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Janitor of Lunacy: a Filibuster by Bryan Campbell: Politics, Diapers, and Empathy

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Janitor of Lunacy: a Filibuster by Bryan Campbell: Politics, Diapers, and Empathy

Interview with Bryan Campbell

Lea Stephan

Websites

- 1 <http://meteores.org/bryancampbell>
- 2 <http://leventdessignes.fr>

Interview

[Fig. 1]

Visual of the show.

© Brian Campbell

- 3 7 June 2018, 7pm – midnight, at Théâtre du Vent des Signes, Toulouse.
- 4 I met Bryan Campbell for an interview two days before his performance of *Janitor of Lunacy: A Filibuster* was scheduled to open at Théâtre du Vent des Signes on June 7, 2018. Given our discussion during the interview and my Civilization Studies perspective, I was slightly disappointed by the content of the performance, as I had expected something more obviously political. Although Campbell had explained that he did not wish his 5-hour performance to be a prescriptive monologue, I nonetheless had thought that he would talk about more topics with an obvious political dimension. But Campbell's approach to a performance that brushed lightly on political topics and was heavily interspersed with the reading of poems and literary extracts, as well as bouts of karaoke, was certainly better adapted to the audience than a heavily political performance, and met with an astounding success.
- 5 The performance opened with an explanation of what a filibuster is, which he presented as an American political tradition of unlimited speech that aims at obstructing the legislative process (in current debates about changing the Senate rules, defenders of the status quo prefer to describe the filibuster as the protection of minority opinion¹). In the interview, Campbell showed awareness that the French public was not necessarily very well-informed about American politics, and certainly not about the filibuster. He arrived in France eight years ago and thus understands how to recalibrate things for a French audience. Campbell has stayed tuned into the politics of his homeland, but has perspective gained through distance, which has modified his reflection.

- 6 Campbell's explanation of the filibuster emphasized both the serious and the ludicrous parts of the filibuster rules. He gave the example of some famous filibusters, such as Strom Thurmond's record filibuster against the Civil Rights Act of 1957 that lasted for 24 hours and 18 minutes or Senator Huey Long's filibuster in 1935, during which he read a recipe for fried oysters, a Louisiana specialty.²
- 7 Campbell then explained the filibuster rules that forbid leaning against the pulpit. The filibustering senator is allowed to move around however. It is permitted for attending senators to ask questions during a filibuster, without time limit for the question (Heitshusen and Beth 5), leading to tactics where complicit senators ask one-hour long questions to relieve the filibusterer.
- 8 Moreover, filibusterers are allowed to drink milk and water (in Campbell's case, soy milk because of his sensitive digestion).³ They are also allowed to eat candy that is kept in the desk currently occupied by a senator from Pennsylvania.⁴ One person in the public was asked to play that role. Campbell did not eat any of the candy, however, the bowl was handed around the audience a couple of times.
- 9 Regarding bodily functions, Campbell explained that senators would use catheters or diapers. He then proceeded to put the diapers on in front of the audience and explained his approach of wanting to wear them to help him get into the role, but also in order to emulate the senate rules and constraints. For him, this is part of the choreography of the filibuster. He then explained the rules for the public, which matched those for the senate, except maybe the part when he told people to get comfy on cushions and lie down on the floor if they wanted to (some did).
- 10 While the audience was allowed to come and go as they pleased, one rule dictated that at least one person remain in the room.⁵ In this way and through soft lighting, the audience was integrated into the performance.
- 11 So by starting with an explanation of filibusters there was an educational aspect to his performance. He has been working on this 5-hour performance for a year and a half now and it includes both written and improvised sections.
- 12 An equally educational approach was applied to the explanation of his artistic concept, which Campbell covered in great detail with the audience. This was to such an extent that it almost equaled the level of elaboration that he had expressed in our interview.
- 13 During the performance, he presented a short history of famous filibusters by *paraleipsis*, telling us about all the filibusters he would not reenact. He explained what he wanted his filibuster to be: « le discours d'une personne traversée par des lignes politiques, » a conversation in which « un organisme [parle] à d'autres organismes. » This was followed by a long explanation of his views regarding the social and political interactions that shape the being, the subject.
- 14 Furthermore, Campbell had clarified during the interview that he was interested in the performative aspect of the filibuster. However, in his research he discovered that political scientists do not really focus on this aspect. This is partly due to the fact that since 1972 the 'performative filibuster' is not really needed anymore. As a result of changes in the senate rules "the threat of a filibuster is enough". Since the early 1970s, the procedures have allowed for more than one bill or matter to be pending on the floor, meaning that the debate has only to go on theoretically. While one bill is being filibustered, other bills can be considered. During this time, the filibustering senator does not have to actually speak.⁶

