ANOTHER CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION?
TERRY EASTLAND

the weekly Standard

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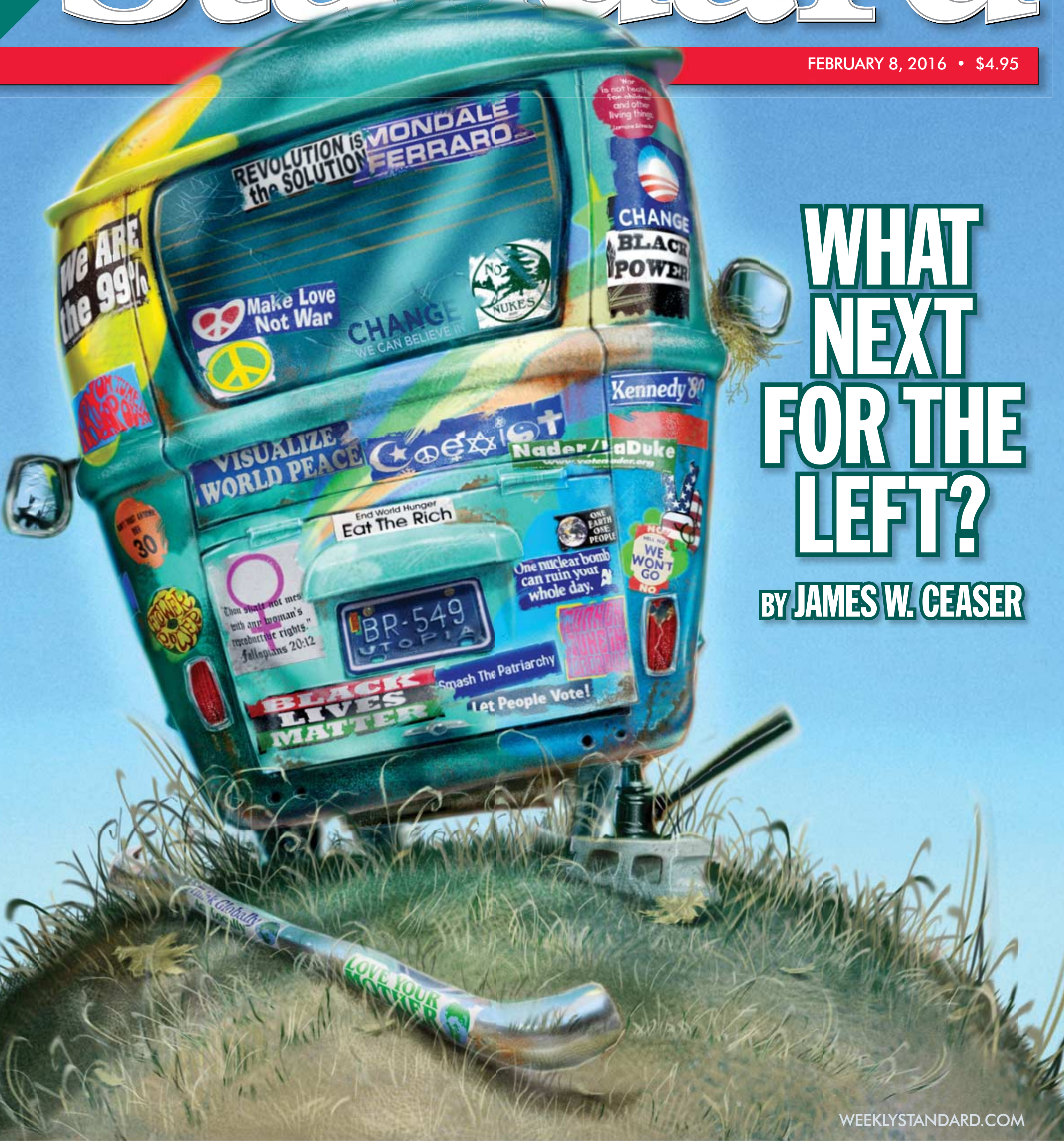
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WHAT NEXT FOR THE LEFT?

BY JAMES W. CEASER

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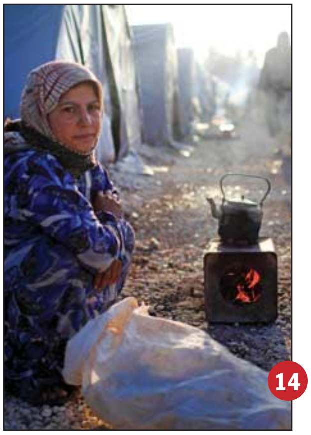

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Death of a Mascot

Well, it's about time. Trustees of Amherst College have banished the school's unofficial mascot, "Lord Jeff," a buffoonish, big-headed representation of the school's namesake, Lord Jeffery Amherst. A British general, during the French and Indian War Amherst signed off on a rudimentary sort of biological warfare against Native Americans, approving the idea of one of his officers to have blankets from the Fort Pitt smallpox ward distributed among the Indians.

For all the horror we hear about Lord Jeff's eagerness to let germs do his dirty work, perhaps more appalling is the old general's attitude toward the tribes his troops were fighting. "I wish to hear of no prisoners," he told a subordinate. Sending a Lieutenant Grimble to have it out with the Seneca, he instructed the junior officer to "Destroy their Huts and Plantations, putting to Death everyone of that Nation that may fall into your Hands." Here's Amherst's general assessment of the American Indian: "the Vilest Race of Beings that ever Infested the Earth & whose Riddance from it must be Esteemed a Meritorious Act for the Good of Mankind."

Yes, this was in the context of a war of tit-for-tat atrocities. Still, there's a reason General Amherst's reputation has not fared well in the history books, and his Riddance from the campus of Amherst College will itself be Esteemed a Meritorious Act by many.

But why banish just the cartoon manifestation? Isn't it a more serious business that the name of the institution—Amherst College—is derived from the genocidal scoundrel? Students are regularly seen on campus committing the microaggression of wearing T-shirts, sweatshirts, and ballcaps emblazoned with his shameful name. When they graduate, they are presented with diplomas branded with the same—diplomas many of them will frame and hang on their walls.

Stripping Amherst College of the A-word should just be the start. Given the enormity of Gen. Amherst's crimes, why is the school willing to remain in a city whose very name celebrates him? If the college had the courage of its convictions, and was willing to do more than just what is convenient and self-congratulatory, it would pack up shop and move the whole institution out of the tainted town.

The Scrapbook suggests that Amherst College may want to consider moving even further than just the next town over. Because, you see, there is the problematic fact of being located in the state of Massachusetts, whose name is derived from that of an indigenous tribe that once inhabited the land around what is now Boston. How cringe-inducing to name an entire state after dispossessed people driven from that very land. (And while we're talking about smallpox, don't forget that the Massachusett were killed off in large part by the viral diseases of the white man, notably smallpox.)

Of course the University of Massachusetts Amherst has similar problems. There is that dreadful name, but also a problem with that school's mascot, too, a cartoon Minuteman named "Sam." Activists protest that Sam is a symbol of colonization and gender insensitivity. And don't even get them started on that gun he carries . . . ◆

Hero-Worship in Our Time

Generally speaking, The Scrapbook adheres to the old Latin aphorism *De mortuis nil nisi bonum* (roughly translated: Don't speak ill of the dead). Our practice is to offer a fond farewell to people we admire and a dignified silence for those we don't. Which puts us in a quandary, of sorts, about an 80-year-old woman named Concepcion Picciotto, who died last week in Washington.

Few people were aware of Picciotto's name, but many might recognize who she was. Beginning in 1981, she and a man named William Thomas kept vigil at a small antinuclear-war campsite in Lafayette Square across from the White House. Thomas expired in 2009, and by the time Picciotto died last week, she is believed to have conducted the longest continual act of political protest in America.

BAN ALL NUCLEAR WEAPONS OR HAVE A NICE DOOMSDAY
LIVE
DIE

The Lafayette Square 'peace camp'

In truth, of course, describing her "peace camp" as anything other than a single squalid tent and an assortment of hand-lettered signs and flyers—antiwar, antimilitary, antinuclear power, anti-Israel, etc.—is a generous act. Nor is it a coincidence that she and Thomas took up residence there in 1981: Ronald Reagan had just become

TOP, DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE; BELOW, TIM SLOAN / AFP / GETTY

president, and strange as it may seem in retrospect, it was an article of faith on the antiwar left that Reagan was determined to provoke nuclear war with the Soviet Union. Presidents came and went, the Soviet Union peacefully collapsed—but Concepcion Picciotto stayed on in Lafayette Square, becoming a fixture on the doorstep of the White House and a year-round tourist attraction.

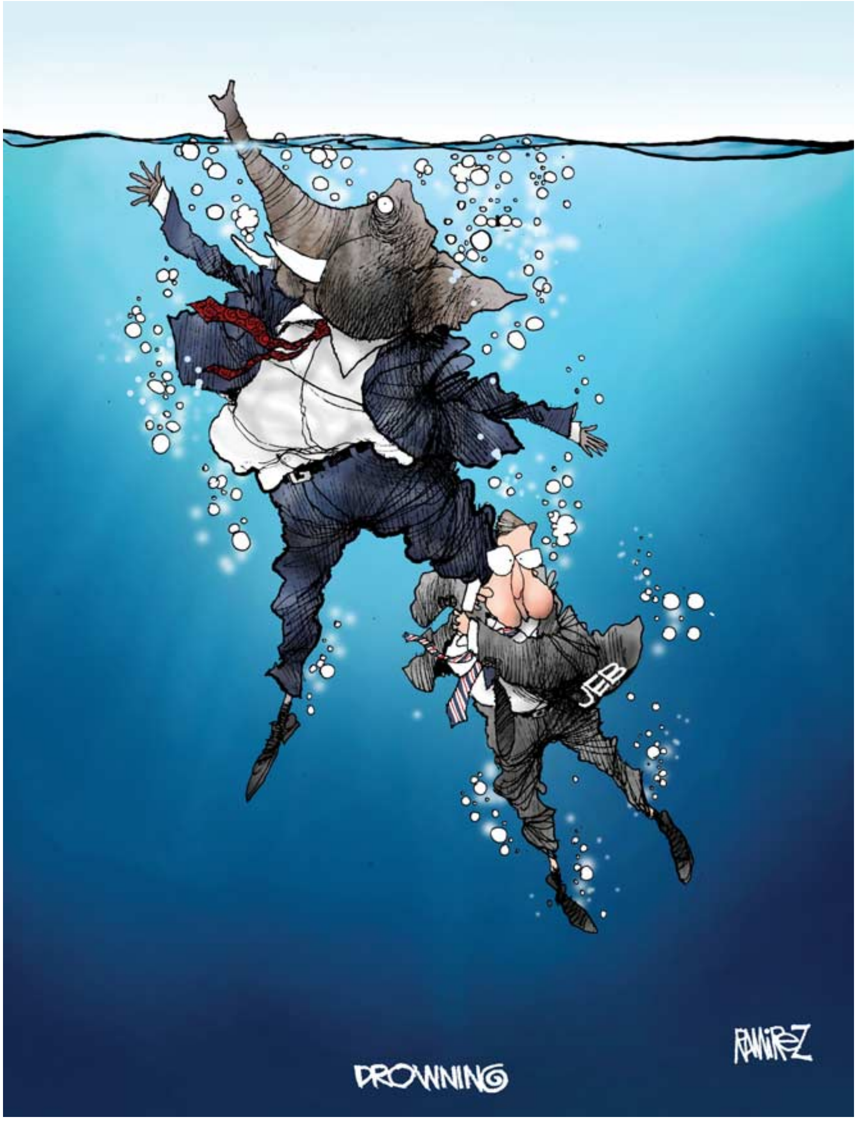
It probably goes without saying that she was mentally disturbed: She claimed, among other things, that the Central Intelligence Agency had extracted all her teeth, which she kept in a plastic pill bottle. And a casual perusal of her many signs and broadsheets made it clear that, in her mind, the threat of nuclear war originated not in Moscow or Beijing or Tehran, but in Washington, D.C.

All this earned her a curious kind of stature: Her seedy vigilance was seen as a quaint kind of martyrdom and earned her the respect of the *Washington Post*, National Public Radio, the *New York Times*, and others. Local sticks-in-the-mud, such as The Scrapbook, who considered her campsite a minor desecration of a historic site, were dismissed: "There was something impressive about Concepcion's resolve," wrote one *Post* columnist last week.

> If Concepcion's billowing tent, hand-painted signs and piles of photocopied jeremiads marred the beauty of the park, well, so what? The Constitution allowed it. Concepcion was the First Amendment come to life. I liked knowing that a succession of presidents saw her when they looked out the windows of the White House.

Which suggests to The Scrapbook a thought experiment. Let us suppose, for a moment, that Concepcion Picciotto had been a dedicated opponent not of nuclear war but of, say, abortion. Let us suppose, as well, that she and her admirers spent their days and nights in a makeshift tent on public land in Lafayette Square, directly in front of the White House, surrounded by handbills condemning *Roe* v. *Wade* and rude signs depicting aborted fetuses. Would the *Post* be equally impressed by her resolve? Would pro-life vagrant Concepcion Picciotto—seen from his window by President Obama—strike the *Post* as the First Amendment come to life?

The questions answer themselves. ◆



A More Perfect Student Union?

While things on college campuses are less chaotic and violent than they were a few months ago, make no mistake—sanity has not been restored. We got fresh evidence of that when the University of Oregon, in the middle of renovating their student center, debated removing a quotation from Martin Luther King Jr. that was inscribed on one of the walls. The offending quote? "I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character. I have a dream. . . . "

According to the *Oregon Daily Emerald*, when confronted with a decision to keep the quotation, sophomore architecture major Mia Ashley asked, "Does the MLK quote represent us today? Diversity is so much more than race. Obviously race still plays a big role. But there are people who identify differently in gender and all sorts of things like that."

Note that this is not the first time a quotation on the walls of the university's Erb Memorial Union has been questioned on the grounds of political correctness. In 1985, the school removed an aspirational quote from one of Oregon's former deans, William C. Jones, in which he outlined the role of the university as a "guardian of the noble in man's aspiration for the humane society" and "leader in the quest for the good life for all men." The line was not gender inclusive, so Jones was asked whether he would be willing to alter it. Jones said no, on the grounds that he was unwilling to be "hostage to ignorance." Suffice to say, they don't make university administrators like they used to—these days being hostage to ignorance is part of the job description.

Ultimately, the MLK "quote is not going to change, but that decision was not made without some hard thought by the Student Union Board," reports the *Emerald*. Thanks to Mark Hemingway's article in these pages ("Schools for Scandal," August 11, 2014), The Scrapbook is quite familiar with the idiocy and corruption of Oregon's student government (among others), and we're fairly confident not that much cogitation was involved. ◆

Marshmallow and Commander?

Meanwhile, at Harvard . . . We note that a frequent and valued contributor to these pages, Harvey C. Mansfield, has weighed in on the controversy there over the renaming of the House Masters (overseers, if you can forgive that word, of the college's undergraduate residences). Mansfield offered some constructive suggestions in a letter to the editor of the *Crimson*, which we reprint here:

> To the Editors of The Crimson:
>
> To aid in the furious thinking going on in the administration for a name to replace "Master" of a House, I would like to propose a College competition to decide a suitable replacement.
>
> To start things off, I will offer two possible new titles: "Marshmallow" and "Mouse." So as to avoid a sexual preference, both sexes should be content with the name "Co-Marshmallow" or "Co-Mouse." "Co-Marshmallow of Currier House," say, sounds pretty good.
>
> Entries should be sent to an appropriate Dean.
>
> Yours truly,
> Harvey Mansfield '53

◆

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BPA WORLDWIDE

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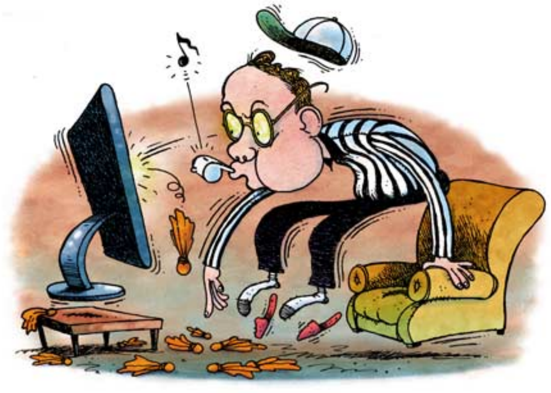
There’s a Flag on That Sentence

My combined roles as television couch potato and language snob have not been easy on me. What I most watch on television is sports and news, with a fair amount of DVDs, these chiefly of English detective stories. Much of this television watching is done in the evening, when, as they say about major-league pitchers who have been hit hard, you can put a fork in me, I’m done. I turn on my television set, in the cant phrases of the day, to kick back, to chill, to knock off for the day.



DAVID CLARK

Except I don’t, or at least not quite. Too often someone paid to know better—a newscaster, a sports announcer, a politician, a civil servant—will use a word or phrase that arouses my ire. Sometimes it will be a historical anachronism, or language used with chronological inconsistency, as when a character in a story set in Rome under the empire uses the phrase “check it out.” Just the other night on *Downton Abbey*, Lord Grantham referred to “the farming community,” when in 1925 he would surely instead have simply said “farmers” and let it go at that.

My readily aroused goat is perhaps too easily got. Until recently I would mumble, mutter, talk to, sometimes yell at the television screen, when someone dragged in a misused “impact” or “impacting” or, more egregious still, “impactful.” When politicians or pundits cannot begin a sentence on words other than “in terms of,” I would think of prison terms to which they ought to be sentenced, there to spend their days with shaved heads in striped uniforms diagramming sentences, with time out only for a bowl of gruel and a brief rest on a thin mattress. All this took its toll on my equanimity, who knows, possibly even on my health.

