the weekly Standard

APRIL 6, 2009

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WILLIAM J. STUNTZ

THE MISSING MAHATMA

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

Life Imitates P.J.

The gap between parody and reality, never large to begin with, has been shrinking alarmingly. The Scrapbook's colleague P.J. O'Rourke, for instance, suggested in a February 9 article, "The Next Big Stink," that

> the next great government crusade will be against soap. The president will appoint a Blue Ribbon Commission, which will determine that soap releases polluting grime into the ecosystem, leads to aquifer depletion, and contains fatty acids that laboratory studies have shown to be acidic and not fat-free. . . .

As if on cue, the *New York Times* reported mere weeks later ("Mr. Whipple Left It Out: Soft Is Rough on Forests") that fluffy toilet paper

> comes at a price: millions of trees harvested in North America and in Latin American countries, including some percentage of trees from rare old-growth forests in Canada. . . . The country's soft-tissue habit—call it the Charmin effect—has not escaped the notice of environmentalists, who are increasingly making toilet tissue manufacturers the targets of campaigns. . . .

Okay, toilet paper is not quite soap, but still a little close for comfort. Right church, wrong pee-yew, so to speak.

Meanwhile, in what we thought at the time was a satire, P.J. called early last December for a newspaper bailout ("Bail Me Out, Mr. Paulson: Print journalists aren't feeling the love, these days"):

> There are many compelling reasons to save America's print journalism. And I'll think of some while the waiter brings me another drink. . . . If you think home foreclosures are disruptive to American society, imagine what would happen if *USA Today* stopped publishing. Lose your home and you become homeless—a member of an important interest group with many respected advocates and a powerful political lobbying arm. But lose your newspaper and what are you going to do for covers on a cold night while you're sleeping on a park bench? Try blanketing yourself with Matt Drudge to keep warm.

Unfortunately, Democratic senator Benjamin L. Cardin didn't get the joke. On March 24, his office issued the following press release:

> U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), today introduced legislation that would allow newspapers to become non-profit organizations in an effort to help the faltering industry survive. . . . The Newspaper Revitalization Act would allow newspapers to operate as non-profits, if they choose, under 501(c)(3) status for educational purposes, similar to public broadcasting.

Looks like we're going to have to swear off the jokes. They've become dangerously influential. ♦

The Shales Award

The Scrapbook, tireless chronicler of America's political culture, has maintained an "Obama Suck-Up Watch" in the weeks and months since Barack Obama first appeared as a gleam in Democratic eyes. Of course, given the generally worshipful tone—and we use the word "worshipful" advisedly—adopted for President Obama in the media, the problem is not finding instances of stark adoration but choosing among hundreds of choice examples.

This past week, however, the *Washington Post*'s veteran TV critic, Tom Shales, might well have placed himself in a separate category. Here is the way he begins his description of The One's most recent televised press conference:

> Most of the facets of President Obama's personality that have made him intensely popular were on display last night during his second prime-time news conference, and so he emerged from it still every inch "President Wonderful," as it were, untouched and intact. On one hand, Obama looks as if he's been working too hard, but then that's exactly what we expect of the president . . .

Well, you get the idea. For unadulterated, schoolgirl-style reverence, Tom Shales has set a standard even The Scrapbook thought was unattainable and prompts us to suggest that the White House may want to supplement the traditional Presidential Medal of Freedom with an annual "Tom Shales Award," honoring its most slavish sycophants. To mark the occasion, there will be a special ceremony at the White House, featuring remarks, personal blessings from President Wonderful, and scrofulous-healing touches upon request. ♦

The Rehabilitation of Client No. 9

One of the unexpected dividends of the financial crisis has been the reemergence from the darkness of former governor Eliot Spitzer of New York, better known to The Scrapbook and to several working gals of our acquaintance as "Client No. 9."

You can't turn around on the Internet, in the blogosphere, or in the mainstream media these days without stumbling across one of Client No. 9's hard-hitting op-eds about predatory lending and executive bonuses or gush-

ing references from friends and admirers. He's now a regular columnist for *Slate*, and *Newsweek*'s recent cover story on the economy featured No. 9's wisdom. Joe Nocera has nice things to say about him in his *New York Times* business column, Fareed Zakaria chats him up on his cable talk show, and the *Washington Post* has solicited his opinion—as it were. Indeed, Katrina vanden Heuvel of the *Nation* thinks so highly of Client No. 9 that she has touted him, not entirely facetiously, as a possible replacement for Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner.

Our interest in all of this has nothing to do with the substance of No. 9's views on politics and the economy—which are entirely consistent with his record as a predatory state attorney general and governor—nor are we shocked to learn that he and Katrina and Fareed and the editorial staff of *Slate* see eye to eye on the great issues of our time. No, our interest is in what his ubiquitous public moralizing tells us about the shelf life of contemporary sex scandals.

Not so long ago, when a politician was caught in bed with a whore, it meant not only the end of his political career, but extended exile from polite society. This was particularly true of politicians—Client No. 9, for example—who wore their virtue on their shirtsleeve. Britain's Profumo scandal, a generation ago, did not involve a politician who was holier-than-thou, but did prompt the guilty party to withdraw from political office and devote the balance of his life to good works. Even Bill Clinton was impeached by the House of Representatives.

Now we may confidently assert that progress has been made, and the calendar is dramatically accelerated. For it was exactly one year ago (March 2008) that Governor Spitzer was revealed to be the habitual client of a prostitution ring—some of whose employees have since gone to prison—and obliged to step down from office "in disgrace." Now all is forgiven! We are not likely to see Client No. 9 restored to the New York governorship, or any lesser office; but in this climate of fear and uncertainty, who would want to be responsible, and accountable, for public policy? Better to be blathering in the pages of *Newsweek* or watching Fareed Zakaria eat out of your hand. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'In a famous exchange in Shakespeare's play, *Henry IV, Part 1*, two characters by the name of Glendower and Hotspur are jesting over how to persuade others to follow them. Glendower says, 'I can call spirits from the vasty deep,' to which Hotspur responds, 'Why yes, so can I and so can any man, but when you call them, will they come?' Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner today summoned spirits from the vasty deep . . . " (David Gergen, *CNN.com*, March 23, 2009). ♦

Casual

Muddy Waters

One upside of the recession is that I cut through the newspaper as never before. Since the news is too bad to actually read, I skip it, assuming I know what's there—the sky is blackening, plagues are being unleashed, the rivers are running red with blood—and I instead skim for pretty pictures of a sleeveless Michelle Obama and her rippling deltoids, which I then clip and paste into my Positive Body Images collage.

On occasion, however, important stories get by me, such as a frontpager in the *Wall Street Journal* last week. A colleague sent me the link, with the taunting query, "Are you a brownliner?" I had no idea what she was talking about. The question sounded personal, even scatological, a discussion best left between a man and his launderer.

The article, however, detailed a purportedly newish phenomenon, that of fly-fishing for trash fish such as carp and catfish in brown water; that is, impure non-trout streams. Reporter Justin Scheck headed to the South Platte River in Colorado to watch a hearty band of flyrodders take massive creatures in E. coli-infested water, downstream from a wastewater treatment plant.

I respect their ethos. Real fishermen don't let the perfect be the enemy of the readily available and will fish whatever water lies before them. For some years now, partly out of necessity (the nearest trout streams are over an hour away), I've scratched my everyday itch by fly-fishing offwater for all manner of non-salmonids, from white suckers to channel catfish, throwing unconventional flies in unconventional places in order to entice them. Possessing none of the elitism of the snobbish, purist trout queens, I am nearly unable to pass up promising, or even unpromising, water. If you have a birdbath in your flower bed, call me, I'll be right over.

I've fished cemetery ponds, office-park retention gulches, and subdivision lakes with decorative fountains. I fly-fish Central Park when I go to Manhattan. I've had yelling matches with golfers. They scream at me to move so as not to get a Titleist implanted in my skull. I scream that they have 17 other holes to play, whereas the largemouth I'm stalking lives in this particular water hazard.

HAL MAYFORTH

It turns out then that I am a brownliner, but just didn't know the status had been named and packaged. For my catfish quests in particular, which have been written up in these pages and elsewhere, I've been called worse than a brownliner by my trout-queen friends. One refers to me as the executive director of the "SSBFTFA—the Scum-Sucking Bottom-Feeding Trash-Fish Association." Like any visionary, I consider their ridicule to be another log on the fire of innovation.

But the worm is turning with this official media sanction, and I'm not sure I like it. I sent the link to one of my elitist fly-fishing friends. He's nicknamed The Cool Refresher, as his fluid casts are not unlike a burst of Wint-o-green rejuvenation. C.R., as I call him for short, said, "We got owned." By which he meant me. A former tormentor, he was now religiously reading the brownliners' blogs. All of them seem to have blogs, and some even tweet about their fishing exploits on Twitter. With all the self-promotion commitments, it's a wonder they have time to fish.

As he kept forwarding one post after another, I told C.R. he could spare me the blow-by-blow on the birth of the Brownline Nation. It's at cross purposes with the reason I fish, which is to get away from people, particularly bloggers. Instead, I headed down to the discharge point of my own favorite wastewater treatment plant, where chlorinated water spills into the river, cleaner and suspiciously greener than the waters that receive it. "You could drink it," a plant worker once told me. "Thanks," I replied, "I'll stick with Diet Coke."

To me, it's not a sewage treatment plant, it's a sanity-preserver and an escape. Here, a conveyor-belt current brings fish a steady buffet of snacks, the riprap provides ideal hiding spots and ambush points, and the temperature holds between 50 and 75 degrees, providing heating in winter and air conditioning in summer, meaning I have a honey hole year-round. Here, I catch-and-release slimy whiskered friends, battle stripers putting a bend in my 4-weight, and have racked up 20-bass days in the snow.

Just as Hemingway bum-steered his readers with the title of his fishing short story "Big Two-Hearted River" (he was actually describing the nearby Fox), I will not give up its coordinates. It's on an undisclosed river in an undisclosed state. If I see you there, I'll politely nod, then tie on a heavy Clouser, and tag you with a careless backcast.

Some secrets are best left un-Twittered.

Matt Labash

Correspondence

Blacklisted

The intimidation tactics employed against Maureen Mullarkey ("The New Blacklist," March 16) and members of the Mormon Church after Proposition 8 passed are examples that illustrate the disturbing cycle whereby a previously aggrieved group becomes what they once abhorred. This practice is all too common in our society as we become less willing to see ourselves as capable of inflicting harm than always being on the lookout for perceived or intentional victimization. If only we could see ourselves as others see us, and treat each other as we would ask to be treated. Isn't that the whole point, regardless of religion or ideology?

Joan C. Dickerson
Chesterfield, Mo.

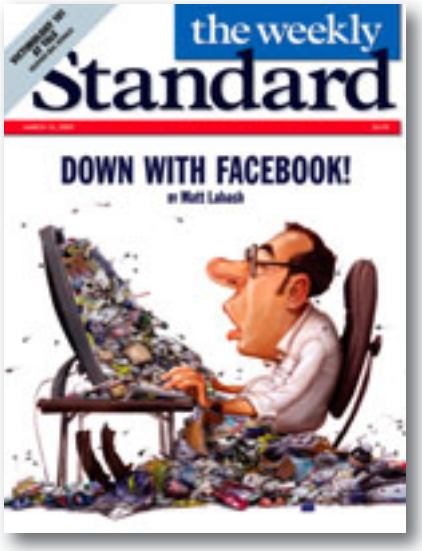
Foes of Facebook

A common theme runs through the March 16 issue of The Weekly Standard. Both Matt Labash ("Down with Facebook!") and Heather Mac Donald ("Victimology 101 at Yale") point out a cultural malady unfortunately afflicting my generation: an overabundant emphasis on self-importance. Instead of poring over books and imbibing intellectual pursuits, students spend an inordinate amount of time on Facebook updating profiles and viewing pictures of friends. Back in the day, people accomplished things first and then wrote about those accomplishments later in life, restricting their focus to the important matters. Now, epic autobiographies are penned every day on Facebook about the dramatic and perilous trip to the refrigerator where, lo and behold, no orange juice was found. This conflation of the important and the trivial will have profound effects on society.

Michael C. Welch
South Bend, Ind.

Facebook may, in some respects, be compared to a cocktail party. The quality of a cocktail party depends in large measure on the guest list. (One ought not neglect the quality of cocktails one offers, however.) The party sinks or swims based upon how deftly the host and the host's more vocal invitees guide the flow of conversation. Cocktail parties can often drift quickly into banality. However, they can also yield immensely diverting and/or stimulating discussion amongst friends old and new alike, in many cases friends with whom one might not otherwise find occasion for direct correspondence or face-to-face engagement. One will encounter tedium on Facebook and at cocktail parties. It would be a shame, though, to dismiss these venues too lightly for making and sustaining certain social bonds based on a few less than scintillating experiences.

Matthew P. Huggins
Orlando, Fla.



The President's Salute

When a president "salutes" a member of the military, he is actually *returning* a salute ("At Ease..." The Scrapbook, March 9). As the senior member, the president does not initiate the exchange, and the junior member who does is certainly entitled to a returned salute. It may have been Eisenhower's policy not to return salutes, but that doesn't mean he was right. A failure to return a salute is not just disrespectful, it's downright rude. It would be like refusing to shake an offered hand. This is one of the very few things that Mr. Obama has actually managed to do properly.

Tamara Mackenthun
Lt. Col., USAF (Retired)
Mountain Home, Idaho

Irresponsible Elites

No one has done a better job of demonstrating the moral bankruptcy of our elites—in every segment of society—than Matthew Continetti ("The Age of Irresponsibility," March 2). More than any other factor, this collapse of character explains our current crisis, and that is why those looking exclusively to Washington or Wall Street to fix it just don't get it.

Bill Donohue
President, Catholic League
New York, N.Y.

Clarification

Maureen Mullarkey's "The New Blacklist: Freedom of speech—unless you annoy the wrong people" (March 16) stated that "the *San Francisco Chronicle* published the names and home addresses of everyone who donated money in support of California's Proposition 8 marriage initiative." What the *Chronicle* did was post on its website, SFGate.com, a link to the California state government database disclosing name, town, and amount of contribution for all donors on both sides of the Prop 8 issue. Donors' complete addresses are available at the secretary of state's office. The people who harassed Mullarkey apparently obtained her unlisted street address from that office or other sources. We regret the imprecision.

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the weekly Standard

A Big, Fat Failure

Well, it's about time. The Beltway is waking up to the realities of President Obama's budget plan, which taxes, spends, and borrows as far as the eye can see. The president's vast new commitments in the areas of health care, energy, and education have already spooked small-government Republicans and the foreign investors who help finance America's public debt. Now even some Democrats are beginning to realize that the president's fiscal policies are unsustainable in the long—and maybe medium—run. What took them so long?

The realities of the modern global economy require government to play a substantial role in ensuring the national and economic security of the people. Americans aren't going to dismantle the welfare state. Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid are—like the Pentagon—here to stay. The task, then, is to ensure that those programs are sensibly structured and financed, and compatible with robust economic growth. And on this score, Obama's budget is a big, fat failure.

It's true, as he so often reminds us, that Obama inherited a public debt that had doubled to 40 percent of GDP from 20 percent, and an economy in the midst of a deep recession. But Obama proposes to take a bad situation and make it much worse.

It was pretty much inevitable that government would pick up the pieces of the financial crisis and its aftermath. A stimulus bill and some form of bank bailout were going to be facts of life. And tax revenues are plunging thanks to the recession. So the federal government's balance sheet was always going to deteriorate in 2009. The problem is that Obama's policies would move us from deterioration to disaster. The national debt Obama gripes about? His budget will double it to 80 percent of GDP in 2019. Whatever that is, it's not "a new era of responsibility."

The debt burden, moreover, is likely to increase as tax hikes weigh down the economy. Obama's budget brings rates up to Clinton-era levels. But those rates probably will be raised even more to service a growing debt and pay for new spending. And don't forget the added levies that will hit us if Obama has his way. There could be taxes on employer-provided health benefits, the indirect tax of a carbon cap-and-trade scheme, an increase of the payroll-tax cap, and maybe a national Value Added Tax.

Nor will Obama's resistance to free trade encourage economic recovery. The president, remember, signed a stimulus bill that included protectionist "Buy American" provisions. When Congress killed off a pilot program to allow Mexican trucks into the United States, Obama acquiesced in an apparent violation of NAFTA. (The Mexicans have retaliated, imposing duties on some American exports.) The president has done nothing to advance through Congress the already-negotiated bilateral trade agreements with Colombia and South Korea. Recently Obama's energy secretary spoke of imposing a "carbon tariff" on foreign polluters. Plenty of congressional Democrats would like to impose tariffs on Chinese products. All this, even though bringing the global trading system to a halt is the surest way to turn our recession into a depression.

"It is going to be an impossible task for us to balance the budget," Obama said the other day, "if we're not taking on rising health care costs." He's right, but the budget exhibits a strange understanding of cost control. Whatever savings you get from preventive medicine and electronic medical records pales in comparison to the projected growth in Medicare spending. But Obama hasn't given any sign that he's about to tame Medicare or change its faulty reimbursement mechanisms.

Obama isn't going to lower prices by having consumers bear more costs directly and introducing competition in open markets. Quite the contrary. His budget expands government health insurance subsidies and may even introduce a Medicare-like public health insurance option available to all Americans. If Obama tried to run a business with this sort of accounting, it wouldn't be long before he had to ask Secretary Geithner for a bailout. Absent the economic growth his budget will squelch, the only ways out of the fiscal hole Obama is digging are massive tax increases, defaults and devaluation, and inflation. If you think *today's* news is bad, just wait.

Americans of all political stripes, as well as the non-Americans who hold U.S. bonds, are voicing concern. Maybe that will be enough to make Obama change course. If not, conservatives have a real opportunity to introduce a truly responsible vision of a welfare state that maximizes efficiency and growth. The budget outline that House Republicans released last week is a start, but it sure could use some work. And if the president persists in giving America a big and slothful government rather than a limited and energetic one, then it will be incumbent on Republicans and sensible Democrats in Congress to stop him.

—Matthew Continetti

Obama's Fuzzy Math

A trillion here, a trillion there . . .

BY STEPHEN MOORE

In his press conference last Tuesday, Barack Obama said that America must reject the "borrow and spend" policies of the past in favor of a strategy of "save and invest." Sounds good. So why is Obama proposing to borrow and spend more than any president in the history of the republic? Already in the first 45 days of his administration, the federal government has authorized more debt spending than Ronald Reagan did in eight years in office.

Then last week the Democrats' own Congressional Budget Office found that the ten-year deficits of the Obama plan will be about $2.3 trillion higher than the $6.97 trillion the White House is projecting. This is the policy of the party that was swept back into power in 2006 and 2008 promising a return to an era of fiscal responsibility.

Welcome to the Obama doctrine. It is built on the high stakes economic gamble that the public and the bond markets will tolerate trillions of dollars of borrowing to pay for massive expansions in government spending on popular income transfer programs. The corollary to this doctrine is that the left will create a political imperative to jack up tax rates to pay for higher spending commitments made today.

But the news on the red ink front is much worse than the president or even the CBO's budget report suggests. If all of Obama's "transformational" policy objectives—from global warming taxes to universal health care to doubling the Department of Energy's budget—are enacted, the debt is likely to increase from about 40 percent of GDP today to close to 100 percent of GDP by 2018. The ten-year debt is likely to be at least $6 trillion higher—or more than one-half trillion of higher deficits a year from now until forever—than the Obama budget projects.

These are uncharted levels of debt for the United States—though not for such high-flying nations as Argentina, Bolivia, and Mexico. This hemorrhaging of U.S. government debt will be happening at precisely the time when, in a rational world, the government would be running surpluses, in anticipation of the retirement of some 80 million baby boomers who will soon collect multiple trillions of dollars of government benefits from Medicare and Social Security.

