the weekly Standard

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# Summer Reading

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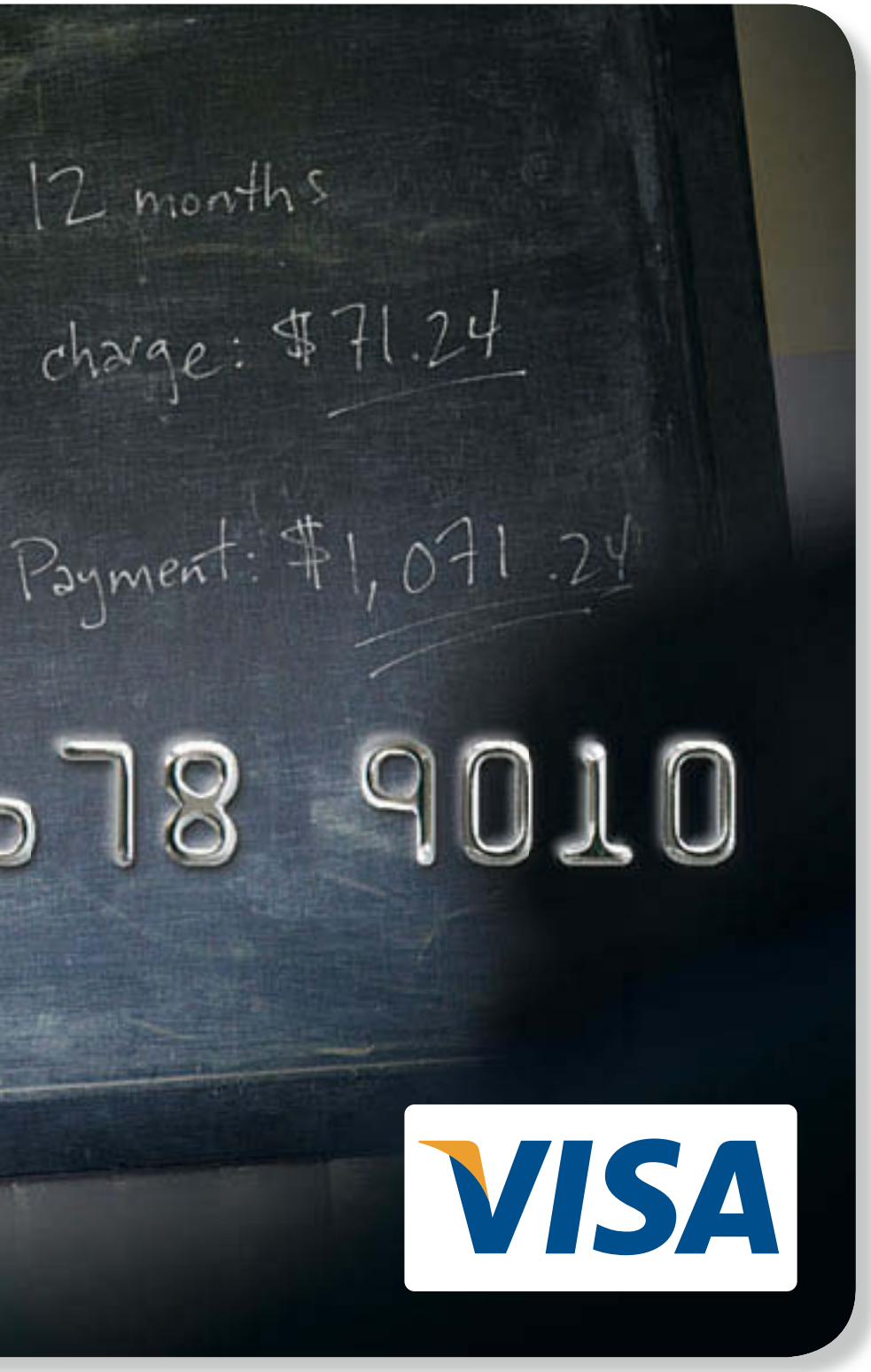


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## *In the new issue of the Hoover Digest . . .*

### "Hybrid" Conservatives Are Learning to Adapt

***Candidates who balance tradition and innovation are today's dominant species***

Consider Rudy Giuliani—the thrice-married, twice-divorced, pro-choice, civil-union-supporting blue-state former mayor who appears to be the GOP front-runner, pacing even likely Democratic presidential challengers. Is conservatism about to remake itself by reclaiming the center of American politics? Or is it about to collapse from its internal contradictions?

Remember that all the leading conservative candidates are, in a sense, political hybrids, as is President Bush. They inherit Edmund Burke's respect for both liberty and tradition but also his awareness that preserving liberty requires "prudent innovation" amid the turbulence of political life. Modern conservatism embodies this built-in instability. Private versus government aid, the church-state balance, whether to try to spread democracy, how to handle social touchstones like abortion—candidates ponder a wide menu. How they choose will invigorate both American conservatism and the nation as a whole.

*—Peter Berkowitz*

### Hurricane Hugo, a Storm of Disinformation

***It was Bush vs. Chávez in the battle for Latin American loyalties. Who won?***

What a spectacle it was to see the Venezuelan president chasing the U.S. president up the length of Latin America, from Buenos Aires to Port-au-Prince, shouting challenges and insults at the American leader and "empire." Gilbert and Sullivan could have turned this indirect combat between the hemisphere's two most self-consciously macho presidents into a smashing comic opera.

But the clash illuminated differences in both style and substance. Chávez and his oil-fueled "twenty-first-century socialism" are just corked wine in a new bottle. The essence of this newfangled old-fashioned caudillo is an aggressive, globalized rehash of the kind of paternalism that caused and sustained the underdevelopment of Latin America—the most unequal region on earth. What Latins need now is the exact opposite of Chavista authoritarianism: free trade and markets, pluralism, an end to scapegoating. And the United States, if it surmounts its regional mistakes, can help nurture that productive alternative.

*—William Ratliff*

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# What others are telling Congress about gasoline price controls

**Newspapers across America are voicing strong opposition to so-called "anti-price gouging" legislation now before Congress. Read what they have to say:**

"**Shortages** and higher prices will come"
*– The Detroit News, April 30, 2007*

"**Empty** legislation"
*– The San Francisco Chronicle, May 28, 2007*

"actually stands to **make matters worse**"
*– USA Today, May 25, 2007*

"silly blasts of **hot air**"
*– The Oklahoman, May 29, 2007*

"a **woeful ignorance** of basic economics"
*– Investor's Business Daily, May 24, 2007*

"It's **silly-season** for oil-company bashers"
*– Los Angeles Times, May 25, 2007*

"**grandstanding**"
*– Philadelphia Inquirer, May 25, 2007*

"If Congress wants really **high prices**, it should keep this up"
*– The Wall Street Journal, May 28, 2007*

No one condones "price gouging." While some may think price controls are good politics, the Federal Trade Commission has said that federal price gouging legislation "could cause more problems for consumers than it solves." Based on the experience of the 1970s – when such controls produced gasoline shortages and long lines at the pump – they are very bad for American consumers.

**Contact Congress today. Tell them you oppose gasoline price controls.**

NAM

# we see
## this same story repeated many times.

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

# An Overdue Memorial

The Scrapbook has long regretted the diffidence with which America's triumph in the Cold War was greeted. We never enjoyed a proper Victory over Communism day to match VE or VJ day. Monuments to the collapse of the Soviet empire and the triumph of the West have been few and far between.

Last week, though, we saw a partial rectification of this regrettable amnesia with the dedication in Washington, just a few blocks north of the Capitol, of a memorial to the victims of communism. The monument itself (at right) is what you might call a third-generation Statue of Liberty, being modeled on the model of the original that was erected by art students in Beijing in 1989, days before that brief flowering of democracy was crushed by the tanks of the Communist government.

President Bush was on hand and paid appropriate tribute to the two scholar-activists who were most responsible for the project, Amb. Lev Dobriansky and Lee Edwards. "The men and women who designed this memorial," said the president, "could have chosen an image of repression for this space, a replica of the wall that once divided Berlin, or the frozen barracks of the Gulag, or a killing field littered with skulls. Instead, they chose an image of hope—a woman holding a lamp of liberty. She reminds us of the victims of communism, and also of the power that overcame communism. Like our Statue of Liberty, she reminds us that the flame for freedom burns in every human heart, and that it is a light that cannot be extinguished by the brutality of terrorists or tyrants."

Rep. Tom Lantos, the Democratic congressman and Holocaust survivor, gave the keynote address, saying, "It was my privilege to fight against Nazism and it was my privilege to fight against communism. And it is now my privilege to fight against Islamist terrorism determined to take us back 13 centuries." He added: "Everyone who has tasted communism, from Albania to Estonia, knows that without the United States, this existential struggle would have been lost."

Lev Nisnevitch

**Victims of Communism Memorial**

For our part, the canonical text on the victims of communism remains the foreword to Whittaker Chambers's *Witness*, in which he tells of a German diplomat's daughter describing why her father lost his allegiance to communism:

> "He was immensely pro-Soviet," she said, "and then—you will laugh at me—but you must not laugh at my father—and then—one night—in Moscow—he heard screams. That's all. Simply one night he heard screams."

Chambers described those as "the five annihilating words: one night he heard screams" that had swept away "the myth of the 20th century."

We offer heartfelt thanks to the many people besides Edwards and Dobriansky who made possible this welcome addition to the capital of the free world, as some of us still call it. ♦

## The AP Just Got Blurrier

When President Bush named Ed Gillespie as his new White House counselor last week, the Associated Press began its story this way: "The line between lobbying the federal government and running it just got blurrier." Really? Gillespie won't be running anything. He's a presidential adviser. And does anyone think he'll be lobbying the president on behalf of his old clients? No.

Had the AP sought to describe Gillespie in possibly more relevant terms, it would have noted first that he's a former Republican national chairman and, prior to taking the White House post, chairman of the Virginia Republican party. That information came in the fifth paragraph, after several of Gillespie's former clients were mentioned.

But there was a better, if less pernicious, angle. The president came to the White House with a jaundiced view of the permanent Washington community, especially its battalions of lobbyists. And compared with earlier presidents, Bush has hired amazingly few lobbyists for his personal staff or his administration. But now, unpopular and under fire from a hostile Congress, Bush has turned for help to the


*(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of April 14, 1997)*

community he once spurned.

That angle might have prompted the AP to contrast Bush with his predecessor, Bill Clinton, who hired a long list of lobbyists to influential positions. These included his Commerce secretary Ronald Brown, White House chief of staff John Podesta, National Security Adviser Sandy Berger, deputy assistant for legislative affairs Steve Richetti, and congressional liaison Howard Paster.

If Gillespie's appointment made the line between lobbying and advising the president blurrier, Clinton's picks for top jobs wiped it out entirely. ♦

## News Flash

Per *Newsweek*'s latest cover, "In a wrenching role reversal, adult children are struggling to help their ailing parents." Life's iron laws continue to come as a shock to the magazine's Boomer editors. Can't wait for the upcoming features: "Incontinence: America's Secret Shame" and "How to Cheat Death: 10 New Ideas!" ♦

## Author! Author!

The Scrapbook could not allow our Summer Reading issue to go to press without a tip of the old straw boater to a pair of fascinating volumes—just arrived in bookstores—from two of our contributing editors, Tod Lindberg and David Gelernter.

*The Political Teachings of Jesus* by Tod Lindberg (HarperCollins, $25.95) is not just about what its title suggests but a lively, knowledgeable guide to what Jesus actually said about politics and —here's the interesting part—how his political (as opposed to his religious) principles have deeply influenced our views on public morality and social justice. Nearly everyone along the political spectrum claims the authority of Jesus; Tod Lindberg shows us who's wrong and what's right.

*Americanism: The Fourth Great Western Religion* by David Gelernter (Doubleday, $24.95) is just the kind of wise and provocative study that Standard readers will welcome. When we talk about "believing" in America and the American ideal, says David Gelernter, we're not just thinking of political science but a genuine religious creed that informs our notions of democracy, freedom, and equality. From the Pilgrims and their vision of a New Jerusalem, through the Founders, to Abraham Lincoln and modern prophets (Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson), *Americanism* traces the articles of faith that have made us who we are and inspired the world. ♦

## Help Wanted

The Weekly Standard has a full-time position available for a staff assistant. This is a clerical position working with the editors. Duties will include answering phones and emails, updating our website, research, and record-keeping. Candidates should address a cover letter and résumé to *hr@weeklystandard.com.* ♦

# Casual

## Old Town, New Money

There is a power plant in Old Town Alexandria, the old port city nestled along the Potomac River just south of Washington. It was built by the Potomac Electric Power Company (Pepco) in 1949, at the north end of town, hard on the bank of the river. Back then, the neighborhood was industrial and decidedly low-rent.

When deregulation hit the energy market, the plant passed eventually to a company called Mirant. I moved to Old Town, just across the street from Mirant, in 2001. The power plant has never bothered me. Truth be told, I kind of like it. For one thing, it's useful: The plant generates 482 megawatts—enough to power between 400,000 and 500,000 homes. It employs some 178 people. It's unobtrusive and mostly hidden from view by trees. The only time I really notice it is when the train rolls by to deliver coal, and I've always been partial to trains.

The rest of Old Town feels somewhat differently.

In recent years, Old Town has undergone a demographic transformation. No longer a mixed socioeconomic bag, it's now one of the richest and most exclusive Washington suburbs. Almost all of the former industrial sites and lower-income residences have been bulldozed to make way for expensive shops, luxury townhouses, and condominiums. In 2006, the median home sales price in Old Town was $696,000.

Alexandria has been politically transmogrified by this infusion of wealth. For instance, while Virginia went for Bush 54 percent to 45 percent in 2004, Alexandria went for Kerry 67 percent to 32 percent. The city now boasts its own Human Rights Commission and recently appointed its first poet laureate, a former chemistry teacher named Mary McElveen. A sample from her "City of Songs": *We are tomorrow's unwritten poems: / Homeless and builder, / Tourist and truck driver, / Lawyer and artist—all of us / Speaking our souls to cellphones / And singing to the empty air.*


One of the songs I hear a lot these days is how much Alexandrians hate Mirant. After a half century of good relations, the city decided in 2000—just as property values began to soar, incidentally—that Mirant was a menace. In a fit of Get Out of My Backyard—GOMBY—ism, the city now wants it banished. The job of producing power would then be shoehorned into somebody else's neighborhood.

The GOMBY campaign began with residents requesting that Mirant perform a "dust study" to see if the plant was contaminating the air. Mirant obliged; research showed it wasn't. The city then focused on the plant's Nitrogen Oxides emissions, charging that they were too high. In 2003, Mirant entered into a consent decree to control and monitor NOx with the Department of Energy, the EPA, and the state of Virginia. Alexandria challenged this deal in court. It lost. Next, the city argued that "downwash" was affecting the high-rise condominiums next to the plant. Incidentally, this complex, erected in the 1970s, was built on land once owned by Pepco. It seems a little unfair to acquire land, build on it, and then claim that you want the government to evict the former owner, who still lives next door.

Nonetheless, Mirant devised a system to alleviate the downwash issue using a compound called trona. Egged on by citizen groups, the city then objected to the use of trona.

You might think there was nothing Mirant could do to satisfy Old Town's new elites. Which is what the city's director of transportation and environmental services admitted during a 2006 deposition. Asked if there was any way the plant could be operated so as not to be a nuisance, he said no, there wasn't.

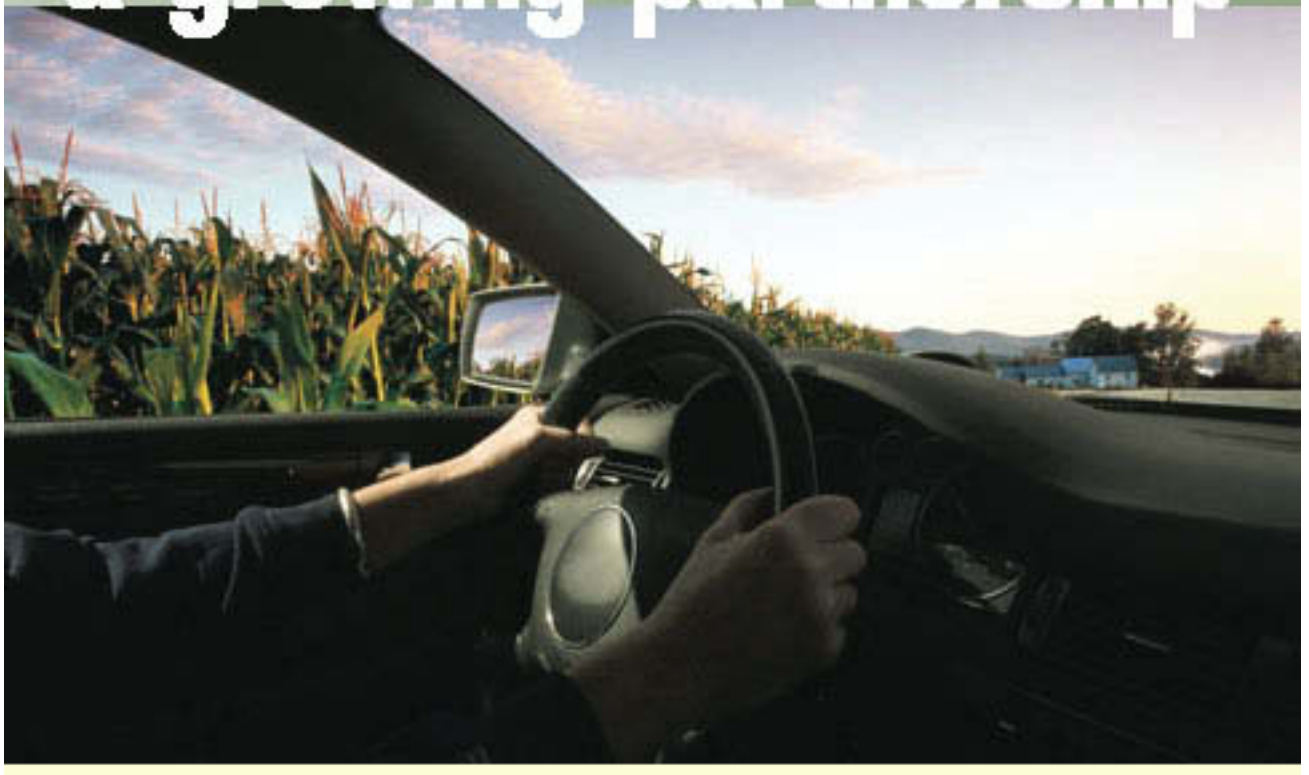
Alexandria has filed three lawsuits against Mirant. It's lost all three, while spending some $2 million of taxpayer money. It has thrown away other money too. Like any smart corporation, Mirant spreads around cash to foster goodwill, giving to local causes, charities, and scholarships. One of the company's annual gifts is for $1,000 to help with the city's Earth Day celebrations. This year, for the first time, the city returned Mirant's check.

That money could have been spent on schools or poets. And what about the children?

Perhaps this all makes me, as one anti-Mirant neighbor gently put it, "a traitor to my class." It certainly makes me a hypocrite. I knew Alexandria was like this when I moved here. Yet I still can't help but wish that the anti-Mirant busybodies would leave my little power plant alone and move somewhere else.

**Jonathan V. Last**

# Ethanol and energy: a growing partnership



## How to keep the ethanol market growing

Today, nearly half the gasoline sold in the United States contains ethanol, and the building blocks are now in place to nearly double ethanol's use in the next five years. That's good news, but it's no silver bullet. Corn-based ethanol, even though highly subsidized with tax dollars, can't conceivably meet U.S. energy goals. The diversion of corn to ethanol production is already driving up food prices, and by raising feed costs to cattle, hog and poultry farmers, it is also raising meat, egg and milk prices. So, where do we go from here?

**New Technologies**

The nation needs to expand research into other potential biofuel sources. For example, cellulosic ethanol, made from plant fiber, is showing considerable promise, although the technology is not yet available to produce it economically on a commercial scale.

**Markets, Not Mandates**

We know from past experience that efficient and cost-effective energy is produced best by market-driven demand — not artificial government requirements. Markets and advances in technology, not government mandates, are more likely to produce a sustainable, growing reliance on biofuels.

**Join Together**

Meeting the nation's energy needs will take cooperation among government, producers and consumers. If we join together and all do our part, we will succeed in diversifying America's energy sources and maintaining our quality of life for generations to come.

COALITION FOR SUSTAINABLE FOOD AND FUEL

# RAISING TAXES WON'T GENERATE THE ENERGY SHE'LL NEED

Most Americans agree energy security is a top national priority, because they want to ensure their families' quality of life now and into the future. So why do some in Congress want to raise taxes on the development of oil and natural gas resources?

History shows that changing the rules by raising energy taxes has serious consequences. After Congress levied a "windfall profits" tax in the 1980s, its own non-partisan Congressional Research Service determined this tax diverted $79 billion from domestic energy investment and reduced U.S. oil production by as much as 1.26 billion barrels.

**Stable tax policies encourage energy development**

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates America will need 25 percent more oil and natural gas by 2030. And to make sure future generations will have it, we need stable tax policies that encourage the development of critical energy resources. Benefiting Americans today – and especially tomorrow.

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the weekly Standard

# Slow-motion Tet

Last week, a group of tribal leaders in Salah-ad-Din, the mostly Sunni province due north of Baghdad, agreed to work with the Iraqi government and U.S. forces against al Qaeda. Then al Qaeda destroyed the two remaining minarets of the al-Askariya mosque in Samarra, a city in the province. Coincidence? Perhaps. But al Qaeda is clearly taking a page from the Viet Cong's book. The terrorists have been mounting a slow-motion Tet offensive of spectacular attacks on markets, bridges, and mosques, knowing that the media report each such attack as an American defeat. The fact is that al Qaeda is steadily losing its grip in Iraq, and these attacks are alienating its erstwhile Iraqi supporters. But the terrorists are counting on sapping our will as the VC did, and persuading America to choose to lose a war it could win.