And then, one day, watching a Bears-Packers game riddled with penalties, the notion came to me to stop grumbling and instead toss a handkerchief, or flag, as they do in football for penalties, whenever misusages, errors, or simply idiotic language was used on television. In football the flags linesmen and referees toss are yellow. I had no yellow handkerchief, but I did own a red pocket square, which I never used, and I removed it from the back of my sock drawer and put it into service. Now when someone on television refers to some obviously peripheral or ephemeral act as “a real game-changer,” I reach for my pocket square and toss it over the coffee table before my couch. Awarding penalties for sloppy language may not constitute a game-changer for me, but it has been a help.

I haven’t yet devised hand-signals for miscast use of language on television, though many of the terms currently in use for penalties in football fit the wretched use of language nicely. “Encroachment,” for example, covers many of the sins of ineptitude used by sports announcers, among them their inability to distinguish between the words “difference” and “differential.” “Delay of game” works for punditti or anchormen or panelists or sports color commentators who are repetitious or otherwise boring. “Unnecessary roughness” would cover the talk of most postgame interviews with athletes. A heavy use of clichés would be “unsportsmanlike conduct.” Self-acclaimed virtue—politicians are big on this—would be “excessive celebration.” I haven’t a football analogy for the use of psychobabble, but without question it’s a 15-yard penalty. As for those who assure us they are “caring,” are eager to “share,” push the pedal down hard on that Hallmark word “special,” and seem always to be “reaching out,” I should like nothing so much as myself to reach out to give them a Dutch rub.

The flag flies with great frequency chez Epstein. “Pro-active” is a 10-yard penalty. “Empathy,” with its uglier sister “empathize,” is another 10-yarder. So are most uses of “global.” Those politicians accused of scandal along with those athletes accused of wife-beating who always want to go “forward” must not be allowed to do so without a flag to accompany them on their way. Nothing to be done, I realize, about other athletes who bid fair to lead whatever league they are playing in in the use of “you knows.” Weathermen and women, with their penchant for those fake possessives—“your record rainfall,” “your wind-chill factor”—are regularly penalized from my couch. You will not be surprised to learn that those who “at the end of the day” want only “a level playing field” are, in my eyes, “on the wrong page,” may even “have lost the plot.”

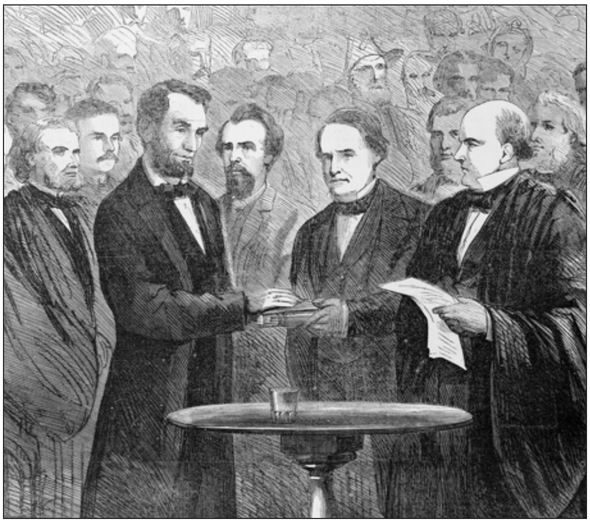
From time to time I urge myself to knock off these perhaps piddling criticisms. But a language snob’s work, as you will have gathered, is never done. He cannot let up. At least this language snob cannot. Besides, picking up all those tossed flags gives the couch potato in me nearly all the exercise he gets.

Joseph Epstein

The Party of the Constitution

The Weekly Standard looks forward to the 58th swearing-in of a president of the United States on January 20, 2017. The oath-taking is the heart of the occasion. It's what makes the winner of the presidential election legally and constitutionally able to execute the office of the president. All the rest is ceremony. That's why Abraham Lincoln, for example, who thought deeply about these things, begins his second Inaugural Address with these words: "At this second appearing to take the oath of the presidential office . . . "

And where does that oath come from? The Constitution. The president is the only officer of the United States whose oath is specified in the Constitution. To wit: "I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the Office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."



Lincoln being sworn in, March 4, 1865

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As Yale law professor Akhil Amar points out, embedded in the Constitution, "an impersonal legal text setting forth general rules and principles," lies "a strikingly personal passage revolving around the words 'I' and 'my'—words that appeared nowhere else in the Constitution."

Now the Constitution requires that the president swear (or affirm, if he is not a believer) two things: That he will "faithfully execute" the office; and that, to the best of his ability, he will "preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

The first task is relatively straightforward. Obviously, any officeholder should faithfully execute his duties. But it's especially important that the president do this, because his is an especially important office. The Constitution vests the executive power in one and only one person, and thus we rely on him to do all that's necessary and within constitutional bounds to faithfully execute that office.

The second part of the oath is more striking. Only the president swears to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution. The presidency, the Founders knew, would have great power. And a president might well have occasion to exercise extraordinary powers. Those powers are to be directed toward protecting the Constitution.

It's true that "We the People" establish the Constitution. But the Founders went out of their way to reject an understanding whereby the president could exercise power simply by claiming to be defending the People.

One element—a powerful element—of the conservative critique of progressivism over the last century is that progressives have viewed the presidency as a tribune of the people rather than an executor of the office and a defender of the Constitution. Of course presidents have always claimed, and are entitled to claim, that they are acting on behalf of the people. Many of our debates turn on whether the policies they're advancing really are in the best interest of the people. But a president's fundamental obligation is to the Constitution.

It was to be expected that, lacking respect for the Constitution, progressives would do damage to it. And so they have. Indeed, Barack Obama has undermined the Constitution in novel and breathtaking ways. Republicans have opposed Obama's extra-constitutionalism. After all, the Republican party first rose to power in reaction to a Supreme Court decision (*Dred Scott*) that fundamentally distorted the Constitution. It's a party reinvigorated in recent years by a popular movement that has sought to restore the Constitution to its deserved place of honor.

When Republicans took control of the House of Representatives in 2011, they opened the first session of the new Congress with a reading of the Constitution. They were much mocked for this by the Constitution's progressive despisers. Is the GOP now going to select as its presidential candidate someone who has no commitment to constitutional government, who has never shown the least concern about the Constitution, whose campaign seems unacquainted with the Constitution? Will the party of the Constitution abandon its north star?

We doubt it. But Republican voters do need to remember what it is they believe. They may not have sworn an oath. But they ought, to the best of their ability, take their civic responsibility seriously.

As this issue of the magazine goes to press, Donald Trump is sitting out a debate and hosting an event in Iowa ostensibly to benefit military veterans. So perhaps it's appropriate to recall Abraham Lincoln's brief remarks to veterans of his day, speaking outside the White House to the 166th Ohio Regiment, on August 22, 1864.

> Soldiers—I suppose you are going home to see your families and friends. For the services you have done in this great struggle in which we are engaged, I present you sincere thanks for myself and the country.
>
> I almost always feel inclined, when I say anything to soldiers, to impress upon them, in a few brief remarks, the importance of success in this contest. It is not merely for the day, but for all time to come, that we should perpetuate for our children's children that great and free government which we have enjoyed all our lives. I beg you to remember this, not merely for my sake, but for yours. I happen, temporarily, to occupy this big White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has. It is in order that each one of you may have, through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field, and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise, and intelligence; that you may all have equal privileges in the race of life with all its desirable human aspirations—it is for this that the struggle should be maintained, that we may not lose our birthrights—not only for one, but for two or three years, if necessary. The nation is worth fighting for, to secure such an inestimable jewel.

We have no Lincoln among us. Perhaps a nation gets only one Lincoln in its history. But in other respects we are fortunate. Our generation has faced no challenges comparable to those overcome by Lincoln and his successors. We have enjoyed in relative peace and comfort the great and free government they bequeathed us. The Republican candidates among whom we can choose in 2016 are not embarrassingly unworthy of repeating the oath of office that Lincoln took a century and a half ago. Except Donald Trump.

—William Kristol

Coal Remains Crucial to Diverse U.S. Energy Mix

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

One can hardly claim to support an all-of-the-above energy strategy while continually working to keep coal, one of our most abundant and reliable resources, locked underground. But that's exactly what the administration aims to do. Intensifying efforts to put coal out of business would exact a heavy toll on our country, resulting in higher energy costs for consumers, a less reliable electricity grid, lost energy jobs, lower revenues for local and state government coffers, and slower economic growth.

The latest assault on coal came last month when the Department of Interior announced a moratorium on future coal leases on federal land—where 40% of all U.S. coal is currently mined. This is on top of a raft of rules and regulations that have targeted the industry over the past several years.

Regulations covering surface mining, coal ash, cross-state emissions, regional haze, and ozone, among other things, are squeezing the industry within an inch of its life. And looming largest are the president's climate change regulations, which impose unachievable mandates on existing coal-fired power plants and effectively ban the construction of new ones. It's little wonder that coal production has been driven to a 30-year low.

Yet coal must remain a vital part of our diverse energy mix. Today, coal generates nearly 40% of our country's power. States that rely on coal have lower electricity rates and are more attractive locations for manufacturing and other energy-dependent industries. Nearly 1 million Americans directly or indirectly owe their jobs to coal.

There is no question that we should strive to advance clean coal technologies, as we have done successfully for decades. But the president's climate change agenda—a centerpiece of his legacy—hinges on coal's demise. This is a flawed approach to achieving carbon reduction goals that will only hurt our workers, our economy, and our competitiveness. Meanwhile, much of the rest of the world is increasing its dependence on coal—more than 2,000 coal plants are planned or under construction across the globe. As a result, the president's sweeping rules may not reduce greenhouse gas emissions at all, instead simply moving them to other countries that have not implemented similar restrictions.

The United States has proven that technology, efficiency, alternative sources, and cleaner use of traditional resources, including coal, together can help address climate change in a meaningful way. With this approach, we can maintain a diverse energy mix that meets consumers' needs and supports a growing economy while taking reasonable actions on environmental challenges.

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The Mystery of the Trump Followers

Who are they, and how many of them are there? We're about to find out. BY **FRED BARNES**

When a Republican leader went to vote in his Dallas neighborhood on May 1, 1976, he was in for a huge surprise. It was the day of the Republican presidential primary in Texas—Ronald Reagan versus President Gerald Ford—and a long line of voters extended outside the polling place. And he didn't recognize any of them.

Many of the voters were participating for the first time in a GOP primary. They had showed up for one purpose: to vote for Reagan. The crowd in Dallas matched those around the state. Reagan swamped Ford, winning all of the Texas delegates to the national convention and coming close to capturing the nomination.

The turnout was a revelation. Reagan was attracting a mass of new voters to the Republican party. Four years later, he was elected president, his victory spurred by a category of voters that hadn't existed before—Reagan Democrats. They were evidence the GOP had grown.

I was reminded of the Republican leader's shock in 1976 when I talked recently to a GOP official in New Hampshire. Donald Trump is far ahead in every poll of voters in the state's Republican presidential primary on February 9. Yet the official doesn't know a single Trump supporter.

The *Washington Examiner*'s Byron York found more evidence of this phenomenon when he covered the New Hampshire GOP's "First-in-the-Nation Presidential Town Hall" in Nashua in late January. He asked every Republican activist he met if they know Trump backers. In nearly all the cases, the answer was no.

There was one exception. "I talked to two party officials, one county and one regional, who said they knew a lot of Trump supporters," York wrote. One told him, "They're not Republicans." The officials said those voters "glanced left and right, to see if it was OK to talk, and then said, 'Trump.'"

The fact that Trump is attractive to non-Republicans leads to a question about his candidacy. Is he capable of enlarging the GOP with a wave of new voters, including people with a skimpy history of voting, who could play a significant role in politics?

Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama thinks Trump could do so. "Absolutely," he told me. He showed up on stage with Trump last August at a massive rally in Mobile. Sessions said he looked at the crowd and "there were so many people I didn't know."

Sessions believes the Republican coalition is growing because of Trump's emphasis on building a wall to halt illegal immigration from Mexico and killing the Pacific trade treaty. These are policies Sessions agrees with that have been rejected by the GOP hierarchy. But many Americans, the senator says, view the Trump policies as necessary to protect their livelihoods.

Sessions hasn't endorsed either Trump or the candidate's insistence on deporting all illegal immigrants. Trump, he says, has "said some things I haven't said." But his "personal strength" appeals to voters, especially in contrast with the weakness they see in leaders in Washington, the senator says.

Besides stirring excitement, Trump has affected the race in other ways. The latest Fox News poll asked voters which quality would influence their choice of a candidate. "Strong leader" was first with 24 percent and "tells it like it is" followed at 23 percent. "Conservative values" got 19 percent and the "right experience" 8 percent.

And 27 percent of self-identified independents said they want to vote in a Republican caucus or primary. Only 15 percent prefer a Democratic caucus or primary. Is there any doubt that Trump has lured them?

What's unknown is whether Trump enthusiasts could become a durable voting bloc. "What we know by observation is that Trump is attracting people who are not traditional Republican voters to his campaign and his events," says Steven Law, president of the American Crossroads super-PAC. "What we won't know until the voting starts is whether they actually show up—and whether their enthusiasm starts and stops with Trump himself."

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

There's also a question about the states in which Trump is popular. Data from Civis Analytics showed Trump "fares best in a broad swath of the country stretching from the Gulf Coast, up the spine of the Appalachian Mountains, to upstate New York," Nate Cohn of the *New York Times* wrote. His appeal "fades as one heads west."

Trump is strongest in Republican states. This may aid him in winning the GOP nomination, but it won't help in the general election.

Then there's the downside of Trump's ascendancy. Republican leaders fear he would lose more voters than he gains in new converts. It's a legitimate fear. To win the presidency, the party can't afford to lose more support among Hispanics, the fastest-growing voting bloc. Sessions says Republicans must be "sensitive" to the concerns of Hispanics. Trump isn't. He alienates them. Thus the cost of nominating him could be high.

If Trump wins the nomination, it will prompt a crisis among Republicans. Peter Wehner, a speechwriter and adviser to President George W. Bush, wrote in the *New York Times* that he would not vote for Trump: Absent "a responsible third-party alternative, . . . I would not cast a ballot for president. A lot of Republicans, I suspect, would do the same."

As of now, many mainstream Republicans surely would. But the general election hasn't been cast yet as it's bound to be in the fall. Let's assume Trump, as the Republican nominee, is running against Hillary Clinton. We don't know what Trump would do as president. He probably doesn't either, despite his threats to start a trade war and deport 11 million illegal immigrants. But even before she cozied up to President Obama recently, we do know what Hillary would do. As president, she would protect everything Obama has done.

If she wins or is allowed to win by Republican defections, Obamacare would live on in perpetuity. So would all the antigrowth, anti-fossil-fuel rulings of the EPA. So would Obama's unconstitutional executive orders. So would the greatest regulatory onslaught ever. The list is long and grievous. Everything—the entire Obama legacy—would be locked in.

With Trump as nominee, millions of Republicans would face a difficult choice. The cost of a Clinton victory would be high. But so high it would be self-indulgent to spurn Trump? Maybe it would. ◆

A New Constitutional Convention?

Greg Abbott's plan to limit federal power.

By Terry Eastland

As Texas attorney general, Greg Abbott spoke with evident pride about how many times he'd sued the federal government. The total came to 31, and invariably the lawsuits challenged actions that Abbott believed violated federal statutes or the Constitution. Now, as Texas governor, he is no longer in court but has hardly quit objecting to federal overreach. In a speech last month to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, Abbott declared it's time for state legislatures to address the problem by amending the Constitution.

Note that Abbott is focused on *state legislatures*. There is a reason for that. Under Article V of the Constitution, constitutional amendments may be proposed by a two-thirds vote in both houses of Congress *or* by a special convention called by Congress on the application of two-thirds of the state legislatures—34, if you do the math. Thus Congress controls one path for proposing amendments while state legislatures control a second one. (A duly proposed amendment must then be ratified by three-fourths of the states—38.) Abbott is urging the second path on the assumption, doubtless correct, that a convention requested by state legislatures is more likely than Congress to propose measures limiting the federal government.

We have, of course, proposed 33 amendments to the Constitution and ratified 27. All 33 used the first path, in which Congress does the proposing. The second path has been tried at times, but we have yet to see an amending convention. That, however, is precisely what Abbott envisions.

Abbott is struck by the history of Article V and in particular a suggestion that Congress should have veto power over any constitutional amendments. Elbridge Gerry and Alexander Hamilton were behind that idea, but George Mason pushed back, contending that "it would be improper to require the consent of the [national] Legislature, because they may abuse their power, and refuse their consent on that very account." Mason further observed that it would be "exceptionable & dangerous" to give Congress such a veto because "no amendments of the proper kind would ever be obtained by the people if the [national] Government should become oppressive, as he verily believed would be the case."

Mason's argument against an amendment process that placed Congress over the states led to the one the Constitutional Convention accepted, with two paths for proposing amendments, the one controlled by the states deemed necessary for the reason Mason gave—a means of restraining an "oppressive" national

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government. As Abbott sees it, “The Framers intended for States to call for conventions to propose constitutional amendments when, as now, the federal government has overstepped its bounds.”