There are three ways that the Obama administration is understating the spending and debt levels embedded in the president's budget policies.

First, Obama uses highly optimistic assumptions on how fast the economy is going to grow and how many jobs are going to be created over the next five years. I've worked in a presidential budget office before. Believe me: If you manipulate the economic assumptions on unemployment and GDP growth, you can make the budget deficit in the future be whatever you want it to be. You can even, as Obama claims to do, magically cut a deficit in half without cutting a single program. From 2010-13, the head of the OMB, Peter Orszag, predicts that the U.S. economy will grow at a 4 percent annual pace, when the blue chip-economic forecast is closer to 2.7 percent. Of the 51 blue chip-economic forecasters, the OMB's forecast is more optimistic than all but two.

Liberals used to lampoon Ronald Reagan's budgets—sometimes with merit—for relying on a "rosy economic scenario," but even the Gipper's sunny optimism never led to economic predictions that departed so radically from independent forecasts. It turns out that about 75 percent of the celebrated halving of

Stephen Moore is senior economics writer for the Wall Street Journal *editorial page and coauthor of* The End of Prosperity.

the deficit that Obama claims in his budget is purely a result of an irrationally exuberant economic model that almost no one believes is very likely. The Republicans on the Senate Budget Committee recalculated the OMB budget deficit assuming the average blue chip-economic forecast. It found that the Obama deficit will be $2.2 trillion higher over ten years.

Next is the hard-to-swallow assumption in the budget that all of the new spending in the $800 billion democratic "stimulus" bill that Obama signed in February will expire after 2011. "We are supposed to believe," says Paul Ryan, the ranking House Republican on the Budget Committee, that "Nancy Pelosi, Charlie Rangel, Henry Waxman, and Ted Kennedy are going to allow spending for programs ranging from education for disabled kids, to Pell Grants, to Head Start, to child nutrition programs to fall off a cliff two years from now." Not likely. When Ryan asked the Congressional Budget Office what happens if the spending for about two dozen of the most politically popular programs is continued, not cancelled, the CBO reported back that the deficit and federal outlays would be $3.27 trillion higher over the next ten years.

Finally, there is the crown jewel of the Obama-Pelosi-Reid domestic agenda: universal health care. This is at the top of the "to do" list of the Obama administration and is unlikely to get pulled back or postponed, as the president made clear in his press conference. Obama has not been specific about what plan he favors or about how much a national health care system will cost, but his budget allocates a $634 billion "placeholder" for that purpose. The consensus opinion, though, is that the lowest possible cost of universal health care is $1.2 trillion, with many estimating closer to $1.5 trillion. So team Obama is off by roughly $600 billion over ten years to cover all of America's uninsured. Obama says he will find ways to reduce health care costs at the same time, and I wish him well, but this is a promise that every president since Jimmy Carter has made and failed to keep.

Incidentally, almost all analysts also believe that the Obama price tag for his global warming program is too low. Jason Furman, the deputy director of the president's National Economic Council, says the cost is likely to be "two to three times higher" than the $646 billion estimate in the president's budget. Most independent analyses agree with Furman's figure. But we will leave this out of our calculations for now, because the debt and spending numbers are ruinous enough without them.

Here are the unhappy totals: the debt is $6 trillion higher from 2010 to 2019 than Obama's forecast. In no single year over the next decade, even when counting the Social Security trust fund surpluses, does the budget deficit fall below $800 billion. The interest on the national debt rises to $850 billion a year by the middle of the next decade, which will be the largest single expenditure item in the budget—eight times more than we now spend on education and four times more than we spend on homeland security. Federal spending remains well over 25 percent of GDP and in some years creeps closer to 28 percent of GDP under the Obama budget, which ironically enough is entitled "A New Era of Responsibility."

The three biggest areas of government expenditure increases sought by the Obama budget are education, energy, and health care. Any unbiased assessment of the return on investment—to use an Obama term—for these programs would find dismally low payoffs for taxpayers.

We are closing in on stagnant Western European levels of government intrusion into the economy. That economic model, by the way, which the left in the United States openly wants to emulate, has created half the jobs that the United States has over the past two decades and generated half the growth rates. Is it any wonder that the Chinese want an extra guarantee on U.S. Treasury debt and say it might be time for a new reserve currency?

I have never been a fear monger when it comes to deficits and debt. If the economy grows faster than the debt, as occurred in the 1980s and 1990s then the nation's burden of financing government borrowing becomes smaller over time. Incurring debt is legitimate, moreover, if the borrowing is paying for future prosperity. The 1980s deficits were probably one of the highest-return investments in American history. We bought a victory over the Evil Empire in the Cold War and borrowed to finance reductions in tax rates that launched America's greatest ever period of wealth and prosperity: 1982-2007. The national debt grew by about $6 trillion while U.S. net wealth grew by $40 trillion. A pretty good trade.

This debt we are now incurring is paying for windmills, unemployment benefits, new cars for federal employees, weatherizing homes, high-speed trains to nowhere, and the like. It buys almost nothing of long-term economic benefit. Most of the money that has been borrowed since September 2008 has been used to bail out irresponsible borrowers, failed financial institutions and car companies, and for expansions of welfare programs. The three biggest areas of government expenditure increases sought by the Obama budget are education, energy, and health care. Any unbiased assessment of the return on investment—to use an Obama term—for these programs would find dismally low payoffs for taxpayers. Government programs are the only things in the world that when they yield failing results, we reward them with more money.

Some five years ago Tom Daschle and many other leading liberals cursed George W. Bush as "the most fiscally irresponsible president in history." He may have been. But he isn't anymore. ♦

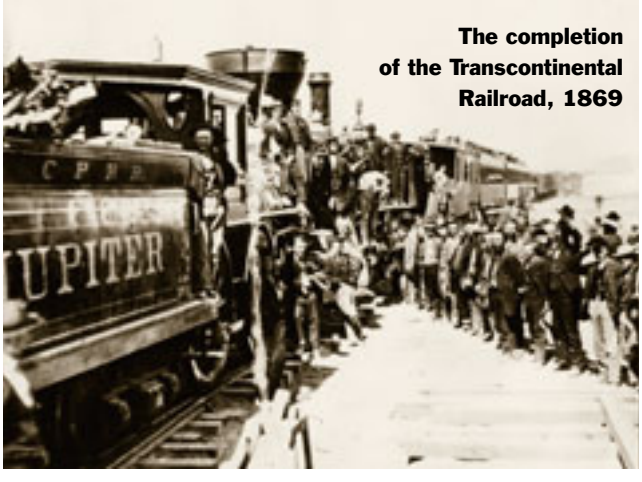
Look to Lincoln

Not to FDR, when designing legislative agendas.

BY WILLIAM J. STUNTZ

A lot of ink has been spilled on what might be called the Roosevelt and Reagan models of the presidency. In the recent past, the conventional wisdom has been Reaganite: New presidents should focus on one or two clear objectives, as Ronald Reagan emphasized tax cuts and a defense buildup. Barack Obama's ambitions are more Rooseveltian. This president seeks not only to address the nation's banking crisis but to upgrade the nation's system of public education, produce an economy based on green energy, and transform American health care. And on the seventh day, he'll rest.

The current debate about the merits of these two presidential models misses the most problematic feature of the Obama agenda. Obama isn't overreaching by addressing too many issues at once. He's overreaching by addressing those issues in the wrong way.



The completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, 1869

To see why, one must compare FDR's First New Deal not with the Reagan Revolution, but with Abraham Lincoln's other presidency—the one that wasn't spent fighting the Civil War. In the first 16 months of his administration, Lincoln signed three of the most important and successful pieces of legislation in American history: the Homestead Act, the Land-Grant Colleges Act (sometimes called the Morrill Act), and the Pacific Railway Act. The first populated the prairie and kept urban wages high; the second created Cornell, MIT, and the great state universities of the Midwest; the third led to the building of North America's first transcontinental railroad. Congress and the president—Lincoln supported all three laws and was a factor in their passage—found the time to enact this ambitious program while battling Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson, and while building the world's second-biggest navy almost from scratch. How did they do it?

The answer to that question is the same as the answer to this one: Why did Lincoln's laws work? Their success did not depend on complex judgments made by members of Congress or government regulators. The statutes in question were meant to confer opportunities, not to solve problems—yet they offer a terrific model for problem-solving government. Notice who did the hard work: not members of Congress, not Lincoln's omnicompetent cabinet, and not the president himself. Rather, the necessary elbow grease was supplied by the private citizens whose prospects Lincoln aimed to improve.

The Homestead Act hastened the day when the American farm belt would become the world's most productive farmland. The universities established by the Morrill Act helped produce the world's most educated workforce. The transcontinental railroad knit a continent-sized nation together without the need for centralized autocracy: an achievement then unique in world history. Each of these pieces of legislation was simple. Complex calculations were left to the homesteaders, to students and professors, to the workers who laid the track and the engineers who helped find a path through the mountains. They, not some 19th-century Timothy Geithner, were the ones who put in 15-hour days in order for these laws to succeed. The results were abundantly positive. These three laws helped America become both the world's workshop *and* the world's farm—a combination no other nation has achieved.

Compare that approach with the key statutes of the early New Deal. The National Industrial Recovery Act (and the National Recovery Administration that it created) aimed to cartelize the manufacturing sector of America's economy—to restrict production by having producers and government regulators, working together, allocate market share to different producers. The Agricultural Adjustment Act did the same for America's farms, dictating how much of which crops farmers could grow in order to prop up farm prices. The Securities Acts of 1933 and 1934 and the Glass-Steagall Act established detailed regulatory systems for the world of banking and finance. The only one of these acts that empowered private citizens was the NIRA—and the private citizens in question were industrial CEOs, not ordinary Joes on the assembly line. Success turned not on the wisdom and hard work of the citizenry, but on the knowledge and insight of corporate managers and government regulators. As Amity Shlaes shows in her recent book *The Forgotten Man*, the results were less than stellar: Seven years after FDR took office, unemployment still stood at 15 percent, nearly double today's figure.

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Obama's program is more Rooseveltian than Lincolnian. Whether the stimulus works depends on the wisdom of Larry Summers and Nancy Pelosi, who appear to have been its primary authors. (Now there's an odd couple.) Geithner's proposed bank rescue plan will succeed if Geithner has given hedge funds enough incentive to invest in toxic assets while bearing enough risk if those assets prove worthless—i.e., if Geithner made all the right calls. As for green energy, cap-and-trade will succeed in reducing emissions without destroying the economy only if the number and size of permits are correct: too many, and carbon-based emissions won't decline; too few, and a host of businesses will be driven into bankruptcy. The success of cap-and-trade also depends on Congress's willingness to resist the temptation to tinker with the permits. Good luck with that. The administration's health care and education programs are as yet unclear, but it seems a fair bet that they too will be exercises in centralized, command-and-control governance.

This is worrisome, for two reasons. The first has to do with the politics of legislation. No 1,000-page bill will be written by 535 members of Congress, or by the few hundred who belong to the majority party (or by their staffers, to whom the drafting is usually delegated). In order to avoid the death of a thousand cuts, those who back the relevant legislation must do the drafting behind closed doors—and in order to be sure the doors stay closed, the number of people involved in the drafting must be kept small. No matter how many degrees they have, a handful of people sitting around a conference table are unlikely to devise wise plans for large sectors of a complex economy.

Which leads to the second reason: The Lincoln model regularly succeeds; Rooseveltian legislation usually fails. Consider the following examples of simple and successful legislation. The Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 embodied a simple idea in simple language: "[e]very contract, combination . . . or conspiracy, in restraint of trade or commerce" is illegal. That proposition guaranteed competitive markets, the key factor in America's long economic dominance. The G.I. Bill fueled the long post-World War II economic boom by investing in veterans' education; what those veterans made of the investment was up to them. Even as it raised the safety and lowered the price of shipping goods, Eisenhower's Defense Highways Act made possible the rise of middle-class suburbs. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 created an integrated national economy; the Voting Rights Act of 1965 created an integrated democracy. Both acts gave black Americans opportunities they had long been denied. Obama's presidency is evidence of the success of that venture. All these pieces of legislation depended on the energy and talent of the private citizens they benefited.

Moving westward in pursuit of a homestead, 1886

Top-down, command-and-control legislation is inevitably more complicated, and the list of successful statutes of that sort is a good deal shorter. The Clean Air and Clean Water Acts of the 1970s were massively complex; nevertheless, they worked well, as those of us who remember smog alerts and polluted bays and rivers can testify. So did welfare reform in the 1990s—another notably complex legislative endeavor. Sometimes, government regulators get it right. But even those success stories are double-edged. Welfare reform worked because welfare recipients did so: The victory was as much theirs as any government official's. As for the landmark environmental legislation of the Nixon and Carter presidencies, America's economy performed poorly in the 1970s and early 1980s. Environmental progress may have carried a higher price tag than politicians imagined. Not an encouraging story for supporters of cap-and-trade.

The lesson seems clear enough. Banking on the innovation, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit of ordinary Americans is smart policy. Betting on the wisdom of staffers in the White House and on Capitol Hill isn't.

Saving the nation's banks may be an unavoidably complex enterprise that necessarily depends on the judgment of those who craft the relevant strategy. Not so the rest of Obama's agenda. On health care, John McCain's campaign proposal offers a good model: Create a working national market for health insurance that is not tied to employers. Then, let the medical and insurance markets work, as they will. With respect to education, Congress could give troubled school systems money for more charter schools—the best education idea of the last generation—then step back and watch test scores rise. As for greener energy, a wise Congress would take two steps. First, fund the construction of nuclear power plants, which would create jobs and provide greener energy than oil and coal. Second, fund energy research. According to Bjorn Lomborg, that is the only cost-effective move on climate change. America has the best scientists in the world. Given the needed funds, there are few problems they cannot solve.

Unfortunately, the president and congressional Democrats are placing a different bet. They seem to believe that America has the best politicians in the world—that, given enough tax dollars, there is no problem *they* cannot solve. We will see who wins that bet. America's taxpayers may turn out to be the losers. ♦

Doubling Down on the Welfare State

Get ready to pay twice for everything.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

The good news is that, according to the Obama administration, the rich will pay for everything. The bad news is that, according to the Obama administration, you're rich.

You may be surprised to discover you're rich, especially if you're broke. How do you know you are a member of the penurious plutocracy? Take this simple test: See if you pay double for everything.

The financial bailout, for example. Pay for it once with your IRA and 401(k) plan investments. Now pay for it again with your tax dollars.

Ditto with the economic stimulus. Write checks to cover your mortgage payment, utilities, insurance premiums, car loan, basic cable, high-speed Internet access, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express bills, and turn your teens loose in the Old Navy store. Think you're done stimulating the economy? I think not. You've also lent President Obama a godzillion dollars to go on an economically stimulational shopping spree of his own. For collateral the Bank of Obama is using a mortgage on that home of yours called America and a lien on all the future earnings of your children.

How about the new car you've paid for with government largesse to GM and Chrysler? They didn't even send a thank you note containing a scratch-and-sniff card with that new car smell. If you want a car that's visible in your driveway, you'll have to—you guessed it—pay double.

Of course paying double for everything didn't start with the Meltdown of '08. It's an integral part of the modern welfare state.

Beginning with welfare. Your tax dollars pay for federal, state, and local welfare programs. Then you pay for your daughter to pursue a career in "holistic dance liberation." You pay for your son's Internet start up idea—"Buttbook," a website where everybody is an enemy. Plus there's your bum of a brother-in-law, drunk in the double-wide, watching Cartoon Network on the widescreen high-definition television you paid for.

Write checks to cover your mortgage payment, utilities, insurance premiums, car loan, basic cable, high-speed Internet access, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express bills, and turn your teens loose in the Old Navy store. Think you're done stimulating the economy? I think not. You've also loaned President Obama a godzillion dollars to go on a shopping spree of his own.

Same with schools. Your school taxes pay for Sara Jane Olson Public High School—conveniently right down the street, inconveniently full of methamphetamine and 9mm handguns. So you also pay tuition at Friar Torquemada Parochial High.

At school, home, or work, the most important purpose of government is to protect your person and property. That's what the police department is for. And you get to pay the police *and* pay for burglar alarms, private security patrols, and guard dogs, such as our family guard dog, Pinky-Wink. (For the information of any prospective robbers of the O'Rourke house, Pinky-Wink isn't really a Mexican Hairless. He's . . . um . . . a Rhodesian Ridgeback, weighing 100 . . . make that 150 . . . pounds. Uh, the kids named him. Stop yapping, Pinky-Wink.)

The second most important purpose of government is trash pickup. Municipal garbage collectors pick up the trash from your house. But not until you've sorted it into its proper recycling bins—which you do by picking up the trash from your house. What you don't pay double for in money you pay double for in time and effort.

But usually it's money. When you pay a hospital bill you're really paying two hospital bills—one bill for you because you have a job and/or insurance and can pay the hospital and another bill, which is tacked onto your bill, to cover the medical expenses of someone who doesn't have a job and/or insurance and can't pay the hospital. Your tennis elbow underwrites the Sara Jane Olson Public High School student's 9mm handgun wound.

And never is paying double as doubly troubling as it is in the matter of retirement. You have to pay into Social Security and into your IRA and your 401(k) plan and put some more money in your savings account too. You have to pay Medicare tax and buy Medicare supplemental insurance and contribute to a medical savings account and make doctor bill co-payments besides. And the funding for Social Security and Medicare is so under-financed and actuarially shaky that you cannot be certain those programs will exist at all by the time you're eligible for them. And you're 64.

Would you like to know what ordinary taxpayers are getting out of this deal? You and me both. How do we benefit from this twinning, this twoing, this duality? Damned if I can figure it out. Barkeep, make that a double. ♦

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The Return of Weakness

President Obama means well. Iran doesn't.

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

In diplomacy and espionage, there is no worse mistake than "mirror-imaging," that is, ascribing to foreigners your own actions and views. For Westerners this is especially debilitating, given our modern proclivity to assume that others pursue their interests in secular, material, and guilt-ridden ways. Confession is an important part of the Western tradition; self-criticism is less acute elsewhere. Americans, the British, the Spanish, and the French have written libraries about their own imperialistic sins; Arabs, Iranians, Turks, and Russians have not. In an unsuccessful effort to reach out to Iran's clerical regime in 1999, President Bill Clinton apologized for the actions of the entire Western world. Last week, in response to President Barack Obama's let's-talk greetings broadcast to Iran, theocratic overlord Ali Khamenei, "supreme leader" of the Islamic Republic of Iran, enumerated 30 years' worth of America's dastardly deeds against the Islamic revolution—but not a peccadillo that the clerical regime had committed against any Western country.

Looking overseas, many Americans are feeling guilty. George W. Bush and his wars have embarrassed Democrats and Republicans. So the Obama administration has tried to push the "reset" button, and not just with Russia. Nowhere has this American sense of guilt been more on display than in the Middle East: Obama has picked up where Bill Clinton left off, trying to engage diplomatically Iran and Syria, and perhaps down the road the Palestinian fundamentalist movement Hamas. Yet nowhere is guilt-fueled mirror-imaging more dangerous.

Washington is again putting U.S.-Iranian relations on the psychiatrist's couch, treating the mullahs as if they were something other than masters of Islamic *machtpolitik*. Obama's message

Grand Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

to Khamenei emphasizes "mutual respect," "shared hopes," "common dreams," and Iran's great historic "ability to build and create." I would bet the national debt that the president and the supreme leader share not a single hope or dream that could possibly have any bearing on the relations between their two countries. Khamenei is a serious revolutionary cleric and a man of considerable personal integrity who has suffered severely for his beliefs (in 1981 a bomb blast mangled his right arm). He is a faithful son of the Islamic revolution.

