

**UFOS AND
THEIR ENTHUSIASTS**
CHARLOTTE ALLEN

the weekly

Standard



THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE

JAMES W. CEASER & OLIVER WARD
on surviving a Trump presidency

Oliver Ward

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Conflating Smug with Science

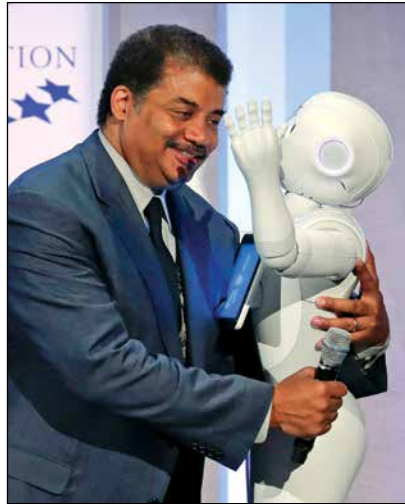
THE SCRAPBOOK has always had great admiration for scientific achievement. However, in recent years we've been repeatedly hectored about whether we are sufficiently reverential towards "Science," which has become a term of art on the left and is less about empirical discovery for the betterment of mankind and more about proving one's intellectual and moral superiority over those with retrograde political and religious views.

The most prominent figurehead for this liberal cult of Science is the ubiquitous astronomer Neil deGrasse Tyson, who has taken all of Carl Sagan's annoying traits and turned them up to 11. (Tyson was even behind the reboot of Sagan's *Cosmos* series that aired a few years back.) When Tyson's not hectoring us about atheism, he's usually on social media griping about inaccuracies in sci-fi films or explaining science in ways that only marijuana enthusiasts would find edifying. Sample tweet: "If there were ever a species for whom sex hurt, it surely went extinct long ago." We'd say our mind was blown by this speculative nugget, but we're still trying to figure out how Tyson has never heard of black widow spiders.

In any event, we were delighted to come across a glorious rant from Sam Kriss last week, "Neil deGrasse Tyson Is a Black Hole, Sucking the Fun Out of the Universe." Even more astonishing is that this article was published by *Wired* magazine, which is normally a vehicle for technological and scientific triumphalism. Along with eviscerating Tyson, Kriss does a

fine job outlining the basic problem of conflating smug with science:

"Science" here has very little to do with the scientific method itself; it means ontological physicalism, not



Neil deGrasse Tyson (left) and robot

believing in our Lord Jesus Christ, hating the spectrally stupid, and more than anything, pretty pictures of nebulae and tree frogs. "Science" comes to metonymically refer to the natural world, the object of science; it's like describing a crime as "the police," or the ocean as "drinking."

A few years ago, Tyson got caught concocting a handful of quotations. For instance, he was habitually spreading a George W. Bush quotation that didn't exist and misquoting the Bible to score cheap points about the former president's alleged disrespect of science and religious views. It took weeks of shaming Tyson to get a response, and in the

meantime the *Daily Beast* actually accused conservatives of declaring "war" on Tyson for demanding accuracy. Well, Kriss provides additional damning examples of Tyson playing fast and loose with facts:

His TV show *Cosmos* described the sixteenth-century astrologer Giordano Bruno as a martyr for science, executed by the Catholic church for proposing a heliocentric solar system. See how the idiots persecute us, the rational, with their superstition and their hostility to objective thought. The reality—that Bruno believed in magic, worshipped the ancient Egyptian god Thoth, and was executed not for heliocentrism but for denying the divinity of Christ—is ignored, because that isn't F—ing Science Love. Or when [Tyson] decided that "Italy valued cathedrals while Spain valued explorers. So worldwide, five times as many people speak Spanish than Italian." A spurious reconstruction of the past from present conditions, or the I F—ing Love Scientific theory of history: successful tribes were populated by little atavistic Carl Sagans; if Italians didn't slaughter millions in the New World it isn't because the peninsula was at the time fractured into multiple city-states (some of them occupied by, uh, Spain) which supplied significant amounts of capital rather than colonists, it's because they weren't interested in spaceships.

Indeed, Neil deGrasse Tyson is a walking, talking reminder that having a Ph.D. doesn't make you a good scientist, let alone morally superior. If even *Wired* thinks Tyson's shtick is tired, maybe he'll decide to zip it for a while and spare us his offensively trite lectures about "Science." ♦

Pardons Without Begging

"I'll do everything I can to get disenfranchised voters entrenched," says Virginia governor Terry McAuliffe, who promised when he

ran for the office, he now says, to be "a brick wall" to protect their rights.

Perhaps his siege metaphors result from the rapid and unfavorable GOP reaction to his restoration last week of voting rights to 200,000 Virginia felons. Governor McAuliffe, former

chairman of the Democratic National Committee, warned Republicans to proceed carefully with any suggestion that the timing of his order is related to the current election year.

To be sure, the reenfranchised felons have to have served their

sentences and successfully completed any period of parole or probation in order to register to vote. Until 2013, when former Republican governor Bob McDonnell began to streamline restoration of rights procedures, Virginia was one of only four states in the country that still permanently disenfranchised convicted felons. McAuliffe has eased the restoration process, by executive order, several times since he took office in 2014.

THE SCRAPBOOK is willing to concede that there may be no (or few) crassly partisan ulterior motives in play. But we are struck with sympathy for one group that will be much affected—political pollsters, who break down the results from their respondents by demographic group, party affiliation, marital status, income level, and other so-called cross tabs. With the influx of this special class of the formerly nonvoting, they're going to have to update their Excel spreadsheets to include, among others, categories for murderers, rapists, embezzlers, drug lords, and drug ladies. Do we offend against political correctness? We would beg pardon, but ours may be the only remaining unpardonable offense. ♦

Scalia in the Dock

It wasn't just predictable, it was inevitable: The ritual calumnia-tion of the late Antonin Scalia has begun. A noisy scrum of faculty and students are protesting the naming of George Mason University's law school after the recently deceased Supreme Court justice.

The university has been given \$30 million—\$20 million from an anonymous donor and \$10 million from the Charles Koch Foundation—for scholarship programs in Scalia's memory, with those gifts to be memorialized by renaming the Arlington, Va.-based law school for Scalia. Ever-so-clever campus leftists at first mocked the plan by yukking it up over the unfortunate acronym they would deploy for the Antonin Scalia School Of Law. But that didn't

scuttle things. The university merely announced the name would be the "Antonin Scalia Law School."

But the left's contempt for Scalia was not about to be blunted that easily. When mockery failed, they turned to protest. In late April, the faculty senate convened, and as *BuzzFeed* reported, it was "a meeting full of angry student activists." (Are there any other kind?) They pushed for a resolution denouncing Scalia for making "numerous public offensive comments about various groups—including people of color, women, and LGBT individuals." And then, having sought to strip Scalia of his black judicial robes and dress him instead in the preposter-

ous white sheets of a Klansman, they had the risible audacity to denounce Scalia as "a significant contributor to the polarized climate in this country."

The faculty senate, by a vote of 21-13, expressed its displeasure at being associated with Scalia's memory. They worried that—ha!—the school would be seen as a "conservative institution," and not "a comfortable home for individuals with a variety of viewpoints."

Thus continues the closing of the campus mind. Serious and fair-minded men and women are treated with contempt and then dismissed as being the divisive ones. Conservative views are redlined in the name of



protecting space for diverse opinions.

That said, in *THE SCRAPBOOK*'s opinion, it is probably a mixed blessing to adorn any law school, even one like GMU's that is home to distinguished conservative scholars, with the name of Justice Scalia. It was a deeply generous gesture by the Friends of Nino, but as happens all too often these days, their generosity provided an opportunity for grandstanding faculty and students to reciprocate with the gracelessness and ill will that have sadly come to be associated with the modern university. ♦

Prizewinners!

If we may quote ourselves, "Movies have the Oscars. TV has the Emmys, Broadway the Tonys. And the conservative movement has the Bradley Prizes." Last week, the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation announced the first two recipients in its annual celebration of individual achievement in the cause of freedom (up to four awards are bestowed each year), and we're delighted to congratulate Charles Murray and Andrew Roberts, both distinguished writers

and both occasional contributors to these pages.

Roberts, a celebrated historian, has filled an imposing shelf in *THE SCRAPBOOK*'s study with highly readable volumes, among them biographies of Napoleon, Lord Salisbury, and Lord Halifax, as well as his engaging sequel to Churchill's *History of the English-Speaking Peoples*.

Bradley Foundation president Michael W. Grebe rightly called Murray "an intellectual giant" as well as "a preeminent social scientist who has made monumental contributions to his chosen field." *THE SCRAPBOOK* also has a shelf filled with Murray's works and enthusiastically recommends all of them—from the pathbreaking 1984 work *Losing Ground*, which paved the way for welfare reform, to his heartfelt cry of rebellion against the regulatory state, *By the People: Rebuilding Liberty Without Permission* (2015). We also heartily urge readers to listen (or relisten) to his extended conversation with our boss—available at conversationswithbillkristol.org—of which Murray said, "Bill Kristol draws me out on things I haven't said elsewhere, except occasionally at dinner tables." ♦



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Going the Distance

My earliest memory of running—of making an effort to run as fast as I could—comes from first grade. There were a lot of footraces at school that year. They were short distance sprints across the blacktop and back. Maybe 75 yards. As often as not, I won. My only real competition was John Scotto, a kind, quiet kid whose family owned a local pizza chain. Where John was short and quick-legged, I was long and thin. He could beat me for 50 yards; after that I'd outstride him. I was fast.

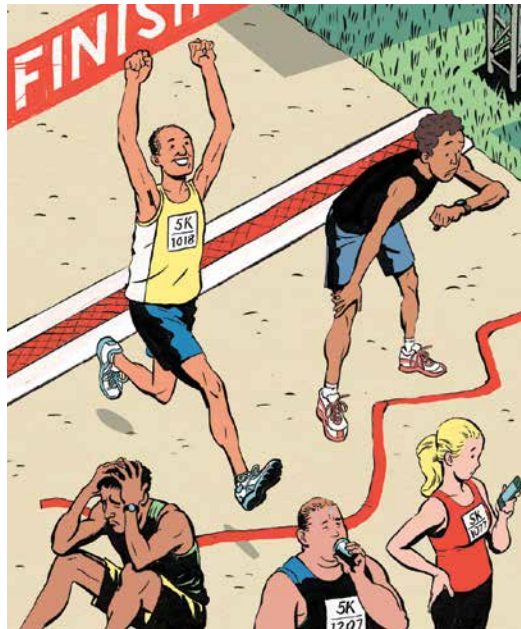
As I got older, I came to understand that while I was fast, I wasn't actually *fast*. In high school I ran track and was captain of the cross-country team, but my times were middling. I'd clock in at just under 19 minutes for the 5,000-meter cross-country course, which blew the doors off no one. In spring track I ran a sub-five-minute mile exactly once, and it almost killed me. As with John Scotto, I realized I needed longer distances.

One of the interesting aspects of distance running is that it's not a purely physical activity. In cross-country, for example, runners don't gradually become faster as they improve their cardiovascular systems: You don't cut 10 seconds one week and then 12 seconds the next. Instead, runners tend to stay stuck on plateaus around a certain time. Then they'll make an evolutionary leap, dropping, say, a minute from their time all at once. And this becomes their new plateau.

It is, literally, mind over body. It's not as if your heart and lungs suddenly become capable of running 5,000 meters 60 seconds faster. Rather, it's that your mind suddenly understands that you can go faster

and then allows your body to do it.

The same leaps happen with distances. An example: Thirteen years ago I was training for a marathon. One day I ran an 18-mile workout, the farthest I'd ever gone in one session. Toward the end my body began what seemed like a physical break-



down. I got wobbly and light-headed. My pace slowed dramatically. I felt like I was walking through molasses.

As I hit the 17-mile mark, I heard footsteps behind me. Hoping not to be passed by other runners in the last mile—nothing is more demoralizing—I glanced over my shoulder to determine whether or not I could hold them off.

What I saw was not another runner, but a gentleman, about the age of 70, strolling hand-in-hand with his wife. And they were gaining on me.

I managed to finish my run—by that point more like the shamble of a gravely wounded buffalo—without the couple passing me. Afterwards, I collapsed.

Two weeks later I did another 18 miles and ran like a gazelle. As I finished, my legs felt as though they had springs in them, and I was tempted to tack on a few extra miles. The only part of my body that had gotten in better shape was the stuff between my ears.

The mind does funny things while you run. For more than 20 years I ran without any distractions. No headphones, no Walkman. I enjoyed being alone with my thoughts. If I was in a good mood and having a pleasant day, I'd go for a run to savor it. If I was cranky or aggravated, I'd run to clear my head. Running in silence for an hour or two is a remarkable way to be present in your own life.

Yet age has robbed me of the patience for such things. These days, I find running indoors intolerable without a movie to watch. (You can't fully appreciate how slow *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* is until you've watched it on a treadmill.) And I loathe running outdoors without an audiobook. (I tend to favor Tom Clancy and Lee Child, but the most enjoyable run I've had in recent memory came doing five miles on a beach, at sunset, listening to *War and Peace*.)

The other thing age has robbed me of is speed. I'm not just slow, I'm *slow*. But as I've lost pace, I've noticed another odd transformation in my head. Back when I was fast, it never occurred to me to take any pride in running. It was simply part of my life. The payoff was the joy of the run.

The other day, on a lark, I ran a 5K. It was my first race in more than a decade. If you had given my 17-year-old self a look at my finishing time, he would have assumed that I'd lost a leg. But it was faster than I had expected. And for the first time in my life, I was proud of myself for a run.

JONATHAN V. LAST

Donald J. Obama

On Tuesday, April 26, Donald Trump won impressive primary victories in five states, victories that would seem to make it difficult (though not yet impossible) to deny him the Republican nomination. On Wednesday, in Washington, D.C., Trump read from a teleprompter a foreign policy speech designed to make it easy for Republican officeholders and apparatchiks to come around, to pretend to discover that, “Gee, Trump really isn’t that bad!” On Thursday, those Republican elites dutifully (if still somewhat halfheartedly) proclaimed that very discovery and began to slink around to supporting Trump.

Trump’s speech is in fact predictably unimpressive. The parts of it that are true are utterly unoriginal and strikingly superficial regurgitations of conventional conservative criticisms of the Obama administration, presented in a simple-minded way. There are also vague platitudes about America and the world indistinguishable from those that inhabit most such speeches.

Meanwhile, the parts of the speech that are striking aren’t true. The most distinctive passages are bowdlerized remnants from the writings of Pat Buchanan—bowdlerized because Trump lacks the courage of Buchanan’s convictions and thinks he can get the upside of Buchananism without paying any price in popularity. Thus Trump’s vague invocation of “America First” without being willing to explore the implications of this historically charged phrase. Thus Trump’s de facto appeasement of dictators without going out of his way to express sympathy with them. Thus Trump’s hostility to intervention around the world without considering the consequences of nonintervention. Thus Trump’s contempt for any attempt to foster freedom or democracy around the world without a willingness to acknowledge what kind of world he would thus be inviting.

Pat Buchanan never really came close to becoming president. But there is a president whose policies Donald Trump’s would in fact resemble: Barack Obama. No intervention against dictators? Check. No action to prevent mass slaughter? Check. Another reset with Putin’s Russia to break what Trump calls the “cycle of hostility” for which the United States and Russia are apparently equally responsible? Check. “Getting out of the nation-building business, and instead focusing on creating stability in the world”? Check! Trump’s agenda turns out to be Obama’s all-too-familiar agenda of national retreat masked by a rhetoric of America First bellicosity.

Obama justified his policies of retrenchment and retreat with appeals to gauzy global liberalism. Trump justifies his policies of retrenchment and retreat with appeals to chest-thumping Americanism. But there would be far more continuity between the two presidents’ policies than not. It would be like the Conservative Stanley Baldwin succeeding Labour’s Ramsay MacDonald in Britain in the 1930s: a new man, a different party, sometimes even contrasting rhetoric—but the same disastrous retreat in the face of the gathering storm.

Watching Trump dress up his continuation of Obama’s foreign policy of retreat in a costume that appeals to Trump’s supporters, we are tempted to prefer Obama, who at least offers us a foreign policy of decline without all the posturing and pretending. Obama never claimed he would make America great again. With him we more or less knew what we were getting.

But of course we also know what we’d be getting with Trump: a man who has never lifted a finger for America’s well-being, let alone America’s greatness. If Donald Trump succeeds Barack Obama as president, we will have two parties committed to an agenda of national decline. At the end of a term of Trump, even more than at the end



Trump's foreign policy speech, at Washington's Mayflower Hotel

of two terms of Obama, the closing sentence of *Federalist* No. 2 will sound sadly prophetic: “America will have reason to exclaim, in the words of the poet: ‘FAREWELL! A LONG FAREWELL TO ALL MY GREATNESS.’”

—William Kristol

‘So Much Phony Stuff’



Not rigging the system: Colorado's GOP conventioneers

For two weeks now Donald Trump has been whining that he is the victim of sinister, shadowy forces colluding to deny him the Republican presidential nomination. This miniature campaign began with an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* in which Trump complained about the Colorado convention, calling it “a rigged delegate-selection process.” A few days later he complained at a rally that the Republican primaries were “a rigged, crooked system that’s designed so that the party bosses can pick whoever they want” and that it’s all filled with “so much phony stuff.”

