the weekly Standard

APRIL 30, 2007

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MILTON HIMMELFARB'S 'JEWS AND GENTILES'
DAVID GELERNTER

Can Petraeus Pull It Off?

MAX BOOT and FREDERICK W. KAGAN report from Iraq
plus REUEL MARC GERECHT: On democracy in Mesopotamia

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In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .

Crossing to Safety in Latin America

Crime is robbing the region of talent, jobs, and its role in the global economy.

Criminal activity in Latin America is the bane of rich, middle class, and poor alike. It steals pesos from the shopkeeper and economic opportunities from the well educated. It makes neighborhoods unwalkable and diverts thousands of jobs into unproductive private security. Moreover, it feeds on itself. The police are often criminals themselves, easily corruptible and with no incentive to make things better.

Many people in the region are resigned to crime, as if it were inevitable in modern economies and societies. But the U.S. experience shows that to be false: when more criminals began to be caught and sent to prison, crime dropped. Latin American leaders can purge crooked cops and make sure new ones do the job they were hired for—while paying them well, to keep them away from bribery and other corrupt acts. It is also critical to improve earnings from and availability of legal jobs, especially for workers at the low end of the job spectrum. In the long run, a good education for young people from poor families would help most of all.

—Gary S. Becker

How to Turn Iran Upside Down

Tehran's weakened hard-liners yearn for a U.S. attack. Why oblige them?

The already tense U.S.-Iran relationship is now a tinderbox. The Islamic Republic trains and supports Hezbollah and Hamas; it provides aid and explosives to Iraqi Shiite militias who attack American soldiers; and, most alarming, it seems determined to develop a nuclear bomb. Bombing Iran, however, would not resolve any of these dangers—it would worsen them.

But where military strikes would fail, a different approach would succeed. President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is neither the most powerful official in Iran nor beloved by the Iranian people. He has not delivered on his campaign pledges to fight corruption or improve the lot of the working classes and the poor. The authoritarian regime is not united behind Ahmadinejad, who knows there is only one thing that could bring the people back to him—a U.S. military attack. Rather than throw the reactionaries a lifeline, the United States should offer to negotiate unconditionally. Then, if Ahmadinejad says no, he would have to face a different foe: his own angry public.

—Abbas Milani, Larry Diamond, and Michael McFaul

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

The Media Frenzy

In their anguish over the slaughter of innocents at Virginia Tech, students and teachers and school officials and parents seemed to agree on one thing: the press coverage was not only horrible, it made things worse. And the problem was not just momentary mistakes, such as identifying the killer as a recently arrived Chinese student when he turned out to be a longtime immigrant from South Korea.

Somehow the media have adopted as their first duty in covering a catastrophe that of judging, finding fault, and parceling out blame. Actual reporting comes in a distant second. Almost from the outset, reporters harshly condemned school officials for not having canceled classes and shut down the campus after two murders in a dorm and before the massacre in classrooms two hours later.

Would this have protected students and teachers in the classrooms and saved lives? Maybe, but the media had done no reporting on which to base such a judgment. Was the decision not to impose a lockdown unreasonable under the circumstances? Days later, the answer to that question still wasn't clear. It was clear, though, that students didn't think so. They gave Virginia Tech president Charles Steger a standing ovation at a convocation the day after the killings.

Then there's the crazed videotape of Cho Seung Hui, the killer. Was it necessary for NBC to broadcast it? According to the prevailing media policy of anything goes, yes—this, despite the fact that it might spur other psychopaths to emulate Cho, just as tapes left behind by Palestinian suicide bombers are used to recruit more killers. And there was an alternative: Show stills of Cho from the tape and provide a synopsis of his message.

NBC News president Steve Capus insisted the videotape offered a rare insight into a mass killer's mind. Really? Forensic psychiatrist Michael Welner, interviewed on ABC, didn't think so. "This is not him," Welner said. "These videos do not help us understand him. They distort him. He was meek. He was quiet. This is a PR tape of him trying to turn himself into a Quentin Tarantino character."

The media did give viewers a break on one issue. The rush to demand more gun control was muted. But don't give the media too much credit. This time their Democratic allies didn't deliver. They've discovered gun control is an issue that doesn't help them politically. ♦

The Bard's Bad Birthday

April 23 marks William Shakespeare's 443rd birthday. He's getting old, in other words, which may explain why the ever-youthful, forever hip Baby Boomers who now control our nation's colleges and universities have decided he's not worth bothering about.

The indispensable American Council of Trustees and Alumni has just released a report about the status of Shakespeare in higher education, and the results, you won't be surprised to learn, are deeply depressing. ACTA surveyed English departments at Big Ten schools, the top 25 liberal arts colleges, and *U.S. News & World Report*'s 25 highest ranking universities. Only 15 of them require English majors to take a course on Shakespeare. In 1996, the last time such a survey was taken, 23 of the 70 schools had a Shakespeare requirement.

So what are the faculty teaching instead? Well, if you're lucky enough to be an English major at Northwestern, you can ogle a course on TV's *Baywatch*, starring Pamela Anderson, who's a Globe Theater all to herself. At the University of Pennsylvania you can take a class in "radical vegetarian manifestos"; at Yale, you can study Lemony Snicket and Dr. Seuss; at Duke you can get credit for "Creepy Kids in Fiction and Film." Then you can pocket your English B.A. and escape Shakespeare altogether.

The effects of this outrageous negligence will trickle down, as graduates ignorant of Shakespeare go off to teach English to high school students, who will themselves remain ignorant of Western civilization's crowning glory. "It's easy to imagine a day," the ACTA report concludes, "when schoolteachers will not have read Shakespeare and will not teach him."

And then there will be no one left to quote Duke Senior from *As You Like It*: "True is it that we have seen better days." ♦

Neopopulism vs. the CBO

On April 17, Congressional Budget Office (CBO) director Peter Orszag, a respected liberal economist formerly with the Brookings Institution—he's been in his new job since January—sent a letter to Democratic senators Charles Schumer of New York and James Webb of Virginia. The two senators had requested that the CBO look into wage and income variability. Neopopulists like Webb argue that income volatility—or "earnings volatility," as the CBO puts it—has risen in recent years as American society drifts "toward a class-based system, the likes of which we have not seen since the 19th century." Numbers from the Congressional Budget Office could help buttress this claim.

Problem is, economic reality doesn't quite reflect the Democrats' talking points. "Since 1980, there has been little change in earnings variability for both

(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of April 22, 1996)

men and women," Orszag wrote in his letter. "There is some evidence that, between 1960 and 1980, earnings variability increased for men but was offset by a decrease for women." The CBO, whose research focused on pretax earnings, concluded that "some variability in earnings stems from workers' voluntary actions, such as deciding to stay home and rear children" while other variability can also be attributed to job loss.

In other words, when it comes to earnings variability or "volatility," things are pretty much the way they were when Webb served in the Reagan administration. ♦

Harry Reid Is Confused

See if you can parse the Senate Majority Leader's position on partial-birth abortion. He voted for the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, which last week was upheld 5-4 by the Supreme Court. His reaction? "A lot of us wish that Alito [supporting the bill Reid backed] weren't there and O'Connor were there"—in which event the measure likely would have been struck down. According to a clarification issued through Reid's press secretary:

> Senator Reid opposes abortion except in the cases of rape, incest, and when the life of a mother is at risk. Consistent with this position, Senator Reid supported the Partial Birth Abortion Ban and supports the Supreme Court's decision yesterday. However, Senator Reid continues to disagree with Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Alito on many issues and that is why he opposed their confirmation.

Glad the senator got that straightened out.

Remembering Michael Kelly

Cruel April brings the anniversary of the death of our friend and journalistic colleague Michael Kelly four years ago this April 3 on the road to Baghdad. This time, it also brings a deeply affecting examination of grief by Michael's mother, Marguerite Kelly. She calls her essay "On the Fairness of Life," and you can read it on the website of the *Atlantic Monthly*, where Michael was editor. Here's a paragraph, to whet your appetite:

> Whatever Mike's take on the Mideast would be today, this much is clear: he knew that holocausts start small; that evil is real; that somebody has to stand up and stop it, and that others must watch and tell the world that evil had really been stopped. And sometimes, he said, good people would die in the doing. That our son was one of them still breaks our hearts, but we can't say that his death was unfair. If we did, we would have to say that it was unfair that he had enjoyed life so thoroughly; that he had such a fine career, such an excellent wife and such jolly, healthy sons and that he had parents and three sisters who loved him so much. Mike knew you can't always have it both ways. And so did we. ♦

Casual

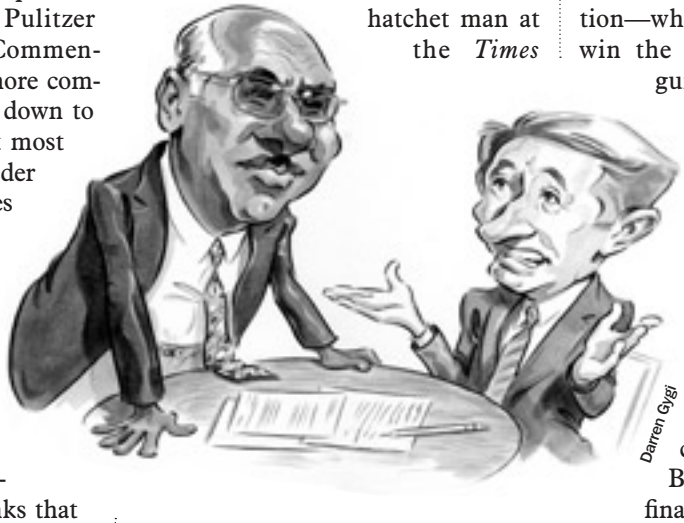
Prize and Fall

You may have noticed that Cynthia Tucker of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* won this year's Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Commentary. I might not have noticed it myself, except that a waggish friend sent me an email on the day of the announcement, reminding me of the last time Cynthia Tucker, the Pulitzer Prize, and I had crossed paths.

But first, as we say, two caveats. The first is to declare that I'm pleased Cynthia Tucker won the Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Commentary. The second caveat is more complicated, but may be boiled down to one simple proposition that most casual observers would consider obvious: The Pulitzer Prizes are a singularly corrupt institution, administered by Columbia University and the management of the *New York Times* largely for the benefit of the *New York Times* and a limited number of favored publications and personalities. Any citizen who thinks that the annual distribution of awards has something to do with quality probably believes that the Oscar for Best Picture goes to the most distinguished film of the year. If you're a connoisseur of unrestrained self-praise, may I recommend the citations when the *Times* awards itself the Pulitzer Gold Medal for Public Service.

Does anyone detect a note of cynicism, perhaps even biliousness, in my tone? Well, maybe. For the sad fact is that once upon a time I was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Distinguished Commentary, and (so I was informed) considered the jury's favorite for the honor. But because the *Washington Post* had fallen short of its quota that season (so I was informed), the Pulitzer Board, which makes the final decisions, moved Jim Hoagland of the *Post* from the International Reporting category to Distinguished Commentary for his second—and no doubt richly deserved—Pulitzer Prize.

Which brings us to Cynthia Tucker. In 1995 I was a Pulitzer juror for Distinguished Commentary, and the *Times*-appointed chairman of our five-person panel was the late Gerald M. Boyd, of subsequent ill-repute as Howell Raines's hatchet man at the *Times* and patron of Jayson Blair, the lying reporter.



The deliberative process is simple. Jurors sit together in a little room at the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism, reading the entries; on the final day each, in turn, suggests a couple of finalists. Lively discussion ensues, of course, and most chairmen serve as interlocutors. To our surprise, Gerald M. Boyd took a different approach: He began by insisting that Cynthia Tucker had to be one of the finalists. My muted response, as I recall, was that Cynthia was a nice person and ubiquitous TV talking head but, on the whole, comparatively young and inexperienced. She would no doubt win the Pulitzer Prize someday, I added, and counseled patience.

Now, Gerald M. Boyd was not the most affable fellow I had ever encountered, and since both he and Cynthia Tucker were black, I had no desire to introduce the subject of race in discussions where it didn't belong. Boyd was adamant on the subject of Cynthia Tucker, but so were my fellow jurors, who seemed offended both by Boyd's arrogance and his racial hamhandedness. Since my private strategy in these sessions was devoted to thwarting the prospects for Molly Ivins, I gladly left it to my colleagues to argue with Gerald M. Boyd about Cynthia Tucker.

In the end, I am pleased to report, I succeeded beyond my modest expectations. Not only did I manage to maneuver Molly Ivins out of contention—who, miraculously, never did win the Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Commentary before her death this past January—but succeeded in promoting Paul Gigot of the *Wall Street Journal* as a finalist as well.

As it happens, Gerald M. Boyd finally surrendered on the Cynthia Tucker front; but in order to mollify his wounded feelings, we agreed on another black columnist, Carl T. Rowan, Boyd's second choice, as a finalist. Rowan, of course, was a consummate hack, puerile stylist, and longtime fixture on the Washington cocktail scene; but better a laughingstock, in my view, than Molly Ivins or Gerald M. Boyd's personal dictation. (The Pulitzer Board awarded that year's prize to the third finalist, a *Newsday* columnist named Jim Dwyer.)

In due course, Boyd was fired from the *Times*, along with his patron Raines, in 2003 for their relentless promotion of Jayson Blair, and he died last November with an office at the Columbia Journalism School. An interesting story, and except for Cynthia Tucker, not a happy one.

Philip Terzian

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Correspondence

Time Keeps Draggin' On

As a former correctional officer, past vice president of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), and owner of a controversial CCPOA blog, I believe David DeVoss's "California Behind Bars" (April 9) is factually deficient.

First, the warden DeVoss quotes lists the "capacity" of Lancaster Prison at 2,200 and the population at 4,300. Later on, we find that these cells are double-bedded, but the 2,200 figure cited by William Sullivan assumes the cells were designed to house a single offender. Second, DeVoss implies the "Three Strikes" law, adopted 13 years ago, is the "main tool" responsible for a 25-year incarceration trend. Further, he claims "thousands of the state's most violent offenders have been locked away for good" under that statute. The truth is, less than a thousand have been committed to indeterminate sentences under Three Strikes; moreover, none of these offenders is serving life without possibility of parole.

Third, DeVoss implies housing inmates in "hallways" is routine. But the overwhelming majority of the overcrowding is in converted gymnasiums and dayrooms, certainly not in hallways. Fourth, DeVoss says that the CCPOA union single-handedly "defeated a proposition that would have limited the Three Strikes law to violent felonies." In fact, the proposition was defeated by a coalition of victims' rights groups, CCPOA, and other law enforcement associations, *and* the original statute is limited to violent felonies—only the instant offense may be "nonviolent."

Sixth, DeVoss claims inmate Saint James Harris Wood is "serving 23 years for second-degree robbery." California Penal Code states: "Robbery of the second degree is punishable by imprisonment in the state prison for two, three, or five years." If Wood is serving 23 years, he was convicted of crimes not cited by DeVoss.

And not once does DeVoss refer to correctional officers (the official and correct title)—he uses the pejorative "prison guard" instead. As though this term doesn't paint a sufficiently negative image in the reader's mind, he describes

them as "grim faced guards" whose "idea of rehabilitation is to keep people in a cage and poke them with a stick" for added measure. I suppose we should be thankful he didn't mention the horns protruding through our uniform caps.

Jeffrey Doyle
Rocklin, Calif.

David DeVoss responds: Statistics on the capacity and population of the Lancaster prison came from information published by the prison itself. I did not see prisoners sleeping in hallways, but CDCR director James Tilton says that's what happens in some locations. The importance of "Three Strikes" and sentencing enhancements in getting felons off the street is beyond dispute. Harris Wood was sentenced for multiple counts of second degree robbery. According to the California Fair Political Practices Commission and former CDCR director Roderick Hickman, the CCPOA contributed most of the money to defeat amendments to the Three Strikes law. And I'm sure CCPOA members are jovial, but during my visit I saw no smiles—or horns.

Dems vs. Gonzales

Regarding Terry Eastland's "Waiting for Gonzales" (April 9): With another Supreme Court vacancy possibly looming, Senate Democrats know that President Bush will likely present them with a "diversity selection" by nominating a well-qualified Hispanic candidate like Attorney General Gonzales—who previously served on the Texas Supreme Court. Democrats do not want to be placed in the uncomfortable position of attacking such a diversity selection, so they want to use the attorney firings flap to destroy Gonzales before he can be nominated to the High Court.

Joe Salzgeber
Brunswick, Ohio

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the weekly Standard

On Democracy in Iraq

Honest Democrats should admit that they are in a predicament: The electoral interests of their party are at odds with the interests of the country in Iraq. If the surge fails, the Democrats stand to gain enormously in 2008. A Republican could try to depict himself as the candidate best able to manage retreat from Mesopotamia, but such a Nixonian approach, given how lamely the Bush administration has handled much of the war, doesn't seem compelling. On the other hand, if the surge works, and the Sunni insurgency and sectarian strife no longer convulse Iraqi society, the odds of Senator John McCain—or another Republican—succeeding George W. Bush go up considerably. The entire Democratic field, however, could end up looking wrong, faint-hearted, and politically reckless.

We highlight this Democratic contradiction since the party's character is being put to the test, as we see whether General David Petraeus's counterinsurgency tactics, which will seriously kick into gear in June, can rescue Baghdad and Anbar and Diyala provinces from the precipice. We don't know if General Petraeus at this late date can reverse the bloody dynamic that has developed in the Iraqi Sunni, Shiite, and Kurdish communities. But militarily the United States is finally waging a counterinsurgency that makes sense: We are focusing our efforts on securing Iraqi lives and property. Incrementally, in many quarters of Baghdad, daily life for Iraqis appears to be getting better.

And politically, Iraq is coming alive again. A Shiite-led Iraqi democracy *is* taking root—an astonishing achievement given the concerted efforts of the Iraqi Sunnis, and the surrounding Sunni Arab states, to attack and delegitimize the new Iraq. The country's obstreperous, stubborn, highly nationalist, Shiite prime minister, Nuri al-Maliki, appears increasingly to be a man of mettle and courage. Slowly but surely, he is distancing himself from the clerical scion, Moktada al-Sadr, the overlord of the Sunni-shooting Mahdi Army. Maliki is so far holding his ground after the resignation of Sadr's men in his government.

This distancing was inevitable once the Americans reversed the disastrous tactics of former secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld and General John Abizaid, which had allowed Sadr and his allies to become the only defenders of Baghdad's Shiites against the Sunni insurgents and holy warriors. Maliki and Sadr are not natural allies intellectually or temperamentally; Maliki's diverse and fractious Dawa party is of a different social milieu from the uneducated young men who give Sadr power. Although Sadr will surely continue to have a significant political following (his family name alone ensures that), his base of support even within Baghdad's Shiite slum, Sadr City, is not guaranteed, provided the central government can bring security and minimal economic opportunity. There are many reasons Sadr has not rallied his men against the American surge, which has already penetrated deeply into Sadr City with minimal resistance. One of those reasons is that Sadr would not be popular with many of the area's denizens if he did.

Politically, Iraqi democracy is *taking root—an astonishing achievement given the concerted efforts of the Iraqi Sunnis, and the surrounding Sunni Arab states, to attack and delegitimize the new Iraq.*

Since 2005, Sadr's calls for political demonstrations against the Americans have not been resounding successes among the Shiites. Although this may be news to Senate majority leader Harry Reid, who believes all is lost in Iraq, Sadr increasingly shows the anxiety of a pol who is nervous about his base, his allies, and his elected Shiite competitors. Not that long ago, many—perhaps most—Iraqis thought that the United States would soon abandon Iraq. President Bush's decision to back the surge has altered this perception, in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East. The effect of this on Iraq's politics has been enormously beneficial. The retreat of Sadr, the growing Sunni tribal unease, if not outright conflict, with al Qaeda in Anbar,

and the growing self-confidence of Maliki are all, in part, results of President Bush's decision.

