them all. And Cruz has repeatedly warned about the dangers that can result from changing bad regimes in the greater Middle East.

Marco Rubio, who supported the removal of Muammar Qaddafi, consistently criticized how the Obama administration handled the intervention in Libya. He was right to do so and argues that the resulting chaos validated his objections. But his are nuanced arguments, and they come at a time when nuance doesn't seem to be working.

Whatever its impact, *13 Hours* is a powerful film that is well worth seeing. From beginning to end, it forcefully rejects the sanitized, no-fault version of Benghazi. In scene after powerful scene, it assigns blame: to policymakers in Washington who naïvely overestimated our ability to distinguish the good guys from the bad guys in post-Qaddafi Libya; to Washington bureaucrats who paid little attention to repeated warnings about the security of U.S. facilities in Benghazi; to CIA officials more concerned with career advancement and positive performance reviews than saving lives.

But perhaps the strongest indictment made by *13 Hours* is an unspoken one. The film itself is an implicit but devastating critique of the American media that refused to report this story in this way, an establishment media that left to Hollywood the responsibility of telling these important truths. ♦

2016 Forecast: Fog

Why the GOP race abounds with uncertainty.

BY JAY COST

After nearly a year of buildup, the Republican nomination process is finally set to begin. What do we know about how things will unfold?

Precious little, as it happens. This is the most open Republican nomination battle in a generation, if not more. The large number of candidates, the unpredictable behavior of Donald Trump, and the lack of a clear frontrunner all conspire to make this race as hard to predict as defeating Garry Kasparov in a game of three-dimensional chess. Time and again, predictions about the state of the race have been quickly exposed as erroneous.

These forecasting errors could persist. In fact, there are four very good reasons why we might not have our *first* clue about the real shape of the race until the votes are tallied in Iowa and New Hampshire. And as for getting a sense of who will actually win this thing, that could still be months away.

First, wild, late swings in the primary polls have been so frequent in recent cycles that we would be remiss not to anticipate something similar in 2016. Newt Gingrich had a lead late in the pre-primary polls of 2012. Barack Obama charged from behind in 2008, as did John McCain that year. John Kerry emerged as an easy winner in 2004 after being nowhere in the polls for most of 2003.

Why does this seem to happen again and again? Partly because these are primaries, and the usual party labels therefore tell us nothing. Partisan affiliation is an important store of information, offering voters a sense of where candidates stand on a whole host of issues. But in primaries, voters settle on a candidate without that valuable heuristic. On top of that, primary combatants rarely develop meaningful distinctions on key issues, because they are all on the same side of the ideological spectrum. Voters are left to make choices based on an impressionistic sense of qualities—character, likability, and electability.

Poring over the relative merits of the candidates is a fun way for a political junkie to spend a Saturday evening. But most voters—even most primary voters—do not have that kind of time to dedicate to politics. So they are prone to make their final choices relatively close to the day of the primary or caucus. What makes it tricky for pollsters is that few people are actually willing to respond "I don't know" when asked which candidate they prefer. Instead, they'll offer a provisional opinion that is subject to change as they consider their options further. The primary polls can thus swing wildly, even late in the cycle.

Second, political polls in general have been functioning less and less well, and nobody is entirely sure why. We saw this in the 2014 midterm, when the GOP largely outperformed its poll numbers on Election Day. Obama enjoyed a similar overperformance in 2012. And the phenomenon has also happened overseas—with the Conservatives in Britain and Likud in Israel doing better than the pollsters predicted in 2015.

Theories abound, but there are no clear-cut answers. It is important to appreciate that while the news is flooded with *a lot* of polls at the moment, quantity does not necessarily yield quality.

One troubling portent is that many pollsters are still doing polls of registered voters, rather than likely voters. At such a late date in the cycle, it seems the only reason for this is budgetary: Given the high nonresponse rate to political polls, a refined sample of likely voters is more time-consuming and costly to collect. Turnout in presidential elections, after hitting a low in 1996, has been on an upswing, so there is less of a difference between

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actual voters and registered voters than there might have been 20 years ago. But primary turnout remains just a small fraction of general-election turnout, so the polls right now include a lot of people who will not actually vote in the primary. Do these nonvoters have different opinions from actual voters? If they do, the polls could be off by a wide margin.

Third, as anybody who followed the Barack Obama-Hillary Clinton battle of 2008 knows, the primary process is a quest for convention delegates, not for votes as such. It is noteworthy that states coming early in this cycle are required to distribute delegates proportionally, which means narrow vote victories will yield only tiny delegate leads. Later on, however, states are free to allocate according to the principle of winner-take-all, so a small margin of victory in a large state could be hugely consequential in amassing delegates. It is easy to come up with scenarios that "game out" the process over the months ahead, but the large number of assumptions one has to plug into such a computation renders the results hopelessly speculative.

Fourth, in every cycle there is talk of momentum, and for good reason. It matters who is up, who is down, who has exceeded expectations, who has fallen short. Without disputing the importance of momentum, though, a relentless focus on it can cause one to miss the forest for the trees. The bigger picture is that the primaries are the process by which a party, broadly defined, selects a nominee. As Anthony Downs outlines in *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (1957), such contests are usually characterized by the "median voter theorem," whereby the candidate who is closest to the middle of the electorate is the one who wins.

There are a number of important caveats that could be added to this theorem. That is especially the case for a primary system in which voters do not all vote on the same day. With sequential contests, the calculus changes greatly. Still, the median voter theorem is a handy rule of thumb: A party usually selects a nominee who is broadly acceptable to most constituencies.

This is quite helpful for understanding how momentum works. If a candidate whom most of the party likes—or at least does not dislike—wins an early contest, it is a decent bet that he or she will develop some momentum. Think

Clarity, doc—I just need clarity.

of John Kerry after his victory in Iowa in 2004, George W. Bush after his South Carolina triumph in 2000, and Ronald Reagan after New Hampshire in 1980. The parties were basically content with these men as their candidates and were happy to follow the signals sent by the early states. If, on the other hand, a party is internally divided, momentum can stall as factions balk at accepting the choice of the other factions. Think of Gerald Ford in 1976, Jimmy Carter in 1980, and Barack Obama in 2008. All three had momentum at one point or another in the contests, but they could not sustain it in the face of lukewarm support (or outright opposition) from certain factions.

Which dynamic will govern this cycle remains to be seen. It is easy to envision somebody challenging Donald Trump through the entire cycle, even if the real estate mogul should break out early. Too many Republicans would be too unhappy with a Trump win to allow for overawing momentum. The same might be true of Ted Cruz, who has become a darling of the grassroots by infuriating many Republicans in government. Accepting Cruz may be a tough pill for them to swallow, and collectively they have the power at least to bankroll a persistent challenger.

These four points are undervalued, and sometimes overlooked altogether. Total them up, and we have a whole mess of uncertainty—more so than most analysts fully appreciate. In a month, we should have a better grasp of what might happen, but it could still be months before we know what comes of all this. For now we must be patient and acknowledge that there is just too much we do not know. ♦

GARY LOCKE

Meme Wars

An online battle for Muslim hearts and minds.

BY DAVID DEVOSS

After the 9/11 attacks, Osama bin Laden and his lieutenants publicized al Qaeda's beliefs, demands, and atrocities with a succession of crudely produced audio and videotapes sent to Al Jazeera and other networks. But during the Iraq war, the way that news and ideas were communicated started changing. The elite reporters and editors who decided what news was and how it would be presented were being challenged by social media without hierarchy or filters.

Launched in 2004, the social networking site Facebook was followed a year later by YouTube, a seemingly infinite repository of videos living forever in the cloud. Then came Twitter, a real-time messaging service offering a global audience to those with something to say who could

East-West News Service editor David DeVoss spent more than four years in Iraq working for USAID development programs.

say it briefly. These and other technologies meant that an anonymous jihadist with a laptop could reach as many people as the world's leading newspapers combined. By 2007, when smartphones started becoming popular, he didn't even need a laptop.

Osama bin Laden recognized the power of social media early. "[T]he wide-scale spread of Jihadist ideology, especially on the Internet, and the tremendous number of young people who frequent the Jihadist websites—a major achievement for Jihad," he wrote in a 2010 letter discovered by Seal Team Six inside his Abbottabad compound.

Today, thousands of jihadists prowl the web promoting their brand of Salafist Islam while trying to persuade young Muslims to travel to Syria and Iraq. Teens curious about the Islamic State can go to Ask.fm, where questions about *sharia* will be answered promptly in English by British jihadists their age. Tumblr, a blogging site, hosts essays on how to build and position IEDs. Those turned off by videos of crucifixions and beheadings can head to Instagram to see terrorists handing out bread, sweeping the streets, and playing with kittens. When sensitive information like how to travel to Syria and whom to contact upon arrival needs to be exchanged, ISIS bloggers communicate with prospective recruits via private messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Kik, Paltalk, and Telegram.

In theory, it's easy to monitor the text traffic of ISIS sympathizers using salience analysis. Lexalytics is a Boston company whose cloud-based sentiment and intent analysis software can process hundreds of millions of documents a day to understand what people using social media are thinking. In the hands of a social media management company like Sprinklr, Lexalytics software can parse the digital zeitgeist for an airline, hotel company, or government security office. "We process the equivalent of the entire Twitter stream several times a day to know what's trending," says Lexalytics CEO Jeff Catlin. "The *Boston Globe* uses our product to analyze the changing sentiments of New Hampshire voters."

ISIS manages to avoid analysis of sensitive communications because of Tails (the Amnesic Incognito Live System) and TOR, two complementary operating systems that encrypt files, emails, and instant messages so that locations and browsing habits remain anonymous. The NSA describes the programs, which are open source and freely downloadable, as "major" threats to its mission and potentially "catastrophic" when used with other privacy tools. It does not mention that TOR, which keeps identities secret by bouncing communications around a network of relays, was developed by the U.S. Navy Research Laboratory and enhanced by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency inside the Department of Defense.

Antisocial media: an ISIS execution video

According to a Twitter census compiled last March by the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, ISIS supporters operate between 46,000 and 70,000 Twitter accounts, with an average of 1,000 followers each—far higher than the typical average of around 200 followers. Several security companies believe ISIS sends out more than 90,000 messages a day. About 20 percent of terrorist messaging is in English, the language used by Huda Muthawny, an Alabama woman who targets Muslim girls in the United States with the message that the "caliphate" is a utopian state where they will find status and belonging.

ISIS YouTube videos are horrific, but its messaging on Facebook and Instagram is weirdly compelling. Steely-eyed soldiers in tailored fatigues almost look daring as they vow to accept martyrdom. By contrast, Washington's counterterrorism program called "Think Again, Turn Away" features blurry photos, jumbled typefaces, and inept prose.

"I know something about memes," Cory Booker (D-N.J.) sputtered at a meeting last summer of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. "Look at their fancy memes compared to what we're not doing." In a rare show of bipartisanship, committee chairman Ron Johnson (R-Wis.) was in full agreement on ISIS messaging. "We invented the social network sites," he said. "We've got Hollywood. We've got the capabilities to blow these guys out of the water from the standpoint of communications."

The Obama administration created the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications in 2010, but Ambassador Alberto Fernandez, its former coordinator, concedes his operation was underfunded, unfocused, and unsuccessful. "Our goal was to discover what terrorists were saying on social media, but we had no mandate to take things down," he admits, adding that his entire budget for three years was less than the cost of one drone. Now a vice president at the Middle East Muslim Research Institute, Fernandez says the administration didn't take ISIS messaging seriously. After the death of bin Laden, Obama thought jihadist terrorism was yesterday's news. "His 'JV team' remark reflected that point of view. Washington ties itself in knots about metadata and the black stuff, but terrorist propaganda is all in plain sight. The government just needs the will to engage."

Some Muslim hackers aim to embarrass ISIS supporters by destroying their digital infrastructure or

"doxing" (revealing) their identities. But others prefer to change the conversation by creating new memes. Affinis Labs in Northern Virginia sponsored hackathons in Abu Dhabi and Sydney in 2015 and will host four more this month, in Uganda, California, London, and Marrakesh. The goal is to devise mobile apps and websites that communicate Islam's true values in a way that resonates with young people.