As a factual matter, none of these charges is true. The Republican primaries, caucuses, and state conventions are perfectly reasonable. You may not like the system. But it is not rigged, nor crooked, nor phony. The rules are predetermined and designed to reach an outcome in a particular manner, one that values not just popularity but the ability to rally members of the party. The system is orderly and transparent.

Trump no doubt objects to it precisely because the system *isn't* rigged, while he himself has spent an entire lifetime exploiting, distorting, and manipulating systems of rules and codes of conduct.

Let’s begin with his bankruptcies. Trump has filed for corporate bankruptcy four times, in 1991, 1992, 2004, and 2009. In a piece revealing how Trump’s companies always seem to go broke while Trump the man seems to stay rich, *Forbes* magazine explained that following his first bankruptcy, where Trump personally lost \$900 million, Trump quit backstopping his corporate debts with personal guarantees. His companies might engage in financially risky behavior, but Trump, personally, would never again suffer any consequences. Anyone to whom Trump owed money would get pennies on the dollar, but Trump himself never again lost a single one of his gold-plated toilets.

Needless to say, this is not the experience of most business owners in America. If you own a sandwich shop, or a law practice, your personal wealth is tied closely to the health of your business. You are probably incorporated, so that if your company fails your personal assets are protected—but you do not have access to large pools of capital without providing some security. If your business has to file for bankruptcy once, getting capital again will be difficult. Go bankrupt twice and it will be that much harder, if not impossible, to find vendors and banks willing to do business with you.

The number of business owners in America who could go bankrupt *four times* and somehow still find banks and vendors willing to work with them is vanishingly small. A man who could accomplish this feat is rigging the system, which Trump forthrightly admitted to *Forbes* in 2011, saying, “Basically I’ve used the laws of the country to my advantage.”

Next, let’s look at Trump’s political dealings. Trump has a long history of giving money to Democratic politicians. He has given money not just to Hillary Clinton and other local Democratic pols in New York, who are his friends and neighbors, but to Democrats across the country, including Harry Reid, Terry McAuliffe, Ted Kennedy, Tom Daschle, and Rahm Emanuel.

Early in the primaries Trump was attacked for these donations, with his rivals suggesting that they prove Trump is neither a conservative nor a Republican. Trump’s defense was that these donations had nothing to do with his political beliefs—he was merely greasing the skids for his business dealings. In 2011, Trump adviser Michael Cohen explained the donations to CNN: “It’s irrelevant as to whether or not it’s Republican or Democrat. . . . There are many business deals he does that that requires.”

Trump himself said that same thing to Jake Tapper last June: “I give money to everybody. . . . For instance, I’ve helped Nancy Pelosi, I’ve helped [Harry] Reid. . . . I was in business. I built a great company. They always treated me nicely.”

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Solyndra was treated “nicely” by Washington, too. Again: Trump’s political experience is—by his own admission—one in which he rigged the system by purchasing political influence in order to gain advantage for his business dealings.

Is this sort of thing illegal? Not exactly. But it means Trump himself is one of the people responsible for turning our politics into a crooked enterprise.

Finally, there are Trump’s personal promises, notably his wedding vows. Not everyone believes in the “till death do us part” clause. *C’est la vie*. But Trump’s serial violation of those vows—he is on his third marriage, so far—should make his supporters a bit nervous about how he’ll honor his campaign promises.

Trump has always been adamant that it’s important to rig the rules of divorce, just in case. In his 2007 book *Think Big and Kick Ass in Business and Life*, Trump wrote that “it is idiotic to get married without a prenuptial agreement.” Because without one, the divorce laws might require greater compensation for your ex-wife. People in love with Trump because he’s an anti-p.c. iconoclast who’s going to crush the corrupt political system and build a wall on the border with Mexico ought to understand that, in this relationship, they’re Marla Maples.

All of that said, what Trump does in his marriages is his business. What’s telling is what Trump has done in

other people’s marriages. Again, here’s Trump in his own words, from *Think Big and Kick Ass*:

The women I have dated over the years could have any man they want; they are the top models and most beautiful women in the world. I have been able to date (screw) them all because I have something that many men do not have. . . . Beautiful, famous, successful, married—I’ve had them all, secretly, the world’s biggest names, but unlike Geraldo [Rivera] I don’t talk about it.

This wasn’t a onetime boast. In his 1997 *Trump: The Art of the Comeback* Trump wrote, “If I told the real stories of my experiences with women, often seemingly very happily married and important women, this book would be a guaranteed best-seller.”

All of this underscores why Trump’s complaints about the Republican primary system are not just wrong, as a factual matter, but monumentally hypocritical.

What’s interesting is that, hypocrisy aside, Trump’s petulant, put-upon routine seems to have worked. Trump has used voters’ decency against them, by appealing to their innate sense of fairness. But they should understand that Trump’s claim is completely without merit.

It’s just another Trump con job. And it ought to be rejected as such.

—Jonathan V. Last

Time to Check Federal Regulatory Power

By **Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The U.S. government is built on a system of checks and balances. Skeptical of government power, the Founding Fathers made it difficult to encroach on the rights of citizens and established co-equal branches of government. They created frequent elections so that the people could hold elected officials accountable.

This is not happening in our regulatory system, where unelected and unaccountable regulators routinely ignore the will of Congress, toss aside the built-in checks on regulatory power, and impose their own agenda. These violations have real-world consequences—they hurt our economy, the rule of law, and businesses, workers, and consumers. Take a look at what this system has wrought.

Ozone Rule. Last fall, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued an ozone rule that imposes billions of dollars of costs

on state and local governments and is so aggressive that the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park would be in violation of it, as would more than 950 U.S. counties. This “nonattainment” designation would hamper development in local economies across the nation. Businesses could be denied federal air permits, putting construction—and construction jobs—at risk. Local transportation projects could lose federal funding. Plus, the rule is unnecessary. Since 1980, ozone-forming emissions have been cut in half.

Clean Power Plan (CPP). EPA’s so-called Clean Power Plan upends the entire U.S. energy sector by requiring states to cut carbon emissions from power plants. CPP would increase average electricity prices in 40 states by at least 10%, costing households up to \$79 billion. It would force many coal power plants to close down, cutting jobs and putting a squeeze on our most abundant and affordable source of energy. CPP greatly exceeds the authority Congress gave EPA. By requiring carbon

capture and sequestration technology, EPA’s new power plant rule forces an industry to do something that’s technologically impossible.

Waters of the United States (WOTUS) Rule. EPA also stepped beyond its authority on WOTUS, which expands federal jurisdiction over land features so much that simple roadside ditches would become federally regulated tributaries. The rule has left landowners and businesses uncertain about what they can do with their property, and it was finalized without the required regulatory impact analyses or consultations with states or affected stakeholders. EPA even improperly conducted grassroots lobbying to gain public support for WOTUS.

Americans respect our system of checks and balances and deserve a regulatory system that does too. Without it, rules are unfair, impractical, costly to businesses of all sizes, and fail to protect everyone’s rights.



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Abortion for Profit

At an April 14 MSNBC town hall, Ted Cruz was asked about abortion. The senator and presidential candidate made a point of mentioning last year's Center for Medical Progress undercover investigation showing Planned Parenthood striking illegal deals to sell fetal body parts for profit. "I will say virtually none of the network news would show the videos on air," Cruz said. "These videos showed Planned Parenthood officials essentially admitting to what appeared to be a pattern of federal felonies." MSNBC's Chuck Todd immediately pushed back. "A lot of controversy around how those videos were made," he told Cruz. "Some of the video was made up. Reenactments."

To be clear, there are absolutely no "reenactments" in the Center for Medical Progress's videos, and there is no evidence any of the horrifying footage was "made up." In fact, a few days after the town hall, the House Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives, chaired by Rep. Marsha Blackburn, held a hearing on the matter of whether abortion clinics were illegally selling fetal body parts. That hearing dramatically reinforced the veracity of the Center for Medical Progress's reports.

The evidence produced at the hearing, which Democratic House members fought to keep from being released, was damning. There was an abundance of marketing materials from fetal tissue brokers targeted at abortion clinics, advising them that harvesting and selling the organs of the unborn was "financially profitable" and "a financial benefit to your clinic." One fetal tissue procurement company even had a ghoulish e-commerce website with a menu of fetal body parts, such as hearts, tongues, and even scalps, that could be ordered. The unborn organ trade was undeniably lucrative—a single fetal brain could fetch more than \$3,000.

The Democrats' star witness at the hearing was Fay Clayton, a Chicago lawyer with a lengthy history working for pro-abortion groups. Her testimony was not effective, to put it mildly. She claimed the evidence showing a market in fetal tissue was altered. Then she said it referred to adult tissue; she was publicly corrected by Rep. Sean Duffy, who pointed out the materials in question specifically mentioned fetal DNA.

Duffy also called attention to the fact that Clayton and her husband have given Rep. Jan Schakowsky, the ranking Democratic member on the panel, over \$10,000 in campaign

contributions. Not only that, as journalist Mollie Hemingway (full disclosure: my wife) has reported, Clayton is at the center of a host of revealing conflicts of interest.

In 2005, Clayton held a fundraiser at her home for Schakowsky's husband, Chicago community organizer Robert Creamer, who was heading off to a stint in federal penitentiary for tax fraud and a multimillion-dollar check kiting scheme. These days, Creamer is out of prison and a partner at the political messaging firm Democracy Partners. Among Democracy Partners's clients are Planned Parenthood, EMILY's List, the Guttmacher Institute, NARAL, National Organization for Women, and Voters for Choice. One of Creamer's colleagues at Democracy Partners happens to be Christine Pelosi, daughter of Democratic House minority leader Nancy Pelosi.

It's clear that—like traffickers in fetal tissue—Democratic politicians regard the abortion industry as a lucrative source of income. So they can't be trusted to regulate it adequately. In addition to unseemly revelations about this organ trade, the circumstances surrounding the conviction of abortionist Kermit Gosnell (who had a fondness for collecting fetal parts in jars he kept in his house) for killing infants born alive suggest that, for political reasons, abortion has been for decades all but immune from the regulatory scrutiny given to every other major medical procedure.

Further, while it's fair to credit Chuck Todd for asking Hillary Clinton a genuinely tough question recently about whether the unborn should have rights, abortion coverage remains startlingly one-sided—when it's covered at all. The House Select Investigative Panel on Infant Lives hearing received almost no major media coverage. We suspect the media were conspicuously silent because they know coverage would discredit the firehose of ink spilled last fall trying and failing to undermine both the Center for Medical Progress and former presidential candidate Carly Fiorina's impassioned attempts to draw attention to their discomfiting revelations.

Planned Parenthood already issued a tacit acknowledgment of guilt when it announced last fall it would stop accepting money in exchange for fetal parts. But its defensive rhetoric remains fundamentally dishonest and will be so long as the media remain uninterested in the facts. House investigators still need to audit abortion clinics before they can definitively say the law against selling fetal parts has been broken, but they have more than enough justification to do so. Unfortunately, so long as abortion is given blanket sanction, it remains impossible for lawmakers to uphold the most basic standard of decency: to stop the wanton killing of others for the sake of profit and convenience.

—Mark Hemingway

An abundance of marketing materials from fetal tissue brokers advised that selling the organs of the unborn was 'financially profitable.'

Republican Party Down

Trump and the decaying GOP.

BY JAY COST



As the Trump campaign steamrolls ahead, most of us are still scratching our heads. *How could this have happened?* The usual answer focuses on the grievances of the Trump voter: economic anxiety, frustration with the status quo in politics, the desire to see somebody “tell it like it is,” and so on.

But that’s only part of the story. While it is important to appreciate the frustrations of those at the base of the party pyramid, we should

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not overlook problems nearer the top of the party architecture. Systemic institutional weaknesses, combined with a lack of leadership, have facilitated Trump in his takeover of the Republican party. The GOP is in grim shape, and Trump is a consequence of the party’s debility as much as he is a cause.

Edmund Burke defined a political party as “a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.” The Jeffersonian Republicans expanded on and democratized Burke’s idea. As James Madison writes in “A Candid State of Parties”:

The Republican party, as it may be termed, conscious that the mass of people in every part of the union, in every state, and of every occupation must at bottom be with them, both in interest and sentiment, will naturally find their account . . . in banishing every other distinction than that between enemies and friends to republican government, and in promoting a general harmony among the latter, wherever residing, or however employed.

This passage points to a tension at the heart of American parties. On the one hand, they are supposed to be principled coalitions whose purpose is to advance the general welfare. On the other hand, they must remain rooted in public opinion, which, per Madison, “sets bounds to every government, and is the real sovereign in every free one.” Political parties, then, must be closely connected to vox populi, but they must also regulate it.

A party strikes this delicate balance through a good organization run by good leaders. The organization is supposed to accomplish a lot of tasks: It formulates the principles upon which the party is based; it communicates them to the voters; it nominates and campaigns for candidates who will adhere to those principles in office; and it keeps an eye on how the victorious candidates perform in government, ensuring that they remain faithful to party principle. This organization requires what Madison called “a chosen body of citizens” that “may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.” Such leaders can “refine and enlarge the public views,” so that “the public voice . . . will be more consonant to the public good than if pronounced by the people themselves.” Martin Van Buren—the country’s first unabashed advocate of party government—put it best when he wrote, “The disposition to abuse power, so deeply planted in the human heart, can by no other means be more effectually checked” than by a party that

GARY LOCKE

combines a well-maintained organization with vigilant leaders, who support the principles of the party “ingenuously and faithfully.”

Judged by Van Buren’s standard, the Republican party of 2016 is a spectacular failure. Lacking sufficient organization and largely bereft of vigilant leaders, it has proven itself incapable of refining and enlarging public views around a principled commitment to the national interest. It is little wonder that a demagogic, ill-informed outsider like Trump is on the cusp of capturing its most important nomination. The party lacks the strength to resist him.

Take the party organization, broadly defined. The rules of the presidential nomination process are a mess and have been for some time. Systematically tilted toward candidates who can raise the most money, hire the best consultants, and garner the most media attention, their purpose is not to generate consensus within the party around the best messenger of the party’s platform, but to deliver a plurality victory to the frontrunner. That is exactly what is happening in 2016; the only difference is that Trump, who is anathema to most regular Republicans, has compensated by dominating media coverage. The fact that he fails to adhere to basic conservative principles, and is a sure loser in November, *should* put him at a disadvantage to win the nomination. But the rules do not disfavor such candidates. They should have been reformed years ago, but were mostly ignored except by the lawyers at the Republican National Committee who tinker with them.

Many state parties are struggling as well. Intraparty squabbles in states as far-flung as Idaho and Florida have split the party regulars from wild-eyed purists, debilitating the state organizations and leaving candidates to rely on local parties or outside groups to attend to the basic nuts and bolts of campaigning.

The party organization in Congress is an even bigger mess. By 1994, 60 years of Democratic dominance of

the legislature had created an expansive system of interest-group liberalism, whereby Congress distributes largesse to the interest groups that are most able to work the system to their advantage. Promising a “revolution” in 1994, congressional Republicans have actually *strengthened* that regime. From farm subsidies to corporate tax giveaways to payouts for the medical services industry to the congressional pork barrel, the list of Republican clients for big government payola is seemingly endless. None of this is consistent with a party that stands for a smaller government administered impartially.

In even-numbered years, when campaigning for office, the party’s congressional leadership makes all sorts of bold promises for changing government, soup to nuts. But those promises disappear in the odd-numbered years, when they remember to counsel voters about the limits of action under divided government.

And what of the party’s leaders? American history is full of statesmen who have overcome organizational impediments to advance the general welfare of the nation. Our Constitution was framed by such giants, who had the courage and wisdom to throw out the Articles of Confederation and rewrite the rules of government from scratch. Alas, such statesmen are always in short supply, and today’s Republican party is no exception.

The Trump campaign has made that point evident. Scott Walker had the decency and self-awareness to remove himself from the presidential race last fall, when it was clear that he could not win, and his continued presence would only aid Trump. But since the voting began in the winter, one candidate after

another has insisted on staying in the race well past the point of having a legitimate chance of victory. Jeb Bush finished fourth in New Hampshire and limped into South Carolina to split the anti-Trump vote. Marco Rubio made a massive push for Kansas and finished a distant third. Yet he lingered and in so doing facilitated Trump victories in Illinois, Missouri, and North Carolina. John Kasich has similarly facilitated Trump along the way, under the apparent misapprehension that winning Ohio was sufficient to merit the nomination.

And what about Republicans not running for president? With a few exceptions—such as Mitt Romney, Ben Sasse, and, once again, Scott Walker—the silence has been deafening. Paul Ryan, who as speaker of the House is in effect the leader of the party, has refused to call Trump out by name. Indiana governor Mike Pence, worried about his own reelection, has refused to throw his weight behind Cruz at this critical moment. Pennsylvania senator Pat Toomey did likewise, meekly announcing on the day of the primary that he had voted for Ted Cruz. The bulk of the party’s leaders seem content to do little more than keep their heads down and hope for the best.