Prime Minister Maliki actually appears to be leading his Dawa party, an awkward, tense collection of deeply patriotic, semi-Westernized Shiite activists, into an embrace of parliamentary democracy. Although not a mass movement, the Dawa has prestige among the Shiites: It was the first organized expression of a Shiite political consciousness and was born, in part, from the mind of Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr (1935–1980), the greatest of Iraq's modern clerics and the font of the Sadr family's continuing charisma. If the Dawa embraces democracy, its commitment, along with that of senior clerics in Najaf led by Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, will likely ensure a lasting Shiite commitment to democracy—provided Iraq's current leading men aren't destroyed in an all-out sectarian war, a scenario that seems likely only if the Americans hastily withdraw from Iraq.

And Senator Reid should take note: As a Shiite-led democracy grows, the calls for an American withdrawal will increase. Which is fine. Iraqi nationalism is vibrant among the Shiites, especially those who are religious. And democracy in Iraq, as elsewhere in the Muslim Middle East, is unlikely to be particularly affectionate toward the United States. Iraqi democracy is much more likely to free American soldiers to go home than is chaos in Mesopotamia.

Critics of the surge often underscore the absence of a clearly defined post-surge political strategy. Echoing Rumsfeld and Abizaid, these critics believe that only a "political solution"—that is, Shiite and Kurdish concessions to the once-dominant Sunni minority—can solve Iraq's trauma. The Bush administration has largely been in agreement with this view, following a strategy since 2004 of trying to placate the Sunnis.

It hasn't worked. In all probability, it could not. Certainly an approach that centers on de-de-Baathification is destined to fail since the vast majority of Iraq's Shiites, and probably Kurds, too, oppose any deal that would allow the Sunni Baathist elite back into government. And de-de-Baathification is not about letting Sunni Arab teachers, engineers, and nurses back into the government job market. It's about the Baathist Sunni elite getting the power and prestige of senior positions, especially in the military and security services. If we really want Iraq to succeed in the long term, we will stop pushing this idea. Onetime totalitarian societies that more thoroughly purge despotic party members have done much better than those that allow the old guard to stay on (think Russia). Grand Ayatollah Sistani is right about this; the State Department and the CIA are wrong.

The Sunni insurgency will likely cease when the Sunnis, who have been addicted to power and the perception of the Shiites as a God-ordained underclass, know in their hearts that they cannot win against the Shiites, that continued fighting will only make their situation worse. Thanks in part to the ferocity of vengeful Shiite militias, we are getting there. And the growing realization in Iraq, and among Western oil companies, that substantial oil deposits exist in the Sunni Arab zone could prove helpful in assuaging Sunni fears about starving in the new Iraq. Even for Iraqi Sunnis, the signs for a better future are increasing. A livable democratic arrangement is there if Sunni Arabs choose to take it. One thing ought to be clear: Without President Bush's surge, the only thing Iraq's Sunnis can look forward to is war, death, and exile. If there are potentially influential moderates among Iraq's Sunni Arabs, the "surge" is their last chance to change the rejectionist temperament and tactics of the community.

So the surge deserves to be supported. This is not the time for talk of timetables for withdrawal—much less talk of a war that is lost. It isn't inconsistent to scorch Bush for his failures—and still to argue that the American blood we will spill in Iraq in the surge is worth the *possibility* of success. Do thoughtful Democrats really believe that the Middle East, America's long fight against Sunni jihadism, and our standing in the world against potential aggressors and bullies will be improved by a precipitous and mandated departure from Mesopotamia? The Democratic party is beginning to sound like an echo chamber for Zbigniew Brzezinski, the national security adviser for the most inept and calamitous Democratic administration of modern times.

We, too, have benchmarks for Iraq. The surge needs to show real progress in providing security by the beginning of 2008. American and Iraqi forces in Baghdad will have to figure out a way to diminish significantly the number and lethality of Sunni suicide bombers. Given the topography of Baghdad, the possible routes of attack against the capital's Shiite denizens, and the common traits of Iraq's Arabs, this will be difficult. If we and the Iraqis cannot do this, then the radicalization of the Shiites will continue, and it will be only a question of time before the Shiite community collectively decides that the Sunnis as a group are beyond the pale, and a countrywide war of religious cleansing will become likely.

If the U.S. military can change the reality and spirit of Baghdad, the rest of Iraq will change too. Contrary to the despair of so many, internal Iraqi politics will probably be the easiest part of this campaign. In the next few months, of course, things could go to hell. One suicide bomber killing the right Shiite VIPs could threaten all. Yet with Petraeus, Maliki, and Sistani in charge, things may work out. If they do, we can only hope that by the time they do, the leadership of the Democratic party will have ceased to have anything in common with those Sunni Arabs who have always wanted the new Iraq to fail.

—Reuel Marc Gerecht, for the Editors

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Partial Victory

The Supreme Court defers to Congress.

BY TERRY EASTLAND

Though today's opinion does not go so far as to discard Roe *or* Casey*, the Court, differently composed than it was when we last considered a restrictive abortion regulation, is hardly faithful to our earlier invocations of "the rule of law" and the "principles of* stare decisis*."*

That sentence comes near the end of Justice Ruth Ginsburg's dissent from last week's opinion by a five-member majority sustaining the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, which Congress passed in 2003. Note that Ginsburg describes the Supreme Court as "differently composed" from the way it was in late 2005. And at that time its composition was different, for Samuel Alito had yet to succeed Sandra Day O'Connor.

Ginsburg knows that if O'Connor had not retired, or if O'Connor's replacement had been someone like David Souter or Stephen Breyer or herself, the Court would have ruled otherwise in *Gonzales* v. *Carhart*. She is right about that much. Such a Court would have struck down the federal partial-birth abortion ban.

And that would have been a truly bad outcome, quite at odds—and here is where Ginsburg is wrong—with the rule of law.

Partial-birth abortion is a procedure used to kill fetuses of 20 to 24 weeks and sometimes older. The doctor pulls from the uterus the entire body save for the head, and then forces scissors into the skull and sucks out the brain tissue, thus collapsing the head and facilitating complete removal of the intact, deceased fetus, who may fairly be called a baby, since live births occur as early as the 20th week of pregnancy, and many of those newborns survive.

This gruesome procedure seems so close to infanticide, the living baby lying there in plain view from the shoulders down, partially born and legs moving before those adult hands start their work, that a determined movement arose to outlaw it. In the 1990s, more than 30 states have enacted bans on partial-birth abortion. But a judiciary enforcing its expansive view of the abortion right announced in *Roe* v. *Wade* (1973) and reaffirmed in *Planned Parenthood* v. *Casey* (1992) opposed the state bans, with the Supreme Court, in the 2000 case of *Stenberg* v. *Carhart*, striking down Nebraska's by a vote of 5 to 4. Yes, the *Stenberg* Court was differently composed, with O'Connor in the majority.

Anthony Kennedy was one of the four dissenting justices in *Stenberg*. His vote surprised some observers, since he had cowritten, with O'Connor and Souter, the joint opinion in *Casey*. That opinion declined to overrule *Roe* and naively (indeed pretentiously) offered itself as bringing to an end the national controversy over abortion, which *Roe* had done so much to trigger.

In *Stenberg*, Kennedy could not accept that *Roe* and *Casey* compelled invalidation of the Nebraska law. In *Gonzales*, challenges to the federal partial-birth abortion ban gave the (differently composed) Court an opportunity to overrule *Stenberg*. It did not do that, but the Court's opinion, written by Kennedy, shrewdly assigned to the job by Chief Justice John Roberts, makes clear that legislatures do have authority to prohibit partial-birth abortion.

Kennedy called attention to "a premise central" of the Court's conclusion in *Casey*, namely that "the government has a legitimate and substantial interest in preserving and promoting fetal life." He quoted *Casey*: "Regulations which do no more than create a structural mechanism by which the State . . . may express profound respect for the life of the unborn are permitted, if they are not a substantial obstacle to the woman's exercise of the right to choose."

Kennedy found that the federal ban on partial-birth abortion, crafted in ways to accommodate the Court's objections in *Stenberg* to Nebraska's ban, does not create "a substantial obstacle," also known, from *Casey*, as "an undue burden." The law does establish an obstacle by outlawing a particular form of abortion, but the burden is not a substantial one, in Kennedy's judgment, since the law doesn't prohibit the most commonly used method of late-term abortion (known as dilation and extraction). That procedure remains quite available. As for the absence from the law of a maternal health exception, that doesn't, on its face, create a substantial obstacle either. Kennedy said that where there is medical uncertainty, as he concluded there is here on the question of whether the ban creates significant health risks for a pregnant woman, Congress still may legislate. Judgment about whether there are "well-defined instances" in which there should be a maternal health exception awaits an "as-applied challenge in a discrete case."

Kennedy's opinion opens the door for further regulation of abortion. Citing *Casey* in support of the proposition that "government may use its voice and its regulatory authority to show its profound respect for the life within the woman," and observing that *Casey* sought to correct post-*Roe* precedents that, in its own words, had "undervalued the State's interest in potential life," Kennedy wrote: "Where it has a rational basis to act, and it does not impose an undue burden, the State may use its regulatory power to bar certain procedures and substitute others, all in furtherance of its legitimate

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interests in regulating the medical profession in order to promote respect for life, including life of the unborn."

States are now likely to pass new limitations on abortion, and doubtless they will one day be litigated up to the Supreme Court. Whether Kennedy's understanding of *Casey* can be sustained will depend, as Ginsburg's opinion reminds, on the Court's composition.

Understandably, then, Democratic and Republican presidential candidates have responded to *Gonzales*, with the Democrats denouncing it and the Republicans saluting it. Among the Republicans, Rudy Giuliani's reaction was the most terse: The Court, he said, had "reached the correct conclusion." Those who look to the Republicans as a bulwark of principled jurisprudence will no doubt hope that their eventual nominee is prepared to articulate *why* that conclusion is correct and to argue for the appointment of justices who will not read new rights into the Constitution, the original sin of *Roe*, and who, if they will not reverse dubious precedents, will at least apply them fairly, as Kennedy has done in *Gonzales*.

On that point, it's worth noting that Justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia, in a short concurrence, while reiterating their view that "the Court's abortion jurisprudence, including *Casey* and *Roe* . . . has no basis in the Constitution," also said that "the Court's opinion . . . accurately applies current jurisprudence," including *Casey*. While a different and Democratically composed Court would alter the application of *Casey* such that even the mild regulation of abortion represented by the federal partial-birth abortion law would have to be condemned, the current Court, one can hope, will maintain the *Gonzales* precedent. Of course, only a Court of still different composition—with more Republican appointees—might finally withdraw the judiciary from policymaking in this deeply controversial area, and let the people decide what to do about it, through their duly elected representatives. ♦

The Right to Life Lobby vs. McCain

They're not fighting about abortion.

Charlotte Allen

Arizona senator John McCain, currently a bit behind Rudy Giuliani as Republicans' favorite presidential choice for 2008, is far and away the most consistently anti-abortion of all the top contenders. During his 20 years in the Senate (plus four in the House), he has never failed to cast his vote in favor of whatever abortion restrictions are arguably permitted under *Roe* v. *Wade*: bans against partial-birth abortion, abortions on military bases, transporting minors across state lines to obtain abortions behind their parents' backs, and government funding for abortion both in the United States and abroad (all but the transporting-minors bill have become federal law). In addition, McCain has voted to confirm every "strict constructionist" judge (that is, disinclined to find, à la *Roe*, a right to abortion and related activities enshrined in the Constitution) appointed by the various Republican presidents who have served during his tenure, including Robert Bork for the Supreme Court. In February McCain declared that *Roe* v. *Wade* ought to be overturned, and he was one of 35 senators who signed an open letter to President Bush earlier this year pledging their support for any veto by Bush of efforts by the Democratic-controlled Congress to change federal law on abortion. Planned Parenthood and NARAL Pro-Choice America, the leading abortion-rights advocacy groups, detest McCain and consistently award him ratings of absolute zero on their scorecards.

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Nonetheless, McCain has a major problem with the nation's largest and most influential anti-abortion advocacy organization, the National Right to Life Committee. And the source of that problem is . . . not abortion at all. It's the McCain-Feingold Act, that set of restrictions on political advertising during election seasons that McCain (along with a number of Democrats) started pushing in 1995 and succeeded in enacting into federal law in 2002.

The National Right to Life Committee (NRLC) regards McCain-Feingold as a major hindrance to its mission of pro-life advocacy—and, *pari passu*, McCain himself as something close to a personal enemy. A so-far-successful constitutional challenge to a key portion of McCain-Feingold mounted by an NRLC affiliate, Wisconsin Right to Life, is pending in the Supreme Court, with oral argument set for Wednesday, April 25. At issue is a provision banning ads that mention the names of candidates for public office within certain "blackout periods" ranging from 30 to 60 days before an election—if funds from corporations or unions are used to pay for the ads. Abortion is the kind of neuralgic issue that most large corporations—the kind of influence-peddlers that are presumably the target of McCain-Feingold—tend to shy away from, and most donors to the NRLC and its affiliates are individuals of modest means and strong religious beliefs. Nonetheless, a small percentage of the NRLC's donations—a little over 2 percent—come from corporations (including nonprofits) and religious organizations (the figure is from the year 2003, when the NRLC took in $13.6 million in contributions,

including $295,124 from corporations and organizations, according to its lawyers).

Wisconsin Right to Life argues that the blackouts prevented it from broadcasting ads in 2004 criticizing by name the state's two Democratic senators, Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, for filibustering Bush's strict-constructionist judicial nominees—at a time when Feingold (the other named sponsor of McCain-Feingold, as it happens) was running for reelection. Although the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of McCain-Feingold on its face by a 5-4 vote in 2003 in a different lawsuit, Wisconsin Right to Life won a unanimous Supreme Court ruling last year allowing it to challenge the law's application to specific instances and then persuaded a special three-judge federal district court in December that the blackout period unconstitutionally impinged upon Wisconsin Right to Life's First Amendment right to engage in grassroots issue advocacy on behalf of its members.

Furthermore, the composition of the Supreme Court has tellingly changed, with the replacement of Sandra Day O'Connor, who cowrote the majority opinion in 2003, by the more clearly conservative Samuel Alito Jr. Only if the law's defenders can persuade five justices that Wisconsin Right to Life's 2004 ads were actually an underhanded stab at Feingold, or that the NRLC is a stalking horse for other, presumably more malign corporate interests (and thus, like them, should be required to run its ads through a PAC, which would exempt it from the blackout but subject it to closer regulation), does it seem likely that Wisconsin Right to Life won't prevail on at least some narrow ground.

It is amazing how bitter the McCain-Feingold Act has made relations between McCain and the NRLC. The organization began implicitly backing George W. Bush over McCain early in the 2000 primary season, even though Bush didn't have much of a track record on abortion back then. Despite McCain's solid history of anti-abortion votes in the House and Senate, the NRLC made much of several statements he had made in 1999 indicating he might be willing to waffle on *Roe* v. *Wade* (McCain claimed to have been misinterpreted by the press). The NRLC's executive director, David O'Steen, declared that the remarks, which expressed sympathy for the dangers to women of illegal abortions, could well have been made by Kate Michelman, then the president of NARAL. The organization's anti-McCain animus reached a peak right before the crucial South Carolina primary (which McCain lost, clearing the field for Bush) when South Carolina Citizens for Life and the NRLC began running ads saying, "If you want a strongly pro-life president . . . don't support John McCain."

So far this presidential election cycle, the NRLC has not been so overtly hostile to McCain, and it issued a press release praising him for his recent strong stand on *Roe*. Still, it is pretty clear that the NRLC (through its PAC) is never going to endorse McCain in the 2008 primaries, and the NRLC's online scorecard for McCain's voting record over the past decade is besmirched with bright red X's representing his deviations from NRLC positions and making McCain look, at first glance, as though he occasionally favors the butchery of unborn babies. It is only on second glance that the voter realizes the vast majority of those red X's represent McCain's votes on McCain-Feingold. It is also true, as the scorecard indicates, that McCain supports federal funding of embryo-destroying stem cell research—a position that makes most pro-lifers blanch—but so, to take one example, does Utah's otherwise abortion-opposing Republican Sen. Orrin Hatch. Yet because Hatch has always voted nay on McCain-Feingold, his NRLC scorecard looks a lot more pro-life than McCain's.

Perhaps that is only fair. "The National Right to Life Committee has always considered campaign finance to be part of its agenda," says James Bopp Jr., a Terre Haute, Ind., lawyer whose James Madison Center for Free Speech has represented several anti-abortion challengers to McCain-Feingold, including Wisconsin Right to Life. "If they can't effectively advocate on pro-life issues, if they can't even raise those issues, that's a threat to their ability to engage in pro-life activity." Bopp says that he personally intends to support recent Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney for 2008; Romney once adamantly backed abortion rights but says he had a conversion experience in 2004 that turned him against both *Roe* and most embryonic stem-cell research. Douglas Johnson, the NRLC's legislative director, declined to respond to repeated requests to interview him about his organization's current views on McCain.

For his part, McCain has thrown himself into the McCain-Feingold litigation with unusual fervor, personally intervening in Wisconsin Right to Life's lawsuit rather than relying solely on the lawyers for the Federal Election Commission and Justice Department who are charged with defending the constitutionality of federal election laws. "It is not a common, ordinary occurrence" for sponsors of federal legislation to become involved in litigation over their handiwork, notes Bradley A. Smith, a law professor at Capital University in Columbus, Ohio, who served as FEC chairman during Bush's first term and is a vocal opponent of McCain-Feingold as well as most other regulation of elections. "How rare it is I can't tell you, but it's more common just to file an amicus [friend-of-the-court] brief."

Smith speculates that McCain might not have trusted Bush administration lawyers to provide a sufficiently vigorous defense of his law, given that Bush expressed doubts about the constitutionality of some parts of McCain-Feingold before signing it in 2002. One advantage of such an intervention is that the defenders of McCain-Feingold got two legal briefs instead of one in which to present their case to the Supreme Court (Bopp, however, was allowed to file an extra-long brief that partly makes up for that advantage).

Furthermore, McCain and three

House members who joined him in the intervention are getting their legal representation free of charge, from Seth Waxman, who served as U.S. solicitor general under President Bill Clinton and is now a partner at the prestigious law firm of Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale & Dorr—because campaign finance reform is one of those issues that is irresistible to the well-heeled liberal lawyers who populate blue-chip firms seeking to look good by filling their pro bono portfolios. Indeed, McCain-Feingold has been an ideological money-magnet for liberal good-government groups, with nonprofits such as the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Carnegie Corporation, and New York University's Brennan Center for Justice pouring funds and free research into getting the law passed and then defending it in court.

Certainly, there's a lot to loathe about McCain-Feingold, especially if you are, as the NRLC is, identified with a "religious right" that supposedly yearns to impose its theocratic views upon secular American democracy. "There's an inherent suspicion of them in the [election-law] enforcement community," notes Smith, who says that when he first arrived at the FEC as a commissioner in 2000, he discovered in the agency's library an entire bookshelf of political tracts explaining in condescending terms what religious conservatives are supposed to be all about. The very aim of campaign finance laws is to restrict political expression (all in the name of battling evil corporations), either by limiting expenditures or by regulating the timing of political speech, as McCain-Feingold attempts to do. In addition, ever since the first campaign finance laws were passed during the 1970s, they have been Maginot Lines of pseudo-reform, notoriously easy to circumvent. McCain-Feingold was a response to loopholes in the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 through which soft money flowed like the Potomac River to the Chesapeake Bay. Yet no sooner was the ink dry on McCain-Feingold than special-interest organizations ranging from Swift Boat Veterans for Truth to MoveOn.org discovered the joys of becoming a "527" group—named after a provision of the Internal Revenue Code that allows freelance tax-exempt groups to engage in all the political advertising they like as long as they steer clear of endorsing or opposing specific candidates. Now, the move is on in this Democratic Congress to reform the reforms by curbing the 527s. McCain, to his credit, has at least supported an amendment that squelched a provision in the latest bill that would have required organizations such as the NRLC to register as lobbyists and submit to onerous reporting requirements.