- 15 However, Campbell is interested in the occurrences of ‘performative filibuster’ that are still carried out, and pointed to the 2013 Ted Cruz filibuster against the funding of Obamacare, which Campbell considered to be clearly pointless, since the law had been passed in 2010.⁷
- 16 The point of the ‘performative filibuster’ nowadays is clearly to draw media attention to an issue. However, Campbell regretted that it has become less esthetic, and mentioned a proposal to go back to the old system requiring that a filibuster actually be performed, instead of fulfilling its purpose solely based on the threat.⁸ Jokingly I suggested that his performance could appear as somewhat anachronistic, or at least as being decidedly rooted in the pre-1970s period of the Senate. To be more in tune with how the filibuster works today, his performance should have a duration of less than a minute: “Good evening. I disagree with this legislation. I will filibuster it. Goodbye.”
- 17 Campbell also regretted that the threat of the filibuster was exacerbated by party polarization. He evoked the changing political atmosphere where increasing polarization and the hardening of party lines prevent across-the-aisle collaboration and leads to fewer compromises. He asked himself the same question that haunts many Americans: “Why is this government not working?”⁹
- 18 In the interview, Campbell had said that his filibuster text skims over broad political matters that are of interest to him. Campbell’s interests are focused on political trends, the underlying patterns, ideas, ideologies, and systems. Current events are mentioned, but rather as illustrations of the underlying patterns, which Campbell does not see as being specific to the US. He said that he considers that he is “addressing [him]self to globalization, the global state”.
- 19 When he spoke with me, Campbell took great pains to point out that he does not represent anyone but himself and shared his “anxiety of people seeing [him] as the exotic American”. Not seeing him as an exotic American in that context was a little difficult, because the 5-hour monologue was delivered in French with an endearing American accent, despite his excellent mastery of the language.
- 20 He explained his disdain for people who speak for other people. Campbell has a strong awareness that in his education as a white man he was taught that he knew better and that had the right (or the duty) to speak on behalf of everyone. He is mindful of his privilege as a first world white male speaking a world language. Moreover, as an artist he has “cultural cachet” and a stage. Although Campbell was educated as a white male, he explained that he comes from a progressive environment which provided fertile ground for working on himself and to detect mansplaining in himself.
- 21 And indeed, the performance was never prescriptive, it was never suggested that the audience should adhere to a specific idea. Social criticism was formulated as self-criticism of Campbell’s own shortcomings. No, the performance was rather an invitation to let your mind wander along with the different topics, for which the order of topics, songs, and readings of citations created associations.
- 22 During the performance, Campbell clearly explained that he wanted to analyze and observe political discourse as a phenomenon. He is interested in affect both as a posture and as the power to affect. In the interview he spent more time elaborating the parallels he sees between the artist and the politician. For him, the similarities reside mainly in the communication of affect, in the performative aspect: “the orchestration of affect”. Although the filibuster in particular does not have a choreography as such,

or rather one that is characterized by the absence of movement (picture someone standing behind a pulpit, with rules keeping them close to it and forbidding them leaning against it), Campbell insisted on a bodily component to discourse and politics. Discourse affects people in their bodies and sensations, it will move them to turn to or away from something in both the figurative and literal sense. Campbell bemoaned the tepid filibusters that are often performed by politicians wanting to physically spare themselves. The only filibuster he watched in its entirety was a Bernie Sanders filibuster in 2010, when the Senator from Vermont spoke against tax cuts for eight and half hours (Kane and Sonmez).