In his public orations, Khamenei has regularly dreamed of Muslims' uniting in one line . . . amassing all the elements of their power to strengthen the Islamic community—learning and wisdom, prudence and vigilance, an historic sense of duty and commitment, and reliance and hope in the divine promise—so that it can attain glory, independence, and spiritual and material progress, and the enemy [the United States], in its pursuit of grandeur and the control of Muslim lands, can see defeat.

For Khamenei, there is no goal more divine than seeing America and her allies driven from the Middle East.

Khamenei has led revolutionary Iran since the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini in 1989. To fulfill God's promise and his own duty, Khamenei authorized the bombing attack on the United States at Khobar Towers (U.S. death toll: 19 servicemen) in 1996; aid to violent Islamist groups including al Qaeda (see the 9/11 Commission report), Hezbollah, and Hamas; the export to Iraq of Iranian-manufactured remote-controlled explosive devices and Iranian-trained assassination teams; ties with anti-American regimes abroad (President Chávez of Venezuela has visited four times); and the development of a nuclear weapons program. Khamenei—not Iran's colorful president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad—turned the Islamic Republic into a turbo-charged engine of anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Khamenei, not Ahmadinejad, converted the Revolutionary Guards Corps and its thuggish, morals-enforcing appendage, the Basij, into major political players.

On Khamenei's watch, the Iranian reform movement, spearheaded by disaffected disciples of the revolution and university students, has been politically crushed and many of its most important members exiled, jailed, beaten, and, in the case of Saeed Hajjarian, a founding father of the clerical regime's intelligence service, shot in the head. As Iran's internal politics have gotten worse, however, Western hope for meaningful diplomacy with the regime has risen.

Thus, the eternal advocates of engagement counsel engaging Khamenei,

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JOHN COX

who they insist is really a "conservative pragmatist." Thoughtful Iran analysts have peered into the eyes of Khamenei (his speeches aren't helpful) and seen Boeing aircraft parts, oil and gas deals, pipelines, and eventually an American embassy in Tehran. They have not seen a man of God and politics whose cherished conception of a just world is inimical to both Democratic and Republican visions of what is right.

This hope attached to Khamenei and to dialogue is partly just a reaction against George W. Bush. Many feared Bush would attack Iran's nuclear facilities. "Diplomacy first, diplomacy only" became a mantra in Europe, since most Europeans would rather see the clerics go nuclear than have the United States (or Israel) do anything harsh to stop them. Most in the Obama administration no doubt share this view.

But misleading analysis easily follows: Europeans and Americans who are adamantly opposed to the use of force (or economy-crushing sanctions) naturally start to see "pragmatists" where they don't exist. Khamenei calls the United States "Satan Incarnate" and President Obama responds with a verse about brotherhood from the Persian Sufi poet Saadi. To respond otherwise would be to act like Bush. (Note to the White House: Revolutionary clerics don't appreciate Sufism, with its ecumenical call for brotherhood. They harass and suppress it.)

Much of Obama's outreach could be chalked up as harmless if the stakes weren't so high. The truth: The administration knows that it will probably fail to stop Iran from developing a nuclear weapon through diplomacy or sanctions. The only sanctions that could conceivably pull the regime to the negotiating table, freeze its nuclear program, and allow for inspections of its closed nuclear sites would be energy related. Stopping the export of gasoline to Iran (which cannot refine enough for its domestic market) could have a devastating effect on Iran's economy and public morale. But neither the Obama administration nor the Europeans like the "big stick" approach. In other words, the nuke is coming.

How alarming is that? Since 9/11, conversations about combating terrorism have revolved around nonstate actors, a disposition reinforced by the war in Iraq and the controversy over Saddam Hussein's links to terrorists, in particular al Qaeda. Yet this disposition is unwise. Even the Bush administration never wanted to touch the 9/11 Commission report's revelations about Iranian ties to al Qaeda—impressed by al Qaeda's attack on the USS *Cole* in 2000, the mullahs reached out to Osama bin Laden—since to do so would supercharge any discussion of policy toward Tehran. So the question remains: Should the United States allow a virulently anti-American regime that knowingly aided al Qaeda to have an atomic bomb?

We don't know what the mullahs will do once they have a nuclear weapon. They may act as the Pakistanis did after they got theirs: much more aggressively. Pakistan's ruler Pervez Musharraf almost provoked a massive war with India over Kargil. Clerical Iran's conception of itself is far more grandiose than Pakistan's. Its support for anti-American terrorism is unrivaled among Middle Eastern states. Almost 30 years ago, Tehran reached out to Ayman al Zawahiri and his murderous band of Egyptian jihadists. It is highly likely that this contact led to Iran's later offer of assistance to al Qaeda.

Remember: The same individuals who brought us the Khobar Towers bombing are with us today. Their power is undiminished. If anything, their rhetoric against the United States—and certainly their lethal actions in Iraq and Afghanistan—are harsher than they were in the mid-1990s, when President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, with Khamenei by his side, appealed to Europeans for more investment and trade while sending assassination teams clandestinely to kill Iranian dissidents in Europe.

The Obama administration now runs the risk of appearing weak in its dealings with Tehran. Whether through mirror-imaging or conflict avoidance, it has set the stage for an embarrassing denouement. Unless Washington can convince itself, and then the Europeans, to implement draconian sanctions, Iran will get its nuke. Once that happens, the appeasement (or engagement) reflex will come powerfully into play. The Islamic Republic's appetite to push its newly obtained strategic advantage could prove irresistible.

The clerical regime has never abandoned its ecumenical outreach to Sunni militants. American success, or more likely failure, in Iraq or Afghanistan could be a powerful spur to Iran to strike. State-supported terrorism, which would be both denied and nuclear-protected, could come ferociously back at us. It was a truly nervy move for Damascus, Tehran's closest Arab ally, to have the North Koreans build a uranium-processing plant (the one the Israelis bombed in September 2007). But then, terrorist-supporting "rogue states," by definition, do nervy, unexpected things.

It is useful to remember what has motivated the Iranians to talk in the past: fear. Fear that the Islamic revolution would collapse brought Khomeini to the negotiating table with Iraq in 1988. And, most tellingly, there is 2003, when Tehran made an overture—how serious is unclear—to the United States via the Swiss ambassador in Tehran. To state the obvious: After the fall of Saddam Hussein, Tehran was terrified that President Bush might eliminate another member of the "axis of evil," the one that had just been discovered to have a massive underground uranium-enrichment facility at Natanz. It was fear, not "mutual respect," that provoked some within the clerical regime to reach out to Washington.

Severe tension in foreign affairs is often salutary. Although it is out of fashion to say so, American hard and soft power in the Muslim Middle East

has been mostly a force for good. For much of the last 30 years, U.S. power has helped to check Iran's revolutionary potential and offered a seductive alternative to the mullahs' spirit-crunching theocratic state.

The United States, not Europe, became the focus of Iranians' profound fascination with the West. The strongest, most explicit internal denunciation of revolutionary Islamist extremism ever made was that of the cleric Abdullah Nouri, interior minister under presidents Rafsanjani and Khatami. A faithful and loving disciple of the Ayatollah Khomeini and Khomeini's "defrocked" one-time successor, Ali Montazeri, Nouri was put on trial in 1999 for challenging the regime's monopoly of power and faith. More than anyone before or since, he mocked the regime's fear of the United States, suggesting that Islam really ought to be able to withstand the restoration of diplomatic relations with Washington. Nouri was nearly killed in jail, where he spent about four years.

Iran's reform movement has been most unnerving to the regime's hard core when advanced by famous foot soldiers of the Islamic revolution like Nouri. But it is in great part a product of the enormous, healthy tension that has existed between the United States and the Islamic Republic. The denial of legitimacy by the United States—and secondarily by Europe, which has sometimes treated Iran's female-oppressing, dissident-killing clerics as moral reprobates—has had an effect inside the country, provoking important debates about Iran's place in the world and its politico-religious ethics. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine the intellectual survival of the reform movement if the United States had not denied the mullahs the respect that they demand from their own citizenry and increasingly do not receive.

It is clear that President Obama means well, yet his good intentions could end up accomplishing the exact opposite of what he wants. Irony is, of course, a Persian forte. It is less appreciated in the United States. ♦

The Liberal Dream Agenda

Republican senators have their work cut out for them. BY FRED BARNES

Once the House passed a 90 percent tax on AIG bonuses, a mad rush was on in the Senate. Majority Leader Harry Reid went to the Senate floor to propose a quick vote on similar legislation. A single senator could object, delaying a vote for weeks. But fear of siding with reviled AIG executives prevailed, and no senator stepped forward—until Republican whip Jon Kyl finally did. "I don't believe Congress should rush to pass yet another piece of hastily crafted legislation in this very toxic atmosphere," he said. "Therefore, I object." A vote was put off, the AIG furor abated, and the tax on bonuses is now probably dead.

That was easy. A nervy act by a single senator stopped the scramble to punish AIG. That was two weeks ago. Last week, the decision by Republican senator Arlen Specter to oppose card check legislation was similarly decisive. He relegated that bill, designed to let labor organizers form unions without a secret ballot vote by workers, to the unlikely-to-pass bin. Senate Republicans had worked diligently to produce unanimous opposition to card check. But again, the act of one Republican senator was crucial.

So much for easy victories. Republicans now face the most important test of their opposition to liberal legislation since they blocked President Clinton's health care scheme—HillaryCare—in 1994. This time the task is far greater and the number of Republican senators is fewer (41 now, 44 then). And the only hope is the Senate. House Republicans, lacking the power to filibuster, can't help.

The liberal onslaught comes in four parts: government-run health care, a cap-and-trade carbon tax, a vast array of personal and business tax increases, and government authority to seize financial institutions in addition to banks. This is the liberal dream agenda. If passed, it would do what conservatives fear most. It would make America more like Europe, with growing nanny statism and more reliance on government, considerably less on individuals. Let's look at the four.

Health care. President Obama is fond of saying his plan allows people to choose between the health insurance they get through their employer and a government program currently limited to federal workers. Sounds wonderful, doesn't it? It's not. Rather, it's the path to a single-payer health care system—the kind Obama has said he prefers but isn't actually proposing.

His program would have the distinct advantage of not having to make a profit. So it would always be able to offer greater benefits at lower cost (with taxpayers taking up the slack when it lost money). Businesses would have an incentive to increase co-pays and trim benefits and, in effect, encourage employees to switch plans. And if employer-paid benefits are taxed, as administration officials have suggested, the incentive steering workers to the government program will be irresistible.

"There won't be any private sector [in health insurance]," Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell says, should government-financed insurance be available to everyone. "It's a

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fast track to single payer." There's an additional fear. The stimulus bill set aside $1.1 billion to research and compare medical treatments and drugs, raising the prospect that government programs would pay for some treatments and medicines but not others and thus open the door to rationing.

Can ObamaCare be blocked? Republicans may threaten a filibuster and force a compromise. But the odds worsen if Democrats use a procedure known as reconciliation to bar a Republican filibuster and require only 50 votes, plus Vice President Biden's, to pass the health care bill. In that case, Republicans would need to recruit at least 10 Democrats, a tall order.

Reconciliation, normally invoked on tax and spending issues, would turn the Senate into a war zone. Republicans would feel free to exploit any parliamentary tactic at their disposal to delay or impede the legislation, tying up the Senate for weeks, perhaps months.

Cap and trade. Here, too, Democrats may use reconciliation to win Senate approval of a measure that would set a national cap on carbon emissions, then auction off emission rights to companies. Obama's goal is twofold, reducing emissions and raising money. His 10-year budget says roughly $650 billion would be collected in fees, but a White House official told Capitol Hill staffers that two or three times that amount might be raised.

During last year's campaign, Obama said cap and trade would cause energy prices to "skyrocket." Indeed it would, while choking the economy and reducing our standard of living. Republicans are "pretty solidly" against cap and trade, Kyl says. So are a dozen or so Democrats in carbon-dependent states. But Obama may attract them with his promise last week to "take into account regional differences" and prevent "huge spikes in electricity prices." Republicans have their hands full on this issue.

Taxes. Obama wants to increase taxes on everyone—individuals, entrepreneurs, businesses—who is usually associated with a growing economy. It doesn't make sense from an economic standpoint, but he wants the money. So tax rates will rise on upper middle class and rich Americans, on capital gains and dividends, on companies that make profits in foreign countries, and the list goes on. Deductions will be slashed. Sad to say, many of these tax hikes poll well. They'll be hard to stop under reconciliation. Meanwhile, the new administration is searching for fresh ways to raise revenue.

Takeover authority. Obama complained in his prime time press conference that "the AIG situation has gotten worse" because he didn't have the authority to seize control of financial institutions that are "too big to fail" and pose "systemic risks" for the entire economy. This is nonsense. He didn't need such far-reaching authority. Letting AIG go bankrupt, instead of bailing it out, would have allowed a judge to do exactly the things Obama said he couldn't. What things? Press Secretary Robert Gibbs said they include cutting CEO pay and installing new business models.

Republicans have a good shot at blocking this authority, particularly because officials in the Bush and Obama administrations have done a poor job with the authority they already possess. Giving them the right to declare a "systemic risk" is too risky.

Republicans face their own risk in opposing the Obama agenda, though oppose it they must. Democrats will scream they're "the party of no." The media will urge them to compromise even when Obama offers nothing in return. They'll be tormented by liberal interest groups. Polls may turn against them.

But they're obligated, as conservatives or moderates, to combat a program—Obama's—that would change America, and not for the better. The tax increases could be shaved back later, but a new health care system financed by carbon fees could not. Nor would the authority to grab financial institutions be easy to uproot. The time to resist Obama, forcefully and unapologetically, has come. It won't be easy. ♦

Like Father, Like Son

Dodd looks beatable in Connecticut.

BY FRED LUCAS

When he met in early February with Sen. John Cornyn, chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, about possibly challenging Sen. Christopher Dodd in Connecticut, Rob Simmons was a little skeptical about his chances against the five-term senator in a Democratic state. But then an RSCC poll showed him running competitively. And, by March 10, a Quinnipiac University poll showed Simmons with a 43-42 lead over Dodd and a 49-32 advantage among independents, the state's largest voting bloc. On March 15, Simmons announced that he would run against Dodd.

These polls were conducted before anyone had heard of the so-called Dodd amendment allowing the hugely unpopular AIG bonuses.

On March 16, after initial reports that AIG executives had received $165 million in bonuses, the chairman of the Senate banking committee joined the chorus of outrage. "A car mechanic or teacher in Connecticut shouldn't have to subsidize the bad decisions of these executives," Dodd said.

When CNN asked Dodd the next day about a loophole in the stimulus bill that allowed the bonuses, Dodd answered: "When that language left the Senate that I wrote, that was not included." A day later, Dodd said the language had in fact been there, but only because the Treasury Department asked for it. The *Hartford Courant* ran a giant front-page headline: "Dodd's flip-flop," while a *New Haven Register* editorial called Dodd a "lying weasel."

Dodd was the second largest recipient of cash from AIG donors in the 2008 election cycle, according to the Center for Responsive Politics. But the troubles for the Connecticut senior senator didn't start with AIG.

The Senate Ethics Committee is still probing whether he received a sweetheart deal on two mortgages, and the *Hartford Courant* recently reported another questionable real estate transaction regarding an Irish cottage.

"People who are struggling to keep their job or to pay their mortgage because they lost their job or face foreclosure are very upset that the chairman of the committee that oversees these activities apparently is benefiting directly from contributions and special mortgages from the very people he oversees," Simmons said. "This has the appearance of a conflict of interest."

For Simmons, the only downside of Dodd's apparent weakness is that other Republicans—such as state Senator Sam Caligiuri—have now expressed interest in entering the race, which could force a primary and weaken a Republican challenger.

After winning two consecutive landslides, Dodd may be a little rusty when it comes to campaign skills. Simmons on the other hand knows all about rough contests. The former three-term House member lost his last race in the state by just 83 votes in a heavily Democratic district. But that was in 2006, a terrible year for Republicans.

In 2000, Simmons beat 10-term incumbent Democrat Sam Gejdenson in the same heavily Democratic eastern Connecticut district that Al Gore (running with home state Sen. Joe Lieberman) carried by 14 points. In 2002 and again in 2004 (when John Kerry carried the district by 10 points) Simmons won decisive victories over his Democratic opponents.

So it's increasingly plausible Simmons could become the first Republican senator from Connecticut since Lowell Weicker, a name that still makes many conservatives cringe. On social issues, Simmons is a typical New England moderate, but as a Vietnam veteran and former CIA officer, he has stood firm on national security issues, and has a 53 percent lifetime rating with the American Conservative Union. Simmons worked in the 1970s as a Senate staffer for both Barry Goldwater and John Chafee and thinks the GOP's conservative-moderate gap isn't so wide.

"If you look more carefully, you'll see some of these labels don't really describe these two great senators adequately," Simmons said of his former Senate bosses. "Both believed in having a strong defense, and both believed a fundamental responsibility of our Congress under the Constitution was to provide for the common defense. Both Senators Goldwater and Chafee were fiscal conservatives. They believed citizens had the first claim on their dollars and that the government should only take their dollars for necessary priorities."

Weicker, those with long memories may recall, won his first Senate bid over another scandal-plagued Dodd. Sen. Thomas Dodd, the current senator's father, lost his 1970 reelection bid despite a distinguished reputation as an assistant to five U.S. attorney generals and a prosecutor of Nazi war criminals in Nuremberg. The Senate voted on June 23, 1967, to censure the elder Dodd for diverting $116,000 in campaign contributions to personal use. While he did not directly violate any law or Senate rule, his colleagues decided Dodd's conduct was "contrary to accepted morals, derogates from the public trust expected of a Senator, and tends to bring the Senate into dishonor and disrepute."

It remains to be seen when the plodding ethics committee will release its findings on the current Sen. Dodd's dealings with Countrywide Mortgage.

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After *Portfolio* magazine reported last summer that Dodd was a beneficiary of the "Friend of Angelo" program, named for the mortgage giant's CEO Angelo Mozilo, and saved $75,000 over the life of two loans he refinanced in 2003, he did the same thing he did with the AIG flap. He first denied it then conceded the point, but said he believed the treatment was "more of a courtesy" than a sweetheart deal.

After nearly six months of silence, Dodd met with a select group of Connecticut reporters who were allowed to review the mortgage documents, but not to make any copies. "Jackie and I acted properly in our mortgage refinancing negotiations," Dodd said, referring to himself and his wife. "We did not seek or expect any special rates or terms in our loans and we never received any."

More recently, the *Courant* has reported on the convoluted real estate deal in Ireland, in which Dodd was able to purchase an Irish cottage for well below market value. The deal involved his friend Edward Downe Jr. Downe was convicted of insider trading and securities fraud in 1993, but benefited from one of the infamous Clinton pardons in early 2001 after Dodd lobbied for the clemency. It was in the following year that Dodd got his great deal on the Irish property.

The ethics theme will resonate with voters, predicts Gary Rose, chairman of the government and politics department at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Connecticut. "Voters in Connecticut are pretty discerning, and they don't like it when politicians have a sense of entitlement." The question is: Will it be enough to overcome Dodd's advantage as an incumbent? In a Siena poll released March 27, Dodd is up 45-40 over Simmons, but 40 percent have an unfavorable view of the incumbent.

"There's a negative reaction to Dodd," Rose says. "The people are looking for something new. But Dodd is formidable. He has a huge war chest. He's already running ads on TV … about what he's doing in the Senate." Simmons's hope is that voters will weigh the full story of what Dodd has done in the Senate, and recoil. ♦

Downwind from Iran

Why they're nervous in the Gulf.

BY PETER BERKOWITZ

Kuwait City

According to the conventional wisdom—echoed by Senators Obama and Clinton on the campaign trail and by President Obama in his *Al Arabiya* interview a week after taking office—the Bush administration's conduct of foreign policy fostered anti-Americanism around the globe and left America's alliances, particularly in the Arab world, in disrepair. While they are perfectly familiar with this view, the people I spoke with last week in the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait—government officials, military officers, business people, and journalists—offered a less melodramatic and more compelling account.