This leads back to the fundamental question: Why shouldn't

pro-lifers at least pay due respect to McCain's quarter-century of pro-life voting and support in Congress? He certainly beats Giuliani. The lapsed Catholic, thrice-married, unabashedly pro-abortion-rights former New York mayor was actually managing to squeak by as barely, just barely, acceptable to social conservatives who otherwise liked his crime-intolerant, post-9/11 tough-guy style by promising to appoint strict constructionist judges—until April 4, when he told a CNN reporter that he supported federal funding for abortion (anathema to fiscal as well as social conservatives).

As for Romney, he may enjoy James Bopp's support, but as late as 2002 (and certainly in 1994, when he tried unsuccessfully to unseat Democratic senator Ted Kennedy) Romney was endorsing a woman's "right to choose," supporting easy access to the "morning-after" pill (viewed by right-to-lifers as an abortifacient because it prevents implantation of a fertilized egg) and backing "comprehensive" (that is, contraceptive-centric) sex education for youngsters in public schools—not to mention taking a liberal stance on gay rights and openly gay military personnel. Fred Thompson, for his part, was not known as a pro-lifer during his 1994 Senate race, although he voted consistently for abortion restrictions during his eight years in the Senate, and now says he supports overturning *Roe*.

Votes in Congress do count for something, after all. On April 18 the Supreme Court upheld the federal ban on partial-birth abortion in a momentous 5-4 decision. That gruesome and not-uncommon procedure is now illegal—thanks in part to the support of John McCain (and in some respects to that of Thompson, who also voted for such a ban, although he was no longer in the Senate by the time the 2003 law at issue passed). Yes, McCain will be forever associated with a silly and destructive campaign-finance law, but abortion opponents, even the National Right to Life Committee, have something genuine for which to thank him. ♦

Gunfight at Alumni Corral

A new round in Dartmouth's running battle.

BY WHITNEY BLAKE

Even in America's fractious conservative movement, you don't often see William F. Buckley Jr. and George Will facing off on opposite sides of an issue. Much less would you expect the dispute to occur over a trustee election at a university neither attended. But Dartmouth trustee elections in recent years have become national events, thanks to insurgent libertarian and conservative candidates who upset establishment choices by focusing on issues such as free speech and political correctness. And this year's contest—aside from the intervention of Buckley and Will—is no exception.

Four candidates are vying for one slot, in alumni voting that began on April 1 and continues through May 15. But two are attracting the most scrutiny. Sandy Alderson (class of '69), the CEO of the San Diego Padres, is the leading establishment candidate, one of three selected by the alumni council. Following in the footsteps of the insurgents is University of Virginia law professor Stephen Smith ('88), whose name was added to the ballot after he obtained the requisite 500 signatures for a petition supporting his candidacy.

Dartmouth is governed by 18 board members, 8 of whom are elected by alumni. The alumni candidates are vetted by the Alumni Council (this year there were around 300), with a handful chosen for nomination. Alumni not picked by the council can still qualify for the ballot via petition. Petition candidates were few and far between until Silicon Valley tycoon T.J. Rodgers ('70), a self-described libertarian, waged a victorious campaign as a petition candidate in 2004. Rodgers ran against faddish race-gender-diversity studies. George Mason law professor Todd Zywicki ('88) and Hoover Institution fellow Peter Robinson ('79) won seats as petition candidates in 2005, opposing politically correct campus speech codes, among other issues.

Smith says his campaign took shape in January, when he contacted his old classmate and friend Zywicki and learned that there were no petition candidates in this year's race. He also talked to Rodgers, who he says provided advice and moral support, but no financial backing. (Rodgers substantiated this in the *Dartmouth*, the student newspaper, in late March.) Smith says he was inspired to run because of his sense, in talking to recent graduates, that Dartmouth was drifting away from its "small college academic mission." Despite Alderson's innovative role in major league baseball, Smith feels that when it comes to Dartmouth affairs, Alderson wouldn't demonstrate a "willingness to think outside the box and have a new vision."

Alderson and his supporters tell a different story about Smith's campaign. Alderson, a friend of Dartmouth president James Wright, told me that Smith was selected by a small cabal, some of whom, he suspects, are current trustees who provided Smith with a coveted mailing list of key supporters, as well as financial backing. The fact that they remain unidentified "creates a questionable appearance" in Alderson's mind. Alderson rejects the "establishment" label, arguing that he is independent, nonideological, and can bring a solid business management background to the board.

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Depending on who you talk to, Dartmouth is either teetering on the brink of Ivy League mediocrity or thriving. Undergraduates "often come last," according to Smith, on a campus that is slowly becoming a "faceless research university" with an overemphasis on graduate research. Freedom of speech needs to be protected, and political correctness should not dominate campus discourse, as it did last December when the athletic director apologized in advance of a hockey tournament hosted at Dartmouth for the "offensive and wrong" team name of a participant, the University of North Dakota's Fighting Sioux. Smith calls for transparency in the administration and minimizing bureaucratic bloat; he describes himself as the only candidate who won't "rubber stamp" the administration "politburo."

An African American raised in Anacostia, a poor neighborhood of Washington, D.C., by a "saint" of a mother who had multiple sclerosis and fought hard to keep her kids out of the failing public school system, Smith feels that his humble beginnings would leaven a board comprising mainly white multi-millionaires in business, finance, and law. He sees a need to continue to bolster the athletic programs at Dartmouth, especially the football team, which, he argues, had been in decline before the other three insurgents joined the board. Smith blames a hostile administration, citing a letter that the dean of admissions, Karl Furstenberg, wrote to Swarthmore in 2000, praising that school's decision to drop football because it is "antithetical to the academic mission of colleges such as ours." Students need to be well-rounded, Smith thinks, as opposed to "creative loners."

Alderson, for his part, says the central question is whether the college needs a "complete makeover or simply a redirection," and says he would fall in the latter category. Attacks on bureaucracy are "overblown"; the growth in college administration was not necessarily "inappropriate." John Mathias, a Chicago-based attorney who graduated with Alderson and has supported his campaign financially, has three children currently at Dartmouth, and told me that the issues Smith is raising are "fictional."

In short, it's a race not unlike those of recent years. Except, unlike earlier candidates picked by the alumni council, Alderson has a conservative celebrity in his corner. In the April 6 issue of the *Dartmouth*, George Will weighed in for his friend Alderson with "a Big League Endorsement." Will credited Alderson for pioneering "new ways of thinking about the evaluation of baseball talents" as chronicled in Michael Lewis's bestseller *Moneyball.* "The point that is germane to Dartmouth," he wrote, is that "the success of any institution depends on clear and constantly refreshed thinking about how best to match resources to the institution's mission. . . . Dartmouth's turmoils have earned it unwanted and often unjust attention around the nation. Alumni and others who desire a less tumultuous and more constructively stimulating future for the College could begin by making Sandy a trustee."

Four days later came the Buckley rejoinder on *National Review Online*. "Mr. Alderson is a clubby alumnus with a legal background and a hyperactive career as a baseball executive, not the worst way to gain favorable attention from patrons of the sport, who include the formidable George F. Will, Princeton Ph.D. and a man of sovereign judgment in most matters. The other principal contender is Stephen Smith," who like the three insurgent trustees "is bent on preserving those traditions at Dartmouth which made it, over the years, so singular an institution of learning, so beloved of its alumni." Moreover, "with every disadvantage known in the land (poverty, single parent, black skin) [Smith] has triumphed, in an enormously competitive environment, against East Coast snobbery and insularity. This is a moment when one wishes one were an alumnus of Dartmouth, so that one could vote for Steve Smith."

Ironically, Smith contends that, when properly understood, the contest is not really political, and he tries to dissuade the use of the "conservative" label in the race. He started out as a Democrat, and actually credits his experience at Dartmouth for his political evolution to the Republican side.

Conversely, Alderson says the race is all politics, and it's "baloney" to say otherwise: It's about people who want the school to return to the days "before women were admitted, and before the Indian symbol was removed," referring to Dartmouth's unofficial mascot, changed in the 1970s. The attack on bureaucracy is really about "big government vs. small government," which is "code talk" for attacking diversity.

If it seems implausible for the white CEO to attack the Anacostia native as a foe of diversity, don't forget that in college politics, diversity can take on many different meanings. In an April 2 column for the *Dartmouth*, a member of the Alumni Council nominating committee questioned whether Smith really would bring diversity to the board, since, like Zywicki, he is a law professor in the state of Virginia. Alderson echoes this talking point: "How many people from the same class, in the same profession, in the same location do we need?"

In an election conducted via mail and the Internet over a six-week period, the outcome is impossible to predict. Junior Joe Malchow, who is following the campaign closely on his blog, *Dartblog.com*, remarks that students see the campaign as a forum to have their concerns addressed, so in a sense, the petition candidacy is an immediate victory for students. Malchow contends that the other candidates only took stances on issues after Smith came out first with his platform. One alum who is a close observer of Dartmouth affairs describes an increased endowment and increased funding for athletic facilities starting in 2004, when Rodgers was elected, and calls this the "petition trustee effect." Indeed, it's hard to see why alumni would want to eliminate tumult and turmoil from trustee elections. However things turn out May 15, the bucolic college town of Hanover, N.H., looks likely to remain in the national spotlight as a test case for conservative efforts to reform elite academia. ♦

The Unquiet Prime Minister

Japan's premier makes his first visit to Washington. BY DUNCAN CURRIE

The last time a Japanese premier met George Bush in America, ten months ago, he wound up touring Graceland and serenading his host with Elvis numbers. Junichiro Koizumi won't soon be confused with the King, but the "Sayonara Summit" of June 2006 affirmed his status as one of Bush's favorite foreign leaders. There won't be nearly as much bonhomie and backslapping when the new prime minister, Shinzo Abe, arrives for his first official U.S. visit this week. Yet in many ways this trip is more significant, as the alliance has hit a rough patch.

Like Koizumi, Abe seeks to move beyond Japan's postwar passivity. Koizumi sent naval ships to the war in Afghanistan and ground troops to the war in Iraq, both in noncombat roles. Since Abe took power in September, Tokyo has upgraded the Japan Defense Agency to formal ministry status and intensified cooperation with the Pentagon on missile defense. Abe's ultimate goal, long prized by Japanese conservatives, is to amend the pacifist Article 9 of Japan's MacArthur-era constitution. He hopes to drag Japan from its guilt-driven foreign policy toward a "proactive diplomacy" based on "common values," such as freedom and democracy.

All of which the Bush administration has welcomed. But Abe is more ideological than Koizumi. He gives credence to Japan's World War II revisionists and regards the Tokyo Trials with suspicion. Koizumi apologized several times for the damage wrought by Japanese militarism; Abe seems less comfortable acknowledging this history. Many Japanese complain of "apology fatigue," insisting their country has sufficiently expressed remorse for Tojo-era crimes. But Abe goes a step further, often sugarcoating those crimes.

The "history issue" flared up again on March 1, when Abe appeared to deny that Japanese soldiers had coerced tens of thousands of Asian women into sexual slavery during World War II. Though he pledged to honor the Kono Statement—Japan's 1993 apology for the military brothels—and later apologized for the suffering of the "comfort women" (as they are euphemistically known in Japan), the damage was done. The Western media went ballistic.

Abe was responding, in part, to a resolution introduced in the House of Representatives by California Democrat Mike Honda, which demands that Tokyo apologize frankly for the wartime sex slavery. If Abe's comments were horrendous, so was his timing. Japan can justifiably claim the high ground in its dealings with North Korea, whose agents abducted at least 13 (and perhaps many more) Japanese citizens in the 1970s and 1980s. But Abe stained this moral clarity when he denied Japan's own record of kidnapping.

"It's extremely bad politics internationally," says a former Bush administration official. According to this official, who is very pro-Japan, the chief U.S. envoy to the six-party talks on North Korea, Christopher Hill, believes Japan is "isolated" and "radioactive." Other senior Asia hands at Foggy Bottom reportedly share this opinion.

Yet that seems overstated. Thanks in part to its foreign aid and burgeoning internationalism, Japan now commands remarkable goodwill, especially in Southeast Asia. According to a BBC World Service Poll released in early March, 84 percent of Indonesians and 70 percent of Filipinos consider Japan a "mainly positive" global influence, as do 66 percent of Americans. Its image may be mud in China and South Korea, but Australia, India, Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore are all pursuing closer ties.

By foolishly donning the revisionist historian's cap, Abe distracted attention from his foreign policy, which Foreign Minister Taro Aso likes to call "value-oriented diplomacy." Abe speaks frequently of Japan's "new values"—"freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law"—and advocates a quadrilateral strategic dialogue among the United States, Japan, Australia, and India. On March 13, he signed a defense pact with Australian prime minister John Howard, the first formal Japanese security agreement with a country other than America. On April 16, the United States, Japan, and India staged their first joint naval exercise.

Indeed, the best safeguard against dangerous Japanese nationalism has always been a healthy U.S. alliance. And Abe believes "it is essential that Japan strengthen its alliance with the United States," calling the bilateral relationship "invaluable and irreplaceable." Boosting U.S.-Japan relations has been the heart of Bush's East Asia strategy since he took office. But now many Japanese worry that Washington is undermining their position on North Korea.

"The problem is Chris Hill," says one prominent Japanese journalist, a self-described "realist" who requested anonymity. "Hill doesn't see Japan as a dependable ally." Indeed, "he ignores Japan. Lots of diplomats are really pissed off." Whether this journalist is correct—and his view of Hill appears to be widespread among Japanese media and policymakers—Japan reacted sourly to the February 13 North Korea nuclear deal, which Hill brokered.

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"The overall impression is that we went wobbly," says the former Bush official. The February 13 agreement gave North Korea 60 days to shut down its Yongbyon nuclear reactor in return for massive dollops of fuel oil (or equivalent economic aid) and a separate pledge to reconsider U.S. sanctions. Farther down the road, Pyongyang could gain diplomatic recognition and more aid in return for full nuclear disclosure and dismantling. Naturally, Kim Jong Il upped the ante right away, demanding the Treasury Department first release the entire $25 million in North Korean assets at the Macau-based Banco Delta Asia that had been frozen since 2005. The Bush administration agreed. Still, the 60-day deadline came and went without any resolution of Yongbyon.

Tokyo smells a U.S. policy shift: from pressure and isolation to piecemeal concessions. It's hard to disagree. The good news for Abe is that, given the apparent unraveling of the February 13 accord, he can make a strong case to Bush that Kim has again proven intransigent and duplicitous. As the *Nikkei Shimbun*, a centrist Japanese financial newspaper, wrote in a March 16 editorial, America must reassure Japan that it will not "settle for easy cosmetic solutions" to the North Korean threat. There will be plenty else for Bush and Abe to discuss, including the relocation of U.S. bases on Okinawa, free trade, and energy policy. But for Japan, the specter of North Korea—and the fear of U.S. appeasement—trumps most other worries.

The alliance remains structurally robust: America and Japan share too many interests for there to be any real breakdown. "A lot of what Japan is doing is balancing against China," says Susan Shirk, a top State Department Asia hand under President Clinton and author of the new book *China: Fragile Superpower*. This fits with the broader U.S. strategy of engaging China while also checking the rise of Chinese power and preserving a regional order favorable to democracy. Thus, Abe's hope that Bush will support a four-way U.S.-Japan-Australia-India dialogue. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has reportedly been reluctant to do so, for fear of angering Beijing.

Abe, for his part, routinely stresses the need for "mutually beneficial" Sino-Japanese relations. He quickly backtracked from his "comfort women" comments after seeing the fuss they provoked, and he agreed last October to launch a joint history project with China, which is now (when Hong Kong is included) Japan's biggest trading partner. Despite the recent controversy, Wen Jiabao visited Japan in mid-April, the first such trip by a Chinese premier in seven years.

Squabbles over historical culpability should not discredit Japan's new foreign policy, which is healthy both for the region and the world. But when it comes to World War II controversies, Abe needs to take a hint from his predecessor's hero, Elvis Presley, and engage in "a little less conversation." ♦

My Struggle with Political Discourse

Will the rhetoric ever change?

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Political discourse has become so rotten that it's no longer possible to tell the stench of one presidential candidate from the stink of another. They all give off the same skunk whiff. Would-be chief executives and their staffs shovel madly in the manure pile of foreign and domestic policy. Rhetorical flatulence renders their positions on the global warming debate moot. And the smell gets worse as the recycling center that is the 2008 election approaches.

Or am I wrong? This campaign has been going on forever. The flipping and flopping and spin is making me bandwagon-sick. Electoral nausea causes everything to smell equally bad. It may be that political discourse is no more indistinguishable—or putrid—than ever. You decide. Read the following genuine politician quotes and see if you can determine who cut which cheese.

"The absurdity of our way of arranging salaries, which considers the question of the family and its support far too little . . ."

—John Edwards addressing corporate compensation?
—Tommy Thompson addressing tax rates?
—Dennis Kucinich addressing an empty auditorium?

"We more than deserved this defeat. It is only the greatest outward symptom of decay among quite a series of internal ones which perhaps would have remained hidden to the eyes of most people. . . ."

—Dennis Kucinich on Iraq?
—Newt Gingrich on the '06 congressional elections?
—Fred Thompson on Iraq and *the '06 congressional elections?*
—Wesley Clark on himself?

"The new movement . . . succeeded in awakening in the hearts of its adherents the sacred conviction that with it not a new *election slogan* was to be forced upon political life, but a new *view of life*. . ."

—Hillary Clinton explaining feminism at Wellesley?

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—John McCain explaining McCain-Feingold?
—Mitt Romney explaining his shift on abortion?

"I thank Heaven for giving me a share of the memories of those happy days. Woods and meadows were the battlefield where the ever-present 'conflicts' were fought out."

—Mitt Romney on being a life-long hunter?
—Al Gore on his youthful environmentalism?
—Barack Obama on growing up black in Hawaii?
—Rudy Giuliani on Central Park after sundown?
—Christopher Dodd on hanging out in Hyannisport and chasing girls with Ted Kennedy?

"It was probably at that time that my first ideals were formed. A lot of romping around out-of-doors, the long trip to school, and the companionship with unusually 'robust' boys, which at times caused my mother much grief, made me anything but a stay-at-home. . . . I had become a little ringleader."

—Hillary Rodham?
—Hillary Clinton?
—Hillary Rodham Clinton?

"I know people who endlessly read a lot, book after book, letter for letter, yet I would not call them 'well read.' Of course they possess a wide 'knowledge,' but their intellect does not know how to distribute and register the material gathered."

—John McCain, off the record, about Newt Gingrich?
—Newt Gingrich, on the record, about everybody else?
—Joe Biden about Joe Biden?

"Now I saw the liberal attitude of the press in a different light; its dignified language . . . was revealed to me as a trick as clever as it was mean."

—Joe Biden?
—Howard Dean?
—Tom Vilsack?
—Sam Brownback?
—Mike Huckabee?

—Barack Obama a couple of months from now?

"I entered for the first time the sacred and much-disputed chambers. . . . Several hundred of these representatives of the people were present who at that moment had to decide about a question of important economic significance. . . . It was a gesticulating mass, shrieking in all keys, wildly stirred, presided over by a good-natured old uncle who . . . tried to re-establish the dignity of the House. . . . I could not help laughing."

—Bill Richardson after a couple of drinks?
—Newt Gingrich sober?

"The [farmer] receives protection for his agriculture, the industrialist protection for his products, the consumer protection for his purchases, the teachers' salaries are increased . . . widows and orphans are to be taken care of . . . the tariffs are to be lowered and even the taxes are to be abolished, though not completely, but almost."

—Candidates' staff in private, ironically?
—Candidates in public, unironically?

"Political activity is loathsome and hateful to a really decent, and therefore courageous, man, while it is attractive to all wretched characters."