- 23 Campbell thinks that Bernie is successful thanks to the emotions and energy he puts into his speeches, which he describes as a “frilly, baroque performance of no frills”. This gives life and depth to Bernie’s financial frugality, and his credibility is enhanced by the fact that he lives his ideas.
- 24 Campbell explained the importance of emotions for understanding and gaining genuine comprehension of an issue. He gave the example of transgender people. Campbell initially had an intellectual understanding of the issue on which his beliefs about transgender rights were grounded. And yet, he reached a real understanding only when he accompanied a friend through the transition and was confronted with his friend’s emotions, breakdowns, joys, and frustrations.
- 25 That is one of the reasons why he is “working in this register of charm” to hook onto people and their empathy. He came back to Bernie and described him as the grandpa you want to have: “You fall in love with that person.” He recognized that the same thing was at work for Trump with his boisterous personality. However much some despise him, his adherents still have the right to love him. Campbell explained that he understood how a white working class male would project himself onto Trump, his success, his fuck-you attitude, of being above the law, and of not needing to be politically correct. All this embodies a social order and a way of being that they had partially been raised in and that they are now told is no longer acceptable. However, with Trump they suddenly seem acceptable again, even more so, desirable.
- 26 Campbell tries to have empathy for Trump voters, but distinguishes this from a call to ease up. However, he is critical of progressives who do not see white class oppression and dismiss real grievances. He pointed to the fact that racial populism has managed to exploit this very successfully. For Campbell, the classic 1970s catch-22 situation still plays out: white working class people feel oppressed, and have the impression that their grievances are insufficiently recognized by progressives. As a result they end up turning to racist answers instead of successfully mobilizing against economic inequalities.¹⁰ Campbell wants people from those communities to talk to their own, to show and to persuade them how interests can converge, instead of progressive elites doing this. He insisted that acceptance of their grievances is needed, and warned against marginalizing them.
- 27 And indeed, as he had said during the interview, his performance was very emotional, very intense, he did not “spare himself” as some senators do. Part of the strong emotion came through the use of anaphora, which appears to be a stylistic device he favors. The constant repetitions gave a hammering rhythm to many of the different topics, and made sure that the public never forgot what the current topic was about.
- 28 Among the topics Campbell wanted to talk about was feminism. He quoted and projected for the audience a poem by Jamara Michelle Wakefield that had been read

during the Day Without a Woman, on March 8, 2017 (Lee). The focus was on reproductive capacities, but not in a reductive, sexist way, but rather to highlight that humanity is nothing without uteri.

- 29 Then Campbell moved on to cancer, still using anaphora (« Le cancer c'est... »), expressing on the one hand the obsession of our contemporary era that finds cancer or risk of cancer in nearly every product, but on the other hand does not seriously tackle pollution or create legislation that would prohibit companies from putting certain substances in our food. From these more common views on cancer Campbell moved to society cancer. He portrayed societal pressure as a form of cancer, expressed as the threat of not being successful if one does not conform to certain stereotypes and expectations: « le cancer nous dit que nous n'aurons pas de job si... »
- 30 For Campbell, the American cancer is the six-pack abs, which led him to a short linguistic excursion explaining the different images used in French and in English (six-pack vs. *tablettes de chocolat*) and dwelled on the slight irony of comparing abs to two of the things that prevent you from having them.
- 31 Campbell fluidly linked the different topics, surprisingly using his frustration about not having a six-pack to talk about homosexual adoption. With humor he explained that the regrets of not having abs might still haunt him on his deathbed and started to depict a scene of his over 80-year-old self during the last minutes of his life. He would be surrounded by his grief-stricken family, his favorite granddaughter Henrietta (through his adopted-in-the-future children) at his side. With his last breath, he would say: "I never had ... never had sssss... [six-pack abs]" and die. And he would be upset because now his family would think he never had sex. Campbell mixed French and English, when he had American characters speaking.
- 32 This scene is also quite characteristic of his approach to political matters. There was no lecturing on gay rights, no advocacy, no activism, just the sharing of his own death vision that hinged on adoption rights for gay people. This was exactly the approach Campbell had mentioned in the interview. He did not want to tell people what they have to think, or even to spell out his own political convictions as a model. He wanted to share a personal universe, and through empathy for his inner emotional world try to foster understanding in the people listening to his filibuster.
- 33 During the interview Campbell explained this approach: "I'm doing a political performance." He wanted the monologue to show a "subjectivity, the ontology, the way of thinking of a person", and added that the show works because of the charisma of the person performing it (not unlike a politician). Campbell uses himself as an example of different political thoughts, of different ways of being. In this context, he mentioned the section of his monologue about piss, about urophilia, and the long description of a dog pissing, and the acceptance he wants to foster for these things. Campbell said that he wants to create empathy and tolerance, before correcting himself and saying that tolerance was not enough, he wanted celebration. Tolerance sounded too much like 'don't ask don't tell', and he demanded more positive representations of all differences. Through his monologue, Campbell wants to "produce an intimacy" that goes beyond tolerance, he wants people not only to accept, but to embrace. He said: "I talk about piss in a way that is seductive."
- 34 After a very anaphoric listing of all the forms of water that he liked, Campbell moved on to his appreciation of urine. On the model he had described during the interview, there was never an open, analytical explanation of his urophilia, he just related his