The Salah-ad-Din announcement that Iraqis were turning against al Qaeda was just one of many such announcements over recent weeks and months. Some media reports have tried to debunk this development, reporting, for example, that the Sunni coalition against al Qaeda in Anbar province is fragmenting. But even the fragments are saying that they will continue to cooperate with us and fight al Qaeda. Sunni movements similar to the one in Anbar have developed and grown in Babil province south of Baghdad and even in strife-torn and mixed Diyala province to the northeast. Most remarkable, local Sunnis in Baghdad recently rose up against al Qaeda, and even hard core Baathist insurgent groups have reached out to U.S. forces to cooperate in the fight against the terrorists. Far from being evidence of our desperation and danger, as some have claimed, this turn of events demonstrates the degree to which al Qaeda is repelling Iraqis.

It has long been clear that most Iraqis want nothing to do with al Qaeda's religious and political views. They do not find the intolerant and occasionally ludicrous al Qaeda program appealing: Being required to segregate vegetables in a market by sex, as al Qaeda fighters have apparently demanded, appalls Iraqis just as it would Americans. Yet whenever al Qaeda makes itself comfortable in an Iraqi neighborhood, it begins to enforce its absurd and intolerant version of Islam. Locals resist, and al Qaeda begins to "punish" them with an increasing scale of atrocities. Just that sort of escalation led to al Qaeda's loss of control in Anbar and to the growth of the various anti-al Qaeda movements in Iraq's Sunni community.

Iraqis have also shown that they are not interested in having their homes become a base for the export of international terrorism—even as Al Qaeda in Iraq proclaims itself a "vanguard," like all good al Qaeda franchises, in the war against the infidel crusaders (us) and the Muslim heretics (the Shia and all others who practice a form of Islam different from al Qaeda's). The overwhelming majority of suicide bombers in Iraq are still foreigners, and Iraqis have never lined up at the gates of al Qaeda recruiting stations for training and dispatch to foreign lands.

Iraq's Sunnis have tolerated al Qaeda's presence all these years for one reason: Terrorists are good fighters. As long as Iraq's Sunni Arab community thought that it could use violence to regain control of Iraq or felt that it faced an existential threat from the Shiite majority, al Qaeda was a useful if unpleasant ally. But the willingness even of some of the hardest core Sunni Arab insurgents to negotiate with U.S. forces shows how far the Sunnis have come toward recognizing reality. They will not regain control of Iraq militarily, and will have to make the best deal they can get within the political system. And they will not face an existential threat from the Shia as long as we are there, and not at all if an appropriate political deal can be cut. These are signs of the waning of an insurgency—and ominous signs indeed for the parasitic terrorists who rely on the blood of sectarian violence to survive.

The way ahead will not be smooth. The second attack on the al-Askariya mosque creates a dangerous situation whose effects cannot yet be seen. Even beyond that incident, the path toward political reconciliation will be long, tortuous, and marked by setbacks. It will not follow timelines dictated from Washington, and it will not be accomplished by a nicely typed legislative package. Politics, like war, is messy, unpredictable, and not subject to timelines. But real progress has already been made in the war against Al Qaeda in Iraq, and the terrorists know it. That's why they're surging against our surge, and why they are attempting to convince us that we have lost when it is they who are losing. But surely our political leaders have enough sense, and enough courage, not to believe enemy propaganda. We believed it once before, in 1968, in circumstances far less dangerous and far less consequential for our well-being than the present. Let's not make that grave mistake again.

*—Frederick W. Kagan and William Kristol*

# Uncompassionate Conservatives

## Call them heartless and frugal—they'll be flattered.

**BY FRED BARNES**

In the good old days when Republicans ruled Congress, their instructions for President Bush were: no vetoes, especially of spending bills. Republican leaders—House speaker Denny Hastert, for one—made it clear a Bush veto would cause ill will on Capitol Hill. So over a six-year period the president vetoed exactly one bill. And it was a bipartisan bid to increase funding for embryonic stem cell research. Meanwhile, spending increased, the number of pork barrel expenditures known as earmarks skyrocketed, and Republicans lost their reputation as skinflints. "We lost our brand," says a Republican official.

They want it back. And they are willing to be pilloried by Democrats as pitiless, cruel, unfeeling, callous, uncaring, coldhearted, and Scrooge-like to get it. That's how important it is to Republicans to be seen again as politicians who can be counted on to restrain or, better yet, slash government spending, even in the case of popular programs.

"It would be refreshing to be accused of being heartless and frugal, rather than getting in a bidding war on spending with the Democrats like we have lately," says Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin, the ranking Republican on the House Budget Committee. Ryan is one of the architects of the strategy to restore the image of Republicans as true fiscal conservatives.

Instead of signing spending bills, Republicans now want Bush to veto them with abandon. "We want to encourage and empower him to put the ink cartridge back in his veto pen," says Rep. Jeb Hensarling of Texas, the chairman of the Republican Study Committee, a group of conservative House members. "They're anxious for a fight," a White House official adds, "and the president is willing."

What looms now is a budget war much like the one in 1995 between House Republicans led by Speaker Newt Gingrich and President Clinton. Only this time it's between a Democratic Congress and a Republican president.

Bush is prepared to veto at least 11 of the 12 appropriations bills that are expected to reach the White House by late summer. House Democrats have allocated $23 billion more for these bills than the president requested, thus providing a justification for the vetoes. The twelfth is the defense appropriation, which Democrats have set at slightly less than Bush asked for. But he may veto it too.

A veto can be overridden by two-thirds of the House and Senate, but that margin will be difficult to reach. The flip side is that one house of Congress can sustain a veto if one-third or more vote to do so.

In the House, that means 146 votes can sustain a veto. And last week, Hensarling announced that 147 House Republicans had signed a petition promising to uphold Bush vetoes of spending measures. "We intend to continue to use all means within our power to highlight the Democrats' empty promises of fiscal responsibility," Hensarling said.

House Republican leader John Boehner has successfully pursued one of those means to embarrass Democrats on spending. He noisily tied the House in procedural knots for days after Rep. David Obey, the Democratic chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, proposed to hide earmarks until the end of the budget process.

This, too, reverses a Republican practice. When they held Congress, Republicans escalated the number of earmarks, regarding them as "preservation tools" in helping incumbents win elections. In the 2006 election, however, the heavy use of earmarks backfired. Earmarks became a symbol for Republican misrule of Congress.

Bush has never been known as a spending hawk. But aides now say he

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was "frustrated" at times by the insistence of congressional Republicans that he shy away from vetoes. They concede, however, that he willingly signed a farm bill in 2002, perhaps the most egregious of spending bills in his first term. The excuse was 2002 was an election year.

Nor is the president a small government conservative with all the stinginess the name implies. On the contrary, he calls himself a compassionate conservative and has defended social spending programs aimed at the poor. Also, his creation of a Medicare prescription drug benefit appalled some conservatives.

Bush and congressional Republicans learned a painful lesson from the 2006 election: Excessive spending made them politically vulnerable. Now they are unified in turning the tables on Democrats and attacking them as big spenders. The Democratic budget has "given us an ability to recast the differences between the parties again," said a House Republican leader.

Credit for Bush's emergence as a hardliner is shared by two White House officials, chief of staff Josh Bolten and budget chief Rob Portman, a former Republican House member. Bolten was Portman's predecessor in the budget post, one that usually leads to a strong preference for limits on spending and austere budgets.

Still, Republicans worry Bush may split with them when the showdown comes between the White House and the Democrats. The president may be offered full funding of his defense budget in exchange for the higher domestic spending favored by Democrats. That's an offer Bush probably can't refuse. ♦


# Dear Judge Reggie . . .

## Letters from Scooter Libby's friends and admirers.

**BY STEPHEN F. HAYES**

Before Judge Reggie Walton sentenced Scooter Libby earlier this month, he was flooded with letters from more than 100 friends and colleagues urging leniency for Vice President Cheney's former chief of staff. Such letters are common at the end of trials. High-profile defendants and anonymous miscreants alike supply testimonials in the hopes of persuading the judge that the verdict was inconsistent with a life of altruism and sunshine.

There were plenty of those letters in the Libby file delivered to Judge Walton. One came from Eric Fernandez, who as a teenager had worked for Libby on two occasions. Another came from Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. One letter came from a former secretary of the Air Force and another from one of the stewards on Air Force Two. Neighbors, clergymen, staffers, bosses, law school classmates, partners at his old law firms, Bush administration officials, Clinton administration officials—all of them pleaded with Judge Walton to have a good thought for Libby.

Walton ignored the letters, or at least did not allow them to influence his decision to send Libby to prison for 30 months. Many readers of this magazine by now know the facts of the case, but it's worth a review.

In the early summer of 2003, as the victory over Saddam Hussein failed to turn up weapons of mass destruction, Richard Armitage, Colin Powell's number two at the State Department, gossiped to both Bob Novak and Bob Woodward about Joe Wilson, a former diplomat and prominent critic of the Iraq war. Wilson had just made himself famous with the anti-Bush left by insinuating that Bush lied the country into the war, ignoring a mission to Niger by Wilson in which he supposedly debunked reports that Saddam Hussein had gone shopping there for uranium. Wilson claimed this was an errand he had run at the behest of Vice President Cheney.

It was more than a bit mysterious to reporters like Novak and Woodward—to any well-informed onlooker for that matter—why a loose cannon like Wilson would have been sent on such a sensitive mission by an administration he clearly loathed. Wilson's sudden prominence as a critic of the administration was also embarrassing to the State Department, under whose aegis his trip to Niger had taken place (never mind Armitage's own lack of enthusiasm for the war). Armitage explained to Novak and Woodward that Wilson's trip had in fact been set up at a low level by Wilson's wife—Valerie Plame—who worked at the CIA.

Dropped into Novak's column, this anecdote gave rise to the myth of a White House conspiracy to "get" Wilson by destroying his wife's career. The CIA referred the leak to the Justice Department for criminal investigation (under certain conditions, the exposure of undercover CIA operatives is illegal). When the investigation seemed stalled, news of the referral was leaked, probably by the CIA, leading Justice to appoint a special prosecutor, Patrick Fitzgerald. By then FBI investigators—and soon Fitzgerald himself—knew that Armitage, not Libby, was the source of the original leak.

Two years later, after thousands

*Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at* The Weekly Standard.


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of hours of sworn testimony to FBI agents and grand juries by dozens of journalists and Bush administration officials; after the jailing of a *New York Times* reporter for contempt and evidence that a number of media figures had hedged the truth or lied through their teeth when it came to their own reporting on Wilson and Plame, Fitzgerald charged no one with wrongdoing except Libby, who was convicted of perjury and impeding the investigation. Although Fitzgerald never charged Libby or anyone else with exposing the identity of a covert CIA operative, he urged the judge to punish Libby as if he had committed such a crime. And so the judge has done.

When he was chief of staff in Gerald Ford's White House, Vice President Dick Cheney, speaking of himself, said: "I really do think that a staff man should be anonymous." Until Joseph Wilson fingered Libby as the official who outed his wife, Libby was that anonymous staff man. (Wilson's claim, like so many others that passed his lips, was later shown to be false.)

Reasonable people disagree about whether Libby lied to investigators, as the jury found, or was the victim of a faulty memory and an overzealous prosecutor, as his defenders maintain. And not everyone who worked with Libby appreciated his sometimes-clipped manner and the tight control he exercised over access to his boss. But if the letters to Walton are any indication, Libby's contributions to post-9/11 national security were significant and deserve to be better known.

One letter came from W. Seth Carus, deputy director of the Center for the Study of Weapons of Mass Destruction at the National Defense University. Carus had worked with Libby on WMD and homeland security issues and writes that his former colleague was a chief architect of the protective measures now in place on bioterrorism.

> Like many of my colleagues inside and outside the government, I believe that biological weapons pose one of the most serious national security challenges facing the United States in the 21st Century. In my considered opinion, Mr. Libby has done more to enable the United States to address the challenges of bioterrorism than any other single person. I do not know when, or even if, we will be the target of biological weapons. What I do know, is that if such an attack occurs, many people will survive who otherwise would have died without the preparations enabled by the processes that he enabled.

This view is echoed by Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases at the National Institutes of Health. He wrote:

> Mr. Libby worked closely with us in the development of the "Project Bioshield" legislation. Project Bioshield was created in order to have set-aside money for the guaranteed purchase by the Federal government of medical countermeasures against bioterror attacks. The money would serve as an incentive for biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies to take the risk of entering a field of product development that was financially risky, since there was no guarantee that the product would ever be used. I do not believe that we would have had the Bioshield legislation or several of the countermeasures that we now have in the Strategic National Stockpile were it not for the tireless efforts of Mr. Libby.

Robert Blackwill, a former dean at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government and former deputy national security adviser for strategic planning under Bush, credits Libby with keeping a bad situation in Iraq from getting worse and suggests a relationship between Libby's exit and the further difficulties there:

> I especially recall the Administration debate in 2003 concerning whether to bring forward the date of the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraq government. While many others were quick to have an opinion on the subject, Mr. Libby as always went through a methodical examination of the pros and cons of the issue. Continually guided by George Marshall's ever present policy question, "Why might I be wrong?", Mr. Libby insisted that the Administration decision making process rely on facts and not vaporous opinion.
>
> In this spirit, he was a tough critic of my own policy inclinations and recommendations and I benefited enormously from his counsel and advice. When the President ultimately decided to follow my recommendation and bring forward by two years the transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqis, Mr. Libby was a crucial voice in favor of that decision which in retrospect clearly provided a major boost at the time to U.S. policy objectives in Iraq. Sadly, I believe that Mr. Libby's premature departure from the Administration has been a major reason for the downward spiral of the situation in Iraq and the consuming mess in which we find ourselves today regarding that country. . . .

Such policy-focused letters were the exceptions. Others struck a more personal note, including two that highlighted Libby's response to personal tragedies among his staff.

"Mr. Libby was with me on Air Force 2 when I found out that my father had suddenly passed away," wrote Paul Flynn, a military aide to Cheney. "As you can imagine, this was a very difficult moment for me. One thing that I will remember about the first few hours after I had received the news and began sorting out what to do next, is Mr. Libby's genuine concern and support for me and my family. He personally informed the Vice President of the situation and offered his assistance in helping me make arrangements to return home. In addition, he made time to speak with me after my return to duty to express his sympathy."

Jonathan W. Burks, a former domestic policy aide to Cheney, described a similar experience:

> Following the death of my father in 2005, Scooter handwrote a long, personal letter relating to me the challenges he faced when his father passed away and offering his support in whatever way he could as I dealt with my grief. Once I had returned to the White House following my father's funeral, Scooter delayed his arrival at a meeting with the Vice President to seek me out to personally offer his condolences and reiterate his availability to support me in whatever way he could.

Fritz Ermath, former chairman of the CIA's National Intelligence Council

(NIC), described advice he once got from Scooter Libby, the attorney.

> Some years ago, I retained him for advice and representation in a matter, although less grave, somewhat similar to that which put him on trial. It concerned official secrecy and classification, its definition and interpretation, varying recollections of who behaved how with respect to it, and aspects of abuse by authorities. In this case, Mr. Libby's advice to me was to behave strictly by the rules very strictly constructed and to trust the decency and honesty of the process, even if that trust was not entirely justified. The Libby I know from this experience would never intentionally misrepresent his recollections to investigators . . .

David Gries, former vice chairman of the NIC, offered a similar story:

> In 1992, Libby was Undersecretary of Defense, and I was Vice-Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. Several CIA officials were indicted during the Iran-Contra scandal, and I was twice a witness for the defense in the subsequent trials. . . . New to the witness box and personally uninvolved in Iran-Contra, I asked Scooter for advice because I valued his counsel. His response was unambiguous: "tell the truth."

Gries also wrote of Libby's *pro bono* representation of former government officials. Libby once represented an individual who was being considered for secretary of the Army. Opponents alleged that the individual, a distinguished Vietnam veteran, had been engaged in shady business dealings in Vietnam. Libby defended him without sending him a bill. Former Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz highlighted the same case. "I also remember how Mr. Libby offered his services *pro bono* or at reduced cost—after he had returned to private law practice—to help former colleagues and friends with legal issues. In one case, he helped a public official defend himself successfully against libelous accusations, something that it is extremely difficult to do for anyone in public office," Wolfowitz wrote.

"The official in question was Richard Armitage. . . . " ♦


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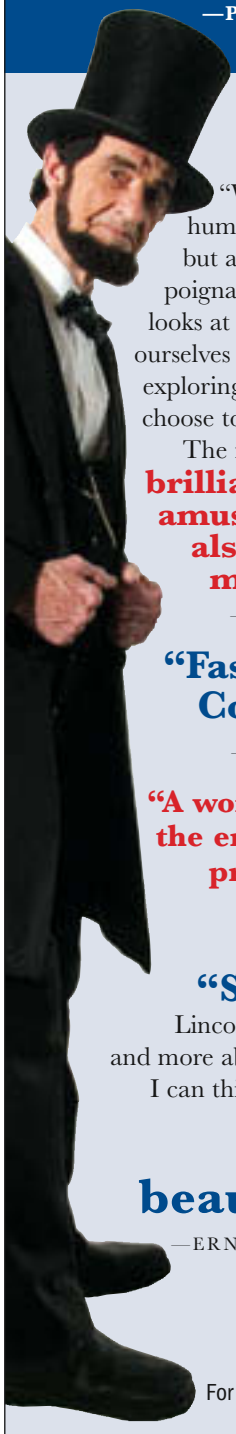

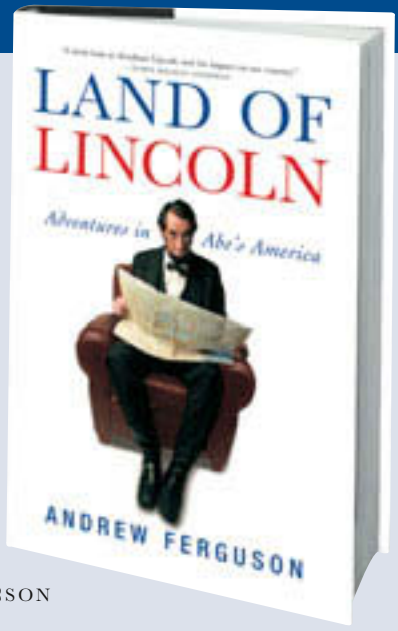


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# The Twelve Commandments

## Giuliani lays down a marker.

**BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI**

Don't let the gimmicky name fool you. The "12 Commitments to the American People" that former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani unveiled in a June 12 speech in Bedford, New Hampshire, are more than political slogans.

The pledges serve two purposes. The first is policy-oriented. So far this year, no other GOP candidate for president has laid out as comprehensive an agenda as Giuliani's. Which is saying something, because the 12 commitments are pretty sketchy in places. For example, the word "Iraq" does not appear in any of them.

The second purpose the 12 commitments serve is political. By making specific pledges to voters months before any voting occurs, Giuliani is attempting to shape the debate. By outlining goals and pledging concrete results, Giuliani is able to highlight his successes in reforming New York City during his two terms as mayor. The Giuliani campaign wants to reinforce the idea that the mayor is ready to be president right now, not just on January 20, 2009. Another aim is to draw sharp contrasts between Giuliani's record and agenda and those of his opponents, both Republicans and Democrats. "The two people in Rudy's sights now are Fred Thompson and Hillary Clinton," says Fred Siegel, author of *The Prince of the City*, a history of Giuliani's mayoralty.

So, what are the 12 commitments? Giuliani says he'll keep America "on offense" in the war on terror, end illegal immigration, cut spending, cut taxes, make government accountable, push America toward energy independence, introduce free-market health care reforms, increase adoptions and decrease abortions, reform tort law and appoint strict constructionist judges, prepare "every community in America" for a terrorist attack or natural disaster, introduce a school-choice plan, and promote free trade and globalization. It's an outsized agenda for an outsized political personality.

The list of commitments is flexible, with one exception. To Giuliani, nothing is more important than his pledge to keep America "on offense" against her enemies. Other commitments will rise or fall in importance at different times in the campaign. For instance, last week Giuliani said the sixth commitment, energy independence, eventually may rise to number two, since the issue relates to national security. And some new commitments may show up as well. "Could be, over a period of time, we'll add several commitments as we talk to people and listen to them more," Giuliani said in Bedford.

The 12 commitments have been in the works for some time, says an unpaid Giuliani adviser, but the campaign "moved ahead fairly quickly." One reason the mayor may have decided to unveil his pledges so early in the campaign is the looming presence of former senator Fred Thompson, who plans to announce his presidential candidacy sometime this summer. In an NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll released last week, Thompson places second among GOP voters nationwide. Giuliani is first.

A senior Giuliani aide disputes that the rollout was in any way rushed. "That's just not accurate," says the aide. That Giuliani would outline the 12 commitments last week had been planned for a while, according to the senior aide. Even the choice of the word "commitment" was the subject of consideration. It's intended to convey Giuliani's dedication and willingness to be held accountable.

"This was an attempt to be goal-oriented," the senior aide says of the 12 commitments. Giuliani, the aide continues, is "someone who likes measurement." An example of this is Giuliani's pledge to increase the number of adoptions and reduce the number of abortions. It's a practical goal that skirts the normative, values-based questions typically associated with the abortion issue.

Giuliani has been meeting with policy wonks since last Christmas. He's deeply interested in policy and takes the lead role in staff briefings with outside experts. One of Giuliani's major fundraisers, private equity magnate T. Boone Pickens, speaks frequently with the former mayor about energy. Another large influence is Thomas P. Barnett, the strategist whose book *The Pentagon's New Map* was a major bestseller. Giuliani read it, loved it, and met with Barnett. One of Barnett's themes is expanding the sphere of American economic interaction with the rest of the world. Giuliani alludes to this idea in his 12th commitment, and it will likely play a large part in the mayor's forthcoming *Foreign Affairs* essay, slated for publication this fall.