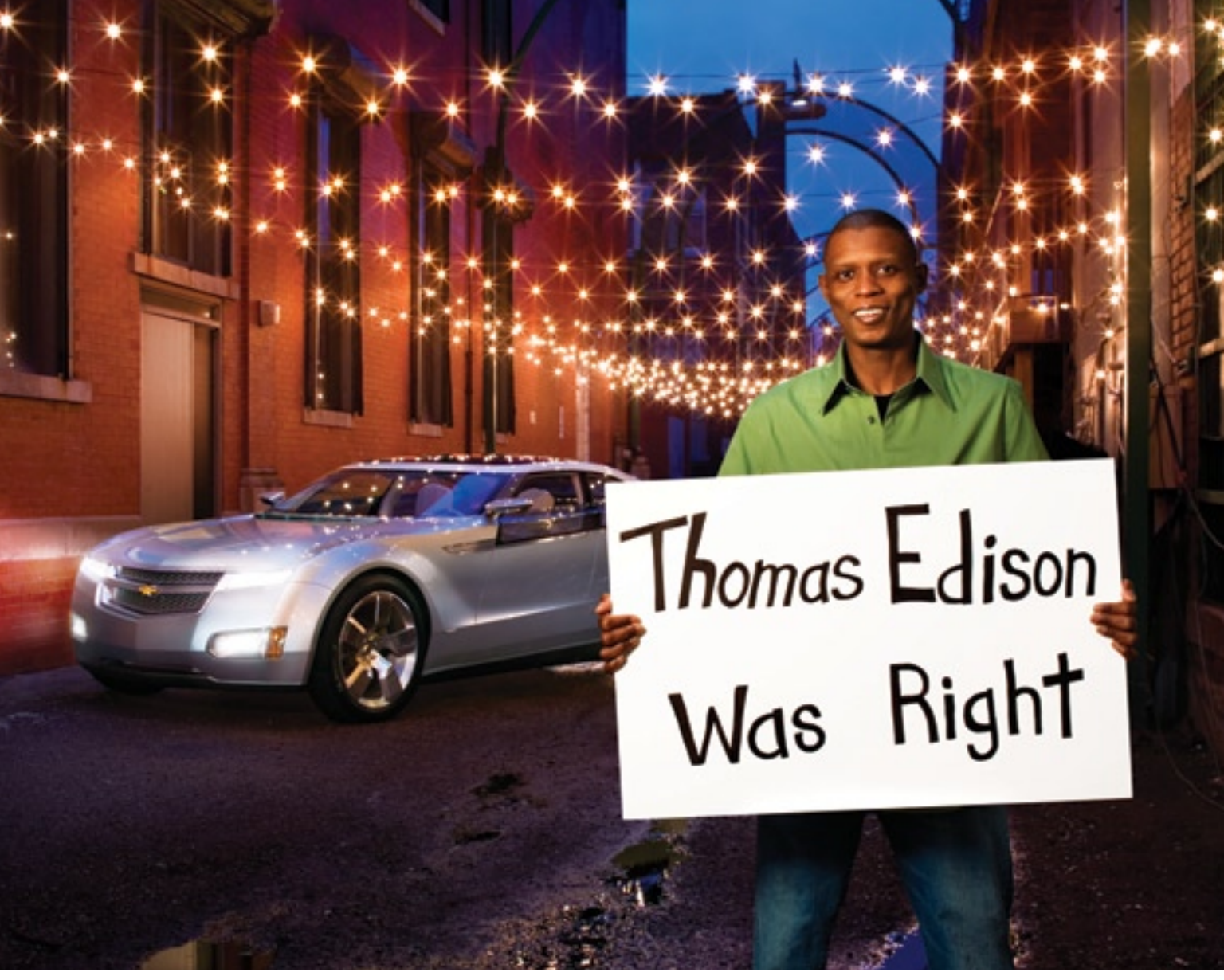
—none of the '08 presidential candidates.

In fact none of the '08 candidates said any of these things. All the foregoing examples of rotten political discourse come from a single famously loathsome, hateful, and wretched political character. He was a pretty good vote-getter in his day. And his book was a bestseller. To borrow a joke that's been bouncing around on the Internet, here is his interview on *Larry King Live*:

"Larry: I hate to bring this up, but I've got to ask. What are you doing to the Jews?

"Guest: Ve are doing noffing to der Jews!

"Larry: I'm glad we got that out of the way. How are Eva and the kids?" ♦



Imagine a car that plugs into an electric socket. One that uses zero gasoline and produces zero emissions. Thomas Edison imagined it, or something like it, over 100 hundred years ago. Today, I'm helping to bring it to life in GM's landmark Chevy Volt— a four passenger concept vehicle that will be powered by GM's E-Flex propulsion system that will deliver 40 miles of pure electric vehicle range.

It's just one part of GM's commitment to energy diversity— creating vehicles that use fuels from diverse sources, reducing our dependence on petroleum and lowering emissions. I'm part of the team in Detroit that's working on a transformation in vehicles today.

Jelani Aliyu

Jelani Aliyu

Lead Creative Designer, Chevrolet Volt

GM

Close Encounters with the Blob

The educrats are still going strong.

BY DAVID SKINNER

Chicago

The American Educational Research Association's annual conference saw more than 15,700 attendees two weeks ago in Chicago. These are the people whom Bill Bennett, as secretary of education, affectionately labeled The Blob—ed school professors, district officials, principals, teachers, teachers-in-training, graduate students, and education researchers.

Granted, sitting in a hotel basement and telling a dozen tired-looking people what you learned by interviewing a handful of third graders about their self-esteem hardly seems like a solid foundation for a career in research. But here at AERA, data has been defined down. Quaint little personal stories are offered in the same spirit as laboratory findings.

Consider the sixth presentation of the "Social Identity and Race as Context and Complexity for Teacher Education" session. Researcher Terri L. Rodriguez of the University of Wisconsin, Madison, quoted a young Latina woman named Patricia as saying, "I always feel everybody else is blue-colored pencils," while she, Patricia, is "a red-colored pencil." The red-colored heart of Patricia's story was an incident involving her blouse, a "peasant top" that she sometimes wore while teaching. The principal thought the blouse inappropriate and told her so, repeatedly, since Patricia continued to wear it to work. This led to negative feelings on Patricia's part. Farnsworth said it was not her intention to assess blame, but she called the incident "tragic" and said the principal's reaction was certainly "grounded in racialized stereotypes" that unfortunately exercise "powerful domination and control" over the ethnic-gender discourse in teacher education.

The highlight of the conference was "Tyranny of Neoliberalism on Education." For this I skipped "'Critical' Teacher Education With an Attitude," and boy was it worth it.

In the after-discussion, an instructor of teachers-in-training said that he agreed that one's authentic identity should not be snuffed out for the sake of appeasing an administrator. But, he wondered, wasn't it sometimes the case that what a young teacher considered essential to his or her identity was not, well, appropriate for the classroom? He quoted one of his soon-to-be-teachers saying, "I'm ghetto, so I have to be ghetto" in the classroom. Furrowed brows all around. Then a woman identifying herself as a principal spoke up and said that, sometimes, you just "have to colonize yourself."

This jargon of postmodernism and international relations was widely deployed to describe the ABCs of American education. Todd Dixon, a seventh-grade teacher presenting "a sociocultural perspective on why boys quit reading" found that little boys "receive hegemonic messages." He then showed graphs correlating the levels of frustration expressed by lower-grade children with how they rank their own reading skills. Among the six kids he'd interviewed—that's right, six—those who found reading frustrating were likely to think poorly of their own reading skills.

Dixon was the student of session chair Mark B. Tappan of Colby College. And once Prof. Tappan presented, it became clear where the young scholar had picked up his research know-how. Tappan, to discuss "Media, Masculinity, and the 'Boy Crisis,'" showed a series of movie clips for the audience to see what terrible messages are out there about being young and male. One was from the 1999 movie *Varsity Blues*, in which a coldhearted coach, played by Jon Voight, tells one of his players to stop complaining about an injury. In another, from the 1986 movie *Stand by Me*, a macho teenager played by Kiefer Sutherland picks on poor little River Phoenix. Somehow Tappan seemed to have missed the import of both scenes: The audience's sympathies are intended to be with the victims.

Tappan closed by saying, "We have to have an honest conversation about male privilege." To which I thought: Fair enough, but first can we have an honest conversation about movies?

Inspired by the experts around me, I conducted my own research project. The findings: Being a presenter at AERA correlated highly with negative feelings about President Bush and the American political system. The data: This is what I perceived, felt even.

There was the principal, Rita Tenorio of La Escuela Fratney in Milwaukee, who talked about "resisting" the federal No Child Left Behind Act—this at a panel on "the Tyranny of Standardization," where another presenter talked of the warm feelings he got that morning driving into Chicago as he passed a billboard asking President Bush

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how many Americans he had killed today. There was the researcher on a panel about homework, who said "our schools seem better suited to a totalitarian regime." And then there was Session 31.078, for me personally (though this time I won't call it data), the highlight of two and a half days at the conference: "Tyranny of Neoliberalism on Education." For this I skipped Session 31.056: "'Critical' Teacher Education With an Attitude," and boy was it worth it.

The first paper was called, enticingly, "Subtle Tortures of the Neoliberal Age." It was about public schooling in Chile. The author, Jill Andrea Pinkney Pastrana of the University of Wisconsin, said that after General Pinochet came to power through a military coup, he jailed dissidents and replaced university heads with army buddies. Then he decentralized the public schools and refocused curricula on measurable results. Milton Friedman visited Chile, freedom steadily disappeared, but the free market thrived, and so on. "Today in the United States," she said, "we're putting the exact same reforms in place." Okay, maybe "subtlety" wasn't her strong suit.

"I've got 14 minutes to change the world," said the second speaker, Dave Hill, who seemed not much interested in education, and who presented not one iota of research, not even a movie clip. Fourteen minutes was not enough, so please "Google me," he said, under "Dave Hill, Marxist." Hill's basic point: Class oppression is the granddaddy of all the other forms of oppression.

But this wasn't the best part: That came when discussant Kenneth J. Saltman of DePaul University played the postmodernist to Hill's Marxist. Saltman asked each presenter a single question, but then held forth at length on what a crazy thing it was to be a Marxist in this day and age, given Marxism's failure to take culture seriously, its self-conscious vanguardism, its history of misogyny, and a dozen other things (but not Marxism's culpability in the 20th-century's staggering ideological death toll). Hill tried to make nice in his response, while Saltman stood behind him shaking his head No, no, no, like a petulant schoolchild, at everything the Marxist said.

Of course, some sessions at AERA were quite serious. Which means I've committed significant selection bias in my own research. I am also guilty of undercounting, as I was not able to attend all the sessions that, from their descriptions in the program, begged for public ridicule. I wasn't even able to drop by the presentation entitled "'Bitch Barbies Love Bully Boys': Transgressive Femininities and Gender Hierarchies in Schools" or the one devoted to "Masculine Generic Animals in a First-Grade Science Classroom." After a couple of days, this masculine animal had already endured all the "science" he could stand. ♦

Michael Ramirez

Can Petraeus Pull It Off?

A report on the progress of our arms in Baghdad, Baqubah, Ramadi, and Falluja

By Max Boot

The news from Iraq is, as usual, grim. Bombings, more bombings, and yet more bombings—that's all the world notices. It's easy to conclude that all is chaos. That's not true. Some parts of Iraq are in bad shape, but others are improving. I spent the first two weeks of April in Baghdad, with side trips to Baqubah, Ramadi, and Falluja. Along the way I talked to everyone from privates to generals, both American and Iraqi. I found that, while we may not yet be winning the war, our prospects are at least not deteriorating precipitously, as they were last year. When General David Petraeus took command in February, he called the situation "hard" but not "hopeless." Today there are some glimmers of hope in the unlikeliest of places.

Until recently Ramadi, the capital of Anbar province, was the most dangerous city in Iraq if not the world. It was run by al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), which had declared it the capital of its Islamic State of Iraq. The Iraqi police presence was limited to one police station, which the police were afraid to leave. Soldiers and Marines engaged in heavy combat every day, losing hundreds of men since 2003, simply to avoid having insurgents overrun the government center and close down Route Michigan, the main street.

That began to change last year when the 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Armored Division expanded the U.S. troop presence on the west side of town, losing almost 90 soldiers in the process. The 1st Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division, which took over the city earlier this year, expanded the offensive toward the al Qaeda strongholds on the west side of town. From mid-February to the end of March, some 2,000 soldiers and Marines, along with their Iraqi allies, fought to gain control of the city. The principal operations were codenamed Murfreesboro (February 10-March 10), Okinawa (March 9-20), and Call to Freedom (March 17-30). Collectively, they deserve to take their place in the annals of this long war alongside such notable clashes as the taking of Tal Afar in 2005, the two battles of Falluja in 2004, and the thunder runs through Baghdad in 2003.

Each of the Ramadi offensives began with troops staging raids into the targeted area to eliminate "high value individuals"—local al Qaeda leaders. Then the troops would place three-foot-high concrete blocks known as Jersey barriers around the targeted neighborhood to prevent insurgents from "squirting out." This would be followed by a clearing operation, with U.S. and Iraqi troops advancing from multiple directions to root out the enemy. Combat was intense. Insurgents fought back with everything from homemade bombs to AK-47s, rocket-propelled grenades, and heavy machine guns. Ten American soldiers were killed and another 40 wounded.

"The price was heavy but worth it," says Colonel John W. Charlton, the burly commander of the 1st Brigade who directed the operations. "The enemy lost massively."

To illustrate the point, he shows me a page of closely printed type listing all the arms caches seized by his men. These included 10,250 pounds of homemade explosives, 2,347 pounds of high explosives, 2,265 feet of detonation cord, and 6,000 gallons of chlorine. U.S. troops discovered and dismantled entire factories devoted to the production of IEDs, and they killed hundreds of insurgents.

The results of these epic battles—and those that preceded them over the past four years—are clearly visible when Colonel Charlton takes me on a tour of Ramadi. Route Michigan resembles pictures of Berlin in 1945. Buildings are either entirely destroyed

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or badly damaged. Twisted girders jut into the sky. Piles of rubble are everywhere. Water sits in the streets; the water mains have been broken by countless explosions of buried IEDs. There are crater holes from roadside bombs every few feet.

It is a horrific scene but also a hopeful one. "A few weeks ago you couldn't drive down this street without being attacked. When I went down this street in February, I was hit three times with small-arms fire and IEDs," Colonel Charlton tells me over the intercom system of his up-armored Humvee. Even though this is an unlucky day—Friday the 13th—we do not experience a single attack on our convoy. The only violence the entire day occurs when a rocket lands on the other side of the Euphrates River without hurting anyone. The previous week, Ramadi saw a much-publicized attack—a suicide bomber drove a truck filled with explosives and chlorine gas into a police checkpoint, killing 12 people (not the 27 or more cited in most news accounts). But such violence has become the exception; it used to be the norm. Ramadi, which used to see 20 to 25 attacks a day, now sees an average of 2 to 4 a day—and falling. Entire days go by without a single attack. By the time I visited, no U.S. soldier had been killed in the town for weeks.

This is a testament to the success of Colonel Charlton's men not only in the "clearing" phase but, just as important, in holding onto their gains. In the past, U.S. troops would follow up a successful offensive by retreating to their remote, heavily fortified Forwarding Operating Base, and insurgents would slink back into the area just liberated at a heavy price in blood. To avoid that happening this time, Colonel Charlton and his battalion commanders have moved many of their men off the main base, Camp Ramadi, and sent them to live in the city. U.S. troops have established four bases in Ramadi itself along with more than 40 Joint Security Stations and Observation Posts where they work alongside Iraqi soldiers and police. There are also 23 police stations in the city and surrounding area. Those mini-forts are located within eyeball range of one another, as I saw for myself when I went to a rooftop Observation Post at one Joint Security Station and was able to discern close by another Coalition outpost. Surveillance capacity is increased with the deployment of computer-controlled cameras on 100-foot poles. U.S. and Iraqi forces have spun such a tight web in town that insurgents are having a hard time crawling back in.

Having completed clearing operations, the American forces are now in the "build" phase of their campaign, trying to repair the damage and win over the populace. An integral part of this effort is the Voice of Ramadi, a daily show broadcast over public address speakers located atop the Joint Security Stations that provides everything from European soccer scores to local news. The stars of the show aren't Americans. They're local Iraqi officials who record messages for broadcast.

Charlton knows it will take more than words to consolidate his success so far. The locals have to see concrete gains from cooperating with the Coalition. Literally. They need to see their town, devastated by war, rebuilt. The roads need to be resurfaced, the water mains repaired. This may be the most challenging part of the American task because it requires money that is not readily forthcoming. Charlton is tapping CERP (Commander's Emergency Response Program) funding at his disposal to pay for $4.4 million worth of projects, but he estimates the entire cost of cleanup will be at least $10 million. He is hoping that someone—perhaps the U.S. Agency for International Development—will foot the bill. Ideally the cost should be borne by the government of Iraq, but whether through incapacity or unwillingness, the Shiite-dominated government is not at the moment sending much money to Sunni-dominated Anbar province.

Yet, for all the shortcomings of their government, Iraqi forces have begun to play a key role in Coalition operations, and nowhere more than in Ramadi. Key to the success of this undertaking has been the recent decision by most of the major Anbar tribes to turn against al Qaeda. From 2003 to 2006, the sheikhs who traditionally dominate life in this rural province were happy to fight alongside al Qaeda against the American "crusaders" and the "Persians" (Shiites) who now run Baghdad. But al Qaeda went too far for their taste. Its indiscriminate violence against civilians, its attempts to impose fundamentalist *sharia* law (banning even smoking), and, perhaps as important, its attempts to muscle in on the smuggling networks controlled by the tribes—all this alienated the people of Anbar. A coalition of sheikhs based in Ramadi, led by Sheikh Abdul Sattar, has decided to throw in their lot with the Coalition in the fight against al Qaeda. Twenty-two of the Ramadi-area tribes are now cooperating with the Coalition; only two are still standoffish. In some parts of Anbar, fighting has erupted between al Qaeda and more nationalist, less fanatical "resistance" movements such as the 1920 Revolution Brigades.

The tribal forces are still too weak to defeat al Qaeda's ruthless fighters on their own (and probably always will be), but they have been of critical help in generating tips that aid Coalition forces. They are also now encouraging their sons to join the Iraqi police and army. Last year, few if any Sunnis were signing up. Now so many are eager to join that training facilities are swamped and there is a

waiting list of recruits. Sunnis are also willing to serve in local governments. Ramadi has just installed a new mayor and city council.

Colonel Charlton and his battalion commanders have taken advantage of this newfound willingness to cooperate on the part of the sheikhs. Ramadi now has some 4,000 police officers as well as an irregular militia that is being integrated into the police force. It also has effective Iraqi army units, which are integrating more Sunnis into their ranks. But even the largely Shiite soldiers of the two brigades already in Ramadi have shown their mettle alongside American troops. One of the most encouraging sights I saw in Ramadi was an Iraqi army sergeant-major, a Shiite from Baghdad, supervising the rebuilding of a Sunni neighborhood and chatting amiably with the residents. This is the kind of intercommunal cooperation that was once the norm in Iraq and can be again if Shiite and Sunni extremists are defeated at gunpoint.

Ramadi is not an isolated example. There is progress across Anbar province, especially in such towns as Qaim and Hit, which have become remarkably calm after years of violence. General Petraeus was able to stroll through Hit on March 10 while eating an ice cream cone. Offsetting these positive trends have been setbacks in Falluja, conquered at great cost by American troops in 2004 and prematurely passed to Iraqi control in 2006. Marines fear it is reverting to insurgent control. The surrounding countryside, where a mere 200 Marines are deployed to cover a population of 130,000, is even worse. In the village of Saqlawiyah near Falluja, which I visited in the company of the local Marine garrison commander, Captain George E. Hasseltine, the city council is afraid to meet in the open and the mayor and a prominent local sheikh have fled to Jordan. There are 21 police officers, but they lack a commander and they seldom venture into the marketplace located next to their station. When they do go out, they wear ski masks to hide their identity—a clear sign that insurgents control the neighborhood.