enjoyment of it. On the wall, there was a projection of pictures of bottles of his pee in different settings, such as in Japan, at the seaside. We saw pictures of his pee in Greece, in Vienna next to a slice of *Sachertorte*, or in France (« *voici ma pisse avec son canelé à Bordeaux* »), or with more intriguing objects, such as his pee on a picture with a statue of the Virgin Mary or next to a cement mixer.

- 35 He started to post the pictures of his piss and used it as his profile pic on Facebook, trying to transform Facebook into Pissbook, as a form of resistance to surveillance, a performance of a salutary paranoia. He explained that he would like to be able to say that this was a rebellion, however, he considers that « *[il] peut chier [s]es données personnelles* » on the Internet without any consequences. He is aware of his white privilege in that respect, as he is not a surveillance target, compared to people of color or Muslims. In this context, he more directly and openly criticized our mini-rebellions and small-scale involvement, as for example taping a small piece of paper over our webcams, yet, without taking real action against surveillance. No, he did not try to portray his pee-posting as an act of rebellion; it is just the pleasure of posting these pictures, and because he thinks that piss is important.
- 36 He then described pee as a unifying element linking all of humanity, each body being the container of a fraction of the total pee. He showed the central place of pee in architecture for instance, where a specific room is devoted to urine, and the contradiction of having that central place for pee, while we try to evacuate it as swiftly and discreetly as possible, thus pinpointing our culture of shame that considers perfectly natural phenomena as taboos.
- 37 He made a listing of expressions based on pee, and focused particularly on a linguistic comparison between “to piss in the wind” and « *pisser dans un violon* », both having equivalent meanings. From the American expression he moved to denounce a certain sexism in language, as the expression entails that the pee-er is male, and also denigrates the fraction of the male population who prefers to sit down.
- 38 Using another pee-related French expression, he then moved to explain how he resented the fact that certain expressions impose a form of normalization and standardization of behavior. « *Je te pisse à la raie* » is used to express disdain, however, for him, as for 2% of the population, this proposal does not sound scornful at all, but rather very appealing. He explained the notion of intimacy he got from this, being able to feel someone else’s inner body temperature outside their bodies.
- 39 He cited famous people who are apparently known urophiles, starting with Ricky Martin, going to Chuck Berry and ending on Trump. Though the only ones Campbell knew, before looking up the others, were R. Kelly, Adolf Hitler, and Donald Trump. In these cases he knew about their urophilia because it had been highlighted as the apex of their perversity (R. Kelly is accused of abuse and intercourse with minors [Fortin]). Campbell feels offended by these associations.
- 40 He finished the pee part of the performance with yet another vision of the future, a future in which technological progress would allow us to extract the phosphorus from our urine (current phosphorus deposits are feared to deplete in the near future). Campbell painted the picture of a future when we would have apps on our smartphones to sell our pee, just like Blablacar or Airbnb, with a specific market for organic pee from people who only eat organic food: « *On pourrait imaginer un avenir où vous pisseriez fièrement dans des bouteilles comme moi.* » He then moved on to portray pee as the intimacy of old age, when your bodily functions become a more public matter again,

just as when you were a baby. He related this through the story of Bambi, the dog he had as a teenager, whose age-related indoor pee accidents he had to clean up.