Not that the weeklong trip to the Gulf—funded by the UAE and Kuwait and organized by Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies for a small group of scholars, journalists, and former and future government officials—failed to include plenty of criticism of the Bush administration, particularly in connection with Israel, Iraq, and Iran. But even the harshest critics stressed their countries' close and continuing military and economic cooperation with the United States. They also insisted that America's vital national interests aligned with theirs and were keen to cultivate the alliance on the grounds that it was vital to the long-term security and prosperity of the Gulf states and the United States.

The UAE's and Kuwait's common orientation toward the United States stems from common geopolitical circumstances. They both live in a dangerous neighborhood that, because it contains 56 percent of the world's proven oil reserves, is essential to the international economic order. The vast majority of citizens of both Kuwait and the UAE—which is composed of seven emirates, the most prominent being Abu Dhabi, the capital, and Dubai, the bustling international port—are Arab and Sunni Muslim. Both the UAE and Kuwait are harbor countries with their backs to the desert and their faces toward the sea, which means that both have seafaring and trading histories and a tradition of openness to the outside world. Both are tiny and are home to large numbers of non-nationals: The UAE has about 900,000 citizens and 4.8 million expatriates, and Kuwait has about 1.4 million citizens and 1.3 million expatriates.

Both enjoy enormous oil wealth. Kuwait owns 8 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and the UAE 7 percent. Kuwait's reserves of 104 billion barrels are the sixth largest in the world; the UAE's 98 billion barrels the seventh largest. Because of their remarkably small number of citizens—Kuwait has fewer than Phoenix and the UAE fewer than San José—they lead the world in oil per citizen: The UAE boasts about 108,000 barrels, and Kuwait more than 75,000 barrels, in proven reserves per citizen. By comparison, Saudi Arabia, despite possessing 267 billion barrels in proven oil reserves, by far the largest supply in the world, comes in a distant third: For each of its 22 million citizens, Saudi Arabia owns less than 12,000 barrels.

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And, not least, the UAE and Kuwait both confront Iran across the Gulf, less than a hundred miles away: a Persian, Shiite, theocratic power whose population of 66 million is greater than that of Iraq and the six Gulf Cooperation Council members (the UAE, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and Saudi Arabia) put together. Both the UAE and Kuwait are tied to Iran by long-standing commercial interests—400,000 Iranians live and work in Dubai, and, in Kuwait, Iranian commercial vessels dock in the same port as U.S. Navy ships. And both view Iran as a destabilizing expansionist power seeking regional hegemony in the Gulf, preeminence in the greater Middle East, and leadership in the worldwide Islamic revolution.

Notwithstanding their shared circumstances, the UAE and Kuwait have opened themselves to the outside world in different ways. Dubai, the UAE's famous city-state, is, as one official put it, "a melting pot on steroids": In just a few decades the sheikhdom transformed itself from a sleepy seaside village into the world's seventh busiest container seaport, the gateway to the Gulf, and a glistening commercial hub; only a few hours' flight from India, northeast Africa, and southeast Europe, it is a center for banking, real estate, and tourism. Meanwhile, Abu Dhabi, the more staid capital of the UAE and home to almost all of its oil, is building a city devoted to world culture just off its coast on 10-square-mile Saadiyat Island. The island will feature a branch of the Louvre, a new Guggenheim designed by Frank Gehry, a spectacular performing arts center, and a full service New York University campus intended to be a center of higher education in the Middle East.

While Kuwait's elite—political, commercial, intellectual—is, like that of the UAE, typically educated in the West and comfortable with Western ways, Kuwaitis concentrate more on conserving their traditional culture. Kuwait has not sought to become an international tourist destination, and only lifted its ban on direct foreign investment five years ago. The liberalizing forces in Kuwait, moreover, face significant internal opposition. The parliament, which the emir dissolved on March 18 because of a dispute over the extent of representatives' oversight of cabinet ministers, will, after the coming mid-May elections, almost certainly still contain a substantial Islamist and tribal bloc.

Much as the UAE and Kuwait have been rocked by the global economic crisis, security questions remain a paramount concern. In discussing them, Emiratis and Kuwaitis often begin by criticizing what they perceive to be the United States' one-sided support for Israel, deploring the return to power of Benjamin Netanyahu, and urging the Obama administration to compel Israel to cease settlements in the West Bank and make whatever other concessions are necessary to achieve a peace agreement that promptly brings into existence a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Kuwaitis worry that even if Iran's nuclear reactor at Bushehr were intended for strictly civilian purposes, it would still pose a grave threat. Given the Russian—and worse still in Kuwaiti eyes, Iranian—engineers at work there and the direction of Gulf winds, they fear the toxic fallout of a second Chernobyl.

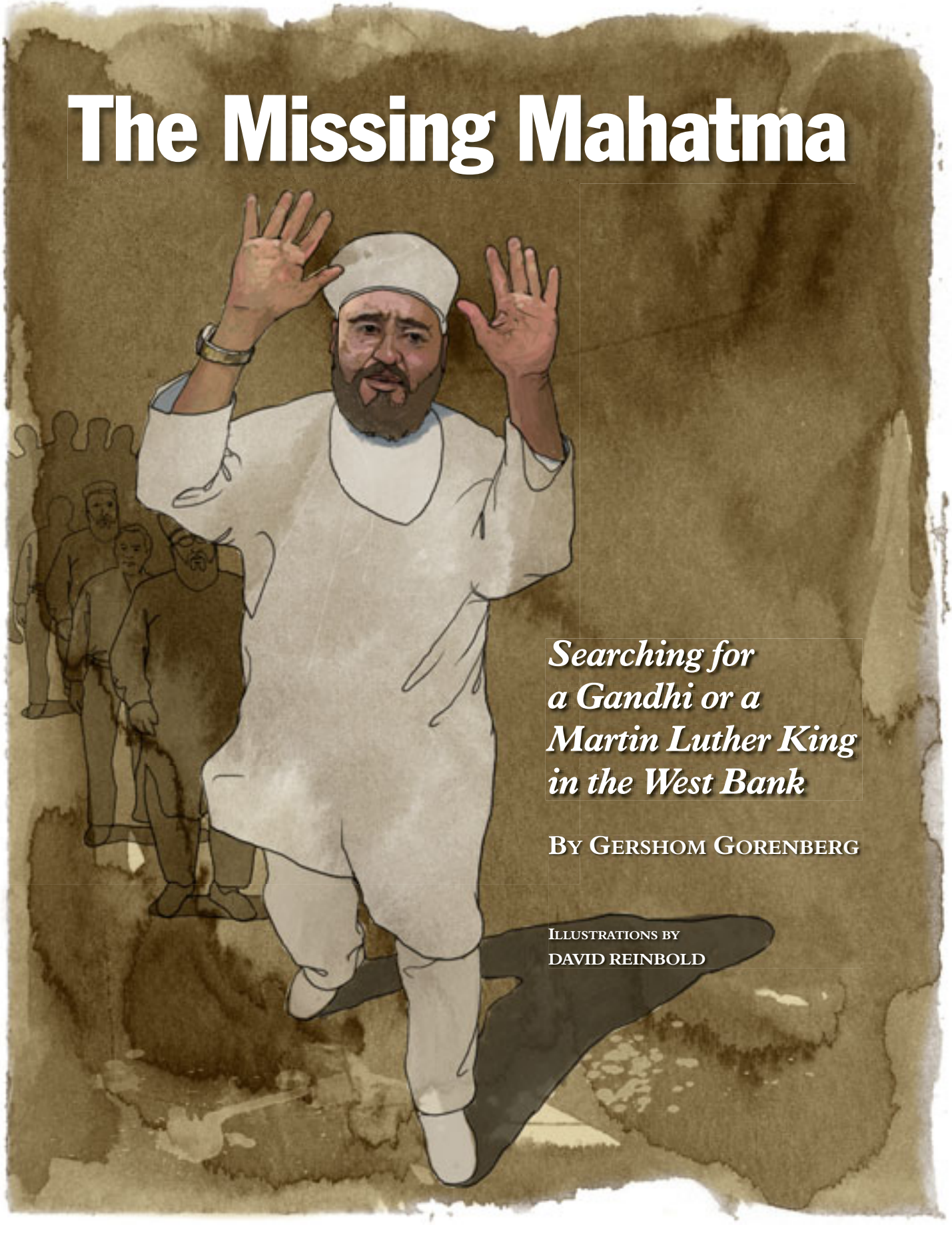
But even when these criticisms are heartfelt, they quickly give way to the more urgent question of Iraq. Many in the region believe the U.S. invasion was a mistake the Bush administration could have avoided had it consulted its Gulf state allies. Although they would be delighted by the emergence of a stable and enlightened Iraq, most observers in both the UAE and Kuwait are convinced that the new Iraq is inherently unstable, even if it is now enjoying a lull before the next violent storm. Their biggest regret about Iraq, however, has to do with Iran, the primordial issue to which all discussions of national security in the Arabian Peninsula eventually return.

The dominant view in the UAE and Kuwait is that by toppling Saddam Hussein, who had served as a check on Iran, and building a Shiite-led government in Baghdad that accepts Iranian influence in Iraq, the United States played a decisive role in unleashing an Iranian superpower. Although our interlocutors were difficult to pin down on how they would prefer the United States deal with Iran, they made plain their concern that no agreement be reached with Tehran at their expense.

Kuwaitis emphasized that Iran's export of jihad and its program to develop nuclear weapons were hardly the only threats it presented. Kuwaitis worry that even if Iran's nuclear reactor at Bushehr, 133 nautical miles across the Gulf on the coast, were intended for strictly civilian purposes, it would still pose a grave threat. Given the Russian—and worse still in Kuwaiti eyes, Iranian—engineers at work there and the direction of Gulf winds, they fear the toxic fallout of a second Chernobyl. And then there are the thousands of Shahab-1, -2, and -3 missiles in Iran's arsenal, which can reach Kuwaiti civilian populations, oil fields, and refineries in minutes.

If one message came through loud and clear during five days of conversations, it was that contrary to the conventional wisdom, and despite the importance of a just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, Iran is far and away the major threat to peace and stability in the Middle East. If the president thinks that the United States has economic woes now, they will be as nothing if he lets down our pro-Western Gulf allies and thwarts our own vital national interests by failing to employ the necessary mixture of diplomacy and force to persuade or compel Iran to respect the requirements of international order. ♦

The Missing Mahatma



Searching for a Gandhi or a Martin Luther King in the West Bank

By Gershom Gorenberg

Illustrations by
David Reinbold

They marched southward from Ramallah one windy morning in March 2012. Sheikh Nasser a-Din al-Masri led them—a slim man with a short black beard that half-hid a puckered scar on his neck. They filled the road to Jerusalem, a long procession of men, women, and children wearing white robes to show they were on a pilgrimage and that they had no pockets in which to hide weapons. They carried their flat bread in clear plastic bags for the same reason. A Reuters reporter said they numbered 20,000. They chanted as they walked.

When the sheikh saw the Israeli troops massed across the road in the distance, he turned and spoke into a megaphone. "Remember the two brothers, the sons of Adam," he said, and then quoted the Koran. "One said, 'I will surely kill you.' The other answered, 'If you stretch out your hand to slay me, it is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you. For I fear Allah, the Lord of the worlds.'"

The river of marchers streamed forward. From the troops came the voice of another megaphone, proclaiming "Halt!" in Arabic and Hebrew. Al-Masri answered, "We come in peace to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque, as is our sacred right." Soldiers lifted their guns.

The sound of the first volley was dull thuds. Tear gas canisters fell on the asphalt. The wind scattered the white plumes. Gasping, the marchers kept advancing. Again came thuds, and rubber bullets showered the marchers. The sheikh groaned, put his hands on his shoulder, and kept walking. "Halt! Halt!" roared the Israeli megaphone.

Afterward, an army inquiry panel would examine whether anyone had actually given orders to switch ammunition. With the first sharp cracks of live fire, a red splotch appeared low on the sheikh's robe; he grimaced and kneeled. People near him fell. A boy crumpled on the road. Screaming mixed with the chanting. The Reuters woman was shouting, pouring words into her cell phone. The guns stopped. No one could understand what the Israeli commander was yelling at his men. A marcher carrying medical gear in a clear plastic bag rushed up to al-Masri; another hurried to the boy.

Lying on the road, the sheikh whispered to a follower, who spoke through the megaphone. "We will fast here," he said, "until we are allowed to go on. We will testify to our faith." People tossed their bags of bread to the roadside and sat down.

Prostrate, pale, al-Masri spoke to television crews. He told about his studies at Al-Azhar University, his years in Hamas preaching armed jihad, and the bullet that grazed his neck when Israeli special forces arrested him. He talked about the *Path of Adam's Son*, the book by Syrian dissident Jawdat Said that he'd read in prison and that converted him to nonviolent struggle, about his release in a prisoner exchange two years before, and about the swelling support for his new movement.

The number of journalists grew almost as quickly as the number of soldiers. Provided a laptop from the Palestinian neighborhood next to the road, a young marcher began a blog whose address showed up in agency reports. On Israel Radio's midday talk show, the deputy defense minister explained in his ex-general's staccato bass that if the march went forward, suicide bombers could enter the crowd and slip into Jerusalem. A left-wing Knesset member, a former commando, warned soldiers that any order to fire on a peaceful demonstration "carried a black flag of illegality" and, under a 50-year-old Israeli precedent, would not constitute a defense in a court martial. A rightwing Knesset member denounced him as a traitor willing to cede Jerusalem. Al-Masri, whispering on the air in Hebrew he'd learned in prison, demanded free access to Al-Aqsa as the first step toward Palestinian independence alongside Israel.

An Israeli army medical team operated on the sheikh's leg under the night sky. The following afternoon, the U.S. president phoned the Israeli prime minister. Unnamed sources said they discussed the legacy of Martin Luther King. Israeli news broadcasts again began with footage of al-Masri, while breathless anchors reported on demands in the European Parliament and liberal American churches for an economic boycott of Israel.

The throng on the road was joined by the Palestinian prime minister and six ministers, who arrived from Ramallah wearing hastily sewn pocketless robes and bent to kiss al-Masri on his stretcher. He insisted that seven Hamas politicians, who had been living underground for fear of arrest, be summoned to join them to show that nonviolent jihad belonged to the entire Palestinian people. Meanwhile, hunger quieted the chanting on the road. More television crews arrived directly from the airport.

Early on the third morning, a Friday, the Israeli cabinet met. Afterward, the brigade commander got orders to let the march proceed. Trucks arrived with food. Al-Masri's followers lifted him onto a stretcher. At Qalandiya checkpoint, where the road passed through the Israeli security wall around Jerusalem, soldiers stood aside, watching the procession pour into the city. It reached Al-Aqsa in time for the sheikh to speak at noon prayers. News websites reported that the Israeli prime minister would address his nation before Sabbath began at sundown, amid rumors he would offer to meet the wounded sheikh to begin negotiations.

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To sit in my study in Jerusalem and to imagine recording this chronology as a historian is to be filled with the wild hope that fantasy can bring and with the pain of knowing it is fantasy.

The landscape is a real one. I know Qalandiya checkpoint, with its loudspeakers, turnstiles, and X-ray conveyor belts that impose the grimy feeling on every Palestinian hoping to cross through the chink in the wall around Jerusalem that he is a ticking bomb, because with some historical cause, Israelis see Palestinians as walking bombs until proven otherwise.

The verses quoted by al-Masri are authentic. They appear in the fifth sura of the Koran. Jawdat Said is also real, as is his untranslated Arabic treatise on nonviolence. But Sheikh Nasser a-Din al-Masri exists only as the stand-in for a question: Why is there no Palestinian Gandhi, no Palestinian Martin Luther King?

Through violence—from airplane hijackings to suicide bombings and rocket fire—Palestinians have failed to reach political independence. They have not stopped the spread of Israeli settlements or ended the occupation of the West Bank. Instead, they find themselves penned between Israel's fences and its roadblocks. In 2007 the vaunted "armed struggle" of Palestinian organizations turned into fratricide in the streets of Gaza, as Hamas seized control. Rather than ending Israel's siege of the Strip, Palestinian rocket fire sparked the Israeli onslaught of last winter, in which hundreds of Palestinians were killed and Gaza was left in ruins.

So why not adopt the strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience, the methods of Gandhi? That question has been asked for years, by moderate Israelis and by Westerners with sympathy for both sides. It comes packed with assumptions. It implies that Israelis accept a civilian death toll like that in Gaza only when they believe it is the unavoidable price of self-defense. It presumes that Israel remains a society whose citizens would not long allow their government to use deadly force against masses of nonviolent demonstrators. And it suggests that if Palestinians succeeded in shedding the image of terrorists and appeared internationally as saints, they would succeed in bringing unbearable Western pressure against Israel.

But even if patronizing, the question remains valid: Sainthood can work. Britain abandoned India; Montgomery's buses were desegregated.

As an Israeli, to imagine Nasser a-Din al-Masri is disturbing for another reason: This is a fantasy of a political savior who comes from the adversary's side because one's own has no answers. Israeli politics has become a junkyard of broken ideologies. The outgoing government of Ehud Olmert succeeded neither in negotiating peace nor in bringing quiet to the Gazan border with military force. Meanwhile, settlement construction continued, deepening Israel's entanglement in the West Bank. In February's election, a majority of Israelis voted for parties that offered no expectation of an end to the conflict. We have failed to manufacture hope. Let the Palestinians do it.

One potential answer to the mystery of the missing Gandhi is that the presumptions about Israel and the West are self-delusion. That answer says that Israel is ready to use overwhelming force against civilians, even when rockets are not being launched from their midst. It says that Israelis are not the civilized Englishmen of the Raj, that Israeli brutality is the father of Palestinian fury, and that in an age of wide belief in the "conflict of civilizations," the West is mostly willing to avert its eyes when Muslims or Arabs are the victims.

On the face of it, this answer suffers an obvious flaw: The British did not face Indian resistance as if engaged in a cricket match. The Amritsar Massacre of 1919, in which British troops opened fire on a gathering of thousands of peaceful Indians, killing and wounding hundreds, did not convince Gandhi to steal weapons and take to the hills. Rather, it deepened his commitment to *satyagraha*, nonviolent action.

An alternative answer is that the problem is Islam. Palestinian society, says this hypothesis, is 98 percent Muslim, and Islam sanctifies jihad. After Hamas's introduction of suicide attacks to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and after 9/11—the hypothesis demands attention. Its own glaring flaw is that Islam has no monopoly on terrorism or holy war. But perhaps a religion whose founder was a warrior has prevented the emergence of an enemy of violence. Perhaps it has no room for the *shahid*, the martyr, who is willing to die without blowing himself up in a café or bus.

To find why a figure is absent from history is intrinsically more difficult than explaining why he is present. The search cannot yield the certain resolution of a detective novel. Nonetheless, I went looking for the missing Mahatma.

Some say the Palestinian Gandhi was here and is now gone. His name is Mubarak Awad. In the mid-1980s, he had an office in downtown East Jerusalem, near the American Colony Hotel.

He was—so says American scholar and civil disobedience-advocate Mary King—the uniquely influential midwife of a nonviolent revolt, King's rather startling description of the first Intifada. Awad's name occurs exactly once, within parentheses, in Palestinian scholar Yezid Sayigh's massive, authoritative history of the Palestinian national movement—*Armed Struggle and the Search for State* (1997)—in a sentence on the PLO's "hostile disregard for strategies of nonviolent resistance." Awad, says Israeli political scientist Yaron Ezrahi, was a missed

chance, an alternative feared by and foiled by both Israel and the Palestinians. This much is certain: In June 1988, six months into the first Intifada, Mubarak Awad was bundled onto a TWA plane at Ben-Gurion Airport by Israeli guards and deported to the United States.