Two myths have sprung up about the 12 commitments. The first is that the list is incomplete or evasive because Iraq goes unmentioned. But Giuliani has said he considers the war in Iraq a part of the overall war on terror, so remaining there in some capacity is implied in his prescription to stay "on offense."

The second myth is that Giuliani's list lacks substance. "His so-called 'commitments' are nothing more than empty rhetoric," Democratic National Committee communications director Karen Finney said last week. If that's the case, why did Finney feel

*Matthew Continetti is associate editor at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.


# Will Rogers

was one of the most loved and admired Americans of all time. When in 1935 a plane crash in Alaska killed him, it caused what was called the greatest outpouring of grief since the death of Lincoln. A fervent FDR Democrat, the "cowboy philosopher" had been a cheerleader for the New Deal. He liked the idea of soaking the rich, enjoyed needling big business, and favored big government programs to end the Great Depression. He is one of liberalism's heroes.

Yet on crime and related social issues, Rogers often said things you'd hear today only from the toughest law-and-order conservative or even from a member of the dreaded Religious Right. For example:

- "Of course, the best way out of this crime wave would be to punish the criminals, but, of course, that is out of the question! That's barbarous, and takes us back, as the hysterics say, to the days before civilization."
- "If the Bolsheviks say that religion was holding the people back from progress, why, let it hold them back. Progress ain't selling that high. If it is, it ain't worth it. … They picked the only one thing I know of to suppress that is absolutely necessary to run a Country on, and that is Religion."

Republicans hoping to regain the voters' favor might take some cues from Rogers, for millions of Americans today feel just as he did. These Will Rogers Democrats aren't small-government conservatives. But they long to live in a society that is free of wanton criminal violence. They want their children's education and peer-group culture to promote, not subvert, what Jefferson called "the moralities of life and the duties of a social being." And they are fed up with the Atheist Crank Litigation Union's unrelenting war against all things holy.

For a look at how the GOP might finally manage to render more than lip service to those people's concerns, click on the Will Rogers icon at **www.fairamendment.us.** And you can obtain a free copy of the essay "Crime, Realignment and the Will Rogers Republican" in illustrated pamphlet form by writing to:

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The great American crime wave we've been suffering these 40 years is far from over. When it finally does end, the phrase "Great Crime Wave" may well go into the history books alongside "Great Depression." Why so? Because we've had it that bad. Between 1960 and 1991, the U.S. murder rate doubled. The rate of major crimes against property tripled. The rates of robbery and forcible rape more than quadrupled, and that of aggravated assault more than quintupled. Even after receding from its crest of the early '90s, crime in the United States remains, per capita, more than twice what it was 50 years ago — and the latest reports are that the mayhem is increasing again. In our time, crime has killed more Americans than died in World War II. Its toll dwarfs that of 9/11 — it even dwarfs that of the terrible Indian Ocean tsunami.

***Yo! Liberals! You Call This Progress?*** counts the crime tsunami's cost, examines its birth, and points toward a way to kill it.

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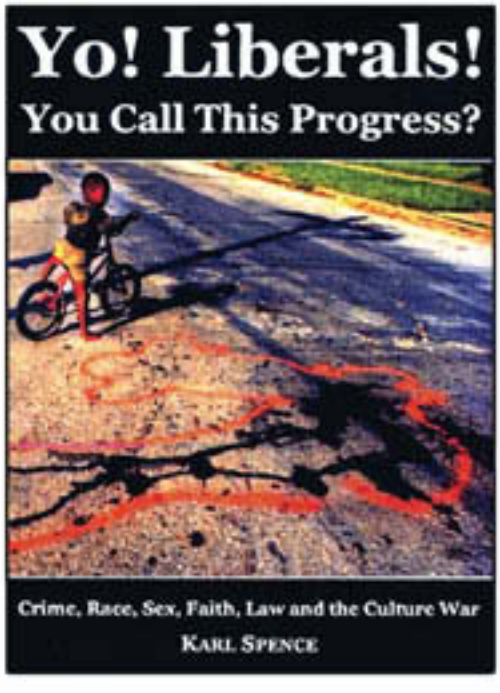


the need to release a four-page email attacking them?

Fact is, while the one-sentence commitments are light on detail, Giuliani added specifics to each in his Bedford address and in subsequent interviews. "Offense" against terror means enforcing the Patriot Act, continuing NSA surveillance of terrorist phone calls into the United States, maintaining the current policy on interrogations, and creating ten new combat brigades for the military, as well as the creation of a "stabilization and reconstruction corps," made up of military and civilian personnel, that would specialize in nation-building. "We may very well need more," Giuliani said in Bedford, "but that's an appropriate way to start."

Ending illegal immigration means an ID card for every noncitizen in the United States, a database tracking them, a one-strike policy for noncitizens convicted of crimes, physical and virtual border fencing, and a BorderStat program to study progress in enforcement. There's also an Americanization component, requiring new citizens to speak, read, and write English.

Energy independence means building new nuclear plants, subsidizing ethanol and biodiesel, and allowing new oil exploration in American coastal areas. Introducing free-market health care reforms means a $15,000 tax deduction for private insurance, health savings accounts, and medical malpractice reform. The list goes on, but there's an underlying message. "Government is about real issues," Giuliani said, "and if you don't have an agenda, you can't march into the future. The future takes control of you."

As for the immediate future, Giuliani plans to spend the summer rolling out his 12 commitments. Each will be the subject of an individual speech. And these speeches will keep the mayor in the news as the primary campaign hits the summer doldrums. Who knows? They might even steal some attention from Fred Thompson. ♦

# Pelosi's Favorite Stalinist

## Return of the San Francisco Democrats.

**BY JOSHUA MURAVCHIK**

Since becoming speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi has campaigned for unconditional withdrawal from Iraq with surprising fervor, making it sound as if "the war" and George W. Bush were America's only enemies. I had supposed that the Democrats would prefer to keep up a drumbeat of criticism of the administration's teetering policies without assuming responsibility for whatever comes next in Iraq, which is what they will in effect be doing if they force the president's hand. I had, in short, thought they would behave more like politicians than like ideologues and activists. I had missed the ideological streak in Pelosi's own background.

Pelosi comes from the San Francisco Bay Area, where Democrats have long positioned themselves far to the left of the national party. For example, former congressman Ron Dellums of Berkeley was a tireless stalwart of Communist front groups, and other representatives, like George Miller, Pelosi's closest colleague in the House, and the Burton brothers, John and Phil, manned the party's left fringe. Miller still does.

The reason for this sharp tilt was not, as one might imagine, the influence of University of California student radicalism, which in reality had little reach into practical politics. Rather, it was the unique character of organized labor in the Bay Area. Everywhere else in America, the AFL-CIO was a staunch force for anti-communism. This was symbolized by labor's most important postwar leader, George Meany, who denied labor's backing to George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election for the sole reason that McGovern was soft on communism, and who organized a welcome to America gala for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn in 1975, when President Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger refused to receive the Soviet dissident.

Beginning in the late 1940s, American labor unions had purged their own ranks of Communists, the AFL-CIO adopting a policy of expelling any union led by Communists. By and large, this policy provided sufficient impetus for anti-Communist factions to organize to battle the Communists within those unions in which they had become powerful. In most cases the anti-Communists succeeded in running the Communists out. But in some cases the Communists won, and the most important such exception was the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), which controlled the docks of San Francisco.

The ILWU was duly expelled from the AFL-CIO, but it thrived nonetheless. It became arguably the most powerful union in the Bay Area and a big supporter of leftist causes, including inside the Democratic party. Unlike UC students, the ILWU could bring lots of money and resources to bear on behalf of favored candidates.

The force behind the ILWU's ideology was Harry Bridges, an Australian immigrant and devoted Communist. The Roosevelt and Truman administrations tried to deport Bridges, on the grounds that he had lied about his Communist affiliation in his immigration papers, but for

*Joshua Muravchik is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.*

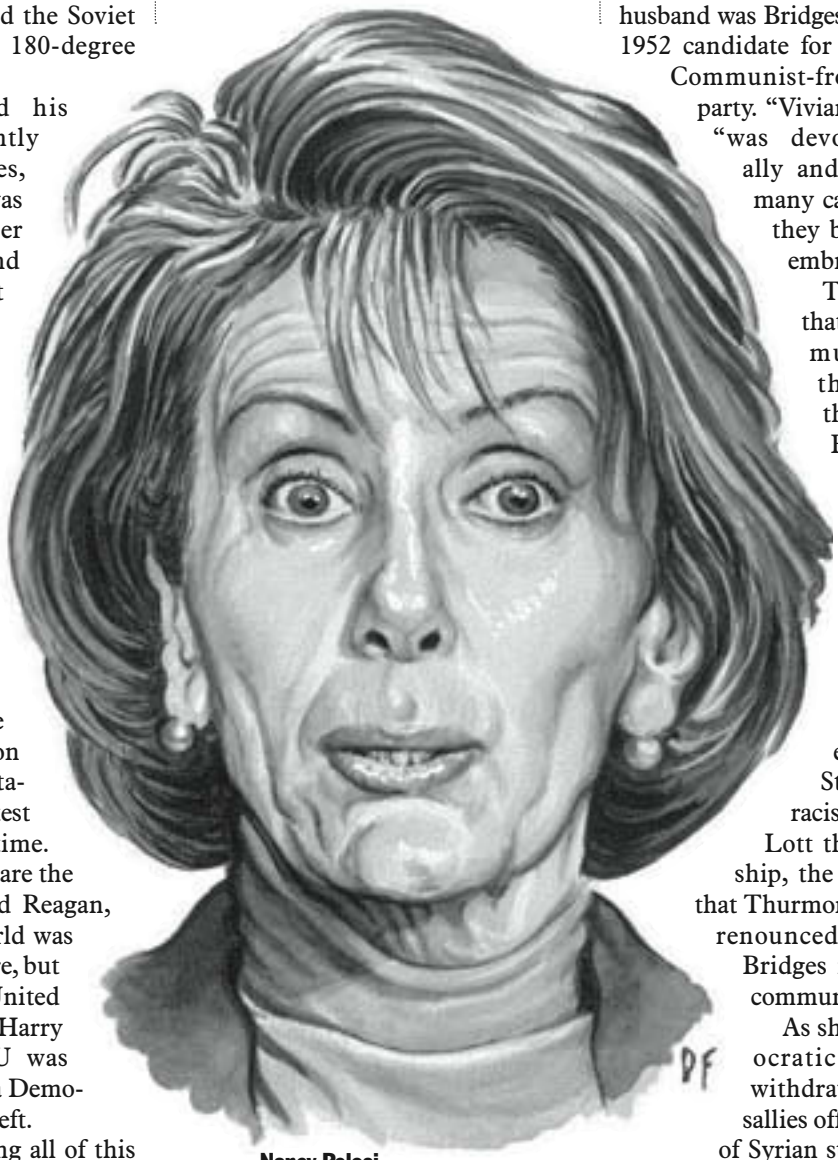
various procedural reasons the case was dismissed. So loyal was Bridges to Moscow that during the period of the Stalin-Hitler pact, he opposed the (1940) reelection of labor hero FDR, because Roosevelt was aligning the United States with Britain against Germany, and the ILWU printed antiwar pamphlets proclaiming "The Yanks Are NOT Coming." As soon as Hitler's forces invaded the Soviet Union, Bridges did a 180-degree about-face on the war.

While Bridges and his union took transparently pro-Communist stances, Bridges denied that he was a Communist. Only after the fall of the USSR, and the opening of Soviet archives, did the truth emerge that Bridges had been not merely in the party but a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party USA, a position for which the documents show he was directly approved by the Kremlin.

This means, plain and simple, that he had devoted his life to the service of the Soviet Union and its ruler, Joseph Stalin, one of the three greatest mass murderers of all time. (Hitler and Mao Zedong are the other two.) Like Ronald Reagan, Bridges believed the world was menaced by an evil empire, but to him, the evil was the United States. The influence of Harry Bridges and his ILWU was what pulled the Bay Area Democratic party so far to the left.

The point of rehearsing all of this ancient history is that one of those he influenced and who still goes out of her way to honor that influence is Nancy Pelosi. In 2001, she took to the pages of the *Congressional Record* to effuse her sentiments on the hundredth anniversary of Harry Bridges's birth, an occasion celebrated only by a gnostic few.

Here is what she said: "Harry Bridges [was] arguably the most significant labor leader of the twentieth century," who was "beloved by the workers of this Nation, and recognized as one of the most important labor leaders in the world." She added: "The International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union [was] the most progressive union of the time."




**Nancy Pelosi**

In other words, this Communist-run union was more admirable than all of the anti-Communist unions.

Pelosi delivered this encomium a full nine years after Bridges's membership in the CP Central Committee had been revealed. Nor was this just a single moment. As recently as this February she visited ILWU headquarters to deliver this homage: "It is very special to me, any occasion that I can come to the ILWU hall and acknowledge the leadership of this great union. . . ." This was not just an infatuation with one man. In addition to her tribute to Bridges, she delivered a similar encomium to another prominent Bay Area Stalin fan, Vivian Hallinan, whose husband was Bridges's lawyer and the 1952 candidate for president of the Communist-front Progressive party. "Vivian," she enthused, "was devoted intellectually and passionately to many causes, well before they became popularly embraced."

This is not to say that Pelosi is a Communist—who is these days?—or that she ever was. But about her adoration of the Stalin-worshiping Bridges there is no doubt. It is no less egregious than Senator Trent Lott's apparent endorsement of Strom Thurmond's racist past, which cost Lott the Senate leadership, the difference being that Thurmond had long since renounced racism, while Bridges never renounced communism.

As she leads the Democratic campaign to withdraw from Iraq and sallies off to meet the likes of Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad, we should know Pelosi's wretched record in judging who are history's good guys and who are its bad. And we should be mindful that some of what she knows about political values was learned at the feet of people who believed fervently that the great enemy of mankind was none other than America itself. ♦

Illustration by Drew Friedman

# One Country, Two Systems, Ten Years

## Hong Kong is still Hong Kong.

**BY GERARD BAKER**

Hong Kong will soon mark the tenth anniversary of its return to China. At midnight on July 1, 1997, amid the mournful downpour of a tropical monsoon, as British soldiers lowered the Union Flag for the last time and Tony Blair, the fresh-faced new prime minister, looked on, another chapter in Britain's long colonial history closed.

But this recessional for a lost empire was unlike almost all of the previous scenes of decolonization enacted over the preceding 50 years. For the first time, the United Kingdom was not ceding sovereignty to the people of the little territory it had governed for 150 years. It was handing them over, lock, stock, and barrel, into the welcoming arms of the People's Republic of China, a regime that had, just eight years earlier, revealed to the world the shocking depths to which it would stoop in its own self-preservation, massacring thousands of its own students in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

Britain had done its best to wring assurances from the Chinese Communists that they would respect the political and economic freedoms Hong Kong had enjoyed under British rule. Beijing had signed a treaty in which it promised to maintain Hong Kong's character for at least 50 years, implementing Deng Xiaoping's famous formula for "one country, two systems."

But trust in Beijing among Hong Kong's people—many of them refugee families from Communist China—was not high. The small minority who could got British, Canadian, and American passports and established bolt-holes overseas. A number of companies moved their Asian headquarters to Singapore. Those who had nowhere else to go hunkered down in a climate of fear.

The Chinese love anniversaries and will celebrate the passage of ten years next month with much fanfare, but for others the occasion presents an opportunity to consider whether their worst fears for Hong Kong's future have been realized.

It is a question that matters not just to the seven million people of the former colony, but one that has worldwide repercussions. It matters for the future of Taiwan. China has never made a secret of its desire to use the recovery of Hong Kong as a model for an eventual reunification with its renegade island. It has hinted that the one country, two systems formula might apply to Taiwan too, so that the island's distinctive and lively free political climate might be maintained.

The survival of Hong Kong tells us much about the China that is emerging into global preeminence. It tells us about whether the Chinese model of an increasingly free economy alongside an unstintingly authoritarian political system can possibly survive.

Visit Hong Kong today and on the surface you will not notice much difference. It was always, despite the colonial myth, a Chinese city to its core. Now, the red flag of Communist China has replaced the union flag over government buildings. The People's Liberation Army maintains a small presence along the harbor front in a rather drab-looking old building that used to house a detachment of British soldiers.

But the street names haven't changed. Official Chinese buildings sit on roads named for Victorian colonial governors. The "Royal" prefix has been taken off the Hong Kong Jockey Club, but the gambling-crazy Chinese still flock there in great numbers every Wednesday night for the action at the Happy Valley Racecourse.

The most obvious change is growth. The famous breathtaking view of the harbor is increasingly obscured by ever taller skyscrapers. Hong Kong has suffered a series of shocks in the ten years since China took it back: the Asian financial crisis, a property price collapse, and the outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). But the territory is now thriving as never before.

It has become an increasingly important global financial center in fact, surpassing New York in the total raised in initial public offerings. Rapidly growing Chinese companies use Hong Kong as their conduit to global capital markets.

China has certainly left Hong Kong's basic economic structure alone. So it remains the model of the low-tax, small-welfare, low-regulation enterprise culture Milton Friedman celebrated in the 1970s. Freedom House in fact still ranks Hong Kong as the freest place in the world in its annual survey of economic conditions.

"Hong Kong is back to its economic peak," Martin Wheatley, chairman of the territory's Securities and Futures Commission, told me. "It's been an extraordinary success story since the handover to China."

But none of this should come as a surprise, nor does it say much about China's willingness to embrace new models of development. Hong Kong's economic success is a key component in the Chinese Communist party's strategy of generating enough prosperity for the mainland to enable it to keep its political grip. China optimists have long claimed that political reform would inevitably follow economic freedom. But on the mainland

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that has not been true for 25 years.

The critical question for Hong Kong has always been whether the Chinese authorities would really permit the former colony to maintain its political freedoms. Absorbing a dynamic and free Hong Kong was bound to pose problems for China. The danger in the one country, two systems model has always been that it is inherently unstable. If Hong Kong were allowed to remain a genuinely free place—albeit a very small one—within China, it could steadily undermine the Chinese model's rigid Communist control over a partially liberated economy.

The results from ten years of Chinese control have been mixed. Hong Kong is distinctively freer than anywhere else in China. But it feels as though it is on a long leash. The basic civil rights China promised to maintain look robust enough. Freedom of religion is an obvious reality in the territory, attested to by the fact that the chief executive, or governor, Donald Tsang, is a devout Catholic who attends mass daily. The rule of law—essential to Hong Kong's efficiently capitalist way of life—has also been maintained. The government has been successfully challenged in court on a number of matters by Hong Kong's fiercely independent judiciary.

The right of assembly is also a practical reality. In June, on the anniversary of the Tiananmen massacre, hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong people gathered as they have every year for the last 18 years to denounce China's human rights record.

More important, it was this type of direct democracy that produced perhaps the most significant political event in Hong Kong in the last five years. In 2003, with the former colony suffering heavily from the SARS crisis, and the government trying to create aggressive new security laws, a half million people marched through the streets to demand the right to vote and to protest a bumbling pro-Beijing administration. They forced not only the withdrawal of the legislation but also in the end the removal of the territory's pro-Beijing chief executive.

Of course, skeptics question how real these freedoms of expression are. They note that shortly after that democracy-induced crisis, a second, equally pro-Beijing chief executive was appointed. Their suspicion is that China tolerates as much as it does only for expedient reasons and could and would shut down Hong Kong's freedoms.

Taiwan's democrats are dismissive of Hong Kong's claims of self-determination. "Birdcage democracy," they call it, noting that the Hong Kong bird of freedom is allowed to fly only so far until it hits the carefully limiting constraints imposed by China.

Perhaps nothing more clearly demonstrates this than the issue of electoral choice. Though Britain had always appointed governors in the traditional autocratic way, it managed to extract from the Chinese a promise to grant the Hong Kong people universal suffrage in choosing their political leaders. But Beijing has steadfastly refused to make good on that commitment, preferring instead to run an electoral system it can control.

From time to time, when Hong Kong political activists get a little too active, some senior bureaucrat in Beijing fulminates threateningly, and things go quiet in the former colony. Earlier this year a senior official of the National People's Congress warned Hong Kongers to "stop messing around with politics."

"That message scares people here," says Audrey Eu, a pro-democracy campaigner. It is "intended to have a chilling effect on the democratic process."

In March the territory held its version of a general election. The two candidates campaigned across the territory, but, as with all Communist elections, the result was never in doubt. The electorate consisted of just 800 members of a special committee, most of them carefully chosen for their loyalty to Beijing; the pro-Beijing candidate, Tsang, squeaked home with 80 percent of the vote.

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kin election. Strutting members of the territory's elite showed up to vote at a vast convention center, supposedly exercising rights on behalf of all Hong Kong people, but kowtowed as eagerly as they could to their masters in Beijing.

And yet, there was also something oddly elevating about the event. Alan Leong, an articulate barrister who ran as the anti-Beijing candidate, was deemed a big hit in the territory. In a couple of presidential-style debates, he bested Tsang with his quick wit and sharp criticism. To his astonishment the debates received a wider audience than the one that was intended. Some tourists from the mainland stopped him in the streets of Hong Kong while he was campaigning.

Leong thinks that, small as Hong Kong is, this extraordinary spectacle of a handpicked leader being openly challenged by a vocal critic may in the end catch on elsewhere in China.

"Hong Kong has been an inspiration to China's economic modernization. We have contributed to the motherland's economic development, and we can do the same for its political reform," he told me.

This may be overdoing it. Hong Kong's seven million people are not going to lead China and its leadership away from the path of authoritarianism. In the end, Hong Kong is much more dependent on China, economically, than China is on Hong Kong.