This should hardly come as a surprise. For nearly a quarter-century, the party’s congressional leadership has usually refused to speak honestly with its voters. In even-numbered years, when campaigning for office, they make all sorts of bold promises for changing government, soup to nuts. But those promises disappear in the odd-numbered years, when they remember to counsel voters about the limits of action under divided government. Is it any wonder that those elected leaders cannot speak honestly and earnestly to voters about the calamity of a Trump nomination?

In sum, the Republican party is in a very bad way. Bereft of good organization—nationally, in many states, and in Congress—it is struggling to field and support principled, electable candidates for office and cannot

hold them accountable to those principles after victory. Worse, its leaders are pale imitations of the giants who carried the party banner in previous eras. Granted, in several of the states—like Wisconsin and Texas—the party seems capable of governing effectively for the public interest, but the national party lacks this kind of coherence, many states are in terrible shape, and congressional Republicans have mostly been an embarrassment.

It is fair to ask: What is the point of the Republican party these days? It has won an extraordinary number of offices over the last several cycles, as voters have registered their discontent with Obama-style liberalism. But to what purpose? If we believe Burke and Madison, then a party should elevate and manage the public discourse, around principles that advance the general welfare. Nobody honestly believes today's Republican party is capable of this on a national level. Instead, the complaint of Iowa senator James Grimes from 1870 is much closer to the mark:

It looks at this distance as though the Republican party was “going to the dogs”—which, I think, is as it should be. Like all parties that have an undisturbed power for a long time, it has become corrupt, and I believe that it is to-day the [most] corrupt and debauched political party that has ever existed.

Such a party hardly has the wherewithal to resist a demagogue like Trump. Lacking sensible organizations or trusted leadership, the party was vulnerable to such an infiltration, and he sensed it.

Perhaps it is time for those of us who genuinely believe that conservative principles will advance the national interest to consider the concluding line of Grimes's complaint: “I have made up my mind that when I return home I will no longer vote the Republican ticket, whatever else I may do.” If the Republican party is not capable of advancing conservatism, the challenge will be to find a vehicle that actually can. ♦

The Kingdom Conned

Doing the old economic development flim-flam.

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

The part of Vermont that is called “the Northeast Kingdom” includes three counties and fewer than 70,000 people and does not really live up to its name. It is undeniably beautiful to look at but equally hard to live in. The familiar woes of New England's small towns and farming communities—poverty, unemployment, drugs, domestic violence, and a kind of civic atrophy—are worse here than in any other part of the state.

But in 2006, it appeared that deliverance might be at hand in the form of some very substantial investor money. This cash infusion would amount to just under half a billion dollars, which might not be much in Texas or Manhattan or Silicon Valley but is still real money in Vermont. And the vision of what this money would do for the Northeast Kingdom . . . well, it was going to change *everything*.

A lot of the money would go into expanding and glamorizing the Jay Peak ski resort. There would be a new and very lush golf course (every ski resort needs one), a water park (likewise), and expanded trails and lodging and amenities. But this was just a start. The vision was much grander than that. The renaissance would spread from the ski mountain east to the Connecticut River and raise up a plant to manufacture windows. There would be a marina, a conference center, and, above all, a biotechnology center. This would be a state-of-the-art (of course) facility where researchers would explore the possibilities of using stem cells to grow human

organs for transplants. This kind of world-class operation would, naturally, require a world-class airport, so the project would include an expansion of the little airport outside the small city of Newport. That facility would become known as the Northeast Kingdom International Airport. The global economy comes to Dogpatch.

The help would not be coming in the traditional way—in the form, that is, of investors who believed they had found opportunities with an upside that justified risking some, or all, of their money. The Kingdom, it seemed, would be rescued by EB-5 money. This is a federal program that has been around since 1990 and permits foreign nationals to “invest” at least \$500,000 in job-creating ventures, in return for which they gain residency and a path to citizenship.

Patrick Leahy, Vermont's senior senator (the junior one is running for president), has been called the “godfather” of the EB-5 program, though for the last couple of weeks, he has been busily calling for its reform if not termination. The program had long been plagued with predictable difficulties of favoritism and rule-bending and outright corruption. But nothing on the order, so far, of what has happened in—and to—the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont, where, according to the Securities and Exchange Commission, the two men behind the design for revitalization have been engaged in an “alleged fraud [that] ran the gamut from false statements to deceptive financial transactions to outright theft.”

The two men are alleged to have siphoned off some \$200 million of the \$350 million that had already been

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The future Northeast Kingdom International Airport, in Newport, Vermont

raised. Some of that money went to buy an apartment in Manhattan's Trump Tower, which seems, somehow, foreordained. But that \$200 million is only money and, in fact, money on which the investors most likely never expected much of a return. They were okay with the idea of a 67,000-square-foot facility doing stem cell research in the middle of nowhere as long as those green cards came in the mail.

But there is no research facility, and no international flights have arrived, or departed, from the airport. The promise of big things to come has, however, resulted in the leveling of a section of downtown Newport that was to be called "Renaissance Block." The rubble remains where the office buildings and retail spaces were supposed to rise up, and the locals now call it "little Beirut."

The disillusionment of people who were sold visions of thousands of new jobs and a place in the economic sun is palpable in the Northeast Kingdom. They were suckered in and maybe they should have given some consideration to that old rule that says, "When something sounds too good to be true, it probably is." But what of the Vermont political leaders who bought in—nay, *enabled*—the alleged fraudsters?

Take, for instance, former Republican governor Jim Douglas, who, in 2010, embarked on a nearly two-week

fundraising jaunt that included a stop at the Park Hyatt Saigon, where he pitched the biotech facility and then went on to tell his audience, "Perhaps most importantly for our discussion . . . Vermont's EB-5 regional center is the only one in the nation that is administered by the state government. [So while] . . . the state does not guarantee an investment's return, we do provide oversight and monitoring of the projects and the investments that are made in them."

That worked out well. Now it appears that the investors may not see those green cards, since their money was spent on that Trump Tower apartment (among other things) and the required American jobs were not created. This is known as turning a win-win into a lose-lose.

And then there was Douglas's successor, Peter Shumlin, former chair of the Democratic Governors Association and current lame duck governor of Vermont. Shumlin has had a bad run of late. He came into office promising to make Vermont the first state in the union to establish a single-payer health care system. After employing many experts (including the one who famously said that the "stupidity" of the American voter was instrumental in securing the passage of Obamacare), appointing several commissions, and spending millions of dollars, he abandoned the effort,

saying the economics simply didn't work. Which many had said from the beginning but . . .

Shumlin was a cheerleader for the work of the developers who were selling the dream of a renaissance in the Northeast Kingdom. He traveled, on their dime, to Asia, where he pitched potential investors. The developers also made contributions to his campaigns, and he appeared in a video that they used to lure more investors. In that video, Shumlin assures investors, "We make sure that our EB-5 program offerings are good investments for the investor and good economic development job creators for the state of Vermont."

It now appears that there was no auditing by the state. As the website *Vermont Digger*, which had been warning of fraud for years, reports, one expert familiar with the program said that if the state had done its due diligence, "They would have discovered in one hour or less, the misappropriation of funds. This fraud went on almost 10 years, to me that's unconscionable."

When things finally fell apart, Shumlin explained that . . . well, it could have happened to anyone.

"You can quarterback this one all you want. All I can tell you is there had been no complaints about the projects—EB-5 generally, across the state, that I can recall—from any investors to any governor—me or prior

ones—until the complaints that we started hearing about.”

A couple of days after Shumlin offered up this lame defense, one of his people ordered a purge of emails from some administration accounts. One of those accounts belonged to a high-ranking staffer who had left the administration to go to work for . . . wait for it . . . Jay Peak Resort.

Pure coincidence, said an administration spokesperson.

And then there was “the Godfather” of the EB-5 program, Senator Leahy, whose office had been accustomed to sending out press releases calling him “the leading champion of the EB-5 investor visa program in Congress for more than a decade.”

Leahy liked to point to the development as an example of the good that the EB-5 program could do and invited one of the developers, whom he called a friend, to appear before a congressional committee and share his story. Leahy himself boosted the project to potential overseas investors and celebrated his 50th wedding anniversary at Jay Peak.

Well, after it was revealed how badly the program had shafted both the investors he had pitched and his hopeful constituents, Leahy whistled a new tune: “Given the significant problems plaguing this program, I will continue to push for meaningful reform.” Without which, he went on, “I believe the time has come for the program to end.”

Of course. Time, now, to go forward. Things didn’t work out. Sorry about that. Who could have possibly foreseen that a state-of-the-art biotech facility might not be compatible with a poor, remote, utterly rural section of a small New England state where some people still poach deer to feed their families?

Now, instead of office parks, marinas, international airports, and biotech centers, the people of the Northeast Kingdom will be stuck with the old regime of poverty, food stamps, and heroin.

Meanwhile, Douglas, Shumlin, and Leahy will be fine. Shame they can’t be put to work clearing the rubble from “little Beirut.” ♦

Trump Takes to the Teleprompter

While Cruz flails.

BY FRED BARNES



Can I throw a chair for you, Donald? Bobby Knight campaigns for his pal.

Differences between Ted Cruz and Donald Trump go beyond their personalities and opinions. One sprang up when Cruz last week named Carly Fiorina his vice presidential running mate, should he win the Republican presidential nomination. He couldn’t wait until the California primary in June, though Fiorina became a favorite of Republicans when she ran an impressive though unsuccessful race for the Senate in California in 2010. Cruz is desperate.

Trump, having trounced Cruz in five primaries last week, brushed off a reporter’s question about picking a vice president. He said the time for that hasn’t come. He doesn’t have the delegates yet. “He’s a logical progression kind of guy,” his friend Newt Gingrich explains. Trump is confident.

Another difference is the status of the GOP race. Trump says “it’s over” and he’s the presumptive nominee. He seems to believe that. Cruz says

the fight goes on. It’s the Republican establishment and Washington lobbyists who favor Trump and want to impose him as the winner, Cruz says. He surely doesn’t believe that.

Despite what he says, Trump is not acting like the nomination is in the bag. He’s not ignoring the remaining primary states—far from it. The day after his five victories, he appeared at a rally in Indiana, where he is spending lavishly (by his standards) on his campaign.

The warm-up speaker for Trump was Bobby Knight, the ex-basketball coach at Indiana University. Knight was an enemy of political correctness years before Trump took the plunge. As you might expect, he and Trump are pals.

Earlier that day in Washington, Trump gave the first of a series of policy addresses, delivered from a prepared text and read from a teleprompter. The subject was foreign policy. Yes, Trump has one. Gingrich described the speech as “presidential level” and it was indeed serious. His aides said it was Trump’s “vision” of America’s role in the world.

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He talked up his hardy perennials—the border wall, the evils of trade treaties—but went beyond them. Trump is not an isolationist. He wants to make friends with Russia. He’s ready to lean on the Chinese to force them to clamp down on North Korea. He claims he would wipe out ISIS “very, very quickly.”

But his foreign policy is not that of Ronald Reagan or George W. Bush. It’s not what Republicans have identified with for the past half-century. Trump wants to “rebuild” the military but use it sparingly. He’s against nation-building and trying to spread democracy. He said “America first” would be his “major and overriding theme.” Trump strikes me as a non-interventionist at heart, which puts him closer to Dwight Eisenhower. If Trump is aware of the Eisenhower parallel, he didn’t mention it.

He got mixed reviews. The glaring contradictions he embraced were widely cited. But John Bolton, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, says the speech “puts Trump in the broad mainstream of Republican foreign policy.” As such, he “advanced his position,” Bolton says.

As for Barack Obama, Trump had nothing nice to say. He attacked the president for courting America’s adversaries while alienating longtime allies. That’s GOP dogma.

One speech on a weighty topic won’t elevate Trump’s stature or ease the concerns of his critics, particularly conservatives. His next speech is likely to be on the judiciary. He has enlisted the Heritage Foundation and Federalist Society to come up with a list of potential conservative nominees to replace Justice Antonin Scalia, who died in January. Presumably he’ll divulge the names.

In the days before the California primary on June 7, Trump won’t be able to resist a tour of the border with Mexico, giving him a venue for a speech on immigration. A supporter, Duncan Hunter, represents the congressional district along the border and would be a willing tour guide. Infrastructure is another likely topic. “It fits his whole background,” Gingrich says.

Policy speeches aren’t Trump’s strength. But they are necessary for a candidate whose credibility on serious issues is in doubt. They don’t represent a pivot to the general election. Trump is merely catching up. He ought to have given these speeches months ago.

For Trump, Cruz’s selection of Fiorina as his running mate isn’t much of a threat. As a ploy, it didn’t work for Reagan in 1976 and won’t work for Cruz now. It could haunt him later. “He might have wanted to create some kind of unity ticket with Kasich, but that possibility is now foreclosed,” James Hohmann of the *Washington Post* wrote.

The real issue Fiorina points to is women. Courting their votes is

Trump’s biggest problem. And he continues to make it worse. In his speech after sweeping the five primaries, Trump turned his attention to Hillary Clinton, his all-but-certain Democratic opponent.

He accused her of playing the “woman’s card.” If she were a man, Trump said, “I don’t think she’d get 5 percent of the vote.” This is a classic putdown of women. It says they’re unqualified and get ahead only because of their gender.

Trump prides himself on his political instincts. He’s been ingenious in exploiting issues and undermining opponents. Changing how millions of female voters regard him will be a supreme test of his skill. “We’ll see how clever he is,” Gingrich says. ♦

Remedial Finance

The outsized cost of playing academic catch-up.

BY JAMES PIERESON & NAOMI SCHAEFER RILEY

Are there really too many high-achieving college applicants? Ted O’Neill, dean of admissions at the University of Chicago for two decades, seems to think so, writing recently, “It was nice to be able to take chances on kids who didn’t have perfect records, but who revealed something special—some kind of hunger for ideas and an intellectual life.” O’Neill complained that many of his colleagues at elite schools no longer take such chances—they are overwhelmed with applications from high-achieving students with perfect résumés. Perhaps this is true at the highest echelons, but most colleges take far too many chances on young people. They are admitting too many who are not qualified, relying on a

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vast infrastructure of remedial classes to bring them up to speed. Too often, these students simply drop out.

According to a report released in April by Education Reform Now, a think tank and advocacy group, “More than half a million college freshmen—approximately one in four students who enter college the fall after high school graduation—had to enroll in remedial coursework during their first year of college, costing their families nearly \$1.5 billion annually.” In addition to out of pocket payments, students borrowed \$380 million a year, much of it from taxpayers, to bear these costs.

According to the report, it isn’t just low-income students who are facing this problem. Almost half of the freshmen doing some remedial coursework on American college campuses were from middle- and upper-income families.

Why do schools continue to admit students who aren’t prepared? Follow

the money: Private colleges—at least those below the elite levels—are desperate for students and willing to accept deeply unqualified ones if it means more tuition dollars. Richard Vedder, an economist at Ohio University, notes that for demographic and financial reasons, “Marginal [private] schools are having a tough time getting students. So their natural inclination is to take anyone they can get.”

While some administrators like to talk about this in terms of taking a chance on borderline students, others are a little more realistic. Michael Poliakoff, vice president of policy at the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, says that he has heard upper-level administrators say “not everyone here is cut out for this school. It’s okay that a significant number of them don’t finish.” Indeed, the financial incentives are there to accept more kids in the early years because, particularly at large universities, those are the cheapest to educate. They are enrolled in big introductory classes, often taught by graduate students or adjunct professors.

Declining standards in elementary and secondary education are partly to blame. “When students leave high school with lower academic skills than if they had gotten a G.E.D.,” says Poliakoff, “the public has been subject to fraudulent behavior on a macro level.” But colleges and universities aren’t exactly guiltless, with many teaching remedial skills in nonremedial classes. It’s not uncommon, Poliakoff says, “to see a college-level math class description include learning ratios, decimals, percentages, and fractions.”

Again, follow the money: “Historically the funding formula for public universities in many states has been based on the number of bodies a school has,” says Vedder. “Even if a kid goes for year and a half,” the university can still count him.

So what can be done to change these incentives? To begin with, public university systems could be funded based on graduation rates, not on the number of students enrolled. And

it makes sense to put colleges on the hook for a portion of the loans of students who drop out: It’s unfair to burden students with loans when they should not have been admitted in the first place. Rewarding colleges for graduation as opposed to enrollment might create its own set of bad incentives—the dumbing down of curricula to ensure higher graduation rates—but it would be a start.

More students could go from high school to community colleges, which remain significantly less expensive than four-year schools. The City University of New York now requires that students needing remedial work do it at a junior college. Clemson University has formed a partnership with a local technical school.

There may also be a market for private educational companies, such as Kaplan, to provide a kind of 13th grade for students. Remedial education in a university setting is as inefficient as it is expensive. Students who need high-school-level coursework

need classes that meet regularly and probably smaller teacher-student ratios. Improving reading or algebra skills is not going to be easy in a class of 100 that meets three times a week for an hour.

Finally, colleges need to make better use of the data available to them. Schools can actually be far more scientific now about figuring out which students are going to succeed.