To meet him, I flew to Washington, D.C., where he teaches in American University's Peace and Conflict Resolution program and heads an organization called Nonviolence International. He is tall and heavyset. His thick curls—black in old news photos—have turned silver. He speaks softly, slowly, meandering through his past with a maddening unconcern for details or chronology, distracted in mid-story to admire a bird flitting past. He appears to have as much influence on today's Palestinian politics as a distant star has on earthly tides.

He was born in Jerusalem to a Christian Arab family that lived just outside the Old City walls. In 1948, when he was four, their neighborhood became a pivot of the Israeli-Jordanian struggle for the Holy City. His mother was a nurse. His father stubbornly refused to follow other families fleeing the battlefield and was shot dead by an unknown gunman while bringing the wounded to his wife's care. "We buried him in the house." He didn't want to leave, and "so he stayed forever," Awad says. Only afterward did the widow take her children into the Jordanian-ruled Old City.

Awad's childhood home was left in the no-man's land between Jordanian and Israeli lines. Though his mother was alive, the family broke up. Awad spent his youth in orphanages and in the home of Katy Antonius, widow of George Antonius, a Lebanese-born Christian who wrote the *Arab Awakening* (1938), the manifesto of Arab nationalism. Awad's mother remained an intense religious influence. "Many times, when you go and visit her, she'll kneel with you and pray. . . . I'll go to see her, want to be with her and talk, and she'll read the Bible," says Awad, who speaks of the past largely in present tense. His mother also taught him "that the one who killed your dad left a widow and seven kids. So don't ever carry a gun and kill anyone." In high school, when Jordanian soldiers came to train the students to march with guns, he refused to join in. As a punishment, he says, he was tied up with a gun in his hand, "and they had everybody spit on me."

Mubarak Awad was a missed chance, an alternative feared by and foiled by both Israel and the Palestinians.

After high school, Awad's life began to zigzag between Jerusalem and America. He received a scholarship to a whites-only Christian college in Tennessee. Unable to reconcile Christianity and segregation, he returned home. In 1967, when Israel conquered the West Bank and annexed East Jerusalem, it gave the city's Arabs the ambiguous legal status of permanent residents—roughly akin to green card holders in the United States. Awad, then the director of a Mennonite orphanage school, received an Israeli identity card. At the orphanage, in the Christian town of Beit Jalla near Bethlehem, Awad says he "allowed [his wards] to protest anything and everything" about Israel's occupation. When Israeli authorities jailed him, the Mennonites negotiated a deal: Free him, and we'll take him out of the country. Awad returned to the United States for studies at a Mennonite school in Pennsylvania.

By the time he returned to Jerusalem more than a decade later, he had a U.S. passport and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology. He set up a center to teach counseling skills to Palestinian educators and, in the fall of 1983, placed newspaper ads for a three-day workshop at the East Jerusalem YWCA on "how to get rid of occupation." A Westernized exile come home, influenced by Christian pacifists, he

bore a passing resemblance to the man who led India to independence. In Awad's description, though, his ideas at the time were shaped more by humanist psychologist Carl Rogers than by Gandhi.

He expected 50 people; 400 showed up—many of them angry supporters of Fatah and the other Palestinian organizations that made up the PLO, who wanted to know "who sent you, by whose authority" to oppose occupation. At the YWCA, Awad says, "I opened my big mouth and said we are under occupation because we choose to be under occupation" just as, he says, a beaten wife has the choice to stay or leave.

A more sympathetic listener was Nafez Assaily, a Jerusalem schoolteacher, who was already upsetting friends by advocating nonviolent resistance, influenced by his study of Islamic mysticism and Buddhism and by the 1982 film *Gandhi*. An Awad supporter ever since, Assaily nonetheless recounts that Awad's Arabic was poor and, when he spoke of the need for a nonviolent movement, he mistakenly used the Arabic for "organization"—a word which meant only *the* Organization, the PLO. "People thought he wanted to replace the PLO," Assaily says.

Awad had become a foreigner in his own land, and in that land it was taboo for a Palestinian to propose resistance outside the PLO. The Israeli authorities were equally intransigent. They said they would close the YWCA if it allowed him to stay. With much smaller numbers, Awad continued his workshop the next day at the Friends' School in Ramallah, which then received its own warning not to host him.

Still, word spread. Hisham Sharabi, a Palestinian historian at Georgetown University, invited Awad to Washington for a small conclave of intellectuals including political scientist Gene Sharp, a theorist of nonviolent revolution. At their encouragement, Awad traveled to India to learn about Gandhi. Back in Jerusalem, he opened the Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence. He published an Arabic catalogue of Sharp's tactics for resistance—marches, boycotts, tax strikes, fasting—and a translation of a biography of Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the most prominent Muslim supporter of Gandhi and of pacifism in the Indian independence struggle. Awad drove through the West Bank countryside, parking at the center of villages, sleeping in his van, setting up placards describing Gandhi, talking to whoever walked by.

An old man came asking for help in getting back several acres of his village's land, fenced off by the neighboring Israeli settlement of Tekoa, east of Bethlehem. Awad recalls, "He said, 'You told us that if we are not afraid, anything is possible.' I said, 'Oh my God, did I say that?'" Awad thought of himself as an educator. For someone to act on what he said terrified him. Still, he agreed to lead the villagers in taking down the fence, if they agreed not to bring guns or throw stones and not to run away even if shot at or arrested.

By one account, 300 people showed up, confronting armed settlers. "We refused to run. We turned numb. We were hugging each other," Awad says, recalling the strange ecstasy of the moment. The military governor arrived—and allowed the Palestinians to remove the fence.

The victory made Awad an activist. At other villages, he led Palestinians and Israeli peace activists in planting olive saplings on disputed land. The tactic was aimed at Israeli sensitivities, since planting trees is a Zionist ritual. Yet he did not ignite a mass movement. At Qatannah, near Ramallah, settlers uprooted the saplings. Awad has a video of a documentary about him from the time that shows his younger self standing in the field near Qatannah, speaking to his forces. His voice is halting, not impassioned; he could be describing agricultural techniques.

"Mubarak Awad was not charismatic. . . . It limited him," says Mustafa Abu Sway, a scholar of Islam at Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, who attended talks at Awad's center. His influence, Abu Sway says, "was highly intellectual. I don't think it was a popular movement as yet." Among many Palestinians, Awad remained suspect. "We were accused [of being] CIA agents. Others were kinder. They accused us [of being] Jordanian agents," says Assaily.

Lucy Nusseibeh—the British-born wife of Palestinian philosopher and aristocrat Sari Nusseibeh—invited Awad to speak at Birzeit University, a hothouse of youthful nationalists, where she and her husband then taught. The invitation "caused a lot of consternation among the faculty and students," says Sari Nusseibeh. "At the time, to put forward the image of yourself as a nonviolent person was not kosher . . . in the Palestinian community. You had to put yourself forward as a guy with a gun, with 10 guns hanging around your waist and shoulders . . . or keep silent."

Awad, perhaps, lacked charisma precisely because he was an outsider seeking acceptance—Americanized, Christian, not a PLO man—and hesitant to speak what he felt. In a 1984 essay published in a Palestinian journal in English, he presented nonviolence as a purely utilitarian choice—"the most effective method" for Palestinians to obstruct "Judaization" of the occupied territories. "This does not . . . constitute a rejection of the concept of armed struggle," he wrote.

"If you push me, [the reason] I use nonviolence is because of my Christian faith, and honoring my mother," Awad says today. "So why should . . . a Muslim follow this Christian believer? I couldn't convince you openly." He would have preferred, he says, to have passed the role of leader to someone else, a prominent Muslim, "and he would be able to be the Gandhi of the Palestinians." He met with the "heads of all the sheikhs," the top Muslim religious figures, at Al-Aqsa

Mosque in Jerusalem, he says, he even went to Al-Azhar University, the most prestigious center of Sunni Islam, "to convince them to pick one Palestinian" to head his movement. He was rejected, he argues, not because of theology, but because of "the fear at that time of Arafat." No one was willing to challenge the PLO. In a mid-1980s television interview, Awad suggested that creating a nonviolent movement would take 10 or 15 years.

In very different ways, neither Israel nor the Palestinians gave him that time.

In 1987, Awad asked the Israeli interior ministry to replace his tattered, 20-year-old ID card. His request was rejected. By living abroad for 13 years and taking U.S. citizenship, the ministry told him, he had forfeited his status as permanent resident of Israel. Meanwhile, the tourist visa in his U.S. passport expired. That November, he was ordered to leave the country.

The residency ruling was a technicality. Asked about the expulsion, the hardline Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir referred reporters to "the security services." Israeli peace activists protested that Shamir's government was eager to get rid of someone who shattered the image of Palestinian nationalist as terrorist. It's equally possible that the government regarded any effort to end Israeli rule of the West Bank and Gaza as seditious, whether violent or not. Perhaps because of official American protests, it was another six months before Awad was arrested. A legal team including top Israeli lawyers prepared his unsuccessful supreme court appeal. His expulsion drew sharp, brief media attention, like the sudden light of a photographer's flash.

Jailing him would have pushed him together with potential converts to his cause. Deported, Awad was simply gone. In the meantime, his long march had already been cut short by the outbreak of the Intifada, the Shaking Off.

Awad led 300 villagers in a nonviolent protest against the seizure of land by a neighboring settlement at Tekoa. The military governor arrived and allowed the Palestinians to remove the fence.

The detonator was a traffic accident: On December 8, 1987, an Israeli army truck hit two vans carrying Palestinians from the Gaza Strip refugee camp of Jabalya, killing four people. In Gaza's camps, rumors spread that the collision was revenge for the murder of an Israeli. Thousands took to the streets. In Jabalya, angry mourners pelted the camp's Israeli army outpost with stones. The next day, soldiers answered with bullets, killing a 17-year-old boy. The confrontations spread to the West Bank. As the dialogue of rocks and Molotov cocktails with bullets continued, the Palestinian death count rose.

Out of rage rather than Awad's teachings, at least one of his goals was being achieved. Palestinians' "paralyzing fear" of Israeli authority "was shattered by the children in the streets . . . they defiantly confronted the occupation . . . neutralizing its overwhelming military power by clearly showing that they were ready to die," wrote attorney Jonathan Kuttab, Awad's cousin and supporter, in the spring of 1988.

Some of the fury turned inward. Two months into the uprising, in the West Bank town of Qabatiya, a crowd surrounded the home of a known collaborator with the Israeli

security services. He fired his Israeli-supplied Uzi, killing a four-year-old child. The mob dragged him from his house, strangled him, and hung his body from an electric pole. By the signing of the Oslo Accord in 1993, about 1,000 Palestinians had been murdered as suspected collaborators by their compatriots, according to the Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group—almost as many as were killed by Israeli forces in the same period.

The first Intifada, wrote Mary King at the start of her 2007 book, *A Quiet Revolution*, was "a landslide of primarily nonviolent Palestinian resistance." Only media coverage of previous Palestinian terrorism prevented recognition that "nonviolent strategies of opposition to military occupation characterized the Intifada for more than two years," King argues. One might suspect King of being a Westerner applying a politically correct syllogism: Good guys do not engage in bloodshed; as those living under occupation, the Palestinians are the good guys; ergo, their uprising was nonviolent.

The Israeli response to the first Intifada was a mix of embarrassment and rage. Troops armed with tanks and M-16s were unfit to deal with crowds made up largely of children.

Rather, she has accepted the insider's view. Among Palestinian intellectuals and activists, portraying the first Intifada as nonviolent is reflexive, as obvious as any sharp personal memory. "It depended on popular resistance," says Abdul Munim Wahdan, a 35-year-old Fatah functionary. "The problem was the exaggerated Israeli response." I met Wahdan in Ramallah, the de facto capital of the West Bank. In the local political vocabulary, *popular resistance* means actions of the whole populace, civil disobedience. It is used as a synonym for *nonviolence* and as the antonym of *armed struggle*, conducted by the few. Wahdan, who had just completed his master's degree in regional studies, wore tan slacks and a blue polo shirt and spoke academese. He looked and sounded like a future think-tank staffer. In 1989, when he was a ninth-grader, he was arrested for stone throwing, he told me. The Israeli army sealed his family's house, and he spent the next five years in prison, where he studied for and passed the difficult exams for a local high school diploma.

As with every piece of Israeli-Palestinian history, there are two stories of the uprising. What actually happened bursts the seams of both stories. The Intifada included the fury and something quieter, though just as determined.

By mid-January, 1988, leaflets began appearing regularly, signed by a clandestine Unified National Command (UNC). They designated days for demonstrations and strikes and confronting troops, and which hours shops could be open. In March, the UNC ordered Palestinians who worked for Israel as policemen and tax officials to quit, and shopkeepers to stop collecting sales tax. Nearly all the Palestinian police quit. Tax revenues in the occupied territories dropped 40 percent.

The idea, as described by Sari Nusseibeh, was to end Israeli rule simply by ceasing to obey it, and by building a network of Palestinian committees that would govern instead. Involving everyone, unforgettably altering daily life, this was, in fact, a "popular" rebellion—tired as that term today sounds in English. It stood in singular contrast to the PLO's armed attacks from across the borders. Yet the United Command represented supporters of the various organizations that made up the PLO. Nusseibeh participated in the UNC as a Fatah representative. By fax, the

UNC coordinated its steps with PLO headquarters in Tunis, which "almost immediately" seized the reins of the uprising, says Yezid Sayigh.

The content of each leaflet was negotiated between the groups in the UNC—"between those factions that wished to go to armed revolution . . . and those in Fatah who wanted to maintain this as a civil disobedience campaign," says Nusseibeh. An insider reading the leaflets could see the tension between violent and nonviolent instructions, he says, while an Israeli would see only "Molotov cocktails and knives." Nusseibeh, urbane, silver-haired, now president of Al-Quds University in Jerusalem, reflects for a moment. "It may be more complicated. Maybe I'm hallucinating, maybe you'll find different narratives . . . even on the Fatah side." The revolution, that is, would be remembered as nonviolent to those who wanted it that way.

Let us be precise with terms. The uprising was *unarmed*, if *arms* refers to guns and not to gasoline-filled bottles. The leaders of the uprising were "opposed in principle" to using firearms and explosives, says Yaakov Perry, who was deputy chief of the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, at the start of the Intifada and became head of the agency soon after. The uprising's leaders deliberately sought to turn weakness into political strength, knowing that "in the international arena, Israel could not deal with the picture of the boy holding a rock facing a tank," Perry says. This is close to Gandhian logic, but only close, unless one imagines Gandhi urging followers both to go on strike and to master the slingshot. Unarmed did not mean nonviolent.

From Mubarak Awad's perspective, the uprising came too early. What he had sought to do required "the head and the heart," he says. He had convinced too few people to believe in their hearts. Jonathan Kuttab, who says that on Christian grounds he rejects violence even in self-defense, nonetheless speaks of stone throwing in a tone that wavers between acknowledging historical fact and taking reluctant pride: "It happened in every town, every village, every street. Yes . . . a stone can injure. But when they were rocks thrown at a tank, or a fortified army vehicle, and in fact when enough rocks are thrown that the jeep has to back up and withdraw . . . it was an act of defiance, of empowerment, of symbolism." The hunger for that symbol is a clue to why there has not yet been a Gandhi in Nablus.

So is the Israeli response to the Intifada—a mix of embarrassment and rage. Troops armed with tanks and M-16s were unfit to deal with crowds made up largely of children. In January 1988, the Israel Defense Forces issued truncheons to the soldiers being sent in ever greater numbers to the occupied territories. Clubs were riot-control equipment, a means of restoring order without bullets. Yet Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's public statement that the Intifada would be crushed with "force, might, and beatings" suggested that his actual purpose was to restore the psychological status quo ante: Israeli strength, Palestinian submission.

Along with the riot clubs, the army tried rubber bullets, intended as a way of shooting without killing (used incorrectly, they sometimes did kill). Thousands of Palestinians were jailed. Beit Sahour, a prosperous town south of Jerusalem, became the symbol of the tax strike. In the autumn of 1989, soldiers sealed the town for six weeks as Israeli tax collectors went door to door, seizing household appliances and merchandise. Elias Rishmawi, whose pharmacy in the town was emptied, remembers bitterly that adopting the slogan "no taxation without representation" did not bring American support. The United States vetoed a Security Council resolution condemning the Beit Sahour operation. In the Knesset, describing the operation, Yitzhak Rabin said, "We will teach them a lesson . . . we will not allow this kind of civil disobedience."

Yet inside the government, says Perry, Rabin insisted that the Intifada was "a popular, national uprising. With military means . . . we can turn down the flame, but we can't put it out." The uprising pushed Rabin, and much of Israel, to recognize the Palestinians as a nation. It led to the Oslo Accord, an agreement that, in retrospect, enshrined equal measures of distrust and hope.

As the response to the uprising showed, one of the deepest fissures in Israeli society is in its attitude toward using violence. "Traditional Jewish communities did not use force. . . . That belonged to the other, the gentile, the non-Jewish authorities," says Haifa University historian Motti Golani, author of a book on Israeli attitudes toward force and war. The ideal Jew, he says, was a scholar, not a military hero.

The cracks in that belief can be dated, perhaps, to a 1903 poem, "City of the Killings," by Hayim Nahman Bialik, later regarded as Israel's national poet. Bialik wrote his raging epic after investigating a pogrom in the city of Kishinev, then part of Russia, in which mobs killed nearly 50 Jews. The subject of his wrath is the impotence of his people. In one passage (here in British poet Atar Hadari's stark translation) Bialik describes the gang rape of Jewish women, while,

> under this bench and behind that barrel
> lay husbands, fiancés, brothers, peeping out of holes
> at the flutter of holy bodies under the flesh of donkeys . . .
> they lay in their shame and saw—and didn't move and
> didn't budge.

The "descendants of the Maccabees, the great grandchildren of lions," he wrote, hid in "the out house, the pig pen, and the other places smeared with s—." God can't explain the deaths, and martyrdom is a farce.

Golani argues that until the 1930s, the Zionist community in Palestine still largely regarded military force as a solution of last resort. That attitude remained dominant even as the community organized for self-defense. But the antithetical view already existed. It equated passivity with shame, and power with pride.

Two events shifted the balance, making the new view the mainstream. The first was the Holocaust. It gave Jews the feeling, Golani says, that "I am the ultimate victim, [so] I can't be the aggressor." Whatever Jews did, it was in self-defense. Immediately after came Israel's victory in the 1948 war of independence. Using military power now appeared effective as well as morally correct. Henceforth, one's Israeliness "was measured by one's ability to fight," Golani says. An Israeli, that is, was the opposite of a Jew. The ideal Israelis were fighters, and the national martyrs were fallen soldiers.

Yet the Jewish distaste for violence persisted, locked in a strange embrace with the belief in force. In a 1978 book, *Tin Soldiers on Jerusalem Beach*, Israeli psychologist Amia Lieblich described a young Israeli man in a group therapy session. He talks about a recurring dream of being with his parents, before his own birth, in their home in Poland, as German soldiers pound the door. "The knocking is the most frightening sound I have ever heard. You have to kick the door with your nailed boots and rap it with the butt of your gun to get the right blend. . . . When I was on a patrol searching for Arab terrorists in an Arab village, I was the one to knock like that on doors." In the dream, he says, "Outside the door I am a man . . . I have a rifle and lots of ammunition. I am with my unit, we are together. We are the victors," wearing Gestapo uniforms. He is horrified both by being strong and being the victim. If the whole country could have been put on the couch, it might have spoken like this.

The Palestinian uprising that began in 1987 exposed the contradiction. Palestinians were challenging Israeli power. And as political scientist Ezrahi puts it, "Israelis see themselves as ontological victims," under attack simply because they are Jews. There was enough Palestinian violence to arouse that fear: Molotov cocktails thrown at Israeli cars, civilians stabbed in Israeli cities. Even boys hurling stones at soldiers could elicit opposite feelings: The imbalance of power was terribly disturbing, but the fury in the boys' faces said they wanted Jews dead.