So while Hong Kong may not be an education to the Chinese, it might come to be an inspiration to them and to the rest of the world. In a small corner of this totalitarian system, a dim light of freedom still flickers. Thanks to a sound legacy in the shape of a legal and political culture left by the British colonizers, and especially to the courageous and continuing struggle by Hong Kong's dedicated defenders of human rights, China is visibly failing to snuff out the light of freedom in Hong Kong. The burning zeal of those democrats may not in the end light a bonfire of change under the People's Republic. But they have lit a beacon of hope for the oppressed of their own country and the persecuted everywhere. ♦

# Up to No Good

## Iran and Syria's sinister Mideast offensive.

**BY MEYRAV WURMSER**

As violence persists in Lebanon and escalates to civil war in Gaza, it would be foolish to minimize the turmoil as merely more of the same. The events in Lebanon and Gaza, though separated by a few hundred miles, are closely related. They were ignited from the same source—Syria, and by extension Iran—and they are all part of a renewed regional offensive against the United States and Israel, a strategic campaign whose coherence has gone unnoticed, and therefore unanswered, for over two years.

The latest fighting in Lebanon began on May 20, when investigations of a bank robbery ended in a standoff between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the al Qaeda affiliate Fatah al Islam, holed up in a Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli. To this day, the standoff continues. A series of bombings, meanwhile—most recently one on the Beirut waterfront on June 13 that killed an anti-Syrian Sunni member of parliament, his son, and 8 others—have heightened fears of a renewal of the Lebanese civil war (1975-90), which also began when Palestinian militias challenged the government's authority.

Fatah al Islam is a pro-Syrian Palestinian Islamist group that, according to Lebanese and Israeli officials, is supported and directed by Syria and Iran. It timed its attack to coincide with the Lebanese government's petition to the U.N. Security Council to establish an international tribunal to prosecute the suspected killers of former prime minister Rafik Hariri, assassinated on February 14, 2005. (Hariri had been a strong spokesman for a free Lebanon, and his killing is widely believed to have been Syrian work. It backfired, triggering the Cedar Revolution, a series of peaceful mass demonstrations that culminated in the expulsion of some 14,000 Syrian troops and intelligence agents from Lebanon in April 2005 and the holding of new democratic elections.) But the Fatah al Islam attack failed to intimidate the government of Lebanon into withdrawing its request and letting Syria off the hook. Despite the bloodshed, the Security Council voted on May 30 to establish a tribunal.

*Meyrav Wurmser is the director of the Center for Middle East Policy at the Hudson Institute.*

Syria is bent on reestablishing its hegemony in Lebanon, but it cannot attack directly. The government of Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, which came to power after Hariri's assassination, enjoys not only wide international support, but also domestic support from many of Lebanon's Christians, Sunnis, and others. Instead, to challenge Lebanon's government, Syria must delegitimize it domestically and isolate it within the Arab world and Sunni politics. The easiest way to do that is to portray the Lebanese government as an agent of the United States and Israel, and then orchestrate events to bear this out.

### Syria's surrogates in Lebanon

It is a fair inference from the actions and statements of Syria's clients that Damascus has been dabbling in Sunni jihadist politics in order to implement this plan. Specifically, it has striven to ensure that the clash between Fatah al Islam and the Lebanese army was not narrowly defined as a Lebanese government-al Qaeda struggle, but rather was cast as a Lebanese-Palestinian clash. When the army attacked the Islamists'

base of operations inside the camp, it could be portrayed as assaulting Palestinian refugees, whose cause is the emblematic grievance of Arab nationalism. In the process, Lebanon's government would lose standing both at home and in the Arab world.

Another Syrian/Iranian client, the militant Lebanese party Hezbollah, has also behaved in a manner consistent with the strategy outlined here. Several days after the outbreak of violence, Hezbollah's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, warned that the Lebanese military, by attacking the Islamists inside the camp, had flouted the longstanding ban on entering the camps and thus had crossed a red line. On Lebanese TV Nasrallah said, "We will not agree to be partners to the military entering the camps. . . . We mustn't turn Lebanon into a battlefield in which we fight al Qaeda for the Americans."

This should raise eyebrows. To protect Sunni extremists like Fatah al Islam is uncharacteristic of the Shiite Hezbollah; indeed, Hezbollah and al Qaeda have been open enemies, and in the past Fatah al Islam has threatened to assassinate Hezbollah leaders. Even the pro-Palestinian, old style pan-Arab nationalist tone of his speech is atypical for Nasrallah. As the scholar Fouad Ajami has shown, since the 1970s Lebanese Shiite politics has been defined in opposition to pan-Arab nationalism, particularly that represented by armed Sunni Palestinians. Hezbollah seems not to be guided strictly by its local interests.

Still another pro-Syrian group has also cast the Lebanese government as the enemy of the Arab nation via the Palestinian cause. In a speech the day the fighting broke out, the spokesman for the Marxist Palestinian group the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) accused the Lebanese government of using Fatah al Islam as an excuse to massacre Palestinians. He said: "A third party interfered. . . . There are snipers, and there are people carrying . . . rockets who are affiliated with the [Hariri] Movement. I call on Saad Hariri [and] . . . Prime Minister Fouad Siniora: 'Do you want to be viewed by history as the one who made the political decision to commit a massacre against the Palestinian civilians?'" Like Hezbollah, the PFLP-GC is chastising the Lebanese government on behalf of an al Qaeda-linked organization that stands for everything inimical to its secular, Marxist agenda. Again, the group's statements are incongruous in a strictly local context. Like Hezbollah, the PFLP-GC appears to be operating in step with a broader strategic vision, one that comes from Syria and Iran.

Lebanese leaders understand the conflict in these broad terms, and they are seeking help from the West. Lebanese Druze leader and anti-Syrian politician Walid Jumblatt placed responsibility for the violence squarely on Damascus, declaring: "Syrian president Basher Assad said in the summer that Lebanon would become the center of al Qaeda and Iraq Number Two. Now he is fulfilling this vision." For Jumblatt, it is clear that Syrian and Iranian involvement with Fatah al Islam serves the purpose of drawing the Lebanese government into inadvertently killing Palestinians and thus casting pro-democratic, multiethnic Lebanon as an enemy of the Arab people.

The Syrian/Iranian strategy in Lebanon is a product of the changed climate in the Middle East following September 11, 2001. As a result of the attacks, U.S. strategy shifted from containment and deterrence to preemption and the championing of freedom. This shift brought down the Taliban regime in Afghanistan and removed Saddam Hussein's government in Iraq, shifting the political balance in the region. The presence of U.S. troops and U.S.-installed or U.S.-supported democracies on the borders of Iran and Syria challenges both regimes. The idea of freedom is manifest in Afghanistan, next door to Iran; in Iraq, neighbor of both Syria and Iran; and in Lebanon, next to Syria. America's freedom policy challenges all the regimes in the neighborhood equally because it does not discriminate against any local sect: Afghanistan is Sunni; Iraq is predominantly Shiite; and Lebanon is Christian, Shiite, Sunni, and Druze. America cannot be accused of playing favorites.

Iran and Syria share an interest in confronting the U.S. presence in the region before Washington's freedom policy gives their populations potentially regime-threatening ideas. In addition to their mutual animosity toward the United States, they are allies in the Sunni-Shia cold war dividing the region. As two non-Sunni regimes (Syria is ruled by an Alawite elite, Iran by Shiite clerics), they seek to minimize the regional role of Sunni powers like Saudi Arabia and to assert their own dominance. For Syria and Iran, this is do or die.

### The Palestinians

The Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, commanded and controlled from Damascus and financed by Tehran, is an important player in the Syrian/Iranian regional strategy. Hamas rose to power in the January 2006 elections in the Palestinian Authority. This capped a revolutionary change that has established the Levant as the new battleground on which Syrian/Iranian ambitions are being played out. In Washington before the Palestinian election, few observers had expected Hamas to beat the PLO's leading faction, Fatah, at the polls, much less to win a majority in the legislature (74 out of 132 seats). The prevailing wisdom had held that Hamas did not want to win; that it garnered its greatest support as an opposition group. When Hamas won, many explained the victory as a protest vote against corruption in the Palestinian Authority. What observers missed was that Hamas was acting to advance a regional strategy.

Hamas's electoral victory signaled Iran's renewal of an old project, a regional offensive derailed long ago in the killing fields of the Iran-Iraq

war (1980-88). Hamas's success in January 2006 showed that the Palestinians—the very embodiment of the Arab cause—had been seduced by Iranian radicalism as personified by Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, elected president just months before. Iran became the strong horse. Unlike the Arab regimes, which were paralyzed by the American presence in the region after the invasion of Iraq, the mullahs in Tehran stood in continued defiance of American dominance. In an ironic twist, it was Persian Iran, and not an Arab country, that held out a new dream tying together the old Arab national causes with religious radicalism. Thus, Hamas's electoral victory had a significance transcending Palestinian politics and dovetailing with Iran's ambitions. Hamas now operates as an Iranian proxy, giving Tehran a say over issues at the heart of Arab politics.

In late April in the Gaza Strip, Hamas and other Palestinian factions declared an end to their cease-fire with Israel and initiated rocket attacks against Israeli cities. Now Hamas is threatening to escalate hostilities by attacking Israel's main electric grid in Ashkelon. The significance of this—as well as of the Palestinian civil war and Hamas's capture of Gaza—is that Hamas, and by extension Iran, has launched a real push to take over the Palestinian areas, just as the violence in Lebanon represents Syria's attempt to retake that country.

### The war last summer

To further illuminate the regional context, it is necessary to revisit last summer's war between Israel and Hezbollah. This was widely viewed as an isolated campaign driven by Hezbollah's local interests: That is, Hezbollah instigated a war against Israel to rally Lebanese support for itself and so to repel international and local initiatives to disarm it.

But last summer's war did not begin in Lebanon. It began in Gaza, when Hamas kidnapped an Israeli soldier there. One month later, Hezbollah joined the fight. It fired rockets at Israeli border villages to divert attention while another Hezbollah unit crossed the border and kidnapped two additional soldiers, killing three others in the process.

By most Israeli accounts, Israel lost the "second Lebanon war," as some are calling it. Israel failed to stop Hezbollah's attacks, destroy the organization and its leaders, and create an effective security zone along its northern border. Israel lost because it had no strategic vision: It did not grasp the war's regional context. Hezbollah suffered heavy losses, but declared victory because it had succeeded in terrorizing Israel for weeks and had survived. Nasrallah was able to confront Israel, expose its strategic weakness—and live to tell the tale.

Iran and Syria were watching. The ineffectiveness and weakness of Israel's government offered a strategic opportunity: via the Palestinian


areas, to confront an Israel unable to answer the challenge. The current effort to turn Gaza into Hamastan is the shape this effort currently takes.

### The coming war

Having won last summer's war by proxy, Syria and Iran now seek to further derail Western ambitions. They are escalating their offensive. They are fomenting discord in the region by directly challenging every key U.S. victory in the war on terror. They are working to further destabilize Iraq, Afghanistan (where Iranian explosives were recently discovered in the hands of our enemies), and now Lebanon.

Since Syria and Iran were able to accomplish so much in a mere four weeks last summer, their next logical strategic move would be to initiate another conflict with Israel. The Syrian regime is open about its intentions. Only last month, President Assad bluntly warned Israel that if it did not immediately enter talks about evacuating the Golan Heights, he would take the Golan back by force.

Syria and Iran see an opportunity they cannot pass up: The United States has no answer to the worsening situations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. Evincing perplexity and weakness, not consistently willing to confront its enemies, the United States entered direct negotiations with Iran and Syria, naively hoping that the purveyors of violence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon would willingly help resolve those problems.

Israel is likewise weakened, even paralyzed. Plagued by corruption scandals in addition to last summer's failure, its government is politically dysfunctional and militarily confused. The Winograd Commission investigating the war sharply criticized Israeli prime minister Ehud Olmert's decision to launch hostilities. Any future Israeli government will find it difficult to initiate large military operations, even in the face of provocation. To Syria and Iran, Israel now seems a vulnerable, tempting target. Moreover, Syria and Iran hope another Israeli defeat will further damage U.S. interests and deepen America's image as a country in retreat.

Another Israeli loss could also undermine the government of Lebanon, as well as create momentum to weaken the United States in Iraq and elsewhere. As the mood in the region shifts, expect to see the elected governments under pressure and the tide of radicalism rising.

As Israel's war in Lebanon demonstrated, military toughness alone does not meet the growing Syrian/Iranian challenge. Instead of seeing all the problems in the Middle East solely as localized conflicts, we must understand their regional context. Only then can we devise a broad strategic vision to confront these threats. Toughness is necessary, but it will remain ineffective without a purpose and a plan. ♦


Sygma / Corbis

*Winona Ryder, Daniel Day-Lewis in 'The Age of Innocence' (1993)*

# Pursuit of Love

## *The life and art of Edith Wharton* BY BROOKE ALLEN

There is a huge cachet involved in writing an acknowledged "definitive" biography of a major figure. Leon Edel's *Henry James*, Richard Ellmann's *James Joyce*, Edgar Johnson's *Charles Dickens: His Tragedy and Triumph*: These books, never trumped, have made it into every library and must be taken into account by everyone who aspires to write on their subjects. R.W.B. Lewis's masterly *Edith Wharton* (1975) has been one such definitive work for over 30 years, the indispensable source for everyone interested in that great novelist and great character. Now Hermione Lee, a decade after her major biography of Virginia Woolf, has made a bid to topple Lewis. She has backed up her assault with every weapon in the biographer's armory: detail, comprehensiveness, new sources, sophisticated literary analysis, and empathy. Finally, she bludgeons the competition with sheer bulk: *Edith Wharton* is a whopping 880 pages, 288 pages longer than Lewis's book.

**Edith Wharton**
*A Biography*
by Hermione Lee
Knopf, 880 pp., $35

Has she dislodged her predecessor? Yes, triumphantly. Wharton's own story, as related by Lee, is as compulsively readable and as coherent in all its parts as Wharton's best novels: *The House of Mirth*, *The Age of Innocence*, *Ethan Frome*, and *The Custom of the Country*. Writers' biographies do not always shed much light on their work, but Wharton's does, for her finest fiction reflects the patterns of her own life and those of the upper-class American world she came from—a society for which she felt a volatile mixture of rage, contempt, pity, and affection. Far from being the *grande dame* of popular legend, the aristocratic chronicler of the Gilded Age, a second-rate Henry James (as depicted by Percy Lubbock in his spiteful "authorized" biography), Wharton was a very complicated character, a powerful and articulate rebel against her caste and its values. Though she adhered throughout her life to certain increasingly dated social standards, her work tells a different tale, and the life itself, as Lee notes, "often feels like a cover-story, with tremendously articulate activity on the surface, and secrets and silences below."

Wharton meant those secrets to remain secrets. She tried hard to control her image to posterity, destroying large quantities of personal letters: Privacy was important to her, as Lee points out, and she made its violation

*Brooke Allen is the author, most recently, of* Moral Minority: Our Skeptical Founding Fathers.

one of her literary subjects. There is no remaining correspondence between Wharton and her parents and brothers; there are only a few letters from Walter Berry, her closest friend (indeed she thought she had destroyed them all), and only three from her husband of 28 years, Teddy Wharton. Henry James destroyed most of her letters to him, and she destroyed all the letters from her lover, Morton Fullerton (though Fullerton kept hers, which eventually made their way to the Beinecke Library at Yale—a fact that would have horrified her).

Though Wharton's literary stock fell during the years after her death in 1937, the last couple of decades have seen it rise to its proper level and she is now recognized as having been a first-rank novelist, perhaps a great one. But what astounds people is not simply the quality of her fiction, or the fact that it was written by a woman from that particular background (surprising enough in itself), but that she produced this vast quantity of very high-level work—more than 40 books, including novels, volumes of short stories, and writings about houses and gardens—while leading a strenuous social life, running several large households, traveling compulsively, entertaining lavishly, creating world-class gardens, and reading and studying widely—*and all this without a wife!*

She had servants, yes, but the very running and organizing of a sizable staff is a job in itself; her key, indispensable team at each of her establishments consisted, at the very least, of housekeeper, butler, staff-manager, chauffeur, secretary, and two maids. "The two essential underpinnings of her life" were "money and servants," Lee states. The freedom from life's worldly demands that so many artists have deemed necessary meant nothing to her; she was incurably worldly, voracious for life's material offerings as well as its intellectual ones. As Henry James exclaimed to their mutual friend Howard Sturgis, Wharton was "a lady who consumes worlds as you & I (*don't* even) consume apples. . . . She uses up everything and everyone." James was intermittently horrified by the Whartons' wealth and mad consumption: "Such incoherence, such a nightmare of perpetually renewable choice and decision, such a luxury of bloated alternatives, do they seem to burden life withal!"

Yet Lee makes a case for Wharton's worldliness and perpetual activity as an aspect of her particular art. She posits, for example, that "it might not be too fanciful to think that gardening and novel-writing have something in common. The mixture of disciplined structure and imaginative freedom, the reworking of traditions into a new idea, the ruthless elimination of dull, incongruous or surplus materials, and the creation of a dramatic narrative, all come to mind." There is clearly some truth to this, so that even readers totally uninterested in gardening—like myself—will not be irritated by the many pages Lee devotes to the subject. Interior decoration (in which field Wharton was a pioneer, coauthoring a classic 1897 work called *The Decoration of Houses*) is even more pertinent to Wharton's fiction. In Lee's formulation, "The links between her Italian writings [on villas and gardens], her interest in the decoration of houses, and the harsh, witty analysis of her society she was starting to make in her stories and novels, were part of a complex cultural argument about America at the turn of the century. One of the key topics in this argument was the morality of taste, something that interested her very much."

Edith Wharton, 1885

Bettmann / Corbis

This is absolutely true. Wharton always took particular pains to describe the décor with which her characters surrounded themselves, and nearly every one of them can be assessed, if not absolutely judged, by the way they furnish their homes. "Whenever Wharton writes about the decoration of houses, she is writing about behavior and beliefs," Lee says, and nowhere is this more evident than in Wharton's descriptions of the world she was formed by, the materially lavish, emotionally repressive society of old New York. Wharton described her own childhood home as a "full-blown specimen of Second Empire decoration" punctuated by medieval motifs that were inspired, she guessed, by a vague idea that there was "some obscure (perhaps Faustian) relation between the Middle Ages and culture." In her story "The Old Maid," she gave a cutting description of the sort of *bibelot*-packed interiors favored by her mother's generation:

> The rosewood what-nots on each side of the folding doors . . . were adorned with tropical shells, feldspar vases, an alabaster model of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, a pair of obelisks made of scraps of porphyry and serpentine picked up by the young couple in the Roman Forum, a bust of Clytie in chalk-white biscuit de Sèvres, and four

old-fashioned figures of the Seasons in Chelsea ware, that had to be left among the newer ornaments because they had belonged to great-grandmama Ralston.

The excess of the *ensemble* is stifling, and its little bows to some dimly grasped ideal of "culture" are pathetic. Culture here is a commodity, an ornament, rather than a living world of thought and art. How could it be anything else in a society "wholly absorbed in barricading itself against the unpleasant," as Wharton deemed hers to be? She remembered her parents as being respectful of literature, at least in theory, but standing "in nervous dread of those who produced it. . . . In the eyes of our provincial society authorship was still regarded as something between a black art and a form of manual labor." The degree to which this was true is proved by an astounding statement by Wharton, which Lee for some reason does not include in her biography, to the effect that no one in Wharton's family *ever discussed her books with her or even mentioned her writing career*. This career was incomprehensible, threatening, transgressive: best to say nothing about it.

So Wharton was a great materialist both personally and as an artist: Her characters are viewed through the lenses of their possessions and of their relation with the material world in general. It is surprising, then, to discover that in her commonplace book (to which Lee devotes a fascinating section) it was the Stoic writers, Epictetus, Seneca, and Marcus Aurelius, who made the most frequent appearances. Anyone less obviously Stoic than Wharton, who "consumed worlds," would be difficult to think of. And yet there is real significance here. Wharton described life as "not a matter of abstract principles, but a succession of pitiful compromises with fate," and all of her fictions illustrate this theory. No one's life is an unqualified success, but a life is only genuinely tragic when its protagonist fails to come to philosophical terms with these compromises. Here her sympathetic but fatally passive "heroes," Newland Archer of *The Age of Innocence* and Lawrence Selden of *The House of Mirth*, come to mind. Both these men, Lee persuasively suggests, were based at least in part on Wharton's kind, disappointed father.

The vein of stoicism that runs through Wharton's densely materialist fiction is what carries most of her work out of the limiting specificities of its time and place and makes it still entirely pertinent a century later. Lee lists the qualities that, in her opinion, made Wharton a great writer: "her mixture of harshly detached, meticulously perceptive, disabused realism, with a language of poignant feeling and deep passion, and her setting of the most confined of private lives in a thick, complex network of social forces." This is a very good description, stressing the characteristically dark vision that made Wharton so very much more than the mere drawing room novelist her disparagers have portrayed.

It is this very darkness that kept Wharton's consummately filmic fictions from reaching the screen until quite recently; if it is true, as William Dean Howells told her, that what Americans want is a tragedy with a happy ending, Wharton wasn't about to give them one. A planned film of her 1913 novel *The Custom of the Country* was scrapped as late as 1961 because its voracious heroine, Undine Spragg, was thought to be "too evil." Is it possible that the producers had already forgotten the success of the terrible and irresistible Scarlett O'Hara, so reminiscent of Undine? And the great John Schlesinger film *Darling*, which appeared only a few years later, presented almost the same character and story as *The Custom of the Country*, but brought up to date and anglicized. It was not until the 1990s, amazingly enough, that Wharton's novels became the hot screen properties they should always have been. Maybe the fact is that we Americans have only just begun to grow up enough to do without that happy ending.