In his speech, Abbott called on the Texas legislature to add “the Texas Plan” to its agenda when it next meets, a year from now. (It convenes every other year.) The 92-page, heavily footnoted plan discusses the federal government’s exercise of its three powers—legislative, executive, and judicial—over the past century and finds that “all three branches of the federal government have wandered far from the roles that the Constitution sets out for them,” grabbing more and more power to the detriment of the states. “Acting through the States, the people can amend their constitution to force their leaders in all three branches of government to recognize renewed limits on federal power,” the plan says. “We can rein in the federal government and restore the balance of power between the States and the United States.”

Greg Abbott gets a standing ovation in Austin after he called for a convention of states to amend the Constitution, January 8, 2016.

JAY JANNER / AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN / AP

Toward this end, the Texas Plan offers nine constitutional amendments. The first and second respond to what the plan calls “Congress’s decades-long project of self-empowerment,” which has been accomplished primarily through the commerce and spending clauses. The commerce clause gives Congress the power to regulate commerce “among the several states,” but Congress has used it “to regulate every conceivable activity in America.” The amendment the plan suggests would “prohibit the federal government from regulating any activity that is confined within a single State.”

The spending clause gives Congress the power “to lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States.” The Framers regarded the clause as a limitation on spending, but Congress “has gradually and successfully turned [it] into an *affirmative grant* of power to do whatever it wants with federal tax dollars.” As a result, spending routinely exceeds revenues, and our national debt continues to rise. The plan recommends an amendment that would require the president to submit a balanced budget to Congress and require Congress to enact a balanced budget every year. The amendment would specify how Congress must do that—by cutting spending.

The Texas Plan discusses the remaining seven amendments in like manner, explaining the problems and stating constitutional remedies. Thus, the plan takes on the administrative state and calls for one amendment that would prohibit agencies from creating federal law and another that would prohibit them from preempting state law. The plan examines the problems of judicial activism and supremacy, and proposes one amendment that would allow a two-thirds majority of the states to override a Supreme Court decision and another that would require a seven-justice supermajority vote for Supreme Court decisions invalidating a democratically enacted law.

Under the heading “The States,” the plan then takes up the decline of state authority and the resulting loss of liberty, suggesting three amendments. One would restore the balance of power between the federal and state governments by limiting the former to the powers expressly delegated to it in the Constitution. Another would give states authority to challenge federal actions that exceed enumerated powers. And a third would allow a two-thirds majority of the states to override a federal law or regulation.

The nine amendments deal with some of the nation’s most important constitutional issues, involving the enumerated powers and the separation of powers, federalism and the Tenth Amendment, liberty and limited government. With each amendment, there’s much to debate. Abbott is certainly up to the task, having served 6 years on the Texas supreme court and 12 years as attorney general.

As governor, Abbott has the power to convene a special session of the legislature and keep it in session until it finishes its work. And what Abbott wants from the legislature next year might be called second-path legislation: a resolution in which Texas makes its application for an Article V convention, one limited to proposing amendments designed to restrain a too-powerful federal government.

As it happens, there is a nationwide, grassroots organization already working to that same end. The Convention of States Project, founded in 2012 by former Tea Party leader Mark Meckler and constitutional lawyer Michael Farris, has been promoting the idea of an amending convention that would propose measures limiting the power and jurisdiction of the federal government. Four states—Georgia, Florida, Alaska, and Alabama—have passed their applications, and more are likely to do so. How many is the question, for as Meckler knows, getting 34 states to join in requesting an

Article V convention is not going to be easy, despite seemingly favorable political trends.

Republicans control the legislatures of 31 states, and Meckler thinks that the reddening of statehouses will continue this year, with the November elections producing three more Republican legislatures. Meckler does not assume that all 34 of those legislatures will apply for a convention, since it is an issue that divides Republicans, even in Texas, where some in the audience listening to Abbott's speech were skeptical. Understandably, Meckler is approaching Democratic legislators in blue and purple statehouses who may be open to an amending convention concerned about federal overreach. "We need some Democrats to come over," says Meckler, who must also maintain and increase Republican support for a convention. Meckler, who is a very frequent flier, is building a political operation relying heavily on volunteers that at full strength will be active in at least 40 states.

The Texas Plan recalls past arguments made against Article V convention efforts and anticipates they will be used again—chief among them that there could be a "runaway" convention "in which the states propose a convention to debate limited amendments, but . . . the delegates end up throwing the entire Constitution in the trashcan." If that were to happen, observes the Texas Plan, "none of the delegates' efforts would become law without approval from three-fourths of the States"—a serious check on an unlikely development. For Abbott, the "runaway" argument rests on the dubious idea that the people serving as delegates to an Article V convention would behave more irresponsibly in exercising their constitutional duties than the members of the many Congresses that proposed amendments did in carrying out theirs.

The Texas Plan also offers sensible counsel to state legislatures in the event a convention is called: that they require their delegates to "vote against any constitutional convention provision not authorized by the state."

Inevitably, given the political season, the question arises as to how leading Republican presidential candidates regard the idea of an Article V convention. Senator Marco Rubio wrote last month in *USA Today* that "this method of amending our Constitution has become necessary today because of Washington's refusal to place restrictions on itself," promising that "as president, I will promote a convention of states to amend the Constitution and restore limited government."

Ted Cruz is friendly to the idea, says his communications director, Rick Tyler. But the senator has declined to "take a leadership role" and promote an Article V convention. Tyler says the issue puts Cruz in an odd position, since, like all senators, he has "immediate access" to the first path for proposing amendments but no second-path responsibilities. Tyler adds that, as president, Cruz would use his office to "return the federal government to its limited authority."

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Donald Trump has not taken a position on an amending convention. But in a January 23 *Washington Examiner* op-ed on *Roe* v. *Wade* he said that decision demonstrated "the utter contempt the court had for federalism and the Tenth Amendment." It is unusual for Trump to use terms like "federalism" and "the Tenth Amendment," both of which sound deeply in the convention movement. The Trump campaign didn't respond to emails seeking the candidate's view of the matter.

What presidential candidates say or don't say about an amending convention is, as Cruz seems to realize, beside the point. After all, the convention movement is a drama taking place where by the terms of the Constitution it must—in the states.

In an interview, Abbott reiterates that the Framers gave the people of the states a means in Article V they could use to restrain an out-of-control (runaway, if you like) federal government. Abbott declares he is passionate about the topic, having "focused on it for years," and he is determined to do all he can to make a convention happen, starting with getting both houses of the Texas legislature to pass the necessary application for a convention of states.

Abbott anticipates speaking on behalf of an amending convention at venues across the country, and he is likely to impress. *Texas Monthly*'s Erica Grieder, a shrewd observer of Texas politics, was in the audience for Abbott's speech to the Texas Public Policy Foundation, and she called it "the best speech" she had ever seen Abbott give. "From the moment he took the stage, he was full of swagger, and there was nothing feigned about his ferocity as he made the case for [an Article V] convention." It would be the first ever. ◆

Turkey's Syria Problem

Washington chides allies and rewards foes. **BY LEE SMITH**

HALIL FIDAN / ANADOLU AGENCY / GETTY

Syrian refugees wait at the Turkish-Syrian border to cross into Turkey, September 18, 2014.

Istanbul

Even before Vice President Joe Biden met with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara last week, the Turks were displeased. The day before, Biden had granted interviews only to opposition media and slammed the government for stepping on freedom of speech. "That's not the kind of example that needs to be set [for the rest of the region]," said Biden. He was referring to, among other issues, the arrest of two Turkish journalists who published information, almost certainly false, claiming that Ankara sends arms across the Syrian border to the Islamic State. He was also referring to the detention of 15 academics for signing a petition denouncing Erdogan's counterinsurgency against the Kurdistan Workers' party (PKK).

The Turkish government overreacted in both cases, and under normal circumstances, it would have been unexceptional for a visiting American vice president to make remarks like Biden's. But circumstances aren't normal. The Obama White House has been putting regional allies like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and now Turkey in the deep freeze. At the same time, it has excused Iran for setting fire to Saudi diplomatic missions and taking American sailors hostage. The Turks understood Biden's remarks—and were likely correct in doing so—as being aimed less at free speech than at bullying them into following the administration's lead on regional policies, especially on Syria.

Secretary of State John Kerry's peace talks in Geneva are about one big thing: ending the war against Syria's Bashar al-Assad. Iran and Russia are in full agreement—indeed, it is they who dictated the terms that Kerry delivered last week to the Syrian opposition. Instead of a transitional governing body that would ease the Syrian dictator out, Kerry explained, there will be a national unity government—in other words, Assad stays.

Turkey is opposed to the plan, and has threatened to boycott Geneva. Erdogan's defiance is not simply a matter of protecting the prestige he staked when he demanded that Assad step down more than four years ago. The Syrian conflict has created a domestic crisis, leaving Turkey to care for, by some estimates, nearly two million Syrian refugees. Many of them are here in Istanbul, where they have better chances of finding work but are competing for jobs and services with Turks in a difficult economy. If Assad stays in power, few of the refugees will return to be ruled by a man who has waged war against them. Turkey will be saddled with millions of refugees for the foreseeable future, maybe permanently, as much of Europe is starting to shut its doors.

Administration officials say they want Turkey to close its border with

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Syria to stop ISIS, but that's code, which the Turks have no problem understanding. It's meant to implicate the Turks as supporters of ISIS and embarrass them into doing what the White House really wants, which is to stop providing logistical support to anti-Assad fighters. Without Turkey, the rebels would no longer be able to mount a fight against Assad and his Iranian and Russian allies.

The way the administration sees it, with the war against Assad over, the war against ISIS can continue. To that end, the Syrian Kurds of the Democratic Union party (PYD), who have proven themselves the most effective fighting force against the Islamic State, will continue to campaign against ISIS. This is fine with Iran and Russia. "As for specific ways of sealing the border between Turkey and Syria," Russian foreign minister Segei Lavrov has said, "Kurdish militia forces . . . could be used."

A Kurdish Syrian refugee prepares tea in front of her family's tent in a camp in southeastern Turkey, October 22, 2014.

GOKHAN SAHIN / GETTY

But the plan is anathema to Turkey. The PYD is the Syrian affiliate of the PKK—the U.S.-designated foreign terrorist organization that broke a ceasefire in June to resume its three-decades-long war against Turkey. In short, Biden was in Turkey to strongarm a longstanding ally into letting a deadly enemy control its long border with Syria.

Biden insisted that the White House is not partnered with the PKK. "The PKK is internationally accepted as a terror organization and will remain to be so," he said here last week. He also recited the administration's familiar talking points—that there's a big difference between the PKK and the PYD. But that's not how Turkey sees it.

As Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told the U.N. in October, "We consider the PYD the same way we consider the PKK." Yes, said Davutoglu, PYD is part of the fight against ISIS, but from Ankara's perspective that hardly makes them benign. "Fighting against [ISIS] does not make PYD a legitimate organization." In this case, the PKK agrees with Turkey—they and the PYD are the same thing. As one PKK fighter told the *Wall Street Journal*, "It's all PKK but different branches." Indeed, just last week, it was the PYD, ostensibly distinct from the PKK, that called for attacks on "the institutions of the Turkish state all over the world."

So why does the White House want to empower a terrorist group targeting a fellow NATO member? The ostensible reason is that the United States will work with anyone to crush ISIS, even another terrorist group like the PKK. But that's not the whole story. The fundamental requirement of any successful anti-ISIS campaign would be to get the region's Sunni Arab majority on board. But that won't happen so long as Washington is indulging the Iranian axis, including Assad.

The surge in Iraq is the model. Al Qaeda was finally turned back there when the Sunni Arab tribes agreed to join Americans in fighting them. The tribes turned on al Qaeda only because the Bush White House resolved to simultaneously fight the tribes' other enemy, the Iranian-backed Iraqi Shiite militias.

The path to defeating ISIS is hardly shrouded in mystery—Obama knows it as well as anyone in the field and all the other actors in the region. It would require empowering the Sunnis of Syria and Iraq. But there is no way to do this without a U.S. turn against Iran, the opposite of Obama's policy. He gives every sign of sticking by Iran, even if it means undoing the alliance system in the Middle East built by Washington over more than half a century. The Obama pattern is more than clear: To secure his deal with Iran, he has been more than willing to downgrade allies and upgrade adversaries.

To be fair, Obama doesn't exactly see the world in terms of allies and adversaries. Sure, Iran misbehaves, as he's told many interviewers, but Saudi Arabia is no great shakes either. The problems of our friends in the Gulf Arab states, as Obama has said, come from among their own populations, not Iranian terrorism. The Israelis, from his perspective, won't grow up and make peace with the Palestinians, or with Iran for that matter. And Turkey, as Biden said last week here in Istanbul, doesn't set a good example.

There are no allies or enemies, as Obama sees it, just forces that he will bring into balance with each other. Bring some in closer, like Iran or the PKK, and push some a little further away, like Israel and Turkey. Obama couldn't be clearer: It's time for everyone in the Middle East to learn how to live with each other, or at least find ways to deter each other, without having to call in America all the time to solve their problems.

It's a nice academic theory but riddled with problems in the real world. Foremost among them: Iran is a revolutionary regime, a destabilizing force that seeks to overturn the status quo. Then there's the fact of the increasingly large and calamitous war in the middle of the region, which continues to pull all its neighbors into its gravitational field. There's no way around it: For the sake of theory, Obama is endangering U.S. allies and interests and putting millions of lives at risk. ◆

Remembering the 'White-Shoe Firm'

Present at the destruction.

by Irwin M. Stelzer

A sign of what might be called "progress" jogged some memories of battles fought. In reporting Governor Andrew Cuomo's nomination of a new chief to a state regulatory agency, the *New York Times* identified the appointee as being a litigator in "the white-shoe law firm Paul, Weiss, Rifkind," et al. The reporter seemingly did not know that the designation "white-shoe law firm" was invented to describe firms at the pinnacle of the WASP establishment, no Jews allowed, named apparently for the shoes these WASPs favored in the summer at their restricted country clubs.

In the 1960s, my partners and I were attempting to establish an economic consulting firm that marketed its services to law firms and public utilities. The "white-shoe" firms were off-limits. We identified them by adding up the Roman numerals after partners' names—I, II, III, etc.—adding to that partners with first and last names that were interchangeable, and dividing by the total number of partners. A high result meant we had no chance.

Then there were cases in which no such arithmetic was needed. A partner in one firm told me at a cocktail party, after his usual consumption of truth-producing alcohol, that he was happy to be living in a New York suburb that did not allow Jews. That firm later merged with another; both went bust. Another pointed out that the new civil rights legislation wasn't a problem for him because it did not protect Jews, whose upward drive would threaten him and his executives. The general counsel of a public utility invited me to lunch to congratulate me on starting the firm and added what he thought was encouraging news: "If we ever hire a firm with Jews, your firm will be the first."

We were not the only disadvantaged group. One company CEO told me that he was certain new legislation did not force him to change a company rule that permitted men, but not women, to smoke at their desks. In the early 1960s, women were finding it difficult to procure professional positions, both in law firms and in the consulting field. Our firm took advantage of that market imperfection by hiring the best and the brightest women economics graduates, with emphasis on my mentor's and my own former students at Cornell. When I was due to testify at an administrative proceeding at a Washington regulatory agency, I brought my assistant along to help check data, refresh my recollection during recesses, find sources, and perform other chores. The hearing officer quietly suggested to me that it was inappropriate to have a woman in the hearing room; I argued that she was entitled to see the fruits of her research and prevailed. It wasn't easy.

IMAGE PRESS / CORBIS

With time and hard work, we managed to build a successful consulting practice. Time, because gradually the law business changed, with the bright young Jewish graduates joining predominantly Jewish firms that prospered, in many instances by accepting cases that the white-shoe firms would not take—contingency fee arrangements, lawsuits against establishment corporations—and prevailing over rivals that had denied themselves access to this portion of the most talented law school output. One WASPy partner in a Pittsburgh firm told me one evening, "We made a mistake discriminating against you guys. We should have hired you instead of giving you an added incentive to beat us." Discrimination, especially against a group with no recourse to the law and therefore reliant only on its efforts, can be costly.

We were helped, too, by three events. A metropolitan New York utility hired as general counsel a Jewish lawyer who had an offer from a white-shoe firm rescinded a day later when the firm discovered he was Jewish. He was in the market for what we had to sell, especially in cases in which he was up against the Wall Street WASP law establishment. Second, a patrician partner in a southern law firm had no use for discrimination, interviewed several firms to handle a series of matters, and selected us on merit—for a client group led by a Philadelphia patrician who had somehow found his way into a top executive position in the utility industry. Not all WASPs wore white shoes.

Finally, a group of utilities found itself appearing before a Jewish administrative law judge. The executives in the group who knew that Jews are clannish—after all, there were none in their city and country clubs—thought it best to agree with the meritocrats in the group so they could play the Jew card in the hearing. We did well. It was easier but not storm-free sailing from then on. ◆

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

A Cost Curve That Bent Way Down

Why have eyeglasses gotten so cheap?

BY ELI LEHRER

Warby Parker is the most celebrated of the online optical shops upending the traditional eyeglass business. In a market where the average price for a pair of prescription glasses has been near $300, Warby Parker sells hipster-chic frames, complete with lenses, for around $100. *Fast Company* calls Warby "the first great made-on-the-Internet brand." Less chic, but perhaps even more significant, have been discount retailers Zenni Optical and EyeBuyDirect, companies that offer basic corrective lenses in cheap frames for as little as $10 or even less. These companies threaten to disrupt the old ways of doing business—which is just what we expect in a market economy. But such innovations are rare in the business of medicine. Which is why prescription eyeglasses, though just a tiny sliver of the medical sector, may prove to be a big story for the future of health care.