- 41 The performance was punctuated by the reading of poems or karaoke intermissions, with the texts projected on the wall. For the reading of a poem by Etheridge Knight, “Belly Song,” a translation was handed out to the public, followed by a karaoke interlude on PJ Harvey’s “On Battleship Hill”.
- 42 The karaoke interludes appeared, at first, as very different from a real Senate filibuster; but then I asked myself: Is it all that different? After all, Ted Cruz, during his 2013 near-filibuster, read a story from a Dr. Seuss book to his children who were watching the filibuster on TV back home in Texas (Peralta). This is perfectly acceptable, as the Senate rules specify that only the first three hours of debate each day have to be germane to the issue at stake (Heitshusen and Beth 5).
- 43 I couldn’t but keep wondering when Campbell was going to read us a recipe. In the sweltering atmosphere in the theatre I kept hoping for a cocktail recipe. After two hours, people were still attentive, despite the stifling heat. The candy was being handed around, there was an ebb and flow of people coming and going, and we were constantly reminded of the constraints of the filibuster, thanks to the diapers sticking out of Campbell’s pants.
- 44 Another, once again very anaphorically presented theme was *Macrocosme Francophone: liste des 1000 articles considérés comme vitaux pour une encyclopédie*, which is proposed by Wikipedia¹¹. Campbell read this list starting with the section on geography, greeting every country (*Bonjour l’Argentine !*), then moving on to cities, moving on to different topics (*Bonjour l’histoire !*) of different continents, eras, civilizations, and finally historic events. The list contains sections on arts, biographies of famous people, politicians, medicine, everyday life, technology, study fields, etc. Basically things that constitute humanity; or at least things that reflect the way humans see themselves. Each entry was punctuated by a slap on his cheek.
- 45 This created a strange mix of mind wandering and reflecting on humanity and what that actually means, while fostering at the same time a feeling of despair wishing for that endless list to be over. Did people experience the same mind-numbing senselessness during certain filibusters? My thoughts kept traveling back to Strom Thurmond’s record filibuster (24h 18 minutes against the Civil Rights Act of 1957) when he read out the existing voting rights legislation of all 48 states (Congressional Record).
- 46 During the list of languages, one spectator had enough of the slapping and interjected: « Croyez-vous que le public est sadique ? Que vous avez besoin de vous infliger cela ? » Followed by “Stop hurting yourself !” None of this had any effect whatsoever.
- 47 The list ended on « Bonjour tout le monde ! » after almost one hour of face slapping. This was followed by the reading of an extract from a speech given by Trump to the police of Suffolk County, NY, on 18 July 2017 (translated into French). In this speech, Trump ranted against immigration, against the gang MS-13, and heavily concentrated on fear mongering by depicting the US in a state of war: “One by one, we’re liberating our American towns.” He threw the economic populism, which had served him so well for the election, over board once again: “Like, I want a rich guy at the head of Treasury, right? Right ?” and concluded with his battle cry of ‘America first !’ This part contained so much of the Trump essence:

We will defend our country, protect our communities, and put the safety of the American people first. And I'm doing that with law enforcement, and we're doing that with trade, and we're doing that with so much else. It's called America First. It's called an expression I'm sure you've never heard of: Make America Great Again. Has anybody heard that expression? (Applause.) (Trump).