"Countering ISIS's revolutionary fervor with passionate moderation doesn't work," declares Affinis cofounder Shahed Amanullah, who refuses government assistance despite his former job as a Department of State adviser in charge of digital diplomacy to young Muslims around the world. "We're more effective working with communities without the government in the back seat or even in the car."

Shahed believes the San Bernardino massacre made ISIS's evil tangible and roused America's roughly three million Muslims to the idea that their youth must be empowered, not embattled. Toward that end, Affinis is incubating 11 startups and mobile applications supporting mainstream living in opposition to radicalism. ComeBack2Us is a digital underground railroad being developed for people who want to leave Syria and return home. It contains a message service for families to communicate with a son or daughter pondering a break from ISIS. Ishqr is an online dating site for millennial American Muslims who want to keep the faith yet avoid arranged marriages. LaunchGood is a faith-based online crowdfunding platform in Detroit supporting Muslim entrepreneurs in 20 countries. The company calls itself a "Global Force for Good"; it raised $100,000 for eight black Southern churches destroyed by fire after the nine murders in Charleston, S.C., last year.

LaunchGood CEO Chris Abdur-Rahman Blauvelt, 31, was raised a Presbyterian in Michigan and converted to Islam 15 years ago. He doesn't believe anti-ISIS *fatwas* from elderly religious scholars have much effect on terrorism. "We need to meet the youth where they are—online and in social media," he says. "The world's largest Muslim community is not Indonesia. It is the community of Muslims who are gathering online and exchanging ideas."

The flow of misguided youths to Syria is far from over, but American Muslims are trying to take back the Internet. AverageMohamed.com is an animated comic for children developed by a 40-year-old Somali-American gas station owner in Minneapolis. Cartoons on the site denounce suicide bombs, slavery, ISIS beheadings, and the Paris attacks and end with the slogan: "Peace up—extremist thinking out." Another web program preaching multicultural peace is *Shakes & Shaykhs*, a series of YouTube videos similar to Jerry Seinfeld's *Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee*. Produced by Ali Baluch, a 26-year-old Afghan-American videographer, the 26-minute conversations in coffee shops mix Islamic precepts with observations on American dating and television shows.

The soldiers in America's digital war on ISIS are tech-savvy millennials like Ali Ashraf Jakvani, 24, a social media expert who divides his time between California and Oman. Asked if American Muslims can defeat ISIS terrorists in the fight for youth, he smiles and nods. "This phone is a weapon," he says, "and it is more powerful than any gun." ♦

Boss Trump

The statist candidate.

BY ROLAND POIRIER MARTINSSON

On the surface it seems clear why Donald Trump's campaign is effective. His fame, bluster, wit, and intuitive sense for one-liners can be easily converted into media currency and are symbiotic with the mechanisms and values of the digital era. But none of this would avail were it not for a disillusionment with the political class so deep and visceral that his supporters consent to the opposite of what is normally expected from right-leaning candidates: respect for traditional values; proven party loyalty; morals, manners, and maturity.

Nor would his appeal have been the same if Trump had garnered his fame from, say, the comedy circuit or the silver screen or the baseball diamond. It is his business credentials that ultimately make him a formidable candidate. And he knows it.

We see this in his observation that the "deal" with Iran is the worst he has ever seen (because he knows the art of the deal); that he will make Mexico pay for a border wall (because he knows how to drive a hard bargain), a wall that he will finish in record time and below budget (because he is a builder); that he will be capable of rounding up and deporting 11 million illegal aliens (because he runs a worldwide organization) in a humane way (because his employees like him); that he will stare down Vladimir Putin (because he has stared down union leaders and business competitors); that he won't be pinned down on policy questions since he wants to be "unpredictable" (goal achieved), an effective strategy in business negotiations. In short, Trump without his business career would not have been a serious candidate.

We will know soon enough how persuasive Republican primary voters find all of this. Yet the idea that business experience is valuable for a politician is not only false, it is patently

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the opposite of truth. Indeed, business experience put to use in politics is more likely to be a liability than an asset. And, in any case, the promise to run a state with the efficiency of a successful business conglomerate is so distant from conservative values that it makes Bernie Sanders look like Barry Goldwater.

Conservatism regards politics as a craft similar to carpentry and farming. Skill and success depend on personal understanding of practices and traditions handed down from generation to generation. Effective statesmen absorb and act on the embedded knowledge and practices of the people they represent, in the nation they belong to, and in the daily flux of its political system. Political experience is specific to the moment and the place; it is not readily exported to nations other than where it was formed; it is not timeless (as countless "out of touch" politicians have discovered). In the setting of the here and now, political experience is invaluable and irreplaceable.

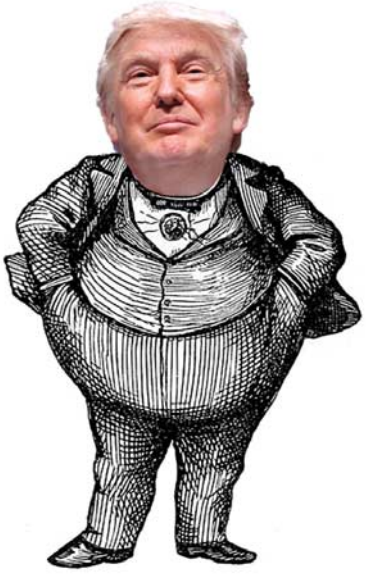
Liberals and socialists believe differently. To them, legislation and governing are universal practices, the application of theories that have been constructed by scholars far removed from the political arena. It follows that a novice can enter parliament or government and know what to do—it's all in the textbooks. Indeed, a strong interpretation of the liberal or socialist view implies that this is the *only* way to be properly prepared for politics. Trump's supporters share this delusion.

But Trump doesn't simply lack political experience. The business experience he touts reveals a demonstrably leftwing view of the nature of politics.

Governing is not about winning. It is about allowing for the flourishing of a social ecosystem where people can form their lives according to their own values and aspirations. It is the sum of all these persons' behavior and beliefs that forms a nation. It begins and ends with citizens, not with the administrators they hire to manage shared assets and assignments.

Consider Ronald Reagan's famous "Morning in America" ad campaign. It showed people going to work, people buying homes, people getting married—images of people going about their lives. That campaign has been criticized for failing to communicate a message. But it did something better. It held up an illustration of the conservative idea of politics: to always strive towards the unattainable ideal of making itself redundant.

Trump is enamored of an entirely different concept: management from



the top, where the state is the first entity, where the president is the CEO and citizens his employees. *We* depend on *him*. Such is Trump's vision of politics, such is his idea of the state and citizenship, and it squarely draws on his experience as a businessman.

It is misleading to apply the rules and habits of the corporate world to politics. Do we want political leaders who design plans for successful competition in the same way that managers of McDonald's design plans for taking market share from Burger King? Do you want your relation to America to be that of an employee to a company?

I will give an example from my home country of Sweden. The prime minister, Social Democratic party leader Stefan Löfven, was new to politics when he was awarded his position thanks to his background as a very successful union leader. He was indeed a capable, strong, and fair negotiator, who understood that every confrontation with the billionaires who employed his members would end well only if he recognized their positions and objectives. To win he needed, in a sense, to share the interests of the corporate leadership and the business owners. Such is the nature of negotiations: Success is achieved only if both parties walk away happy. It follows that the opposing sides enter into negotiations with the goal of reaching an agreement. Both sides want this agreement to favor their position, but it is ultimately not about defeating the opponent.

Every time Trump has made a successful deal—and there have been many—it has been because he has been able to make his opponent happy, and vice versa. Both parties walked in the room with the evident goal of reaching an agreement, getting things done.

But this is not politics. How did Löfven fare in office? Three small parties—the former Communists, the environmentalists, and the xenophobic populists—dominate the agenda. Across the board the same explanation is given for the former union leader's failure: He is politically incompetent.

Does Donald Trump really believe that Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, Ali Khamenei, and Kim Jong-un will enter into negotiations that are in any way similar to the ones he successfully conducted in his business career? Apparently a large share of voters are willing to bank America's future on such an idea. Thoughts wander to an inexperienced community organizer who believed that his college brilliance and good will would impress dictators and strongmen around the world.

For seven long years America has suffered under an inexperienced president. Are Americans now willing to hand over the fate of the United States to a man with a gold-plated latrine? Nothing Donald Trump has ever done indicates that he would make a good president or, for that matter, a conservative president. One final difference between business and politics: There is no Chapter 11 for a country. ♦

THE WEEKLY STANDARD, WITH APOLOGIES TO THOMAS NAST; TRUMP, GAGE SKIDMORE

Bernie at the Bridge

The red whirlwind comes to New Hampshire

By Geoffrey Norman

Manchester, N.H.

Crossing from Vermont into New Hampshire, you get a feel for what is driving the improbable Bernie Sanders campaign. The two states are separated by the Connecticut River valley, where the American industrial revolution could be said to have begun. The river supplied power for the mills, and the small towns and farms were a source of eager labor. The American system of manufacturing was born here. Even the British, who ordinarily thought they had all the answers, came to study the way things were done in the Connecticut River valley. Downstream, in Massachusetts, the factories turned out guns; far upstream, the Fairchild Company supplied industrial scales to the world. There was enough work to attract immigrants and create fortunes, and a sense that prosperity was just part of the natural order of things.

JASON SEILER

Today, most of those old, red-brick factory buildings are empty. The mills have long been closed. The factory jobs that could once pay wages ample enough to support a family are scarce to nonexistent. There is an old, tired, and depressed feeling in the air of towns like Springfield, Vermont, and Claremont, New Hampshire. New England is no longer a vital region. The population of Maine is the oldest, per capita, in the nation. Vermont is a close second and losing population. New Hampshire, stuck between the two, is doing somewhat better but is still fertile ground for the Sanders message, which is a new kind of socialism.

The old kind of socialism was the spawn of industrialization. The state would own the means of production and ameliorate the great gaps in wealth between those who worked in the factories and those who owned them. This is a little harder to imagine when the factories have shut down and the jobs have gone away.

Hard, also, to imagine government ownership and management of, say, Apple—or even of General Motors, which the government bailed out and could have taken over but did not, even with Barack Obama in charge of things. Government ownership of the means of production is an idea whose time came and passed. No one wants the same government that runs the Veterans Administration put in charge of General Electric or Microsoft.

But the distance between the rich and everyone else is still here and, in the view of Sanders, wider and more unjust than ever. The "millionaires and billionaires" are the "malefactors of great wealth" of his political universe—the "one-tenth of one percent" that controls almost as much wealth as the 90 percent at the bottom. His form of "democratic socialism" will, he promises, close the gap by making college education free, by investing in a vast rebuilding of the country's infrastructure, by increasing the minimum wage and Social Security benefits, by taking on global warming, and so on and so forth.

He has come a long way since he first began making noises about a possible presidential campaign. Last winter, the conventional wisdom was that if there was to be a challenge to Hillary Clinton from the left, the challenger would be Elizabeth Warren. This was, far and away, the preferred scenario among the cognoscenti. Warren had what, if she

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

were an athlete, would be called the "intangibles." She was good copy. And wouldn't a fight between two formidable women for the nomination be fun?

Sanders? He was the old, grumpy, white-haired guy from Vermont, one of those candidates who live out on the borderline between kooky and conventional, feeding on scraps of media coverage and pitifully small campaign contributions.

Sanders himself began making noises about a possible campaign. He would explore the possibility, he said, but he would not run unless he could do it right. Which, to most minds, meant that he wouldn't be doing it.

As part of this exploratory effort, he made a series of appearances in Vermont, talking mostly to college students. My wife and I drove two hours on a very cold February evening to attend one of these events at the University of Vermont in Burlington.

I couldn't say, at the time, exactly *why* I wanted to attend the event. I wasn't prescient enough to think that a Sanders campaign would (a) become a reality or (b) gain serious traction if it did. And I wasn't, by any stretch, a fan. If he did run for president, Sanders would not be getting my vote. I'd had opportunities to vote for him as Vermont's lone member of the House of Representatives and in his two successful campaigns for the Senate, and I'd never been tempted. The socialism business would have been reason enough for me to pass on Sanders. And I didn't much like it that he had honeymooned in the old Soviet Union or that, when he was mayor of Burlington, he had made a "sister city" arrangement with Puerto Cabezas in Nicaragua as a way to diss the Reagan administration. There is a humorless, hard-left aspect to the man.