There was certainly no happy ending in Wharton's own life, at least not of the conventional romantic type. Her marriage was a disaster from the very beginning; not only were she and Teddy sexually incompatible (she put some of the blame on her mother, who had refused to tell her the facts of life before her wedding), but they had nothing in common except for their shared background and their affection for dogs. Teddy Wharton was a man of limited intelligence and no artistic or intellectual interests; he also, as it turned out, inherited his father's bipolar illness and, in the first decade of the 20th century, began a rapid and irreversible slide into mental illness. It seemed that Teddy was too crazy to deal with, but not quite crazy enough to lock up; Edith was trapped. "Think of having had the chance of . . . *a life of my own*, in which I could write & think; & now *this*!" In the opinion of Henry James—and for once this was not a bitchy comment but a painful truth—their union was a "gilded bondage" or "gorgeous vortex." Wharton abhorred divorce and lampooned American divorcées in her fiction, but she knew there could be no alternative in her own case, and the marriage was dissolved in 1913.

By that time Wharton's one great love affair, her three-year relationship with Morton Fullerton, had also broken up. The two of them had met in 1907, when Wharton was already 45 years old. Until that time Wharton appears to have had no sexual partner except for Teddy, though consensus has it that she had always loved her friend Walter Berry. Most people have assumed that Berry was gay, but for some reason Lee never mentions that theory, not even to knock it down; instead, she describes him as a lady-killer who preferred the freedom of bachelorhood to being trapped in marriage. Wharton fell passionately in love with Fullerton and the affair lasted on and off for three years, but as he had demonstrated over many years to countless lovers and admirers of both sexes, he was deeply evasive, perhaps incapable of loving. Wharton railed against his emotional cruelty—"The one thing I can't bear is the thought that I represent to you *the woman who has to be lied to*"—and complained of "being left to feel [after sex] like a 'course' served and cleared

away," but to no avail; eventually she realized he had nothing more to give, and moved on.

One thing Fullerton did give her was the experience of a fully felt and lived love, and she used it to good effect in her fiction of that period. "It takes a strong power of detachment to turn one's most painful humiliations into comedy," Lee remarks. Wharton rose to the challenge magnificently. Her life with Teddy also went into her books. As Lee points out, there are very few happy marriages in Wharton's fiction, and her unhappy ones provide the most vivid and visceral moments in all her work. Newland Archer's love for Ellen Olenska is delicately imagined, for instance, but his marriage to the "invincibly innocent" May is a masterpiece.

"I wonder," Wharton reflected, "among all the tangles of this mortal coil, which one contains tighter knots to undo, and consequently suggests more tugging, and pain, and diversified elements of misery, than the marriage tie—and which, consequently, is more 'made to hand' of the psychologist and the dramatist?" (And the novelist, of course.)

Lee recognizes the idiotic husband in the story "The Choice" as Wharton's closest fictional version of Teddy. His wife is given this horrifying monologue:

> Day by day, hour by hour, I wish him dead. When he goes out I pray for something to happen; when he comes back I say to myself: "Are you here again?" When I hear of people being killed in accidents, I think, "Why wasn't he there?" When I read the death-notices in the paper I say, "So-and-so was just his age." When I see him taking such care of his health and his diet—as he does, you know, except when he gets reckless and begins to drink too much—when I see him exercising and resting, and eating only certain things . . . I think of the men who die from overwork, or who throw their lives away for some great object, and I say to myself, "What can kill a man who thinks only of himself?"

And yet, when there is a boating accident and they are all in danger of death, it is the husband she cries out for and her lover who is killed. No happy ending, indeed.

After the end of her marriage, Wharton departed definitively for Europe, trying to reinvent herself as a Frenchwoman (while remaining American "*jusqu'aux moelles*," according to one of her French obituarists), passionately identifying herself with her adopted country, and laboring on its behalf throughout the First World War. She began to look on crude America with an ever more jaundiced eye, and her work suffered as a result; in her later novels she was more mocking of her home turf and seemed to understand it less. As with so many expatriate writers, separation from the sources of her art did not improve the work. She was old-fashioned, and openly disliked—this is Lee's list—lesbianism, feminism, bad manners, obscenity, socialism and "Bolshevism," exhibitionism, and experimental art. All these things flourished in postwar America, along with jazz and divorce. But in merely parodying the American scene, as she did in late novels like *Twilight Sleep* (1927), she forgot her own dictum—a true one—that what doesn't date in a work of art is "whatever of unchanging human nature the novelist has contrived to bring to life beneath the passing fripperies of clothes and customs."

Lee is at her best when she detects the echoes of Wharton's life in the lives of her characters, weaving their stories into hers. She does readers a real favor by reminding them of Wharton's many superb short stories, which are seldom read any more. I did not agree with all of Lee's literary judgments, and felt that she missed the occasional point in her discussions of the various fictional works; but her enthusiasm is contagious, her knowledge prodigious, her personal insights very sharp. One feels, as is so seldom the case, that had subject and biographer ever had the chance to meet (in fact, Wharton died a decade before Lee's birth), the two would have become tremendous friends. ♦

BCA

# Boys Will Be . . .

*. . . pleased by this garden of earthly delights.*

**BY ROGER KIMBALL**

I wouldn't be at all surprised if *The Dangerous Book for Boys* were banned by zealous school groups, social workers, and other moral busybodies. I first encountered this admirable work when it was published in London last year. I liked its retro look—the lettering and typography of the cover recalls an earlier, more swashbuckling era—and I thought at first it must be a reprint. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that a book containing instructions on how to make catapults, how to hunt and cook a rabbit, how to play poker, how to make a waterbomb, was published today, the high noon of nannydom.

The first chapter, "Essential Gear" ("Essential Kit" in the English edition), lists a Swiss Army *knife*, for God's sake, not to mention matches and a magnifying glass, "For general interest. Can also be used to start fires." Probably, the book would have to be checked with the rest of your luggage at the airport: If you can't bring a bottle of water on the airplane, how do you suppose a book advocating knives and incendiary devices is going to go over? Why, even the title is a provocation. The tort lawyers must be salivating over the word "dangerous,"

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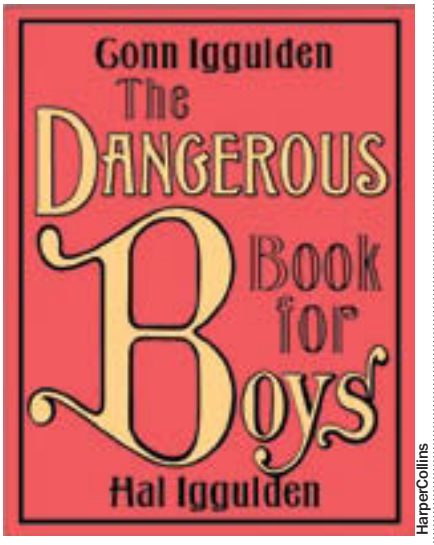
and I can only assume that the horrible grinding noise you hear is from Title IX fanatics congregating to protest the appearance of a book designed for the exclusive enjoyment of boys.

And speaking of "boys," have you noticed how unprogressive the word sounds in today's English? It is almost as retrograde as "girls," a word that I knew was on the way out when an academic couple I know proudly announced that they had just presented the world with a "baby woman."

No, I did not make that up, and even after due allowances are made for the fact that the couple were, after all, academics and therefore peculiarly susceptible to such p.c. deformations, it's clear that something fundamental is happening in our society. Some speak about the "feminization" of America and Europe. Scholars like Christina Hoff Sommers have reported on the "war against boys." A public school near where I live gets high marks for "academic excellence," but I note that they allow only 15 minutes of recess a day for kindergarteners and first graders. Result: By 2 P.M. the boys are ready to explode. That turns out to be a solvable problem, though, because a little Ritalin with the (whole grain) cornflakes does wonders to keep Johnny from acting up.

In a recent interview, Conn Iggulden, speaking about his collaboration with his brother in writing *The Dangerous Book for Boys*, dilated on this campaign against the boy-like side of boyhood. "They need to fall off things occasionally," Iggulden said, "or . . . they'll take worse risks on their own. If we do away with challenging playgrounds and cancel school trips for fear of being sued, we don't end up with safer boys—we end up with them walking on train tracks." Quite right. *The Dangerous Book for Boys* is alive with such salubrious challenges. Its epigraph, a 1903 letter from an army surgeon to the young Prince of Wales, advises, "The best motto for a long march is 'Don't grumble. Plug on.'" How antique that stiff-upper-lippery sounds to our ears!

The book includes instructions on making "The Greatest Paper Plane in the World." Did you know that many schools have outlawed paper airplanes? Might strike a child in the eye, don't you know. And of course, that's only the beginning of what many schools outlaw. The game of tag is *verboten* almost everywhere, a fact I learned this winter when our eight-year-old son fell and broke his elbow while playing the game. The final indignity came when, being down, he was tagged by the chap who was "it." Even that had its compensations, though, since James is looking forward to suspending his allegiance to the principles



HarperCollins

**The Dangerous Book for Boys**
by Conn Iggulden
and Hal Iggulden
HarperCollins, 288 pp., $24.95

of the Sermon on the Mount and getting the fellow back when he fully recovers. Besides, although it hurts to break your arm, it is quite nifty to have your arm in a cast, especially if one of your heroes is Lord Nelson, to whom (or so one's parents assure one) you bear a strong resemblance when sporting a sling. Of course, I am sorry that James broke his arm, but I prefer his school's (unofficial) motto—"Better a broken bone than a broken spirit"—to the pusillanimous alternative.

Into the swamp-like miasma of contemporary life *The Dangerous Book for Boys* blows like a healing zephyr. Mark Twain once included a note about "the weather in this book," explaining that there wasn't any. There is a lot of weather in *The Dangerous Book for Boys*, and I do not just mean the sections devoted to cloud formations and such questions as Why is the Sky blue? What causes the wind? and Why is it hotter at the Equator? True, this book includes lots of indoor activities. You'll find out how to make a simple battery out of a bunch of quarters, aluminum foil, vinegar, and salt, for example, as well as how to make secret inks, fireproof cloth, and marbled paper. There's a section on timers and tripwires—"very simple to make—and deeply satisfying," the authors explain. Let's say you want a light bulb to turn on in 20 minutes "to win a bet perhaps, or frighten your little sister with the thought that a mad axe murderer is upstairs." Look no further: It's all here.

There's a section of useful quotations from Shakespeare, "Latin Phrases Every Boy Should Know," and "Books Every Boy Should Read" (this is one of them, though it's not on the list). There are several engaging sections on words and grammar. There are also two sections devoted to famous battles, from Thermopylae and Cannae up through Waterloo, Gettysburg, and the Somme. If you want a quick timeline of U.S. history, it's here. So is information about "the golden age of piracy," spies, codes, and ciphers, as well as coin tricks, dog tricks, and first aid. There's also—uh-oh: p.c. alert!—a chapter on the history of artillery.

Still, this is essentially an outdoor book. Not that it deals chiefly with outdoor subjects, though it has splendid advice about building treehouses, fishing, and growing sunflowers (and I suppose artillery is, usually, a subject best pursued outside). Rather, it understands that boys and the outdoors go together like a hammer and nails. It is sympathetic to dirt and looks kindly upon rocks, bugs, snakes, and woodpiles. It is a book, in other words, that approves of derring-do and the testosterone that fires it. This is clear in the informative chapter devoted to the mysterious subject of Girls who, many feminists will be surprised to discover, are "quite different" from boys. By this, the authors explain:

> We do not mean the physical differences, more the fact that [girls] remain unimpressed by your mastery

> of a game involving wizards, or your understanding of Morse Code. Some will be impressed, of course, but as a general rule, girls do not get quite as excited by the use of urine as a secret ink as boys do.

In fact, the chapter on girls is full of good advice. Here are two bits: 1. "Play a sport of some kind," they advise. "It doesn't matter what it is, as long as it replaces the corpse-like pallor of the computer programmer with a ruddy glow." 2. "If you see a girl in need of help—unable to lift something, for example—do not taunt her. Approach the object and greet her with a cheerful smile, whilst surreptitiously testing the weight of the object. If you find you can lift it, go ahead. If you can't, try sitting on it and engaging her in conversation." Ovid couldn't have put it any better. (His advice about girls is to be found in a book for older boys called *Ars Amatoria*.)

*The Dangerous Book for Boys* is a book that implicitly endorses Aristotle's observation that courage is the most important virtue because, without courage, it is impossible to practice the other virtues. "In this age of video games and mobile phones," the authors write, "there must still be a place for knots, treehouses and stories of incredible courage." Indeed, physical courage looms large in *The Dangerous Book for Boys*. One of its best features is a series of "extraordinary stories." Remember the bracing story of Robert Scott, the intrepid English explorer who suffered untold hardships in his race to be the first to reach the South Pole? In the event, the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen beat him, just barely. Scott and his team arrived there on January 17, 1912, only to find Amundsen's empty tent and a note announcing their presence on December 14, 1911. Scott made it back to within 11 miles of his last camp before he and the rest of his team froze to death. In his last hours, he managed to write a few letters, including one to his wife which mentioned their only son:

> I had looked forward to helping you to bring him up, but it is a satisfaction to know that he will be safe with you. . . . Make the boy interested in natural history if you can. It is better than games. They encourage it in some schools. I know you will keep him in the open air. Try to make him believe in a God, it is comforting. . . . and guard him against indolence. Make him a strenuous man. I had to force myself into being strenuous as you know—had always an inclination to be idle.

The Igguldens also include the story of Douglas Bader, an RAF pilot who crashed in 1931 when showing off doing rolls too close to the ground. He lost his right leg above the knee, his left below the knee. His flying log for the day reads: "X-country Reading. Crashed slow rolling near ground. Bad show." Fitted with metal legs, Bader was told he would never walk without sticks. "On the contrary," he replied, "I will never bloody walk with them." When World War II broke out, Bader was allowed to reenlist and even to fly, metal legs and all. He had 22-and-a-half air-to-air victories (he and a fellow RAF pilot both shot up one German plane, so they agreed to split the victory). In 1941, Bader collided with a German Me 109 over France.

> The tail of Bader's plane was torn off and he began plummeting towards the ground. He got the canopy off and climbed out into the wind to parachute clear. His right leg caught and he found himself nailed to the fuselage by the slipstream. . . . At last, the belt holding the leg to him snapped and the leg went off through his trousers, allowing him to break free of the plane and parachute to safety.

Well, relative safety. He was scooped up by the Germans and put in prison. He asked his captors if a message might be sent to England to retrieve his spare right leg. *Mirabile dictu*, the Germans agreed. The British dropped it off during a normal bombing run. Bader put on the leg and casually walked out of the hospital in an effort to escape. He was promptly rounded up again, but tried to escape early and often. Exasperated, the Germans took away his metal legs, but the outcry from other prisoners was so great they shamefacedly returned them.

These are stories, the Igguldens note, "that must be told and retold, or the memories slowly die." The fact that *The Dangerous Book for Boys* was a runaway bestseller in England gives one hope. And speaking of England, my chief recommendation is not just that you buy the book, but that you buy it twice. Connoisseurs will want the English as well as the American edition. There are numerous differences. There are little things like prices being expressed in dollars, not pounds, and a chapter on baseball instead of one on cricket. American history has been substituted for the story of the British Empire. I note that instead of a chapter called "Astronomy," the American edition offers us "Astronomy—the Study of the Heavens," which I suppose tells us something about how the publisher views its American readership.

All of that is minor—though I miss the list of kings and queens of England, especially the mnemonic to keep the fate of Henry VIII's wives straight: "Divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived." But having mentioned Admiral Nelson already, I have to say I was sorry to see that the Wright brothers appear in his place in the American edition. I hasten to add that there are no flies on Wilbur and Orville—theirs is an exhilarating tale, eminently worthy of inclusion in this book—but the story of Horatio Nelson is essential, Master James Kimball requires me to state, absolutely essential.

I was also sorry to see that the chapter on catapults was dropped from the American edition. Ditto the chapter on conkers. Not that American boys play much with horse chestnuts attached to a bit of string, but the book's advice about how to make the hole in the chestnut is worth savoring. You can use a nail or spike, but "better to get your dad to use a drill on them." Don't try it yourself, by the way, because "the conkers spin round at high speed or crack when you put them in a vise. Much better to ask an adult to do it, but give them your worst conkers to start with until they have learned the knack."

Why not make do with the English edition, then? Well, for one thing, the American edition includes the Navajo Code Talkers' Dictionary. The U.S. Marines would have been lost without it in World War II. 'Nuff said. ♦

# Mister Secretary

*A brilliant life of Wise Man No. 1.*

BY PHILIP TERZIAN

Harry Truman, Dean Acheson, 1950

Corbis

There never was, and there is never likely to be, a secretary of state quite like Dean Gooderham Acheson. Son of the Episcopal bishop of Connecticut, educated at Groton, Yale, and Harvard Law School, tall and effortlessly elegant in manner, between the cut of his J. Press suit and the angle of his waxed moustache, he personified the well-connected WASP lawyer-statesman of the American Century.

But as is often the case, things were not precisely as they seemed. Acheson was American by birth but the product of an Anglo-Canadian marriage, and his mother was the granddaughter of a successful distiller. There is no evidence that Groton's famous rector, the Rev. Endicott Peabody, who tirelessly preached the gospel of public service, inspired anything in Acheson except mild schoolboy rebellion. After Harvard he set his sights not on Wall Street but on provincial Washington, serving as clerk to Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, the Court's first Jewish member. During the 1920s and '30s, while living comfortably off corporate practice, he positioned himself on the left wing of the Democratic party.

**Dean Acheson**
*A Life in the Cold War*
by Robert L. Beisner
Oxford, 800 pp., $35

A brief tenure as Franklin Roosevelt's under (and later acting) secretary of the Treasury ended in disaster and resignation/dismissal in late 1933, leaving him in the wilderness for the balance of FDR's first two terms. This may account, to some degree, for Acheson's retrospective coolness toward Roosevelt—respect without affection, in his words—but may also be described as the clash of two supremely self-confident egoists whose temperamental similarities may well have been discomfiting.

Roosevelt, in any case, was capable of rising above such things. Acheson took particular satisfaction in the story that FDR once returned an angry letter of resignation with advice to consult Dean Acheson about the way a gentleman quits. And in 1939, when Acheson served as counsel during his friend Felix Frankfurter's contentious nomination to the Supreme Court, he found himself restored to Roosevelt's good graces. This was a mixed blessing for Acheson: He resented what he considered to be FDR's condescension, and was obliged to decline a pair of flattering appointments—as a federal judge, and as solicitor general. But in late 1940, as Great Britain struggled alone against Nazi Germany, and the Roosevelt White House contended with U.S. neutrality, Acheson was invited to join the State Department, where he was to remain (with one brief interregnum) for the next dozen years.

I furnish this introductory information not because *Dean Acheson* is unduly concerned with his background—it is not—but because, in Acheson's case, style was, to some degree, complementary to substance. As assistant secretary, undersecretary, and secretary of state (1949-53) during Harry Truman's second term, Acheson displayed a personal loyalty to his chief and determination to push the United States toward postwar global leadership—in contrast to the decades between the two world wars—setting the stage for the struggle between West and East, and ordained the unipolar world we now inhabit.

We may speak of the Truman Doctrine to assist free peoples in resisting subversion or aggression, and the Marshall Plan to rebuild a shattered Europe, but what we are really talking about is the diplomacy of Dean Acheson.

The great value of *Dean Acheson* is that it concentrates not only on the ways in which Acheson came to perceive the Soviet threat after 1945, and designed alliances and institutions (notably NATO) to resist Stalin's schemes, but also how he worked with Truman and Congress on

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Cold War tactics and strategy, and dealt with America's isolationist instincts. In this excellent study, Robert L. Beisner, a diplomatic historian who has specialized in the tension between politics and policy, is especially perceptive on the day-to-day mechanics of making foreign policy. Acheson has been fortunate in his previous biographers—David McClellan, Gaddis Smith, James Chace, Douglas Brinkley—but Beisner is the first to examine his relations with Truman and Congress in illuminating detail.

Readers interested in comparing present circumstances with the heroic past will find plenty of material. Acheson's fidelity to Truman was sincere, of course, but pragmatic as well: Truman's loyalty to Acheson was dependent on trust, and Acheson's success hinged on mutual respect. The Department of State in that era was not so much a fifth wheel in perpetual conflict with the Pentagon, but a bureaucratic fiefdom in concert with the White House. The secretary really was the president's principal diplomatic adviser.

Similarly, while it is always fashionable to commend bipartisanship in White House relations with Capitol Hill, Acheson actually enjoyed its benefits—an experience not always awarded his successors.

The remnants of Republican isolationism in the Senate—notably Robert Taft and, later, Joseph McCarthy—harried Acheson, but precursors of GOP internationalism—Arthur Vandenberg, John Foster Dulles, John Sherman Cooper, and others—furnished critical support at decisive moments: in resisting Communist aggression in Greece and Turkey, at the creation of NATO, in choosing to defend the independence of South Korea. Now that the two political sides have long since traded ideologies, the Democrats being the isolationist party, it is impossible to imagine Democratic support for the Bush Doctrine—"It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world"—which is largely indistinguishable from what Dean Acheson and Harry Truman believed. ♦

BCA

# A Motown Mystery

*Even lesser Leonard is well worth a read.*

**BY JON BREEN**

When a major writer produces a sub-par book, it's no great disaster, no unforgivable affront to readers. But the biggest loser in the deal may be the new reader who picks the book up on the basis of reputation and hype, wonders what the shouting was about, and decides never to try that particular author again.

Everett Collection

**Up in Honey's Room**
by Elmore Leonard
Morrow, 304 pp., $25.95

Elmore Leonard is one of the great names in contemporary crime fiction, revered and honored by his peers, rewarded with healthy book sales by a loyal readership. True, some lesser writers move more books and some arguably better writers (Donald E. Westlake, say) move fewer. It's remarkable Leonard makes the best-seller lists at all in the current thriller-dominated market, given the keys to his success: plot movement, sparkling dialogue, offbeat character development, deadpan humor, economically sketched background, a wide range of pop culture references and factual nuggets, minimal use of descriptive passages (he tries to leave out the stuff readers skip), and that elusive quality known as style.