The IDF answered with force—less than it would use against an army, more than could be justified practically or ethically against civilians. Footage of soldiers beating Palestinians violated Israeli's faith in their "purity of arms," the Jewish army's code of moral restraint. The uprising undermined Israeli trust in military power—even as the Israeli crackdown undermined Palestinian hopes for "popular resistance."

The uprising was a missed chance. It was not a Gandhian revolt, but it hinted at what a nonviolent Palestinian strategy could, and might yet, achieve, if followed strictly. News photos of demonstrators refusing to lift their hands against soldiers' blows could have aroused "the moral sensibilities of post-Holocaust Jews," as Ezrahi puts it. That is, they had the potential to arouse horror among Jews of being the victimizer rather than the victim.

Tactics speak more strongly than negotiating positions, as the return to arms after Oslo showed. A bomb in a Tel Aviv disco told Israelis that Palestinians want them eradicated. The rocket fire from Gaza is heard the same way. Pure nonviolence could tell Israelis that Palestinians are willing to live next to them. It just might exert what Sari Nusseibeh has called "gravitational pull" toward reconciliation.

That said, absolute nonviolence is a terribly unfair standard to demand of those on the other side—the weaker side—of a conflict, even if it has a potential of being politically effective. And here lies another problem: The promise of mere political effectiveness may be too little to convince people to march unarmed toward troops or to fast unto death or simply to put down their stones. Both Gandhi and King based themselves on spiritual doctrines. Understandably so: To stand before someone and say, "You can kill me, but it is more important to me to overcome my desire to strike you than to overcome *you*," is arguably to make one's spiritual purity the ultimate goal, even more important than stopping an injustice. For this reason, both Gandhi and King were radical even within their own traditions. Is *that* kind of radicalism imaginable in Islam?

Sheikh Yazid Khader's deep, oratorical voice rolls from a speakerphone lying on a table in a Ramallah café, as if from a mosque loudspeaker. It's early evening. The café is known as a Fatah hangout; I'd come earlier to meet a Fatah legislator. Khader, a spokesman for Hamas in the West Bank, feared arrest by the Fatah-controlled Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and was unwilling to meet face-to-face.

"The Palestinian people put out their hands for peace," he says. "But in exchange the Israelis have only appropriated land and built settlements . . . and have built the wall. This enemy is trying to ban us from breathing. How can we face this occupation with flowers?" The only solution, he says, is "violent resistance, which we call jihad." Those who criticize the "militarizing" of the second Intifada (meaning, in local argot, the use of terror attacks) "do not understand our religion."

Asked about the prohibition in Islamic law on attacking noncombatants, he answers, "When Palestinians can come back to their lands and villages, we will have no problems with Israelis or Jews." It's a soundbite of rigid nationalism,

offered in place of reasoning. Asked if the Islamic ban on suicide applies to "martyrdom operations," meaning suicide bombings, Khader again skirts the law to talk about the need develop new "modes of resistance." As for the internecine Palestinian fighting, he says jihad is aimed at Zionists alone. But "traitors, collaborators, and conspirators who help the occupation" must be punished.

"That man is stupid," comes a loud voice from the next table as the sheikh hangs up. "Just stupid." The speaker is a groomed, gray-haired man with a laptop who turns out to be Salah Soubani, an official in the Palestinian Authority's education ministry. He looks surprised at his own outburst. "I agree with that man, the sheikh, about what Israel does in Palestine, but we have to think," he says, because Israel wants Palestinians to abandon their country. The second Intifada produced just that result, he argues, pointing to the report he is reviewing on his computer. It shows that first-grade enrollment in Palestinian schools dropped over 8 percent between 2000 and 2006. In Soubani's reading that means families emigrating. (Another possible reading is parents keeping children home in violent times.)

The sheikh "doesn't represent all Palestinians," Soubani insists, then shifts his argument. "There is no tolerance in our culture. . . . A Gandhi—in our culture there is no room. Muslim culture says that if you injure my eye, I injure your eye," he says, "We need a revolution in our culture."

The scene is an unrehearsed set piece: Westernized technocrat versus hardline Islamic cleric. They agree on Israel's transgressions, disagree on how to respond—and agree, strikingly, that Islam is the obstacle to the emergence of a Palestinian Gandhi. Khader's movement, Hamas, was born during the first Intifada. It called for an Islamic state, but also for uncompromising Palestinian nationalism. Khader, speaking the movement's slogans, is the voice of the public, politicized Islam of our day and not only in the West Bank and Gaza.

In the late 1980s, Hamas emerged, 'using Islamic language and painting violence in Islamic terms.' Politics was transmuted into theology; Palestine and armed resistance became sacred, absolute values.

But is that the same as the religion itself? When I first met Mubarak Awad's disciple Nafez Assaily, he held up his hand, with his thumb and forefinger together, his other fingers extended, and showed me that together they spelled "Allah" in Arabic. "His name is in our hands," said Assaily, who now quietly runs an educational center on nonviolence in Hebron, a city known among Palestinians for its arch-conservative Islamic ambience. "I teach children to see Allah in everyone, even in those who are fighting you," Assaily said. "It doesn't mean you have to give up, but you must resist nonviolently, [so as] not to hurt Allah in that human being." Perhaps Assaily is unorthodox; certainly he lacks the foot soldiers that Hamas has enlisted.

One must be balanced, says Gilles Kepel, which means neither "to be essentialist . . . and say Islam *equals* violence" nor to say that "Islam is perfectly flexible." Kepel, author of the *War for Muslim Minds*, is chairman of Middle East Studies at the Institute of Political Studies in Paris and a world expert on politicized Islam. To step out of the tangle of Israel and Palestine in my search for the missing Gandhi, to listen to distance-accented analysis, I had traveled to Paris to meet Kepel and his protégé,

Bernard Rougier, author of the book *Everyday Jihad*.

Originally, Kepel stresses, Islam was a minor overtone in Palestinian nationalism, which began as "a variation on an anti-imperialist theme." The slogan "Palestine will win!" belonged to the same lexicon as "Vietnam will win!" Until the late 1980s, Palestinian Islamicists stayed out of politics—indeed, were "coopted by the Israeli state as a counter fire against the PLO." Only then did Hamas emerge, "using Islamic language and painting violence in Islamic terms." Politics was transmuted into theology; Palestine and armed resistance became sacred, absolute values.

The process had begun earlier, elsewhere. Ali Shariati, one of the intellectual fathers of the Iranian revolution, produced a Farsi version of the *Wretched of the Earth*—Martinique-born psychiatrist Frantz Fanon's 1961 treatise on decolonialization, which anointed "absolute violence" as the means of ending colonial rule—soon after its publication. "When Fanon spoke of the 'oppressed' versus the 'oppressor,'" Kepel explains, Shariati "would translate it into Islamic parlance—*mustad'afin* [the disinherited], a Koranic term, and *mustakbirin*, 'arrogant,' which is also Koranic." Ayatollah Khomeini wove these old-new terms into his speeches. In the French original, Fanon's book bore a breathless preface by Jean-Paul Sartre, who wrote that "The rebel's weapon is proof of his humanity." Rendered in Islamic parlance, Fanon inspired a new set of rebels.

Armed struggle galvanized the support of Palestinians and transformed the PLO into a state without territory. It failed miserably at liberating Palestinian territory.

Religion, says Rougier, "is a box where you can find all sorts of tools to legitimize your strategy." From there, a process begins. "If you commit a violent action, your act creates a precedent. A precedent crystallizes as a rule and may inspire other people. . . . It belongs now to the tradition of Islam." Terrorism has been elevated to ritual, a testimony to faith.

But not every tool is available in a particular religion, Kepel suggests. In India, Gandhi behaved as a *sadhu*, a Hindu ascetic "who sacrifices all of his worldly passions for the supreme goal," Kepel asserts. "His political grammar was new, the vocabulary he used was old." Islam, he implies, lacks an equivalent model for nonviolent self-sacrifice.

No, Islamic scholar Mustafa Abu Sway tells me when I return to Jerusalem. The model is in the Koran itself. It is the son of Adam, who knows his brother will kill him, and says, "It is not for me to stretch my hand against you to slay you." The Koran adds those words to the biblical account of the world's first murder. But it leaves out the names Cain and Abel, speaking only of "the sons of Adam," which is also Arabic for *human beings*. The story thereby becomes a parable, timeless and universal, for choosing death over self-defense.

On the basis of that passage, Abu Sway explains, Syrian philosopher Jawdat Said wrote his treatise on nonviolent political reform, the *Path of Adam's Son*, published in 1966. Said, now 78, was educated at Al-Azhar University. In the 1960s and 1970s, he was jailed repeatedly in Syria and dismissed from a series of teaching posts. In a rare essay published in English, Said explained the meaning of Abel's statement as "I will not make my death validate killing." Had Abel responded with violence, he would have legitimated it. Instead, by refusing to defend himself, Abel makes killing "vile even in [Cain's] eyes." Such is the effect of pacifism in our world, Said argued: "For while soldiers conceive of success in combat as heroic . . . the killing of those who do not defend themselves is seen as a grisly murder." This, surely, is Gandhi's "political grammar" expressed in Islamic vocabulary.

Abu Sway adduces a second model for spiritual resistance, and a more surprising one. It is the prophet Muhammad himself, who "practiced nonviolence in Mecca. In fact, not only nonviolence, he was passive." For the first 13 years of Muhammad's prophetic career, "he endured the most severe persecution, he and his followers," without responding. In Abu Sway's telling, only when Muhammad finally fled to Medina, at the age of 53, did he become a warrior: an unwilling one, defending himself against the Meccans who pursued him. Reilluminated this way—the Mecca years in the brightly lit foreground, the Medina years of conflict in shadows, the conquests veiled in black—the prophet's life is still not quite a paradigm of absolute pacifism. Self-defense is permitted, but only as a final resort for the long-suffering. Armed jihad is an allowance, not an ideal.

In an online essay written around the time that the second Intifada erupted in 2000, Abu Sway went a step further. Early Muslim armies, he explained, were warned not to harm women, children, or the elderly. "Within its own historical context," he wrote, this was a "sublime standard." But once technological advances in weaponry made it impossible to avoid killing civilians, "I believe that war in itself could not be justified anymore." It is a classic gambit for a change within a tradition whose founding text is presumed perfect and unchanging:

The prophet was not wrong to wage war, but circumstances make it impossible to do so today. As for fighting occupation, Abu Sway concludes, "Mahatma Gandhi proved that it is possible to gain independence through nonviolence."

It does not matter terribly if historians, not to mention the proponents of armed jihad, might fault Abu Sway's biography of Muhammad—for leaving out the prophet's battles with the Jewish tribes of Medina, for instance. Religious traditions come blessed with contradiction. The Hebrew Bible declares in the Book of Isaiah that "in the days to come . . . they will beat their swords into plowshares." In the Book of Joel it proclaims, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears." For the individual believer, there is an "essential" Islam, Judaism, or Christianity constructed by taking one part of the tradition as obvious truth, interpreting others in its light. Seen from the outside, a religion is only a set of possibilities.

Abu Sway is mainstream enough to have lectured weekly for three years at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, but he is also clearly in the minority. He was introduced to the idea of the Meccan Muhammad in the 1980s, he tells me, at a lecture at Mubarak Awad's Palestinian Center for the Study of Nonviolence by Iraqi-born, London-based writer Khalid Kishtainy, a longtime advocate of "jihad in which no blood is shed, no children are killed." Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Gandhi's ally in India, also cited the tradition of the prophet in Mecca as his model for ending British rule. In a village in the hills south of Bethlehem, an earnest young Muslim schoolteacher involved in organizing protests against construction of the Israeli security fence tells me that "our prophet engaged in nonviolence in the early years of his prophecy." If the idea is in the toolbox of Islam, Sheikh Yazid Khader's tools appear to get more use.

The reason for Palestinian violence, Abu Sway argues, "is contextual, not textual." The text is Islam, the context is occupation. "There is no equality between oppressors and oppressed, occupiers and occupied," he has written. "Violence is linear with a specific historical beginning." In simpler words, he is asserting that Israel has oppressed Palestinians and bears responsibility for the bloodshed. The argument allows Abu Sway to reject violence while maintaining his Palestinian allegiance, but it is too pat. Israeli-Palestinian history is a tangle, not a line, with guilt enough for both sides. And context includes ideas. In the context of British India and Gandhi's leadership, Khan made Islam a faith of nonviolence. The context of the Palestinian struggle for independence is adulation of armed revolution. To go back a step further, the context is the refugees who populate Ghassan Kanafani's stories.

Kanafani, a pioneer of Palestinian literature, was killed along with his niece when his car exploded in Beirut in 1972. The bombing is usually attributed to the Mossad. In his day job, Kanafani was the spokesman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Among the competing Palestinian organizations, the PFLP had taken the lead in "external operations," meaning airplane hijackings and other acts of international terrorism. A few weeks before his death, the PFLP took responsibility for sending three members of the Japanese Red Army into Israel's Lod Airport, where they killed 26 people.

Unable to visit Kanafani, I revisit his best-known work, the novella *Men in the Sun*. The story, published in 1963, tells of three Palestinian refugees trying to reach Kuwait to find work. They are men of small hopes: to build a shack to live in, to buy a couple of olive saplings, to send money home to a mother in a refugee camp. A smuggler named Abul Khaizuran agrees to take them across the border from Basra, in Iraq, into Kuwait inside the tank of his water truck. Abul Khaizuran fought the Jews in 1948; unknown to his passengers, he quite literally lost his manhood in battle.

At the border post, an official delays Abul Khaizuran endlessly, ribbing him about a dancer with whom he supposedly spends his nights in Basra. Inside the tank, his three passengers wait in unbearable heat, and silently die. Afterward Abul Khaizuran dumps their bodies in the desert, shouting, "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you say anything? Why?" In its controlled prose, Kanafani's story has much the same message as Bialik's raging "City of the Killings": Passivity turns victimhood into shame.

In 1972, the year of Kanafani's death, his novella was made into a film, with a change in the ending: Now the three men pound against the walls of the tanker. True, they still die, but they struggle loudly against their fate. The original dénouement, Kanafani's translator wrote, "would have appeared glaringly incongruous" after the establishment of the "resistance movements"—Fatah, PFLP, and the other armed Palestinian groups that seized the world's attention in the late 1960s.

The story, and the change in ending, allude to much of what drove Kanafani and his comrades in arms. "At last you have found the way to make our voice heard in all the world," said new recruits joining the Black September Organization in 1971, according to a member of the group quoted in Yezid Sayigh's *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*. Those few words could be the epigraph to Sayigh's study.

In Sayigh's description, the impact of the Nakba—the "Catastrophe" of 1948—was not only that over half the Palestinian population became landless in the personal sense. As a national community, the Palestinians were stateless and voiceless. They lived under Israeli, Jordanian, Egyptian,

Lebanese, and Syrian rule. The Arab states, no less than Israel, were interested in treating them as refugees, not as an independent political force. A Palestinian government formed in the Gaza Strip in 1948 was boycotted by Arab governments, who did not want to lose a force for instability.

From then on, Sayigh argues, Palestinian politics was defined by the effort to build a virtual state, an organization that would speak for Palestinians and make them an autonomous actor in world affairs even before it undid the Catastrophe and took back their land. The means to accomplish all this was "armed struggle"—creating the resistance movements and attacking Israel. Armed struggle galvanized the support of Palestinians themselves and transformed the PLO into a state without territory. It forced the Arabs and the world to accept the PLO as "the sole legitimate representative" of the Palestinians, even if it failed miserably at liberating Palestinian territory.

"Sometimes these [things] don't appear as choices. It's not as if someone said armed struggle is instrumentally useful. . . . It was obvious. It was maybe what young men do," Sayigh carefully explains when we meet in person, in his office at the Department of War Studies at King's College in London. Sayigh, now 54, grew up in Beirut, but left after the Israeli invasion in 1982. He is thin and tall, his gray hair and beard so trimmed they seem only like nuances, his slacks pressed, his shirt white, his English exact: a man who aspires to precision as he studies chaotic events. In the late 1950s and the 1960s, he stresses, "If you were a young man and you wanted to act against what you saw as occupation, the most obvious thing to do was to look at what other Third World peoples were doing." It was the time of "the Algerian war of independence . . . Vietnam, Cuba, the Bay of Pigs. This was the world."

Frantz Fanon provided inspiration, with his promise that "violence unifies the people" and that it "frees the native from his inferiority complex" and "restores self-respect." In one of its first pamphlets, Fatah published much of the *Wretched of the Earth* in translation. From the Cuban revolution, Fatah took the idea of military action as propaganda. It sought "a spectacular operation that would arrest the attention of the Israelis, Palestinians, Arab regimes and world public opinion," as one leader of the movement later wrote.

At the end of 1964, Fatah began launching raids into Israel. After the Arab defeat in June 1967, Fatah "field commander" Yasser Arafat slipped into the West Bank. The inspiration was now Mao. With Israel directly ruling a large Palestinian population, Fatah's guerrillas "would move among the people as a fish swims in the sea," spark an insurrection, liberate areas of the West Bank, and declare the founding of a Palestinian entity. The grandiose dream fizzled; Israel quickly arrested hundreds of Fatah activists, and Arafat escaped to Jordan.

Afterward, Fatah and other groups stepped up attacks from across the border, sometimes clashing with Israeli soldiers, often targeting civilians. The turning point was March 1968, when the Israeli army launched a major operation against the town and refugee camp of Karameh in Jordan, where Fatah was based. The Jordanian army and the Palestinians put up a stiff fight, and the battle was a costly Israeli victory. For Fatah, the triumph was that it stood, fought, and drew blood. Thousands of young Palestinian men signed up for the resistance groups. Arafat exploited the "victory" to become head of the PLO.

Suddenly, pride replaced the stain of refugeehood. To be Palestinian meant being a *fidai*, a guerrilla, the new hero of an Arab world starved for heroes after the defeat of 1967. Fatah radio, wrote Sayigh, played songs with lines such as "the Palestinian people is a revolution, take my blood O revolution and give me victories." In a new ritual, posters appeared on the streets showing each *shahid*, or martyr, who fell—the religious term borrowed for nationalist purposes.

Militarily, the PLO was a failure. Jordan's King Hussein drove the organization out of its base in his country in 1970. In 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon and forced the PLO into a further exile in Tunis. This record only makes its symbolic successes more remarkable. By October 1974, the Arab League appointed the PLO to represent the Palestinians diplomatically. Two weeks later Arafat spoke before the U.N. General Assembly, treated as a head of state. He declared that diplomacy was an "enhancement" of armed struggle—an explanation to his constituency of why he should use diplomacy at all.

By the time Mubarak Awad began preaching nonviolence in the 1980s, Sayigh says, the idea that the PLO alone spoke for Palestinians was "established truth." And even if few Palestinians in the occupied territories had ever tried to participate in armed struggle, the myth held sway. Awad was challenging the very basics of Palestinian identity. When he suggested that he was only rejecting violence tactically, not in principle, he diluted his own message without gaining support.

Afterward, when the first Intifada erupted, the pro-PLO leadership grasped the advantage of spurning guns. But it could only go so far. The "children of the stones" filled the role of Palestinians as fighters, rebels against their fate. The need for a symbol of defiance outweighed any advantage that a Gandhian strategy could provide.

Even so, by first moderating its tactics and then by accepting the idea of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza alone, the PLO opened up space for a competitor. Hamas entered the political arena as the heir of armed struggle and of the Palestinian claim to the entire land.

The movement, a sympathetic Palestinian scholar wrote at the time, was "transforming Islam . . . into a liberation theology." The key word in that sentence is "transform." After the Oslo agreement—and the 1994 massacre carried out by Baruch Goldstein in Hebron—Hamas embraced suicide bombings as the means of sabotaging diplomacy. To do so, it had to alter its religious understanding of the ban on suicide, so that blowing oneself up in a crowd of civilians became martyrdom.

