

has roots, and those roots are essentially English.... It was from our Locke and Sidney, our Harrington and Coke, that your Henry and your Jefferson, your Madison and Hamilton took their bearings."

Statecraft "is dedicated to Ronald Reagan, to whom the world owes so much." Thatcher's brief recounting of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Reykjavik is an example of how the Iron Lady rebuffs revisionist interpretations and sets the Reagan record straight.

During the 1986 summit, the father of *glasnost* was desperate to keep the United States from developing the Strategic Defense Initiative, which would allow the U.S. to defend herself from missile attacks. He tried to tempt Reagan by offering deep cuts in Soviet nuclear-weapons stockpiles. Reagan famously refused to trade away missile defense, and the talks broke down. For this, Reagan was skewered by the liberal elite. But the Cold War was finally won in unambiguous fashion precisely because Reagan refused to back down on this and other fundamental points. The Soviet Union had only one claim to superpower status: military might. By building up America's military capabilities and weakening Russia's, Reagan undercut all Soviet claims of superiority. And without military might, the whole empire crumbled.

It is this drawing on the lessons of history, stating the obvious, and resting on principle that makes *Statecraft* such an invaluable book and a pleasure to read.

Leslie Carbone is co-editor of *Fifty Years After the Declaration: The United Nations Record on Human Rights*.

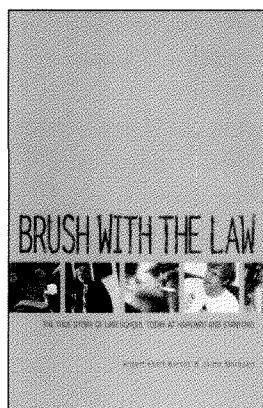
LAW SCHOOL DAZE

By Clark Stooksbury

Brush With the Law

By Robert Ebert Byrnes & Jaime Marquart
Renaissance Books, 336 pages, \$24.95

Brush With the Law is actually two books. One by Harvard Law School



graduate Jaime Marquart, and one by Stanford Law School alumnus Robert Byrnes. Both wound up at the same Los Angeles law firm and compared notes about

their graduate school days. The myth that slavish, ascetic devotion is required to make it through a top law school should be thoroughly dispelled by their tales. I graduated from the University of Memphis law school in 1993. Although that institution is an earthbound counterpart to heavenly entities such as Harvard and Stanford, the process is about the same: pompous, tweedy professors attempting to intimidate students and trip them up using the Socratic Method. The environment at a place like Memphis may even be tougher than at Harvard and Stanford in some ways. Unlike Byrnes and Marquart, I was almost always required to attend class. Yet I know from personal experience that successfully graduating from law school is perfectly compatible with plenty of goofing off. After the initial terror wears off—it takes about a month—law school is at worst manageable, and often easy.

Compared to the experiences of Byrnes and Marquart, my lazy law school days were a tour in the salt mines. Marquart devised an elaborate system to minimize the amount of work he did after his first year. It called for taking classes with large enrollments and boring professors who had a preference for take-home exams. Courses with gaseous titles like "Law and Society" and "Gender and the Law" are invariably fluff classes, Marquart advises. He even went so far as to calculate a "ditch ratio" based on the number of people who evaluate a class (generally on the last day before the next semester) compared to the number who eventually

enroll. He surmises that if few students bother to show up on the last day, when valuable information about the final exam is likely to be imparted, then few found it necessary to attend throughout the semester. The lesson of his system is that success as a lazy law student requires a bit of industriousness.

When did Marquart actually get his legal education? "Turns out," he explains, "nine days [of the Introduction to Legal Studies course] is enough to learn everything you need to know to start work in a law firm." (Note that he did not say "to be a lawyer.") While I suggest it takes longer than nine days, it's true that three years of legal education is usually a huge waste.

Byrnes and Marquart both tell compelling stories, but they lard them down with detail about their personal lives that is excessive for anyone uninterested in the doings of mid-to-late-'90s slackers. Do we care about Marquart's gambling losses and various romantic and personal belly-flops?

But cut away the fat in *Brush with the Law* and there is still plenty of meat that the gatekeepers at Harvard and Stanford would rather you not digest.