How do the super-discounters make and sell glasses so inexpensively? There are some simple ways they bend the cost curve. They eschew the markups that come with fancy designer brands, and they manufacture the frames themselves, typically in China. And one key difference: They don't indulge in the sort of price premium that the dominant market-player, Luxottica, has been able to charge.

Cutting the cost of glasses affects related markets as well. A little more than half of adult Americans have vision insurance (and the Affordable Care Act mandates such coverage for almost all children). A vision policy for a married couple costs about $25 a month when purchased from an agent and about $15 a month through an employer, and usually comes with a deductible or co-payment. Buying discount glasses out-of-pocket is almost always going to be cheaper than maintaining coverage.

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Can the costs of other medical devices be cut as much as the price of glasses? After all, crafting lenses is a fairly routine process, one that's a lot easier to outsource overseas than, say, crafting and fitting prosthetic limbs.

Which points to some of the real disadvantages that come with super-cheap eyeglasses. Even with express shipping, they take a week or more to arrive; many shopping-mall opticians, by contrast, offer one-hour service. With online retailers, the technical task of making what should be a precise measurement of the distance between pupils is generally done not by an optician, but by the customer. And if you have a difficult prescription—say, a pronounced astigmatism—you'll find that Warby Parker doesn't offer online the lenses you need. And then there is the question of quality: Cheap frames and lenses can be, well, cheap.

But for all that, the discounters have found a robust market. There are things the medical system might learn from this quiet revolution. People buying glasses have traditionally written much of the check themselves, making them care about price. This is why the online upstarts have made cost their key pitch (Zenni Optical was originally called "19dollareyeglasses.com" but changed the name when its prices dropped as low as $6.95). Other parts of the health care sector might benefit from this sort of sensitivity to price. While it may not be wise to shop around for discount chemotherapy, the price of routine lab tests could well come down if patients were encouraged to compare costs.

But for patients to bargain-shop, doctors and hospitals would have to post their prices, which almost none currently do. State lawmakers looking to encourage market forces in health care, might consider mandating that, where possible, prices be disclosed in advance.

Perhaps most difficult to accept might be the conclusion that bending the cost curve for health care might require some tradeoffs in quality and perks. Prescription eyeglasses that cost less than $10 aren't going to be as good as those that cost $500, but price *is* obviously a factor. Some people pay extra for a fancy designer's name or special lens coatings to resist fingerprints. Others conclude such perks aren't worth the money. The same could certainly be true for other medical procedures, treatments, and devices. The key to making these trade-offs acceptable and fair is in putting those choices in the hands of the consumers themselves and giving them a stake in what the costs are.

The success of online eyewear merchants, who have cut the price of glasses by as much as 90 percent, demonstrates that, even in the notoriously closed and regulated market for health care, disruptive innovation remains possible. ◆

Eli Lehrer is president of the R Street Institute.

What Next for the Left?

The progressives go from bad to worse

By James W. Ceaser

A strange period has now passed into history. Captivated by a presidential campaign in 2008, Americans by the millions came to believe that a new leader would be able to produce more than a transformed society and an era of world peace. Politics could be extended beyond its ordinary boundaries and bring about a spiritual renewal. This exhilarating prospect fed on its own spiraling expectations, surprising even its original purveyors.

Faith in this political religion eventually dissipated. Four years into the experience, many ceased to believe. Today most have forgotten. Politics has retreated to its more usual limits, focusing on the harder core of ideology.

Modern progressivism has driven much of American politics for the past seven years. It now fully owns the Democratic party. President Obama failed to achieve the general electoral realignment that many anticipated after 2008, but he succeeded in creating an ideological realignment within his own party. The result was attained by subtraction. Advocates of rival positions—New Democrats, "blue dogs," pro-lifers—were either sacrificed or induced to sacrifice themselves. The Democratic party is now divided between a progressive wing and a more progressive wing, one that openly wears the label of socialist.

Modern progressivism is a combination of three components: theories inherited from the original progressives of the early 20th century; ideas introduced since the 1960s by the intellectual movements of the left (the New Left, multiculturalism, postmodernism); and the practices and patterns of behavior that have resulted from progressivism's central role in shaping American politics and culture.

THE PROGRESSIVE INHERITANCE

The enormous debt modern progressives owe to the movement's originators begins with a belief in the idea of progress, the notion that there is an intrinsic force within history pushing toward expanded prosperity, greater equality, and peace. Progressives took their bearings for the idea that history has its own will from the great 19th-century theoretical systems found in German idealism (Hegel), French sociology (Comte), and evolutionary biology (Darwin). Modern progressives have kicked away this philosophical ladder, preferring to be known as pragmatists. Their pragmatism comes fully prepackaged, however, with a residual faith in an arc of history. Progress may temporarily be slowed or derailed by those who cling to the past, but under the guidance of enlightened leaders history will inevitably resume its forward course.

Modern progressives take credit for expanding the scope of government and for forcing the spring on many social, religious, and lifestyle issues. Progressives also insist that they are on the right side of history in foreign affairs. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea, Secretary of State John Kerry let President Putin know in no uncertain terms, "You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th-century fashion." President Obama decreed that ISIS "has no place in the 21st century." The administration counts this century as one of its staunchest allies and a leading contributor to the grand coalition. The original progressives possessed a similar confidence in the ameliorative powers of the 20th century, though many grew disillusioned when it produced barbarisms on an unparalleled scale. Modern progressives believe that things will be less bumpy this time around. Even the idea of progress progresses.

Modern progressives spend much of their time inveighing against the "one percent," just as the old progressives assailed "the malefactors of great wealth." For both, inequality is society's greatest problem, threatening democracy by ceding real control to the trusts and the super rich. The charge today is that we have government of the one percent, by the one percent, and for the one percent. Inequality for progressives surpasses all concern about economic growth and enhanced opportunity, although progressive economists manage to bundle all these challenges together and attribute the root cause to inequality. President Obama subscribes to many economic nostrums of the original progressives, from his theory, revealed on the run in 2008 to Joe "The Plumber" Wurzelbacher, that "when you spread the wealth around, it's good for everybody," to his thesis, shared with Elizabeth Warren, that "you didn't build that," a position that regards society's wealth as being by right collectively owned, to be distributed by

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the government on the basis of social justice and utility.

Modern progressives have for the moment rallied around the idea of "leader democracy" that was introduced by the nation's first progressive president, Woodrow Wilson. Wilson called for a concentration of political power in the presidency, arguing that it was both futile and inadvisable to attempt to restrain power by partitioning it among different institutions. "Leadership and control must be lodged somewhere," he wrote. "No living thing can have its organs offset against each other as checks, and live." Power would be restrained through presidential elections. Following a number of Republican presidencies after 1968, progressives seemed to abandon this view, sounding the alarm against "the imperial presidency." Senator Obama in 2008 was an important voice for this position: "The biggest problems that we're facing right now have to do with George Bush trying to bring more and more power into the executive branch and not go through Congress at all." But second (or third) thoughts have brought most progressives closer to the original position. Few presidents have shown greater contempt for Congress, or seized more powers legislative in character, than Barack Obama. Government by decree is now being legitimized. Progressive intellectuals have been Obama's enablers, advancing a theory of "dysfunctional government" that justifies presidential aggrandizement.

Operating under the loose direction of the president, administrators are to be the vanguard of the progressive project, promoting the people's best interests and earning the common man's confidence over the long run. Yet as with many elites, they have not been able to hide their arrogance towards those whom they are supposed to serve.

Jonathan Gruber and Lois Lerner, 2014

All political parties have yielded at one time or another to the temptation of constitutional opportunism and shifted their position on institutional arrangements to promote a partisan goal. Progressives are unique, however, in doing so without qualms, knowing that their opportunism has received absolution in advance from a higher source. Constitutional forms, by their account, always take a back seat to the imperative of promoting progress. No legal framework merits permanency. Stripped of the pretense of concern for constitutional theory, the progressive claim today is that a progressive president opposed by an unprogressive Congress rightfully acquires a vast new reservoir of authority. That authority could conceivably come to an end on January 20, 2017.

Modern progressives have the same confidence in national public administration as the original progressives, who spoke in broad and bold strokes in favor of "social engineering" and "social control." Given the 20th-century experience with totalitarian governments, few dare to use this language today. Yet modern progressives do not hesitate to urge federal agencies to prod, nudge, and command in ever-increasing spheres of activity. National administration remains the progressives' primary instrument for transforming American society.

The old progressives wrote many of the seminal works on the theory of public administration. Remembered often as champions of civil service reform, which they were, their objectives went well beyond the late-19th-century reformers' goal of eliminating patronage, corruption, and inefficiency. Nor did progressives find that much to admire in the British model of the civil service, with its senior corps of classically educated generalists known for their prudence, neutrality, and respect for the rule of law. The progressives' more ambitious aim was to train and empower a new breed of policy expert educated in the social and technical sciences. Operating under the loose direction of the president, administrators were the vanguard of the progressive project who would promote the people's best interests, earning the common man's confidence over the long run. Modern progressives profess to follow the same model. Yet as with many elites, they have not been able to hide their arrogance towards those whom they are supposed to serve. The recent travails of two public servants—Professor Jonathan Gruber, the main architect of the Affordable Care Act, and Lois Lerner, the IRS's zealous suppressor of unprogressive political activity—illustrate the problem. Both were highly acclaimed within the administration for their intelligence and dedication until their progressive virtues shone too brilliantly.

National public administration is the natural foe of civil society. In the classic conception of liberal democracy, two basic modes of governance share power: the visible source of legal authority (the "state") and a less visible, informal process known as civil society. Civil society, the more difficult mode to grasp, consists of the network of private institutions and associations (families, churches, clubs, corporations, civic groups, and the like), as well as selected public bodies such as state universities, local public institutions, and, in relation to the national state, lower levels of government. Civil society's significance lies in its function as a system of rule. Where civil society thrives, much of the nation's life is indirectly governed by the activities and decisions of its many parts, whether acting individually or in concert. Coordination in civil society is decentralized, relying on the mechanisms of markets, contracts, voluntary undertakings, customary procedures, and informal agreements. The preservation of this system rests on a basic principle: the expectation of the parties involved that their choices and engagements are for the most part made freely, without interference from, or preemption by, a higher outside power. Weaken this expectation and the patterns of interaction and the habits on which civil society depends begin to wither.

THE GREAT SOCIETY SPECIAL

Limits abandoned: LBJ with Lady Bird, 1965

BETTMANN / CORBIS / AP

A system of rule is most important for how it helps to shape human character and influence a way of life. By habituating people to take responsibility for handling a wide range of social and economic matters, civil society promotes enterprise, initiative, and independence. Those habitually engaged in managing affairs become jealous of their role in governing and seek to protect large spheres of activity from interference by distant administrative bodies. Civil society develops its own complex idea of liberty. It goes beyond the legalistic "state" model of a central government that protects individual rights to include a strong sense of obligation to participate in governing community activities.

Contemporary treatments often go astray by identifying civil society with the political activities of associations, foundations, and groups. In this account, civil society is characterized by these entities' efforts to influence governmental decisions and affect election outcomes through such activities as lobbying, publishing policy studies, holding conferences, and fundraising. No one disputes the significance of political involvement for maintaining a free country. But if the main activity of groups boils down to arguing about the role of the federal government, whether for its expansion or its limitation, civil society no longer is engaged in its primary function of serving as a system of rule. It becomes a tiny satellite revolving around the main body of the state.

Progressives have contributed to political analysis by making visible some of the hidden workings of civil society. Their aim, however, has for the most part been to expose its deficiencies. Civil society in their description operates to shield business corporations as they exploit workers and gouge consumers, and to protect local governments as they favor the wealthy and deny basic rights. Even where the intentions are more benign, civil society is defective. It is a piecemeal and decentralized system that lacks the overall authority to provide economic security and to supply the equal entitlements of a modern welfare state. It is not rational. Only national public administration can assure uniformity and equality in the delivery of benefits and services. It may take a village to produce a good life, but it will be a village whose school curriculum is guided by the Department of Education, whose police force is under surveillance by the Department of Justice, whose zoning laws need approval by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and whose school lunch menu is planned by the first lady.

With the collapse in the 1960s of a public understanding of the limits of the federal government's jurisdiction, national policy-making began to touch an ever-growing number of activities. Civil society lost one source of its legal protection. Fewer reminders of its importance were heard in public discourse. This change paved the way for the emergence and dominance of the policy-making mindset. Proposed measures in national politics are debated, under the best scenario, on the basis of the benefits and costs each brings to a particular area—education, health care, housing, etc.—without considering the effects of any single program, much less the accumulating impact of all programs, on the political structure and the place of civil society. Politics is no longer about modes of governance, this old question having been settled, but about policy. At universities, schools of public policy crowd out departments of political science, which once held a place in their curricula for the study of basic questions of rule. The administration of things has replaced the government of men.

Yet as the best progressive thinkers well know, the war between national administration and civil society is not over. As long as civil society has a grip on even part of the American populace, progressivism is not secure. Almost any measure, therefore, that extends federal administrative control, even if its benefits are dubious, garners support, just because it weakens civil society. Expanding the scope of national administration creates additional client groups, which improve the progressives' prospects of consolidating control of the electorate. Practical progressive politics is all about creating dependencies. Poor policy can sometimes be good politics.

With all the attention paid to social justice, it is sometimes forgotten that progressivism has its own visions for shaping the right kind of human type. The original progressives followed the philosopher John Dewey in rejecting the independent spirit of the "old individualism" and calling instead for a "new individualism" to remake Americans into more "social," "collective," and "democratic" beings. Dewey's point of entrance for this project was K-12 education. By transforming educational theory and schools of education, he sought to change what transpired daily in every classroom in the country. Modern progressives also have perfectionist projects—just look at what is going on in universities. They rely increasingly on national administration to promote their goals and use federal funding in an effort to build a parallel progressive civil society, supporting groups like ACORN and Planned Parenthood.

The expansion of national administration over the past seventy years, and notably over the past seven years, may be applauded or deplored. It cannot be denied. Even where institutions of civil society appear to be acting on their own, closer inspection reveals that they often make decisions in accord with existing regulations or, what is just as important, in anticipation of possible new regulations or with a view to preventing unwanted regulations. National administration is palpable, even when it is not acting. The outward forms of civil society remain, but its inner force is dwindling.

The methods national administration uses to control the parts of civil society that progressives have targeted for conquest are revealing of its enormous power. Agencies deploy their forces in the manner of an invading army tasked with pacifying new territory and eliminating resistance. Familiar tactics include punishing some while offering favors and temporary exemptions to others in order to create collaborators. Emboldened administrative chiefs do not hesitate to employ stealth and deception, especially in the management of information. Selective leaking, deliberate obfuscation, and outright falsification are now common practices. The misrepresentations are sometimes so blatant—think of the inflated figures initially given for Obamacare enrollees—that the purpose cannot merely be to deceive, but to intimidate. Flouting with impunity recognized standards is a way for administrators to signal that resistance to them would be futile. The same is true of the performances of high administrative officials before congressional committees, where contempt for lawmakers is now a deliberate strategy.

Contemporary critics of the administrative state deplore the aggrandizement of bureaucratic agencies and the atrophy of the rule of law. What should be of even greater concern to them are the effects on people's thought processes and imagination. In the case of the growing number of personnel in our institutions whose job is to implement the burgeoning number of federal regulations, the administrative state has created a class of subjects who identify governance with the promulgation and enforcement of agency-created rules. No wonder, as this system is the source of their livelihood and the path to their career advancement. It is also the basis of their own petty despotism, allowing them to compel others within their institution to bend to their instructions. Then there is the rest of the population, who receive the diktats and comply. More and more of their time is spent filling out forms, taking online mandatory tests, and submitting to mandated training sessions. In an environment filled with a thicket of administrative constraints, fewer and fewer now rely on their own professional or independent judgment. Their horizon shrinks. They may find a tiny measure of satisfaction by complying with the letter of rules while managing to evade their substance. Such pitiful acts of resistance represent the last displays of freedom in a system of social control. The only question for the future is whether most will continue to submit or, summoning what remains of a spirit of independence, conclude that they have had enough.

THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENTS OF THE LEFT

Modern progressivism's second dimension developed from a breach that opened on the left midway through the progressive century. In a movement known as the New Left, college students in the 1960s, their professors in tow, joined with antiwar activists in reaction against "the system," the amorphous name given to society's controlling ideas and dominant institutions. Falling into this last category for the New Left were not only the business corporations that were the targets of the old progressives' ire, but also the universities, the media, and parts of the government, all of which had a large progressive presence. To their great dismay, progressives—known at the time as liberals—found themselves under attack from the left, mostly in the persons of their own offspring. Families were riven, and major institutions, including the Democratic party and many universities, temporarily came apart. Further challenges from the left followed in the ensuing decades, inspired by multiculturalism and postmodernism.

Words easily deceive, and too many commentators have fallen into the trap of viewing modern progressivism as the simple heir of its early-20th-century namesake. A quick look around belies this characterization. Modern progressivism combines in almost equal measure elements of original progressivism with themes drawn from these later leftist movements, including identity politics, personal expressivism, and antipathy toward Western values. That modern progressives have succeeded in recent years in bringing the two parts together can be seen from the positions of the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination.