When the Oslo process collapsed, both Israel and the Palestinians reflexively reverted to force. The day after Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000, Israeli police used live fire against Palestinian rioters at the site, killing four people. The new Intifada was born. Despite some revisionist accounts, Palestinians used firearms virtually from the start. By the third night, Palestinian gunmen "were shooting from outside my apartment in Ramallah," recalls Sayigh, who was then living in the West Bank town as a consultant to Palestinian negotiators. Hamas took the lead in suicide attacks inside Israel. By 2002 the Fatah-linked, loosely organized Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade had followed suit. "When the Al-Aqsa Brigades started engaging in the Hamas mode . . . of suicide attacks, it embarrassed the Palestinian Authority" in the diplomatic realm, says Palestinian Legislative Council member Nasser Juma'a. But "on the popular level, the Palestinian street accepted these measures."

Juma'a, 42, is a former leader of the Al-Aqsa Brigades in Nablus who now represents Fatah in the Palestinian legislature. Meeting me in Ramallah, he spoke just above a whisper, as if still concerned that the walls might listen. Juma'a says he opposed attacks inside Israel, because "they served Israeli extreme policies." It was not the only argument he lost. When Israeli troops swept into Nablus in 2002, he said, "Our fighters decided to take the Old City of Nablus as our base. I argued that this would be lethal to us." The Israeli goal, he told his fellows, was "to kill or arrest us. . . . We should not put ourselves in cages. The Old City is like a cage." But everyone else wanted to stay, so Juma'a did as well. "They did not want to escape confrontation or hide or disappear." In Juma'a's account, "a hundred men were killed in two days." Listening, I thought of Kanafani's story: For Juma'a's comrades, pounding the walls was worth even more than escape.

Neither Palestinians nor Israelis are unusual for using deadly weapons to achieve political goals, or for making warriors into heroes. What may make Palestinians and Israelis stand out is the overwhelming place of victimhood in their national memories. In very different ways, the experience of powerlessness made picking up the gun a goal for both—an end, not just a means.

Sami Awad leads 150 protesters toward the security fence. They push against the shields, scuffle, and fail to break through. They sit on the road, backs to the police in a gesture intended as defiance, then walk home.

Yet even by the coldest calculations of realpolitik, the use of force has led to a dead end. Israel suppressed the second Intifada, but remains entangled in the West Bank. When Ariel Sharon decided to leave Gaza, he insisted on doing so unilaterally, as an act of Israeli will, rather than taking the opportunity to renew peace negotiations. Sharon marketed the pullout domestically as "disengagement," making it a

military operation: One disengages from the enemy in war. As critics on the right and left had warned in advance, Hamas took credit for driving Israel out by armed struggle. Despite all the military power Israel used in last winter's campaign, it was unable to stop the rocket fire from the Strip.

Still, the Palestinians face a breakdown at least as deep. The armed uprising left them impoverished, without freedom of movement. The Palestinian Authority, the first fragile step toward sovereignty, was shattered. After 2000, says Sayigh, the use of guns dismantled exactly what it once created—"a shared idea of what it is to be a Palestinian" and any institutions that embodied that identity.

"The values to which people cling most stubbornly under inappropriate conditions are those . . . that were previously the source of their greatest triumphs," Jared Diamond wrote in his book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Diamond was speaking of ecological catastrophes, but his thesis fits the Palestinian political collapse. Even to conduct negotiations successfully with Israel, the Palestinians need a means other than arms to create pressure and "gravitational pull." If once-sacred values have failed, the time seems ripe for a heresy. Perhaps, at last, there could be the opening for nonviolence.

Here and there in the West Bank are people who want to seize that opening. If wider change eventually comes, they may be counted as its harbingers. In Hebron, Nafez Assaily runs a library on wheels, which lends children's books on Gandhi and Martin Luther King. One morning I watch him lecture in the small town of Idna. Eighteen housewives and college students have shown up. Assaily explains that the people whom Palestinians see as "freedom fighters, international opinion sees as terrorists." The Israeli army, he says, "is well trained to confront armed people, not unarmed people." Yet Assaily makes it clear that he is not condemning the use of arms. When Arafat spoke at the U.N., he held a gun in one hand, an olive branch in the other, Assaily recalls, adding, "Neither hand cancels the other." Afterward he explains his hedging to me, "If I say I am against armed struggle, it means I am not a good Palestinian."

On a Friday afternoon at the village of Artas, south of Bethlehem, I watch Sami Awad lead 150 protesters toward the security fence being built around the settlement of Efrat. The plan is to hold a sit-in in one of the village's orchards recently uprooted to make way for the fence. Sami, the nephew of Mubarak Awad, has been preaching his uncle's message for several years around Bethlehem. On the dirt road to the orchard, a line of paramilitary border police with plastic riot shields blocks the march. The protestors push against the shields, scuffle, and fail to break through. They sit on the road, backs to the police in a gesture intended as defiance, then walk home. The impassioned call to keep pushing, or to fast to the death on the road, or in some other way capture the media's attention is missing. The protests continue ritually each Friday.

Other villages have tried similar protests against the fence, aiming for nonviolence, hewing with less than success to that ideal. Until now, a mass movement dedicated to a Palestinian version of *satyagraha* has not arisen in answer to political despair. It has not seized the mainstream, turning a terror attack or rocket firing into a violation of political consensus.

What is lacking, Mustafa Abu Sway tells me, is a "charismatic leader," the figure who pulls crowds after him. (He is not nominating himself.) The great-man theory of history has been maligned, but he is right. Historical processes create opportunities, but it matters who seizes them. Segregation was ready to crack in 1955, but if Martin Luther King had previously accepted an academic position teaching theology rather than a pulpit in Montgomery, nonviolence might never have been part of the civil rights movement. King was a preacher and a preacher's son, an aristocrat of an intensely religious society. Taylor Branch, in his vast biography, *Parting the Waters*, notes that when King was a divinity student, "his peers so admired his preaching technique that they packed the chapel" when he gave the student sermon. The brilliance of the individual cannot be explained by the blind processes of history. Rather, it shapes them.

At the end of a search for a missing man, I can imagine him. Earlier in his life, he would have believed in armed struggle. He would have acted on that belief and served time in an Israeli jail—so that he fit the myth before he sought to change it and so that his own life embodies what he asks of his followers. Ideally, he would belong to a prominent clan—perhaps the Husseinis of Jerusalem or the al-Masris of Nablus. He would be committed to nonviolence as a moral principle and would say so rather than describing it only as an effective means. Without the commitment, sticking to the tactic is hard. And for a leader to speak with the passion that makes people follow, he needs to say what he really believes. He would be a gifted orator and organizer. Knowing that the audience for his public drama included Israelis, he would threaten their preconceptions by showing he could keep Palestinians from threatening their lives.

The first Israeli reaction to his acts of defiance could well be massive force. Yet if he stuck absolutely to nonviolent means, he could awaken a political storm in Israel. Today's radical Islamicists would attack him, but Islam itself could provide the language to move people. His greatest challenge would be to redefine what it means to be a Palestinian. In a time of despair, like the current time, that might be possible.

I can imagine Sheikh Nasser a-Din al-Masri. The position is open. So far, no one has appeared to fill it. ♦

American Muslims Commend FBI for Rejection of CAIR

THIRTY YEARS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE IRANIAN revolution and 29 years since the first Islamist murder in the U.S.—that of 'Ali Akbar Tabataba'i in a Washington, D.C., suburb. More than seven years ago, America received a wake-up call, on September 11, 2001, about radical Islam. However straightforwardly evil these events, they left U.S. authorities mostly baffled by extremism among American Muslims.

One disturbing example of this confusion has involved the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR).

Almost from CAIR'S founding in 1994, the FBI has worked with the organization, which successfully presented itself as the "Muslim NAACP," letting CAIR train bureau personnel and serve as a liaison to the American Muslim community. CAIR concentrated on terror-related law enforcement such as sensitivity in investigating extremist suspects and allegations of profiling.

Now, at last, the FBI-CAIR relationship has changed.

In a letter dated March 9, 2009, FBI Assistant Director John Miller wrote to U.S. Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va) confirming that the bureau has "suspended any formal engagement with Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) field offices around the country." He explained that this adjustment "comes in part as a result of evidence gathered through FBI investigation and presented in connection with the Holy Land Foundation trial. CAIR was listed as an unindicted co-conspirator in that case."

Miller referred to the Holy Land Foundation, or HLF, having been convicted of terror financing in November 2008.

CAIR and its allies in the "Wahhabi lobby" reacted aggressively to the FBI's decision to distance itself from CAIR. Ten extremist Muslim groups announced on March 17, 2009, that they are "considering suspending outreach relations with the FBI" based on vague claims that "American mosques and Muslim groups have been targeted." CAIR's supporters included American Muslims for Palestine, the Islamic Circle of North America, and the Muslim Students Association, as well as the leading pro-Iranian Muslim element in America, the Islamic Educational Center of Orange County, Ca.

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED AMERICAN MUSLIMS, have long known the true character of CAIR and its allies. Therefore:

- We observe that they denounce "terrorism" in general terms but not the specific actions of Islamist groups like Hamas or Hezbollah. They denounce violence but not the ideologies behind it.
- We observe their commitment to radical aims, their attempts to chill free speech by calling critics of radical Islam "Islamophobes," and their false, ugly accusations against moderate American Muslims who disagree with their agenda.
- We reject any claim that CAIR and its supporters are legitimate civil liberties advocates or appropriate partners between the U.S. government and American Muslims.
- We congratulate the FBI for adopting a firmer attitude toward CAIR, as a defense of Americans of all faiths from the menace of radical Islam, including Muslims of all backgrounds—Sunni, Shia, Sufi, secular, etc.
- We call on the U.S. Department of Justice to affirm and continue this decision.
- We call on the entire United States government to follow suit in rejecting relations with the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Dr. Kemal Silay, *President, Center for Islamic Pluralism, www.islamicpluralism.org*
Supna Zaidi, *Assistant Director, Islamist Watch, www.islamist-watch.org*
M. Zuhdi Jasser, *American Islamic Forum for Democracy, www.aifdemocracy.org*
Imaad Malik, *Fellow, Center for Islamic Pluralism*
Dr. Ahmed Subhy Mansour, *International Quranic Center, www.ahl-alquran.com*
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Nawab Agha Mousvi, *American Muslim Congress and Center for Islamic Pluralism*
Kiran Sayyed, *Council for Democracy and Tolerance, http://cfdnt.com/*
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Center for Islamic Pluralism

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George Santayana, 1944

Alive in the Mind

Santayana's world is a reasonable place.

BY JAMES SEATON

George Santayana (1863-1952) was not only one of the great American philosophers, he was also an important presence in American intellectual life throughout the first half of the 20th century. Today those who know more about Santayana than one or two quotations usually associate him with *The Life of Reason* (1905-6), a five-volume exposition of human culture in the light of a conception of reason not as natural law but as "interest in harmony." Bringing society, religion, art, and science—all of culture—before what he called "the court of reason," *The Life of Reason* stands as a summation marking its author as one of the most significant thinkers of his time. But for Santayana himself it was only a beginning.

He went on to originate the concept of "the genteel tradition" and analyzed it in *The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy* (1911) with a precision that eluded most later commentators who picked up the phrase only to use it as a blunt instrument against what Mencken called the "booboisie." Santayana expanded his analysis beyond philosophy in *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920), a study of American culture worthy of comparison to *Democracy in America*. In the 1930s he wrote a bestselling novel, *The Last Puritan* (1936), while working on *Realms of Being* (1927-40), the four-volume work he considered his true philosophical summa.

The Letters of George Santayana
Volume V, Books 1-8
edited by
William G. Holzberger, et al.
MIT Press

In the forties he again hit the best-seller lists with his autobiography *Persons and Places* (1944), and published two major works on religion and politics, respectively: *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* (1946) and *Dominations and Powers* (1950).

Santayana began *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, his book-length introduction to *Realms of Being*, with the proud declaration that he stood "in philosophy exactly where I stand in daily life," in pointed contrast to the philosophical idealists who, anticipating the postmodernists, rejected material reality in their books but acknowledged it in their lives. Yet Santayana, an adamant materialist or naturalist, argued that human beings could find their highest and most satisfying fulfillment in "immaterial objects and harmonies" such as "affection, speculation, religion, and all the forms of the beautiful." His seminal lecture on

James Seaton, professor of English at Michigan State, is the editor of a new edition of Santayana's The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy *and* Character and Opinion in the United States *(Yale).*

GEORGE SILK / TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

The Genteel Tradition ends with a call to "be content to live in the mind" since "what you can do avails little materially, and in the end nothing."

In *Character and Opinion in the United States*, observing that Americans "usually say that thought is for the sake of action," he replied that "reflection is itself a turn, and the top turn, given to life." The change of heart, or *metanoia*, Santayana underwent in his thirties left him, he wrote in his autobiography, with an awareness that "to possess things and persons in idea is the only pure good to be got out of them; to possess them physically or legally is a burden and a snare." Santayana's letters leave little doubt that such sentiments were not only his "official" philosophy but also his way of life. What makes the letters so interesting, however, is not only Santayana's intellectual integrity but the range of emotions and attitudes compatible with that integrity.

From the viewpoint of a philosophy that places a higher value on the idea of a person than on the person in the flesh, physical death is a relatively unimportant occurrence, especially if the same philosophy believes that human beings should "be content to live in the mind." In a 1901 letter to a young friend, Lawrence Butler, he employs this philosophy to offer a moving consolation on the death of Butler's father:

> This is an irreparable loss for you but not a bitter one. . . . The world is so ordered that we must, in a material sense, lose everything we have and love. . . . The truly unfortunate are those persons . . . who have never known anything worth living for, any noble and natural characters. . . . But those who have known such things and grown like them can never be truly unhappy.

Santayana did not believe in God or immortality any more than Nietzsche or the existentialists did, but unlike them he was not traumatized by the resulting view of the universe and human life—and death. In a 1914 letter (written before the outbreak of World War I) Santayana supposes that, even without belief in immortality, human beings are capable "of accepting death gladly" without losing interest in the "career of the race after them." Santayana comments in a 1949 letter that he finds it hard to sympathize with existentialist *Angst* "as if it were unnatural to exist, to have bones in your body, eyes in your head, and accidental occasions for knocking about in the world. It is all natural, stale, and a matter of course, and not anything to be 'anxious' about." Commenting on the death of an old friend in a 1941 letter, he reflected that "the death of Mrs. Toy is sad, but only as all death is sad. . . . I shouldn't want to live longer myself, except for unfinished or unrevised books that I should like to leave in order."

On other occasions the same philosophic view of death is used to rationalize what seems mere cynicism, as in his 1917 letter to Bertrand Russell about the destruction of the war: "As for deaths and loss of capital, I don't much care. The young men killed would grow older if they lived, and then they would be good for nothing; and after being good for nothing for a number of years they would die of catarrh or a bad kidney or the halter or old age—and would that be less horrible?"

Quite possibly Santayana exaggerated his lack of concern about the war dead to underline the contrast between Russell's utopian pacifism and his own realism. (The essays in *Soliloquies in England*, like the sonnets of its prologue, *A Premonition*, *The Undergraduate Killed in Battle*, and *The Darkest Hour*, reveal a Santayana who cared a great deal.) His 1913 essay "The Philosophy of Mr. Bertrand Russell" demonstrates, politely but definitively, the extent to which Russell's "estrangement from reality" renders his ethics, logical though they may be, irrelevant to human life. He quotes Russell's proof of the folly of egoism: "It is, indeed, so evident that it is better to secure a greater good for *A* than a lesser good for *B*, that it is hard to find any still more evident principle by which to prove this. And if *A* happens to be some one else, and *B* to be myself, that cannot affect the question, since it is irrelevant to the general question who *A* and *B* may be."

Irrelevant, that is, until one deals with actual human beings in life rather than on paper with *A* and *B*. Santayana notes that the world Russell's logic ignores includes "the inertia of nature, the ferocity of beasts, the optimism of mystics, and the selfishness of men and nations." As he observes in a 1913 letter, he and Russell had very different goals as philosophers: "He wants certainty, and the narrowest deepest possible foundations for thought; I want judicious opinions and a just balance in the imagination." In 1939 he wrote that Russell's union of clarity and certainty allowed him to perform a valuable service for philosophy—though not the kind Russell himself believed he was providing:

> He is a born heretic or genial madman, like John Knox or Giordano Bruno: yet he is preternaturally intelligent, penetrating, and radical; so that the more wrong he is the clearer he makes the wrongness of his position; and what more can you expect a philosopher to prove except that the views he has adopted are radically and eternally impossible? If every philosopher had done that in the past, we should now be almost out of the wood.

In the 1930s Russell, though heir to an earldom and a fortune, had become almost penniless, while Santayana had become unexpectedly wealthy when *The Last Puritan*, his "Memoir in the Form of a Novel," became a book-of-the-month club selection and best-seller. Santayana made arrangements to send "Bertie . . . $5,000 a year for three or four years, but *anonymously*." Determined not to allow his generosity to disturb Russell's bad opinion of him, Santayana explained in a 1937 letter to George Sturgis, who handled his money, that "[Russell] and his friends think of me as a sort of person in the margin, impecunious, and egoistic; and it would humiliate Bertie to think that I was supporting him."

The combination of generosity and tact Santayana displays in this episode recurs throughout the eight volumes of letters, as he repeatedly helps relatives in Spain, assures his occasional assistant and companion Daniel Cory of an income after Santayana's death, gives money to old friends in need, and sometimes sends money to strangers like Carl Sadakichi Hartmann, an "old wreck of a poet . . . an old beggar" to whom Santayana regu-

larly sent $100 checks simply because Hartmann wrote that he needed money.

Though Santayana could be unfeeling in writing about human beings in general, in practice he was kind to those he knew or somehow encountered—in contrast to "Bertie" and his family: "How inhuman these high-principled self-righteous people are," he writes to Daniel Cory about the Russells in a 1946 letter.

Santayana's letters are full of political opinions, but he never writes as a partisan for any party, cause, or country. He lived in England during World War I, and his sympathies were all for the English but not for liberalism or democracy. Writing from Oxford on August 16, 1914, just after the beginning of the war, he makes it clear that detachment has its own price: "My plans are upset and my sympathies are lacerated. Happy the man with a country, and faith that it is of course always in the right, and will of course be victorious!" In a letter to his sister later that month he describes his own feelings, but also his doubts: "My natural sympathies are anti-German, but I can't help admiring the sureness and the immense patient effort which characterizes their action. If they overpower 'us,' I am not sure that the world will be ultimately the worse for it."

Santayana rarely expressed moral outrage in commenting on two world wars and the rise of fascism, Nazism, and communism. He rejected Nazism as "romanticism gone mad," but often, like a more philosophical Mencken, regarded politics as a spectator sport, as in this 1933 letter: "It is most entertaining living in these times. This Roosevelt is more Caesarian than the spluttering Theodore; we are having Fascism under another name rising in France, in Germany, and in the U.S.!"

His frequent irony makes misinterpretation easy, especially when passages are taken out of context. After World War II, *Life* magazine promoted an image of Santayana as a starry-eyed philosopher unable to discern any differences between, say, the politics of the United States and the Soviet Union. And indeed, in a number of letters from 1946, he praises Stalin—as an author: "I am reading Stalin, and like his honesty and frankness." And later: "I am also reading Stalin … excellent, and refreshingly dogmatic." But in another 1946 letter Santayana makes it clear that he is well aware what Stalin was being clear about: "Stalin is very clear and frank. We are all to be liquidated. The question is whether somebody won't want to liquidate the liquidaters."