- 48 He linked the notion of America First explicitly to the idea that the US is under assault at every level, in a state of war. It is also, in the last part of the quote, the quintessential Trump: who else could plagiarize Reagan's 1980 campaign slogan and pretend it is a novel idea?
- 49 This was followed by another karaoke session on Patti Smith's "Pissing in a River" and then by a reading of a translated extract from David Foster Wallace's "Infinite Jest".
- 50 Campbell's performance included question time, just as questions are allowed during a Senate filibuster. However, in this case it was not unlimited but restricted to 18 minutes. The questions from the public focused mainly on the face slapping and the diapers. The explanations he gave about the diapers were very close to what he had said during the interview, in which he had stated that he does not really go through a specific preparation for the performance, such as dehydrating. He explained that on stage he actually does not drink that much water, and that with the adrenaline things are fine. However, he does wear the diapers, both as a safety net and as a performative gesture, since senators are said to wear them. However, he stated that actually using them was more or less out of the question, as the diapers tended to leak. With the 5-hour performance, bodily functions are not an issue, however, ultimately Campbell wants to aim for an 8-hour performance.
- 51 After question time, Campbell slipped in a karaoke of "Making Love out of Nothing at All" by Air Supply, followed by an ode to coffee. The anaphoric, detailed, drop-by-drop description of the experience of drinking coffee was followed by a flowing list of the people and professions who make it through the day fuelled by coffee. His prosody was closely adapted to the subject, the flow of speech mirrored the content and the coffee paradox of the calm and relaxing enjoyment of a stimulating substance.
- 52 For the reading of the last extract, Campbell encouraged the public to make themselves comfortable, to take a cushion or to lean against someone they liked. He then proceeded to read "Yoga Nidra for Sleep" written by Jennifer Piercy. He expounded that even though political discourse mainly aims at waking people up, he sees this yoga text as political because it aims at calming and relaxing people. Although Campbell did not say so explicitly, to me, the subtext read that in such a relaxed and peaceful state of mind, people might make better and more tolerant political choices than when they are in a state of anger and excitement.
- 53 The calming, reassuring function of political discourse is certainly not new, as executive speeches are used to appease the nation after a catastrophe or to prevent panic in the face of danger. In the case of the performance, the aim was not to overcome trauma, but to create a deep, genuine tranquility and peace of mind. Needless to say, this stood in sharp contrast with the reading of Trump's speech detailing the massacres and rapes of little girls perpetrated by Mexican gangs and the depiction of the US as a nation at war. The close juxtaposition of the two readings made me notice the difference of emotions fostered by the two texts. Even though one does not necessarily subscribe to Trump's ideas, even if one knows that there are exaggerations, it is nonetheless impossible to fully escape the sensation of danger and

urgency conjured up by Trump's speech. What could possibly be the effect on someone who believes this to be reality?

- 54 The yoga had reached the moment when I was supposed to concentrate on the feeling in the space between my toes. It was 11 :30 pm and by then I had abandoned all hopes for a reading of a cocktail recipe. Or fried oysters, for that matter.
- 55 The last part of the filibuster was devoted to the recital of a poem of his own composition, "Extraction", on a background of cicada chirping and tambourine, followed by a succession of karaoke pieces (Kate Bush "Hounds of Love", Rihanna "Only Girl in the World") and a long series of Joe Dassin songs, which triggered increasing, good-humored laughter from the audience (« Dans les yeux d'Emilie, » « A toi, » « Salut les amoureux, » « Les petits pains au chocolat »). The last karaoke was "Janitor of Lunacy" by Nico. Accompanied by dreary, grave, oppressive harmonium music that sounded like a doleful organ, the song deals with childhood anguish, psycho-tyranny, and details a prayer for the acceptance of human defects. A plea for tolerance?