This second dimension of modern progressivism comes from conflicting intellectual sources and contains tensions of its own. Confusion emerged at the outset from within the New Left itself, which was never known for its theoretical rigor. Yet what it lacked in intellectual firepower, it more than made up for in raw energy. The New Left's vitality stemmed from its relentless opposition to almost everything in American life. Beginning on the political level by decrying the Vietnam war and racial injustice, the New Left moved quickly to focus on the trauma that American culture was said to inflict on people's spirit or souls. The genuinely "human" was being stifled by bourgeois values, patriotic attitudes, station wagons, and grades. To overcome this repression, the New Left sought to change lifestyles by building up the "counterculture," its most important legacy. The aim was to promote authentic self-expression, which would be achieved through such means as artistic experimentation, attendance at rock festivals, drug use, and sexual liberation. The only orthodoxy was an insistence on nonorthodoxy.

Children of the New Left: Protesters during the 1968 Democratic National Convention fight with Chicago police, above; below, Black Lives Matter protesters chant in New York City.

A RIOT IS THE LANGUAGE OF THE UNHEARD
Eric Garner
Michael Brown
JUSTICE
People's Power Assembly

TOP, BETTMANN / CORBIS / AP; BOTTOM, ANDREW BURTON / GETTY

In its plan for reconstituting society, the New Left relied on the convenient premise that personal liberation would generate community (a favorite term) and a harmonious social order. America would contain a network of communes and smaller political units, each fully democratic. Direct participation was an essential element of self-expression. These units would enforce a robust idea of the common good while also assuring the autonomy of each self. The classic problem of resolving tensions between the collectivity and the individual was taken care of by a positive view of human nature. In the words of the movement's programmatic Port Huron statement, "We regard men as infinitely precious and possessed of unfulfilled capacities for reason, freedom, and love."

If human nature is so good, it remained to explain why the condition of modern life was so bad. For the original progressives, who wrestled with a similar problem, the source of corruption was the free market system and the business corporation. For the New Left, it lay in the triumph of a scientific mindset bent on domination and control. While technology had helped to satisfy many material needs, it brought "loneliness," "estrangement," "isolation," a loss of "meaning in life that is personally authentic," and "the depersonalization that reduces human beings to the status of things"—in a word, "alienation."

There is an evident gap in outlook between the college youth of the 1960s and today's millennial progressives. Their faces glued to their screens, millennials harbor few of the New Left's suspicions about technology. Nor do millennials attribute their anxieties to a philosophical crisis in Western thought. They prefer instead to speak in therapeutic and medical terms, seeking out psychological counseling and medication. Yet for all these differences, millennials seem to admire New Left radicals, exemplars of which they probably encountered in their forays into the attic, where they chanced upon fading Kodak photos of Grandma with a flower in her hair and of step-grandfather in a tie-dyed T-shirt bearing the motto "make love not war."

What survives from this old race is the counterculture's first commandment to cultivate personal liberation and self-expression. Progressive millennials understand this commandment, however, in a new and special way. It applies to themselves, but not to others. Gone is the belief that the liberation of all leads spontaneously to social harmony. Just the opposite, they think, is the case. Removing restraints across the board can allow for the expression of hurtful opinions. More importantly, it produces criminality, violence, addiction, and dysfunctionality. Danger lurks everywhere. A few ideological purists may still insist that all social pathologies result from income inequality, but the privileged youth know in their hearts, and from what they see around them, that this isn't so. Drug use may be "cool" among peers, but out there, beyond the gates, it produces disorder. A hippie today, far from being that charming vessel of untapped potential for "reason, freedom, and love," is more likely to be a vagrant. Social justice for society's down-and-outs is one thing, contact with them is something else. A main preoccupation of millennials is to figure out how to segregate themselves, a confession they make only to friends or on Facebook. This dance of duplicity draws on millennials' own experience with the child-rearing strategies perfected by their parents, who hovered over them in order to make sure that the self-expression endorsed in theory was always safely circumscribed in practice.

This understanding of the counterculture shapes the environment governing student life at many of the nation's universities. Millennials demand full personal liberty while expecting complete security. Security consists of protection not only from physical menace, but from psychological discomfort. Universities are asked to meet these demands, which they do by creating infrastructures of psychological counselors, sensitivity trainers, and police (the last often disguised under a euphemistic title). These mechanisms of control are justified initially on the "negative" grounds of providing security, but they soon expand to serve the "positive" purpose of changing the culture to promote progressive ends. National administration is a full partner in this bureaucratic expansion, most recently in the area of relations among the sexes. Beginning from a supposed security concern—a government-sponsored survey finding that "one in five women is sexually assaulted in college"—universities, with backing and encouragement from federal agencies, are implementing elaborate rules for courtship and controlling the approved stages of touching. The Department of Education has mandated the establishment of what amounts to a new national court system for college students to mete out punishments for sexual misconduct. *In loco parentis* was shown the front door at most universities in the 1960s, *in loco administratis* has been brought in the back door in the 2010s. For a generation that has canonized freedom and self-expression, the degree of surveillance that it countenances invites bewilderment. The progressive idea of liberty increasingly resembles life in *The Truman Show*.

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Multiculturalism was the next intellectual movement to appear on the left, beginning in the 1980s. Its influence on modern progressivism has been enormous. Under this theory, the New Left's preoccupation with self-expression was forced to share the stage with the partly conflicting idea of cultural expression. Cultures were seen to be the natural unit of human belonging and the only genuine source of values and norms. No standards exist above or beyond the culture. Individuals are subordinated to the group and liable to sanction for exploring an identity apart from their culture, an experience well known to many African-American conservatives. Defining culture has never been easy, but multiculturalists settled on tying it to the biological characteristics of race, ethnicity, and gender. Diversity today is defined in both law and practice by this criterion, with regulations requiring a certain percentage of African Americans, Hispanics, women, and so on. As for the purported "cultures" of nations based on beliefs rather than biology, like America, multiculturalists have downgraded them to the status of inauthentic entities, built to hide or destroy the real cultures.

An early version of American multiculturalism wore a kind and gentle face. It looked forward to a society of harmonious relations among the various cultures. People would delight in the experience of variety, from tasting the flavors of different cuisines to enjoying the sounds of distinct accents. Sensitivities and prejudices would become sufficiently relaxed to allow for good-natured intercultural raillery. Underlying this happy vision lay the notion, rarely articulated, of a common humanity.

A different and ultimately more influential understanding of multiculturalism was meanwhile growing among intellectuals, one that emphasized conflict of the kind exemplified in current college protesters' demands that bearers of white privilege apologize. Multiculturalism in this sense is almost a misnomer, since the crux of this theory rests on a binary distinction between a single victimizer culture (white, of European origin, and male) and the many victimized cultures (blacks, Native Americans, Hispanics, women, and gays). The victimizer culture holds the upper hand, a position that includes the critical power to define terms and impose norms, which it sometimes proclaims to be "universal values" or "natural laws." The victimized cultures are subjected to one or more of the "isms" of oppression (racism, colonialism, imperialism, and sexism). They have had their voices silenced and their values demeaned—hence their designation in multicultural speech as the "marginalized" or the "other."

Multiculturalism is far more than a social scientific theory designed to analyze existing political conditions. It is a full ideology culminating in a project that seeks to reverse the existing cultural hierarchy and to give satisfaction to the victimized. The oppressor culture will need to be brought low and the victimized cultures elevated. This reversal applies to both domestic and international politics, which are now indissolubly connected. Multiculturalists wish to secure justice for both the marginalized in America and the oppressed peoples of the world. Oppression is the legacy bequeathed by white Europeans beginning with the Crusades, followed by the creation of colonial empires, and continuing today with the economic domination of the West. Multiculturalism can help the victimized cultures to become more conscious of their plight and build solidarity among them in a struggle against the West. The model is derivative of the Marxist theory of the worldwide revolution, with the oppressor culture taking the place of the bourgeoisie and the oppressed cultures the place of the proletariat. Victimized of the world unite! Variants of this view exercise a considerable influence on progressive ideas of foreign policy, reaching into the highest places in the academy and the government.

One of the multiculturalists' chief weapons inside Western societies is "political correctness," which refers to a campaign going on now for some four decades to influence speech, writing, artistic expression, and behavior for the purpose of upending the cultural hierarchy. In addition to seeking to change norms and practices, political correctness aims to shape psychological dispositions, placing the culturally privileged into a state of unease, fearful that what they say or do may offend, and the victimized into a condition of anger and suspicion, looking everywhere for slights. Political correctness initially proceeded by operating through the medium of ideas, mobilizing core activists, and winning over opinion within key sectors of society. These successes were converted into an informal system of sanctions and rewards, where transgressors could suffer a loss of reputation and employment, and supporters could win accolades and find new avenues of advancement. The campaign has now turned to employing more formal measures of enforcement through rules and supportive administrative regulations. Proponents will not rest until political correctness becomes the law of the land.

The full impact of political correctness extends beyond its specific measures to its symbolic impact. The more stylized and extravagant the rituals demanded, the greater the impression they make. The spectacle of a learned professor bending to the demand to issue "trigger warnings" to students in an introductory class is on a par with the feudal subject bowing to a superior and averting his gaze. Such displays of obeisance initially signal the emergence and later the consolidation of a new social order.

Political correctness has enjoyed enormous success in promoting the multiculturalist agenda in both Europe and the United States. Its progress was steady and seemingly irreversible. Yet it is now provoking a vast public reaction that threatens to alter the political landscape on both sides of the Atlantic. Opposition to p.c. is currently a main theme in the American presidential campaign.

Multiculturalism today exerts considerable influence on the administrative agencies involved with issues of race and gender. It is well to recall, however, that the origin of the civil rights movement predated the rise of multiculturalism, going back to the 1960s or even to the 1860s, and was born of a different spirit. Civil rights legislation developed not out of an abstract ideology, but from an effort to deal with the problems stemming from America's "original sin" of race slavery and its aftermaths. Its aim was to end legal segregation and discrimination and make good on the liberal democratic principle of equal treatment of all individuals. Its theoretical foundation was the principle of natural rights, with added support from biblical teachings. As multiculturalism began to colonize the intellectual left, it also penetrated the civil rights movement, altering its focus. Its agenda today includes boycotts on products from Israel, calls for gender and ethnic studies programs at universities, and plans to establish a national curriculum in American history favorable to a multiculturalist narrative. The spirit behind multiculturalism is captured in the building excitement over the moment in 2045 when, according to census projections, "white people" become a minority of the American population. This demographic shift is already being hailed as a landmark in American history, above all by those who elevate their own racial self-contempt to the status of a high moral virtue. The civil rights movement may have expanded its coalition, but it has lost its soul.

Modern progressivism is suspended somewhere between acquiescence to and approval of multiculturalism. The hesitations come from contradictions that have emerged within multiculturalism in response to its confrontation with real events. The genocide in Rwanda and the chaos that followed the Arab Spring exposed the fiction of solidarity among the oppressed and showed that fanaticism can be constituent of an authentic culture. The most severe regimes of oppression against women and gays are perpetrated by victimized cultures. Progressives in extreme cases have concluded that certain oppressed cultures may need to be condemned or policed. The problem has been to find a justification. Happily for progressives, the quandary is always resolved by the arrival, just in the nick of time, of Puff the Magic Value. Overnight America, the oppressor nation, is magically transformed from being the carrier of the "white man's burden" to becoming the defender, in President Obama's words, of "human dignity" and "universal values." Alas, Puff does not linger, but slips back into his cave in Honalee. The trance over, multiculturalists return to their more comfortable posture of assailing Western privilege.

Postmodernism is the last of the developments on the intellectual left that has influenced modern progressivism. Less directly connected to politics than the New Left or multiculturalism, it entered American thought from the academy. Its main premise is that there are no real or true theoretical foundations or philosophically grounded values. The Declaration of Independence's laws of nature and the theoretical idea of progress, not to mention Nature's God and God's providence, are fictions. In philosophy classes, this premise might be subsumed under the formula that "nothing is by nature, and everything is by convention." Expressed in a more popularized version, as one might hear it today in any course in cultural studies, it is that "everything is socially constructed." Exported from the classroom to the quad, this slogan is deployed to call into question any custom or institution that the left is currently targeting for extinction.

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Postmodernism became the leading school in humanistic thought in higher education in the 1980s. In combination with multiculturalism, it helped create new disciplines and programs within the humanities and the social sciences. Thousands of its acolytes entered the professoriate, where they proceeded to spawn generations of postmodern scholars, taking great care to secure their advancement. This clerisy now plays a role in running many universities and is assured of doing so until well into the 21st century. Talk of being on the right side of history!

Postmodernism's influence beyond the academy is considerable but, being indirect, difficult to trace. No major political figure in America boasts of acting under the aegis of postmodernism in the way that many of the Founders affirmed an attachment to natural rights philosophy or many progressive leaders an affinity with Darwinism. With philosophy now occupying a much lesser role in general education than in the past, most in the political class seem to have managed to receive their degrees without having experienced a serious encounter with postmodernism. President Obama, who was long an academic himself, stands out as one of the rare exceptions.

There is a voluminous literature, it is true, connecting Bill Clinton with postmodernism. A pairing of these two terms in a Google search brings up an astounding 270,000 hits. Observers have fastened on the former president's casual relation to what had previously been regarded as moral truths, and on his uncanny ability to evade sanctions that once attached to certain transgressions. All this suggested that Clinton played a seminal role in exposing Americans to a lightheartedness about the deeper strata of things, an outlook that was nicely captured in the phrase "moving on," which made its grand debut in reference to the Clinton scandals. This impression was strengthened by Clinton's unprecedented step of introducing the ontological question into American politics when speculating on what the meaning of *is* is. Yet to be precise about Clinton's role, the link observers posited between Clinton and postmodernism was based on what they *ascribed* to this situation. No one alleged that Clinton was postmodern by design, but only that he was so by being there. Postmodernism may have first appeared in the White House with the Clintons, but it only achieved consciousness with Barack Obama.

Postmodernism's impact on politics was initially more tactical than theoretical. Intellectuals, already on the left before they ever became postmodern, discovered in postmodernism a useful weapon to advance their goals. Denying the truth of foundations served to undermine important parts of the tradition, from the claim of natural rights that underlay American exceptionalism to the religious tenets that supported older morality and customs. If all things are socially constructed, there is no reason not to discard any one of them and replace it with something else, it being self-evident that all social constructions are created equal. Progressives employed this tactic selectively, deconstructing only the ideas and practices they disapproved of. Yet since much of the culture at this point still rested on traditional beliefs, it made sense for progressives to embrace the general postmodern doctrine of nonfoundationalism, or what they called "pragmatism." The claim of social construction proved attractive to progressives in one other respect. It encouraged the view that everything is malleable. Reality is what we make it. This liberating notion gave impetus to creating new norms, lifestyles, and genders, with each breakthrough becoming an occasion for celebrating yet another festival of a first.

Tactical postmodernism left open the question of whether this philosophy would continue to serve the cause of progressivism. As progressivism succeeds in wiping out old verities, the culture becomes a product not of tradition, but of the left's making. If postmodernism is an equal-opportunity destroyer, it is the left's creations that may be exposed and subject to hostile makeovers. Wary of this possibility, some leftist thinkers have endeavored to prove that postmodernism is inherently supportive of progressivism. By this account, once pragmatism comes to dominate within the leading segments of society, the result will be a political order, eventually perhaps a world order, of tolerance and democracy. When all give up brandishing their truth claims, which are the source of conflict, people will grow more relaxed and gentle. Relativism chimes with progressivism. This extraordinary view formed the intellectual underpinning of the European Union in the first decade of this century, leading many of Europe's thinkers to laud their new postfoundational democratic order and to contrast it with Americans' primitive insistence on theoretical foundations. The settlement of the world's problems would only come by rejecting the American model and following the European approach. American progressives readily joined in this view.

Reality is now demonstrating the shallowness of this argument, which is collapsing of its own accord. Deeper postmodern thinkers made known in any case that this position had never been intended as anything more than pabulum designed to reassure casual postmoderns of a progressive bent—in other words, most intellectuals—that everyone in the end would think much as they did. Real postmodernism, these thinkers revealed, could offer no support for any particular form of government. Its relativist starting point might just as easily end in a choice to embrace an authoritarian government as a progressive democratic one. What postmodernism can supply is insight for how to prevail in the political world. Postmodernism is ultimately a philosophy of will. After freeing the mind of illusions, it instructs the few, meaning the few who understand, in how to go about imposing their vision on society. Mastery is obtained by shaping the public *narrative*, that most favored of postmodern words. Narrativicians are the legislators of the world.

Postmodernism's elitist and top-down conception of politics may help account for the progressives' indifference today to the republican dimension of regular citizen participation, especially in state and local politics. Progressives speak of democracy, but it is conceived in terms of an outcome—social justice and liberation—not a process of governing. The only democratic procedure that counts is the mobilization of a national majority for the presidential contest. Postmodern elitism finds its ultimate expression in the technique of linguistic management, a point on which President Obama has shown his true postmodern colors. The administration's strange avoidance of ordinary language—words such as terrorism, war on terrorism, Islamic—in favor of euphemisms and new expressions is a sure sign of a grand strategy of narrative-shaping to further the progressive vision. Even some of the president's prevarications have a strangely postmodern ring, appearing less as ordinary lies meant to hide or get away with something than as attempts to construct a favorable reality. If, as postmodernists like to repeat, "language is the house of being," the president has taken on the task of being its chief building contractor.

This strategy of linguistic manipulation has enjoyed some success in progressive circles, but outside it has fallen well short of what was hoped for. Human perceptions in the face of real conditions may be less susceptible to narrative-shaping than postmodernism has taught. The world is not a field of dreams. The most noteworthy effect of the president's language games has been the emergence of a strong public reaction, arguably stronger than the reaction to the president's policies themselves. Its source is the deep anger of those who sense that they have been treated like unwilling subjects in a laboratory experiment in psychological coercion. It remains now to be seen if this reaction, which parallels the reaction against political correctness, will lead to a curtailment of these methods or, as seems more likely, to the rise of cruder distortions of traditional political discourse.