There is suspense, certainly, but focused on what will happen next, not on any visceral connection with the characters, whom he views at too much of a distance for the kind of emotional reader identification supposedly essential in today's popular fiction. By his own admission, he finds the bad guys more intriguing than the good guys. Readers not interested in the inner lives of small-time crooks may not fully get Leonard, but will still admire his skill.

Born in New Orleans in 1925, but a resident for most of his life of Detroit, the locale of much of his fiction, Leonard worked in advertising after wartime service in the Naval Reserve. His first professional fiction sales were westerns for the 1950s magazine markets, beginning with *Argosy* and the still-flourishing pulps, finally cracking the prestigious *Saturday Evening Post* in 1956. These early stories were gathered in *The Complete Western Stories of Elmore Leonard* (2004), whose endpapers reproduce those colorful magazine covers. He also wrote eight western novels, notably *Hombre* (1961) and *Valdez Is Coming* (1969), which became movie vehicles for Paul Newman and Burt Lancaster

*Jon Breen is the author, most recently, of* Eye of God.

respectively. But after the decline of the western market, he turned to hard urban crime fiction, beginning with *The Big Bounce* (1970). By the end of the 1970s, he had become a favorite of connoisseurs, and by the time he won the Edgar Allan Poe Award for *LaBrava* (1983), he was firmly situated in the genre's pantheon.

Even in a lesser example of his work, which *Up in Honey's Room* certainly is, Leonard's strengths are at least sporadically on display. The action begins in 1939 Detroit, where Honey Deal has just left her husband Walter Schoen, a German immigrant who believes he is the twin brother (separated at birth) of Heinrich Himmler. The story jumps ahead five years to 1944. Honey is contacted by FBI agent Kevin Dean, and soon she is accompanying Carl Webster of the U.S. Marshal Service on a visit to question Walter, a known Nazi sympathizer and enthusiastic reader of *Mein Kampf*, about two escaped German prisoners of war, SS Major Otto Penzler and tank commander Jurgen Schrenk. The balance of the action alternates between the German group and their various plans and activities, including a venture in the black market meat industry, and Webster's investigation. A side issue is whether Honey will succeed in seducing the loyally married marshal. There are brief interludes of violent action, but most of the story is told through dialogue.

Continuing characters are rare in Leonard's work, maybe with good reason. The Oklahoman Webster was first met as the title character of the Prohibition-era feds-and-robbers saga *The Hot Kid* (2005), a better book than its sequel, and also figured in "Comfort to the Enemy," a *New York Times Magazine* serial in the same year. The back story is filled in via a family conversation among Webster, his father Virgil, and Virgil's common-law wife Narcissa Raincrow. Three characters recounting to each other for the reader's benefit things they obviously already know makes for exceedingly clumsy exposition, particularly from a writer who has been compared to George V. Higgins as a master of dialogue-driven narrative.

The choice of names is another problem. The confusingly similar surnames Deal and Dean should have been avoided, though fortunately the FBI man is a relatively minor character. Calling one of the German fugitives Otto Penzler, in jokey homage to the well-known publisher, book dealer, and crime fiction expert, is more serious. In genre fiction, this is called Tuckerization, named after Wilson Tucker, the mystery and science fiction writer who popularized the practice. Such foolery can be cute in small doses, but to name such a prominent character after such a well-known model is dubious indeed. To some lucky readers, the name will mean nothing. Those who recognize it may find it a delightful in-joke, smugly congratulate themselves for feeling like insiders, or (most likely) be distracted from the story.

There are good lines of dialogue, jokes, period details, character touches, and unexpected plot reversals to reward the patient reader. But the story doesn't move as it should, bogging down in tiresome conversations of questionable plot relevance or entertainment value. For once, Leonard left in stuff readers will want to skip.

The lesson to be drawn is a simple one, though it contradicts the commercially encouraged impulse to overvalue the new. Elmore Leonard completists—those who read and/or collect everything he writes—will and should acquire this book. Those with limited experience with his work, or most crucially new readers, should first seek out his excellent past novels. For strong examples, transport to the 1970s and '80s is not necessary. In *Pagan Babies* (2000), the very funny adventures of a fugitive priest and a female wannabe stand-up comic, are the vehicle for exploring some serious issues, including the Rwandan genocide. *Be Cool* (1999), a sequel to the memorably filmed *Get Shorty* (1990), delivers au courant satire in hood-turned-Hollywoodian Chili Palmer's efforts to sort out the burgeoning categories of contemporary popular music. ♦

# Warrior at Sea

## *Admiral 'Slew' McCain and the old Navy.*

**BY MACKUBIN THOMAS OWENS**

Almost everyone knows that Sen. John McCain's father was an admiral. Indeed, Adm. John S. McCain Jr., U.S. Navy, served as commander in chief of the Pacific Command from 1968 until 1972, during which time then-Lt. Cdr. John S. McCain III was a prisoner of war in North Vietnam. McCain had been shot down in October 1967, and when the North Vietnamese discovered who his father was, they attempted to embarrass the American military by offering McCain a chance to go home. But he refused, remaining in North Vietnamese captivity for five-and-a-half years.

**A Leader Born**
*The Life of Adm. John Sidney McCain, Pacific Carrier Commander*
by Alton Keith Gilbert
Casemate, 288 pp., $32.95

Most people, however, do *not* know that McCain's grandfather was also an admiral. That would include me. Indeed, when I was asked to review *A Leader Born*, I thought it was a biography of the senator's father, not his grandfather. But as I was to discover, in the pantheon of

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World War II naval leaders, John Sidney McCain ranks right up there with William Halsey, Raymond Spruance, and Marc Mitscher.

McCain has been described as "a gaunt, hawk-faced man known as Slew by his fellow officers and, affectionately, as Popeye by the sailors who served under him." One cannot imagine him in today's Navy. He gambled, cursed a blue streak, drank bourbon and branch water, and rolled his own cigarettes with one hand. His fitness reports were excellent, with the exception of "military appearance." Admiral Halsey called McCain's infamous combat-area headgear "the most disreputable one I ever saw on an officer." But because of his merits, McCain rose to become one of the Navy's greatest combat commanders in World War II, leading the powerful aircraft carrier force of "Bull" Halsey's Third Fleet during key campaigns in the Pacific.

When asked what he thought about McCain, Halsey replied, "Not much more than my right arm."

Gilbert's biography is workmanlike. It will never be confused with Winston Churchill's life of the Duke of Marlborough, but it provides a fairly complete picture of a remarkable combat leader who deserves to be better known than he is. Gilbert has done a good job of pulling together bits and pieces of information about a man who died only four days after witnessing the surrender of the Japanese aboard the USS *Missouri* and, therefore, didn't have an opportunity to provide his own reflections on his wartime career.

John Sidney McCain was born in Carroll County, Mississippi, in 1884, the son of John Sidney and Elizabeth-Ann Young McCain. He began his college studies at the University of Mississippi in 1901 but transferred to the Naval Academy the following year, from which he graduated in 1906. He rose through the grades to rear admiral in 1941 and to vice admiral in 1943.

McCain began his career as what today is called a surface warfare officer, serving on vessels ranging from gunboats to battleships. He also graduated from the Naval War College and pulled shore duty in Washington. But when the Navy needed senior officers to qualify as aviators, Captain John McCain earned his wings at age 52. Shortly thereafter, he commanded one of the Navy's first aircraft carriers, the USS *Ranger.* He was selected for promotion to flag rank at the end of 1940 and then assumed command of the Pacific Fleet's Scouting Force, consisting of three wings of PBY Catalina seaplanes.

**John S. McCain, 1942**

Bettmann / Corbis

In May 1942, McCain became commander of all land-based aircraft in the South Pacific, under Vice Admiral Robert L. Ghormley. His job was to protect the vital sea lanes between Hawaii and Australia, which required searching a huge area north of Australia to detect the movement of the Japanese from the Marshalls and Carolines toward the Solomon Islands.

During the struggle for Guadalcanal, the Japanese were able to exploit a "seam" between Ghormley's South Pacific command (McCain's search area) and Gen. Douglas MacArthur's Southwest Pacific command to inflict on Ghormley's force one of the greatest defeats in the history of the Navy at the Battle of Savo Island. During this night battle, the Japanese task force sank one Australian and three American cruisers, and badly damaged another. Fortunately, the Japanese did not follow up their victory. Had they continued south and attacked the unprotected transports, the first allied offensive of World War II might have ended in disaster. As it was, it set things back considerably, leaving the Marines ashore operating on a shoestring.

While there was plenty of blame to go around for the debacle at Savo Island, McCain has borne his share of criticism for the failure of aerial reconnaissance. But McCain certainly balanced the books with "his visionary and relentless support for the Marines on Guadalcanal," for which he received the first of three Distinguished Service Medals.

As part of Adm. Ernest King's plan to rotate aviation flag officers in and out of the war zone, McCain left the South Pacific in September 1942 to become head of the Bureau of Aeronautics. In August 1943, McCain assumed the newly created post of deputy chief of naval operations (air), taking five divisions of the bureau with him. One of his major contributions was the articulation of an offensive concept of operations for carrier-based air that envisioned a strike force of fast carriers capable of striking the Japanese home islands. As we shall see later, it was an idea ahead of its time.

In July 1944, McCain left Washington for the Pacific, where he became the commander of Task Force 38, the fast carrier force of Halsey's Third Fleet. As the United States pushed closer to the Japanese home islands, Third Fleet alternated operations with Admiral Spruance's Fifth Fleet and Task Force 58 under Vice Admiral Mitscher. McCain continued in this position until the end of the war, making an important contribution to victory in the Philippines campaign, including the Battle of Leyte Gulf.

Alton Keith Gilbert is not a professional historian, and for those who enjoy narrative history and biographies, and who appreciate military history, that is a good thing—which does not reflect favorably on the academic his-

torical profession. *A Leader Born* is reminiscent of another excellent account of the Pacific war by a nonhistorian, Edward S. Miller's *War Plan Orange*, a remarkable book about the evolution of the U.S. war plan for defeating the Japanese in the Western Pacific.

It is clear that *A Leader Born* is a labor of love. As Gilbert confesses in the preface, he came to realize that, as he plowed through the material on McCain, "John Sidney McCain had grown to become a personal hero to me." But while he clearly admires his subject, *A Leader Born* is not hagiography. Even the greatest of men have flaws, and McCain was no exception. As Gilbert observes, "To take on command is to take on risks—risks of success and failure, and the risks of praise and criticism. McCain experienced a bit of each."

One determinant of McCain's successes and failures was his leadership style. This was true of the Navy's senior leadership in general, and Gilbert offers a comparative study of this factor. McCain always operated in the shadow of "Bull" Halsey, and the former shared both the virtues and vices of the latter. Meanwhile, in temperament and leadership style, Halsey was almost the polar opposite of Raymond Spruance. Spruance was deliberate and cautious, a meticulous planner, and a brilliant strategist and coordinator who left the execution of his plans to his subordinates. Halsey was a bold commander and imaginative improviser. As one historian cited by Gilbert observes, Halsey "had daring and was unafraid to take risks, but he was also sloppy in his procedures."

An aggressive risk-taker can be a good thing. When the commander of the Pacific Fleet, Adm. Chester Nimitz, needed a leader to restore the fighting spirit of the forces around Guadalcanal, he turned to Halsey to replace Ghormley. But Halsey's aggressiveness almost cost him dearly at Leyte Gulf, when he took the Japanese bait and left the landing force uncovered.

McCain was also a risk-taker. Whereas Spruance preferred to keep his carriers on a short leash to cover the amphibious force during the seizure of advanced naval bases in the Central Pacific campaign, McCain envisioned the fast-carrier force as an offensive weapon to attack the Japanese air threat at its source. Gilbert does not mention it, but McCain's vision adumbrated the Navy's operational concept for the use of the carrier during the Cold War. The carrier battle force was designed to defeat Soviet naval aviation by means of "bait and trap." With its offensive punch, the carrier was the "bait" because the Russians could not afford to permit the carriers close enough to launch strikes against the Soviet homeland. But it was also the "trap" because it carried the F-14 Tomcat, an interceptor designed to shoot down the bombers that would attack the carriers.

We sometimes forget that the United States was not preordained to win World War II. It took an extraordinary effort and extraordinary sacrifice to do so; and even then, we needed the right leaders in the right place. John S. McCain was one of those leaders so dedicated to the completion of his mission that he refused to let up, even though the stress and burden of command killed him. He might have suffered a heart attack while in command of Task Force 38, but kept it to himself lest he be relieved.

Senator John McCain writes a touching foreword to *A Leader Born*. His grandfather died when he was only nine years old, and it is clear that he left an indelible impression. But as I was reading I wondered what Admiral McCain would think about his grandson—and the rest of his generation. Of course, he would admire John McCain for the reasons the rest of us admire him: his steadfast courage, both physical and moral, the character he demonstrated in the crucible of war and long captivity, and his sense of honor. But I wonder if Admiral McCain wouldn't think that his grandson's generation had become too solicitous of America's enemies, and too soft to do what is necessary to defeat a vicious enemy. ♦

PCA

# Zion on Ice

## *Imagining Sitka as the New Jerusalem.*

**BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Michael Chabon, the best writer of English prose in this country, and the most interesting novelist of his generation, is expressing amusement at the idea that anyone would think his new book might be anti-Semitic. Calling him an anti-Semite, Chabon says, would "be like calling Groucho Marx anti-moustache."

**The Yiddish Policemen's Union**
by Michael Chabon
HarperCollins, 432 pp., $26.95

That's a pretty good crack until you remember that Groucho Marx painted on his moustache with bootblack.

Chabon's new novel is called *The Yiddish Policemen's Union*, and even those readers bowled over by the capacious inventiveness of his Pulitzer Prize-winning opus, *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*, are going to be amazed at how inventive Chabon can be. This mash-up of two pulpy genres—speculative science fiction and hardboiled detective story—is set in an alternate version of the present in which Israel did not sur-

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Michael Chabon

Corbis / Sophie Bassouls

vive the 1948 war of independence.

Instead, in Chabon's imagining, the post-Holocaust Jewish remnant was settled in Southeastern Alaska, about three hours north of Vancouver, where they have spent six decades building a teeming, crazy metropolis called Sitka, where Yiddish is the native tongue.

As the novel begins, this Jewish city of 3 million is about to revert to Alaskan sovereignty the way Hong Kong reverted to Chinese sovereignty. The Jewish experiment with self-rule is over. The Jews of Sitka are about to become a homeless, rootless, diasporic people again.

What Chabon has done here is extraordinary. He does not lay out the alternative history or the geopolitics in a neat preface. He merely presents us with Sitka in 2007 and along the way we glean and gather how the city came about and how it will end. We follow a disappointed, depressed, drunken cop named Meyer Landsman as he wanders through the city's redoubts to solve the mystery of a chess player who was murdered in a Sitka flophouse—the same flophouse where Landsman has come to reside following the collapse of his 15-year marriage to the formidable Bina Gelbfish.

Landsman finds himself in the middle of a gigantic conspiracy involving a grotesquely obese Hasidic rebbe with unlimited financial resources who runs a vicious crime syndicate, a tortured and saintly junkie homosexual with messiah-like powers, and a bunch of crazed goons who want to start a holy war in Jerusalem by blowing up the Dome of the Rock and placing a third Temple on the site. They are aided and abetted by an unnamed evangelical president of the United States who wants to hasten the end times by bringing Armageddon to the biblical Israel.

Since Chabon is a serious writer who uses the conventions of pulp fiction, I think we should do him the honor of taking him seriously. His Sitka is plainly a metaphor for Israel, complete with the political clashes that characterize the Jewish state—including the dependence on, and the subsequent uneasy relationship with, the United States.

The logic of *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* is this: Gather Jews together in any mass, and they will let loose messianic havoc on the world, either because of their own messianic hungers or because dispensationalist Gentiles wish to use them for this purpose. Jews are the authors of clannish conspiracies—the nonbelievers, especially—while the believers are themselves susceptible to conspiracies that flatter their conviction that the Jews are of cosmic importance.

Landsman's pregnant cousin-in-law sums it all up after the Jews destroy the Dome of the Rock: "All those people rioting on the television in Syria, Baghdad, Egypt? In London? Burning cars. Setting fire to embassies. Up in [the Hasidic district], did you see what happened, they were dancing, those f—ing maniacs, they were so happy about all this craziness, the whole floor collapsed right onto the apartment beneath. A couple of little girls, sleeping in their beds, they got crushed to death. That's the kind of s—t we have to look forward to now. Burning cars and homicidal dancing."

In other words, the Jews who change the world in Chabon's novel are nothing more than reverse-image fanatic Muslims, Palestinian suicide bombers in black hats. According to Chabon, his mother crowed when she heard he was receiving some (pretty muted) criticism of his novel's perspective: "Now you know you've arrived as a Jewish-American writer," she said. "When you've been condemned by other Jews as an anti-Semite, you know you've made it."

In fact, the condemnation to which she was referring came from my colleague Kyle Smith at the *New York Post*. Smith isn't Jewish. But it's interesting that Chabon's mother instantly assumed he was. She was clearly referring to the treatment accorded Philip Roth in his early years, when Roth's no-holds-barred and unsentimental portraits of postwar Jews sent many of his contemporaries into frenzies of rage. The critic Marie Syrkin spoke for many when she said that *Portnoy's Complaint* was "plain unadulterated anti-Semitism ... right out of the Goebbels-Streicher script."

Syrkin was wrong, since *Portnoy's Complaint* is not an expression of Jewish self-hatred but rather an acidic portrait of Jewish self-hatred. Chabon is a very different case. There's no Jewish self-hatred in him because he excludes himself from the deep contempt he feels for those Jews whose religious convictions or Zionist beliefs he does not share.

"I love my Jewish heritage," says Chabon. "I'm so proud of it. If I weren't, I wouldn't write about it, and I feel that I don't need to prove that to anybody." He need prove nothing. Trust the tale, not the teller, D.H. Lawrence once said. Chabon's tale speaks for itself. Like all those who express a great sentimental love for their "heritage," Chabon loves his just so long as it's in the rearview mirror. ♦

# Prophet of Prosperity

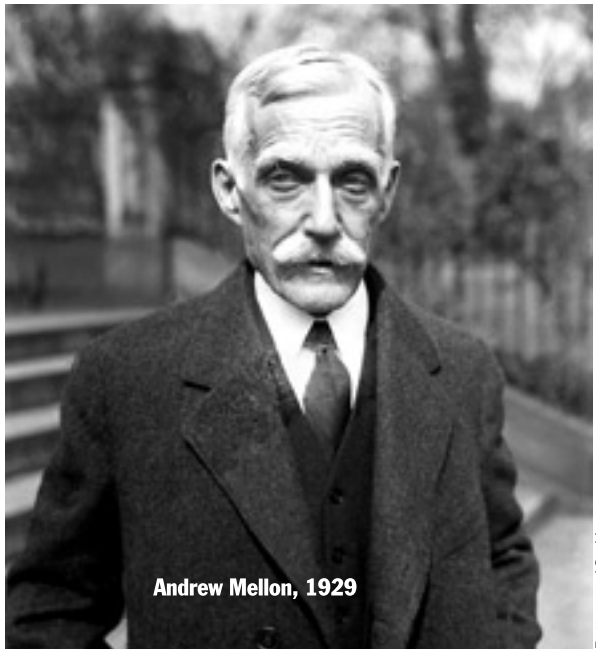
*A second look at a great American capitalist.*

**BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.**

The portrayal of American worthies in the binary mode, as either paragons or demons, may originate with Parson Weems. But even now our estimates of the eminent are often caricature, with Daumier and Nast as the presiding muses. That is one of many reasons David Cannadine's resolutely rounded portrait of Andrew Mellon is a significant addition to the canon of American biography.

Mellon's name is now associated with a great charitable foundation, as well as the National Gallery of Art, whose core collection—and the great building on the Mall that houses it—was his personal gift to the nation. But there was a time when Mellon was viewed, through lenses darkened by Depression-era disillusion, as one of the exemplary rascals of the Roaring Twenties. Accordingly, Cannadine's measured portrait will disappoint those who cling to that view, as well as those who apotheosize the Pittsburgh banker and perennial Treasury secretary (1921-32) as the faultless prophet of prosperity. Cannadine has no patience with the binary approach, which he rightly dismisses as unhistorical.

Mellon's father, "Judge" Thomas Mellon, was a protestant Irish immigrant to western Pennsylvania who imported the Calvinist attitudes that, somewhat secularized, marked his son. Andrew Mellon led a melancholy and reclusive private life, seared by an unhappy divorce and distant relationships with his two children: a personal aspect that receives a degree of attention exceeding its intrinsic interest here. For most readers of this very long book, the compelling interest of Mellon's life lies in his career as public man, featuring his decade as secretary of the Treasury under three Republican presidents.



Andrew Mellon, 1929

Bettmann / Corbis

Cannadine's examination of the Treasury years may surprise those who assume that a rock-ribbed Republican, nurtured in banking, mining, and manufacture, and fiercely hostile to unionism, would reflexively pursue the self-interested policies we too often expect of tycoons raised to public office. Mellon was, indeed, the first apostle of supply-side economics: Steep cuts in marginal income tax rates. What is less clearly understood is Mellon's rationale.