The college-cost bubble may end up being like the housing bubble: We’ve “overbuilt” higher education on the premise that every young person needs a college degree to succeed, just as we said that every family must own a home to be part of the middle class. We created a population of underwater mortgage-holders; now we are creating more and more college dropouts.

As Poliakoff notes, “Schools have to get beyond the pieties of saying they want to serve at-risk students and be firm in saying ‘No, this is not yet the time.’” ♦

Wide Awake in Naptown

Hoosiers get the political full-court press.

BY CHRIS DEATON

Indianapolis
Monument Circle is a brick-road roundabout in the heart of Indiana’s capital. It is a spacious road with no lane markings, surrounding a nearly 300-foot-tall obelisk built in tribute to the state’s war heroes from the 18th and 19th centuries. It is lined with establishments and businesses, including a concert hall, the city’s major media conglomerate, and, inescapably, a Starbucks. It is

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haunting at night, the B-roll setting of choice during sporting events when television networks want a shot of downtown Indianapolis coming out of commercial.

On a cloudy, chilly Wednesday morning less than a week before the Indiana primary, vast metal structures resembling rafters loom over the circle. There are TV lights amid them and bystanders observing the setup, the people confined to the sidewalk by temporary fencing. The activity is bookended by police cars on one edge and a large truck displaying the NBC peacock on

the other. Just the day before, John Kasich had attended a private event inside the Columbia Club, right off the circle, and taken note of the spectacle outdoors.

It's not often Indiana plays host to this type of thing. Another presidential campaign event? No. Today they're setting up to tape an episode of the reality TV hit *American Ninja Warrior*.

"It's arguably the best month in Hoosier history," Pete Seat jokes, but only sort of. The George W. Bush administration alumnus and Schererville, Ind., native had a broader point: A great many circuses have ridden into town. May is always the month for the Greatest Spectacle in Racing, aka the Indianapolis 500. But now comes the Greatest Spectacle in Politics: a decisive May 3 showdown between Ted Cruz and Donald Trump and, oh yes, the remnants of John Kasich's campaign. Why not lump the Greatest Spectacle in Reality TV on top of it all—one of those rare programs on the tube nowadays that actually has the potential to leave viewers feeling good about themselves. (Unlike, say, cable news.)

"This is something we're not used to. And the sad thing is, when there has been attention on Indiana the last several years, it hasn't been positive," Seat says. His consulting firm was helping Kasich in Indiana, but the candidate chose to wind things down here. Now, "Some of our most cherished landmarks and idiosyncrasies and traditions are getting the spotlight."

Those include pork tenderloin sandwiches—the breaded, deep-fried discs, about three-times the diameter of the buns they're served on, that are the unofficial state food—and basketball, which is incontestably the official state religion. Cruz rallied his supporters in the Knightstown gymnasium featured in the movie *Hoosiers*, re-creating a scene in which coach

Gene Hackman measures the height of the rim to reassure his small-school players that no matter the size of the crowd and the venue, it's always 10 feet up from the gym floor. (The Texas senator clanked one off the iron when he referred to the basketball hoop as a "ring.") Trump appeared at an event with Indiana University coaching leg-

'It's arguably the best month in Hoosier history,' Pete Seat jokes, but only sort of. The George W. Bush administration alumnus and Schererville, Ind., native had a broader point: A great many circuses have ridden into town. The showdown between Ted Cruz and Donald Trump is only one of them.



American Ninja Warriors tackle Monument Circle in Indy.

end Bob Knight, who is as famous for his temper as he is for his success. Despite being nicknamed The General, Knight is not on Trump's vaunted foreign policy team. But he is a fitting surrogate.

Trump "does a great job of finding good people and teaching good people, and just as important, he's damn good at getting rid of bad people, too," Knight, himself a stern disciplinarian, said of Trump at a rally.

A (lower-case) general description of Knight reflects what has propelled Trump's campaign: a blunt-force personality who forges a soldered loyalty from his fans despite his abuse

of a microphone, and perhaps even because of it. One doesn't need to look much further than the two men's shared contempt for and derision of journalists to see the similarity. Trump routinely mocks members of the press at his public appearances and sequesters them among his throng of supporters in an area only slightly better than a farm pen. Knight just swears at them and once described sports writing as a profession "one or two steps above prostitution."

Trump earns cheers for shoving back against those who pan his unruly style. Knight won acclaim for reciting to a stadium of Hoosier faithful in 1994, "When my time on earth is gone, and my activities here are passed, I want they bury me upside down, and my critics can kiss my a—." These two were destined to be in a room together.

This brash behavior is hardly reflective of the state's electorate, though. That the likes of Cruz and Trump, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders would give Indiana the Iowa treatment—with visits to small towns from the Greater Chicago region to the suburbs of Louisville, from Evansville to Ft. Wayne—is flattering and rare. The midday bustle in certain

places is unaccustomed and welcome, like at Bee Coffee Roasters, an Indy caffeine shop adjacent to the building where Cruz announced Carly Fiorina as his hypothetical running mate. It's just up the street from Lucas Oil stadium, where the Indianapolis Colts play football on Sundays in the fall and winter. Who knew they would need extra manpower on a Wednesday in the spring?

The people here are just happy to have the attention, and unlike in Washington, it comes without all the street closures.

Except on Monument Circle. *Ninja Warrior* was to blame for that one. ♦

Thinking the Unthinkable

How to survive a Trump presidency

BY JAMES W. CEASER & OLIVER WARD

As a futurist, Herman Kahn's job was to think about the unthinkable. And the unthinkable subject in the 1960s was thermonuclear war. Kahn's analysis struck a nerve; going beyond consideration of how to prevent a nuclear war, he assessed how the United States could survive and win one. This step proved more than most national defense experts could bring themselves to contemplate. The use of rationalist methods to study an event of such hideous proportions was nothing short of an outrage; in fact, it earned Kahn a place in the annals of film history as the inspiration for the mad title character of Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*.

Similarly, many political analysts today seem to have buried their heads in the sand. The "unthinkable" used to be Donald Trump's selection as the presidential nominee of the Republican party, a previously remote possibility now well within his reach. The prospect of his election as the 45th president of the United States was even more unimaginable. No longer: The *Economist's* Global Forecasting Service now classifies a Trump presidential victory as a "moderate" probability, with an impact comparable to jihadist terrorism destabilizing the global economy, according to the magazine's risk intensity scale.

These bleak scenarios have given birth to a vast doomsday literature on the fate of the GOP and the nation. Featuring commentary by some of the best minds, this analysis has explored, then explored again, the deeper meaning of the Trump phenomenon, reaching an audience of the educated with an insatiable interest in the subject, its moral hazard, and its cultural implications. Yet for all of this intellectual activity, no one has asked the kind of question that Kahn had in mind: how to make it through the dropping of the "big one." How should we ready ourselves to survive

a Trump presidency? The assumption here is that the event will happen and the time for mulling, fretting, and moral agonizing over how to prevent it is over. The issue then becomes one for unemotional analysis. Is it possible to escape the worst outcome that so many have prognosticated and ensure that, in the end, the essentials of the American political system will remain intact with the nation's basic interests protected?

There are, to be sure, understandable reasons why commentators have studiously avoided thinking about the unthinkable. This approach is alien to ordinary political analysis, which looks at current circumstances or those likely to occur. Strategic analysis, by contrast, proceeds under the logic of contingency planning, in which it is deemed worthwhile to study a major disaster that, though improbable, could theoretically take place. Such studies of hypotheticals may be compelling material for a convention of civil engineers or insurance actuaries, but they are hardly the stuff of which news stories are made. And today, while the mere mention of a Trump victory is sufficient to elicit reactions of horror, most calm down upon hearing the pollsters' predictions of Republican oblivion if the billionaire heads the ticket.

In the case of the handful of political commentators for whom a strategic approach might hold some appeal, it seems that they are waiting until the GOP convention in July to see if Trump is nominated. That would be a serious error. One of the aims of a strategic approach is to examine, in advance of a hypothetical disaster, the points at which the most consequential steps can be taken to mitigate its ill effects. Some decisions key to improving the chances of surviving a Trump presidency are already at hand. The longer we wait, the more limited will be the options available and the more diminished the chances of success.

Strategic analysis for the feared political crisis has the advantage of simplicity. No elaborate game theoretical models or mathematical equations are required. All that is needed is the willingness to examine the possible uses of features of the existing political system, including elements that now lie dormant and would need to be

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reactivated. The starting point is with our political parties and the selection of the vice presidential candidate.

Just phrasing the issue in this way sounds jarring today, for everyone now conceives that the presumptive presidential nominee picks the vice presidential nominee. Ratification by the party convention is a mere formality. And indeed such has been the practice for quite a while. The last time a party actively picked a candidate for vice president was at the Democratic convention in 1956, when presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson decided to enliven proceedings by leaving the selection of his running mate to the assembled delegates. In a close contest that boiled down to a decision between the young senator John F. Kennedy and Senator Estes Kefauver, the party coalesced around Kefauver on the second ballot.

The decision had also been out of Stevenson's hands in 1952, the last year either party's convention witnessed multiple rounds of voting for the presidential nominee. After choosing Stevenson on the third ballot, the convention then moved on its own to select Senator John Sparkman, whom Stevenson praised afterwards for "strengthening me and our party immeasurably." Before this period, it was understood that the political party had some say in this matter, and thankfully so in 1944, when a few party leaders working behind the scenes—call them "the establishment"—urged Harry Truman on the convention to replace the incumbent Vice President Henry Wallace. Truman was chosen on the second ballot.

The Republican convention in Cleveland could well turn out to have more than one ballot for the presidency, which opens up the possibility of reactivating the party's power to select the vice presidential nominee. And even if Donald Trump is able to force his way on the convention on the first ballot, it is clear already that he will not fully control the majority of the delegates for other matters. Party officials should accordingly seize the opportunity now to make clear that the convention reserves the prerogative to select the vice presidential candidate. This would not preclude politicking. If the choice of the presidential nominee is not certain on the first ballot, Trump might seek to use the offer of the vice presidency as a bargaining chip to achieve a majority. Trump has already stated, if he is to be believed, that he will not pick an outsider but "a political person . . . [who] can help [him] with legislation, getting it through, and all that." Yet no matter what the candidates have in mind, party leaders should stake the claim in principle to the party's authority over the second place on the ticket. Assuming a Trump

nomination, he might then have to consult with the party or perhaps accede altogether to the convention's choice.

The exercise of this power by the party is a key component in thinking about how to survive the unthinkable. A party choice modifies the excessive view of the presidential nomination as a pure and simple coronation and begins to teach the lesson that the power of a leader in America's political system is subject to robust checks. As a businessman who has been used to running his own show, and as a candidate who has been able to take possession of the Republican party as if it is a choice kind of rental property, Donald Trump would experience the limits of his power. After all, it is finally the party, not the presidential nominee, that certifies the names that go on state ballots.

A more important aspect of survivability pertains to securing a better vice presidential nominee. Think of it. Trump might find the range of choices of those willing to run with him, at his request, highly limited. A prominent politician with ambitions for the future might well calculate that accepting an invitation to run as

the Donald's choice, in an election in which defeat may seem likely, would be a sure career-ender. The field of vice presidential candidates is likely to increase for Republicans if the selection is made by the convention, as this method would help immunize the candidate from subsequent reprisal. To be sure, the two nominees would have to reach a meeting of the minds, with the vice presidential candidate naturally acceding

in substantial measure to the presidential candidate. Still, it would make a difference if the vice presidential candidate were in some measure his or her own person, in possession of an independent party mandate. And as vice president this person, though restricted by Trump's personal agenda, could if need be establish some distance from the president and perhaps exercise a certain amount of leverage. The office, as FDR's first vice president, John Nance Garner, once put it, might not be "worth a bucket of warm piss," but at least it would be in some degree the party's bucket.

It is at this point in hypothetical thinking that survivability analysis runs into a potential conflict with real-life concerns. Any step taken that makes a Trump campaign look more attractive arguably also undermines the Stop Trump movements. Herman Kahn faced a similar problem when some of his critics accused him of undermining deterrence by certain of his suggestions, like erecting bomb shelters, that might serve to make nuclear war less unthinkable.



Stevenson and Sparkman, at the 1952 convention

AP PHOTO

The only response is to consider a kind of cost-benefit calculation: how much Trump's electability is enhanced by a more credible vice presidential candidate (the amount seems minuscule), weighed against how much this step might add to the prospect of a more survivable Trump presidency (a more considerable amount). Any rational investor sees the merits of hedging. In all likelihood, many commentators' arguments on this point stem from a moralizing spirit that gives them a clear conscience, rather than from a political judgment about what is best for the country. To continue railing against an outcome that they have been conspicuously unable to influence, simply to signal their impeccable virtue, has begun to reach a point of diminishing returns.

The next item in a strategic analysis of survival is the place of policy advisers and potential candidates for the cabinet. Already, choices have to be made. Should good and qualified persons, despite serious reservations about the suitability of Trump for the presidency, make themselves available if asked? The risk of doing so, besides the danger of becoming tainted by association, is that it might once again add a measure of credibility to a campaign. The advantage is the chance that Trump, as both candidate and president, will receive competent advice and perhaps prove willing to accept some part of it. As for a cabinet, what would clearly be best for the country are appointees of substance, who might have opposed Trump but have not burned every bridge with him and who if asked to serve would do so with a certain degree of independence and with a willingness to depart if the president did not deal with their counsel responsibly. By this reasoning, even ardent supporters of a Stop Trump movement should see the wisdom of maintaining a potential group of quality cabinet appointees from whom Trump might pick. These people should be shielded, rather than shunned.

On a larger scale, the objective is to encourage the selection of advisers and cabinet appointees who are not—as has so often been the case recently—merely “president’s men” or sycophants trying to make a career. As a person with so few allies within the party establishment, Trump will need to reach out beyond the limited circle of persons with whom he is now acquainted. The risk for him, though a benefit to the country, would be the uncomfortable independence of certain individuals, as well as the greater influence that a group of levelheaded cabinet members might possess. Imagine the potential leverage that might be exercised from a fear of a mass resignation. Of course, a return to the kind of power exercised by cabinets in an earlier era is beyond the realm of possibility. But some steps in that direction would offer a better chance of avoiding a disaster. Recall Lincoln’s

cabinet, which was well-stocked with men whose formidable presence acted as counterweights to Honest Abe’s power. His “team of rivals”—the checks and balances principle in human form—included William H. Seward, Salmon P. Chase, and Edward Bates, his three Republican opponents: “I had looked the party over,” Lincoln observed, “and concluded that these were the very strongest men. . . . I had no right to deprive the country of their services.”

Even more fundamentally than this, a Trump presidency could initiate a dramatic shift in the institutional balance of power between the executive and Congress. The legislature’s chronic weakness in recent years has rested in part on the growth of partisan polarization, which incentivizes the president’s co-partisans in Congress not just to acquiesce to, but also encourage, acts of executive overreach. The Obama years offer rich testimony to this distortion of the Constitution. Trump would, by contrast, have the full buy-in of neither of the two main parties. Congress would then wield formidable power, presenting a vital check on any attempts by Trump to govern unencumbered. For all the recent discussion of the decline of Congress, the fact remains that the total formal power assigned to the legislature under the Constitution is insurmountable. With a veto-proof majority, it cannot be stopped. On some matters, at least, parts of the Republican party could ally with Democrats, and Paul Ryan could end up at the very center of policy-making on some issues.

Though Trump still has little backing from Republicans in Congress—just eight representatives and one sitting senator at the last count—he will of course attract further support if nominated and still more if elected. A significant part of the GOP might adopt a wait-and-see approach, assessing how Trump performs and lending support on a case-by-case basis. That would still represent a shift from anything we have seen in recent times. The power of Congress would suddenly look very different. It could even open the way to a more constitutional relationship between president and Congress, rather than one distorted by parties.

Trump, meanwhile, might fear finding himself playing the role of a latter-day Andrew Johnson, a president without a firm basis of support in a political party. As this analogy suggests, looming over a Trump presidency is the possibility of impeachment, Congress’s own nuclear option. It is the mere fact that such a weapon *could* be used, not that it would, that alters the dynamic so profoundly. Here we see why the contingency planning of the kind Kahn advocated must begin sooner rather than later. With a vice president ready and able to assume presidential duties, a safe transition would become altogether less unthinkable. A credible vice president could turn out to be the nation’s, not the president’s, trump card. ♦

The UFO Enthusiasts

Roswell, McMinnville, and . . . Hillary Clinton?

BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

In 1995 the city of Roswell, New Mexico, population just trailing 50,000 then as now, discovered that it had the potential to become a major tourist site, courtesy of *The X-Files*. That immensely popular television series ran from 1993 to 2002 and was briefly revived in early 2016. It combined extraterrestrial-centric science fiction, evergreen paranoia about government cover-ups, and a *Twin Peaks*-style atmospheric noir that signaled a pervasive darkness underlying cheery middle-American culture. It had as its myth of origins an event that had occurred in Roswell in July 1947: the crash of a mysterious object, believed by some to be a UFO, at a ranch not far from town. *The X-Files*' troubled protagonist, maverick FBI agent Fox Mulder (David Duchovny), was one of the believers. Much of *The X-Files*' narrative centered around Mulder's efforts to persuade his skeptical and sometimes murderously hostile confreres that a well-placed U.S. government cabal had deliberately buried evidence that the Roswell crash not only involved a genuine UFO but had yielded, amid its debris, extraterrestrial corpses and possibly also extraterrestrial survivors hastily spirited away along with most of the downed spacecraft by military operatives during the dead of night.