NOTES

1. See for example Rajiv Tarigolupa, "In defense of the filibuster," *Harvard Political Review*, Jan. 12, 2011, <http://harvardpolitics.com/online/hprgument-blog/in-defense-of-the-filibuster/>.
2. "Huey Long Filibusters, June 12-13, 1935," *United States Senate*, June 12, 2018, https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/minute/Huey_Long_Filibusters.htm. He also read the recipe for potlikker, another southern specialty.
3. Since 1966 senators have been allowed to drink milk when they are speaking. This is expressly mentioned in "Riddick's Senate Procedure: Precedents and Practices," 101st Congress, 2nd Session, *Government Publishing Office*, 1 January 1992, <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/search/pagedetails.action?collectionCode=GPO&granuleId=GPO-RIDDICK-1992-112&packageId=GPO-RIDDICK-1992&fromBrowse=true>. On page 758, under the subtitle "Milk While Speaking" it reads: "Senate rules do not prohibit a Senator from sipping milk during his speech." However, it was not possible to find other rules regarding food and drink. Some sources suggest that food and drink is prohibited (with the famous exception for candy). See Erika Lovley, "The Commandments of Capitol Hill," *Politico*, 11 June 2009, <https://www.politico.com/story/2009/06/the-commandments-of-capitol-hill-023598>.
4. The tradition of the candy desk was started in 1965 by Senator George Murphy of California. It is located in the back row of the Republican aisle, near one of the busiest entrances. "Senate Chamber Desks: Candy Desk," *Senate.gov*, June 21, 2018, <https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/art/special/Desks/hdetail.cfm?id=1>. Currently it is desk 80 occupied by Pennsylvania Senator Pat Toomey. Some sources suggest that up to 400 pounds of candy transit through this desk each year.
5. This is the exact opposite of what would actually happen in the Senate. In order for the physical filibuster to have to continue, meaning the obligation to speak, a quorum of the proponents of the bill must be present, otherwise the debate can be adjourned or suspended—which would bring relief to the filibusterer. Thus the burden of this is heavier on the defenders of the bill. Valerie Heitshusen and Richard S. Beth. "Filibusters and Cloture in the Senate,"

Congressional Research Service. April 7, 2017. <https://www.senate.gov/CRSPubs/3d51be23-64f8-448e-aa14-10ef0f94b77e.pdf>. p. 8.

6. Senators Mike Mansfield (D-MT) and Robert Byrd (D-WV) introduced the track system that allows for several pending matters to be considered. This was initially devised to avoid having other important bills blocked by a filibuster on an unrelated bill. Robert C. Byrd, *The Senate 1789-1989: Addresses on the History of the United States Senate*, (Vol. 2. US Government Publishing Office, 1991), 203.

7. The Washington Post interpreted Cruz' near-filibuster (technically it was not a filibuster, as procedural rules already in place meant that Cruz eventually would have to yield the floor) as a partly successful attempt to push the Republican Party to take a harsher stance on defunding Obamacare in the pending budget bill. Ed O'Keefe and Paul Kane, "Sen. Cruz ends anti-Obamacare talkathon after more than 21 hours," *The Washington Post*, 25 September 2013, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/sen-cruz-continues-night-long-attack-on-obamacare/2013/09/25/5ea2f6ae-25ae-11e3-b75d-5b7f66349852_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.47f396e34e36_

8. In 2011 Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) reintroduced a bill changing the filibuster rules requiring that those who want to filibuster nominations to courts and executive positions actually have to come to the floor and speak. The aim, besides avoiding constant stalemates, was also to hold senators accountable for their actions, according to Sen. Lautenberg. The proposal is dubbed the "Mr. Smith Bill", a nod to the movie "Mr. Smith Goes to Washington," the 1939 Frank Capra movie that shaped the popular vision of the filibuster. Ed Hornick and Ted Barrett, " 'Mr. Smith' filibuster change introduced in the Senate," *Cnn.com*, 5 January 2011, <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/POLITICS/01/05/senate.filibuster.changes/index.html>

9. On the subject of polarization see for example: Norm Ornstein, "Yes, Polarization Is Asymmetric—and Conservatives Are Worse," *The Atlantic*, June 19, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/06/yes-polarization-is-asymmetric-and-conservatives-are-worse/373044/>.

10. See for example: Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary D. Edsall, *Chain Reaction: the Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991).

11. For a detailed list, see "Wikipedia: Vital Articles," *Wikipedia*, June 12, 2018, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Vital_articles.

ABSTRACTS

Interview with the American performer Bryan Campbell. The interview was conducted on June 7, 2018 at the theatre Vent des Signes where the show *Janitor of Lunacy: a Filibuster* was performed.

Entretien avec le performeur américain Bryan Campbell à l'occasion de sa performance *Janitor of Lunacy : a Filibuster* au théâtre le Vent des Signes le 7 juin 2018.

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