But he was a force and tireless, like the hard leftists of the 1930s who soldiered on through every betrayal of their ideals, convinced that they would be vindicated by History. In an age of slippery, focus-group-driven politicians, there was something admirable and even compelling about his consistency.

Also, there isn't much to do on cold February nights in Vermont, and it would be an opportunity to spend some time in "the city." Eat at a trendy little restaurant. Spend the night in the Hilton, looking out across a frozen Lake Champlain and watching the sun drop behind the Adirondacks. And, who knows, there might actually be a story in it.

His performance then convinced me that Sanders would run and that, when he did, he would be a force, so I wrote an account of the event saying as much ("Bernie Sanders Is No Joke," June 1, 2015). And when I talked to people about the event and my reaction to it, I would say that I thought he might surprise people when the New Hampshire primary rolled around. Sanders might aspire to be either Eugene McCarthy in 1968, when battalions of college kids went "clean for Gene" in a campaign to run Lyndon Johnson out of the White House and get the United States out of Vietnam, or Pat Buchanan in 1992, calling for a pitchfork rebellion of the peasants against the elitist George H.W. Bush. Both insurgent campaigns helped bring down sitting presidents.

Sanders announced his candidacy in May, in Burlington, and it quickly became evident that he was no longer a marginal figure. From the beginning, his crowds were large and enthusiastic, and his poll numbers improved by the week. By the time I was driving to New Hampshire, a few days before Christmas, to watch him debate Hillary Clinton and Martin O'Malley (a truly marginal candidate), some polls had him winning the primary by as much as 10 percent of the vote.

Sanders has always campaigned in anger, since the futile campaigns of his youth on the Liberty Union ticket, when he would get 1 or 2 percent of the vote running to be governor or for the U.S. Senate.

He has done this without "evolving" on any of his core issues. He has raised a remarkable amount of money. And he has run what is nearly an insurgent campaign, one that appeals to an angry, populist sentiment that has been building as the economic recovery failed to materialize for people like those who had once held those good factory jobs in the Connecticut River valley. Sanders is decidedly *not* running for an implicit third Obama term, as Hillary Clinton is.

As he had in Burlington, on the night I went to listen to him last winter, he repeatedly pointed out that the "real" unemployment rate is more than 10 percent; that unemployment among young African Americans is close to 50 percent; that most people feel like the recession never ended, and that many have given up hope things will get better.

The one emotional chord he consistently struck was anger. He has always campaigned in anger, since the futile campaigns of his youth on the Liberty Union ticket, when he would get 1 or 2 percent of the vote running to be governor or for the U.S. Senate.

Almost half a century later, the country has caught up with him at last.

The leaders of his party are not especially happy about it. Hillary Clinton is their candidate. Some of them might have gone over to Joe Biden had he run. But Sanders is too . . . well, in an almost absurdly paradoxical way, too much like

the other improbable candidate out there running a campaign fueled by anger: too much like Donald Trump.

The point of my drive on a bleak, snowless New England Saturday was to divine, if possible, who would be the candidate of the casualties caused by the collapse of the Connecticut River economy.

I took back roads—pretty much the only kind there are in rural New England—and looked for yard signs in favor of one candidate or another. Real scientific research. Surprisingly (to me, anyway), there were not many signs for any candidate. A few for Trump. Not quite so many for Sanders. Hardly any for Clinton.

I followed the GPS directions to Saint Anselm College outside of Manchester, where the debate would be held. The scene was the usual. Crowds of people holding up placards bearing their candidate's name. I eyeballed the crowds, and it seemed that those for whom Bernie was the one were all young enough to be his grandchildren. And they had that college kid look. Intense and naïve at the same time.

"*Bernie, Bernie*," they shouted. "*Bernie, Bernie*."

It was cold and getting colder now that the pale December sun had gone down, the last Saturday before Christmas and almost the shortest day of the year. The Democrats had scheduled their debate so that the fewest people possible would watch. This was widely assumed to be a tactic designed to help Hillary Clinton, and Sanders later said so.

I drove on into town to the hotel where the Sanders campaign had rented out a very large banquet room. I wrote my name on a sign-in sheet and went in. Nobody even asked me for money.

There was a serving line and people were helping themselves to lasagna. Most of the tables were empty. I mingled for a while and found myself talking to, mostly, college kids and more college kids. People would ask where I was from, and when I told them Vermont, they reacted as though they were talking to someone who had been present at the creation. How fortunate I was to have been able to vote for Sanders even before he ran for president!

The conversations were cordial and even friendly. If Sanders was running a campaign based on anger, these kids were his happy warriors. The people left behind when the factories along the Connecticut River closed down were not here on this night.

This is, I think, one of the qualities of socialism that keeps it alive intellectually when it has failed, so often, in the real world. Socialism is equated with idealism. It seeks to correct the unfairness of the world and do so in a very big way. It just isn't *right* that Bill Gates (or, in Sanders's gallery of the guilty, the Koch brothers) should have so much money while so many others live paycheck to paycheck and must count on Social Security when they are too old to work.

Sanders connects emotionally with that sentiment when, in one of those rare moments he gets personal on the stump, he talks about his immigrant parents and the apartment in Brooklyn where he grew up, and where money was always tight. "My mother's fondest dream," he says, "was to one day move out of that apartment and into a home of her own. She never realized that dream."

Socialism is equated with idealism. This is one of the qualities of socialism that keeps it alive intellectually when it has failed, so often, in the real world.

It isn't quite that personal among the college kids who fill the banquet room waiting for their candidate to arrive after the debate and give them a victory speech. (They already know he will be the winner.) Their feelings are not connected, directly, to the anger of the people who are refugees, in some sense, from the collapse of the Connecticut River valley. Those are people who, a few days after the debate, President Obama identified, and patronized, when he told NPR,

> I do think that when you combine that demographic change with all the economic stresses that people have been going through because of the financial crisis, because of technology, because of globalization, the fact that wages and incomes have been flatlining for some time, and that particularly blue-collar men have had a lot of trouble in this new economy, where they are no longer getting the same bargain that they got when they were going to a factory and able to support their families on a single paycheck.
>
> You combine those things, and it means that there is going to be potential anger, frustration, fear. Some of it justified, but just misdirected. I think somebody like Mr. Trump is taking advantage of that. That's what he's exploiting during the course of his campaign.

I didn't run into any of those people in Sanders HQ.

The debate was, predictably, a nonevent. By New Year's, what most people remembered about it was that Hillary Clinton had been late returning to the podium after a break and that Donald Trump had gotten nasty about that. Of positions taken and programs proposed . . . nothing. This election—and the primaries in advance of it—is not about 10-point programs. It is about that anger and which candidate can stoke it most successfully.

Sanders himself seems to sense this, telling an interviewer a few days after the debate, "Trump's supporters are working-class people and they're angry, and they're angry because they're working longer hours for lower wages. They're angry because their jobs have left this country and

gone to China or other low-wage countries. They're angry because they can't afford to send their kids to college so they can't retire with dignity."

Sanders plainly has a feel for that anger. He grasps it almost without thinking. He is also an old and battle-scarred socialist who, while he has won elections, has seen the greater cause fail, time and again. One can only imagine him observing the Thatcher demolition of the socialist apparatus in Great Britain.

When he arrived at campaign headquarters after the debate, the room was packed and pumped up with the energy of a fiery introduction of "Brother Bernie" given by Cornel West, who came on like a revivalist preacher with lines like, "Justice is what love looks like when it goes out in public." (Not sure what he meant by that, but it sounded good and got the crowd going.)

Sanders couldn't match that, and the energy level dropped a few points when he stepped to the podium amid chants of "*Bernie, Bernie*" and launched into the usual stuff about the "billionaire class paying their fair share."

Then his voice dropped a bit and he said, "We have come a long way." It was impossible not to agree with that and it was hard not to feel respect for all that he had put into the struggle.

"We started," he said, "at 3 or 4 percent in the polls." Now there were polls, he went on, showing him with a 9-point lead over Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire and within single digits in Iowa.

"Brothers and sisters," he went on, "we are on the verge . . . "

But you sensed that he knew it was a long, long shot. And he said something about how if they did win Iowa and New Hampshire, then "we'll see" where things would go from there. And there was a note of resignation in his tone, and one sensed that even though he was raising more money than he had ever hoped to, enough that he was actually chartering private jets to campaign events instead of flying coach as he had at the beginning of the campaign, even though he had risen as high as he had in the polls, even though he was regularly doing the Sunday morning talk shows . . . that, in spite of all this, it was not to be.

Several young people holding clipboards stopped me, politely, on the way out and asked if I would be willing to "house" a Sanders volunteer during January and the runup to the primary.

"Sorry," I said, "but I live in Vermont."

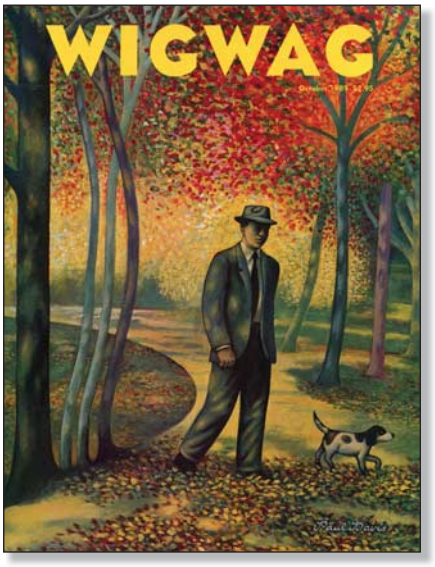
On the other side of the river. ♦

The Two Years with Lex Kaplen

The death and life of a great American magazine

By Sam Schulman

Alexander Kaplen died December 16, 2015, at the age of 56. He was 31 when I last saw him on March 5, 1991, about 5:30 p.m. I know the time because I had rushed to the bank in a taxi with $8,000 in cash. The money was the Wigwag Magazine Company's share of the auction proceeds of the magazine's hard assets: the phone system, Macs, desks, chairs, fax machine. An ironist would have enjoyed some of our furnishings: filing cabinets from *Esquire*'s former headquarters, their drawers still labeled "Man At His Best" and "Women We Love." The conference table too big for our conference room, but irresistible when the man at the used furniture shop in the basement of Calvary-St. George's Episcopal Church told me it had belonged to Ivan Boesky. In the hectic days leading up to the auction, after every media company that pursued us in 1990 had turned us down in 1991, I got one last call. It was Michael Milken's public relations man. Would we be interested in letting Mrs. Milken run the magazine while Mr. Milken was in prison?



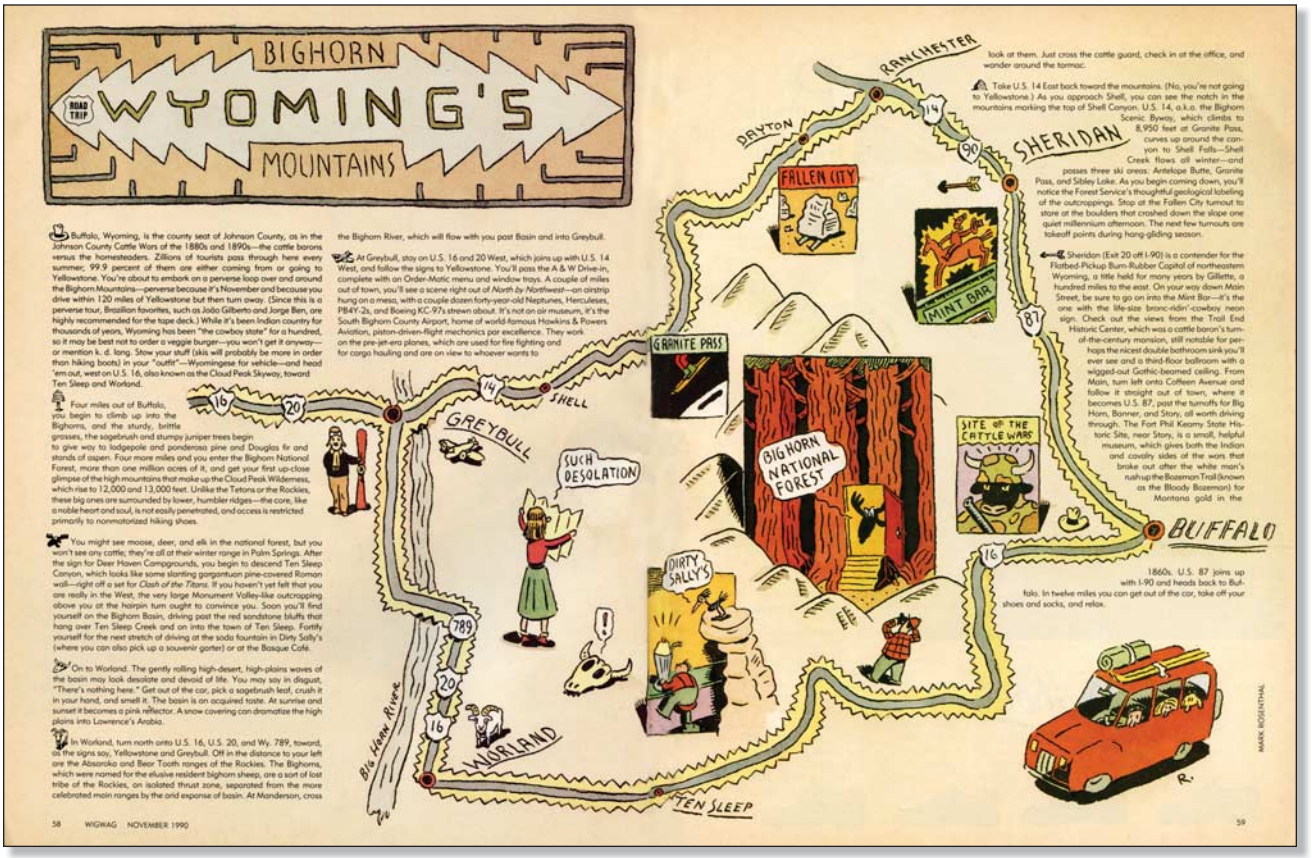
The premiere cover, featuring Wigwag *man*