Yet, for all the difficulties that remain (and it would be a serious mistake to underestimate them), the overall trend in Anbar is positive. Startlingly so. According to briefings I received at Multi-National Division-West in Camp Falluja, attacks in the province are at a two-year low. More than 13,000 police officers have been deployed, and more are on the way. Tips to Coalition forces are soaring. Whereas U.S. troops used to find only 50 percent of IEDs, they are now defusing 80 percent before they detonate. Al Qaeda in Iraq has responded with chlorine gas bombs, in other words using chemical weapons against Sunni civilians—not a tactic likely to win over the populace.

The big question now is whether Coalition forces can have similar success in the country's epicenter. As part of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon ("Enforcing the Law"), they are now applying the same "clear, hold, and build" strategy in Baghdad that worked so well in Ramadi and, before, in Tal Afar and Qaim. But the situation in the capital is considerably more complex, because the fight is not just between Sunni moderates and Sunni extremists but also between Shiite moderates and extremists as well as between Shiites and Sunnis of all stripes. And, of course, the capital is much bigger. All of Anbar has 1.25 million residents. Baghdad has some 6 million. Each of its security districts has more people than Ramadi. Even when the "surge" is completed in June, U.S. and Iraqi troops will not have as heavy a presence on a per capita basis in Baghdad as they have now in Ramadi.

Nevertheless, with only three of five extra brigade combat teams on the ground, the situation in the capital has already shown signs of improvement since Fardh al-Qanoon started in February. The murder rate fell 75 percent in February. March saw a slight increase, but by the beginning of April the number of murders in the capital was still down 50 percent since the start of the year. Last year it was not uncommon to find dozens of corpses a night dumped in the capital, many of them tortured by Shiite death squads using power tools. This type of ethnic cleansing still goes on but at a much reduced level. Now it is common to find only one or two victims a night. To be sure, some of this decrease in violence is due to the fact that there are fewer mixed neighborhoods—Shiite militias have succeeded in ethnically cleansing most of northern Baghdad, thus reducing areas of conflict. But a large part of the explanation also lies in the fact that there are now more American troops in the city, and they are for the first time in years focused on improving the security situation, not simply on handing off control to the Iraqis.

More U.S. soldiers now live in the neighborhoods they patrol, in Joint Security Stations such as the one that I visited in Hurriya in western Baghdad. Here soldiers from the 82nd Airborne Division sleep and work alongside men from the Iraqi army and National Police. They lack the normal comforts of life on a big base: Instead of getting to choose from multiple flavors of ice cream at a large DFAC (Dining Facility), they have to be content with one hot meal a day. The rest of the time they make do with field rations—MREs (Meals Ready to Eat). But what such outposts lack in amenities they make up for in effectiveness. As they have established their presence, soldiers have found the number of tips from residents appreciably increasing. This makes U.S. soldiers safer. They are no longer simply speeding down streets in their armored Hum-

Phtotos by Max Boot

Blackhawk over Baghdad, April 2007

vees hoping not to hit an IED. They are now conducting targeted raids and foot patrols, the basis of any effective counterinsurgency.

I went along on one such stroll on the evening of Monday, April 9, in the heavily Shiite neighborhood of Kadhamiya in northwestern Baghdad. This was the fourth anniversary of the liberation of Iraq, a day that Shiite cleric and militia leader Moktada al-Sadr had designated a day of protest, but things were pretty quiet when Captain David Brunais led a dozen men from the 82nd Airborne Division out of Forward Operating Base Justice into the warm spring air. His soldiers spread out on both sides of the street, keeping a vigilant eye for trouble using their night-vision goggles.

The only major problem we encountered was a serious car crash (a taxi flipped upside down), but the Iraqi army had the situation well in hand. As we were standing there, a dozen Iraqi Humvees screeched up, sirens blaring. We kept on walking, pausing only to sit down and share cans of Pepsi with some men smoking hookah pipes at an outdoor café. Brunais joked around with them, having come to know them since his arrival in the area in February in the first wave of the surge. Through an interpreter, he asked what their concerns were and explained why the government had decided to impose a ban on vehicular traffic that day. It is through such amicable encounters that soldiers gain the intelligence necessary to wage a successful campaign against an unseen foe.

While this patrol was undertaken by American forces alone, more and more patrols in Baghdad are now joint endeavors. One of the great achievements of recent months has been the willingness of Iraqi army formations to deploy to Baghdad with more than 85 percent of their strength. Many of these units, especially those composed primarily of Kurdish troops, have already proven highly effective.

Although Iraqi and American troops report to separate chains of command, great efforts are being made to coordinate their work—to achieve unity of effort if not unity of command. I attended one of the daily meetings between Colonel J.B. Burton, commander of the 2nd Brigade Combat Team of the 1st Infantry Division, and General Abdul Ameer, deputy commander of the Karkh Security District encompassing most of west Baghdad. The subject was Arrowhead Strike 9, the codename for the ongoing operations to clear western Baghdad. For two hours, the two commanders and their senior subordinates carefully went over the details of operations planned or in progress. A major focus of their discussion was the emplacement of concrete barriers and entry checkpoints around embattled neighborhoods. The creation of "gated communities" has become a critical part of the effort to deny insurgents the ability to reinfiltrate cleared-out areas. Every night another 500 meters of concrete is planted by Coalition forces in Baghdad—the "concrete caterpillar," some commanders call it.

Once completed, such barriers should make it impossible to drive cars packed with explosives into crowded marketplaces—one of al Qaeda's favorite tactics—though it will remain difficult to stop suicide bombers wearing explosive vests. Not even the Green Zone is entirely safe, as the recent attack on the Iraqi parliament showed. But suicide vests are a lot less deadly than vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices—what the U.S. military calls "vee-beds" (VBIEDs).

Sunni and Shiite extremist groups have not taken this challenge to their reign of terror lying down. Although initially cowed by Coalition efforts, they have begun fighting

back with a vengeance. Al Qaeda terrorists are suspected of responsibility for the April 12 bombings that killed at least one Iraqi member of parliament and destroyed one of Baghdad's bridges, as well as the April 18 blast in the Sadriya market that killed more than 100. Moktada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army is suspected of responsibility for a series of rocket strikes on the U.S. embassy compound in the Green Zone. (I happened to be inside the embassy during one such attack—talking with a general, ironically enough, about improvements in security. We were interrupted by a loud thump outside and an ominous voice on the public address system telling us to "duck and cover—get away from the windows." "You were saying . . . " I said.)

But the bulk of terrorist activity has been moving outside the capital. That is not a bad thing: Controlling Baghdad, home to a fourth of the country's population and to its most important business, media, and cultural entities, is more critical than controlling the hinterland. But instability in the "Baghdad Belt" stretching from Salman Pak and Iskandariyah in the south to Falluja in the west and Baqubah and Taji in the north exacts a heavy toll. The mass-casualty attacks that are happening with greater frequency in these places obscure some of the progress being made in the capital.

The situation in Baqubah is particularly depressing. When I visited the capital of Diyala province last year, Coalition forces were ramping down their operations in the expectation that Iraqi forces could pick up the slack. When I visited this year I found a hotbed of insurgent activity, with American casualties high, food and fuel deliveries interrupted, and the streets nearly deserted. U.S. generals now say that Baqubah has displaced Ramadi as the worst place in the entire country.

Such reverses are not only demoralizing in their own right but also have the potential to subvert attempts to pacify Baghdad, 35 miles to the south. Insurgent strongholds around the capital can be used as staging areas to export violence back into Baghdad. For this reason, some of the newly arriving American troops are being deployed not to the capital itself but to the "belt" around it. Their goal is not so much to pacify these areas—there are not enough troops to do that—but to disrupt insurgent activities and so keep the heat off Baghdad.

An important aspect of this campaign has been waged largely out of the limelight by Coalition and Iraqi Special Forces. Every night, these "operators" stage precision raids based on accurate intelligence that capture or kill Shiite and Sunni extremists at scant cost to themselves. The most valuable targets are "serviced" by a Joint Special Operations Command task force known as OCF-I, commanded by Lieutenant General Stan McChrystal. OCF-I stands for Other Coalition Forces-Iraq, a counterpoint to the common military euphemism for the CIA: OGA, or Other Government Agency. OCF-I is made up of "Tier 1" Special Forces—the best "direct action" specialists from such elite outfits as Delta Force, the Navy SEALs, the Air Force "Night Stalkers," and the British SAS. It was through their efforts that Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of al Qaeda in Iraq, was killed last year. (In the current *Atlantic Monthly*, Mark Bowden offers a revealing—perhaps overly revealing—behind-the-scenes reconstruction of how this operation worked.) Their efforts are complemented by the larger Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force made up primarily of Army Special Forces (Green Berets) working closely with the Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) Brigade.

With more than 2,000 soldiers, ISOF has proven itself to be the most tactically skilled and politically reliable unit in the entire Iraqi Security Forces. I got to meet some of its personnel at their heavily guarded compound near Baghdad airport. Many senior officers live on base with their families for fear of being killed if they go back to their old neighborhoods. Indeed, last year a number of ISOF soldiers were kidnapped and killed while off duty. If this has discouraged the remainder, I saw no sign of it.

The Iraqis showed off their equipment, which is every bit as good as that of their American Special Forces counterparts. They demonstrated their skills in a state-of-the-art "shoot house," followed by a mock hostage rescue mission in a cavernous training facility. (My ears are still ringing from all the C2 explosives used to blow open a wooden door.) Their American liaisons, all veteran Green Berets, proudly told me that the Iraqis are capable of planning and executing their own missions. The Americans mainly help with intelligence, logistics, and air support. The ISOF soldiers are already the most experienced and probably the most skilled special operators in the entire Arab world. And, although composed primarily of Shiites, these operatives are willing to take down Shiite extremists as well as Sunni ones.

Their work is part of a delicate campaign on the part of Coalition forces designed to kill or capture "irreconcilable" insurgents while winning over the "reconcilable." The man directing both sides of this effort, political and military, is General David Petraeus, who in February assumed command of Multi-National Forces-Iraq, making him the senior U.S. commander in the country. Lieutenant General Ray Odierno, a bald-headed bull of a man, heads Multi-National Corps Iraq, with direct operational responsibility for Coalition forces. Petraeus's job is to focus on the big picture—to try to translate some of the success

General David Petraeus and Iraqi soldiers in Baqubah

Coalition troops have been having at the tactical level into strategic success.

It is hard to imagine anyone better qualified for this exceedingly difficult assignment—what Petraeus calls "the postgraduate level of warfare." The 54-year-old four-star has already spent more than two and a half years in Iraq, first as commander of the 101st Airborne Division, then as head of Multi-National Security Transition Command-Iraq, with responsibility for training Iraqi Security Forces. Following these stints, he oversaw the production of *Field Manual 3-24*, the bible of counterinsurgency warfare for the U.S. armed forces.

Petraeus is that rare combination, a man of intellect who is also a man of action. He looks slight and bookish and has a Ph.D. in international relations from Princeton (he wrote his dissertation on how the Vietnam war affected military thinking). But he is also a physical fitness fanatic who is famous for challenging and beating soldiers half his age at push-up contests. His toughness is legendary—he bounced back from a training accident in 1991 when he took an M-16 round right in the chest (his life was saved by surgeon and future senator Bill Frist) and from a sky-diving accident nine years later in which he broke his pelvis.

Having known him since 2003, when I visited him at the 101st Division headquarters in Mosul, I was already impressed by Petraeus. My respect only grew when I got to spend a week by his side, sitting in on his morning Battle Update and Assessment meetings, commuting with him via Blackhawk helicopter from Camp Victory near Baghdad airport to the Green Zone, and visiting troops in the field with him. His low-key manner—he is not given to profane tirades in the Patton tradition—belies a quiet intensity and a driving ambition. A number of officers I spoke with said they were working harder than ever under Petraeus but that they also felt reenergized to tackle the tough tasks ahead.

With the support of President Bush (with whom he talks once a week via secure video-teleconference), Petraeus has adopted a fundamentally different strategy from that of his predecessor (and current army chief of staff) General George Casey. Casey's philosophy, shared by his boss, General John Abizaid, the former Central Command chief, was that U.S. forces were an "antibody" in Iraqi society. The faster we left, the better. That resulted in a pell-mell scramble to turn over responsibility to Iraqi Security Forces that weren't ready for the challenge. The result was a precipitous increase in violence following the bombing of the Golden Mosque in Samarra in February 2006, bringing the country to the brink of all-out civil war. Petraeus's priority, by contrast, is to reengage with the population in order to improve security. Only then will it be possible, he reckons, to turn over responsibility to the Iraqis.

Besides pushing more troops out of their Forward Operating Bases (a soldier who never leaves his FOB is known as a fobbit), Petraeus has emphasized information operations. Casey was very much a traditional soldier who shunned publicity and thought that results should speak for themselves. This had the inadvertent result of ceding the "information battlespace" to adversaries like Moktada al-Sadr and the late Abu Musab al Zarqawi, who proved skillful in exploiting the Internet and satellite television in particular. Petraeus, who has sometimes been derided behind his back as a "glory-seeker," has tried to fight back by opening up his command to the news media. He often

takes journalists along on his regular visits to troops in the field. When he went to Baqubah on April 7, he took a reporter from the *San Antonio Express-News* (as well as two WEEKLY STANDARD contributing editors, Fred Kagan and me). He is also trying to push authority to conduct "information operations" down to lower levels of his force.

The stakes couldn't be higher. U.S. commanders report that, whatever the case before the war, Iraq has now become the central front of al Qaeda operations, drawing jihadists from all over the world. It is also a central front in Iran's offensive to become the dominant player in the region. American generals say they have been "shocked" to discover the level of Iranian influence in Iraq. The Iranians are supporting not only the Mahdi Army, Badr Brigades, and other Shiite militias, but also, the generals believe, al Qaeda—the very group killing Shiites en masse.

Petraeus feels that he is making slow, steady progress against the myriad enemies that Coalition forces confront, but he is keenly aware that results may not come fast enough to please antiwar politicians back home who are eager to pull all U.S. troops out of Iraq, and damn the consequences. "The Washington clock is ticking faster than the Baghdad clock," Petraeus often says. His goal is to speed up the Baghdad clock by pressing for more reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites, and to slow down the Washington clock by showing gains on the ground that can reverse public pressure to pull U.S. troops out prematurely. The former is hard to do because of the mutual suspicions that grip this country. The latter is equally hard, because a few high-profile insurgent atrocities can obscure the progress being made by Coalition forces in stopping ethnic cleansing in Baghdad, which Petraeus views as his most important immediate goal.

Petraeus's ultimate objective, he told me over lunch at his embassy office, is to "achieve an outcome sustainable by the Iraqis." Upon his assessment of Iraqi capabilities will rest his recommendation for when, how far, and how fast to draw down U.S. forces. Under consideration are various plans. The lower the number of American troops, the easier it is to sustain, politically and materially—but the greater the risk that the security situation will once again slide out of control as it did in 2006.

To avoid that, Petraeus is working, along with the new U.S. ambassador, Ryan Crocker, to make Iraq's government more effective and less sectarian. One of his biggest successes to date was convincing Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to visit Anbar province on March 13. This visit highlighted both the difficulties that Petraeus faces and the possibility for progress: It was great that Maliki went, but staggering to learn that he had not visited this area as prime minister and had no plans to do so until the American general forced the issue.

Petraeus and his circle are fairly happy with Maliki. They say he has begun to think and act more like a national, not just a Shiite, leader. "I've been hearing a different tone," says one Arabic-speaking American official who works closely with the prime minister. As evidence, he points to Maliki's willingness to support an oil law that gives Sunnis a fair share and to agree to bring back some Baathists who had been purged from government. But the limits of Maliki's power are evident in the fact that neither measure has yet been adopted by parliament. Although he is prime minister, Maliki does not command the loyalty of most members of parliament or even of most of his own cabinet, which was chosen by sectarian party bosses. Some major ministries, such as the Departments of Transportation and Health, had been under the control of Moktada al-Sadr's allies until they announced their resignation last week. Others have better ministers at the top but are heavily infiltrated by Shiite extremists down below.

Petraeus argues, reasonably enough, that it's unfair to expect the Shiite-dominated government to make too many concessions too quickly to the Sunnis who had oppressed them for decades. He frequently says that all the legislation being demanded of the Iraqi government—an oil law, a de-Baathification law, a provincial election law, and much else besides—is akin to getting the U.S. government to pass a civil rights act in 1866 or to pass Social Security reform and a comprehensive health care plan today. He hopes that success in pacifying Baghdad, if that is achieved, will provide breathing space for politicians to make the compromises necessary to foster effective governance.

Beyond the question of will lies the equally troubling question of competence. The Iraqis in charge of the government today, primarily exiles who spent years plotting against Saddam Hussein, have little experience of administration, much less of democratic administration. And they have to develop such a capacity in the midst of numbing violence—a challenge some American officers liken to building an airplane in flight. Widespread, corrosive corruption and deep-rooted mutual suspicion stand in the way. Most of the important factions in Iraq are willing to engage in politics but not to forgo the option of achieving their objectives at gunpoint.

The Iraqi Security Forces reflect this tension, with some dedicated soldiers and police officers willing to go after extremists of any stripe but many others hedging their bets for fear of offending powerful militia leaders.

On patrol in a Ramadi marketplace

The Ministry of Defense is coming along, but one U.S. general who deals closely with the crucial Ministry of Interior, which controls the police, says it "is not a functional ministry right now and may never be." Mistrust between the Iraqi army, which is more representative of the entire country, and the National Police, which is seen as a preserve of Shiite militias, remains high. Iraqi soldiers I met constantly asked me and other Americans to use our influence (imagined influence in my case) to get them the equipment and supplies that their own government has not provided.

Can Iraqis come together quickly enough to save their country before domestic politics forces American troops to begin pulling out? That is the great unknown that Petraeus grapples with. During my visit I found cause for both optimism and despair.

The contradictory impulses of a complex country were neatly encapsulated by Captain Rob McNellis, the lanky commander of the 57th Military Police Company, as he took me on a tour of some of the 15 Iraqi police stations he oversees in west Baghdad. Since he arrived in June 2006, he has seen some "major improvements." When he first got here, most of the policemen were not even wearing uniforms, much less patrolling. Most of their vehicles were broken. They often did little beyond collecting a paycheck, and what they did tended to be destructive—Shiite policemen either turned a blind eye to, or actually participated in, terrible attacks on innocent Sunnis.

On Tuesday, April 10, when we visited police stations in his AOR (Area of Responsibility), we found most of the cops in uniform and most of their vehicles in operation. At one station, almost all the squad cars were gone because the cops were on the streets patrolling—a good sign. But McNellis also confided his frustration that "a lot" of policemen "are still involved in militia-type activity."

"Some of the people we were training were trying to kill us," he told me. A powerful EFP (Explosively Formed Penetrator) that killed one of his MPs was planted within a few feet of an Iraqi police checkpoint, suggesting complicity on the part of the Iraqi cops. McNellis told me that "nonsectarian police commanders don't last long because of pressure from militias, Shiite or Sunni." Corrupt police commanders, on the other hand, are tough to get rid of. Even when a culprit is removed from one job he often turns up in another security post, sometimes even a higher-ranking post. Other American officers in the area told me they suspected some Iraqi National Policemen of running extortion rackets—arresting Sunnis and then threatening their families that they will be beaten or even killed unless a handsome ransom is paid for their release.

"The situation has come a long way, but there's still a long way to go," McNellis says. That sums up not only his own area but the entire country. ♦

Friends, Enemies and Spoilers

Two months in, the consequences of the surge

By Frederick W. Kagan

The new effort to establish security in Iraq has begun. At this early stage, the most important positive development is a rise in hostility to al Qaeda in the Sunni community. Al Qaeda has responded with its own "surge" in spectacular attacks, which so far has not revived support for the terrorists or reignited sectarian violence. The Coalition has also made unexpectedly rapid progress in reducing the power of Moktada al-Sadr, including killing or capturing more than 700 members of his Mahdi Army. At the same time, the rhetoric of the Iraqi government has changed dramatically, and there are early indications of an increased willingness to attempt reconciliation among Iraq's Arabs. Meanwhile, some challenges are intensifying. Diyala province in particular poses serious problems that do not admit of easy or rapid solutions. On balance, there is reason for wary optimism.