PROGRESSIVISM IN PRACTICE

The third component that constitutes modern progressivism is made up not of ideas or theories, but of what progressivism has meant in the realm of practice—for life outcomes, mores, and the workings of institutions. Historians and commentators commonly emphasize the realm of practice when offering an overall sketch of progressivism's rival, liberal capitalism. Yet rarely, and then only selectively, do they begin by analyzing progressivism in these terms.

There is a partial historical explanation for this imbalance. Progressivism emerged when liberal capitalism—roughly the Constitution and a free market economy—was in place as the "system." Progressivism was the youthful challenger, not yet part of the system, that aimed to replace the established rival. Viewing progressivism in this light, which initially accorded with reality, became a habit of thinking. It was one that progressives, for political reasons of their own, had reason to encourage. Even as progressivism's actual influence expanded to cover more and more aspects of American life, progressives continued to disclaim responsibility for any of the ills that plagued society. These were all the fault of the system. Like Peter Pan, progressivism will not grow up. By its own self-conception, it cannot.

The statute of limitations on this intellectual anachronism should by all rights have expired long ago. Progressivism has been around now for well over a century and can no longer plausibly present itself as new or young. All of its wrinkles—huge and inefficient bureaucracies, ponderous regulations, and endemic violations of the rule of law—are showing through its makeup. Nor is progressivism the innocent outsider or wayfarer begging at the door for admittance to the system. Progressivism *is* the system, at least as much as, if not more than, liberal capitalism. And with its vast interests to defend and its clients to sustain, progressivism is also every bit as much constitutive of the status quo. Just as liberal capitalism has bred pathologies like crony capitalism, progressivism has created its dysfunction of crony progressivism.

The vastness and porousness of these two categories make it impossible to parse exactly their relative influence. But much is discernible. In governance, the Constitution still supplies the basic outline of the national government. Yet none would deny that it has been overlaid and modified in practice by the progressive constitution that calls for unlimited federal jurisdiction, a huge administrative apparatus, an expansive domestic presidency, and a jurisprudence of living interpretation. As for which force has run this machine, the contestants have been in constant struggle, often finding themselves in deadlock. But in the three breakthrough political moments since the Depression when one side has held something approaching full political power (the New Deal, the Great Society, and the Obama majority in 2009-2010), it was progressives who were in charge. The closest partisans of liberal capitalism have come to achieving this status was a limited coalitional majority during the Reagan revolution of 1981-82.

Outside the boundaries of government, within the commanding centers of power that shape society and control the manufacture of consent, progressives now fare very well. Higher education, despite the source of much of its private funding, is a bastion of progressivism; the dominant news media, despite corporate ownership, lean decisively to the left; the entertainment industry . . . just watch an Academy Awards show. The moral codes have all been rewritten under progressive guidance, while the influence of religion is declining.

Still playing Peter Pan, progressives conveniently ignore the power of these command centers and insist that decisive control in society lies with the moneyed interests that necessarily support liberal capitalism. The claim is exaggerated. Money can surely buy much, but if it were as powerful as progressives allege, its investments in all of the other social institutions should have netted a much better return. The truth is—just as the progressives' intellectual idol Antonio Gramsci showed—these different sources of command enjoy a substantial degree of independence with the power among them more dispersed than is supposed. Few progressives like to consider the possibility, but it may well be that the upper one percent of the intelligentsia exercises as much overall influence as the upper one percent of the wealthy. And to the great advantage of the left, the members of the intelligentsia are far more homogeneously progressive than the wealthy are liberal capitalist. Wealth in fact is distributed widely between the two contending parties. It can be stipulated that the supporters of liberal capitalism maintain full control over the nation's country clubs, and they no doubt also hold the advantage on Wall Street. Yet a quick look at the largest personal fortunes in America shows that progressives are just as well placed as defenders of capitalism, while in the arena of philanthropic foundations, progressives hold the edge, even without counting the Clinton Foundation.

A major change taking place within the populace today about what constitutes the "system" provides a key for understanding our politics. For a long time, longer than the facts warranted, there was rough agreement between liberal capitalists (known as conservatives) and progressives on what the system was, though not, obviously, on what should be done. Both sides considered the Constitution to be the governing instrument of the political order and the market and free enterprise to be the ordering principle of the economy. Progressives were dissatisfied with this arrangement and wanted it to be changed, while conservatives wanted it to be maintained. Yet both were in basic accord on what the system was.

No longer is this the case. Conservatives look out at the political world today and see it as being run by a progressive establishment. The old system is teetering or gone. Progressives, though surely aware of their enhanced status, elect for obvious reasons to claim that the decisive power lies, much as it did in the past, with the big interests and a capitalist economic elite. Leaving the ideological dimension of the term aside, supporters of which side now think of themselves as "conservative" in the literal sense of being conservers or defenders of the prevailing order? It is not now conservatives, and not yet progressives.

The general public sees problems all around—a loss of opportunity, a low-growth economy, stagnant wages in the middle class, mounting debt, and lingering poverty. Yet who or what is accountable? For progressives the fault continues to lie with liberal capitalism. For conservatives it lies in the new system, progressivism, that was built supposedly to resolve these problems.

Where then is the left today? Gone is the pixie dust that Barack Obama sprinkled over American politics in 2008 that led so many, for a moment, to imagine a new dimension to American politics. The left today is all about the ideology of progressivism. It is fated to blame all ills on the shrinking part of the political order and society it does not yet fully control and to demand more measures to shrink it still further. Progressivism is on a treadmill, running either at a fast clip toward huge new piecemeal changes or at a faster clip toward a change to socialism. The direction is the same. ◆

Downtown Buenos Aires, Obelisco de Buenos Aires in background (2005)

MARIANA SILVIA ELIANO / GETTY

Down Argentine Way

The continental charms of Buenos Aires. by Thomas Swick

The old droll definition of an Argentine—an Italian who speaks Spanish, lives in a French house, and thinks he's an English gentleman—does not appear anywhere in *Buenos Aires: The Biography of a City*. James Gardner's history of the Argentine capital is a serious work that, inevitably, brings that assessment frequently to mind.

An art, architecture, and culture critic, and frequent contributor to these pages, Gardner traveled to Buenos Aires for the first time in 1999 and—like many visitors—fell under its spell, a great part of which has to do with its extreme unlikeliness. For it is a European city set down improbably in the Western Hemisphere. As Gardner writes in his preface: "I am aware of no other city in North, South or Central America that consciously sought to become a European capital, let alone that succeeded so well in this capricious quest."

Buenos Aires
The Biography of a City
by James Gardner
St. Martin's, 272 pp., $27.99

How that happened is the subject of this book. Gardner wrote it because, wanting to learn more about this glorious urban anomaly, he found no books in English on how it came to be. The city that gave us the Peróns and the tango was surprisingly unrepresented on library shelves. There was literature by its famous son Jorge Luis Borges, one of whose poems is quoted from in the introduction: *They tell me that Buenos Aires had a beginning, but to me it is as eternal as water and air*. Gardner cites this line as proof of his own belief that Buenos Aires has a quality that only a very few cities possess, one that is unconnected to

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Thomas Swick is a writer whose most recent book, The Joys of Travel, *will be published in May*.

age, size, beauty, or place in history. And that is “the ability to awaken in its inhabitants a vague and poetic sense of infinity and eternity converging upon a single place.”

To anyone who has had the pleasure of strolling Avenida de Mayo on a Saturday morning, that statement does not ring hyperbolic. But of course Buenos Aires, like all cities, grew gradually out of emptiness. Founded in 1580 (15 years after St. Augustine, Florida), the first settlement was located near what is still the spiritual heart of the city, the Plaza de Mayo. The Spanish explorer Juan de Garay drew up the grid that, over time, would be filled with gracious apartment houses and elegant theaters. Gardner calls it “perhaps the most conspicuous example of a grid in urban history,” noting that not even New York’s is adhered to with such unwavering consistency.

In those early years, the grid was rather grim, “a relentless series of muddy, filthy streets.” The city’s role was to serve Potosí, the silver mining center in Alto Peru (what is today Bolivia), and about the only trade that its citizens were permitted was in the hides and fat of cows (since meat, of course, could not be healthily exported). This period of dormant subservience lasted two centuries—though livestock flourished on the pampas, to such an extent that large herds of cattle were occasionally driven to the river banks to repel invaders.

Things took a turn for the better in 1778 with the enactment of the Free Trade Law and improved even more with independence in the early 19th century. The sun in the middle of the Argentine flag, we learn, is not just any sun; it is El Sol de Mayo, the sun that appeared, after a week-long absence, on May 25, 1810, the final day of meetings to declare independence.

While distancing themselves from the Spanish, Porteños (as the residents of Buenos Aires are called) were showing admiration for the British. The city boasted two tea salons—la Fonda Britannica and the Esmeralda Tea Garden—and one of its newest and most fashionable hotels was the Hotel de Londres. London was where the most famous portrait of Bernardino Rivadavia was painted.

One of the pleasures of this book is reading about towering historical figures you’ve never heard of (unless you’ve been to Buenos Aires and walked the streets and crossed the plazas that bear their names). Rivadavia, president of the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata and former ambassador to London and Paris, was the first to embody the dream of re-creating Europe in the port city, “the defining dream,” as Gardner calls it, “of Porteño history.” Yet it was the Europe of England and France that attracted him and others who followed; Rivadavia’s goal was to eliminate the influence of Spain.

He created the prestigious University of Buenos Aires and advocated for the Argentine Museum of Natural Sciences. Possibly his greatest achievement—though it wasn’t accomplished in his lifetime—was to relieve the monotony of the urban grid by widening certain streets into major boulevards.

Rivadavia was followed by Juan Manuel de Rosas, a dictator whose only contribution to the city and the country seems to have been a legacy of fear. Gardner goes so far as to suggest that because of Rosas, Buenos Aires could possibly be “the birthplace of totalitarianism.” He calls Rosas’s secret police, the Mazorca, precursors of East Germany’s Stasi. An infinitely more endearing character was Bartolomé Mitre—poet, biographer, translator, founder of *La Nación* newspaper, and president of Argentina during 1862-68. Gardner includes a poem that the young Mitre wrote to his beloved hometown—the first line of which you can almost imagine being sung by Carlos Gardel—and remarks: “In the entire corpus of earlier Argentine writing, no one had expressed so forcefully or so personally a love of the city of Buenos Aires itself.”

The city was about to become a lot more lovable. The seed of its transformation was carried, oddly enough, by a French steamer, *Le Frigorifique*, that arrived in the city on Christmas Day, 1876. Its principal cargo was meat; its aim was to show that, thanks to new French refrigeration techniques, perishable foods could safely be shipped long distances. With herds of cattle on its pampas, Argentina did not need meat from Europe; but thanks to *Le Frigorifique* (a name as historically noteworthy as the *Maine*, and much more fun to say), Europe would soon be receiving meat from Argentina.

After centuries of circumscribed commerce, the country, and its capital, climbed into wealth. By the turn of the 20th century, Argentina was the eighth-richest country in the world, and Buenos Aires was on its way to becoming “the Paris of South America.” The City of Light was not the only model for the 20th-century Argentine capital, but it was the predominant one.

> Like the Beaux Arts tradition itself, the resulting architecture was not entirely Gallic in taste, but it was entirely historicist, even when it evoked the Italian Renaissance, Tudor, Spanish colonial or Gothic styles.... The thing to which [Porteño architects] all aspired, whatever the cost or inconvenience, was Europe and especially Paris.

The city’s newfound prosperity attracted immigrants, many of them Italian, often from Genoa. Large numbers of them settled in La Boca, the colorful neighborhood now popular with tourists. Its brightly painted houses, Gardner explains, are the result of happenstance: The inhabitants used whatever paints were left by sailors painting ships at the nearby docks and, because quantities were invariably small, one house could get several blocks of colors. He also notes, as further evidence of Anglophilia, that the local soccer team—the Boca Juniors—carries an English name, as does River Plate (stopping short of mentioning that they both play an originally English if not necessarily gentlemanly game). European Jews were also an important part of immigration; the Jewish community in Buenos Aires is, today, the seventh largest in the world.

But Gardner’s focus is more on the buildings than on the people who live in them: Even an international star like Gardel gets little attention, though it is noted that the art form that he helped popularize—the tango—was "the first cultural invention of the Rio de la Plata to conquer the larger world." Out of the streams of European influence emerged a music quintessentially Buenos Aires.

Even the architecture, while lavishly—slavishly—European, occasionally experienced an alteration on the new continent. The use of wrought iron was so widespread, even in the poorer neighborhoods, that it became a kind of defining symbol of the city. In a more unusual development, the corners of blocks were blunted rather than run together at right angles, so that every intersection "becomes a theater for four separate urban events, whether a shop, a restaurant, or a residence, each clamoring in some colorful and emphatic way for the attention of the pedestrian." One finds this blunting, or chamfering, in some other cities, but nowhere is it as ubiquitous as in Buenos Aires. It is also one of the things that makes it such a delightfully walkable city for visitors, who are often oblivious to this contributing factor.

The city's Golden Age lasted from 1880 to 1920, and the years following it are covered with diligence, if less exuberance. During the repressive rule of Juan Perón, Borges lost his job at the Biblioteca Nacional and was assigned one as a state poultry inspector, which he refused. The physical city fared even worse (deprived as it was of the option of refusal), and the architecture of the time was, for the most part, a reflection of the awfulness of the regime.

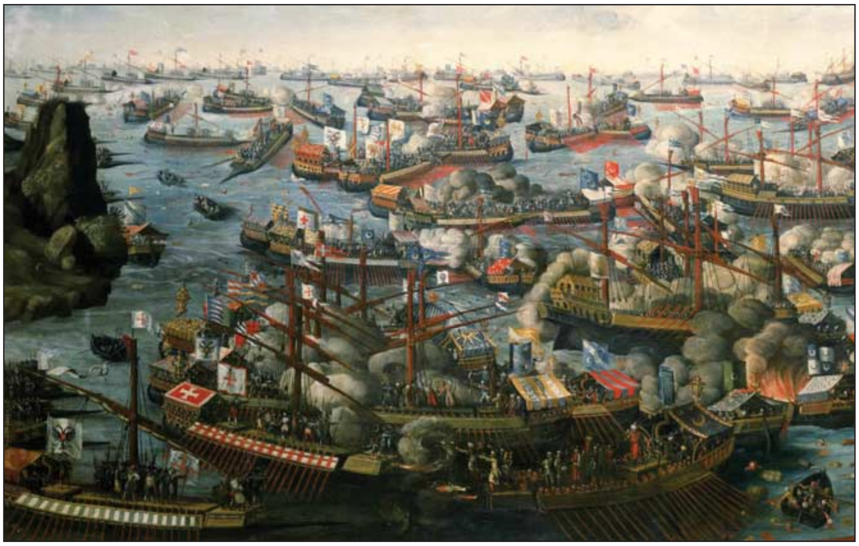
But most of the stylish buildings still stand in the city on the banks of the Rio de la Plata (even if one can no longer see the river). The beautiful parks remain, as do the grandiose monuments, the energizing streets, the theatrical intersections, and the elaborate sculptures in Recoleta Cemetery, to which Gardner devotes several pages. You come away from *Buenos Aires* with a strong desire to visit Buenos Aires—or if you already have, to return and see all the things that escaped your notice. ◆

B&A

Through Albanian Eyes

A skirmish in the war between Islam and Christendom.

BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ



The Battle of Lepanto *by unknown artist (late 16th century)*

Agents of Empire
Knights, Corsairs, Jesuits and Spies in the Sixteenth-Century Mediterranean World
by Noel Malcolm
Oxford, 640 pp., $34.95

Noel Malcolm, senior research fellow at All Souls College Oxford, is a polyglot and polymath. Skillful with sources in Albanian, Romanian, Serbian, modern Turkish, Italian, and other languages, he is probably best known for books produced during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, *Bosnia: A Short History* (1994) and *Kosovo: A Short History* (1999). He has published definitive editions of the writings of Thomas Hobbes and was knighted in 2014.

His latest—*Agents of Empire*—a highly engaging (if complex) work began in obscure circumstances and deals with arcane matters. Still, Malcolm is gifted in moving from the microcosm to the macrocosm, and his survey of competing European and Eurasian dominions more than four centuries ago offers many useful insights for the present.

This study originated with Malcolm's discovery, two decades ago, of a reference in a 16th-century Italian volume on the Ottomans. A passage noted that a treatise on Albania, then the main Ottoman province in Europe, had been written by a certain Antonio Bruni, described as Albanian himself. Malcolm saw this with excitement as probably the first such work by an identified Albanian.

Malcolm dedicated an extensive investigation to Bruni, his cousins, a

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Stephen Schwartz is a frequent contributor.

family named Bruti, and the environment in which they lived and served various masters. The "empire" in the title is somewhat general insofar as the narrative covers several realms: These include the Ottomans, the Habsburgs (Spain and Austria), France, and Russia, along with the significant roles played by the papacy, the Knights of Malta, and the city-state of Venice, with possessions along the eastern Adriatic coast, including (most importantly) Dubrovnik, plus Romania and Poland. Much of the geopolitical developments were played out against the background of the Ottoman subjection of a great part of Hungary, beginning in the mid-1520s.

Religious communities involved in this broad tapestry of events include Roman Catholics, Orthodox Christians, Protestants, Jews, Sunni Muslims, and, in Persia, Shiite Muslims. Rivalries between sects were as prominent as those between states. The main action takes place roughly between the failed Ottoman siege of Vienna (1529) and the Battle of Lepanto (1571), in which the Ottomans were defeated.