Lex's career up to this point had been enviable, magnificent—if only he could have enjoyed it more. Born to a wealthy, artsy, philanthropic family in Englewood, New Jersey, he had made a mark at Harvard by founding an undergraduate magazine, which brought him to the notice of William Shawn, the editor of the *New Yorker*, who hired him. But Lex left his junior editorial job after two years to attend Yale Law School. There he had the idea of starting a new, national "literary" magazine (which is how the *New Yorker* was classified by an adoring advertising industry), but one less arch, more rooted, written for the young woman who lives in Dubuque, or yearns to. Lex's dream took fire when Si Newhouse, whose Condé Nast acquired the *New Yorker* in 1985, fired Shawn in 1987. The magazine's editorial staff regarded this as a betrayal, and some who were young and had little to lose joined Lex's project. After a test issue of *Wigwag* in early 1988, Lex found an investor and hired me as publisher, to start January 1989.

I handed Lex that final deposit slip two years later. We shook hands, and I left. Lex would never speak to me again. Not a rare experience in my life; much rarer was never to have encountered him again in the next 20 years in the media business in New York. It wasn't personal. Lex kept to a minimum contact with *Wigwag* people he liked, even loved. When I met those to whom he was closest, I would ask them about Lex; the reply was often, "I was going to ask *you* that." The brilliant entrepreneurial young editors of the '80s and '90s kept bobbing up again, and still do. Adam Moss, Graydon Carter, Terry McDonell, Dan Okrent, Jane Pratt, the late Peter Kaplan—I had the privilege of seeing them all in the midst of various humbling experiences, all of them crystallized in an ineradicable memory: Tina Brown, post her editorship of the *New Yorker*, struggling to open the lobby door of an anonymous 56th Street office building with an armful of presentations for her next project, *Talk* magazine—all by herself. Barely reaching the door in time to help her, I murmured, "Miss Brown, you shouldn't have to do this."

Not Lex. He would not sacrifice to the media gods. He seemed to me to have determined that *Wigwag*

Sam Schulman, a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard, *was publisher of* Wigwag.



A characteristically illustrated Wigwag *spread*

magazine would not only remain his greatest achievement, but would entomb his ambition and the greater part of his immense talent.

In mid-September 1989, Lex and I were alone in his office in *Wigwag*'s second-floor space on Spring Street in SoHo, waiting for the first box of printed issues of the magazine: the October 1989 issue. Lex grimaced and jammed a pencil into the powerful electric pencil sharpener on his desk, as he did at moments of stress. "Sam," he said, simply, "do you think we'll be famous?" Even though it had been a full year since Lex hired me, it was still surprising to hear his high, light, musical voice coming out of a body that was stout in a prewar 20th-century manner. Lex was being kind by including me in his anticipation of fame, because he did not particularly like me.

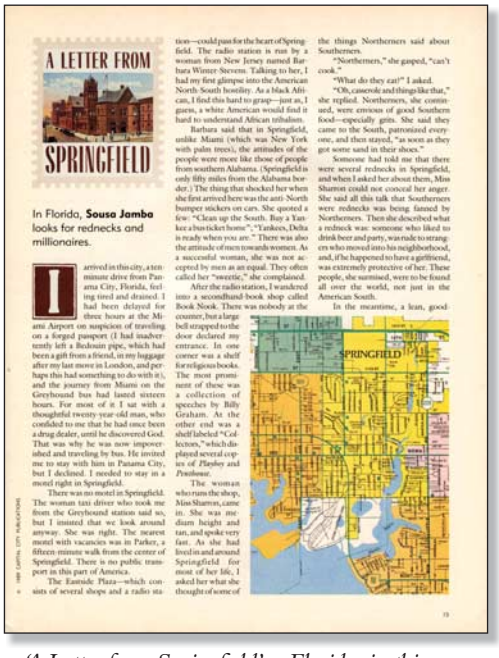
Wigwag would make him, fleetingly, famous. A month after that meeting, I went into the office on the Sunday after the great San Francisco earthquake of Tuesday, October 17. I needed to catch up after being stuck on the West Coast all week on an abortive sales trip that was to include a late SFO dinner on Tuesday. I unlocked the office and panicked; but it wasn't vandalism. It was a vast pile of curled-up heat-sensitive paper at the foot of our fax machine. The offerings were a jumbo roll-full of personal accounts of the earthquake experience sent to us by a score or so of the first 50,000 *Wigwag* subscribers out of an eventual 200,000. They had seen the first issue, and already it felt natural to them to share what they saw and felt with Lex's magazine.

Even before we mailed that debut issue, Lex and *Wigwag* were celebrated. We were the emblem of the "kinder, gentler" era that—much to Lex's annoyance—the George H.W. Bush campaign had ushered in. To give one example of many: Perhaps the very day Lex and I were talking, the September 15, 1989, *Detroit Free Press* hit the street—a paper read by the men and women who placed automotive advertisements in slick magazines (a breed not yet extinct). The front page of its feature section welcomed the kinder, gentler '90s. The age of excess was over: In the coming decade, wrote Robin Givhan and J. Tanasychuk,

> we'll want less glitz and more substance. . . . We won't be reading smarmy, cynical *Vanity Fair* and *Spy* magazines. Instead, . . . we'll be able to turn to *Wigwag*, a magazine that its editor, Alexander Kaplen, calls a charming picture of American life. . . . In the first issue we can downscale to a story about a day at Weight Watchers in Astoria, NY,

and an engaging piece on sea otters. Kaplen hopes to revel in the ordinary a la Garrison Keillor and Charles Kuralt. "I'm 29 and I grew up in the '70s and it was a really dispiriting decade for many people," he says. "There was one national sadness after another and I think it took its toll, and I think a lot of people lost a sense of what it meant to have a good time, to enjoy things, to appreciate things without a great deal of cynicism."

At the bottom of the page there were two archetypal '90s images of sincerity and humility. On the left, a Gap ad for a $9.50 T-shirt—modeled by Veruschka. On the right, the cover of the first issue of *Wigwag*. The cover image, painted by our art director Paul Davis, one of the 20th century's greatest American designers and illustrators, was *Wigwag*'s answer to the *New Yorker*'s Regency dandy, Eustace Tilley, who every February 21 reappears on the cover pretending to inspect a butterfly through an elegantly deployed monocle. For *Wigwag*, Paul painted an uninteresting, rather inattentive man in a crumpled fedora and a dull suit, walking his nondescript dog though a beautiful park. Like his rival, the *Wigwag* man is monocular: You can see only one of his eyes, but it is indifferent to the glorious autumn landscape. Something else—perhaps one of the great national sadnesses of the '70s—flashes upon our man's inward eye. The outward figure of our counter-Tilley *Wigwag* man, Paul Davis later confessed, he modeled on me, inspired by my then-fedora (soon to be destroyed by my then-dog).



A LETTER FROM SPRINGFIELD

In Florida, **Sousa Jamba** looks for rednecks and millionaires.

I arrived in this city, a ten-minute drive from Panama City, Florida, feeling tired and drained. I had been delayed for three hours at the Miami Airport on suspicion of traveling on a forged passport (I had inadvertently left a Bedouin pipe, which had been a gift from a friend, in my luggage after my last move in London, and perhaps this had something to do with it), and the journey from Miami on the Greyhound bus had lasted sixteen hours. For most of it I sat with a thoughtful twenty-year-old man, who confided to me that he had once been a drug dealer, until he discovered God. That was why he was now impoverished and traveling by bus. He invited me to stay with him in Panama City, but I declined. I needed to stay in a motel right in Springfield.

There was no motel in Springfield. The woman taxi driver who took me from the Greyhound station said so, but I insisted that we look around anyway. She was right. The nearest motel with vacancies was in Parker, a fifteen-minute walk from the center of Springfield. There is no public transport in this part of America.

The Eastside Plaza—which consists of several shops and a radio station—could pass for the heart of Springfield. The radio station is run by a woman from New Jersey named Barbara Winter-Stevens. Talking to her, I had my first glimpse into the American North South hostility. As a black African, I find this hard to grasp—just as, I guess, a white American would find it hard to understand African tribalism.

Barbara said that in Springfield, unlike Miami (which was New York with palm trees), the attitudes of the people were more like those of people from southern Alabama. (Springfield is only fifty miles from the Alabama border.) The thing that shocked her when she first arrived here was the anti-North bumper stickers on cars. She quoted a few: "Clean up the South. Buy a Yankee a truckload home", "Yankees, Delta is ready when you are." There was also the attitude of men towards women. As a successful woman, she was not accepted by men as an equal. They often called her "sweetie," she complained.

After the radio station, I wandered into a secondhand-book shop called Book Nook. There was nobody at the counter, but a large bell strapped to the door declared my entrance. In one corner was a shelf for religious books. The most prominent of these was a collection of speeches by Billy Graham. At the other end was a shelf labeled "Collectors," which displayed several copies of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*.

The woman who runs the shop, Miss Sharron, came in. She was medium height and tan, and spoke very fast. As she had lived in and around Springfield for most of her life, I asked her what she thought of some of the things Northerners said about Southerners.

"Northerners," she gasped, "can't cook."

"What do they eat?" I asked.

"Oh, casserole and things like that," she replied. Northerners, she continued, were envious of good Southern food—especially grits. She said they came to the South, patronized everyone, and then stayed, "as soon as they got some sand in their shoes."

Someone had told me that there were several rednecks in Springfield, and when I asked her about them, Miss Sharron could not conceal her anger. She said all this talk that Southerners were rednecks was being fanned by Northerners. Then she described what a redneck was: someone who liked to drink beer and party, was rude to strangers who moved into his neighborhood, and, if he happened to have a girlfriend, was extremely protective of her. These people, she surmised, were to be found all over the world, not just in the American South.

In the meantime, a lean, good-

'A Letter from Springfield'—Florida, in this case

Wigwag man was a good picture of what Lex needed me to do for his magazine: to be its sole non-*New Yorker* emissary to the non-*New Yorker* universe of potential readers and advertisers, printers, lenders, and future owners. I pitched myself to Lex and his editors in his Horatio Street apartment, which was decorated with such sophistication that I thought it must be his parents' and would have had a grand view of the sunset on the Hudson had it not been on the second floor. I told them that the *New Yorker* was the greatest repository of publishing talent and wisdom in the country. But no one at the *New Yorker* could even remember a time when a subscription had to be sold to a reader, not just renewed. None knew how to plead for a last-minute ad page in an unknown magazine: Its salespeople were skilled instead in gentle ways of breaking the news to advertisers that no more space was available. *New Yorker* folk did not know how to ask for credit, or good will, or investment, or mercy. I did. I got the job and, apart from a few people I hired, was the only non-*New Yorker* alumnus on the staff. Paul Davis was right to replace Eustace Tilley with an image of a Willy Loman who would do his best to make the magazine not just liked but well liked.