President Bush announced the new strategy on January 10, and shortly thereafter named General David Petraeus overall commander of Coalition military forces in Iraq. His mission: establishing security for the Iraqi people and only secondarily transitioning to full Iraqi control and responsibility. In January, five new Army brigade combat teams started reaching Iraq at the rate of one a month. An additional division headquarters to assist with command and control and an additional combat aviation brigade are also headed to Iraq, along with logistics, military police, and other enablers. No timeline for the increased American presence has been announced, although public comments suggest it will last at least through the fall and probably into early 2008. Activation warnings to National Guard brigades and the extension of the tours of Army brigades already in Iraq from 12 to 15 months, issued in April, would make such an extension possible.

The new strategy resulted from a combination of Iraqi proposals and discussions within the Bush administration and among American commanders. The collaborative nature of the plan led to the creation of dual chains of command: American forces report to Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno, commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I), and from him to Petraeus. Iraqi forces, both army and police, report through their own commanders to one of two division commanders (one on either side of the Tigris River, which divides Baghdad). Those commanders report to Lieutenant General Abboud Gambar, commander of Operation Fardh al-Qanoon (Enforcing the Law), the Iraqi name for what we call the Baghdad Security Plan. Gambar reports to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki. This bifurcation of command poses significant challenges of coordination, but Generals Petraeus, Odierno, and Gambar have developed tactics that mitigate them.

The new plan pushes most U.S. forces out into the population. Americans and Iraqis are establishing Joint Security Stations and Joint Combat Outposts throughout Baghdad. U.S. and Iraqi soldiers eat, sleep, and plan together in these outposts and then conduct mounted and dismounted patrols continually, day and night, throughout their assigned neighborhoods. In Joint Security Stations I visited in the Hurriya neighborhood, in the Shiite Khadimiya district, American and Iraqi soldiers sleep in nearly adjoining rooms with unlocked and unguarded doors between them. They receive and evaluate tips and intelligence together, plan and conduct operations together, and evaluate their results jointly. Wherever they go, they hand out cards with the telephone numbers and email addresses of local "tip lines" that people can call when they see danger in the neighborhood. Tips have gone up dramatically over the past two months, from both Sunnis and Shiites, asking for help and warning of IEDs and other attacks being prepared against American and Iraqi forces. People have also called the tip lines to say

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thanks when a dangerous individual was removed from the streets.

Most of the military operations of recent months have been laying the groundwork for clear-and-hold operations that will be the centerpiece of the new plan. Coalition and Iraqi forces have targeted al Qaeda and other Sunni insurgent cells in Baghdad, in their bases around the capital, and in Anbar, Salahaddin, and Diyala provinces. They have established positions throughout Baghdad and swept a number of neighborhoods in a preliminary fashion. They have begun placing concrete barriers around problematic neighborhoods to restrict access and change traffic flow to support future operations. Targeted raids have removed a number of key leaders from the Shiite militias as well, reducing the effectiveness of Sadr's organization, which was already harmed by his hasty departure for Iran early this year.

Over the past weeks as the enemy has responded, preparatory operations have shifted their focus. Generals Odierno and Petraeus sent reinforcements to the towns south of Baghdad to intensify efforts against al Qaeda bases there, and they sent more troops into Diyala province as the magnitude of the challenges there became clear. These adaptations are a normal part of military operations. They reflect a determination by the U.S. command not to allow the enemy to establish new safe havens when it has been driven out of old ones.

Major clear-and-hold operations are scheduled to begin in late May or June, and will take weeks to complete, area by area. After that, it may be many more weeks before their success at establishing security can be judged. General Petraeus has said he will offer an evaluation of progress in the fall. Even that evaluation, however, can only be preliminary. Changes in popular attitudes, insurgent capabilities, and the capacities of the Iraqi government and its armed forces take months, not weeks, to develop and manifest themselves. Premature judgments influenced by a week's headlines, whether positive or negative, are unwise.

Enemies and Spoilers

The United States and the government of Iraq are at war with a cluster of enemies: Al Qaeda in Iraq, affiliated Islamist groups, and determined Sunni insurgents who wish to overthrow the elected government. In addition, they face a number of "spoilers" who have played an extremely negative role so far and could derail progress if not properly managed: Shiite militias, criminal gangs, Iranian agents, and negative political forces within the Iraqi government. The distinction between enemies and spoilers is important. Enemies must be defeated; in the case of al Qaeda and other Islamists, that almost invariably means capturing or killing them. Spoilers must be managed. It is neither possible nor desirable to kill or capture all the members of the Mahdi Army or the Badr Corps. Dealing with those groups requires a combination of force and politics. Bad leaders and the facilitators of atrocities must be eliminated, but reducing popular support for these groups' extremism, coopting moderates within their ranks, and drawing some of their fighters off into more regular employment are political tasks. American and Iraqi leaders have been using both force and politics to manage these challenges.

Enemies and spoilers have responded to the Baghdad Security Plan in different ways. Al Qaeda and the other Islamist groups have increased their large-scale attacks, not only in Baghdad but also in Tal Afar, Mosul, Anbar, and Diyala. These groups rely on suicide bombings to attract international media attention and to create an exaggerated narrative of continuous violence throughout the country. They also hope to reignite the sectarian violence that raged through much of 2006. In this hope they have so far been disappointed. Within days of the bombing of the al-Askariya Mosque in February 2006, 33 mosques were attacked in retaliation, hundreds of civilians were murdered, and Baghdad suffered seven vehicle bombings; within a week, there were more than 21 peaceful protests of over 1,000 people each across the country. Reprisals for the recent spate of spectacular attacks have been much more modest.

Sectarian killings began to drop dramatically in January, and remain well below their December levels (although they are now somewhat higher than at the start of the current operations). The continuing terror campaign in Iraq is both tragic and worrisome, but it has not yet restarted the widespread sectarian conflict that was raging as recently as the end of last year.

The reasons for the drop in sectarian killings are important. First and foremost, after President Bush's announcement of the surge, both Moktada al Sadr and Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, the leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq and its militia, the Badr Brigade, called upon their followers not to kill other Iraqis. Sadr has remained true to this appeal despite his recent renewal of his longstanding demand for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces. The fact that sectarian killings responded to the orders of Shiite leaders speaks volumes about the nature of those killings. Despite the oft-repeated myth that Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites have been killing each other for centuries, the drop in sectarian murders since January shows that last year's killing was motivated by politics rather than primordial hatred. It was organized and rational rather than emotional, and

it is therefore susceptible to persuasion through force, politics, and reason. The idea that Iraq is trapped in a civil war that we can only allow to be fought out to its conclusion is so far unproven and is not a justification for withdrawal.

Second, sectarian killings have dropped because of dramatically increased partnership between the Iraqi police, the Iraqi army, and American forces. The Iraqi police were heavily implicated in the killings; the Iraqi army less so. U.S. forces do not tolerate such behavior. The partnership has helped American units identify individuals within the Iraqi police and army who have participated in atrocities. As these individuals are identified, U.S. and Iraqi leaders work to prepare evidence packets to support their arrest, detention, and conviction. As a result, the Baghdad Security Plan is supporting efforts to weed out the worst elements from the Iraqi Security Forces. In some cases, entire police units have been pulled off line, vetted, and "re-blued"—that is, retrained after the removal of known felons and militia infiltrators. In this way, the security plan is improving the quality of the Iraqi Security Forces, which is essential to giving these forces legitimacy in the eyes of the Iraqi people. This can only occur through the close cooperation of American and Iraqi forces at all levels.

Some have complained that the Iraqi government's insistence on evidence packets rather than intelligence packets is excessively constraining, given the nature of the conflict. Evidence often requires confessions and/or formal witness statements, whereas intelligence may come from accusers whose identity is not revealed and who therefore remain safer from retaliation. In addition, information that could compromise sources or techniques cannot be presented to an Iraqi judge. But American forces have adapted to this requirement, and are working to acquire the evidence necessary under Iraqi law not merely to arrest and detain suspected individuals, but to ensure that they are convicted and duly sentenced. No doubt more suspects remain at large this way than would if forces could operate solely on the basis of intelligence. On the other hand, the Iraqi government has shown a remarkable willingness to arrest and prosecute or dismiss from their positions even senior Shiite leaders when presented with appropriate evidence of their crimes.

In sum, key potential spoilers have chosen to support the current plan rather than to undermine it. The Iraqi government is fully committed rhetorically, and has been supporting the plan practically both by sending all of the requested military and police units and by agreeing to raids on Sunni and Shiite targets, as well as to the arrest and detention of both Sunni and Shiite leaders. Sadr and Hakim continue to oppose violence, and the militias have dramatically reduced their killings in response to the orders of their leaders and to Coalition pressure. At the moment, the struggle against al Qaeda is far more central to the war in Iraq than sectarian violence—something that has not been true for many months.

Political Progress and Benchmarks

A final end to violence rests, of course, on bringing insurgents into the political fold in a way that the Shiites, including some Shiite radicals, can tolerate. It is too early to evaluate progress in this realm. Political compromise cannot take place in an atmosphere of high violence, and both sides need time to recover from the trauma of sectarian conflict before reconciliation will be possible.

There have been some developments worth mentioning, however. Prime Minister Maliki visited the Sunni stronghold of Ramadi in mid-March, reaching out to the Sunni community. The Iraqi government followed up by sending the defense and interior ministers and the national security adviser to Ramadi recently to meet with the local Provincial Council to discuss reconstruction in Anbar. This was a very important gesture. The next question is: Can the Iraqi government get funds to Anbar and actually begin projects there? It has had serious problems in such endeavors in the past, both because powerful Shiite elements resist spending money in Sunni areas and because the government is so inexperienced and underdeveloped that it is unable to spend most of the money it has. Even here, though, there are positive signs. After more than a year of delays, the Iraqi government has finally gotten money to Tal Afar, and reconstruction is starting there. Fiscal follow-through in Anbar will be a significant test of the government's willingness and ability to rebuild Iraq in an impartial and nonsectarian way.

The withdrawal of Sadrist ministers from the government in mid-April offers another opportunity. Some of those ministers were obstacles to nonsectarian reconstruction and effective government. Their departure gives Maliki the opportunity to appoint people who are more competent and who can be more evenhanded. The resignations do reduce Sadr's stake in the government, however, and thereby increase his ability to court conflict with the Sunnis, with Maliki, or with the United States. Some argue that his departure to Iran was part of an effort to drum up increased Iranian support for his movement. If so, the withdrawal of his ministers might signal the start of a broader Sadrist counteroffensive. On the other hand, he has not withdrawn his members from the Council of Representatives or attempted to bring down the government by a vote of no confidence.

Getty Images

General Petraeus on the streets of Baghdad, with U.S. and Iraqi troops

We would be wise to prepare for the worst and assume that Sadr will attempt to restore his crumbling position in Iraq. There is no question that Coalition and Iraqi forces can withstand such a counteroffensive if we and the Maliki government retain the will to weather the storm.

The threat of a Sadrist counteroffensive aside, the withdrawal of his ministers should make the task of reconciliation somewhat easier. But reconciliation in Iraq is likely to follow its own road. The U.S. political debate is increasingly fixated on political benchmarks, including narrowly defined legislation that "must" be passed by the Iraqi parliament to move Iraq along a path to reconciliation prescribed by us. We must resist the temptation to micromanage the political and emotional resolution of Iraq's internal conflicts. Sunni Arabs in Anbar, Salahaddin, and Diyala have all reached out to American forces and Iraqi leaders. The Maliki government has started to reach back. What matters is that the two sides clasp hands, not that they pass any given collection of laws, certainly not that they meet externally dictated timelines.

One of the things that struck me most on my visit to Iraq from April 3 to April 8 was the growing Iraqi desire to exercise sovereignty. The insistence on evidence rather than intelligence as the basis for arresting suspects reflects a larger desire to see the rule of law functioning in Iraq. So does the establishment of a chain of command under the control of the Iraqi prime minister. So does Maliki's appointment of subordinates in whom he has confidence, even when we would prefer others. This burgeoning sense of Iraq-ness can be seen even beyond the central government. Pictures of the Sadrist demonstration in Najaf in early April showed many people carrying Iraqi flags and few people carrying pictures of Sadr. At a minimum, the leaders of that movement clearly felt they needed to show they are Iraqis rather than followers of a particular leader.

The irony is that the more the Iraqi government feels its own strength—a very positive development from the standpoint of establishing a state that can survive on its own—the less it will be inclined to listen to our dictates about how to manage its internal affairs. Legislative or other benchmarks imposed as conditions of U.S. aid are likely to be seen increasingly as inappropriate interference and therefore not constructive. We have wanted Iraq to be independent from the outset, and we have worked

hard to make Iraqi independence possible. We must accept the consequences, including the impossibility of dictating specific political solutions to Iraq's leaders.

Challenges and Dangers

Success in Iraq is not assured, and we face major challenges in some areas. Diyala province is a microcosm of almost all of Iraq's problems. Al Qaeda fighters driven out of Anbar and elsewhere have flowed into the province in the past few months and are now receiving Iranian aid. Sunnis driven out of Baghdad in 2006 moved to Diyala and drove many Shiites out of their homes. Shiites have retaliated with sectarian killings, sometimes with the support of provincial leaders. Kurdish forces have been pushing into the northern part of the province in support of historic claims to a greater Kurdish region within Iraq. All this unrest fuels, and has been fueled by, tribal conflict. And American forces are spread thin in the province (although Generals Odierno and Petraeus have sent reinforcements).

American and Iraqi forces are attacking some of these problems aggressively. They are setting up Joint Security Stations in Baqubah and elsewhere in imitation of those in Ramadi and Baghdad. The Iraqi leadership in Diyala is enthusiastically opposing al Qaeda, and Iraqi soldiers are engaged in that fight. In spite of the widespread violence, reconstruction efforts are underway throughout the province, even in Baqubah. The talented American commander in the area, Colonel David Sutherland, is working hard to calibrate kinetic and nonkinetic operations, to integrate American operations with Iraqis, and to get the violence under control. The challenges of Kurdish incursions, of increased Iranian involvement, and of the embattled Shiite minority in Diyala remain potent and will require prolonged and careful management. Diyala is likely to remain violent for many months to come.

In Baghdad, we have seen only the preliminary unfolding of a large and complex plan. Much of the city is still dangerous, violent, or out of control, and it remains to be seen how much the planned operations can reduce the violence and how long it will take. The enemy, of course, has a vote. If Sadr orders his soldiers to fight, the situation may deteriorate rapidly. No one knows how long al Qaeda can sustain the current level of violence, or whether it can increase it, or how patient the Shiites will be in the face of continued terrorist attacks. The probabilities are that Sadr will not seek a full-scale confrontation, that al Qaeda will not be able to sustain the current level of violence indefinitely, and that the Shiite leadership, sensing the chance for meaningful self-government, will restrain its people. But very little is certain in this war, or any war.

Early overtures toward reconciliation between Sunnis and Shiites are not tantamount to success in that pursuit. The Sunni tribal leadership is just beginning to reconstitute itself after the decapitation of the Sunni Arab community in 2003. Current tribal leaders do not speak for all Sunni Arabs, and nationalist Sunni insurgents continue to fight American and Iraqi soldiers. Nor is it certain that this government, elected on the basis of national lists that favored extremists rather than moderates, can accommodate Sunni demands appropriately. Again, the trends and probabilities appear to be positive in both areas, but trends are not accomplishments, and there is a long and uncertain road ahead.

Can America succeed in Iraq? Definitely. Will we? It's too soon to say. The most that can be said now is that we seem to be turning a corner. In December 2006, we were losing, and most of the trends were bad. Today, many trends are positive, despite the daily toll of al Qaeda-sponsored death. That reversal resulted from our own actions, from enemy mistakes, and from positive decisions by potential spoilers. Our actions are proceeding in the right direction, as our forces work skillfully to establish order and support and assist reconstruction. The enemy is maintaining the same strategy that led to its difficulties in Anbar: ruthlessly attacking both Sunnis and Shiites in an effort to terrorize populations into tolerating its presence. And the key potential spoilers are holding to their vital decision to call for sectarian calm rather than sectarian war.

Americans have been subjected to too much hyperbole about this war from the outset. Excessively rosy scenarios have destroyed the credibility of the administration. The exaggerated certainty of leading war opponents that the conflict is already lost is every bit as misplaced. Too much optimism and too much pessimism have prevented Americans from accurately evaluating a complex and fluid situation. It is past time to abandon both and seek a clearheaded appraisal of reality in Iraq.

Today, victory is up for grabs, and the stakes for America are rising as the conflict between us and al Qaeda shifts to the fore. It is no hyperbole to recognize that a precipitous American withdrawal would undermine the current positive trends and increase the likelihood of mass killing and state collapse. Painful and uncertain as it is, the wisest course now is to support our commander and our soldiers and civilians, as they struggle to foster security in Iraq and to defeat the enemies who have sworn to destroy us. ♦

Getty Images / Peter Macdiarmid

How Odd of God . . .

Milton Himmelfarb on the worlds of Judaism

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Milton Himmelfarb was the Samuel Johnson of modern (or postmodern) life: A brilliant essayist with an uncanny ear for language and the ability to deliver large truths in small packages. His essays are tightly written and argued, and the same holds for nearly every paragraph and sentence they contain: Like Johnson, Himmelfarb was a formidable stylist, one of the best of his age. Like Johnson, he knew how to point out deep truths that seem obvious in retrospect. Like Johnson, he was profoundly religious and knew how to say so plainly, movingly—and wryly and wittily.

He resembled Dr. Johnson in leaving us at the end of each essay, and at the end of his life (he died last year), wishing he would go on. And he was like Johnson, above all, in being like nobody except himself. This book of essays was compiled and edited by his distinguished sister Gertrude Himmelfarb—aka Mrs. Irving Kristol; America's great Neoconservative Families are as intricately interconnected as England's ducal houses—and is called *Jews and Gentiles*. Should you happen to be a Jew or a Gentile, you will find it indispensable.

Jews and Gentiles
by Milton Himmelfarb
Edited by
Gertrude Himmelfarb
Encounter, 260 pp., $25.95

Of the imposing, mostly Jewish, intellectuals who changed America forever by inventing neoconservatism (i.e., "new conservatism," progressive conservatism), Milton Himmelfarb was the one who cared first and most about religion—in particular, Judaism. Repeatedly, he described the mood of the moment with absorbing precision, but kept his eye fixed on politics *and* historical and religious truth.

The essays here span nearly half a century, from 1949 through 1996—the time during which intellectuals took over America's universities, the universities took over American culture, and the left replaced the right as America's "Establishment" (a word that was far more popular in olden times when the Establishment was right-leaning and fun for professors to attack). Most of these essays were published originally in *Commentary*—and, as Gertrude Himmelfarb notes in her introduction, are a tribute to *Commentary*'s importance and to the brilliant editorship of Norman Podhoretz, and then Neal Kozodoy, as well as to Milton Himmelfarb's remarkable achievements as

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thinker and author.

Although *Jews and Gentiles* is a book of essays, compiled posthumously, it has a theme: the rise of paganism in our times, and the fundamental, irreconcilable antagonism between paganism and Judaism. We must carefully distinguish (the author writes) between paganism and mere atheism. Paganism is a positive system of beliefs. Atheism dominated the "modern" age, but modernism collapsed in the turmoil of the late 1960s.

For Himmelfarb, paganism is *the* characteristic religion of today's elite—and it stands for promiscuity, misery, and death. He traces the taste for paganism to Enlightenment *philosophes* such as Diderot, to their 20th-century academic admirers, and to the psychotic sixties, when nature-worship and sexual promiscuity began to seem positively good and Christianity (and Judaism even more, to the extent anyone ever thought about it) began to seem evil.