The Brunis and Brutis were Albanians from towns that today are in Montenegro and little known to modern foreigners, but which sit on the frontier between the Albanian and the Slavic cultural spheres. During the time Malcolm describes, they were Ottoman possessions. Antonio Bruni was born in the mid-1550s, Malcolm surmises, and was educated by the Jesuits. His uncle Antonio Bruti, born in 1518 in the Ottoman-occupied Albanian port of Lezha, began as a trader but felt compelled to move from Lezha under Ottoman pressure. Commerce drove the struggle for influence in the Mediterranean no less than religious differences and reasons of state, and a good portion of the trade Malcolm describes was piracy, conducted from the Albanian harbors and often comprising the capture and ransom of shipping.

While Christendom and the Ottomans were at odds over the greater issues of religion, Christian rulers allied with Istanbul against competitors within their own faith. France, in particular, under Francis I, was concerned to limit the reach of the Habsburgs and had no compunctions about aligning with the Ottomans to do so. The sultans gained partners, at one time or another, among the Poles (against the Habsburgs and Russians) and with Venice. Spain still harbored a captive Muslim population and was a more serious foe of the Ottomans.

The papacy, then a leading power, attempted assiduously to unite Roman Catholics, Orthodox, and Protestants in a "holy league" that would repel the apparently easy advance of the Ottomans into Europe. The best-known such effort, the Council of Trent, met in the Italian city of Trento from 1545 to 1563. As described by Malcolm, the expectations of the Roman pontiffs in summoning the European Christian rulers to Trento were naïve: The Russian czar Ivan the Terrible was invited if he would swear fealty to Catholicism, which was out of the question. Similarly, Protestant representatives were present at the council but denied substantial participation, although the council was called to respond to both the Ottoman conquests and Protestant demands for reform. Still, the popes were nothing if not assiduous in searching for collaborators. As Malcolm notes, in 1562, Pius IV sent an agent to the shah of Persia, who was at war with the Ottomans, soliciting his participation in a unified anti-Ottoman campaign.

Through a daunting labyrinth of intrigues, the Albanian Brunis and Brutis made their way—including as combatants in the Battle of Lepanto, where the Ottoman fleet was defeated by the holy league mainly composed of Spain, Venice, and the papal states. In the seaborne combat, one member of the Bruni family, Giovanni, the Catholic archbishop of Bar, was an Ottoman hostage; on the other side, his brother Gasparo Bruni was captain of the papal flagship. Malcolm speculates that during the battle, the two brothers were no more than a hundred yards distant from one another. But Archbishop Bruni was murdered by Christian fighters who swarmed aboard the Ottoman ships and plundered the lives and possessions of Christian galley slaves.

Malcolm is superb in his description of Lepanto, which most historians treat as the culmination of Ottoman strength. The encounter took place October 7, 1571, in the Gulf of Patras, off the west coast of Greece, but is named for the port from which the Ottoman fleet sailed. In addition to the diplomatic scheming and jealousy over command of the Spanish, Venetian, and papal fleets that led to it, Malcolm has assembled a thorough accounting of its maritime details. Some 40,000 Christian and Ottoman soldiers participated in the clash. Both the Christian and Ottoman fleets were manned by numerous fighters armed with muskets and the lighter arquebuses, crossbows, and conventional bows. Malcolm points out that the military technology that produced firearms had not replaced the bow, which "had a much faster rate of fire . . . and [was] unaffected by rain." To their disadvantage, however, the Ottoman forces depended on the composite bow, which couldn't pierce armor.

According to Malcolm, the aim of the opposing naval forces was not to sink each other's ships but to serve as floating platforms for soldiers armed for hand-to-hand fighting. The point was to kill enemy personnel, raining shot and "Greek fire" (burning pitch) on their adversaries until they could board the ships and draw sufficient blood to prevail. The holy league won, but Malcolm dissents from those who argue that the Battle of Lepanto achieved anything permanent for the West: The Ottoman fleet was reconstructed rapidly, and soon Venice had entered into a humiliating peace with Istanbul. Malcolm also argues against the notion that Ottoman intentions in the 16th century were compelled by religious motives. Rather, Ottoman strategy was determined by a desire for security in the eastern Mediterranean more than expansion, and Ottoman hostility to Persia counted for more, in the 16th century, than aggression against Christendom.

Of the many rewards of Malcolm's massive contribution, his description of life at the seat of Ottoman authority in Istanbul is by no means the least. Spies and influential people of doubtful loyalties abounded in Renaissance Europe, both in Christian and Ottoman territories. The sultans maintained Christian rulers in place in conquered regions, such as their Romanian possessions. Christian captives converted to Islam and assumed prominent positions in the sultan's state. Malcolm gives much attention to a Serb-turned-Muslim, Mehmed Sokollu (original name Sokolovic), who served as grand vizier; he also discusses the crucial activities of Sokollu's adviser—and medical doctor to Sultan Selim II—the Jewish Solomon Nathan Ashkenazi. Christians-turned-Muslims, Christian tributaries of the Ottomans, and Jews like Ashkenazi maintained communications between the Ottomans and the Western empires and city-states.

Malcolm praises the Albanians, like the Bruni and Bruti families, for their physical courage, their martial endeavors, their frequent rebellions against their Ottoman rulers, and their personal loyalty. At the time of which he writes, Albania was a strategic asset, since it lies directly on the sea route between Istanbul and Venice.

And what of Antonio Bruni and his manuscript on the Albanians? Malcolm located the text in two Latin copies, one in the Vatican library and the other at a library in Venice. Only 4,000 words long, it describes the Ottoman-controlled territories in the Balkans, their religious and linguistic differences, and the possibility of defeating the Ottomans by mobilizing them. From this discovery, Noel Malcolm has produced a demanding but necessary and relevant work that will be read and reread for a long time to come. ◆

The Hills Beyond

How an Appalachian range became the Catskills.

by Jay Weiser

The Catskills
Its History and How It Changed America
by Stephen M. Silverman
and Raphael D. Silver
Knopf, 464 pp., $45

Stephen Silverman and Raphael Silver offer a boisterous, colorful history of New York's Catskill Mountains, but like the tummlers of yesteryear, once they depart, it's hard to remember what the noise was about. The Catskills have always been at the edge of the American experience—a hinterland of New York City. Unlike William Cronon's classic *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, which examined how 19th-century Chicago transformed the Midwest's ecology and economy, *The Catskills* offers loosely linked stories where the Big Apple is forever popping up to take over the narrative.

As the authors note, only in the last two centuries have people even called the Catskills a single mountain range. Despite heroic efforts to unify the story, the book is really about three regions: the Hudson Valley, at the center of American history and culture from 1750-1850; the remote, central Catskills, forever wild by statute and the primary source of New York City's water supply; and the southern Catskills, famed for their 20th-century Jewish resorts.

The problems with the Catskills-as-autonomous-region start at the beginning. The Hudson River was a water highway in both the French and Indian War and the American Revolution, but the theater's key events took place far south, in Manhattan, and far north, in the region's Lake George-Lake Champlain extension. The authors somehow discern George Washington's tactical genius from his string of New York military disasters in 1776, but it hardly matters: Washington never fought in the Catskills.

They turn to Washington Irving's short stories, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle," which satirize the vanishing Dutch world of the Hudson Valley and the disconcerting changes in postrevolutionary society. Irving was actually a New York City and Europe-based writer—though like his antihero Ichabod Crane, he later resided in the Hudson Valley on the opposite bank from the Catskills. Fortunately, two of James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, which similarly contrast the vanishing Native American culture with that of the European-descended frontiersmen, are actually set in the Catskills.

The Hudson River School painters also contrasted the vanishing rural world with the booming 19th-century economy. Even as the Hudson Valley bustled with tanneries, factories, and bluestone quarries providing the paving for New York City's sidewalks, painter Thomas Cole and his fellow Romantics found the sublime in Katterskill Falls, setting nature's untamed magnificence against civilization's distant encroachments. Lacking an eye for art—or, perhaps, adequate search skills in Google Images—Silverman and Silver contrast the Hudson River School painters with the allegedly "cold" landscapes of England's J.M.W. Turner, which were far more melodramatic exemplars of Romanticism.

While the authors commendably provide copious citations (in contrast to many popular histories that expect readers to take it on faith), their long quotations from antiquarian sources add charm at the price of clarity. More recent histories are neglected: The discussion of Catskills native Sojourner Truth and New York slavery omits her pre-abolitionist membership in the radical Kingdom of Matthias sect. The book's organization is neither fully chronological nor topical, making it hard to follow the thread.

The Catskills becomes more coherent

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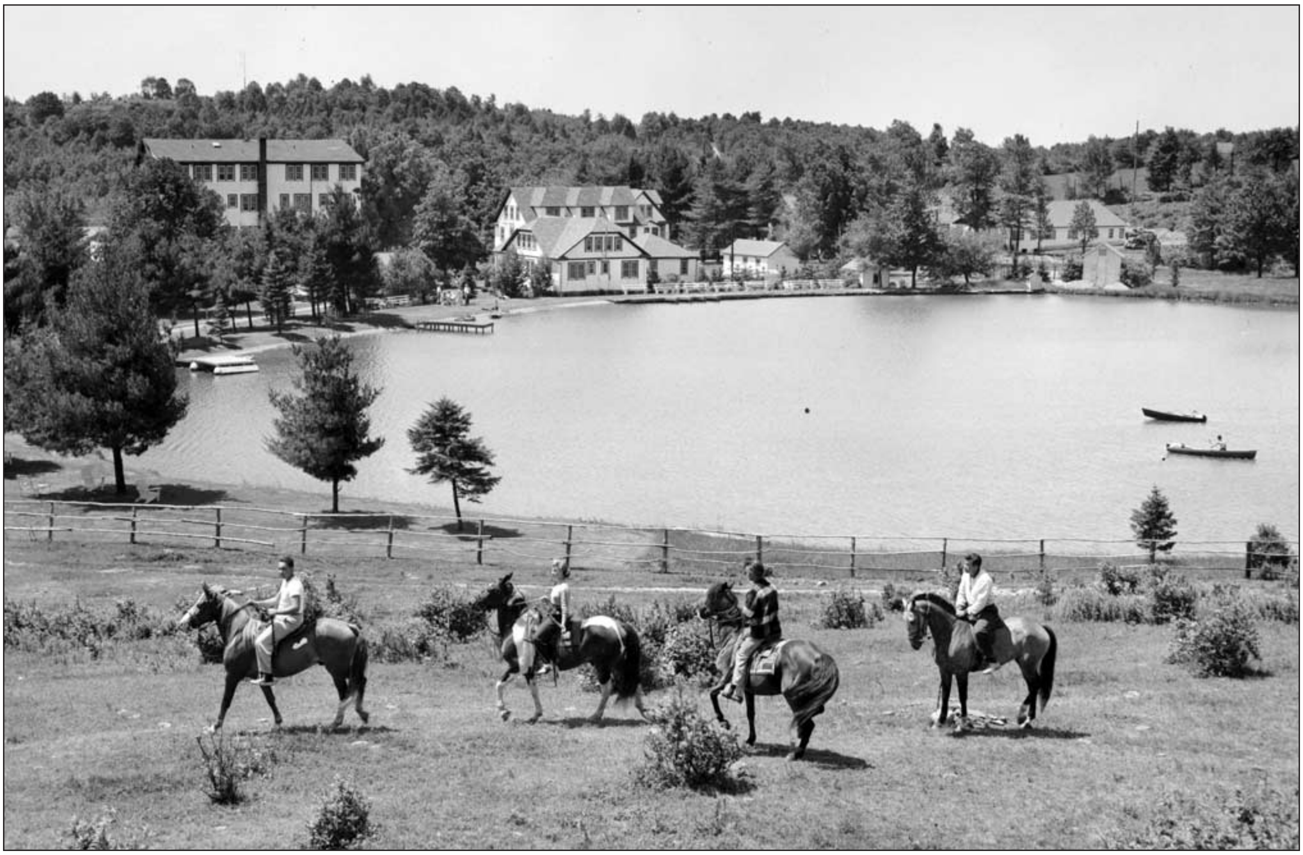

Vacationers on horseback (1955)

PICTORIAL PARADE / ARCHIVE PHOTOS / GETTY

with the rise and fall of Catskills resorts during 1850-1975. Here many of the long quotes come from interviews with the Grossinger's resort family. The real story is the creation of a resort hinterland for New York City parallel to Chicago's creation of a Wisconsin resort region. Steamboats created a market for Hudson Valley luxury resorts (restricted to Christians in most of the 19th century), and rail later opened up the southern Catskills.

By the 1910s, the railroads, eager to attract traffic, offered fares to suit the pocketbooks of members of the massive Eastern European Jewish immigration. Unlike Irving, Cooper, and the Hudson River painters, the Jewish immigrants lacked nostalgia for a past that their forebears were not part of. Nor, coming from industrial New York City and its giant garment industry, did they share the upscale 19th-century quest for the unspoiled sublime. And so the previously remote (and therefore less expensive) southern Catskills became the scenic-yet-raucous Borscht Belt, with a range of accommodations from humble bungalow colonies to the 1,200-room Concord Hotel, where ladies were expected to change their finery three times a day.

The Borscht Belt also served as a training ground for entertainers: Milton Berle, Buddy Hackett, and Joan Rivers strutted their stuff at the Concord's Imperial Room. The same rising incomes and affordable train fares (as the authors fail to note) created the heavily Jewish Miami Beach winter resort starting about a decade later. The Borscht Belt resorts' colorful family owners (and colorful gangsters) and their increasingly lavish facilities (often designed by the pop-modernist master architect Morris Lapidus, best known for his Fontainebleau Hotel in Miami Beach) make for the most vivid episodes here.

By the 1960s, home air conditioners made Catskills summers less essential for sweaty New Yorkers, passenger railroads gave way to inexpensive highway and air travel, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 made it illegal for resorts to bar Jews. Europe and the American West became more enticing destinations. The famous Woodstock concert of 1969 was a premonition of decline: Hippies wanted free love and free tickets, not costly resort vacations. Starting in the 1970s, the Borscht Belt eroded. Attempts to revive the region with casino gambling were blocked for 40 years; but now that the gambling boom has turned to bust, New York's license raj has at last permitted a casino on the site of the old Concord. Today, the Catskills are an attraction for Hasidic Jews (who like the low costs and close-in living afforded by former bungalow colonies) and yuppies priced out of weekend homes in the Hudson Valley proper. Kutsher's Hotel and Country Club was the last resort to close, in 2013. It was demolished to make way for a new hotel offering today's vacationers "yoga sciences" and "ayurvedic medical treatment."

Forever a hinterland, but now for a new generation. ◆

The Eliot Shelf

Old Possum's prose is gathered together.

BY EDWARD SHORT

Writing in 1920 of Algernon Swinburne, the appeal of whose enraptured lyricism was not self-evident to the generation that had survived the Great War, T.S. Eliot pronounced, in that marvelously authoritative tone of his, that "it is a question of some nicety to decide how much must be read of any particular poet" before delivering the sort of definitive verdict that his readers came to relish.

> There are some poets whose every line has unique value. There are others who can be taken by a few poems universally agreed upon. There are others who need be read only in selections, but what selections are read will not very much matter. Of Swinburne, we should like to have the "Atalanta" entire, and a volume of selections which should certainly contain "The Leper," "Laus Veneris," and "The Triumph of Time."

That Eliot should have given serious reconsideration to a poet whom many of his contemporaries thought passé was characteristic. Throughout his career, he would come to the defense of other unfashionable poets, particularly Dryden, Tennyson, and Kipling, each of whom, as some of the uncollected early pieces in this magnificent edition show, had a strong influence on his fledgling talent. Yet to come to the defense of Swinburne in 1920 showed great critical confidence. Here, in a reassessment of what most critics might have regarded as the poet's greatest liability, we can see the emergence of an altogether new critical intelligence.

Edward Short is the author, most recently, of Adventures in the Book Pages: Essays and Reviews.

The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot
The Critical Edition
Volume 1: Apprentice Years, 1905-1918
edited by Jewel Spears Brooker
and Ronald Schuchard

Volume 2: The Perfect Critic, 1919-1926
edited by Anthony Cuda
and Ronald Schuchard
Johns Hopkins, online edition, $185

> Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified. They are identified in the verse of Swinburne solely because the object has ceased to exist, because the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life. . . . In Swinburne . . . we see the word "weary" flourishing in this way independent of the particular and actual weariness of flesh or spirit. The bad poet dwells partly in a world of objects and partly in a world of words, and he never can get them to fit. Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne.

Eliot also saw in Swinburne precisely the sort of poet-critic—Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge, and Arnold were others—whom he was working to emulate. For Eliot, "Swinburne's essays have the value of notes of an important poet upon important poets." And the proof was that, like Eliot himself, "he read everything, and he read with the single interest in finding literature." No one who revisits both pieces gathered here on Swinburne will fail to concede Eliot's contention, which is as true of himself as it is of Swinburne:

> The author of Swinburne's critical essays is also the author of Swinburne's verse: if you hold the opinion that Swinburne was a very great poet, you can hardly deny him the title of a great critic.

Since Eliot's death in 1965, admirers of his work have often criticized his literary executor, Valerie Eliot, for not bringing out her husband's complete prose sooner. After all, if it had been made available at an earlier date, many of the attacks on Eliot's reputation might have been more easily parried. Yet, now that this laudable edition has appeared, it is clear that Valerie Eliot (who died in 2012) proved an admirably meticulous, thorough, and above all responsible executor of her husband's literary estate. This edition will stand as a monument to her good judgment and good taste, especially since she chose Ronald Schuchard, who has done such splendid work on Oxford's *Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats*, as editor in chief.