The 2016 resurrection of *The X-Files* lasted only six episodes watched by an ever-diminishing audience. Both Duchovny and his costar Gillian Anderson (playing his loyal but mostly unconvinced FBI partner and sometime lover, Dana Scully) looked worse for wear after 14 years, and the show itself seemed exhausted as it tried to interest its viewers in the discovery that Scully might be carrying

alien DNA. But strangely enough, the Roswell cover-up narrative has gotten a shot in the arm from an unlikely but potent political source: Democratic presidential frontrunner Hillary Clinton. And not just Clinton herself but her husband, former President Bill Clinton, and her campaign manager, John Podesta.

In a 2014 interview with talk-show host Jimmy Kimmel, Bill Clinton revealed that he “had all the Roswell papers reviewed” during his presidency. And although he hadn't found anything exactly definitive in them, he told

Kimmel he believed that we earthlings are not alone. Both Clintons had been lobbied extensively during Bill Clinton's first term by the late billionaire venture capitalist and philanthropist Laurance Rockefeller, a UFO enthusiast. And in 1995 Hillary Clinton, perhaps along with Bill Clinton as well, had been a guest at Rockefeller's Wyoming ranch, possibly to discuss the release of long-classified UFO documents that Rockefeller had urged.



Just another day in Roswell . . .

In December 2015 Hillary Clinton told a reporter in New Hampshire that she planned to “get to the bottom” of the UFO issue if she became president. She reiterated this promise in a March 24 interview with Kimmel in which she also declared her preference for the less-kooky-sounding acronym “UAP” (“unexplained aerial phenomenon”) in contrast to the more common “UFO” (“unidentified flying object”). Then on April 7 Podesta, who had served as Bill Clinton's chief of staff (and from 2014-2015 as counselor to President Barack Obama), told CNN correspondent Jake Tapper that Hillary Clinton as president would aggressively pursue the declassification of UFO-related documents in the government's possession, especially as related to Area 51, an Air Force facility in Nevada about 100 miles north of Las Vegas, used for top-secret military aircraft testing. It is Area 51 whether the alien remains from Roswell were said to have been

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transported and where experiments are said to be conducted to this day in reverse-engineering the extraterrestrials' technology. Podesta is known for his fascination with UFOs and his longtime insistence that the federal government is in possession of important UFO-related documents. One of Podesta's favorite television shows was *The X-Files*, and Bill and Hillary Clinton were said to have dressed up as Mulder and Scully for a 50th-birthday celebration for Podesta in 1999.

In 1947 the local press in Roswell had described a mysterious downed object variously as a "flying disk" and a "flying saucer." The U.S. Army, operating from a World War II-era airfield just outside of Roswell that later became known as Walker Air Force Base, decided to characterize the debris, largely consisting of tinfoil and rubber, as the remains of a weather balloon. That was an obvious Cold War obfuscation. In 1994, possibly in response to Rockefeller's lobbying, the Air Force issued a report stating that the downed balloon had actually been part of "Project Mogul," an ultra-secretive project monitoring sound waves generated by Soviet nuclear testing. Many doubted that story as well, along with a second Air Force report in 1997 concluding that reported sightings of alien corpses at Roswell actually represented psychologically altered memories of military casualties and crash-test dummies. During the early 1990s, just as *The X-Files* was getting off the ground, a murky 17-minute black-and-white film surfaced that purported to record a medical autopsy, filmed by a military cameraman, performed on the body of an alien being that had been killed either when its spaceship crashed or at some point following its capture. The widely broadcast film was later agreed to be a fake, although its London-based producer, Ray Santilli, continued to insist as late as 2006 that it was a reconstruction of authentic footage of an alien dissection that had deteriorated over the decades. A fictionalized version of the supposed autopsy, along with a vast array of conspiratorial storytelling that could be coaxed out of it, played a recurring thematic role in *The X-Files*.

The *X-Files* proved to be a godsend for the town of Roswell, which in 1995 launched its first annual UFO festival, coinciding with the Fourth of July weekend—because that was the time of year when the original Roswell crash broke into the news. Located on a flat, featureless plain in southeastern New Mexico near the Texas border, Roswell is about as far as you can

get, geographically and culturally, from the picturesque adobe, the millionaire-boho art scene, the blue-corn tortillas, and the spectacular mountain vistas of northwest New Mexico that most visitors associate with the Land of Enchantment. Furthermore, the 1947 crash happened at a time of year when the desert heat of southeastern New Mexico is at its most searing: late June and early July (the first press reports of the "flying saucer" appeared on July 8, 1947). Temperatures hover in the 90s and can climb well into the triple digits in Roswell in early July.

With the closing of Walker Air Force Base in 1967, there hasn't been a whole lot of economic or other action in Roswell for decades. Still, despite its inauspicious seasonal timing and its out-of-the-way location, the Roswell UFO Festival has been a runaway success. In 2015 an estimated 10,000 out-of-towners braved the High Plains swelter to pour into "Alien City" during the first weekend in July, generating as much as \$5 million in revenues for Roswell and its businesses catering to UFO mania. During the festival the tourists could listen to bands, visit a UFO museum, enter their dogs and cats in an "alien pet contest" and themselves in an "alien costume contest," watch fireworks, and, if they wanted to get serious, attend three days' worth of lectures, films, and panel discussions presented by a cadre of people who take UFOs very seriously indeed.

Soon after the Roswell festival proved to be a moneymaker, copycat UFO-fests sprang up in other American towns that could claim contacts with extraterrestrials.

Soon after the Roswell festival proved to be a moneymaker, copycat UFO-fests sprang up in other American towns that could claim contacts with extraterrestrials. One of the first clones started up in 1998 in McMinnville, Oregon, in the heart of the Willamette Valley, about 35 miles southwest of Portland. On May 11, 1950, Paul and Evelyn Trent, a middle-aged couple who lived on a farm about nine miles from McMinnville, claimed to have seen a large metallic-looking disc moving slowly across the evening sky. Paul Trent grabbed his camera and, as he said, managed to take two black-and-white photos of the object before it sped away over the horizon. The pictures ended up in a local newspaper and, eventually, in *Life* magazine. Even in 1950, according to *Life*, some wags were jesting that the photographed object looked more like the lid of a garbage can. As the decades passed, skeptics who examined the photos and their negatives maintained that they were a hoax; that the "flying saucer" in question was actually a model, probably suspended by a string from a power line visible at the top of both photos. No matter: McMinnville, pop. 32,000 today, had a genuine UFO hook, and its annual mid-May

festival is now second only to Roswell's in tourist draw.

Unlike the Roswell festival, which is vigorously promoted by city and state officials, the McMinnville festival is a proprietary affair, sponsored by McMenamins, a chain of hotels and pubs in Oregon and Washington that operates the Hotel Oregon, a funky turn-of-the-20th-century inn on a busy corner of McMinnville's historic downtown main street. But the festival has been enthusiastically co-opted by McMinnville's residents, business owners, and children. Its high point is a Saturday afternoon alien-theme parade that is a marvel of costumes and amateur float construction: *E.T.*-style extraterrestrials by the dozens, but also *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* characters, Coneheads, *Starship Troopers* insectoids, little (and large) green men, purple face-painters, tin-hat wearers, and just plain fantastical concoctions of gauze, aluminum foil, and masking.

It helps that northwestern Oregon in mid-May is an infinite improvement over southeastern New Mexico in early July: temperatures in the pleasant 60s and rhododendrons in glorious springtime bloom blazoning nearly every front lawn. It also helps that during the 1990s the Willamette Valley switched socioeconomically from the backwater turkey- and rabbit-farming of the Paul and Evelyn Trent era into upscale viticulture, organic produce, and free-range this and that. (A nostalgic "Turkey Rama" festival persists in McMinnville every July, although most of the big birds have flown the coop to Mexico and elsewhere.) Downtown McMinnville now boasts wine-tasting rooms and excellent restaurants serving up fresh-from-the-fields Pacific Northwest bounty. My husband and I have attended the UFO festival twice, in 2009 and, most recently, in 2015 (his brother lives nearby, so it's a convenient excuse for a visit).

The problem for us was the "serious" portion of the McMinnville UFO-fest: all those lectures, films, and panel discussions that mimic—often literally, because they feature the same guest speakers who are stars of the UFO circuit—the offerings in Roswell. We bought tickets for the serious stuff both times, which meant that we sat for many hours along with several hundred other people in a darkened auditorium taking in presentations that typically lasted about two hours apiece. In 2009 that

was an interesting experience, because of the sheer novelty (to me, at any rate) of UFO culture, but in 2015 it was excruciating, a tired rehash of 2009.

That was because the proposition that we earthlings have been visited by intelligent extraterrestrial beings, whether from nearby planets or from distant stars, has been an idea with a trajectory, and that trajectory—for nearly everyone apparently except the Clintons and John Podesta—seems to have drawn to a close, perhaps around the time that the original *X-Files* folded on television.

For some reason, either the aliens have lost interest in us or we (except for a small, UFO-fixated minority) have lost interest in the very idea that they could be interested. Polls show that at least half of Americans believe in extraterrestrials, but there hasn't been a dramatic spaceship sighting, much less a *Close Encounters*-style full-fledged abduction, for decades.

Even during the 1950s the Roswell crash and the Trents' photographs were news flashes in the pan, although they

had a distinct cultural context that dated to the late 19th century, when the Boston astronomer Percival Lowell announced that he had discovered canal-like features on the surface of Mars indicating that intelligent beings had constructed a sophisticated irrigation system on the Red Planet. Lowell's theories never gained much credence among his fellow astronomers, but they captured the imagination of science-fiction writers. H. G. Wells published *The War of the Worlds* in 1897; its plot involved a successful invasion of Earth by monstrous-looking but technologically advanced Martians. In 1938 Orson Welles adapted Wells's novel into a radio drama so grippingly realistic (it took the form of a series of news bulletins) that it caused some listeners to panic. Then, starting in the 1940s, airplane pilots and others began reporting sightings of mysterious "lights in the sky" and other unaccounted-for celestial objects that often took disc-like shapes. The famous psychoanalyst C. G. Jung, as one of his last published books before his death in 1961, wrote *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Skies*. Jung contended, in typical Jungian fashion, that the sightings represented a fundamental human religious impulse dislocated by modernity, a longing for contact with the



Paul Trent of McMinnville, Ore., in a 1950 *Life* magazine

gods. He noted that the circular shape of flying saucers resembled the mandala, the Jungian-archetypal symbol of wholeness.

Still, both the Roswell crash and the McMinnville sightings quickly disappeared both from the news media and the public consciousness, not to be revived until the 1970s. That's when pioneer "ufologist" (the name that those who study, and believe in the existence of, such phenomena have given themselves, as the preferred acronym UAP hasn't caught up with them yet) Stanton T. Friedman introduced the exciting element of an elaborate government conspiracy into the celestial mix. Friedman, possessing a master's degree in nuclear physics from the University of Chicago and a career as an industry physicist for such well-respected companies as General Electric and McDonnell Douglas, brought scientific street-cred to his investigations (in the National Archives and elsewhere) of the Roswell incident, which he concluded had involved the genuine crash of an alien spacecraft that the U.S. military had effectively concealed. During the 1990s, Friedman endorsed the existence of the "Majestic Twelve," the code name for a top-secret committee of a dozen academic scientists, military leaders, and high government officials that had supposedly been created by Harry S. Truman in 1947 in the wake of the Roswell crash. The Majestic Twelve's existence was purportedly evidenced by a leaked film of eight pages of government documents that surfaced in 1984 and contained instructions for exploiting the aliens' technology and engaging with extraterrestrial beings in the future.

Meanwhile, in 1978, Jesse A. Marcel, a former Army Air Force intelligence officer who said he had personally picked up some of the Roswell crash debris in 1947, told Friedman and two writers, Charles Berlitz and William L. Moore, that he had found the remains of a flying saucer, complete with mysterious purple hieroglyphs, but had been ordered by his superiors to keep mum. Other witnesses in and around Roswell interviewed by Friedman claimed to have seen alien bodies amid the wreckage: child-size humanoid creatures with enormous heads and huge, almond-shaped eyes, the standard *E.T.*-esque physiognomy that we now associate automatically with visitors from outer space. Berlitz and Moore wrote up their reporting in the best-selling *The Roswell Incident* (1980), which made the sun-scorched New Mexico town famous. It mattered little—in fact, it was a conspiratorial godsend for the UFO cover-up theorists—that both the FBI and the Air Force's Office of Special Investigations conducted their own probes of the Majestic Twelve documents and deemed them to be bogus. It was Berlitz and Moore, along with Friedman, who also put Area 51 onto the ufologist map.

During the 1970s and 1980s, the theme of human contact with beings of superior intelligence residing on distant planets captured the popular imagination. A Jungian might point to the cultural disruptions of those decades and to the death-of-God theology that essentially killed off mainline American Christianity as underlying sources for this phenomenon. Steven Spielberg's runaway-hit movies *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) and *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* (1982) dealt with themes of divorce, family tension, and the suburbs in which most middle-class Americans by then lived: simultaneously cozily familiar and cookie-cutter alienating. Slightly later, in 1996, Roland Emmerich's *Independence Day*, another runaway hit, was set in part in Area 51, which in the film housed three alien bodies and a downed attacker ship.

Stanton Friedman, now a white-bearded age 81, is a regular on the UFO panel circuit (he spoke at both Roswell and McMinnville, where I heard him in both 2009 and 2015). So is Kathleen Marden, a blonde former schoolteacher now in her late sixties, who had the good luck to be the niece of Betty Hill and her husband Barney. Now both deceased, the New Hampshire couple had claimed to have been kidnapped and transported onto a spaceship on the night of September 19, 1961, while they were driving back to their home in Portsmouth from a vacation in Niagara Falls and Montreal. Their story, a template for dozens of alien-abduction tales in the decades that followed, became an NBC made-for-television movie, *The UFO Incident*, in 1975, starring James Earl Jones and Estelle Parsons (Barney Hill, like Jones, was African-American, while Betty Hill, like Parsons, was white). At first the Hills seemed to have no idea that they'd been abducted. As they were winding their way south along U.S. Route 3 through New Hampshire's White Mountains, the couple claimed to have been pursued by a bright moving light that eventually revealed itself to be a pancake-shape illuminated aircraft. At one point Barney got out of the couple's car with his binoculars and, as he told people afterwards, saw several humanoid figures staring down at him from the enormous hovering object. The couple raced home—or rather, found themselves at home after a mutual memory lapse that lasted several hours.

It was only later, after Betty had a series of vivid dreams and both Hills underwent hypnosis, that their abduction story and way of accounting for the lost hours coalesced. They then insisted that they had been escorted onto the spaceship and "medically" examined by the aliens in a procedure involving genital probes that seems to be a hardy staple of alien-abduction narratives. Skeptics have maintained that the Hills had ample opportunity to

correlate and elaborate on their claimed experiences over the many months of the hypnosis sessions. Furthermore, according to Kathleen Marden, Betty Hill's sister Janet (Marden's mother) had reported her own UFO sighting to the family in 1957, leading some critics to speculate that Betty's story had been triggered by her sister's.

Marden, by her own account, didn't get seriously interested in her aunt's story until around 1990, when she dropped out of teaching to become a professional ufologist. She affiliated herself with the Mutual UFO Network (MUFON), a 46-year-old nonprofit dedicated to investigating extraterrestrial sightings, from a perspective that critics have deemed overly credulous. As Marden explained during her presentation in McMinnville last May, her main criterion for deciding whether an alien-abduction narrative is credible seems to be whether the claimed abductees socioeconomically resemble the Hills: whether they, like the Hills, aren't obvious kooks but solid middle-class citizens. (Barney Hill had been a career post-office employee and NAACP officer, and Betty Hill had been a social worker employed by the state of New Hampshire.) In 2007 Marden teamed up with Stanton Friedman to publish *Captured! The Betty and Barney Hill UFO Experience*. The book's cover displayed, along with a black-and-white photograph of the Hills, an image of another of those almond-eyed, skinny-necked figures of etiolated physique that are part of the standard iconography of extraterrestrials. Most recently, in 2013, Marden published *The Alien Abduction Files: The Most Startling Cases of Human-Alien Contact Ever Reported*. Her collaborator this time around was Denise Stoner, who, along with her husband, Ed, reports having been kidnapped by extraterrestrials *twice*, in 1982 and again in 1991. Marden devoted a substantial portion of her presentation in McMinnville last year to grainy video footage of a hypnotized Denise Stoner foggily recalling her adventures aboard the distant-planet spacecraft.