Himmelfarb casually but thoroughly annihilates to the last splinter the idea that paganism is admirable. Diderot admired pagan Tahiti, for example, which still (in the 21st century) strikes many people as romantic, exotic, and generally lovable. But a little research discloses that, in pagan Tahiti, an organized priesthood handled the worship of the "greater gods," who sometimes required human sacrifice; cannibalism was also on the menu, occasionally. Himmelfarb notes the bloodthirsty, "sick-making" entertainments staged in the amphitheaters of pagan Rome, a civilization much praised by Diderot and his Enlightenment colleagues. As for the Eastern spirituality sometimes admired by "soft-boiled modern pagans," as recently as 1968, India's prime minister saw fit to denounce the ritual murder of a 12-year-old boy to appease the gods at the outset of a large construction project. Bloodshed, says Himmelfarb, is "the piety of paganism."

Judaism is the other part of his main topic. Judaism is dedicated to paganism's utter destruction. (*Even though*—Himmelfarb never neglects a nuance—the prophet Micah said, "For let the peoples walk each in the name of its god, but we will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever." "Sometimes I like to think," Himmelfarb writes, "that maybe [the rabbis] had a quiet weakness for pluralism.")

On the other hand, many biblical and rabbinic statements, and many prayers, denounce and execrate paganism. Take the *Alenu* prayer, for example—the "Jewish Marseillaise" according to the rabbinic scholar Solomon Schechter. (Himmelfarb quotes Schechter or Chesterton, Aristotle or Gershom Scholem, an ABC/*Washington Post* poll or the Psalms, as needed.) The *Alenu* seethes at paganism: "In hope we wait, O Lord our God . . . for Thee to remove the idols from the earth, the no-gods being utterly cut down." Judaism, after all, is the religion of "Choose life!" Paganism is the religion of death. (Himmelfarb's Hebrew is fluent; his translations are consistently inspired. If only he had published his own translation of the prayer book that he discusses so movingly and with such depth.)

He writes about Judaism in relation to Christianity, too. He quotes the eminent historian C.G. Coulton, suggesting (in passing) that Judaism is a vengeful religion, Christianity a loving and forgiving one. Yet Coulton (he notes) was a serious scholar and no anti-Semite: "[T]he theme of vindictive Judaism and merciful Christianity must have run very deep indeed in his culture for him not to question in it." (A typical Himmelfarb observation: obvious, but only in retrospect.)

Then, Himmelfarb demonstrates that this "theme" is backwards and upside down. Nobody can annihilate a wrong argument so thoroughly and convincingly—yet with so little *Sturm und Drang*, and so much learning, wit, grace, kindliness. Traditional Christianity, he writes, developed the idea that a large majority of human beings (including most of the faithful) would be damned to burn in hell forever. He quotes Coulton on this very point: "The difference here between St. Thomas Aquinas and Calvin is far smaller than men commonly imagine." For *non*-Christians, perpetual hellfire was virtually guaranteed. Coulton again: "St. Augustine even taught that unbaptized infants suffered in hell not only the penalty of losing the Beatific Vision but bodily torture as well." Nor were the fires of hell exclusively an ancient obsession: "During the Lenten season of 1949," Himmelfarb notes, "Pope Pius called for a greater homiletic emphasis on hell."

Jews see things differently. "Rabbinic literature knows of hell too, but it is a very rudimentary kind of hell." He quotes a Hasidic story in which, on the evening before the Day of Atonement, a tailor and his sons drink a toast to the Lord: "We therefore forgive Thee for all the transgressions that Thou hast committed against us, and do Thou likewise forgive us all the transgressions wherewith we have transgressed against Thee." Not a terribly vengeful-seeming view of the Lord. Himmelfarb reflects that his learned, pious grandfather made a point of mentioning hell only once that he could remember: He told his grandson that, on the Sabbath, even the damned get a respite from their suffering. So which is the vindictive religion and which is merciful?

Yet Himmelfarb is careful to note that only paganism, and never Christianity, could have sponsored the Holocaust: "If one sentence could summarize Church law and practice over many centuries, it is this: the Jews are allowed to live, but not too well." This sentence is worth a couple of academic monographs and a journal paper all by itself.

Religion is Himmelfarb's main topic, but he has others. In a 1985 essay he remarks that "after the 1968 election I wrote what was eventually to become an anonymous aphorism, that Jews had the incomes of Episcopalians but voted like Hispanics." In her introduction, Gertrude Himmelfarb notes that "he himself generally used the term Puerto Ricans, and it is in that form that the aphorism is now familiar." I knew the aphorism (nearly everyone does); I never realized it was authored by Himmelfarb, and too many people don't.

Yet the author found it necessary to adjust his own famous saying because,

as of 1985, "Episcopalians are not what they used to be"—and according to one postelection poll, "the Jewish vote for [Walter] Mondale was 13 points higher than the Hispanic." In one of the most biting, telling, chilling paragraphs in the book—which is just as true today as in 1985—he adds, "With all their Judaic sympathy for the needy, American Jews contrive to forget that Israel is very needy indeed—almost friendless.... Will the American Friends Service Committee, will the bureaucracies of the liberal churches rush in to befriend Israel if the Christian Right stops being friendly?" But American Jews are determined to despise and fear the religious right: "An opening to the Christian Right would subject Jews to the discomfort of thinking new thoughts and doing new things. Apparently Israel is not thought to be worth such a grievous sacrifice."

Even more famous than the "earn-like-Episcopalians" *bon mot* is his epoch-making observation, "No Hitler, no Holocaust." Modern historians hate the "great man" (or "greatly evil man") view of history; "for them what counts is geography, demography, technology, *mentalités*." Of course, there were and are exceptions—such as Gertrude Himmelfarb herself. But again, the trend that is described in this 1984 essay is still going strong. The author compresses a shattering load of truth into three sentences: "The obedience of Himmler and the SS was to Hitler, not to anti-Semitism.... Hitler made the Holocaust because he wanted to make it.... Hitler was ex-Christian and anti-Christian."

Notwithstanding, "we would rather talk about socioeconomic stresses and strains, political backwardness, group psychopathology, religious hatred, racism"—than the paganism of the Third Reich or the unspeakable evil of one man.

This particular essay is brilliant but incomplete. Others have the same characteristics; but incompleteness is especially disturbing here, where the author has such an enormous truth to deliver. The essay reads like a transcript of thoughts thrown out in a small seminar by a brilliant professor, to be completed by eager graduate students (whose comments go unrecorded). "Let me summarize, fill in some lacunae, and draw some conclusions," he writes at the end, before closing with a list of seven bullet points. Which is just what a professor might say in closing, but not what a scholar should write in closing. We don't hear enough about General Erich Ludendorff's anti-Christian views and Teutonic paganism. We do learn that Hitler "scorned Judaism and Christianity not like Ludendorff the Teutonizer but like Voltaire the Enlightener." But no explanation follows. There *are* Hitler pronouncements that support this claim (although Himmelfarb doesn't cite them); there are also pronouncements that suggest otherwise—and there is the Wagner cult Hitler belonged to, the pseudo-Teutonic rites and ceremonies he loved. Himmelfarb emphasizes that the Holocaust was a pagan and not Christian phenomenon, but doesn't tell us nearly enough about Germany's paganism *or* Hitler's.

Despite the occasional essay that stops short or leaves us not quite satisfied, *Jews and Gentiles* is a brilliant book. The author is an essayist and informal historian, an expert on Judaism and a master of style. Samuel Johnson was hard to describe, too (essayist-biographer, lexicographer-conversationalist). But you will find, beneath the enormous dome of St. Paul's Cathedral, the marble statues of four great "benefactors of the English people"—and Samuel Johnson is one of them. Himmelfarb deserves an equally conspicuous monument, and will never get it. Which might be just as well. No statue could be a better monument than this book: witty and moving, inspiring and eye-opening and wise—and above all, *memorable*, because Himmelfarb had the clarity, wisdom, and nerve to see the big picture. ♦

BCA

The Nuclear Wars

Men, women, marriage, children—and America's future. **BY CLAUDIA ANDERSON**

Kay Hymowitz has brought good news and bad news back from her investigations into the state of matrimony in America. The good news—that most of the country has started to pull away from the un-marriage abyss—cannot take the sting out of the bad—that the near disappearance of marriage among the poorest Americans is producing a self-perpetuating proletariat lacking the culture of self-control, work, and committed relationships that is the lifeline out of poverty. The underclass is hardening into a hereditary caste.

Marriage and Caste in America
Separate and Unequal Families in a Post-Marital Age
by Kay S. Hymowitz
Ivan R. Dee, 192 pp., $22.50

It is the last two of the eight essays collected in this short and readable volume that announce the hopeful developments. "The End of Herstory" offers a refreshingly obvious explanation for the reluctance of most women to identify themselves as feminists: "Most women want husbands and children as much as they want anything in life." This truth is offensive to feminism, a grievance-based outlook "rooted in a utopian politics that longs to transcend both biology and ordinary bourgeois longings," Hymowitz writes. Feminism

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therefore "cannot address the reality of the lives that it has helped to change." In particular, its tedious dogma of 50-50 parity between men and women in all aspects of childrearing and home chores is simply irrelevant to the experience of normal families juggling their multiple tasks. What's more, today's young women, Hymowitz finds from her extensive interviews, are perfectly comfortable with the observation—anathema to feminists—that men and women are complementary and their differences are rooted in biology. Lawrence Summers's Harvard notwithstanding, apparently our long feminist nightmare is over.

Hymowitz clusters that happy turn of events with an array of positive trends under the heading "It's Morning After in America." The improvements over the last 10-15 years in the incidence of crime, divorce, illegitimacy, drug use, alcohol abuse, early sexual activity, and more are already familiar. Behind them all, Hymowitz sees a "change in cultural beliefs" that is producing "a vital, optimistic, family-centered, entrepreneurial, and, yes, morally thoughtful citizenry."

This cultural shift she traces to four causes: generational backlash, as Gen-Xers and Millennials resolve not to reproduce the divorced, blended, and single-parent families the Baby Boomers made; a resurgence of patriotism and seriousness among the young triggered by 9/11; the example of immigrants, with their strong work ethic and, in the case especially of Asians, high grades and stable families; and the opportunities extended by the information economy to "the hardworking, forward-looking, and pragmatic."

These mutually reinforcing influences have helped Americans recognize the damage done by "their decades-long fling with the sexual revolution and the transvaluation of traditional values." Now, says Hymowitz, "they are earnestly knitting up their unraveled culture." While we are unlikely to return to the status quo ante, this is, she concludes, "a moment of tremendous promise"—for some Americans.

But not for all. Most of the book is devoted to that portion of our cultural fabric that has slipped beyond the reach of self-repair. The saddest news she brings is the near disappearance among poor urban African Americans of the simple "life script" that leads out of poverty, the inherited "how-to" of successful adulthood, namely: Finish school, get a job and stay employed, get married—and then, and only then, have children.


Kay Hymowitz

Ivan R. Dee

And it's worse than that. Instead of positive guidance and examples leading them in a sound direction, young people in the 'hood are subjected to deeply disturbing influences. Hymowitz describes a "relationship dystopia." Growing up without fathers—sometimes without ever encountering a lifelong married couple—poor urban kids are surrounded instead by de facto polygamy: single or temporarily attached men with children by multiple women, and single or temporarily attached women with children by multiple men. The young are formed in the midst of the resulting "maelstrom of confusion, jealousy, rage, abandonment, and violence."

While this familial chaos correlates to a great degree with poverty, Hymowitz rejects the economic explanation for it—the argument that the lack of reliable breadwinners forces women to settle for children without marriage. She notes that teen birthrates were at their lowest, and illegitimacy rare, during the Depression, when unemployment reached a historic high of 25 percent. By contrast, between 1965 and 1991, while unemployment rose and fell repeatedly within a "normal" range, illegitimacy soared. She points out, too, that rural black populations in Maine, Montana, and Idaho have been largely exempt from inner-city-style family disintegration. Why? Because there, "mainstream norms" have continued to hold sway.

Hymowitz's greatest strength is her appreciation of the role of norms and values, ideas and beliefs, in shaping behavior. She recounts, for example, the dark story—equal parts scandal and tragedy—of black and white elites' ideologically based refusal to heed the warning of the Moynihan Report. In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, then assistant secretary of labor, documented alarming levels of illegitimacy in the "ghetto." But Moynihan's conclusion—"a national effort towards the problems of Negro Americans must be directed towards the question of family structure"—was greeted with what Hymowitz calls "forty-plus years of lies."

There was the lie that the only problems were joblessness and discrimination. There was the lie that "the nuclear family was really just a toxic white hang-up anyway." There was the lie that the poverty of single mothers was proof of patriarchal oppression and nothing more. And so Moynihan's call to action produced none—and today, the share of African-American babies born to unwed mothers, already 25 percent when he sounded the alarm, has nearly tripled, to 70 percent. To this day, it is newsworthy when a prominent person breaks through the denial and speaks plainly about the need to recover "Parent Power," as Bill Cosby has done—to large and enthusiastic audiences, Hymowitz notes.

Or take her interesting discussion of the distinctive mission of marriage in the American Republic—namely,

to mold free citizens equipped for self-reliance and self-government. Breaking with the arranged marriages and authoritarian fathers of Europe, the theorists of the Founding generation prescribed a different style for the democratic family. By the 1830s, Tocqueville already observed in American homes a "familiar intimacy, which renders authority less absolute" and noted that "a species of equality prevails around the domestic hearth."

But American principles of equality and free choice contained within them the seeds of the divorce revolution. American individualism—progressively unmoored from the moral capital of biblical teaching, with its emphasis on love, fidelity, and self-sacrifice—led to the cult of self-fulfillment, of which recent generations have eagerly grabbed the rewards, and for which they, their children, and the country have paid dearly:

> Think of the past several decades of high rates of divorce and illegitimacy as a kind of natural experiment testing the truth of the founders' vision. The results are in: if we forget that marriage is both a voluntary union between two loving partners and an arrangement for rearing the next generation of self-reliant citizens, our capacity for self-government weakens.

Given her interest in beliefs and culture, it is surprising that Hymowitz gives only the most cursory treatment to the decline of religious commitment in hastening the developments she deplores. Similarly, in her discussion of the "Morning After," she makes no mention of the renewal of interest in orthodox belief and morality among the young. (Colleen Carroll Campbell has described this on prestigious college campuses, among both Catholics and Protestants. Among evangelicals, the Joshua Harris phenomenon is worth noting: His *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, published in 1997 when he was 21, sold over a million copies, according to his publisher. Like his three subsequent books, it calls for a return to chaste, marriage-oriented courtship.)

So what to do? These fine essays, along with the rest of Kay Hymowitz's intelligent polemics, embody a response rather than proposing one. Long associated with the "marriage movement"—an energetic and constructive alliance of social scientists, theologians and pastors, lawyers and judges, psychologists, counselors, and writers periodically convened by the Institute for American Values in New York—Hymowitz has surely contributed in some small way to creating the present hopeful moment for mainstream America. Whether or not similar efforts have the power to prevent the final entrenchment of a post-marriage under-caste in America, and even to begin the restoration of the black family, Hymowitz and her friends are right and valiant to try. ♦

BCA

Frozen in Time

The ice-bound lands of mythology and history.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

Quests have a long, distinguished literary history, the most satisfying being the futile ones, from the Grail legends of the Middle Ages up through the Kafka and Beckett characters who surmount many obstacles while getting nowhere. Joanna Kavenna's engaging, meandering book is a quest in pursuit of the futile quest for Thule, the mist-shrouded noplace that has echoed through Western literature and explorers' diaries since ancient times as a kind of far-north anti-Arcadia, an inclement absolute, a utopia without the disadvantage of people—pure, inviolable, empty, and white, the ultimate blank slate.

The Ice Museum
by Joanna Kavenna
Viking, 293 pp., $24.95

Thule isn't entirely fictional. It was first mentioned by the Greek explorer Pytheus in the 4th century B.C. He sailed from Marseilles to Britain and then north, getting as far as Thule, he claimed, before turning back, and he probably got as far as somewhere. He said that Thule was a place where sea, sky, and land blurred into one, where there was no night in summer and no light in winter, where the ocean congealed into drifting ice. Shetland Islands? Norway? Iceland? Spitzbergen? Too much aquavit?

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No one knows, but the northern mystery seized the Western imagination. As Kavenna recounts the story, Virgil called it Ultima Thule, ancient mapmakers put whimsical outlines of it on their maps, the Roman army that occupied northern Britain claimed to have conquered it, and the geographer Strabo thought Pytheus had made it up, since there could be nothing farther north than Britain, where the inhabitants were always miserable with cold, the only more miserable place being Ireland, where men slept with their sisters and ate their parents.

Ancient geography was fanciful anyway, but Thule continued its icy siren call in medieval and modern times as blank northern spaces were filled in on maps. The Norse sagas offered attractive Thulian real estate peopled with stern and heroic Thulites. Iceland became a particular favorite. Christopher Columbus claimed to have reached it before he discovered America, and the iconoclastic Victorian explorer Richard Burton interrupted his Indian, Arabian, and African adventures to go there and blast other Thule conjectures while offering his own. William Morris, the Viking-infatuated medievalizing socialist, was there as well, along with a lot of shiv-

Corbis / Galen Rowell

Thule Island, South Sandwich Island, British Antarctica

ering Thule-minded tourists, who also couldn't resist the Arctic cluster of islands, northwest of Norway, known as Spitzbergen (now called Svalbard).

Greenland eventually made a nice, inhospitable Thule, too, though no one seriously thought Pytheus had gotten that far. In 1910 a Danish explorer, Knud Rasmussen, named his trading post in north Greenland Thule, and the Inuit natives who lived around it were displaced 40 years later when the U.S. Air Force chose the site, with the landlord's (Denmark's) permission, for Thule Air Base, which is still there.

Aside from conjectures about where Thule was, there were guesses about where the word might have come from (Old Norse for frozen earth? Old Irish for silent?) and how it was pronounced (Thulay or Toolay or rhymes-with-fool). The place, bounded on all sides by myth, produced an inexhaustible supply of speculation.

And the speculation could take sinister turns. During the Weimar Republic there was a Thule Society that met in Munich and imagined the place as the original Aryan homeland. Several future Nazi officials attended its meetings, though it fell out of favor once Hitler came to power, and its founder, Thule being unavailable, fled to Turkey. Kavenna goes deeply into the story, since the Nazi idealization of Nordic blondness influenced their occupation of Norway—an attempt, in effect, to stake a physical and spiritual claim to Thule, which the polar explorer Fridtjof Nansen (if this book has a hero, he's it) had identified with the far northern Norwegian coast.

Kavenna grew up in rural England, loving winter and snow, immersing herself in accounts of polar expeditions. After spending years elbowing her way through the crowds of London and New York, where she worked as an editor and journalist, she started dreaming again of empty northern landscapes and, armed with the old legends and theories, set off to visit every place ever associated with Thule. Her book is a pensive mix of genres, weaving together travel diary with childhood memoir, shards of ancient and modern history, brooding personal essay, and the speculative flights of the philosophers and scientists she interviews. In the process she's willing to go well out of her way—to rural Estonia, for instance, where she talks to the retired first post-Communist president because of his theory that Pytheus sailed into the Baltic Sea, making Estonia the dark horse candidate for Thule.

The Ice Museum is densely festooned with passages of pictorial prose, some of it quite good, like this view from the boat taking her along the northern Norwegian coast:

> After Thule, as Nansen defined it, the stark crags of the Lofoten Islands emerged ahead—an archipelago of barren crinkled rocks, emerging violently from the sea. . . . Before the sun set, the boat made a detour into Trollfjord—the gathering shadows playing across the blackened crags, snow glinting like mist in patches on the rocks.

But it gets to be a habit, and there are unnecessarily lush descriptions of the Four Seasons Hotel in Munich, where the Thule Society met in the 1920s, and the Estonian countryside, and enough of the Greenland coast, ice walls looming above barren rock and rubble, to convince us thoroughly that it all looks about the same.