Being liked was not Lex's problem: He was loved, and deserved to be, because he was endlessly lovable. He was also capable of jamming his charm into his pencil sharpener until there was nothing left of it. He was the most determined speaker of the word "no" I have ever known. So in order to move each issue forward, he had occasionally to be managed, and his editors, collectively if not always individually, were able to do so. I saw him once weeping with laughter amidst them, when they had evidently teased and shamed him out of some pointless obstinacy. He pleaded with them to stop: "Remember, I can dish it out," he said, giggling, "but I can't take it!"

Lex loved *Wigwag* and, more, the world he wanted *Wigwag* to present: tender, small-scale, poignant, precise, contingent, as pointillist as Paul Davis's painting. He was endlessly inventive in finding ways to convey his view of the world to his readers, and ferocious in his struggle to drive his editors to enlist writers and illustrators into a magazine they feared no one would read. His ambition was not to create a media platform but a home. "'Wigwag' is an American word that means 'to signal someone home,'" he wrote in the first issue. "The word isn't made up, and the name's no accident. This magazine has a lot to do with home—who lives where, what it's like, what they do there." Instead of "Talk of the Town," Wigwag opened with "Letters from Home": a chorus of diaries written by writers living in Dripping Springs, Texas, Baltimore, Lewisburg, W.Va., Bangor, Maine. Our readers supplied a last-page "Map": a personal diagram of where they were in their lives. The best was a diagram and list of private names for "The Dogs of Westhampton, Mass." Every issue had a longer "Letter from Springfield": a chronicle of the Angolan writer Sousa Jamba's visits to the various Springfields around the country (almost every state has one), where he frequently found himself both lost and surprised to the point of tears by the warmth with which Springfielders

welcomed him. Feature stories smiled at the good—*Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood*'s Fred Rogers—and frowned at the bad—Dan and Marilyn Quayle's pastor.

Lex had a personal relationship with his readers that was easier for him, perhaps, than the relationships he had with his colleagues, who mostly adored him unrequitedly. In his shyness, he never permitted us to have the fashionable Christmas party that I envisioned, which might have enhanced the magazine commercially and me socially. But he gleefully embraced a plan that would award a unique prize: *Wigwag*'s editor would arrive at a lucky subscriber's house and cook a holiday dinner for his hosts. It would be a reenactment of *Christmas in Connecticut* (1945) with Lex as both Sydney Greenstreet, a stout, distinguished New York magazine editor, and S.Z. "Cuddles" Sakall, a stout, *gemütlich* New York neighborhood chef. He loved it and spent hours planning it.

Wigwag's office was suffused with nostalgia for the world of movies, and for the great days of the *New Yorker*, which ended, as far as we were concerned, when Si Newhouse fired Mr. Shawn, as he was always referred to in the office. Lex liked to affect the mannerisms of the *New Yorker*'s founding editor, Harold Ross, but put to his own use. He would occasionally moan, as Ross did, that "nobody tells me anything," except that what Lex meant, I thought, was that he hoped nobody would tell him anything with which he might have to disagree. He would say "I haven't got time for this!" precisely the same way that Ross, in James Thurber's account, would say it: "impatiently, to anyone—doctor, lawyer, tax man—who interrupted, even momentarily, the stream of his dedicated energy" and his attention to his magazine. Lex expected these allusions to be recognized; but another imitation of a venerable *New Yorker* tradition was an affliction. He shared with his mentor Mr. Shawn a terrible fear of elevators. I learned of it when I started searching for office space for the magazine in prerecession 1989. He said to me casually, "Oh, Sam, don't look at anything any higher than the third floor. I like to walk up to my office" (a remarkable curtailment of space possibilities in Manhattan). Only once in our time together did I have to insist he ride an elevator: to meet the men behind the Absolut Vodka ad campaign. When the doors closed on us in the elevator car, alone save a few puzzled ad people—well, I've never known a man to hold my hand and fight back tears with more dignity or courage.

Lex kept the magazine pages themselves free of insider *New Yorker* nostalgia. Nevertheless, his magazine was nostalgic through and through, not for the glorious past but for the glorious present. To every subject the magazine touched he gave, if he could, a sense of evanescence. If, like the '90s, *Wigwag* was about coming home, then home was something that could dissolve in an instant, like Brigadoon, or the town of Bedford Falls, whose existence rested on the frail shoulders of Jimmy Stewart's George Bailey in *It's a Wonderful Life*. *Wigwag* was Lex's home, and he assumed it was that for all of us who worked for him. He also assumed that when *Wigwag* died—and he was certain it would die—something would die for all of us.

Once he shocked me with the hardness of his vision. We were still in the early confident days of looking for money. I noticed some grumpiness among the staff, 90 percent of whom were editors, since I served as publisher, circulation director, ad marketing director, publicity director, and CFO. I asked Lex if anything was up. "No," he said, "it's just the normal attitude of people who know they have the best job they'll ever have in their lives."

Yet for none of us was *Wigwag* the greatest thing we were to do or the best job we would ever have (with perhaps one exception: me). Managing and assistant editors Nancy Holyoke and Harriet Brown lit out to Wisconsin to start a magazine and book publishing empire for Pleasant Rowland, the founder of the American Girl dolls. Lex's editors helped make Pleasant a near-billionaire. Harriet's book on anorexia, *Brave Girl Eating*, has helped thousands of families—maybe yours. You must read the wonderful books—on Christian Science and English usage—by Caroline Fraser and Mary Norris; you have probably read Robert F. Worth's dispatches from the war in the Middle East. Evan Cornog is now Hofstra's J-school dean. And as for *Wigwag*, its use of illustration, color, and type has transmigrated, as souls are meant to do, to the media world at large—not least to the *New Yorker*.

Lex, who wrongly imagined a diminished fate for his most talented people, resolutely sought one out for himself. He spent much of his time on philanthropy: Good work, but the nonprofits Lex helped would not have collapsed, like Bedford Falls or *Wigwag*, without the support of an irreplaceable George Bailey. For a time he served as a strategic planning committee executive at Time Inc. A *Wigwag*-era predecessor on that committee described her job during the recession of '91 as "saying no to Sam Schulman [and *Wigwag*]." I hope Lex had more fun.

Even after his early death at 59, Harold Ross retained his hold on the *New Yorker*. Thurber's *The Years with Ross* describes how it felt: "Ross is still all over the place for many of us, vitally stalking the corridors of our lives, disturbed and disturbing, fretting, stimulating, more evident in death than the living presence of ordinary men." For decades I've hoped that Lex would resume disturbing, fretting, and stimulating us or some successor to us, as he did for a time that none of us expected to pass so quickly, or to echo so faintly. ♦

Judy Garland sings 'The Man That Got Away' in A Star Is Born *(1954).*

His Shining Hour

The maestro of the Great American Songbook. BY TERRY TEACHOUT

Songwriters are the unknown soldiers of popular music. A few, like Irving Berlin and George Gershwin, have won lasting fame, but more often than not they labor in the shadows. Unless a songwriter has a parallel career as a performer, as did Hoagy Carmichael and Johnny Mercer, he does his job behind the scenes and never takes a bow. This was especially true of the songwriters of the 1930s and '40s who worked in Hollywood. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart got star billing on Broadway, but no sooner did they cross the Rockies than they became well-paid craftsmen who did as they were told. As for those songwriters who specialized in writing for films, even the best of them were considered fungible by the tone-deaf moguls for whom they churned out three-minute masterpieces on company time. Everybody knows "Blues in the Night" and "Over the Rainbow," but how many people can tell you who made those classic movie songs hummable?

The Man That Got Away
The Life and Songs of Harold Arlen
by Walter Rimler
Illinois, 248 pp., $29.95

The answer, of course, is Harold Arlen, and among musicians and connoisseurs, he is universally regarded as one of the half-dozen greatest composers from the golden age of American popular song—*the* greatest, according to Irving Berlin, who said that "Harold's best is the best." George Gershwin, whose ego was more than usually well developed, called him "the most original of all of us." Nor was that high opinion limited to songwriters of Arlen's own generation: His songs are also admired by Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, and Donald Fagen (who mentions "an Arlen tune" in the lyrics

WARNER BROS. / GETTY

Terry Teachout, drama critic of the Wall Street Journal *and critic-at-large of* Commentary, *is the biographer of Louis Armstrong, George Balanchine, Duke Ellington, and H.L. Mencken. His first play,* Satchmo at the Waldorf, *ran off Broadway in 2014 and is being produced this month by Chicago's Court Theatre and San Francisco's American Conservatory Theater.*

of "Morph the Cat," in which he catalogues the classy delights of Manhattan life). Yet Arlen was and is so little known outside the profession that when, in 1959, Moss Hart suggested to Edna Ferber that she approach Arlen about writing the score for a stage version of her novel *Saratoga Trunk*, she replied, "Who? What's he done? What are his credits? Never heard of him."

In one sense Arlen's credits *are* lackluster. None of his Broadway shows has ever been successfully revived, and except for *The Wizard of Oz*, the films on which he worked were, for the most part, unmemorable. And while he was also a highly accomplished singer who recorded a fair number of his finest songs—no one ever sang "Ill Wind" better—the timbre of his plaintive, throaty tenor voice was not quite distinctive enough to bring him the kind of mass popularity that Carmichael and Mercer had during their salad days.

But . . . the songs! To catalogue them is to be reminded of what made the golden age of American popular song golden, and to be struck by how many of them were performed and recorded to indelible effect by the very best pop and jazz singers of the 20th century. Think, just for openers, of Fred Astaire's "My Shining Hour," Ray Charles's "Come Rain or Come Shine," Nat Cole's "It's Only a Paper Moon," Bing Crosby's "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive," Judy Garland's "The Man That Got Away," Lena Horne's "Stormy Weather," Peggy Lee's "Happiness Is Just a Thing Called Joe," Frank Sinatra's "One for My Baby (And One More for the Road)," and Mel Tormé's "When the Sun Comes Out." Of such records is an era made.

Arlen and his songs have been written about intelligently and in exhaustive detail by Edward Jablonski, who knew him well and whose *Harold Arlen: Rhythms, Rainbows, and Blues* (1996) is a somewhat pedestrian but nonetheless solid account of his uncommonly sad life. Yet there is still room for a short, stylish book aimed at general audiences, and Walter Rimler's *The Man That Got Away: The Life and Songs of Harold Arlen* fills that bill as well as it could possibly be filled. The author, whose previous books include a Gershwin biography, steers clear of the grating solecisms with which popular books about music are too often crammed, and while he is inevitably a bit unspecific about musical matters, he offers pithy and readable accounts of Arlen's personal and professional lives. If you want to know what Harold Arlen was all about, you'll find it here.

GABRIEL HACKETT / GETTY

Harold Arlen (1965)

Born Hyman Arluck in 1905, Arlen was the son of a Yiddish-speaking Orthodox cantor from Buffalo, and the course of his life was not greatly dissimilar to the plot of *The Jazz Singer*, save for the last cruel twist. He discovered jazz as a teenager, dropped out of high school to lead a band, wrote songs for Duke Ellington and arrangements for Fletcher Henderson, changed his name, and married a chorus girl named Anya Taranda who was neither Jewish nor—as it turned out—sane.

Arlen's unhappy marriage was the defining fact of his offstage life. Not only did his parents find it impossible to accept that he had married a gentile, but Anya's mood swings, which became so pronounced over time that she finally had to be institutionalized, were emotionally devastating. A devoted husband, Arlen was a quiet, gentle man who was unwilling to walk away from her—he seems never to have been romantically involved with any other woman—but found her protracted suffering all but impossible to bear. Fortunately for him, he was able to escape into his art, which was enriched both by his personal heartbreak and by his youthful immersion in jazz.