But 1961, the year of the Hill abduction, was a long time ago—55 years ago, to be precise—and even 1991 is not exactly recent. The Roswell incident of 1947 is getting close to ancient history. Hasn't anything new happened in the annals of alien contacts? The answer, at least in McMinnville last May, was: not much. I was already so familiar from my 2009 attendance with what Marden had to say that I could have jumped onstage myself to retrace the Hills' midnight automotive adventures along U.S. Route 3.

The Roswell incident of 1947 is getting close to ancient history. Hasn't anything new happened in the annals of alien contacts? The answer, at least in McMinnville last May, was: not much.

The star of 2015's McMinnville event, for example, was Travis Walton, probably the most famous alien abductee in history, although his story, like those of the others at the festival, was a bit hoary. At 6 P.M. on November 5, 1975, Walton, then age 22 and part of a U.S. Forest Service brush-clearing crew near Heber, Arizona, had been headed back from the job site in a truck with some of his fellow crew-members. The crewmen spotted one of those bright lights in the sky that always seem to signal extraterrestrial visitors, and the light quickly took the shape of a golden disk. Walton jumped out of the truck and was running toward the light, his fellow crew members said, when he was zapped by a beam from the disc and knocked to the ground. The rest of the

crew cleared out of there pronto. Walton went missing for five days and was the object of an extensive manhunt, but he eventually turned up dazed and disoriented outside a gas station in Heber. Ufologists had gotten wind of the story by this time, and so had the *National Enquirer*, which financed an investigation by the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization, a predecessor group to MUFON, in return for access to Walton and his family. Under hypnosis Walton narrated an elaborate tale of waking up

on a hospital-like bed inside the spacecraft surrounded by the short-of-stature humanoids with outsize domed heads and immense eyes who seem to inhabit every distant planet. He wandered around the spaceship and even manned the controls briefly, encountered more aliens of varying degrees of friendliness and hostility, and was ultimately released.

Walton's credibility remains mired in controversy. After his disappearance his crewmates who claimed to have seen the beam of light were given polygraph tests by the local sheriff, who suspected foul play on their part. All passed the lie-detector tests except for one man who failed to complete his. Walton himself was said to have conspicuously flunked (and also to have tried to game the results by holding his breath) a polygraph arranged by the *National Enquirer*, which decided to suppress the results. Walton later passed two other polygraphs, but the suppression of the first test dogged him through the years. Nonetheless, he wrote up his alleged abduction in a 1978 book, *The Walton Experience*. That book became the basis of the 1993 sci-fi cult movie *Fire in the Sky*, clips from which formed part of Walton's McMinnville presentation in 2015. Actor Robert Patrick, most famous for

his impassive killer-robot role in *Terminator 2* (1991), played Walton's boss and best friend, Mike Rogers, in *Fire in the Sky*, so impressing *X-Files* creator Chris Carter that he carved out a part for Patrick during the last two years of the original series.

Speaking in 2015 in McMinnville, Walton, who is the subject of a just-released documentary, *Travis: The True Story of Travis Walton*, looked like a fly preserved for 40 years in 1970s amber, complete with sideburns and soup-strainer mustache. He also came across as oddly defensive, as if he couldn't get past his polygraph fiascos. (In 2009 Walton had again failed a lie-detector test, as a guest on the now-defunct reality show *Moment of Truth*.) "You know that polygraphs are only accurate 97 percent of the time," he told us at one point, not exactly sounding persuasive.

Indeed, Walton, Friedman, Marden, and other McMinnville regulars seemed to spend as much time arguing against the "debunkers," as UFO-believers call the skeptics who try to destroy their stories, as they spend describing their own experiences and research. The most vilified of all the debunkers, the Clare Quilty of the UFO world—even though

he has been dead for 11 years—is Philip J. Klass. Klass, a trained engineer and longtime senior editor of *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, made a lifetime hobby out of poking holes in narratives of extraterrestrial encounters. He had been particularly hard on the Majestic Twelve documents, which earned him a lengthy blast by Friedman at McMinnville in 2015. Travis Walton also delivered a blast at Klass, who at one point had suggested that Walton and Rogers had cooked up the UFO light show and kidnapping in order to get out of an unprofitable Forest Service contract. (Other skeptics have maintained that the strange lights in the sky in 1975 were probably Air Force test flights, then frequent in that part of Arizona.)

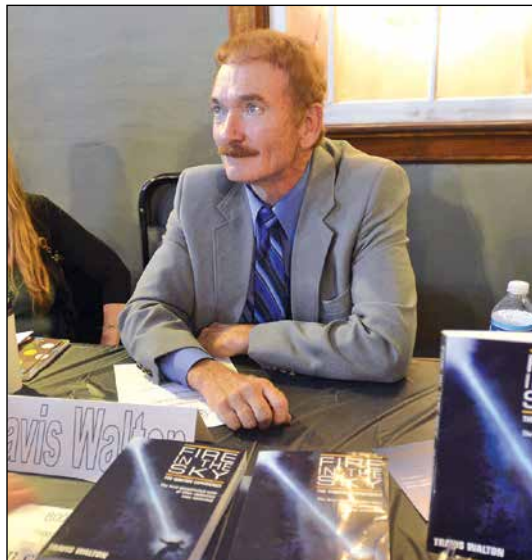
And for good measure, Friedman threw in some jibes at Carl Sagan, dead for 19 years but active during his lifetime in the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence, which holds that alien life forms may exist but not that they've paid visits to Earth that the government has concealed. "Carl Sagan was in some of my classes at the University of Chicago," Friedman jeered. "I know all about Carl Sagan."

It's true that there is no lack of reported UFO sightings that are a little less than two or four or seven decades old. On one website I counted 12 of them in January 2016 alone (fun fact: The new generation of aliens seems to have largely switched from the disc-shaped flying saucers of the 1950s to sleeker triangular-shaped vehicles). Interplanetary contacts are still a staple of *Coast to Coast AM*, the wee-hours talk-radio show for paranormal-fixated insomniacs, although the extraterrestrials compete with witches, ghosts, giant squids, crop circles, cattle mutilations, and time travel. But in a world that is infinitely more technologically

interconnected than it was even 20 years ago, it's also infinitely easier to figure out quickly that most, if not all, of the claimed extraterrestrial spacecraft have actually been balloons, airplanes, helicopters, searchlights, shooting stars, or just plain imaginary. UFOs are like Bigfoot: People stopped finding traces of the elusive yetis once the formidably forested Pacific Northwest got more developed during the 1980s. And perhaps, from a Jungian perspective, people's dislocated religious yearnings have simply fastened onto other things: near-death and post-death experiences, life-extension, or colonizing Mars, which

is in fact almost as fantastical a prospect as meeting a little green man from Mars. Even Chris Carter, when he revived *The X-Files* in the 2008 movie *I Want to Believe*, dropped the Roswell theme and centered his plot around head transplants instead. And he might just as well have stuck to head transplants, given the flop this year of the series revival.

None of this should bode ill, however, for the future of the UFO *festivals* at Roswell, McMinnville, and other locales that have claimed close encounters with extraterrestrials. At McMinnville the "serious" presentations by Walton, Marden, Friedman, and others were strictly for diehards. The vast majority of the attendees never got near the auditorium; they were out on the streets to eat and drink, take in (and show off) the phantasmagorical costumes and buy bobble-headbands with alien skulls at the souvenir stands. UFO sightings may not be genuine, but they are genuine Americana. During *The X-Files'* original long television run, episodes would end with the colophon "The truth is out there." Indeed it is, although perhaps not in the places where the ufologists might expect. Or Hillary Clinton. ♦



Travis Walton, star attraction of McMinnville's festival



The Rothko Chapel, Houston (2015)

Look at Mark Rothko

Is there less here than meets the eye? BY MAUREEN MULLARKEY

Impresario of his father's legacy, Christopher Rothko plays Vasari to papa Mark (1903-1970). Simultaneously pious and market-driven, his apotheosis of the painter is two things at once. Elegantly packaged, it is a promotional tool for sustaining his father's cult status and attendant asset value. Equally, it is a devotional tract for the faithful who confuse aesthetic sensation with religious sensibility.

The text makes instructive reading, largely as inoculation against the fallacy in which it is drenched. Christopher Rothko's rhetorical posturing

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Mark Rothko
From the Inside Out
by Christopher Rothko
Yale, 328 pp., \$35

mirrors Mark Rothko's delusional grandeur. Florid overreach rises to an unintended argument against the role of Art as presumptive heir to the errands of a Church. The son channels the spirit of the father's "path to the absolute," a self-glorifying excursion that permits stopping en route anywhere the plumbing works and the cuisine pleases. To seek the sacred but with no obligation to it—and no humility before it—has been Art's evolving game since German Idealism provided impetus in the late 18th

century. Rothko, a professed atheist, excelled at the romance.

The most aureate of Abstract Expressionism's declamatory high priests, the painter was born Markus Rotkovich in Latvia, then part of czarist Russia. Ten years old when he arrived in the United States, the boy grew up in Portland and came east on a scholarship to Yale. After freshman year, his scholarship was rescinded and replaced with a student loan. A voracious reader but desultory student, Rothko quit the next year. He settled in New York in 1925, the year he took up painting at the Art Students League under the Russian-born Max Weber. This was Rothko's only formal art training. Decades of teaching, working, exhibiting, and aggressive networking followed. He established

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himself among other, mainly emigré, artists who called themselves “The Ten,” the nucleus of what came to be called the New York School.

An artist’s minyan, they gathered in downtown bars to complete the liberation of visual art from the degrading obligation to imitate nature: Creative genius demands total freedom from obsolete models of intelligibility; the human figure, first among shackles on the primacy of subjectivity, need no longer apply as a measure of distinction.

On the evidence of Rothko’s own early figurative works, abandonment of the human form was prudent. He had little aptitude for visual reality, none at all for those deliberate, knowledgeable distortions that elevated Max Beckmann’s expressionism. Rothko disguised his deficit in high-minded rationalization: “After the Holocaust and the Atom Bomb you couldn’t paint figures without mutilating them.”

Christopher Rothko was only 6 when his father committed suicide. The son’s relationship with his father was largely vicarious, conducted posthumously by reading the painter’s own recorded statements and writings. These accumulate in unintended witness to the power of assertion over what meets the eye. The author pledges not to “demystify” his father’s painting nor interfere with “the sacredness” of our communion with it. We can hardly expect him to: He chairs the board of Houston’s Rothko Chapel, a nonprofit that exists (in its words) “to inspire people to action through art and contemplation.”

Trained in clinical psychology, Christopher Rothko abandoned practice early to make a life’s work of fostering his father’s estate. Appeals to psychology thread through the text. Emphasis on the psychology of color recalls Le Corbusier’s comment on his chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp: The single factor driving design was not ritual requirements but “the psychophysiology of the feelings.” Mark Rothko desired a public who would “not only listen to but venerate” his work. The paintings come to us as relics, much like

Padre Pio’s bloodstained gloves. But with a singular difference: Here the stains serve as a Rorschach test that tells us not about the saint but about ourselves. The truth of T.E. Hulme’s remark that art has come to be “spilt religion” expands here to include spilt psychoanalysis as well:

My father, whom so many commentators seem determined to turn into a rabbi, is far more of a psychoanalyst, [the paintings] providing the obtrusive silence of the analytic hour; the silence which you must fill with you.

Gestalt therapy was in vogue during Rothko’s working years. Alert to cultural signals, Christopher Rothko seizes the word *gestalt*, flashing it as a badge of gravity: “My father’s paintings are gestalts.” Looking at a Rothko stands bail for a therapeutic session; it is “a gateway to our inner selves.” We enter “the gestalt of a Rothko painting” and, under its guidance, penetrate to the heart of “our own inner workings.” In that moment of self-discernment, we encounter the artist as well:

Getting to know a Rothko painting is a process of learning what human qualities are foremost in you and which ones you and the artist have in common.

On our journey to understand what Rothko is saying, we find that we are perhaps learning more about ourselves.

The paintings can make us aware of our own feeling states. They can truly function as emotional barometers.

To understand a Rothko is to understand what the painting helps us see in ourselves.

He is helping you reorient your values.

As if in parody of prophetic intuition, Christopher Rothko’s prose imitates that blend of brass and grandiosity crucial to Mark Rothko’s image as the End of Art History incarnate: “You can’t really learn *about* Rothko, for that ‘knowledge’ will keep you rooted in one place. You have to learn to *speak* Rothko to have a conversation that invokes timelessness.”

Apologist for his father’s magisterial view of the artist as “torchbearer of the

philosophical,” Christopher Rothko endorses the misconception that art serves a function analogous to that of language. The son concedes a head start in “developing fluent Rothko.” Nevertheless, “anyone should be able to become conversant.”

But what of crusty souls who never get the lingo, the ornery ones whose prompts to “gazing resolutely inward” operate outside the precincts of art?

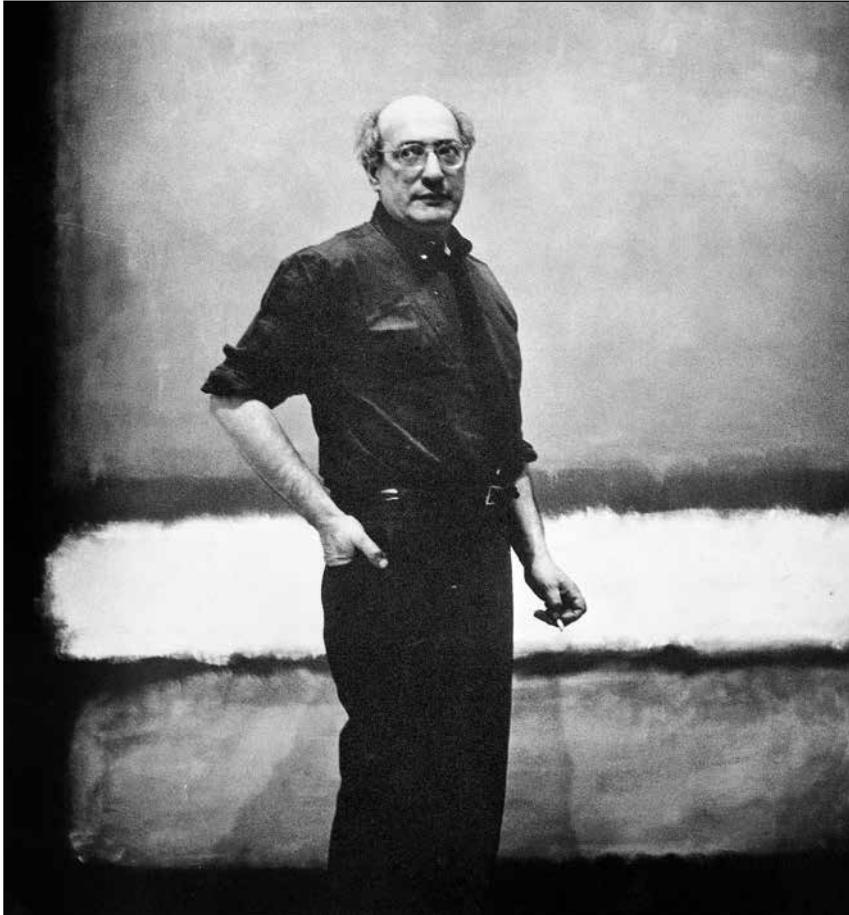
These are people who do not want their emotions stirred up, who generally don’t want an experience with art that penetrates to the visceral level.

People who dislike the work are those whose “anger stems from something other than the content of the artwork.” They are likely to be intimidated by its “seeming emptiness,” unable to penetrate the generosity of its “essential blankness.” Ideas—other than pictorial ones—are not an artist’s *métier*. But for Rothko, “ideas were paramount.” No evidence can be brought against them. The son allows nothing to bear against inflated claims made for the work of the father. An agile publicist, he upends negative responses. Those who question the work’s greatness are, “in essence, confirming that Rothko’s art communicates on a deep emotional level; that it is, in the truest sense, emotionally disturbing.” The author leaves no room for the possibility that some might be indifferent to Mark Rothko’s work precisely because they understand it.

Might Rothko have preferred to be a musician? Was painting a compromise?

A Rothko hovers between both worlds: “The spaces in Rothko paintings are filled with music, and indeed they readily serve as nurseries for the creation of music.” Rothko’s work “is symphonic in scale and ambition.” Rothko “is like some of the greatest composers in music history—Dufay, Bach, Mahler.” Prose purples to depict the painter as the climax of a resplendent era, “singing an impassioned final aria” before Pop Art arrived to ransack the opera house.

Attention lingers inevitably on the three major commissions that absorbed him from 1958 to 1969.



Mark Rothko (1961)

These were the monumental canvases—called *murals*—for the Four Seasons Restaurant in New York’s Seagram Building; for Harvard’s Holyoke Center; and for the chapel at the Institute of Religion and Human Development in Houston. Known as the Rothko Chapel, the capstone of his career was dedicated in 1971, a year after the artist opened his veins in his studio with a palette knife.

By now, Rothko’s comment on the Four Seasons appointment has entered folklore: “I hope to paint something that will ruin the appetite of every son of a bitch who ever eats in that room.” He resented having to serve a patron (Philip Johnson, architect of the building’s interiors) and a public (“the richest bastards in New York”). He was the one whose needs should be met because Rothko “was the one who was producing something truly important.”