Of course, a certain amount of woolgathering and running to catch the next tangent to nowhere suits Kavenna's subject matter, reverie and myth and futility. She might have spent some time speculating about the lure of the pure and the absolute and the utmost, all those white whales of history that take possession of people in religion and politics as well as geography. But the most serious objection to the book might be that it's too serious. You don't want Hunter S. Thompson, but a little P.J. O'Rourke would help: You keep expecting something more vividly picaresque to emerge out of her antipodal encounters with cranks and drunks.

It's a subdued, melancholy book. But maybe that goes with the territory, and especially with what's been happening to the northern lands. They've become the cluttered attic of civilization, poisoned by faraway industries, littered with oil spills and nuclear waste. The glaciers and ice sheets are melting. The polar bears may be in trouble. What's left of the traditions of the Inuit and the Laps may be doomed. Thule, empty, mysterious, unapproachable, had been a seductive fiction. It's getting a little too real. ♦

The Royal Touch

Physician to the courts of Renaissance Europe.

BY FRANKLIN FREEMAN

"Truth is the criterion of historical study," wrote G.M. Trevelyan, "but its impelling motive is poetic. Its poetry consists in its being true. There we find the synthesis of the literary and scientific views of history."

Hugh Trevor-Roper's posthumous biography of Sir Theodore de Mayerne illustrates this synthesis with a style not spinning on its own metaphysical deconstructionist wheels, but a truth-seeking, straightforward, stately style, passionate but decorous. And it seeks the truth about the life and times of one of the most remarkable historical figures of whom you have probably never heard.

Europe's Physician
The Various Life of Sir Theodore de Mayerne
by Hugh Trevor-Roper
Edited by Blair Worden
Yale, 464 pp., $35

Sir Theodore de Mayerne (1573-1655) was court physician for France's Henry IV, England's James I and Charles I, as well as the physician, it appears, of at least half (if not more) of the nobility of Europe, hence Trevor-Roper's title. He was born of French Huguenot exiles in Geneva, where his godfather was Calvin's successor, Beza. Though his father, Louis de Mayerne (author of *The General History of Spain*) had literary aspirations for his son, Theodore from an early age wanted only to be a physician: "I sucked the milk of medicine in my cradle … nor could any advice from parents or friends ever divert my mind to any other studies."

Mayerne studied philosophy at Heidelberg, then medicine at the University of Montpellier. Through his friendships and connections made at Montpellier—"the road of patronage," Trevor-Roper calls it—he set up practice in Paris by 1597 and was soon the third royal doctor for Henry IV.

Mayerne became a very popular physician among the nobility, both Protestant and Catholic. Many of his cases involved the treatment of venereal disease. Trevor-Roper comments: "If a man was afflicted with venereal disease, he did not stand nicely upon sectarian positions." His most famous patient, in hindsight, was Armand-Jean du Plessis, bishop of Luçon, later to be known as Cardinal Richelieu.

In 1610 Henry IV was assassinated and life at court was transformed. Officially Mayerne and the other Huguenots at court were tolerated, but extreme pressure was put on them to convert to Catholicism. Mayerne had considered going to England; then, in 1611, his brother Henri was killed in Geneva by La Roche-Giffart, and the authorities in Geneva wavered. If they prosecuted the Catholic Frenchman, they feared, the Huguenots would again be persecuted. Yet a man had been slain. The new queen, Marie de Médici, and her court worked from France to secure the murderer's pardon.

Mayerne learned of this and wrote to Geneva. Trevor-Roper writes eloquently of Mayerne's righteous anger.

> There is something splendid in this last glimpse of the Huguenot court-doctor, writing from the court itself, to demand that a foreign republic show no respect to persons and should disregard the letters of his queen. It shows Mayerne not in his usual guise, as a courtier, whose perfect bedside manner carried him effortlessly into the confidence of even Catholic princes, but as an Old Testament prophet, standing firmly, even arrogantly, on his own principles or interest, and defying human power. This too was a permanent part of his character.

Mayerne had been secretly negotiating with the English and, in April 1611, just after he had learned of his brother's murder, received a letter from James I asking him to be court physician. Marie de Médici let him go on the understanding that it was a temporary appointment, but both sides knew he would probably not be coming back.

Mayerne traveled to England, weathered attacks from envious doctors, built up a thriving practice, went on diplomatic trips for James, and was spied on and banned from France for carrying secret messages from the English king. He eventually tired of court life and settled in Berne. He "might declare, in his letters, that he did not meddle with affairs of state, but who could believe that? In fact, he loved to be in the centre of things; and now, once again, he was. Expelled from France [because of spying], and chary of returning to that scene of his humiliation, he discovered, in the agonizing autumn and winter of 1621-2, a new centre of activity in Switzerland," then in the throes of the Thirty Years' War.

The governments of Berne and Geneva enlisted his assistance in negotiating with King James for help to protect them from the Duke of Savoy, so Mayerne returned to England:

> Reading Mayerne's letters to Geneva and Berne, we have the impression of a man who thoroughly enjoyed the exercise of influence and power. He is no longer merely the suave successful medical pioneer, the friend of apothecaries and surgeons: he is the masterful politician, instructing rulers and ambassadors, wielding authority, dictating policy. A servant in name only, he recommends, patronises, even commands his distant masters: for he speaks to them in the name of a greater prince, their protector, King James. So his tone of voice is peremptory.

In 1628 the Huguenots rebelled, Richelieu determined to defeat them, which he did in the following year.

"By 1629," Trevor-Roper writes, "the whole concept of international Protestantism had become a chimera." May-

Franklin Freeman is a writer in Maine.

Sir Theodore de Mayerne by Peter Paul Rubens

Christie's images / Corbis

erne withdrew "into proud, personal reserve," an example of "'interior emigration.'" His first wife died in 1628, and Mayerne sent his eldest son, Henri, on a Grand Tour, preparing the ground (he thought) for retirement to his estate in Switzerland, where he wanted to "give to the world, the works which I have long owed to it."

But he never returned to his estate—Charles I would not let him—and he never completed the works he aspired to write:

> It seems that he had a psychological incapacity to complete a work. Perhaps he had been made to publish his first book—[a] little guidebook to Europe which he had written as an undergraduate—too soon. Often he would speak of his plans to publish his whole medical philosophy. Often he would begin an apparently systematic treatise. But never, after his *Apologia* of 1603, would he give anything of his own to the press. . . . Like many men of encyclopedic ambitions, he lacked the architectonic faculty. He was conscious of having a philosophy, but he could not organize it into a coherent form.

In 1620, at age 47, Mayerne took up the study of art—no one is sure exactly why—eventually producing, based on written sources and consultations with artists, including Rubens who painted his portrait shortly after meeting him in 1629, what art historians call "the Mayerne manuscript." Trevor-Roper describes it as "an indispensable document in the history of Baroque painting, and indeed in the technique of oil painting from the time of the Flemish primitives to the time of Rubens. But to what end?"

He was not himself an artist or a craftsman: He did not intend to exercise the arts that he studied. It is difficult to detect an economic motive in this case. Rather, it seems that he was animated by a real thirst for knowledge and a desire to leave a record of the chemical discoveries to which he had been inspired by the teaching of Paracelsus, and which he had not realized in both medicine and the arts. He would write a book. It was the doomed ambition of his life.

Doomed also was Mayerne's desire to leave behind a dynasty living on his estate in Berne. Both of his sons—one of whom he wanted to become a gentleman farmer, the other a physician—rebelled, lived dissolute lives, and died in their mid-twenties. Mayerne blamed his wife's lenient Dutch family, but, writes Trevor-Roper, "we may see it . . . as Nature's revenge against a powerful and exacting father, and we may note that he was not the only great Huguenot individualist to suffer this revenge. . . . It is the syndrome of the puritan hero's rebel son."

Trevor-Roper's last paragraph, summing up Mayerne's final days and the "melancholy tale" of the way his possessions and legacy were fought over, rises to a blend of eloquence and shrewdness:

> Thus were Mayerne's hopes thwarted, his fortune dispersed, his writings overlooked and then inadequately published. By the end of the century, more than his belongings had suffered decline or neglect. The shaping influences of his thought and outlook had disappeared. The Calvinist militancy and the ideological confrontations of the era of the wars of religion were over; and the Paracelsian and Hermetic ideas which in Mayerne's time had prompted innovative thought and practical experiment had become, in the scientific revolution, separated from it and discredited by it. Mayerne's mental world had passed.

Hugh Trevor-Roper, the classic scholar, tells the reader when he is speculating, when he knows or does not know something. He is a methodical, meticulous researcher; his judgments are well balanced; his insights into human nature ring true. He emphasizes that, in history, there is never just one cause for any event: He is not a reductionist in the name of politics, science, economics, psychology, or religion, but acknowledges all of them, and shows how they work together to make history. ♦

Text Messenger

James B. Meriwether, 1928-2007.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

In every writer's secret heart, which is not without tincture of vanity, he covets the kind of letter I received out of the blue from a total stranger one day in July 1963. It suddenly lavished upon me the compliments that every writer believes he deserves and seldom hears.

It said that an editorial I had written in the regional paper for which I was then writing "has all the hallmarks your best pieces have—not only contemporary but historical knowledge, clarity of thinking, strong feeling disciplined by scholarship and perspective and independence of mind. It is a blessing to encounter such thinking and such writing." And that wasn't all, but immodesty has its limits.

The writer, I soon learned, was James B. Meriwether, devoted South Carolinian, Faulkner scholar, former Army intelligence officer, fellow idolator of Winston Churchill, champion track man and badminton player, and—not least—maker of definitive mint juleps. At the time he was also an assistant professor of English at Chapel Hill. That generous letter became the overture to a friendship of shared affinities and interests that ended, sadly, only with Meriwether's death in March in his native Columbia, S.C.

As a doctoral candidate at Princeton, Meriwether had gathered a display of Faulkner materials later published as *The Literary Career of William Faulkner*, the definitive treatment of the subject. In that sense he was a pioneer, since the heedless world was only a decade and a half into the Faulkner revival. The great novelist's Nobel Prize in 1950 found almost all of his novels out of print; and the few that were in print were notoriously corrupt—especially the Gothic and lugubrious *Sanctuary*, which Faulkner had almost entirely rewritten in galley proofs. (Only those who once coped with the vanished hazards of "hot type" know how garbled a printed text can be.)

Meriwether, on a Guggenheim grant, was collating—that is, comparing and correcting—the major Faulkner texts. Even now his specialty, textual scholarship, remains a relatively esoteric and unsung branch of literary studies. The obtuse attitude of the great critic Edmund Wilson is all too typical: When the Modern Language Association and others were contending for an NEH grant to update and preserve great American fiction, and the MLA applied for funds to clean up and authenticate the texts, Wilson took a waspish swipe at textual scholarship in the *New York Review of Books*. "The Fruits of the MLA," it was captioned, double entendre intentional. Wilson wondered why anyone but a silly pedant could possibly care about the quality of a text so long as a book was handsome and nice to hold in the hands and the print was legible.

The homely but essential aim of Meriwether's specialty is to establish a reliable text that meets the gold standard of authenticity, 'authorial intention.'

If only it were that simple! Meriwether was already a master of textual scholarship that first summer afternoon in Chapel Hill when we stunned ourselves on his back porch with the mint juleps that, like his scholarship, were lingering labors of love and meticulous precision.

The homely but essential aim of Meriwether's specialty is to establish a reliable text that meets the gold standard of authenticity, "authorial intention." Textual scholars feel a nearly sacred obligation to assure that when we read, say, Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, or Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi*, we are reading what they wrote, with their own idiosyncrasies, and not some "correction" by an officious editor or careless printer. By collating the Faulkner texts with Faulkner's manuscripts and (rarer) typescripts and publishing the discrepancies ("variants") in little journals, Meriwether shamed Random House into resetting them. That we have sound Faulkner texts we owe to him.

It is painstaking labor. Every detail, including punctuation, must be compared systematically with a so-called "copy text," that is, the best extant evidence of what the author intended. If you took Edmund Wilson's view, this was idle pedantry. But if you happened to be, say, Mark Twain or Nathaniel Hawthorne or Herman Melville, revenant by time machine to see how your work was faring, it might matter a great deal. Twain was a fanatic about punctuation, driven to profane fury by editors and printers who tinkered with his commas. Hawthorne's prudish sister excised references to lady's ankles from his stories. A body of New Critical speculation had grown up around an odd but colorful locution in Melville, before it was found that he had written "*coiled* fish of the sea," not "*soiled* fish." Misprints have consequences.

And there were ancillary dividends. I never heard Jim Meriwether boast, but his command of Faulkner's work was so much more exact than Faulkner's own that when the great Mississippian commenced writing the two concluding volumes of the Snopes trilogy he turned to Meriwether to

Edwin M. Yoder Jr.'s novel, Lions at Lamb House, *about Freud's analysis of Henry James, will be published in September.*

straighten out the confused chronologies and inconsistencies. Imagine: It was like being adviser to the Almighty on the sixth day of creation. I should add that Meriwether was not only a great hawk of detail but also an eagle of wide horizons. Along with that first letter he sent me was a collection he had compiled (without credit) of Joyce Cary's journalism advocating African independence.

No man so attuned to the devil in the details could be without amusing quirks. I close with two characteristic Meriwether moments.

Once in Columbia, when I was writing a magazine piece on the textual wars provoked by Edmund Wilson, Jim was collating an Edith Wharton novel or story collection, of which there had been two printings for a single edition—the signal of textual trouble. A wedding scene had the parson intoning, "I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord . . . " Even meticulous Mrs. Wharton had nodded, and opened a wedding ceremony with words from the burial service! How many thousands, one wonders, had read right through it without noticing?

Ten years ago, at the time of the Faulkner centennial (when he organized several conferences), Jim came for a master class in a seminar I was teaching. His first move was to walk to the blackboard and place a small dot on it. *Huh?* we thought. The significance was this: Faulkner usually did not punctuate honorifics—wrote them Mr, Mrs, Dr, and so forth—with one exception: He had written "Dr. Einstein," a tribute to the great physicist.

This was the kind of thing Jim Meriwether and few others would notice or know, for he had a jeweler's eye for the telling detail. I mourn him as an enriching and faithful friend, but the world should remember him as one who made it his mission to remove treacherous barriers that create confusion between writers and their audience—faceless, thankless, invaluable work. All hail, then, the man who liberated William Faulkner from careless printers and from his own imperfect memory. It is enough for one lifetime. ♦

PCA

Hitchcock Lite

Entertaining, yes, but Shia LaBeouf is no James Stewart.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The new hit movie *Disturbia* is *Rear Window* with teenagers.

The protagonist is not a rugged *Life* photographer trapped by his broken leg in a Greenwich Village walk-up (James Stewart's parlous condition in Alfred Hitchcock's peerless 1954 thriller) but rather a delinquent high-schooler who has been placed under house arrest for punching his Spanish teacher. His girlfriend is not society fashion maven Grace Kelly but an anorectic chick in a bikini with parent issues. And the dangerous man across the way isn't a pathetic and henpecked salesman who cannot take another moment's criticism from his nasty invalid wife, but a pony-tailed charmer who undertakes an uncomfortable flirtation with the delinquent's mother.

Disturbia
Directed by D.J. Caruso

Paramount Pictures

What makes *Rear Window* so spectacular is that it makes you experience, in the most vivid possible terms, the isolation of an active man who finds himself in a wheelchair in the midst of a hot summer before air conditioners, and with nothing whatever to do but look out the window. He spins dramas and theories out of the scenes he witnesses in the windows across and around the courtyard behind his brownstone.

It's a game, an intellectual exercise, and a somewhat tawdry one because our hero is violating the privacy of his neighbors for no reason other than boredom. And yet his game suddenly becomes deadly serious when he begins to suspect a horrifying crime has been committed just a few yards away from him—but he has no evidence to prove his claim and can only deploy his girlfriend to secure it. And when he does so, he places her and himself in terrible jeopardy with no way of defending himself.

Criticizing any attempt to update and re-engineer a classic—and in my estimation *Rear Window* is the greatest suspense picture ever made—is a fool's errand. The new version is doomed to fail by comparison. At its best it will seem like a Xerox copy. And at its worst, it will inspire dark thoughts about cultural decline, cultural ransackery, and the general dumbing-down of America.

So, yes, *Disturbia* is no *Rear Window*, to put it mildly. The only question that really matters is whether *Disturbia* works on its own terms—whether the plotline of the original is so strong and clear that it survives the revisions and emendations of something well nigh perfect to begin with. And the answer is: pretty much, at least while you're in the theater and for a few minutes afterwards. Direc-

John Podhoretz, a columnist for the New York Post, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

Paramount Pictures

Sarah Roemer, Shia LaBeouf

tor D.J. Caruso does a superb job with the material, and the picture is wonderfully well-acted by the stunningly natural rising star Shia LaBeouf and a languorous newcomer named Sarah Roemer. It's got thrills and scares and laughs and a frightening villain in David Morse (a largely unsung character actor who enlivens and deepens every movie fortunate enough to have him in the cast).

It's worth ten bucks. But it falls apart upon a moment's reflection. The characters do things that make no sense merely to advance the plot, which is something that never happens in *Rear Window* and is inexcusable for a thriller, which must seem rigorously logical if it is not to descend into arrant foolishness. Just because the target audience for *Disturbia* is between the ages of 12 and 24 doesn't absolve screenwriters Christopher Landon and Carl Ellsworth from the obligation to work out their plot.

Still, *Disturbia*'s success will surely bring about more of the same in years to come. Perhaps we will see *The Philadelphia Story* with Jessica Simpson rather than Katharine Hepburn as the fast-thawing ice goddess, Tracy Lord, being courted simultaneously not by Cary Grant and James Stewart but by Tobey "Spiderman" Maguire and Elijah "Frodo" Wood. Or *Going My Way*, the sentimental tribute to the Catholic priesthood—only instead of Bing Crosby singing "Swinging on a Star" and Barry Fitzgerald talking in a hearty brogue, we will have swinging young priest Sanjaya from *American Idol* finding his (shall we say) soulmate in older cleric Harvey Fierstein.

How about *Norma Rae* with Lindsay Lohan taking the part of Sally Field—only Lindsay doesn't try to organize a union at a textile plant but stages a strike to protest the serving of meat in the school cafeteria? Not to mention the hilarious musical *Singin' in the Rain*, with its plot about the secret dubbing of a screechy silent-film actress thrown into a blender with *Dreamgirls* to become the tragic tale of a hip-hop record producer (Chris "Ludacris" Bridges) who replaces the warblings of a socialite wannabe singer (Paris Hilton) with those of his long-suffering girlfriend (Jennifer Hudson) without ever properly explaining how a black woman's voice is emerging from a blonde who sounds like Minnie Mouse.

If that happens, I am telling you, I'm not going. ♦

"Frank Langella and Michael Sheen star in the Donmar Warehouse production of Peter Morgan's drama, based on the taped conversations between Robert Frost [sic] and President Nixon." **—New Yorker, April 9**

Parody

Robert Frost: Some say the world will end in fire, some say in ice. From what I've tasted of desire I hold with those who favor fire. What say you, Mr. President?

President Nixon: Well, I'm very glad you asked that question, Mr. Frost, because you see, it's the job of the president to see to it that the world doesn't end--either in fire, as you say, or in ice--and to work day after day, here in the White House, so that we can come together as a people, and as a nation, to build a generation of peace, for all Americans, that will endure. And I'm determined to do just that.

Robert Frost: I have a neighbor who insists that "good fences make good neighbors." Mr. President, do you agree?

President Nixon: Well, Mr. Frost, I think the American people have a right to know how their president stands on issues of such importance--importance, that is, both to us and to our allies as we go about the business of building a generation of peace. Now, a lot of people in Washington are going to say: He's taking the easy way out, he's doing the politically popular thing. And that's their right; I respect that. But I'm here to say that I'm not going to do that, and that I have no intention whatsoever of doing that.

Robert Frost: And miles to go before you sleep.

President Nixon: That's exactly right! Mr. Frost, let me make one thing perfectly clear: The American people elected me to make those tough decis
will build a generation of peace for

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