He was himself, after John D. Rockefeller and his fellow townsman Andrew Carnegie, the nation's third largest payer of income taxes. He saw them as his duty. But he argued that at a time when few Americans paid *any* income tax—the tax in its post-16th Amendment incarnation was only a decade or so old—rich men were driven by high marginal rates (up to 50 percent on the last dollar) to shelter capital in tax-exempt government securities. Lower marginal rates, the core of the "Mellon Plan," would, he insisted, tilt investment towards equities, nourishing industrial capitalization and, perhaps, boosting net revenues. Sen. James Couzens of Michigan, a progressive Republican and a fellow millionaire, trenchantly disputed Mellon's analysis, and the "battle of the millionaires" became a star turn of fiscal debate in the mid-twenties. Mellon finally got his tax reform bill in 1926, but the argument goes on. It was a point in Mellon's favor when it was revealed that Couzens had heavily invested his own fortune in tax-exempts.

The most engaging pages of this book, humanizing Mellon's notoriously austere and taciturn personality, concern his art collection, his supervision of the building of the great beaux arts Federal Triangle in Washington, and, far from least, the Justice Department's assault on him in the mid-1930s as an alleged tax delinquent—an episode that shows Franklin D. Roosevelt and Atty. Gen. Homer Cummings at their pettiest. The essence of the charge was that Mellon, by dubious gifts to his charitable foundation, had drastically underpaid his 1931-32 taxes. With interest and penalties, the bill assessed came to more than $3 million.

Cannadine suggests that Mellon was targeted as a very visible representative of the "malefactors of great wealth" reviled by FDR's cousin Theodore in the Progressive era, and identified by FDR himself as "money changers" who must be driven from "the temple

*Edwin M. Yoder Jr.'s novel,* Lions at Lamb House, *will be published in September.*

of American civilization." Cannadine has written well of the vicissitudes of the British aristocracy, and is perhaps more attuned than a native biographer to the class overtones of this paradigmatic clash. It pitted old money (FDR's family fortune was founded in the old China trade) against the upstart 19th- and 20th-century millionaires.

A piquant sidelight was that, on New Year's Eve 1936, with the tax case still pending, Mellon came by invitation to the White House for tea to be thanked by FDR for the gift of his art collection to the nation. As usual, FDR was so disarming that Mellon left marveling at what a nice man he was! But it must have diluted the charm when Mellon discovered, if he did, that while he had paid tens of thousands in income tax in the years in which he was accused of evasion, FDR himself had paid all of $31.31 on an income of nearly $20,000. After a long and heavily publicized process before the Treasury's Board of Tax Appeals, Mellon was vindicated, though not soon enough to savor the victory. He died of uremia and bronchial pneumonia at 82 in August 1937, some months before the vindication.

Mellon's munificent gift of art to the nation has been much chronicled, never better than in S.N. Behrman's delightful sketch *Duveen* half-a-century ago, a zesty supplement to Cannadine's hurried and impatient handling of Mellon's great late-life collecting passion. Sir Joseph, later Baron, Duveen was a transatlantic art dealer of Dutch-Jewish ancestry and wiles whose theory it was that new money in America and old art in Europe needed bringing together—by himself. A notable cartoon of a later day depicts Duveen as a huge, predatory cat assailing a tiny, timid bird (Mellon) in a hotel elevator.

The implication, however, is as misleading as the anecdote it is based on; for Mellon was as shrewd a bargainer as Duveen was a salesman. Duveen, however, managed many of Mellon's signal acquisitions, and by 1930, Mellon's purchases of Old Masters had piled up so rapidly (and awkwardly, since there was a Depression on) that many were secreted in the basement of Washington's Corcoran Gallery.

Underwood & Underwood / Corbis

Behrman's book originated as a saucy *New Yorker* profile and remains delicious reading, although its rarely understated storytelling needs a bit of salting. Behrman's main defect was that he gave credence to the legend that Mellon's gift was an after-the-fact tax dodge that saved him from criminal prosecution. In fact, there was ample evidence—enunciated with panache by Duveen himself at Mellon's "trial"—that the donor had planned his gift for a decade. Whatever else may be said, Mellon was as generous as he was dutiful.

**Mellon**
*An American Life*
by David Cannadine
Knopf, 800 pp., $35

The late Paul Mellon commissioned this warts-and-all portrait of the father with whom he had a troubled relationship; and Cannadine doesn't scant the negative side. Andrew Mellon, with many of the super-rich of his time, had no sympathy for the as-yet-unrecognized legal claims of labor; and it hardly helped the family reputation when his brother Richard, custodian of the Pittsburgh assets, declined to make it clear in a congressional hearing that machine guns would be out of place in the hands of company "police" keeping order in the Pennsylvania coal fields.

Andrew Mellon seems to have had only the slightest sense of what today we call "conflict of interest." Throughout his tenure at the Treasury he was active in the management of his personal fortune. Mellon was as blinded as other contemporaries (of all persuasions) by the mystique of classical economics. He believed that no official tools could alleviate the huge distress of the Great Depression, even with a third or more of the labor force jobless, 5,000 banks in failure, and tens of thousands of homeowners facing foreclosure.

The Depression became the debacle of an era, the graveyard of the rigid theory of governmental noninterventionism Mellon championed, and far from incidentally, the source of a lingering disfavor. The Mellon worldview had been overtaken by the more adventurous spirit of the New Deal, and by John Maynard Keynes's withering dissection of classical microeconomics in the *General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936). Keynes's most famous words—that "practical men . . . are the slaves of some defunct economist"—might have been Andrew Mellon's public epitaph.

Cannadine, a fine historian of British origin, misses a few American political subtleties, occasionally confuses names, and entertains more than one stark misconception: for instance, that Chief Justice Charles Evans Hughes was the leader of the anti-New Deal Supreme Court faction before 1937. And he and this reviewer have very different conceptions of F. Scott Fitzgerald's most famous creation, Jay Gatsby. Still, the overriding point of this massive and impressive chronicle is that no figure of Andrew Mellon's magnitude can or should be dismissed as the stuff of caricature or cartoon. David Cannadine has proved his point. ♦

# One of a Kind

*Haunted lives and lucky hands at the poker table.*

**BY TED GIOIA**

Michael Ondaatje has earned a reputation as a major novelist based on a small body of work—five short or medium-sized books published over a period of more than 30 years. One could squeeze all of these novels into a single volume and they would take up less space than, say, Vikram Seth's *A Suitable Boy* or David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest*. In an age of loquacious writers, where words are flogged and blogged in mass production style, Ondaatje stands as the odd man out, a craftsman who favors concision and taut poetic expression.

Michael Ondaatje

Corbis / Rune Hellestad

**Divisadero**
by Michael Ondaatje
Knopf, 288 pp., $25

Now seven years after his last novel, *Anil's Ghost* (2000), Ondaatje offers us *Divisadero*, a story of broken families and fractured lives in California, Nevada, and France. Here the reader encounters all the trademarks of Ondaatje's fiction: the jazzy rhythms of his prose, fragmented narratives that seem to echo the cracks in his characters' psyches, and a delicate probing into enigmatic personas defined by shameful secrets and sudden moments of violence. Ever since he launched his writing career with books built around the historical figures of Billy the Kid and Buddy Bolden, Ondaatje has erected his narratives around protagonists who are desperately in need of a 12-step program if not a prison sentence.

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Ondaatje's most successful exploration of the complexity of such self-destructive lives came in his celebrated 1992 novel, *The English Patient*. The book earned him a Booker Prize, and the resulting movie won nine Academy Awards, including the top honor for Best Picture of 1996. Although the film added a double dose of Hollywood romance to the plot line, it successfully (and daringly) remained true to the disjointed chronology of Ondaatje's narrative, in which flashbacks and recollections constantly interrupt the current action, and the audience is left to pull the story's individual components together like so many puzzle pieces scattered on the floor.

*Divisadero* is much the same. The narrative does not develop so much as break apart. The novel introduces Anna in its opening pages, a young girl living in Petaluma, California, who is raised alongside two orphans, Claire and Coop, brought into the home by her father after the death of his wife. This makeshift family erupts in violence after the father discovers an affair between Anna and Coop. He attempts to murder Coop, and Anna responds by savagely attacking and wounding her father.

The narrative now shifts its focus to the adult Coop, who has become a card shark and professional poker player. Poker, it seems, is the new subject of choice for novelists trying to emphasize the alienation of their protagonists. Just a few weeks ago Don DeLillo published his latest novel *Falling Man*, in which a survivor of the World Trade Center attack recovers from this experience by an intense submersion in Texas hold 'em. Cristina Garcia has also featured poker prominently in her latest novel, *A Handbook to Luck*, in which a math whiz turns to the game to support his father.

I am happy to report that poker works even better on the page than on ESPN. As a game built on bluffing and posturing, it almost requires a probing psychological novel to do justice to its subtleties. Perhaps the next Henry James will learn his craft at the Las Vegas card tables rather than waste his time on those European jaunts. In any event, Ondaatje rises to the challenge. Some of the most engaging pages in *Divisadero* deal with Coop's exploits in scamming a gang of hoodlums with bottom deals and phony shuffles.

Coop decides to take on the Brethren, a gang of born-again card sharks working Tahoe and Vegas casinos. The Brethren are colorful scammers: They even form a prayer circle before sitting down at the poker table to cheat their unsuspecting victims. Coop trains for months before taking on his adversaries in a high-stakes game that Ondaatje describes artfully, card by card, wager by wager. Coop captures the pot, a $300,000 triumph, but sets off a chain of ugly events by this win that he can neither predict nor control.

Yet this second interlude in *Divisadero* is abandoned even more abruptly than it begins. The last hundred pages shift their focus, in a jarring and unconvincing manner, to the life and times of Lucien Segura, a French poet from the first half of the 20th century. The grown-up Anna is studying him as part of her work as a literary scholar. Yet beyond this, the characters and events of the first half of the novel fade completely from view in these concluding chapters. This type of disjointed structure worked well in *The English Patient*, where the musings and recollections of a dying man served as a unifying device linking the various threads in a complicated plot. But here Ondaatje has no such justification for

this unexpected break in the narrative flow. His book reads like three separate stories—each one well crafted in isolation—struggling to join hands in a single novel.

Ondaatje's sparkling prose somewhat compensates for this defect. In his early books, such as *Coming Through Slaughter* and *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid*, Ondaatje veered back and forth between poetry and prose, almost as if he aspired to some exemplary merging of the two approaches. His writing today is less overtly experimental, but the meticulous care he imparts to each sentence is still apparent. His stories frequently depict characters reading aloud from great works of literature—Herodotus, Kipling, Dumas, and the like—and they give great attention to the placement of commas, the cadences of the succeeding phrases. This is also the best way to experience Ondaatje's own writing, and I found myself, while reading *Divisadero*, returning to certain paragraphs and sentences, and reading them aloud, basking in the aural pleasure of his text.

Even so, the finished work would have been more powerful and coherent if presented in the form of three novellas, separate tales with some overlapping characters—like the seven stories of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*. By trying to squeeze these disparate accounts into a single narrative structure, Ondaatje leaves his reader hanging, expecting connections and closure at *Divisadero*'s end that he never delivers.

Perhaps the title inadvertently highlights this limitation. Divisadero Street in San Francisco is only mentioned in passing here, but Ondaatje lingers to point out that there are two possible sources for the name. One interpretation links it to the Spanish word for "division" while the other etymology refers to the word *divisar*, which means to "gaze at from a distance."

Ondaatje's novel embodies the first of these perspectives. It is a divided work, a splintering of stories, which resists our best efforts to pull the various narratives together into a coherent whole. ♦

BCA

# Underhill Revisited

*The child was the father of the man in the Waugh household.* **BY EDWARD SHORT**

In *Fathers and Sons*, Evelyn Waugh's grandson revisits some fascinating family history. Here is the story of four generations of Waughs told with wit and *brio*. Evelyn has been fortunate in his biographers—Frances Donaldson, Selina Hastings, and Douglas Lane Patey all wrote brilliantly about him—but *Fathers and Sons* reveals aspects of the novelist's poisonous relationship with his father, Arthur, that have never been given adequate attention. Anyone interested in the Waugh family, or family history in general, will find it an absorbing read.

**Fathers and Sons**
*The Autobiography of a Family*
by Alexander Waugh
Nan A. Talese, 400 pp., $27.50

The book opens with a portrait of Arthur's father, Alexander, otherwise known as "the Brute," an award-winning doctor who delighted in shooting and fishing. With his booming voice, Dundreary whiskers, and mad, piercing eyes, he terrified family and associates alike. He took particular pleasure in flogging his dogs. Perhaps unsurprisingly, none of his three daughters ever married. When the word "sadist" was first explained to Arthur, he is reported to have thought a minute, and said, "Ah, that is what my father must have been."

Although the Brute congratulated Arthur on winning the Newdigate Prize at Oxford for his epic poem about Gordon at Khartoum, he died before he could see his son's later attainments as publisher, poet, biographer, and critic. The only interests father and son shared were amateur theatricals and cricket.

The theatrical interest would become a Waugh family staple. Arthur regularly recited passages from Dickens, Shakespeare, and the great Victorian poets to both his sons at Underhill, the family home in Hampstead. Evelyn endowed most of his books with the pace, economy, and seamlessness of good theater. He might also have been a first-rate theater critic, as a review he wrote of a 1955 production of *Titus Andronicus* demonstrates. Here is his description of Vivien Leigh as Lavinia:

> When she was dragged off to her horrible fate she ventured a tiny impudent, barely perceptible roll of the eyes, as who should say: "My word! What next!" She established complete confidence between the audience and the production. "We aren't trying to take you in," she seemed to say. "You're too clever, and we are too clever. Just enjoy yourself." It was the grain of salt which gave savour to the whole rich stew.

Evelyn also enjoyed playing theatrical roles himself, the most memorable being the one described in *The Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold* (1957): "[A] combination of eccentric don and testy colonel," which he acted relentlessly in his later years. Like Pinfold, he "offered the world a front of pomposity mitigated by indiscretion that was as hard, bright and antiquated as a cuirass."

Cricket played an immense part in Arthur's family life. "With a thorough knowledge of the Bible, Shakespeare and *Wisden Cricketers Almanac*," he would tell his sons, "you cannot go far wrong." In 1893 Arthur married, and five years later was born his first son, Alec, whom he always referred to as "the son of my soul," not least for his cricketing prowess at Arthur's own

*Edward Short's book about John Henry Newman and his contemporaries will be published in the fall by Continuum.*

public school, Sherborne.

Arthur's love for his first-born son was all-consuming. When Alec was boarding at Sherborne, Arthur wrote him daily and awaited his responses "in the palpitating manner of a teenage paramour." Something was not right in this picture. "I think Arthur may have suffered from the same syndrome that is claimed of the pop star Michael Jackson," Alexander observes. "Those who are brutalized by their fathers often find themselves unable to grow up: They are consumed with a need to relive their childhood over and over again to get it right."

Alec was the golden boy Arthur had never been able to be himself. Where did this leave Evelyn? Alexander puts matters succinctly: "Alec and Arthur were a two-man gang from which Evelyn was excluded." The second son, whose difficult birth had come five years after Alec's, was never shown the attention he craved. Both parents had wanted a girl and let Evelyn know it. He was not the golden boy and, as Alexander shows, the resentment this caused stayed with him for the rest of his life.

Meanwhile, all was not well at Sherborne: Alec was discovered *in flagrante delicto* and stripped of all his schoolboy honors. He wrote his first novel, *The Loom of Youth* (1917), to expose the homoeroticism rife at public schools. A *succès de scandale*, the book won him praise from the likes of J.C. Squire and Arnold Bennett. Then Alec went off to war and witnessed the horrors of Passchendaele from an abandoned German pillbox. But when he returned home it was his experiences in French brothels that he was eager to share with his wide-eyed brother.

Alexander calls Alec an "erotomaniac." Evelyn and his friends called him "the bald-headed lecher." Although married twice, he never put down roots and was happiest trotting the globe in search of exotic conquests. Tahiti was his favorite destination. "Polynesians," he discovered, "as hula dancers, acquire an astonishing mobility between the knees and navel."

While Alec was setting himself up as a successful novelist, Evelyn floundered. He did poorly at Oxford. He took teaching jobs from which he was ignominiously sacked. He even enrolled in a course for carpenters. But mostly he drank. When he did finally put pen to paper, settling scores with his father became paramount. In *Rossetti* (1928) he was careful to differentiate his own from his father's brand of biography, which he claimed only produced "catafalques heaped with the wreaths of august mourners, their limbs embalmed, robed, uniformed and emblazoned . . . their faces serenely composed and cleansed of all stains of humanity."

Evelyn Waugh (in top hat) Hulton-Deutsch Collection / Corbis

In *Decline and Fall* (1928), Evelyn's first novel, Arthur is mocked in the character of Prendergast, a sentimental glutton, whose death, as Alexander points out, "must have been especially galling to Arthur: his head is sawn off by a madman who wants to be a carpenter." In 1930 Evelyn had Arthur's shortcomings in mind when he wrote a piece called "What I Think of My Elders."

> I admire their lack of scruple. It takes a great deal to rouse them, but when some feature of their comfort is really threatened they will suddenly plunge into conflict with every artifice their long lives have taught them. I admire their lack of ambition. I admire the resolution with which they hold to their own opinions; their indifference to the traps and pitfalls of logical proof. I admire their sense of humour, those curious jokes which seem to gain lustre and pungency with each repetition . . .

When Evelyn's story "The Man Who Liked Dickens" (1933) appeared, the mere title must have made the old man shudder: "What new onslaught—what new patricidal biffing am I in for now?" (Alexander provides inspired interior monologue.) Everyone in literary London knew that Arthur loved Dickens. He was president of the Dickens Fellowship. He lectured on Dickens. For over 30 years, as managing director of Chapman and Hall, he published Dickens. The actress Ellen Terry called him "Mr. Pickwick." Evelyn took his father's harmless delight in the novelist and turned it into a comic nightmare in which a shipwrecked explorer falls into the clutches of a lunatic half-caste who insists on having his captive guest read the works of Dickens over and over again. Later Waugh would make the story the gruesome finale of *A Handful of Dust* (1934).

When Arthur took revenge by writing his second son out of his autobiography, Evelyn retaliated with incendiary ruthlessness. Arthur's diary for January 29, 1935, records: "Woke at 4 am to a strong smell of burning. On opening the bookroom found the room ablaze." Evelyn recounted the episode two years later in a piece he wrote for the *Pall Mall Magazine*:

> My father is a literary critic and publisher. I think he can claim to have more books dedicated to him than any living man. They used to stand together on his shelves, among hundreds of inscribed copies from almost every English writer of eminence, until on one of my rather rare recent visits to my home, I inadvertently set the house on fire, destroying the carefully garnered fruits of a lifetime of literary friendships.

Evelyn's literary star rose with dazzling celerity. *Decline and Fall* and *Vile Bodies* (1930) sold more copies in a week than all Arthur's and Alec's books put together. His diaries document the gusto with which he enjoyed his success. Many writers can look back on robust drinking days, but few persisted in them with Evelyn's abandon. His heroic intake only decreased when he retired to country hotels to write his books or to faraway jungles to research his travelogues. But then his first wife, Evelyn Gardiner (nicknamed

"She-Evelyn"), left him for a man whom Evelyn nicely called a "ramshackle oaf," and his bright young world toppled around him. As he told one friend, "I did not know it was possible to be so miserable and live."

After converting to Rome in 1930, Evelyn spent the rest of his days trying to see himself and the world *sub specie aeternitatis*. Alexander suggests that the novelist's conversion was simply another outrage undertaken to disconcert his already reeling father, but this is not true. Evelyn might have relished playacting, but there was nothing make-believe about his Roman Catholic faith.

Once his first marriage was annulled, Evelyn married Laura Herbert, an imperturbable 19-year-old who spent most of her married life doting on her beloved cows. Alexander implies that Laura and Evelyn disliked their six children. Evelyn, it is true, told Diana Cooper, "I can only regard children as defective adults," but the letters he wrote to his children when they were unhappy at school (especially to his son Auberon) are models of parental affection and good sense.

Towards the end of his life, after he had survived the ordeal of bringing up Auberon, Evelyn mellowed. The hurt that Arthur had caused still rankled, but he could see it in a larger light. In his own unfinished autobiography, he paid the memory of his father a fitting tribute. Speaking of Arthur's recitations in the bookroom at Underhill, Evelyn recalled:

> In these recitations of English prose and verse the incomparable variety of English vocabulary, the cadences and rhythms of the language, saturated my young mind, so that I never thought of English literature as a school subject, as matter for analysis and historical arrangement, but as a source of natural joy. It was a legacy that has not depreciated.

*Fathers and Sons* is a special book. It puts one in mind of something Francis Bacon said: "Use the memory of thy predecessors fairly, and tenderly; for if thou dost not, it is a debt will sure be paid, when thou art gone." Alexander Waugh has nothing to fear on that score. ♦

BCA

# Cooke's Tour

*A keen eye and sharpened pencil in wartime America.*

**BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS**

Just before the millennium turned over in 2000, a set of audiocassette tapes appeared for the first time, *September 21, 1939: A Day from the Golden Age of Radio*, an aural record of every second of one day's broadcasting over the airwaves of WJSV, a CBS affiliate in Washington, D.C. Much in the spirit of the time capsule sunk deep into the earth that same summer at the New York World's Fair, these tapes constitute a time capsule in sound. The producers inspired to press this recording—back then a more painstaking task than flipping a digital button today—chose the date more or less at random. Leaving aside the political drama of President Roosevelt's address to a joint session of Congress on American neutrality in the three-week-old European war—carried live that afternoon—they gunned for a prosaically normal day in the late-Depression life of the capital city.

**The American Home Front: 1941-1942**
by Alistair Cooke
Atlantic Monthly, 336 pp., $24

And achingly normal it was. For the impatient and incurious, listening to these tapes provides hour upon tedious hour of some of the most tired entertainment, cornpone commercials, and sketchy news ever broadcast. Benumbed by our own spoon-fed flashiness, today's listeners may find themselves hoping that golden radio got a bit more golden than this bland, crackling hash reveals.