At the beginning of their book, the authors quote an anonymous Yale law graduate suggesting: "I would caution you to be somewhat circumspect about what you write, whether or not it's true.... The value of your degrees—and that of every one else's—may be affected by what you write." To the extent that *Brush with the Law* is taken seriously, this Yale graduate is correct. The students, parents, alumni donors, and foundations that fund august institutions such as Harvard and Stanford—as well as the employers who pay bloated salaries to their graduates—may begin to wonder just what they are buying with all that money.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.



Oscar Politics

Ah, Academy Awards season. A time for Hollywood cynics to shine like stars.

Don't get me wrong: I enjoyed each of the five Best Picture nominees. But I wish I could say they're being honored solely for their artistic accomplishments. The truth is that industry politics are at least as important to winning a top Oscar as a great story or a stirring performance. As a small antidote to the self-congratulatory hoopla we're now hearing from Hollywood, here's a look at some of the *real* reasons the following films are up for Best Picture this season:

Chicago

How does an entertaining—if never quite transporting—musical snag 13 Oscar nominations, making it the favorite to win as Best Picture at this year's Academy Awards? With lots of P.R., that's how. Miramax Films, known for its lavish and aggressive campaigns for awards, has carefully cultivated a climate in which an Oscar seems to be an inevitability. Of course a studio alone can't generate the kind of buzz necessary to make a film a contender. For that you need accomplices who allow all the promotion to affect their judgment—in this case *Entertainment Weekly*, which put *Chicago* on its first Oscar issue, and the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which fawned over the film at its recent Golden Globes awards show. Just like that, a Best Picture favorite is born.

The Hours

Since the Oscars are essentially Holly-

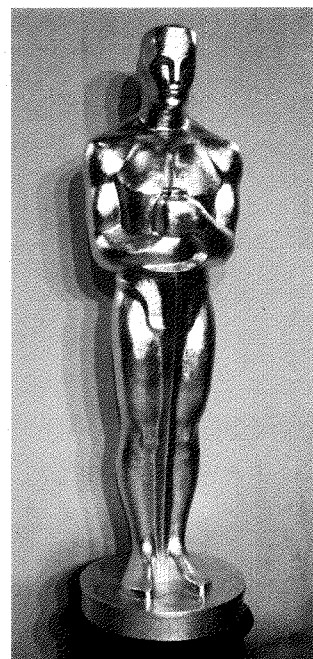
wood applauding itself, the nominees often reveal what the industry wants to see when it looks in the mirror. Something like *The Hours* makes Hollywood types feel good about themselves. An adaptation of an honored novel, which was itself based on a Virginia Woolf classic, the movie has the sort of literary patina that Oscar voters are suckers for. Nominating it allows them to drape themselves in a cloak of "culture."

The Pianist

As creators of drama, the film industry loves it when an Oscar nomination comes with attendant drama of its own—especially the sort that's swirling around *The Pianist*. To begin with, the film represents the first time director Roman Polanski has tackled the Nazi occupation of Poland—which he lived through as an eight-year-old. Then there is the gossip about whether the exiled Polanski will return to Hollywood, which he fled in the 1970s after being charged with having sex with a 13-year-old girl. This kind of scuttlebutt earned Polanski not only a Best Picture nomination, but also a selection as Best Director.

Gangs of New York

Gangs of New York also rides to Oscar night on a behind-the-screens story. This historical epic has moments of brilliance, but even its most enthusiastic supporters admit that it's deeply flawed. As the baby of director Martin Scorsese, however, the film gains the benefit of all doubts. Scorsese is a critic's darling who has been nominated for an Academy Award five



times without ever winning. Making him a finalist once again this year lets Oscar voters show that they know "quality" when they see it, and keep the critics from one-upping them. And if Scorsese wins, there'll be a great sentimental gusher.

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers

With just one noteworthy nomination, for Best Picture, the second *Lord of the Rings* installment is something of a lame-duck nominee. Oscar voters had to recognize it, if only to justify going ga-ga last year over its predecessor, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. On its merits, *Two Towers* deserves to compete for Best Picture, but it's clear the Academy voters exhausted their enthusiasm for this project last year, and are now just practicing retro-active self-validation.

But the swinging door of Oscar politics may tilt back in the direction of *Lord of the Rings* next year. Here's your first prediction for the Academy Awards champion of 2004: The final installment in the J. R. R. Tolkien trilogy—*The Return of the King*—will be hailed as epic filmmaking at its grandest. I'm just guessing. But if you're a Hollywood cynic, you might want to place your bet right now.

—Josh Larsen