Arlen was one of the only major songwriters to start out as a working jazz musician, and it is the combination of blues-inflected melody with the Hebraic cantillation of his father's synagogue singing that gave shape and definition to his composing language. He liked to write long, twisty, seemingly improvised tunes (he called them "tapeworms") that broke free from the blocky symmetries of 32-bar-chorus song style, and even when those tunes were free of the piquant "blue" notes with which "Blues in the Night" and "Stormy Weather" are flavored, they drew upon a well of emotion that is deeper than that of any other popular songwriter of his generation. Sometimes Arlen's tunes were as warm and hopeful as "Over the Rainbow," and he was also capable of writing with the aria-like purity of "Last Night When We Were Young" and "My Shining Hour." Just as often, though, he partook of the despair to which Bob Dylan referred when he spoke in *Chronicles*, his 2004 autobiography, of "the lonely intense world of Harold Arlen."

Though Arlen collaborated to fine effect with a number of accomplished lyricists—most famously Ira Gershwin, Yip Harburg, and Ted Koehler—it was when he started working with Johnny Mercer in 1941 that he truly found himself as a composer. Not only was Mercer as much a product of jazz and

the blues as Arlen, but he was himself an intensely romantic, emotionally unstable man, an alcoholic trapped in a loveless marriage who drank not to quell his demons but to unleash them. The two men bonded at once and promptly started churning out one hit after another: "Blues in the Night" and "This Time the Dream's on Me" in 1941, "Hit the Road to Dreamland" and "That Old Black Magic" in 1942, "My Shining Hour" and "One for My Baby" in 1943, "Ac-cent-tchu-ate the Positive" in 1944, "Out of This World" in 1945, "Come Rain or Come Shine" in 1946. They also wrote "I Wonder What Became of Me," a shockingly black 1946 saloon song that made Stephen Sondheim's list of "songs I wish I'd written (at least in part)," and though it never made the charts, it speaks eloquently of their shared sorrows: *I can't be gay, / For along the way / Something went astray, / And I can't explain, / It's the same champagne, / It's a sight to see, / But I wonder what became of me*.

For all their singular gifts, neither Arlen nor Mercer managed to write a first-rate Broadway musical, whether together or separately. Not only was Arlen hopelessly untheatrical—he had no plot sense whatsoever—but he was, like Mercer, a singer-songwriter *avant la lettre* who wrote songs of himself, not of others. Rimler puts it well when he observes, "[E]ven when Arlen and Mercer put a character's name into a song, they didn't venture outside themselves." Hence they found it all but impossible to produce the plot-propelling, vividly characterized songs that are the stuff of musical comedy. This is why Arlen is obscure and Rodgers and Hammerstein celebrated, and now that we are separated from their shared heyday by the half-century-long rise and fall of rock 'n' roll, it is even less likely that he will ever become a household name. But I have no doubt whatsoever that the songs will last, and that every time a jilted lover listens to Frank Sinatra sing *It's quarter to three, / There's no one in the place except you and me*, he will pay silent tribute—knowingly or not—to the genius of Harold Arlen. ♦

B&A

The Putin Challenge

A sobering assessment of post-Soviet Russia.

BY JOHN R. BOLTON

ALEXEY SAZONOV / AFP / GETTY

Garry Kasparov speaking in Moscow (2010)

During his traditional year-end press conference in Moscow, Vladimir Putin delighted in toying with America's political process by touting Donald Trump as the leading candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. Less clear was whether Putin was delivering kudos or lumps of coal to the Trump campaign: Was this a burst of candor from an envious fellow politician (and friend of oligarchs), or an exercise in Soviet-style *maskirovka*, intended to achieve a more devious result? Or both?

Had anyone asked Garry Kasparov's assessment of Putin's pre-Christmas gambit, it would have been decidedly negative. Kasparov was an active participant in the tumultuous era that opened with the Warsaw Pact collapsing, followed by the collapse of the Soviet Union itself, and ending with Putin's neo-authoritarian regime back in control of the Kremlin. Over a mere 15-year period, Russia emerged from autocracy, enjoyed a chaotic decade trying to establish representative government—and then lapsed back into authoritarianism.

Winter Is Coming tells how both Russia's domestic ferment and its foreign policy affected (and were affected by) Western, particularly American, attitudes and actions. This is a richly complex story, well told, and illuminated by Kasparov's personal travails, which led ultimately to his self-imposed exile in the United States.

Winter Is Coming
Why Vladimir Putin and the Enemies of the Free World Must Be Stopped
by Garry Kasparov
PublicAffairs, 320 pp., $26.99

John R. Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 2005-06.

His narrative is a stark refutation of the Whig interpretation of history, in which mankind inexorably progresses toward greater heights. Russia's last quarter-century shows that there is no "arc of history," certainly not one that "bends" inevitably in any direction, President Obama's Oval Office rug notwithstanding. Those like Obama—on both left and right—who speak self-importantly about being "on the right side of history" should note Kasparov's observation about Russia: "You can often do just fine being on the wrong side of history if you are on the right side of a pipeline."

Correctly characterizing the 1990s as a decade of missed opportunities, Kasparov criticizes both the Russian reformers and foreign leaders who watched as Russia struggled, and ultimately failed, to emerge from the swamp left by communism. He is perhaps too hard on the former and too kind to the latter. When the Communist empire disintegrated, the world's libraries were not bulging with treatises explaining how to dismantle and replace its wretched economic system and strangling expanses of government power. Russia's reformers operated under a palpable sense of dread that, if they did not rapidly dismantle communism's political and economic fortresses, the dictatorship would reemerge.

By contrast, the West in the 1990s, especially the Clinton administration, reflected insufferable smugness about the "end of history" and the triumph of the so-called Washington Consensus. Inevitably, the Russian reformers made mistakes, but their fears were far more realistic than the West's blasé attitude that the Cold War's end meant that malevolence had disappeared worldwide, and that a "peace dividend" of reduced military expenditures would last—perhaps forever. Kasparov reminds us of the Clinton campaign's theme song, with its refrain "yesterday's gone, yesterday's gone."

Not quite.

The troubling lessons of Russia's recent history are not unique to Russia: The instability of states and regimes globally seems only to be increasing. Even countries that have experienced decades of quasi-democratic government may succumb to the totalitarian temptation, let alone those barely transitioned away from autocratic government. And rogue regimes such as Iran and North Korea play on the same gullibility Vladimir Putin knows so well, succeeding in equal measure, advancing their agendas while the West lounges benignly.

One of Kasparov's insights is that determined authoritarians can often turn the West's supposed economic leverage against it. Naïve policymakers, here and elsewhere, have argued endlessly that increased economic and cultural interaction will soften dictatorships. "In practice," Kasparov argues, "authoritarian states have abused this access and economic interdependency to spread their corruption and fuel repression at home." Consider the evidence: Has China's authoritarian government really changed that much since it opened economically to the West? How are the Castro brothers doing after Obama's capitulation to *their* preconditions for normalizing relations? And we will soon be able to ask Tehran's ayatollahs precisely the same questions.

When "engagement" proponents point to Cold War arms control diplomacy with the Soviets to prove we should not hesitate to negotiate with adversaries, they are essentially missing the key point. They exalt the putative benefits of a process (negotiation) over the substance at issue (e.g., the territorial integrity of Ukraine). Indeed, to Kasparov, the West's failed policies concerning Ukraine graphically illustrate how Putin uses our misperceptions to his advantage, already resulting in considerable danger to Ukraine and other former Soviet republics. Moscow has stolen Crimea's sovereignty from Kiev, with barely a hint from the White House of a modern version of Secretary Henry Stimson's 1932 doctrine of nonrecognition, which rejected Japan's seizure of Manchuria from China.

Kasparov rejects the notion that Ukraine legitimately falls into Moscow's sphere of influence, "as if 50 million Ukrainians should have no say in the matter." And he stresses that "the Russian military commanders . . . in the field are not fools. They are aware that NATO is watching and could blow them to bits in a moment." Yet Obama and European NATO members have shown virtually no inclination to train and equip Kiev's forces—even for more effective self-defense. Putin is daily exploiting this failure of will through his continued belligerence in Ukraine and his exploitation of "frozen conflicts" elsewhere in former Soviet lands, not to mention more distant satellites such as Syria's Assad regime.

Garry Kasparov has a final grave assessment that President Obama "crippled the power of the office he holds in many ways that will outlast his White House tenure for years." This pessimism is incontestably correct. Obama has voluntarily walked America and its allies away from countless geostrategic positions of strength, leading to chaos in the Middle East, with governments dissolving into spreading anarchy and terrorism; with Iranian and North Korean nuclear proliferation unchecked and even legitimized; with Russia and China on the move in Eastern Europe and Asia; with the resurgence of anti-American authoritarianism in the Western hemisphere; and with our defense budget's debilitating collapse.

These weaknesses will not snap back automatically on January 20, 2017. The real question for Americans is whether Obama's successor will be content to dwell among the ruins, managing America's decline, rather than reversing it and reducing the perils facing Washington and our allies. Right now, virtually all the Republican candidates are talking tough, particularly on terrorism. The real divide among them is whether they have the resolve and the stamina to struggle, in difficult straits, to reclaim and extend the high ground Obama has deserted. Measuring these leadership qualities is hard, and the candidates' skills in reciting staff-generated, preprogrammed speeches and talking points alone will tell us little.

Republican voters would be squandering their patrimony if they believe that last month's Las Vegas debate checked the box on national security issues. Quite the contrary; we have just begun the discussion, one that Hillary Clinton seems determined not to have at all. Americans must evaluate the candidates' characters, not just their eloquence, and how their thought processes work on national security. And while that broader evaluation is underway, the candidates could do a lot worse than reading Garry Kasparov while jetting between Iowa and New Hampshire. Indeed, winter is here. ♦

B&A

Gore Vidal, Anyone?

The dwindling shadow of a literary celebrity.

BY DANNY HEITMAN

Since Gore Vidal died at age 86 in 2012, the passage of time has invited the question of how—or if—he'll be remembered in popular culture.

Vidal wrote more than two dozen novels, two well-received Broadway plays, a number of screenplays, works of memoir, and countless essays on literature and politics. But he seems to abide most vividly on YouTube, a venue best known for cat videos, home movies, and smartphone clips of teenagers singing karaoke.

Vidal's online claim to fame rests in archival footage of a 1968 ABC television debate with William F. Buckley Jr., where they tangled about the Vietnam war. Vidal, a staunch opponent of the war, called Buckley a "crypto-Nazi." Buckley, who supported U.S. military involvement in southeast Asia, called Vidal a "queer" and threatened to "sock" him—a punch that might have been carried out if Buckley hadn't felt compromised by a recent injury to his collarbone. The debate appeared to anticipate the coarsely confrontational sensibility of reality TV, which is why, one gathers, it endures in an eerie half-life in cyberspace. Google Gore Vidal, and his brawl with Buckley quickly surfaces among his greatest hits.

Danny Heitman, a columnist for the Advocate *in Baton Rouge, is the author of* A Summer of Birds: John James Audubon at Oakley House.

Empire of Self
A Life of Gore Vidal
by Jay Parini
Doubleday, 480 pp., $35

Suffice it to say that neither man fared well in the exchange. For Buckley, who died in 2008 at age 82, the episode was a rare lapse in a life defined by patrician gentility. He routinely invited liberals to his "Firing Line" public affairs show on PBS, where the talk proved spirited but genial. Buckley counted John Kenneth Galbraith and Norman Mailer, whose politics were reliably leftish, among his close friends. Vidal's part in the dustup with Buckley, on the other hand, was standard operating procedure—the reflexive response of a man governed by a pattern of pathological extremes. Or so we're reminded by *Empire of Self*, Jay Parini's charitable if ultimately unflattering account of Vidal's life and work.

Parini, an accomplished poet, novelist, and biographer, began a friendship with Vidal in the 1980s when they were both living in Italy. "It would be fair to say, in a crude way, that I was looking for a father, and he seemed in search of a son," he writes. "We had a good deal in common, including a passion for liberal politics, American history, and books." Vidal asked Parini to write his biography, a job he agreed to do only if it could be published after Vidal's death. Otherwise, "he would try to control what I wrote at every turn, driving both of us insane," Parini tells readers.

Parini's postmortem comes across as an affectionate but earnest stab at the truth about Vidal. It doesn't seem, like Paul Theroux's controversial biography of V.S. Naipaul, to be an attempt at score-settling by an apprentice grown resentful of his old mentor. Parini's tone is more generous, as if he's amiably tolerating a corrosively crazy uncle who's come for Thanksgiving, his presence bearable because he brings good wine and even better stories. "He was usually kind to me, and to others in his surprisingly discrete circle of friends," writes Parini. "He listened to my ideas for books and essays carefully, eager to respond in useful ways." Parini also notes that Vidal was typically nice to the biographer's family and always picked up the tab at restaurants.