A light to the nations is lost in an eatery. Rothko famously voided his contract by returning the money, convinced that no painting should be displayed in a public space. He envisioned his work installed in a series of chapels, each one a tabernacle sheltering the real presence of his own interior monologues revealed on canvas. It was a biblical ambition parasitic on the Holy of Holies, focus of Jewish prayer: “I have consecrated this house which you have built, and put my name there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time” (I Kings 9:3).

Thus began the Rothko Chapel, funded by John and Dominique de Menil. Human rights activists and blue chip art collectors, the Menils were Roman Catholics devoted to the “broadly inclusive principles” of Vatican II. Their faith in a declared atheist to create “something of deep meaning and religious resonance” is as much a

reminder of the spirit of Vatican II as it is a token of collector sanctimony. Multipurpose, the chapel (“truly a gestalt”) was designed by Rothko himself. Bunker-style, it is a conventional salaam to modernist disdain for the idea that religious impulse imposes any duties on architecture.

That form follows function is a central tenet of modernist design. And the form of a chapel, as that of any church, serves a distinct liturgical function. But religion-in-general has no liturgy, no unambiguous purpose, requires no essential spatial orientation. In terms of modernist credo, a nondenominational chapel, like the unicorn, is a fiction. So the Rothko Chapel is better seen as an architectural folly, a *kunsthalle* with airs, and its existence confirms Louis Dupré’s observation that “culture itself has become the real religion of our time, absorbing traditional religion as a subordinate part of itself. It offers some of the emotional benefits of religion, without exacting the high price faith demands.”

Mark Rothko has ascended into myth. And the chapel needs to keep him there.

The National Register of Historic Places listed it a scant 30 years after construction, waiving its own requirement that a site be at least 50 years old to warrant historic status. In 2009, *National Geographic* featured the chapel in its guide to *Sacred Places of a Lifetime*. A mitzvah tank for collectors, it endures as a pilgrimage site for aesthetes, the spiritual-but-not-religious, and world-improvers. The space hosts orthodox multicultural programs ranging from hip-hop and Black Lives Matter to eco-spirituality, indigenous people’s rights, and the healing sound of crystal bowls.

In the end, Rothko’s suicide was more eloquent than his paintings, lovely as the “classic” ones are. His son nods to the fact indirectly by committing a chapter to arguing against it. But as spectator of his own work, Mark Rothko was intimate with the distance between painting and ultimate reality. Color alone can hold a wall; it is not enough to sustain a life. ♦

KATE ROTHKO / APIC / GETTY

Getting Realpolitik

The fall and rise of a protean approach to statecraft.

BY GARY SCHMITT

A good historian is inevitably a revisionist. Why write if you have nothing new to offer? But of course, not all revisionists are good historians. Whole forests have been cut down in the name of publishing some novel insight that obscures the past rather than enlightens. John Bew, a professor in the War Studies Department of King's College, London, is a revisionist for sure but one whose works never fail to deepen knowledge of the past.

In 2012 Bew published *Castlereagh: A Life*. Rapidly received as the definitive account of the British minister to date, it overturned the orthodox portrayal of the Tory statesman as a one-dimensional counterrevolutionary diplomat and politician. Instead, Bew cast him as a figure attached to Enlightenment ideals but whose career was largely defined by the thankless task of dealing with foreign and domestic threats to British rule and (to Castlereagh's mind) the rule that made attainment of those ideals possible.

Previously, in *Talking to Terrorists* (2009), Bew and his coauthors challenged the conventional view that the Troubles in Northern Ireland were resolved only when London decided to sit down with the IRA with no preconditions and broker a final agreement. To the contrary, their research showed that what actually led to the settlement was far more complicated—including the overlooked but critical fact that the British security services had so disabled the militants by arrests, penetrations, and assassinations that there was no alterna-

Realpolitik
A History
by John Bew
Oxford, 408 pp., \$27.95

tive left for the IRA but to give up its armed struggle.

Similarly, Bew's 2009 *The Glory of Being Britons: Civic Unionism in 19th-Century Belfast* was, as the title suggests, a new account of Ulster Unionism that didn't simply conflate that political persuasion with Northern Irish desires for Protestant supremacy. Instead, he recovered a strand of Unionism grounded in a Whiggish attachment to the crown and the British constitution.

Now there is *Realpolitik: A History*, in which Bew provides a new or, more specifically, forgotten account of the origins of the word and its many uses and abuses since.

Most often associated with "realism" as a school of international relations, Bew points out that the term "realpolitik" has a distinct origin and father: the 19th-century German student-activist, writer, and politician August Ludwig von Rochau. Contrary to how contemporary political scientists might use the word today, Rochau's two-volume *Foundations of Realpolitik* (1853, 1868) did not attempt to reduce politics to normative-free practice. Rather, his intent was to instruct fellow liberals that, if they hoped to succeed in establishing a reformed and unified German state, they needed to be more realistic and consider all the forces at play in a modern society. Having experienced the failure of the European revolutions of 1848, Rochau coined the term "realpolitik" as a kind of Burkean rejoinder to his colleagues' too-utopian plans. In

Bew's telling, Rochau was "a liberal mugged by reality."

For Rochau, while social forces, political coalitions, and geopolitics had to be factored into reformers' efforts to move policies forward, so too did the power of ideas in shaping politics. But whatever nuance there was in his account of realpolitik, it was (as Bew shows) rather quickly dispensed with by the word's most famous practitioner, Otto von Bismarck, and the word's most effective popularizer, the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke. By the turn of the 20th century, it had come to mean in British eyes a narrow-minded and brutish approach to world politics—a distinctly German statecraft devoid of all principle except the pursuit of greater power.

If politics emptied realpolitik of its original meaning and resulted in its being used as a term of opprobrium, politics also resurrected the word into a more positive connotation following World War I. Reacting to the failure of the League of Nations, realpolitik gained more approving use in both Great Britain and the United States as a counterbalance to the overly moralistic approach to world politics that followed the war. Indeed, as Bew details, even before the United States entered the war, the young American journalist and intellectual Walter Lippmann wrote a book with a chapter titled "A Little Realpolitik." There, Lippmann called on Americans to put aside their naïveté about the world and use their power in conjunction with others in the West to build a liberal international order.

Realpolitik: A History takes readers through the complex genealogy of the friends and foes of realpolitik in continental Europe, Britain, and the United States before and after the Great War and World War II, and during the Cold War and after. As one might expect, Bew gives special attention to the lineage of German emigrés to the United States, such as Hans Morgenthau, Henry Kissinger, and Carl Friedrich, who differed substantially in their understanding of realpolitik and realism more broadly. So thorough is Bew in recounting the history of the use of

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the word that it is difficult to imagine that there is much left to discover.

Yet precisely because the word has taken on so many connotations through the years, a reader might well be left to wonder: Why conduct this exercise at all if the term has had no lasting meaning? It's a lot of words spilt over a word that never seems to stay true. Bew the historian might answer that, precisely because of all the to and fro over realpolitik, how the word is used actually becomes something of a Rorschach test for tracking modern ideas about the conduct of national security.

But Bew, one of Britain's top guns when it comes to writing about current strategic affairs, doesn't want to leave it at that. He concludes his history by attempting to pull from Rochau's own admittedly convoluted work a list of principles to help guide a country's foreign policy. Here the real realpolitik is principled but prudent, knowing thoroughly the existing circumstances that give rise not only to the limits of statecraft but also to its possibilities.

One suspects that this version of realpolitik is as much John Bew as August von Rochau. Nevertheless, it's worthwhile advice. ♦



Sensational Novelist

The mysterious mastery of Wilkie Collins.

BY SARA LODGE

Wilkie Collins was quite literally a colorful character. His doctor described his attire at dinner as sometimes featuring “a light camel hair or tweed suit, with a broad pink or blue striped shirt, and perhaps a red tie.” On another occasion he appeared wearing a low-cut shirt “dashed with great, gory squares” with a bright blue jacket and a rakishly-tied spotted neckerchief of the kind popularized by James Belcher, the bare-knuckle boxing champion.

His physique was as incongruous as his wardrobe. Five-foot-six, with a large head, acute myopia, and a weak chin (later masked with a bushy beard) he was apt when sitting to jiggle his knees nervously, “as if soothing invisible babies.” He liked to party. Rebellious against the stolid English diet of gravy soup, mutton, and cabinet pudding as he rebelled against other

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Wilkie Collins

A Brief Life

by Peter Ackroyd

Nan A. Talese, 272 pp., \$25

stolid English conventions, he liked to indulge in Parisian pleasures: pints of champagne, paté de foie gras, garlic sauces, and sauciness.

Charles Dickens was friends with him, as a fellow author who collaborated in his plays and his magazine, but also partly because the younger man was an enthusiastic coadventurer on bachelor holidays that included whoring. The two shared “Haroun al-Raschid” expeditions, named after the Caliph in the *Arabian Nights* who each night goes slumming incognito in the streets of Baghdad.

Collins wrote over 20 novels, but today is chiefly remembered for two: *The Moonstone* (1868), arguably the first English detective novel, and *The Woman in White* (1859), a breathless mystery involving spousal abuse and attempted homicide, doubles, incarceration, madness, and a ground-breaking narrative method in which we hear

from several different narrators in turn, as if they were witnesses in court, and piece the “truth” together from their fractured accounts.

These novels electrified 19th-century Britain and America. Indeed, the genre of which Collins was the presiding master became known as the “sensation novel.” Thomas Hardy complained that such fiction contained “murder, blackmail, illegitimacy, impersonation, eavesdropping, multiple secrets, a suggestion of bigamy, amateur and professional detectives.” The sales figures attest that being shocked was a guilty pleasure that thousands of Victorians relished.

Where the Gothic novels of the previous century had depicted horrors that occurred in the monasteries and castles of Roman Catholic Italy and France, Collins pioneered a domestic Gothic that played out in ordinary, contemporary British streets and houses: what he dubbed “the secret theatre of home.” His novels suggest the possibility that we are all impersonating someone and we are all hiding something. Freudian psychoanalysis would develop these insights, arguing that what is *unheimlich* (uncanny) is precisely that which is *heimlich* (domestic). We are the monsters of whom we are afraid.

Peter Ackroyd's new life of Wilkie Collins is the latest in his series of Brief Lives, biographies that provide an account of their subject in around 200 pages. Ackroyd is an old hand at describing Victorian London; he has produced many noteworthy volumes including biographies of Dickens, of J.M.W. Turner, and of London itself. Given the depth and breadth of his knowledge, however, this digest of Collins's life is both more superficial, and more plodding, than one would hope.

It begins well enough, with Wilkie's birth to the artist William Collins and his vivacious, sharp-witted wife Harriet Geddes, a woman who had wanted to be an actress but heeded her family's moral objections and became a governess instead. Wilkie would inherit her passion for the stage. Like his father (as Ackroyd points out) he also “possessed a painter's eye” and learned the importance of connecting “figures

with the landscape, making each of equal importance.” In his novels, locations such as *The Shivering Sands*, a quicksand which swallows up one of *The Moonstone*’s suspects, embody the nervous energy, the subconscious fears and desires of the characters.

William Collins needed to study the Old Masters in Rome and, accordingly, took his small family to live abroad when Wilkie was a teenager. Wilkie dived precociously into the cultural, gastronomic, and sexual embrace of Italy and found the material that would enable him to write his first published novel, *Antonina: or the Fall of Rome*, a toga-ripping melodrama set in the fifth century A.D., whose success would enable him to evade the dull but respectable professions (preaching, tea-dealing) that his father recommended.

Once Ackroyd begins on Collins’s writing career, however, the difficulties of a potted biography of such a prolific author become apparent. Ackroyd is committed to giving us an outline account of each of the books and plays that Collins penned. This leaves comparatively little room for discussion of other important matters, such as Collins’s interest in mesmerism and psychology; the landmark criminal cases, exhaustively reported in the newspapers, that influenced his writing; his friendships; and his complicated emotional life.

After his novels, the thing for which Wilkie Collins is now most famous is the scandal surrounding his domestic arrangements. He lived for much of his adult life with a widowed shopkeeper, Caroline Graves, whom he didn’t marry. In his forties, he took up with a barmaid, Martha Rudd, with whom he set up a second household and had three children. He didn’t marry her, either.

Many 19th-century men ran two relationships in tandem. Dickens cast off the wife who had borne him 10 children and took up with a teenage actress called Ellen Ternan. Dickens’s illustrator, George Cruikshank, had a childless marriage and a secret family with one of his servants. William Frith, the painter of *The Derby Day* and other

Victorian crowd scenes, took the cake when it came to having it and eating it too: He fathered 12 children with his wife and 7 with his mistress.

Collins was unique, however, in his principled rejection of the institution of marriage, the general idea of whose “scope and purpose” he felt to be “miserably narrow.” In “Bold Words By a Bachelor” (1856), his



Wilkie Collins

frankest comment on Victorian sexual politics, he inveighed against the way that marriage led to emaciated friendships and social life, as men left all their sympathies in the boudoir and the nursery. Moreover, if incompatibilities emerged, man and wife were both trapped: Divorce through civil proceedings only became possible in 1857 and the terms under which one could sue for it were unequal for men and women.

Riddled with venereal disease, selfish, and yet also progressive in his views about women’s right to legal identity and independent possession of property, Collins provided financially for both Caroline Graves and Martha Rudd, dividing his estate between them after his death. He was a goat but not a hypocrite. Ackroyd’s biography deals, as it must, with Collins’s love life. But it does not have time give more than a line to “Bold Words By a Bachelor,” and

the nuances of his relationships—particularly with Caroline Graves and her daughter—are lost to compression.

The biography suffers also from vagueness about some things and uncalled-for certainty about others. In the course of a few pages, we are told that Kate Dickens, in describing Collins’s mother as a devil, “may have meant no more than that ... she was occasionally cutting or caustic in conversation,” that “moral admonitions may have meant very little to Wilkie Collins,” and that Collins’s “fondness for women may have impeded his muse.” So many may, and no summer in sight. When it comes to Martha Rudd, however, Ackroyd is confident (on the basis of one obituary) that Collins met her when she was a servant in his mother’s house. We can’t know this. The possibility that he met her behind the bar in the Vauxhall Tavern in Yarmouth when he was on one of his bachelor sailing expeditions is equally likely.

There are other little niggles. Ackroyd is sometimes rather sweeping, even old-fashioned, in his depiction of Victorian proprieties: The circles in which Collins moved, in fact, show how diverse and contested the moral and aesthetic lights were by which people lived in the 19th century. He says of the “world of confused identities—both sexual and social” in Collins’s fiction, “this was the world of London.” Yet much of Collins’s fiction is not set in London. Part of the point of the sensation novel is mobility: People travel by train, by boat, and by omnibus, knocking up against complete strangers who may, in fact, be illegitimate relatives, femmes fatales, or impostors, ready to steal their name and position. This is the world not of one city but of universal duplicity.

Ackroyd is at his best when Dickens steps into the frame, organizing Collins to write and act in *The Frozen Deep*, a melodrama of romantic self-sacrifice set in the Arctic that reduced Queen Victoria and Prince Albert to sobbing wrecks. There are lively passages, too, when Collins embarks late in life on a celebrity tour of America. He was doordropped by journalists, who managed

to stalk him even into private homes and parties: The press in the land of the free took liberties as yet unfamiliar in England. Still, the master of sensation enjoyed his visit: The warm, clean air dissipated his rheumatism and his gouty symptoms disappeared. Manners were more frank and open in the New World, Collins reported, even if its inhabitants had the minor failing of never walking anywhere.

The idea of “Brief Lives”—biographies that you can read in bed with-

out bench-pressing—is a good one. It is the sort of thing that would have appealed to the Victorians themselves, who founded a National Portrait Gallery so that ordinary people could be inspired by their extraordinary compatriots. Sadly, however, in this biography Wilkie Collins’s life is made more anaemic by being cut. Those who learn just enough from Peter Ackroyd to want to know more should turn to Andrew Lycett’s pacy yet penetrating *Wilkie Collins: A Life of Sensation* (2013). ♦



Birth Pains

A centennial revision of Ireland’s Easter Rebellion.

BY EDWARD SHORT

No history cries out for revision more insistently than Irish history. And no event in Irish history demonstrates this better than the Easter Rebellion—the centennial of which is now in full throttle—because no event better epitomizes the vexed question of what constitutes Irish identity and Irish nationhood.

As everyone knows, when the band of romantic nationalists occupied the General Post Office in Dublin on that sleepy bank holiday 100 years ago and proclaimed the founding of the Irish Republic, most of their fellow townsmen looked upon them as mad, disruptive nuisances, especially after the civilian death toll reached 250 and the property damage soared to over £1.8 million. It was only when the unimaginative British started shooting the leaders that popular opinion swung round in favor of the rebels.

Nevertheless, despite all the hoopla surrounding the centennial, it is remarkable how little attention has been paid to the nationalism that inspired the uprising. *The Seven* is a

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

brilliant exception. Written with great verve and zest, as well as judicious tough-mindedness, this is an overdue reexamination of the remorseless nationalist faith that led not only to the Easter Rebellion but to the Troubles beyond. For anyone keen on understanding why the question of Irish identity and Irish nationhood remains so vexed, Ruth Dudley Edwards’s study is essential.