Here, Schuchard is overseeing what promises to be a veritable intellectual biography of Eliot. This searchable online edition—which is also being prepared for print publication—will, when all eight volumes are complete, include all of Eliot's collected essays, reviews, lectures, commentaries from the *Criterion*, and letters to editors, including more than 800 uncollected and 150 unpublished pieces from 1905 to 1965.

As Schuchard shows, Eliot was ambivalent about the quality of his uncollected prose, telling his friend John Hayward (whom he initially thought to make his literary executor) that he could never revisit his scattered pieces "without acute embarrassment." Indeed, Eliot dissuaded Hayward from preparing any of his uncollected pieces for publication because, as he said, "I have had to write at one time or another a lot of junk in periodicals the greater portion of which ought never to be reprinted."

Later, after making his wife his executor, he relaxed this astringency. Yet Schuchard is certainly right to quote something Eliot wrote of Baudelaire in 1927 to justify this exhaustive edition.

> It is now becoming understood that Baudelaire is one of the few poets who wrote nothing, either prose or verse that is negligible. To understand Baudelaire you must

> read the whole of Baudelaire. And nothing that he wrote is without importance. He was a great poet; he was a great critic. And he was also a man with a profound attitude toward life, for the study of which we need every scrap of his writing.

One can revel in many of the uncollected pieces included here without denying that the fastidious judge in Eliot saved the best for the collections published in his lifetime, including *The Sacred Wood* (1920), *For Lancelot Andrewes* (1928), *Selected Essays* (1932, 1934, 1951), and *On Poetry and Poets* (1957). Nevertheless, while both the collected and uncollected pieces enhance Eliot's stature as a critic of genius, they also show him to have been an impassioned champion of what Cardinal Newman called "the sovereignty of Truth." Moreover, many of the pieces show that, for all of his brashness, Eliot had a certain humility that makes his brilliance doubly winning. In a 1959 letter recalling a tutorial course he taught at University College London in 1916, he wrote:

KATHERINE MESSENGER

> I was working in a bank during the day-time, and reviewing for two or three periodicals at night-time. The transport between Southall and Marylebone, where I lived, was sometimes interrupted too by the primitive air raids which took place during that war. . . . But I was happy in my classes and I must admit that I learnt more about English literature than my class did, in as much as I had to read a good many books which I ought to have read but had not read, in order to take my pupils over the ground properly.

Most of the pieces in these first two volumes are either philosophical papers written when Eliot was contemplating a career in philosophy at Harvard or literary pieces. What is striking about the philosophy papers is that they have the same witty self-assurance as the literary essays. On the idealist philosopher T.H. Green, for example, Eliot observes that "Green's philosophy, like most others, is built upon facts which everyone can acknowledge, but he proceeds in the familiar way by throwing a rope in the air and clambering up it; and it is not until he has disappeared from view that we break the spell and realize that the magician was on the ground the whole time."

Certainly, Eliot could lay down the law with admirable dispatch. "Second Thoughts on Humanism" (1929) is included in the third volume but its force is characteristic of all of Eliot's philosophical pieces:

> Man is man because he can recognize spiritual realities, not because he can invent them. Either everything in man can be traced as a development from below, or something must come from above. There is no avoiding that dilemma: you must be either a naturalist or a supernaturalist. If you remove from the word 'human' all that the belief in the supernatural has given to man, you can view him finally as no more than an extremely clever, adaptable, and mischievous little animal.

The literary pieces are nicely exemplified by a 1919 essay on the French playwright and novelist Pierre de Marivaux, where Eliot's grasp of cultural history makes an early appearance, as does his delight in provocative generality.

> When Marivaux began to write plays, the age of Molière was well over; several years of weak imitation had prepared Paris for receiving favourably something entirely new; something making use of different machinery, investigating different emotions, disregarding all traditions and laying hold on a new world as the material of its art. Then came perhaps not the greatest, but certainly the most civilised period of French art and letters. Magniloquence and rhetoric were discarded; sentimentalism had not yet appeared. Moralists are replaced by observers. Instead of Rochefoucauld, we have Vauvenargues; instead of Madame de Sévigné, Madame du Deffand; instead of Molière, Marivaux; and instead of Racine also, Marivaux. Between Claude and Poussin on the one hand, and Greuze on the other, is Watteau; and the similarity between Watteau and Marivaux, both the men and the work, is more than superficial. Perhaps the temper which I am endeavouring to localise existed only in a very few men; but very few ever can be civilised. The age, at least, was propitious, and the painting of Watteau, the Dialogues des Morts of Fontenelle, and the plays and novels of Marivaux are the result. In England, there was Chesterfield, perhaps Horace Walpole. Since Rousseau, the flood of barbarism has left very few peaks. It is difficult to be civilised alone.

As a whole, the pieces here exhibit the apprenticeship of an intelligence that might have distinguished itself in history, philosophy, or theology but plumbed, instead, literary criticism because this was the discipline that could not only fuel his poetry but test his interests in history, philosophy, and theology. In his Clark Lectures on the metaphysical poets (1926), he gave his readers a good idea of the sort of eclectic criticism that he meant to produce. “The literary critic must remain a critic of literature,” he writes, “but he must have sufficient knowledge to understand the points of view of the sciences into which his literary criticism merges. You cannot know your frontiers unless you have some notion of what is beyond them.”

Yet knowledge for the sake of knowledge always incurred Eliot’s mistrust. As he insists in “Tradition and the Individual Talent” (1919): “A poet ought to know as much as will not encroach upon his necessary receptivity and necessary laziness.” And for corroboration of this, he adduced the fact that “Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum.”

This creative understanding of knowledge accentuates the highly practical character of Eliot’s criticism. After all, although splendidly well read and full of self-deprecatory charm, he was never a litterateur. Nor was he a critic in any art for art’s sake sense. He wrote his essays, whether on the Elizabethan drama, Dante, Shakespeare, Marvell, Arnold, Pater, Seneca, or the darling of the music halls, Marie Lloyd, not merely to make sense of European culture but to revitalize it. Indeed, he founded the *Criterion*, which ran from 1922 to 1939, precisely to advance that often quixotic object.

Tackling questions of belief and unbelief was essential to this enterprise. In “Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca” (1927), he says of John Donne: “In making some very commonplace investigations of the ‘thought’ of Donne, I found it quite impossible to come to the conclusion that Donne believed anything. It seemed as if, at that time, the world was filled with broken fragments of systems, and that a man like Donne merely picked up, like a magpie, various shining fragments of ideas as they struck his eye, and stuck them about here and there in his verse.”

This could be a description of the Eliot misunderstood by many modernists before he succumbed to what William Empson derided as “neo-Christianity.” Yet Eliot was never indifferent to faith: Even before converting to Christianity his reading had given him a respect for its culture. As he remarks in the piece on Seneca, “The problem of belief is very complicated and probably quite insoluble”—though he also recognized that it was not a problem that one could shirk. In an uncollected 1913 piece on Kant and agnosticism, he writes:

Eliot was ambivalent about the quality of his uncollected prose, telling his friend John Hayward (whom he initially thought to make his literary executor) that he could never revisit his scattered pieces ‘without acute embarrassment.’

> The germ of skepticism is quickened always by the soil of system (rich in contradictions). As the system decomposes, the doubts push through, and the decay is so general and fructifying that we are no longer sure enough of anything to draw the line between knowledge and ignorance.

That use of the word “fructifying” might seem odd, unless we appreciate that for Eliot, as he wrote in his introduction to “The *Pensées* of Pascal” (1931), “the demon of doubt . . . is inseparable from the spirit of belief.” At the same time, he was unimpressed with the absolute posited by the British idealist F.H. Bradley, on whom he wrote his doctoral dissertation: “This Absolute is mystical, because desperate. Ultimate truth remains inaccessible; and it only remains for [skeptics] to shatter what little Bradley has left standing, by urging upon us that we have no right to affirm . . . that there is truth at all.” Which led the 25-year-old Eliot to pose the overwhelming question that J. Alfred Prufrock could never bring himself to ask: If there is an absolute that can reaffirm objective truth, what is it?

Thus, even in these early years, the appeal of Christianity had already become importunate for a poet who would not be fobbed off with philosophical abstractions. In his wonderful 1926 essay on the 17th-century Anglican divine Lancelot Andrewes, he speaks of this appeal by sharing with his contemporaries the inimitable prose of someone of whom most of them had probably never heard. Bradley might have understood metaphysics as “the finding of bad reasons for what we believe on instinct,” but Andrewes saw the supernatural in altogether different terms.

> I know not how, but when we hear of saving or mention of a Savior, presently our mind is carried to the saving of our skin, of our temporal state, of our bodily life, and farther saving we think not of. But there is another life not to be forgotten, and greater the dangers, and the destruction there more to be feared than of this here, and it would be well sometimes we were remembered of it. Besides our skin and flesh a soul we have, and it is our better part by far, that also hath need of a Savior.

Together, these fascinating pieces chart not only an arduous conversion, but the extent to which conversion was essential to the development of T.S. Eliot’s critical intelligence. With a total of eight volumes planned in this superb edition, we are in for an incomparable feast. ◆

B&A

Character Is King

Abe Vigoda, master of the second fiddle.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

There's a great joke about acting. One actor says to another actor, *Hey, I just got cast in* Hamlet. The other actor says, *I know this is embarrassing, but I've never read or seen it. What's it about?* The first one says, *It's about this guy, Gravedigger #2 . . .*

Nobody goes into acting to specialize in small parts, just as no one seeks a career as a middle-inning reliever in baseball or as a third-string quarterback in football. All actors want to be stars, the fixed points around which all other action revolves, onstage and off.

Stars are the primary recipients of the fame and adoration all performers falsely believe will sate the desperate hunger for attention that drives them to expose themselves on stage or screen. It follows logically for them that the more attention you get, the better your life will be, even though we have more than 100 years of evidence to suggest that a life lived in the spotlight can be a pretty awful one and that the loss of everyday anonymity is more often a living nightmare than the fulfillment of a glorious dream.

Stars are figures of controversy, too: People hate them as well as love them. And often the people who love them eventually come to dismiss them once fashions change.

No one feels this way about actors who *aren't* stars. No one is gunning for Gravedigger #2. Indeed, memorable character actors—those who fill secondary roles on stage, in the movies, and on television and come to be well known even though they are not at the center of the work they do—are among the most beloved people in the world. Case in point: Abe Vigoda, who died this past week at the age of 94.

Vigoda was a narrow, long-faced New York stage actor who had done some work in television when he got cast in a small but crucial role in *The Godfather* in 1971 as the proper Mafia lieutenant Salvatore Tessio—the one who quietly betrays Michael Corleone to the rival Barzini clan.

Vigoda's great scene comes when Tessio realizes he has been found out: "Tell Mike it was only business," he says. "I always liked him." Then he makes a halfhearted plea for his own life that he knows will fail. The brilliance of the moment is how Vigoda captures Tessio's punctilious concern with his own dignity even to the very last—the same punctiliousness that leads him to betray Michael because he believes the kid is not up to the job of running the Corleone empire.

One moment, however great, does not a legend make, and as we've learned, it turns out that Vigoda was kind of a legend. People said in the wake of his death that this was due to a false report of his death in *People* in 1982, to which Vigoda responded by posing in a coffin holding a copy of the magazine. But I don't think that's right. What really made Vigoda endure in pop-culture memory was that two years after *The Godfather* he took to the small screen in another secondary part—as the consummate depressive New Yorker, NYPD detective Phil Fish, on *Barney Miller*. Fish was a slow-moving, mournful hypochondriac who spent much of his shift in the bathroom, carried with him a donut cushion to help with his hemorrhoids, and conducted a running conversation about his woes on the phone with his unseen wife Bernice.

Vigoda appeared on the show for four seasons, and to my knowledge never cracked so much as a smile. He didn't speak all that much, either. He didn't need to. Whenever *Barney Miller* needed a laugh, all director Noam Pitlik had to do was cut to Vigoda's seen-it-all-and-it-was-all-pretty-lousy face. It was the deadpan performance to end all deadpan performances, one of the funniest turns in television history.

Of course, Vigoda didn't want to be in the background. He wanted to be a star. And so he complained and pushed and got himself a spinoff series called *Fish*, which ran for a season-and-a-half. On it, Fish and his wife (now unfortunately seen) raised foster kids. It was a lousy concept, and in any case it turned out that Vigoda couldn't hold anyone's interest when he was the center of attention. He couldn't have known this about himself because it would have been too much for any actor to bear; but what Vigoda had was the opposite of a star's charisma. Both in *The Godfather* and on *Barney Miller*, he was the embodiment of an ordinary person just trying to get by. And that is what character acting really is.

Stars are larger than life. Character actors are realistic representations of life. They're not heroes and they're not fantasy projections of what we would like to be. They are the people in movies and on television who truly remind us of ourselves.

The truth is that, deep down, every sensible person knows that while he may dream of being Hamlet, he's really just Gravedigger #2. He speaks in prose, not poetry. He's just a regular guy, not a tortured prince. And that's a good thing. After all, Hamlet dies young and tragically. And Gravedigger #2? He probably lives to 94 and dies peacefully in his sleep. Just as Abe Vigoda did. ◆

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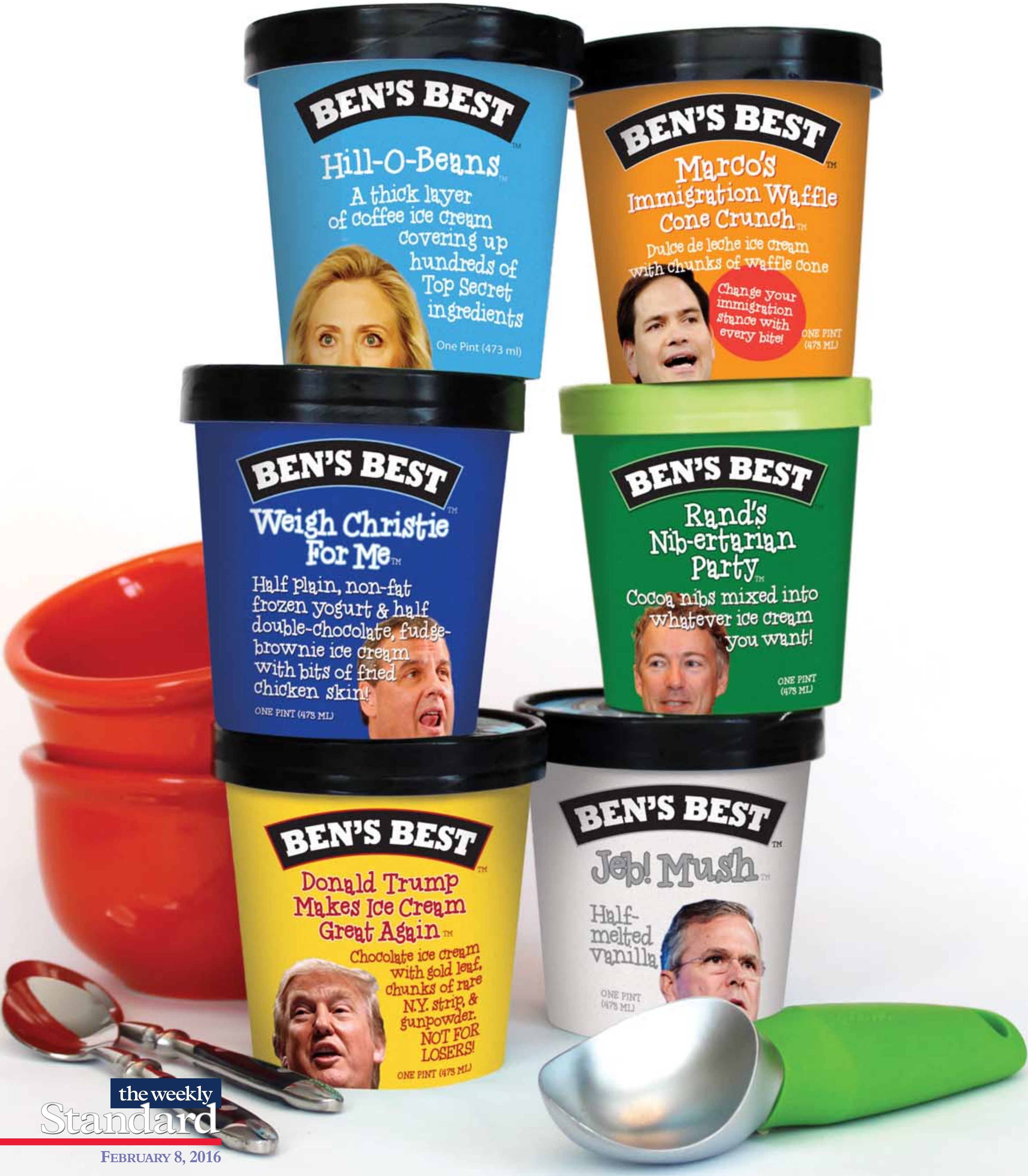
John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

PARODY

Ben & Jerry's cofounder Ben Cohen honored Bernie Sanders with a special ice cream flavor called "Bernie's Yearning," released under a mock brand, "Ben's Best." —News item, January 25, 2016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RUBIO, CHRISTIE, AND BUSH, MICHAEL VADON;
PAUL AND TRUMP, GAGE SKIDMORE