Such testimonials don't square with the gist of *Empire of Self*, which often resembles a running dossier of dyspepsia, drunkenness, dissolution, and diatribe. To get some measure of the darkness shadowing Vidal's inner life, try a game of reading roulette with this biography, opening the book to any page to see if you can land on a passage in which Vidal is *not* acting the cad. Here's page 113, where he writes to a friend about his budding career penning television scripts, admitting that "I am treacherous in all things; I sign contracts I have no intention of fulfilling." The finger flips by chance to page 285, where Vidal, hired to front a breezy TV travelogue on Venice, decides it's a perfect forum for denouncing Ronald Reagan's policies toward the Soviet Union. On page 325, we find Vidal ditching longtime friend Jason Epstein because the usually supportive editor disliked Vidal's moribund lampoon of Christianity, *Live from Golgotha* (1992).

A more systematic reading of *Empire of Self* suggests that Vidal drank too much, loved too little, and talked all the time. He seemed incapable of an unexpressed thought, even if it had yet to form into a lucid idea. He and his companion, Howard Austen,

were together some five decades; but the great love of Gore Vidal's life was obviously Gore Vidal, hence the title of Parini's book. "If he could be petty and difficult, that was part of his total being," Parini observes in a nonjudgmental, New Age formulation that dodges the moral consequences of Vidal's character.

> He was an alcoholic, no doubt. And he had lacked the kind of mother-love that might have encouraged a sensitive young child to grow into a complete and balanced human being. His sexuality certainly complicated his life, as he came of age well before being gay was something one could accept without difficulty.

Vidal assumed that American civic life was as self-serving as he was, which is why his historical fiction, a big part of his literary production, offers such a jaundiced window on the national past. *Burr* (1973), his fictional account of the republic's early days, casts George Washington as a hapless general and shrewd opportunist and Thomas Jefferson as a mediocre inventor lacking in ideals. *Lincoln* (1984), Vidal's speculation on Honest Abe, is equally sardonic. If Vidal had gotten around to novelizing the life of Mother Teresa, she'd no doubt have come off as a sanctimonious schemer angling for a book deal.

Among members of the cultural elite who equate cynicism with sophistication, Vidal was often celebrated as a deep intellectual. He was a darling of Hollywood and a frequent contributor to *Esquire* and the *New York Review of Books*. "When Johnny Carson, Merv Griffin, David Susskind, or anyone associated with the BBC called," Parini writes, "he leaped to his feet, put on the mask of Celebrity Author, and stepped out smiling and waving to the audience."

Vidal grew up in Washington, D.C., the son of a troubled marriage that relegated him largely to the care of his maternal grandfather, a populist senator from Oklahoma. Those origins shaped Vidal's politics, a peculiar blend of cornpone progressivism and crackpot conspiracy theories—William Jennings Bryan by way of Oliver Stone. He believed that Franklin Roosevelt facilitated the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in order to ease American entry into World War II. He tried to implicate George W. Bush in similar allegations of skullduggery in the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. As he aged, Vidal's political views became even more depraved:

Gore Vidal (2011)

He praised Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh as "a noble boy," arguing that his actions were morally equivalent to those of George Patton and Dwight Eisenhower.

In his previous biographies of Robert Frost and William Faulkner, Jay Parini profiled literary figures with their own demons, although they possessed forms of genius that inclined readers to overlook their flaws. This naturally leads to the question of Gore Vidal's lasting value. He was a jerk and a demagogue, but does the quality of his work make him still worth the trouble? Parini poses the issue this way: "Will anyone remember Gore Vidal in years to come? Will they read him? It's not possible, of course, to answer such questions with certainty."

Admirers have compared Vidal favorably to Oscar Wilde, another gay gadfly whose outsider status fed his literary ambition. But it's hard to see how *Myra Breckrinridge* (1968), Vidal's signature satirical novel about a transsexual afoot in Hollywood, will prove as memorable as Wilde's comic confections. Vidal's chief contribution to Wildean tradition seems more superficial: Like the flamboyant Oscar, he cultivated his celebrity as intently as a bonsai gardener, and like Wilde, he searched tirelessly for the zinger bon mot that tended to confuse cleverness with wisdom.

Parini correctly concludes that Vidal was best in his essays. His senator-grandfather, unable to consult his massive library because of blindness, recruited the young Vidal to read to him. Books became Vidal's refuge, and speaking them into life for his grandfather taught him that language, even when written down, lives most vitally as a form of talk. Vidal was a masterfully conversational writer, and *United States*, his 1993 doorstopper of an essay collection, shows a writer who, whatever his faults, was deeply conversant in the classics and could write beautifully about literature. What we get in Vidal's literary essays is something all too rare in the rest of his work—and indeed, in the rest of his life—a sense of unalloyed happiness. In reading, Vidal always seemed to reconnect with the innocence of discovery he'd first found among his grandfather's shelves.

For the most part, joy appeared to elude Gore Vidal, and Jay Parini suggests that, wherever his old friend now resides, he's probably frowning. "He told me to say what I saw whenever I wrote about him, not pulling my punches," he tells readers. "That is, of course, how he lived his life. I'd like to think he would appreciate my efforts, although I'm not looking forward to our meeting on the other side." ♦

BRIAN TO / FILMMAGIC

B&A

The Klan's All Here

Reality and myth in the Invisible Empire.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

'The Birth of a Nation' (1915)

Ku-Klux
The Birth of the Klan During Reconstruction
by Elaine Frantz Parsons
North Carolina, 400 pp., $34.95

It is Elaine Parsons's purpose in this timely book to measure the structure and impact of the "first" Ku Klux Klan, from its beginnings as an ex-Confederate officers' lark in middle Tennessee through its metastasis into a secretive and vicious force of murder, arson, and terror.

Despite the myth, the Klan was never centralized, and soon after its initial founding became less serviceable to the South's counterrevolutionaries as Northern fatigue with federal military enforcement of law and order set in. It is conventional history that a struggle between Abraham Lincoln and Congress for the privilege of directing the Civil War began early and persisted after Lincoln's death. Ultimately, congressional authority prevailed with the "Radical" Reconstruction, commencing in 1867-68—as in many political labels, the adjective began as an epithet.

The urge to punish the South for the sins of secession and war was powerful, and Andrew Johnson's inept attempt to implement Lincoln's lenient intentions—"Let 'em up easy," he had said—quickly faltered. Johnson's reconstruction plan brought familiar Confederate figures back to office around the South and unwelcome secessionists back to Washington. For dismayed Unionists, notably the "Radicals" who had warred with Lincoln to impose their own will and policy, it raised the question of who had actually won the war. Lincolnesque generosity did not thrive amid the "waving of the bloody shirt" intended to remind voters that the Democrats were (allegedly) the party of secession and war.

This is not merely orthodox history; it vividly evokes the turbulent setting in which the original Klan flourished, well into 1872, notwithstanding the imperial wizard's disbandment command. The original Kuklux—as it was named for the Greek word for "circle," *kuklos*—began with six former rebel officers in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1865, though several years passed before the idea caught fire, and in many places (especially in the upcountry South), took on a violent tinge.

The advent of a punitive militarily administered federal reconstruction policy generated its own reaction. Indeed, few occupied societies, from Poland under the Russo-Prussian partition to France under German rule after 1940, have submitted quietly and without violence. The former Confederacy was no exception. Federal military control from Washington was not foreign, unlike Nazi rule in Paris or 19th-century Russian tyranny in Warsaw. But thousands of young white Southern men, having fought a grinding war, possessed the training, bravado, and gall to make nuisances of themselves. Their turbulence tended to thwart the feeble stabs at political equality for the freed slaves embraced in the 13th and 14th Amendments. It was downhill from there until the stirrings of the "second reconstruction" of the 1950s and '60s, and after: the classic period of white supremacy in America.

If Radical Reconstruction and its disorders became the alpha of the post-Civil War counterrevolution, its omega arrived with the disputed presidential election of 1876, when intersectional and bipartisan wheeling and dealing handed the presidency to a former Union officer, Rutherford B. Hayes, in exchange for concessions to the South. Those concessions included the shutdown of military supervision of reconstruction throughout the former Confederacy—obviously one of the pivotal events of American history, although strangely understudied, even by well-versed students of our past.

Lacking visible reference to the 1877 settlement, *Ku-Klux* is without an

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

essential part of the larger story. In the presidential election of 1876—which the Democratic candidate Samuel J. Tilden may have won—the disputed electoral count went to the House of Representatives. Feverish efforts by both parties to control the electoral votes of three unreconstructed states (Florida, South Carolina, and Louisiana) stretched to the eve of the March inauguration day. The disputed electors were finally awarded to Hayes on the casting vote of a Supreme Court justice of GOP antecedents.

The promised concessions to the South were implicit but substantial. The 13th and 14th Amendments and their attendant "enforcement" acts, already enfeebled by Northern impatience with racial turbulence, became essentially dead letters, while Southern interests in transcontinental railroad routes and subsidies would be viewed with favor. The eminent rebels whose early reappearance had queered Johnson's reconstruction design could now raise their heads again.

A notable example was the appointment to the Supreme Court of Mississippian L.Q.C. Lamar, sometime Confederate emissary to St. Petersburg. Within two decades, that tribunal (though without Lamar) would ratify white supremacy in *Plessy* v. *Ferguson*, a precedent that stood all but unchallenged until 1954. The late C. Vann Woodward told the 1877 story in a masterwork of historical detection, *Reunion and Reaction*, essential reading (with other Woodward works, notably *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*) for those who would understand the ultimate yield of the terror and turbulence of Parsons's period.

Parsons gets good marks for diligent research; but *Ku-Klux* shows how easily the forest can be obscured by too much focus on the trees. Her book comes dressed as "cultural history," and it is certainly that—not least in its fashionable oddities, both of diction (e.g., "freedpeople" for "freedmen" and its omnipresent iteration of the words "discourse" and "narrative") and novelty of conception (a third of the text is devoted to two chapters on Klan activity in a single South Carolina county).

Another oddity is the author's use of an algorithm designed to show who may have "co-occurred" in Klan mischief in Union County, South Carolina. For want of identifiable connections, prominent people are connected by crisscrossed lines in a graphic visualization that resembles a ball of yarn. The aim is to detect who might have been associated with night-riding and its enablers. Since these are random connections that may be either innocent or nefarious, this would seem to be guilt by association in its literal form. One is reminded of the exotic "cliometrics" technique that briefly flourished in some history studies of the 1970s. An equally brief life can be predicted for this algorithm.

But however blemished by current fashion, a study of the Klan is useful these days, since echoes of the Invisible Empire continue to figure in the zeal to blot persons now disfavored from history. And the more we know about the original Klan, the better. Recently, in Chapel Hill, an agitation by a small but noisy student-faculty group led the University of North Carolina trustees to expunge the name of a distinguished 19th-century alumnus from the building that once housed the university's well-regarded history department. William Saunders allegedly had an unspecified connection with the original Klan, as did many thousands of others who in that troubled era never lifted a violent hand against their neighbors, black or white.

He is now banished into Orwell's memory hole, and pending a return of historical sanity, others are likely to follow. ♦

B&A

Israel's Laureate

The sacred and secular vision of Yehuda Amichai.

BY BENJAMIN BALINT

Yehuda Amichai (1924-2000) was not only Israel's most beloved contemporary poet and the most widely translated, but also the most profoundly persuaded, with some justice, that his own convulsions and commotions were allied with the country's at large. One of the poems included in this sumptuous collection, the largest to appear in English, begins with the line *When I was young, the country was young*. Another likens the poet's emotional topography to the rugged landscape. Love and hate, he writes, *have made my face resemble the face of this ruined land*.

Amichai was not born to this land. In the 1930s, at the age of 11, he and his family fled to Palestine from Würzburg in Nazi Germany. During World War II he served with the Palestinian brigade of the British Army, and later fought in Israel's war of independence, in the Sinai campaign, and the Yom Kippur war. Reading through this new anthology—judiciously selected from Amichai's 12 books of verse—it comes as no surprise to discover that his strong identification with the biography and geography of Israel runs so deep.