One governing virtue of this book is that, as a revisionist, Edwards has not come simply to scoff where others have prayed. She understands how British misrule stoked the fires of Irish nationalism as well as the idealism that often imbued that nationalism. And she certainly understands the sacrifices that individual nationalists made as witness to their faith. Some of her liveliest passages recreate those sacrifices in a narrative full of pathos, irony, and wit—proof that good storytelling always distinguishes good history.

Edwards’s treatment of the Fenian Thomas Clarke (1857-1916), so much of whose sacrificial zeal animated the Easter Rebellion, nicely demonstrates this. After being dispatched by the Irish-American Clan na Gael to blow up London Bridge, Clarke was betrayed by an informer and sentenced in 1883 to life imprisonment. It was not until 1898, after 15 years behind bars, in conditions that were often gratuitously barbarous, that he was released. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes Thomas Clarke as “shadowy.” Edwards’s account of the “disciplined, focused teetotaler,” who sought “neither status nor recognition” for the work he did to advance his beloved cause, brings the man and his trials entirely to life.

Indeed, her vivid account is a model of critical sympathy. It might be true that Clarke, impelled “by a desire for vengeance, an all-pervading hatred for the British, an implacable ambition to get them out of Ireland, a steely determination to do whatever it took and exceptional strength of character . . . was readying himself to start a revolution.” But it is also true (as Edwards shows) that he chose to live in “an Irish republican bubble” and had no interest in anything unless it could somehow help to “damage the British.” And this included Irish culture—the genuine article, in all of its richness, not the counterfeit culture peddled by the nationalists. Denied any proper reading material by his British captors, Clarke was desperately parochial, and the crude, narrow, fanatical view of Irish identity and Irish nationhood that he bequeathed to the new republic cast a long, lamentable shadow.

In Edwards’s brilliant portrait of the leader of the nationalist republicans, Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), she shows how this perfervid schoolmaster, poet, and barrister paved the way for the Easter Rebellion in an oration he gave at the graveside of the Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa (1831-1915) by reaffirming a central tenet of the Fenian faith. The nationalists, he insisted, would acknowledge “only one definition of freedom: It is Tone’s

definition; it is Mitchel's definition; it is Rossa's definition. Let no one blaspheme the cause that the dead generations of Ireland served by giving it any other name and definition than their name and definition." And his conclusion could not have been starker: "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace."

In this bravura piece of nationalist propaganda, Edwards recognizes what would become a pattern: "The use of the dead to justify as well as dictate the policy of the living . . . would be enthusiastically adopted by subsequent generations of violent republicans"—though using Rossa in this way was especially cynical because, before his death, the old Fenian had already begun to accept the constitutionalism anathema to Pearse and the nationalists. Nevertheless, no one can read Edwards on Pearse without seeing her solicitude for a man whose talents were so terribly misapplied. She quotes the British colonel superintending Pearse's court-martial, who would remark that he had "just done one of the hardest things I have ever had to do. I have had to condemn to death one of the finest characters I have ever come across."

Edwards is unsparing about the role that Irish Americans played in fomenting and funding the nationalists' campaigns of violence at a time when the barrister and member of Parliament John Redmond (1856-1918)—who was never unsympathetic to the aspirations of the separatists—was trying to put together a constitutional solution acceptable not only to nationalists and the British but to Ulster as well. While appreciative of the hurdles in his way, Redmond was confident that independence might still be won without bloodshed, especially after the shared sacrifices exacted by the Great War, in which over 49,000 Irishmen—from both the South and the North—would die. As it was, the Easter Rebellion was tragic proof that the men of violence, backed to the hilt by bloody-minded Irish America, would prevail over the constitutionalists.

In her conclusion, Edwards quotes the Jesuit Francis Shaw to show how the nationalists radically impoverished Ire-

land's sense of identity and nationhood: "In the commonly accepted view of Irish history," he wrote,

the Irishman of today is asked to disown his own past. He is expected to censure as unpatriotic the common Irishmen who were not attracted by the new revolutionary ideas, but who adhered to an ancient tradition. . . . [He is told] to apologize for [his] fellow countrymen who accepted loyally the serious guidance of the Church.

Worse still, in Shaw's words, he is told that he "must despise as unmanly those of their own country who preferred to solve problems, if possible, by peaceful rather than by violent means." Here was the issue of Irish nationalism in all of its arrogance and divisiveness.

The Easter Rebellion has inspired fine historians, from F.S.L. Lyons and J.J. Lee to Charles Townshend and Lord Bew. Now, to their illustrious company, we add Ruth Dudley Edwards. ♦

BCA

Sinner/Saint

The lesser-known, but no less memorable, Inkling.

BY FRANK FREEMAN

In many ways, for those who dislike the apologetics of C. S. Lewis and/or the fantasy of J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams (1886-1945) is the most approachable of the Inklings. He was more connected to the ideas and people of the present moment than were Lewis, who never read newspapers and called himself an Old Western man, a dinosaur; and Tolkien, who hardly ever read anything written after medieval times.

Charles Williams
The Third Inkling
by Grevel Lindop
Oxford, 464 pp., \$34.95

and Thomas, who attended some of Williams's famous lectures, was overheard saying to him, "Why, you come into the room and talk about Keats and Blake as if they were *alive*." Philip Larkin, by contrast, was not as impressed. He admired Williams's literary criticism "a good deal" but didn't "give a fart for his poetry" and thought Williams, when lecturing, became "crazy as a coot."

Larkin may have been onto something. This new biography, the most in depth thus far, shows Williams had a foot in two worlds in all aspects of his life. Grevel Lindop, poet, former professor of Romantic and Early Victorian Studies at the University of Manchester, and author of *The Opium Eater: A Life of Thomas De Quincey* (1981), has been able to use papers, documents, and letters heretofore unavailable. He reveals Williams as constantly and deeply divided between faith and doubt, Christianity and the occult,



Charles Williams

But Charles Williams also knew and admired Dylan Thomas, W.H. Auden, and T.S. Eliot. Eliot and Auden each wrote a foreword for one of his books,

Frank Freeman is a writer in Maine.

fidelity to his wife and, at the least, emotional adultery, and his own web of personal mythmaking and reality. Lindop believes that Williams, in his *Taliessin Through Logres* (1938) and *The Region of the Summer Stars* (1944), was “a great poet” but adds that his “work ranges from the great to the embarrassingly bad; his personal conduct from the generous and heroic to the selfish and manipulative.”

Williams was born in the Holloway area of London into a family that “lived at the lowest edge of shabby-genteel respectability.” But he did very well in school and was able to get a scholarship to University College, London; family poverty soon forced him back to the family business, however. Eventually, through a friend, he got a job reading proofs at the London branch of the Oxford University Press, where he would work the rest of his life. He married his youthful sweetheart and they had one son.

When World War II came round—Williams did not fight in the Great War, as Lewis and Tolkien had, because of poor eyesight—the OUP offices were moved to Oxford. There, Williams joined the Inklings—Lewis admired Williams’s novel *The Place of the Lion* (1931) and Williams worked on Lewis’s first book of literary criticism—and drew rapt crowds to his lectures.

Just as the war was ending, in May 1945, Williams began to suffer intestinal pain: He had a rare condition called intussusception from adhesions caused by abdominal tuberculosis picked up from unpasteurized milk. After an operation, he collapsed and died the next day. Many at Oxford were devastated, and yet, because of his faith and charisma, strangely exhilarated—as if they knew he was still with them.

Though considered homely, even ugly—C.S. Lewis used the word “monkey” in describing his facial features—women adored Williams. He was prone to falling in love with young coworkers or women who came to him asking for advice. He would give them “assignments,” but when they didn’t complete them,

he would “punish” them: He liked to hit their hands, sometimes buttocks, with a ruler; once he pinched a woman on the arm, leaving a bruise. He was a devoted orthodox Christian who liked to tread as close to heresy as he could manage—which, Lewis once wrote, is probably why, during an Inklings meeting, the Anglo-Saxon scholar C.L. Wrenn “expressed a strong wish to burn Williams, or at least maintained that conversation with Williams

enabled him to understand how inquisitors had felt it right to burn people.”

Lindop shows us the whole man, leaving out neither the sordidness nor the sanctity. In this, the author is a little like Williams himself, of whom W.H. Auden wrote, “Never was there an historian more courteous to all alike. ... Williams never fails to be just to both sides.” Lindop, too, is courteous to all concerned, and just to both sides of Charles Williams’s life. ♦



But I Repeat Myself

*Posterity extends George Santayana an offer
he can't refuse.* BY JOE QUEENAN

George Santayana was sitting in his stately, well-appointed Cambridge home when the housekeeper announced he had visitors. Seconds later, Mrs. Hudson ushered three oddly garbed men into the parlor, where he greeted them with sherry and cheroots.

“We’ll cut right to the chase, Mr. Santayana,” the tallest of the three, one Jared Polanski, said. “We’re visitors from the 21st century and we’ve come back in time to ask you for a huge favor.”

“So H.G. Wells was right about time travel?” Santayana said. “Or was that Jules Verne?”

“Well, mostly Wells, but Verne was definitely in the ballpark,” the man replied. “In any case, we belong to a special team that gets sent back into The Past to try to prevent misfortunes from occurring in The Future. If you get my drift.”

“I do,” said the much-admired philosopher and essayist. “Tell me how I can be of assistance.”

The second of the visitors, Travis O’Callaghan, now spoke up: “Over the course of your life you will become an esteemed and beloved public figure,

ultimately penning such classics as *The Realms of Being* and *Scepticism and Animal Faith*.”

“That’s wonderful,” said Santayana. “Please continue.”

“One day you will write the immortal sentence, ‘Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.’”

Santayana was impressed: “That’s a good line,” he told his guests. “When will I say that?”

“Somewhere around April 1904,” Polanski replied. “It will soon become your most favorite saying. It will become such a popular aphorism that it will become a cliché. A mind-numbing cliché. An unbearable cliché. In some quarters, a hated cliché. By the time the 21st century rolls around, no hack journalist or politician will be able to talk about current events without citing it. It will be on the tip of every nitwit’s lips.”

Santayana did not take offense. He knew whereof they spoke: “You mean it will become incredibly annoying, like ‘It is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness?’ That sort of thing?”

“Bingo,” said Polanski. “It will become such a maddening, ubiquitous, insufferable cliché that no one will be

Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of One for the Books.

able to pick up a newspaper or magazine without seeing it in print. It will drive thinking people like us mad. If there were some way to ban the expression, we'd do it. Some way to impose the death penalty on any journalist who used it."

"That seems a bit extreme," said the future author of *The Last Puritan*.

"It does, I understand that. But take it from me, this expression just sucks the life out of every conversation," Polanski noted.

"It makes it impossible to think," added O'Callaghan. "It's like 'It is what it is' or 'It's all good.' It just stops a conversation dead in its tracks."

"We're not blaming you," Polanski pointed out. "'Those who cannot remember the past' is a wonderful expression, a truly brilliant insight. It's just that ..."

"It got way overused," said his partner. "It's gotten to the point where every discussion of the past comes back to that same phrase. It's like 'Let he who is without sin cast the first stone' or 'If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem.' It just annoys the hell out of everybody."

Santayana thought over what he was hearing: "Have you fellows done this with anyone else?"

"Dozens of people. We got William Butler Yeats to agree to not write the line 'The center will not hold.' We got Oscar Wilde to agree to not write 'When good Americans die, they go to Paris. When bad Americans die, they go to America.'"

"How much persuading?" Santayana asked.

Polanski pointed to the third man, who now produced a truncheon, a Bowie knife, a stiletto, a strip of piano wire, an electric saw, three baseball bats, and a pair of well-used brass knuckles. "We'd prefer to do it the easy way," O'Callaghan said. "But if we have to do it the hard way, so be it."

Santayana could see that he was backed into a corner. His visitors seemed absolutely determined to prevent him from ever writing or uttering the phrase that had made him immortal. He was not unsympathetic to their position. "Just out of curiosity, what do

I get out of this?" he asked his guests.

"A \$1,000 stipend and a solemn promise that your other famous expressions will remain intact," Polanski replied. "In fact, we'll make a concerted effort to get them cited more often by the leading lights of our era:



"Those who cannot remember the past..."

noted intellectuals, esteemed luminaries, captains of industry, keen observers of the human condition, perhaps even stand-up guys, men of the people and working-class heroes, which is something to be."

"What other things did I say?" Santayana asked. "Give me an example. Let's hear my second-most famous expression, okay?"

The two men exchanged glances. They seemed nervous.

"Well ... your second-most famous aphorism is 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.'"

"That's it?" said Santayana, miffed and crestfallen. "That's the second-most famous thing I ever said?"

The men looked down, not wishing to make direct eye contact. They nodded. "We're really sorry to break it to you this way, Mr. Santayana," said Polanski. "But the fact of the matter is ..."

"I'm a one-trick pony? Is that what you're trying to tell me? I'm like Nathan Hale or Stephen Decatur, people who said just one thing they're remembered for? Is that it?"

Polanski nodded.

"You're the proverbial one-hit wonder," he said. "Mind you, it was a big hit."

"But now you want to get rid of my

most celebrated expression? You want me to simply kick away my one chance for immortality?"

"Not exactly," said O'Callaghan. "If you agree not to write 'Those who cannot ...' we'll let you have your choice of 'It ain't over till the fat lady sings,' 'Que sera, sera,' or 'Whatever goes around comes around.'"

"Who said those?"

"It doesn't matter. If you agree never to write the words 'Those who cannot remember the past,' etcetera, we're authorized to let you write 'The longest journey begins with a single step' or 'Today is the first day of the rest of your life' almost a century before anyone else thinks of them."

"You'd be helping humanity," said Polanski. "You have no idea how annoying that phrase is."

Santayana stroked his chin. "Gee, can I have a day or two to think it over?" he asked. "This is all kind of sudden."

"No," said the man in the corner, who had previously been silent. "You've heard your options. Now make up your mind. We have three more stops to make. Mark Twain. René Descartes. Aesop."

Santayana pondered the proposal. Then he went over to his desk, opened the top drawer, pulled out a pistol and shot the third man, the big oaf. Polanski and O'Callaghan looked on in horror.

"This is about the fifteenth time this year this nonsense has happened. Time travelers stop by and ask people like me to *not* write aphorisms we subsequently became famous for. Instead of going back and preventing the First World War from happening, or warning Custer about the Little Big Horn, you clowns pull stunts like this. You guys really piss me off."

He now shot the two remaining time travelers and summoned the maid. "Fetch Caleb and Jedediah and bury them in the cellar," he said, "like all the others."

"Very good, sir," said Mrs. Hudson. "Sounds like yet another case of 'We know not the day nor the hour.'"

"You got that right, babe," said George Santayana. "Ask not for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee." ♦

"John Kasich said Monday he's not the desperate one on the campaign trail. Donald Trump is."

PARODY

—CNN.com, April 25, 2016

any kind of...
So we were wrong. We were...
right. So doesn't that make you happy?

AY, MAY 3, 2016

ONE DOLLAR CHEAP

JOHN KASICH REJECTS CLAIMS HE IS FLAILING

'I know you are. But what am I?'

By ALEX BUCKLEY

WHITE SANDS, N.M. — Standing in a Roy Rogers parking lot, Ohio governor John Kasich told onlookers that Donald Trump's days were numbered. "Any moment now that guy is gonna implode, I can just feel it," he insisted. The presidential candidate exuded confidence despite the size of the crowd—12 New Mexicans (half of them children)—and the bleak backdrop of a fast-food joint that, according to locals, has been closed for the last two years.

"I blame MapQuest—it said this place was still open," the governor explained with a laugh. Gov. Kasich admitted that he now does his own advance work. "Not because we're struggling," he added, "but because it's good to be lean and efficient. These big, bloated operations usually disguise a campaign in danger. Which means Donald Trump is in big danger, right? Anyone? ¿Hola?"

Gov. Kasich also confirmed he and Texas senator Ted Cruz have agreed to cede certain states to each other in hopes of stalling the Trump machine. "We have our disagreements, believe me, but Ted and I both know the danger Donald Trump poses to our party." The governor said that in return for staying away from Indiana and Nebraska, Sen. Cruz



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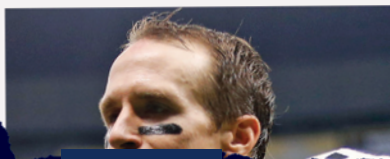
"Where's the beef?" asked Gov. Kasich, who no longer employs speechwriters.

will not compete in New Mexico, Guam, the Marshall Islands, American Samoa, Fiji, and southern California—specifically Baja.

"You want to talk about the 'art of the deal,' how about that?" boasted the Ohio governor. "I've got lots more campaign-

ing to do between now and Cleveland. And I can promise you by that time we will be leading both Senator Cruz and the Donald. For as Scripture reminds us, the last shall be first and the first

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QB Brees says Goodell has 'too much power'

Goodell denies, orders Brees to be shackled

By AARON HERNANDEZ

the weekly
Standard

MAY 9, 2016