Yet for astute listeners with a taste for the sharp tang of history as it's experienced, those tapes offer up a lavish, nostalgic banquet. We move with the pace of Arthur Godfrey's morning wake-up talk and casual whistling, snicker over the jokes, pause with the jingles for soap powder, strain to catch faintly spoken lines from daytime serials, get the hard sell on the new 1940 models, and follow a baseball game. As we settle in, we saunter to a different, slower rhythm; the past takes on color and character.

This is what time capsules are designed to do: They preserve the artifacts of time to show future aliens how those objects once breathed among the living.

*The American Home Front* would fit snugly in a time capsule sealed, say, in 1945. It's nothing less than an artifact from the same pivotal, though quickly fading, era, now brought back unaltered and pristine as though it had been lodged untouched in a vault. And in a sense it was.

Back in 1941, Alistair Cooke—newspaperman, radio commentator, and, much later, genial host of *Masterpiece Theater* on PBS—was a onetime British subject in his early thirties, newly naturalized as an American, hoofing the pavement as a reporter for the BBC and based in New York. The young journalist's beats comprised everything from diplomacy to the intrigues of Washington deal-making to movie reviewing to jazz. But after Pearl Harbor, Cooke set off across the American landscape on the broadest of assignments: to collect and record the gaudy, gritty sights and sounds of a somnolent behemoth just roused from its slumber to mobilize for worldwide war. Cooke mined thoroughly what he learned over those months for his dispatches, both newspaper and broadcast. But while keeping up his other reporting for the dura-

*Tracy Lee Simmons is the author, most recently, of* Climbing Parnassus: A New Apologia for Greek and Latin.

tion of the war, he was also writing up his account of the journey as a longer, more coherent narrative, and planning for its publication as a book.

By the time the war ended, though, nobody on either side of the Atlantic cared to look back at what most people preferred to forget. The book, completed but unpublishable, was pitched in a closet and there it remained, forgotten and hidden, even to him, for almost 60 years. And so, just weeks before his death in 2004, his enterprising secretary spied the old manuscript while combing through Cooke's papers and bestowed it on its astonished and gratified author, then a man in his mid-nineties.

Now it's in the hands of the reading public at last. The story of this book's recovery is a minor but enticingly charming one from the files of the literary lost and found. But the better tale is that of the trek itself.

"Travelers always find what they're looking for," Cooke often said over the years, and while collecting pre-fab hunches and confirmed biases might be acceptable for freewheeling travelers, it's not for reporters out to see accurately with fresh eyes. This lone excursion of discovery is ground-up journalism, a tight set of stories about little people in little places bobbing on a gargantuan wave of history. It's a relic of the days when journalists took to the road to gather their sticks of information—the kind of reporting that Internet surfing and other instant gee-whiz gadgetry might render obsolete before long. Here a man with pointed literary skill, and a finely tuned sensibility, does the observing and reporting, not an impersonal cipher wielding a manual.

This wartime journey began, retrospectively, a few weeks before Cooke knew he was going to take it. War had not yet begun for America, but rumors buzzed as he was on hand among a flock of correspondents on November 15, 1941, to conduct an ambush press conference with special Japanese envoy Saburo Kurusu as he arrived in New York. Cooke followed him down to Washington, and there he was by December 6, a Saturday that ended uneventfully with "a raw, misty night." Sunday, December 7, opened sunny and balmy, and that afternoon, just before 2:30, Cooke sat down with much of the nation to listen to the New York Philharmonic broadcast on radio, that domestic device which had become, for Americans, "a background to living, a species of wallpaper, against which they eat and snore and quarrel," when the bulletin came in from Hawaii.

The next day Cooke stood in the U.S. House chamber to hear President Roosevelt call, to rousing cheers, for a declaration of war on Japan.

Any reporter's instincts would likely keep him pinned to the center of political, or perhaps military, action in the rush of these momentous events. But Cooke opted to hit the road and "see what the war [would do] to people, to the towns I might go through, to some jobs and crops, to stretches of landscape I loved and had seen at peace." By February 1942, carting pad and pencil, maps, and a set of second-hand retreads, he was off.

His clockwise itinerary began in Washington, headed through the southland to Florida, west through New Orleans and Texas, to California and the Pacific Northwest, then east through the Great Plains and Midwest, ending in New England and New York City. Here was a wide canvas for word painting. Quickly do we see that this was a different America over a decade before the interstate highways began to make life more speedily convenient but, in doing so, diminished the sense of space, belittling those little places, consigning many to insignificance. In these early years of the war, Cooke must drive, not whisk, by stores and factories and fields—a propitious method for a writer graced with a keen eye for detail. America is a place with less blaring electronic noise and more politeness than today, and far less wealthy.

As Cooke sets out from Washington, a notice in a shop window presents the first sign of the coming austerity as he crosses the Potomac into Virginia: "Zippers repaired." The war, he sees, is already administering "a gentle nudge to the American way of life." Along with passing many touchstones of familiar geography, he also travels through a world in some ways barely recognizable now, like the outlying hills and towns just west of Washington in Virginia: "After leaving US 50 and going west on 29-211, I drove almost a dozen miles without seeing more than one truck and one private car coming or going." (Only the release of a neutron bomb could explain traffic so sparse along that stretch of road today.)

Mile upon mile he takes us along, the roving eye, speaking in the confidential second person, describing what we, too, would find were we riding along. Slowly do we spy the regimented privations of wartime. Predictably he finds people with "a defiant faith in General MacArthur and very little knowledge of Pacific geography." Out in Charleston, West Virginia, they're zealously recruiting air wardens to watch the skies for the Luftwaffe and finding a glut of volunteers for nurse's training. He reaches Louisville to witness the amorous languor of soldiers in town from nearby Ft. Knox and guesses later—perhaps not so predictably to us—that "the fifteen-year-old unattractive girl might well be the debauchee of the Second World War."

He sees farmland and fruit orchards in the South converted to impromptu airfields and hotel owners in Miami negotiating ineptly with the Army for quartering troops. In New Orleans he meets a man with the auspicious name of Andrew Jackson Higgins, a businessman who parlays an amateur's knowledge of naval design to develop PT boats. He passes through Texas, ruminates on the oil business, and discusses the apparent foolishness of rationing gasoline, which has not yet beset all regions of the country. He visits anxious passengers late one evening in a New Mexico train station: "Never are Americans so still as when waiting for a train late at night."

The trip through California could make a book of its own. Cooke discovers how Hollywood contributes to the war effort (goofily) and how that day's

Mexican workers meld in with the surrounding population. Perhaps the most disturbing episode of the entire journey is his drive in the mountains to see the internment camp for Japanese-American citizens at Manzanar, where Cooke finds occasion for deep skepticism but not self-righteous bluster. He finds sad stories aplenty, but he also spots indomitable wills, even cheerful patriots, with their own elected councils, still loyal Americans. He quotes an editorial from the camp newspaper, poignantly called the *Manzanar Free Press*, which extols freedom and the American system of government. Cooke concludes:

> I drove away from Manzanar none too proud of the showing we had made in running the first compulsory migration of American citizens in American history—not counting the Indians. How slippery seemed the solid abstractions we preach when you journey 6,000 miles and find democracy in a concentration camp.

Making his way back east, he drives through Montana, down through Wyoming (where a sudden storm darkened the skies and made "not night so much as darkness visible") to Colorado and Kansas and Missouri before heading north through Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan—where he praises American industrial might and describes the labor unrest and Detroit race riots of 1943—Ohio, and Pennsylvania, finally steering north into New England, whose autumn he always rhapsodized.

Everywhere he goes, he tells tales, large and small, of the valiant nation he had come to love, stories which were almost—almost—lost to time. By 1945, Cooke ends the book with an epilogue recounting the stunning death of FDR as seen in the faces of passersby on the streets of New York, the unexpected, quizzical news of the atomic bombs, and the final squawking sentences of General MacArthur on the decks of the USS *Missouri*.

While this book's value to students of history is undeniable, some will regard it just as highly for its conscious yet lightly practiced art. Rightly has one critic said that Cooke "wrote in conversation and spoke in prose," a formidable feat for anybody and probably impossible to learn. Few writers—and no journalists after H.L. Mencken—could make a sentence sound so inevitable. His powers of description were vast and poetic.

BBC / Corbis

**Alistair Cooke, 1946**

"When the evening comes on again," he writes as he leaves Biloxi, "the war shrinks to the width of the highway and your own thoughts." He can flick off a metaphor at once jarring and apt; his car creeps through Kansas City one night "like an eel in mud." And the landscape of the American West, he writes in a bit of mood drawing, becomes a mindscape, "empty of trivialities, and enclosed only by the eternities of shade and horizon and silence, [and] acts as an echo chamber to the small sadness of persons and sends their feelings back to them magnified into a grandeur of despondency they had not felt indoors."

This penetrating, elegant book shows an early picture of Cooke the journalist-sociologist, the witty and sympathetic anatomist of the American character. His tone is never less than urbane (a word he didn't care for) and civilized. He seeks more to observe and record than to judge, though the judgments he does venture can cut to the quick: "We tend to assume that war will endow people with a completely different and more elevated set of emotions to live their lives on," he writes, and then goes on to find, in the words and actions of the citizens he meets, the proposition to be dubious.

Yet it's also a portrait of who we Americans were at one decisive moment, for better and worse. War often changes little at home, and patriotism doesn't always ensure the purest of motives; one town out West he suspects of "exhibitionist patriotism," and hucksters are always out for the fast buck. Nonetheless, the love of country and the will to sacrifice are real and never fail to move Cooke. He arose, he tells us, from a generation—he was born in 1908—of debunkers, people inclined to denigrate patriotic fervor. But he now senses that "debunking was a slightly hysterical form of disappointed sentimentality."

The cynic must never have the last word. America, he finds, is a country uniquely justified—despite her troubles and trials—to feel, as Oliver Wendell Holmes put it, an itch for the superlative. ♦

# In Brief

*In which we recommend a handful of titles for the discriminating book buyer.*

*For the coffee table.*

***Collecting the Imagination: The First Fifty Years of the Ransom Center*, edited by Megan Barnard (Texas, 160 pp., $40).** Formerly known as the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas, the Ransom Center is a stunning example of the extraordinary uses to which oil revenue can be put. In a half-century of relentless collecting and learned stewardship, the Ransom Center has become one of the great depositories of literary treasures in the world, and place of pilgrimage for students of British and American culture—and the humanities in general.

***Selected Correspondence of Charles Ives*, edited by Tom C. Owens (California, 410 pp., $45).** The greatest American composer, Charles Ives (1874-1954), was an easygoing, erudite, enigmatic man: a Connecticut Yankee who went to Yale, made a fortune as a New York insurance executive, and wrote sonorous, flamboyant, discordant music that still soothes and challenges the listener. Readers will especially appreciate the efforts of the Yale music faculty to obtain an honorary degree for Ives before he died—unsuccessfully, of course.

***Christian Art* by Rowena Loverance (Harvard, 248 pp., $35).** This is by no means the first time the intersection of art and Christianity has been examined by a scholar, but the author, a British Museum staffer and visiting fellow at King's College London, has written a series of intriguing essays—"Visualizing the divine," "Representing women," "Dying and living," and nine others—perfectly illuminated by dozens of illustrations, from simple calligraphy through the medieval world to Georges Rouault. It would be difficult to think of a more satisfactory introduction to an endlessly rewarding subject.

***The Music of Bill Monroe* by Neil V. Rosenberg and Charles K. Wolfe (Illinois, 384 pp., $35)** is the comprehensive account of the father of bluegrass music, a happy adornment to the Music in American Life series. The authors have discovered and annotated every recording Monroe ever made, chronicled his most important public performances, and tied the package together with a biographical text that puts Monroe, and the folk music of the American South, in full perspective.

*For the history buff.*

***English History Made Brief, Irreverent, and Pleasurable* by Lacey Baldwin Smith (Academy Chicago, 264 pp., $17.95).** Readers of a certain age will recall *1066 and All That*, the 1930 classic by W.C. Sellar and R.J. Yeatman, which (as its subtitle stated) introduced "103 Good Things, 5 Bad Kings and 2 Genuine Dates" and parodied the style of school histories of the time until "America became Top Nation, and history came to a." Lacey Baldwin Smith, the great Tudor historian at Northwestern and author of *Henry VIII: The Mask of Royalty*, is not going strictly for laughs here, but he has successfully reduced two millennia of English history to a tart, succinct, and witty formula for "what today is worth remembering about the past."

***The Black Hawk War of 1832* by Patrick J. Jung (Oklahoma, 275 pp., $29.95).** The Early National period is the great blank space in American history, and the Black Hawk War is largely remembered today for Abraham Lincoln's two-month service in the Illinois militia, where he "had a good many bloody struggles with the musquetoes." But as this latest volume in the Campaign and Commanders Series illustrates, the Black Hawk War was a fascinating chapter in the long conflict between white expansion and Indian retreat, when the Sauk warrior Black Hawk sought to forge a tribal alliance to defend homelands on the east bank of the Mississippi. As the author suggests, this was more than just a military mismatch, but a complex story of rivalry among Indians and a bloody education for the U.S. Army.

***The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961-1989* by Frederick Taylor (HarperCollins, 512 pp., $27.95).** It is altogether too easy to forget that, less than two decades ago, the United States and the Soviet Union faced one another across a barbed-wire frontier, and that Germany's historic capital was literally divided by an ugly, concrete, serpentine wall. At the time—even when Ronald Reagan exhorted "General Secretary Gorbachev . . . [to] tear down this wall" in 1987—it seemed as if the division was permanent, and that the Soviet sector of Berlin would remain forever tyrannized, impoverished, and isolated. With skill and discernment, Frederick Taylor re-creates the horror of the Wall and what it symbolized for East and West.

*For the Civil War buff.*

***Shiloh and the Western Campaign of 1862* by O. Edward Cunningham, edited by Gary D. Joiner and Timothy B. Smith (Savas Beatie, 520 pp., $34.95).** O. Edward Cunningham, who studied under T. Harry Williams at LSU and died in 1997, wrote this expansion of his doctoral dissertation in 1966. Why it remained ignored, and unpublished, for 41 years is a minor academic mystery since it may well be the best, most perceptive, and authoritative account of the Battle of Shiloh. If there was a turning point in the Civil War, this expensive victory (24,000 dead and wounded) of General Ulysses S. Grant over the Confederate Albert Sidney Johnston would qualify: It ended the struggle in the West, established Grant's reputation, and revealed that the War Between the States would take years, not months.

***Nathan Bedford Forrest: In Search of the Enigma* by Eddy W. Davison and Daniel Foxx (Pelican, 528 pp., $35).** General Grant once said that Forrest was the only Confederate he genuinely feared, and it is not difficult to see why: Behind the rough-hewn exterior lurked a genius of cavalry warfare, whose doctrines of mobility and relentless forward movement greatly influenced tactics in the 20th century. This is the best account of a great American character since Andrew Lytle's *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company* (1931), and a splendid evocation of a complex, startling, and intriguing soldier—who, incidentally, never said he "got thar fustest with the mostest."

***Virginia at War, 1862*, edited by William C. Davis and James I. Robertson Jr. (Kentucky, 243 pp., $35).** We recommended *Virginia at War, 1861* last year, and are pleased to note that the second volume in this series, sponsored by the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies at Virginia Tech, is just as good as the first. This is a series of excellent essays by distinguished historians—John G. Selby, Harold Holzer, and others, including the two editors—that treat such disparate subjects as the military hospitals of Richmond, how Robert E. Lee rebuilt his army, and the plight of Virginia's civilians. Virginia was, of course, a principal battlefield of the conflict, but comparable volumes on Tennessee, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Georgia—the list goes on—would be a genuine service to Civil War history.

*For students of current affairs.*

***In Defense of the Bush Doctrine* by Robert G. Kaufman (Kentucky, 251 pp., $35).** President Bush could use an unapologetic argument for his foreign policy these days, and this is it. Professor Kaufman's strategic term for the global war on terror is "moral democratic realism," and he makes a persuasive case. If Sept. 11, 2001, taught us anything, it is the limitations of deterrence and containment, and the lethal character of jihadism. As the president has said, during the past six years, it will be neither simple nor easy to mobilize against terrorism, and sustain resolve; but the stakes are too great to do otherwise—unless, of course, we choose to defeat ourselves.

***The Clinton Crack-Up: The Boy President's Life After the White House* by R. Emmett Tyrrell Jr. (Thomas Nelson, 320 pp., $26.99).** No one has followed the life and career of Bill Clinton with the wit and tenacity of R. Emmett Tyrrell, bon vivant and founding editor of the *American Spectator.* And the stark possibility, no matter how slight, that Clinton might soon be America's First Gentleman sends the author once more unto the breach. The Marc Rich pardon, the postmodern marriage, the seven-figure speeches, the Hollywood sycophants, the nonexistent coattails, the quivering lower lip, the penthouse atop the presidential library—they're all here, and subject to the Tyrrell treatment.

***The Great Philanthropists and the Problem of 'Donor Intent'* by Martin Morse Wooster (Capital Research Center, 275 pp., $14.95).** It is fair to assume that, when they died, Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, John D. MacArthur, J. Howard Pew, John D. Rockefeller, and assorted other capitalists had no idea of the concepts, programs, and sheer malign influence their eponymous foundations would someday represent. In his third, revised edition of this classic account, Martin Morse Wooster explains how the legacies of great American entrepreneurs have fallen into the arms of the managerial class, betraying their beliefs and explicit intentions. But it's not all bad news: Sometimes founding families—the Milbanks, Bradleys, Dukes, and Hiltons—have managed to ensure that their visions endure, and Wooster, with his customary skill and erudition, explains how.

*For students of our current civilization.*

***Counterpoints: 25 Years of* The New Criterion *on Culture and the Arts*, edited by Roger Kimball and Hilton Kramer (Ivan R. Dee, 512 pp., $35).** Since 1982 the *New Criterion* has been a balm to observers of the culture, and here is that rare thing: an anthology of essays, published during the past quarter-century, that retains its freshness, nerve, and relevance. If a partial list of contributors—Kenneth Minogue, Keith Windschuttle, Heather Mac Donald, Brooke Allen, Joseph Epstein, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Mark Steyn, Hilton Kramer, John Simon, Karen Wilkin, and the two Rogers, Kimball and Scruton—isn't enough to whet your appetite, then consider the range of subjects: Frantz Fanon, "The Waste Land," Aldous Huxley, abstract art, utopian writing, and the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, plus 36 others.

***Figures in the Carpet: Finding the Human Person in the American Past*, edited by Wilfred M. McClay (Eerdmans, 506 pp., $25).** What it means to be human is an obvious question, of course; but what it means in the context of American life is another matter. Wilfred McClay, the cultural historian and occasional contributor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, has assembled a thoughtful series of essays by 17 scholars that explore "our understanding of personhood" through different perspectives—in law, medicine, religion, business, art, etc.—and the ways in which these have influenced American views on morality, public life, and the culture as a whole. As if you didn't know, the "culture wars" have been raging for centuries, not years.

***The New York Intellectuals Reader*, edited by Neil Jumonville (Routledge, 456 pp., $30).** That famous alcove at the City College of New York where, in the 1930s, students met and argued the merits of Marx, chose between Trotsky and Stalin, pondered the future of socialism, and laid the intellectual foundations for the second half of the 20th century, is restored in this remarkable collection. The names are familiar—Sidney Hook, Alfred Kazin, Irving Kristol, Hannah Arendt, Dwight Macdonald, Paul Goodman, Lionel Trilling, Clement Greenberg, Norman Podhoretz, etc.—and the subjects remain contentious and pertinent. Neil Jumonville, a historian at Florida State, provides the pertinent biographical data, and completes the definitive portrait of these remarkable essayists, to whom we are all indebted.

*—Philip Terzian*

***Fans of the HBO series 'The Sopranos' were disappointed by its ambiguous ending last week, where the screen went suddenly blank for 11 seconds, leaving viewers uncertain about the fate of Tony Soprano and his family.*** **—News item**

# How would you have written the final episode of The Sopranos?

**Harry Reid**
***Reno, Nevada***

I'm not sure there's any way this thing could have come to a satisfactory conclusion, since it's a product of the culture of corruption that has hurt our country and its working families for the past six years.

**O.B. Laden**
***Quetta, Pakistan***

Allah be praised, Phil Leotardo was finally crushed to death! But they should also have killed Tony Soprano, Carmela Soprano, Meadow Soprano, A.J. Soprano, Junior Soprano, Janice Soprano, Dr. Jennifer Melfi, Benny Fazio, Silvio Dante, Paulie Walnuts, Patsy Parisi, Furio Giunta, Carlo Gervasi, Hesh Rabkin, Artie Bucco, Johnny Sack, and the FBI infidel Dwight Harris.

**Al Gore**
***Nashville, Tennessee***

I was very, very disappointed to see that writer/producer David Chase, who probably means well, didn't think it was necessary to install low-cost, low-wattage lighting or low-pressure toilets during the renovation of the Bada Bing! club. That would have ended this wonderful series on an environmentally responsible note.

**Richard Cohen**
***Washington, DC***

As it happens, I'm a close friend of David Chase, and while I probably wouldn't have ended the series the way he did, I'm willing to concede there are worse ways it could have been done.

**Newt Gingrich**
***Atlanta, Georgia***

I've said this many times, but you can't begin to understand Tony Soprano unless you look at him in world-historical terms. He's a classic example of the kind of entrepreneurial spirit that animated this economy in the postwar era and that, for better or worse, we've lost in the past decade. The real challenge for HBO is going to be how to rekindle that spirit, and in my PowerPoint presentation on the future of cable, I outline a nine-point program for recovery that utilizes the extraordinary energy and spirit of American television.

**Lou Dobbs**
***New York, New York***

Truly, it is beyond belief that, in the year 2007, the well-compensated writers of a series that millions of ordinary, hard-working, taxpaying Americans watch couldn't have found some way to thank them for everything they do to keep these cable television shows alive and well in the good old US of A.

Paris Hilton Launches Prison Ministry