But why, in turn, do his fellow Israelis recognize themselves in his poems and welcome their author as somehow "representative"? To begin with, Amichai gave voice to the hybrid quality of Hebrew. On the one hand, placing himself squarely in the Hebraic tradition,

The Poetry of Yehuda Amichai
edited by Robert Alter
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 576 pp., $35

Benjamin Balint, a writer living in Jerusalem, is the author of Running Commentary *and the translator from the Hebrew of Hagit Grossman's forthcoming book of poetry,* Trembling in the City.

he drew from the rich allusiveness of an ancient language, every word of which, he said, "reverberates through the halls of Jewish history." The language of religion is "a geological layer that exists within me," he wrote, "although it's extremely compact, because it's so very early." Having been raised in an Orthodox home, the language of the prayers and the Bible naturally tied him to a larger patrimony. "Anyone who writes in Hebrew," he commented to Paul Celan (who visited Amichai in Jerusalem in 1969), "binds his own existence with that of the language and the people."

On the other hand, Amichai was alert to the ruptures of a language, as he put it, "torn from its sleep in the Bible," which had to awaken to the clamor of the everyday. With his first collection of poems, *Now and in Other Days* (1955), he grafted onto Israeli writing an utterly new plainness of speech. In contrast to the mannered, aloof decorum of his precursors, Amichai's more readable poems juxtapose the biblical, medieval, and liturgical registers against the colloquial and conversational Israeli vernacular, with all its irreverence and irony, its gravity and levity.

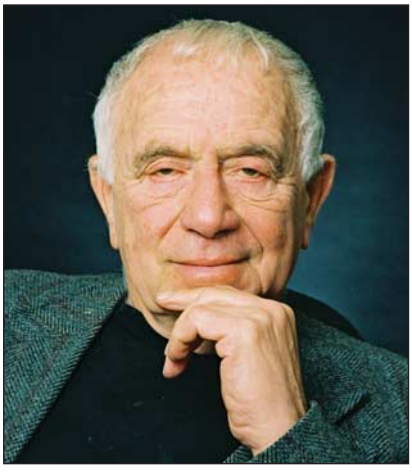
But the wideness of Amichai's appeal goes beyond his virtuosity in an old-new language. The best of the poems assembled here arrestingly juxtapose sacred with secular and are charged with the current between those two poles. A door of a house stands open *like a tomb / where someone was resurrected*. Jerusalem's air is saturated with prayers, like some sort of industrial pollution. And Jerusalem, Amichai's city and his great subject, is like a merry-go-round:

> *And instead of elephants and painted horses to ride,*
> *there are religions that go up and down and turn on their axis*
> *to the music of oily tunes from the houses of prayer.*

In another poem, Jerusalem's domes are like *blisters before bursting*, its minarets like *three-stage missiles*, its bells like *hand grenades*. Prayers intended for on high fall back to earth *like shrapnel from anti-aircraft shells / that have missed their target*. Here the profane illuminates the sacred, rather than the other way round.

> *God's hand is in the world*
> *like my mother's hand in the guts of the slaughtered chicken*
> *on Sabbath eve.*

Belief and blasphemy rally with each other in the percussions of Amichai's lines *like the sound of a ping-pong game*. In one poem he affirms that *I still show kindness to the god of my childhood*, but he professes himself weaned from his father's God. His poems display a keen feeling for tradition, but none for redemption. In a rare reference to the Shoah, he compares the tattoos on the forearms of survivors to *telephone numbers of God, / numbers that do not answer*.



Yehuda Amichai (1998)

Other poems likewise resist divine consolations:

> *When I banged my head on the door, I screamed,*
> *"My head, my head," and I screamed, "Door, door,"*
> *and I didn't scream "Mama" and I didn't scream "God."*
> *And I didn't prophesy a world at the End of Days*
> *where there will be no more heads and doors.*

It is here that eros enters in. Love substitutes for loss of God, as when the poet tells his lover:

> *You made it possible for me to live*
> *for a few months*
> *without needing religion or a world-view.*

Throughout, Amichai plagiarizes the language of tradition to subvert tradition. He rewrites biblical stories and parodies prayers. He turns the classical Hebrew prayer *We must praise the Lord of all* toward a woman: *But we must praise the loins of all: your lap*. He compares a night of lovemaking to the wresting match between Jacob and the angel. An embroidered skullcap reminds him of the pattern of his lover's underwear. He compares Torah scroll covers to *silken petticoats / and gowns of embroidered velvet / held up by narrow shoulder straps*.

Beyond the sacred and the secular, this collection shows us how, as Amichai's poetry matured, it began to work like a pestle, churning together opposite elements *for the sake of a little flavor, / a little fragrance*. The poems here increasingly oscillate between, and fuse together, desire and sadness, departure and return, remembering and forgetting, severity and compassion—above all, pain and joy. Amichai's poems repeatedly allude to *the precision of pain and the blurriness of joy*. In later years—as in his suite of 22 poems, *Open Closed Open* (2000)—they close in on the attempt to describe joy with pain's precision.

That attempt is deeply personal. "You are the poem you write," Celan told Amichai. Yet Amichai saw himself not as "representative" so much as a go-between, a channel of transmission. In one poem included here, the sight of an ancient aqueduct heightens his awareness that he and it do the same thing: *conduct and convey that which / is not ours / from one place to another*.

Amichai did not himself subscribe to Robert Frost's notion that poetry is what gets lost in translation. This collection shows how ably his translators have conducted the flow of his words from one language into another. The English versions here convey the inventiveness—and also the self-deprecation and droll humor—of the originals.

If translation involves the trick of carrying a poem into the afterlife without causing death, this invaluable volume has given us an Amichai, alive and vivid, who distilled his country's aspirations and contradictions into essential words. In his afterlife, Amichai continues to chart not just the disjunctions in Israel's language, but also the fissures in its uneasy sense of itself as a place caught between the mundane and the sublime. ♦

DAN PORGES / GETTY

B&A

Bad Day at Red Rock

An 'itsy-bitsy whodunit' with blood.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Two years ago, the writer-director Quentin Tarantino announced his next picture would be a Western called *The Hateful Eight*. He sent his script to a few people, and it was leaked. Tarantino announced that he would not be making *The Hateful Eight* after all because he was so furious. Then he reversed his decision and made *The Hateful Eight* anyway. Having now seen the product of his filmmaking labor, I can only wonder whether his initial impulse to kill the project truly resulted from his anger—or whether it was because some part of him knew the script was terrible and the movie he would make from it would be a train wreck.

Because the script is terrible. And *The Hateful Eight* is a train wreck.

Now, *The Hateful Eight* is an interesting train wreck—because whatever else one can say about Tarantino, and there are a great many uncomplimentary things one can say about him, he is incapable of being uninteresting. But *The Hateful Eight* is primarily of interest because it is so completely and thoroughly misconceived. Tarantino's script is, basically, what they used to call a drawing room mystery, in which a crime is committed, the characters are stuck together in one place, and the question of who committed the crime is played out.

It's set in Wyoming a decade or two after the end of the Civil War. Kurt Russell is in a stagecoach bringing a prisoner (Jennifer Jason Leigh) to the town of Red Rock to collect a $10,000 bounty. Samuel L. Jackson is a fellow bounty hunter, and he's stuck: A

The Hateful Eight
Directed by Quentin Tarantino

blizzard is on the way, his horse has died, and he is toting the corpses of three criminals to Red Rock to collect the reward. Russell gives him a lift, and they soon come upon the equally stranded Walton Goggins (late of the great TV series *Justified*), who's on his way to Red Rock to become its sheriff. They ride to a way station called Minnie's Haberdashery, where they come upon four men with whom they have to wait out the blizzard.

Just getting to this point in the tale takes more than an hour of screen time, which suggests the nature of the train wreck: *The Hateful Eight* is as distended a movie as you will ever see. The movie runs for three hours. Indeed, if you see it displayed in 70 millimeter in the manner Tarantino would prefer, it's more like 3 hours and 10 minutes—because the 70-millimeter version features an overture and an intermission, in the manner of *Gone with the Wind* and the David Lean movies of the 1960s.

Which is crazy. This is a small-scale story, set almost entirely indoors, that can only be effective if it generates a feeling of claustrophobia among its characters and the audience. But Tarantino has filmed it as though it were *Lawrence of Arabia*, which takes place across the sands of Araby, or *Doctor Zhivago*, against the vastness of Siberia. I suspect he gussied it up in this way because—again—somewhere inside him he knew he had produced a subpar screenplay of limited interest and decided to mask its deficiencies by lending the proceedings an epic grandeur they do not possess or deserve.

Gregory Peck once starred in an Alfred Hitchcock misfire called *The Paradine Case*, a simple story about a lawsuit that became afflicted with a similar case of elephantiasis due to the interference of its producer, David O. Selznick. Peck asked Selznick why he was mucking about with it so much. Selznick replied that he felt, with every picture, that he had to match or outdo his masterpiece, *Gone with the Wind*.

I suspect that Tarantino felt the same way about *The Hateful Eight*. It follows two astoundingly audacious pictures, *Inglourious Basterds* and *Django Unchained*, in which he dared to rewrite the history of World War II and reengineer the story of antebellum slavery. *The Hateful Eight* is really just an itsy-bitsy whodunit.

Even worse, it's a lousy whodunit. At one point, Russell tells Jackson that there's one other man at Minnie's Haberdashery who is in cahoots with Jennifer Jason Leigh and wants to rescue her. He's right, and this is the point at which the movie's plot kicks into gear. But how on earth does Russell come to know this? Despite moments when Tarantino literally rewinds the clock and tells the story from another angle, he doesn't revisit the moment of Russell's revelation. This is a colossal storytelling failure. Nor is the mystery's resolution in any way gripping or surprising. There's just a lot of blood and guts involved.

To the extent that *The Hateful Eight* is at all watchable, credit is due Tarantino's particular gift for creating outsize roles and handing them to hammy actors who tear into them like Tiny Tim on Christmas morning. Jackson, Russell, and Goggins bring so much concentrated energy and enthusiasm to the goings-on that they alleviate the tedium to a remarkable extent. I don't particularly like Quentin Tarantino; but I feel sorry for him, because I'll bet he knew he should have put this one back in the drawer and, instead, let his solipsism, arrogance, and pride get the better of him. ♦

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

"Jeb Bush Sprints to Escape Donald Trump's 'Low Energy' Label"
—New York Times headline, December 29, 2015

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Newly reenergized, Bush crashes through wall, screams 'Oh, yeah!'

THE JEB AWAKENS

Adds second exclamation point to name

BY MURRAY SLAUGHTER

DES MOINES — Like the giant Kool-Aid pitcher from those 1980s commercials, presidential candidate Jeb Bush came crashing through a wall of styrofoam bricks on the stage of the Des Moines Hampton Inn conference center. "Oh, yeah!" bellowed the former Florida governor amid the faux rubble. It was, to be sure, a different Jeb Bush than we have seen thus far.

Wearing a black T-shirt with the words "Straight Outta Coral Gables," the Republican contender vowed to "kick things up a notch," "raise the roof," and "take my game to the next level." He also promised, "This campaign will be off the hook!" and, pointing to a female supporter, said, "You go, girl!"

Bush campaign manager Danny "Dizzy" Diaz insists this time, the transformation is real. "It took a while for the governor to come out of his shell, but now, I gotta be honest with you, he is unstoppable. The governor will not quit. He is, in fact, too legit to quit."

Asked where he derives his newfound energy, Mr. Bush pointed to his diet, consisting primarily of Krispy Kremes dusted with Pixy Stix powder and 24-ounce cans of the energy drink Rockstar. "Frankly, Red Bull is for wimps," he added.

In addition, Mr. Bush now ends each speech by echoing the words of Washington professional football team quarterback Kirk Cousins. To cite one example: "And that's why my tax plan will benefit the middle class most of all. You like that! You like that!"

At the Des Moines rally, Mr. Bush worked himself into a frenzy, assuring voters he was in for the long haul. "Not only are we going to New Hampshire, we're going to South Carolina and Oklahoma and Arizona and North Dakota and New Mexico, and we're going to California and Texas and New York," he exclaimed. "And we're going to South Dakota and Oregon and Washington and Michigan, and then we're going to Washington, D.C., to take back the White

BYAAAAH CONTINUED ON A16

MIKE MATUS

Former governor Jeb Bush breaks on through to the other side.