In a 1950 letter he protests that the *New York Times* reporter Herbert Matthews has, in misquoting him, given the impression that Santayana saw little difference between American and Russian plans for the rest of the world:

> I certainly never said that the U.S. were "trying" to "impose" their form of government on anybody; and what the Russians are trying to impose is not only their *form* of government … but their own government as it exists in Moscow and is exercised over the Satellites by the Comintern, that plans insurrections and police governments for other nations. The American system cannot be imposed in this way because it conceives "democracy" to mean government by the majority, and respects elections fairly carried on.

Bertrand Russell

His point is all the more significant because he does not think of democracy as the ideal form of government. In the same letter he emphasizes that he himself believes that "trust in majorities" could be "a dangerous and unjust method," and in any case, he does not believe that "the same form of government can be good for everybody," whether it is democracy or anything else.

He was suspicious of political democracy, but his letters demonstrate a democratic readiness to respond to all correspondents, famous or obscure, those he knew and those he did not, with equal courtesy and, even more impressively, with the same readiness to discuss serious philosophical questions seriously. Santayana does not adopt the pose of a sage or celebrity to whom ordinary people come for advice, but writes on the assumption that he and his interlocutors are, alike, searchers for truth. He begins a 1946 letter to a "Lieutenant Garcia" by emphasizing their philosophical agreement: "That you should think Plato good but not true, and should at the same time follow Darwin with approval would seem to indicate that you instinctively think as I think."

He is not willing, however, to be merely polite, and engages the lieutenant in a philosophic colloquy:

> What is the difficulty? You don't tell me or give me any hint of where it lies. Why is Plato good in spite of being wrong? I should say because his ethics and politics are right in principle, but his cosmology is mythical and made to fit his humanism miraculously, having been planned on purpose to an ideal Athens and a perfect set of Athenians.

In an 1887 letter he distinguished between the dreaming and the talking philosophers. Dreaming philosophers may provide incomparable intellectual adventures, he wrote, but they "should be read as one reads the confessions of converts and the plaints of lyric poets. It may be very beautiful and very profound, but it has only the interest of autobiography." The talking philosophers "come to you as one man to another, on the basis of everyday facts and life." They may be little help in exploring the depths of the inner self, Santayana wrote, but "to find out what may be known about the world common to us all, we must go to those who have thought it worth their while to talk about it." ♦

MARTY LEDERHANDLER / AP PHOTO

MICHAEL LEWIS / CORBIS

Norah Vincent

Asylum Seeker

Sometimes crazy ideas make a certain sense.

BY CAITRIN NICOL

It is, perhaps, as good a sign of the times as any that it takes an East Village quasi-bohemian going undercover for months at a stretch and systematically wrecking her psyche to discover for the *New York Times* bestseller-reading public things that were well known less than 50 years ago: Men and women are very different creatures. A happy life involves some measure of personal responsibility. Mental health requires more than pills.

Norah Vincent's *Voluntary Madness* is a wry, inventive reprise of a truth too plain to otherwise catch our attention.

Voluntary Madness
My Year Lost and Found in the Loony Bin
by Norah Vincent
Viking, 304 pp., $25.95

Vincent, back from her stint exploring male communities in drag for her *Self-Made Man* (2004), decides to do a similar project: to go incognito as a sane person in the mental health system. Presenting symptoms of major depression, she checks herself into three facilities in turn: a large public urban psych ward, a private Catholic institution in the middle of nowhere, and a Zen rehab clinic in a balmy corner of the country. The catch is that, in a series of Shakespearean switchbacks, it turns out that she is *not* perfectly sound of mind, body, and spirit (who is?), so for this new feat of immersion journalism she is an ill person posing as a well person who pretends to be ill to go undercover and receive treatment and learn, after all, that she is a well person responding normally to various life trials. In the heart of this confusion lies a serious problem in mental health care, the over-diagnosis and over-medication of functional individuals, who may later find themselves dependent on a drug they should not have been prescribed.

Thanks to just such an unfortunate experience, Vincent approaches her assignment with a vengeance, envisioning a blistering exposé of "the system." She finds what she's looking for at Meriwether, the public hospital, a wretched place where a stable person on the brink of sanity can hardly help but go native. Little or no thought is given to basic matters like nutrition and hygiene; the staff is alternately apathetic and domineering; and the patients, most of them psychotics, are medicated with alarmingly strong cocktails into chemical submission. A scant few hours into her self-imposed stay, Vincent, already desperate, flirts with the idea of escaping through the radiology wing. Imagining herself tearing down the street in "mad rags" she chuckles at how loony she would surely look to passersby:

> But, God, it was a strong urge—run! I thought—and I had this thought many times in the coming days—who wouldn't look crazy doing that? Yet who, under the circumstances, wouldn't do it, or at least want to?

The other facilities are dreary in their own ways. St. Luke's, the Catholic clinic, is kindly staffed but overhung with deadness, for most patients a futile little haven in an ocean of despair. Mobius, the rehab resort, is agreeably designed; in fact, it seems plucked straight from fantasies she had of the "perfect" mental health

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center when she was a patient at the other two facilities. But no one there, it seems, is making much of an effort to get better.

Unsurprisingly, tackling private demons is neither simple nor pleasant. It dawns on her, then, that the biggest challenge in psychiatry lies where no amount of increased funding, policy reform, or new improved pharmaceuticals can touch it: in the individual's willingness to participate in his own recovery.

Nonetheless, she has some words for mental health professionals. One of her finest suggestions is for psychiatrists-in-training to repeat her stunt, disguising themselves as patients for a kind of hands-on *there but for the grace of God go I*. Another is to offer patients something to really *do*, some way of meeting one another's needs above and beyond waiting for their own to be addressed. At St. Luke's, an aged, unhinged nun named Sister Pete is furnished with a station on the grounds where she ministers in her own way to her fellow patients, "giving mad solace to the mad," providing for them a sympathetic personal connection and for her the dignity of purpose.

"I imagined how Mother T [a very religious, very mad woman at Meriwether] would have flourished in this kind of role," Vincent writes, thinking of the many other patients who, by feeling needed, might find the encouragement to rise to the occasion.

Voluntary Madness is not, as its author first intended, a polemic. Nor is it in any sense an objective analysis of modern mental health care. What it does, and does quite well, is offer up a strong reminder to view sane and disturbed alike as whole human persons. Rather than moving towards the medicalization of every human trait and passion, it would be wise, even (or especially?) with the most severely afflicted, to begin with what is most central to them—one might call this the soul—and move outwards, from their hopes and fears and aspirations to the obstacles, medical and otherwise, that stand opposed to their full flourishing. ♦

Gotta Dance

With or without men, in search of romantic Vienna.

BY SARA LODGE

Vienna State Opera Ball, February 2009

Everyone has a ball in Vienna. Between December and March, every weekend, in palaces and hotels and church halls in the Austrian capital, somebody is holding a dance. There is the Sugarbakers' Ball, where you can cakewalk with a confectioner; there is the Coffeehouse Owners' Ball, which runs very latte; and of course, the Opera Ball, whose tickets hit a note that few can reach.

Further down the scale, there's a Roofers' Ball, a Shoemakers' Ball, a Policemen's Ball (not secret, but closed to the public), and possibly even a Parking Attendants' Ball: You can't buy tickets for that one; you are given them.

I had long dreamed of waltzing to the strains of Strauss in a city that looks as if it is built of marzipan. But I don't have a fairy godmother, and I don't have a romantic partner. So I decided to take matters into my own hands. Balls without men—why not? I placed a call to my Danish friend Ilse who, among many admirable qualities, is red-haired, feisty, and fearless.

"We're going to a ball in Vienna," I told her. "You'd better practice reversing in heels."

It isn't, in principle, difficult to get a last-minute ticket to a Viennese ball: Many only issue tickets in the week before they take place. But you have to be quick. I just missed tickets for the Circle of Industry and Technology Ball (I imagine they dance to the Electric Light Orchestra). Instead, I ended up with tickets to the Altkalksburger Ball.

Who or what was the Altkalksburger? Reader, I hadn't the faintest

GEORG HOCHMUTH / AP PHOTO

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idea. But the ball cost 50 euros a ticket, and it was in the attractive Auersperg Palace. What could possibly go wrong?

"Maybe the Altkalksburger is the Austrian name for the League of Frustrated Fascists," mused Ilse, when I told her. "Or maybe it's the Old Age Pensioners' Ball."

We might be shimmying with a zimmer for all I knew. "It'll be fun," I assured her.

In the best tradition of Cinderella, we were running late. Ilse's flight was delayed. I had just stepped off a train without a dress. That is, I was not embarrassingly unclothed—this was reserved for later in the evening—but I didn't own a floor-length gown. Viennese balls are very strict about their dress code. Although at some traditional balls men wear leather shorts and green hats with feathers in them, exposure of the female ankle results in mirth and shame.

The receptionist at our hotel took pity on me. "You need to go to Peek and Kloppenburg," she said.

Peek and Kloppenburg is a department store a few metro stops west of the town center. At first sight it seemed an unlikely place to find a ball dress: It was full of T-shirts, socks, button-down shirts, and babywear. But rounding a corner at random I heard a noise reminiscent of a seabird colony in nesting season. Following the shrieks and chatter, I came upon an extraordinary sight: hundreds of dresses in ruby, gold, aquamarine, electric blue, fuchsia, and silver, and amongst them all the sisters and mothers and best friends and boyfriends and grandmothers of all the women under 40, in the whole of Vienna, simultaneously helping them choose a frock.

Finding a dress was easy; finding a place to try it on was nearly impossible. I ended up with a fetching strapless number in black tulle with a spider web of silver sequins curling around one hip. It was definitely floor length. Indeed it was so floor length (I'm five-foot-five) that when I swept down a staircase I was liable to take everything on the staircase with me from cake crumbs to potted plants. I felt very elegant.

When we were finally in our cab, my skirts frothing over most of the backseat, and traveling through a starlit Vienna, I was aglow with happiness. The air was clear and cold; in a few days it would snow. The baroque Auersperg Palace was all I could have hoped. With marble staircases curving upward to east and west, there were sweeping opportunities to rival Scarlett O'Hara's. The rooms were as pretty as patisserie, with vanilla stucco friezes of Roman wrestlers and pistachio paint work. In the main salon I heard with delight a real orchestra striking up the waltz from *The Merry Widow*.

DIETER NAGL / NEWSCOM

But what of the Altkalksburger? They were, Dear Reader, the alumni of a rather exclusive Viennese private school. Ilse and I are both thirtysomething, and we had stumbled into a prom.

All balls in Vienna begin with the debutantes dancing. These young ladies, attending their first ball, are dressed in white gowns with white gloves and posies and partnered by gauche young men in evening dress. It is the terpsichorean equivalent of first communion. The young people are prepared by dancing schools for weeks beforehand. Anxious parents crowd around, dewy-eyed, to watch them twirl their way into tradition.

It's worth seeing—though it was with a mixture of horror and relief that I later in the evening saw these impeccable young couples doing everything that normal teenagers do: cricking their necks examining their own up-dos in every available mirror, rapaciously snogging in corners, stuffing cake into their mouths with dress shirt unbuttoned and bow tie dangling, and smoking cigarettes while chasing one another down corridors to the disco room.

Once the debutantes have done their display dance, the floor is free for all. At the Altkalksburger Ball, Strauss waltzes were interspersed with rumbas, tangos, and foxtrots. I was delighted to see older couples launching into relaxed routines. Despite the floor-length gowns, some of the ladies showed evidence of bohemianism. One had scarlet hair. Two sported tattoos. I had leisure to examine these largely because Ilse and I were not, ourselves, dancing. We were, as the inglorious phrase has it, sitting out.

We were also standing out. Viennese society is relatively closed and conservative at the best of times. To the Altkalksburger we probably looked like parrots that happened to have found their way into a penguin parade. It was charming to listen to the orchestra and watch the couples swish past, but we wanted to join the dance. We were obviously going to have to score some men.

Ilse is better at this than I am. Long before I was conscious of him she had spotted the only thirtysomething man in the room. In a matter of moments she had thrust a camera into his hands: "Could you possibly take our picture?" she asked. But of course.

He was a big-headed lawyer from Bratislava, but he could dance. Finally, I was waltzing. I was getting all I could wish of the dizziness I crave: that particular bliss that con-

sists of turning and turning in a pair of confident arms as the music swirls and the lights flash past. It is a fairground pleasure for adults. I was out of breath and exceedingly pink and my dress—alas—my dress was, as my partner could not avoid occasionally stepping on its voluminous tulle, slipping ever lower toward a point when it would part company with my upper body altogether.

Luckily, very few people spotted the wardrobe malfunction. I simply clutched my partner and my dress simultaneously, as one might in the event of sudden gunfire, and backed off the dance floor very slowly.

"Are British women always so affectionate?" asked Herr B, enjoying my predicament.

From that point, I danced with one hand holding up my morals, which was awkward. But I did hook Ilse up with a nice violinist when the orchestra wasn't playing, so at least she was dancing, too. We drank Sekt (sparkling wine) and spritzers. And at midnight everyone crammed into the main ballroom for the Public Quadrille.

This is a formal tradition and an excuse for mayhem. Couples gather in fours, facing one another. They bow and curtsey in stately fashion. They walk toward one another and then walk back; they exchange partners. This begins slowly and then gathers an increasingly frantic pace. In the "gallop" that follows, couples join hands and polka down the room at breakneck speed. They form an arch through which subsequent couples dance before themselves becoming part of the ever-growing human tunnel.

The ball ended at 4 a.m., but Ilse and I left the last couple of hours to the teenagers. If our first experience of a Viennese ball had not been a social triumph, it had, at least, not been an outright disaster. Next time, we would choose an event more likely to attract princes in their prime. And I would learn to distinguish dainty tripping from unintentional stripping.

Still, I was glad I hadn't waited for a fairy godmother to call before I made my way to a Viennese ball. Cinders, as they say, are doing it for themselves. ♦

BCA

Sacred Mistrust

God is not in the details of reporting religion.

BY TERRY EASTLAND

LARRY DOWNING / REUTERS

Reverend Jeremiah Wright at the National Press Club, 2008

A little over four years ago a group in Iraq affiliated with al Qaeda and calling itself "One God and Jihad" released a video *via* the Internet showing the grisly beheading of a kidnapped American engineer. In the video, a man in a ski mask made a statement during which, the *New York Times* reported, he called President Bush "a dog."

A dog? In his essay for this slim volume, of which he is a coeditor, Paul Marshall takes the *Times* to task for failing to report that Bush was called not "a dog" but "a Christian dog." In fact, the latter is what the jihadist said, if translations of his statement were correct, and there is no reason to believe they weren't. As it happens, Reuters arranged for one of those translations, and other news outlets followed Reuters in reporting that Bush was called "a Christian dog." So of those outlets' coverage it may not be said, as Marshall does of the *Times*'s, that "the religious dimension was obscured, even obliterated."

Blind Spot
When Journalists Don't Get Religion
edited by Paul Marshall, Lela Gilbert, Roberta Green-Ahmanson
Oxford, 240 pp., $19.95

Yet Marshall's point—and indeed, that of the other contributors—is not that the media invariably botch stories that have something to do with religion. It is, rather, that enough important news organizations miss or dismiss or misunderstand or otherwise get religion wrong on enough occasions, and in enough important ways, to constitute a problem for the news business. That's what the title, *Blind Spot*, is meant to capture: Journalists may be said to have a blind

Terry Eastland, publisher of The Weekly Standard, *is the editor of* Religious Liberty in the Supreme Court: The Cases That Define the Debate Over Church and State.

spot in their field of (reportorial) vision when they fail to see and pursue religious elements of a story that are plainly there and critical to its understanding.

Of the nine chapters, six are styled as "case studies," meaning studies or reviews of this case of media coverage or that, in which blind spots are identified and discussed. What mostly interests the contributors to *Blind Spot* is "secular" news, such as the war in Iraq and the 2004 presidential election. But two of the case studies deal with the journalism on clearly religious subjects: Pope John Paul II and his successor, Benedict XVI; and Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ.*

One chapter that is not a case study bears a provocative title, "God is Winning." This essay, by Timothy Samuel Shah and Monica Duffy Toft, functions as an introduction of sorts to the case studies, its purpose being to demonstrate how religion, so far from yielding to the forces of modernization and withering away (as was often predicted) has, instead, become "increasingly vibrant, assertive, and politicized the world over." What has emerged, they say, is a "prophetic politics" in which "voices claiming transcendent authority are filling public spaces and winning key political contests." The voices are diverse, including—and this is only a partial list—"Islamic radicalism, evangelical Protestantism, Hindu nationalism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Buddhist revivalism, [and] Jewish Zionism."

These developments provide a powerful reason for news organizations to take religion seriously, and report on it just as they would any other part of a story. But *Blind Spot* shows that this task may be more easily spoken about than done.

After all, a reader here learns from Marshall about journalistic failures to adequately describe the nature and goals of Islamic terrorism; from Michael Rubin about widespread press ignorance of Shiite and Sunni beliefs and practices (in Iraq); from Allen Hertzke about simplistic takes on the faith-based quest to advance human rights through American foreign policy (as witness the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998); and from Danielle Vinson and James Guth about media mischaracterizations of George W. Bush's religious beliefs, on the one hand, and on the other, failures to examine John Kerry's during the 2004 campaign.

Of course, this is hardly an exhaustive list. I would note, for example, that journalists writing about religion and politics in the United States often use labels that are woefully imprecise. Take "evangelical," which is often employed to refer to a range of Christian adherents so broad in terms of their theological beliefs and churchly practices—or non-churchly, as the case may be—as to beg the question of the term's definition.

Enough important news organizations miss or dismiss or misunderstand or otherwise get religion wrong on enough occasions, and in enough important ways, as to constitute a problem for the news business.

Then, too, there is the problem of accepting at face value what our politicians say about matters of faith when more questions may fairly be asked. Take, for example, Bush's belief that civil freedom is a gift of God and that its spread throughout the world is "inevitable." Bush attributed his belief to a "theological perspective." Okay—but where were the journalists who asked him about a theology that contemplates the inevitable spread of political liberty? What is the theology that teaches such a certain human outcome?

Likewise, where were the journalists who pursued candidate Barack Obama about the black liberation theology of his onetime church, and asked him about his evident sympathy with that theology, as indicated by passages in *Dreams from My Father.* And where were the journalists who asked him what he meant by his stated desire (in South Carolina before its primary) to build a Kingdom of God on earth? Merely a metaphor, this reference to a "Kingdom," or did its use indicate something grandiose (in any of the word's definitions) about Obama?

As might be expected, the editors of *Blind Spot* would like to see less of the blind spot that is their focus. They would like more journalists to "get religion." These are worthy goals. And in his essay Terry Mattingly, a veteran religion reporter and media critic, offers some sound recommendations: He urges greater care in handling religious language and in using labels, and he shows by negative example how news organizations should *not* go about hiring religion reporters (a lesson, by the way, for those outlets still in business and able to hire).

Mattingly recalls how, some years ago, the editors of the *Washington Post* put up a notice in the newsroom for a religion reporter, hoping to find someone on staff. The "ideal candidate," said the notice, is "not necessarily religious nor an expert in religion."

The latter half of that conjunction was problematic, Mattingly writes, correctly observing that it's hard to imagine *Post* editors "seeking a Supreme Court reporter and posting a notice saying that the 'ideal candidate' is one who is 'not necessarily an expert on legal issues,' or similar notice seeking reporters to cover professional sports, opera, science, film, and politics." He makes a compelling case that news organizations should seek to improve their coverage of religion by "taking precisely the same steps they would . . . to improve coverage on any other complicated, crucial theme: hiring qualified specialty reporters and giving them the resources to do their jobs."

This may seem like urging the obvious, but sometimes it's the obvious that most needs doing. ♦

Rembrandt Lite

The versatility of an aging child prodigy.

BY JAMES GARDNER

'The Feast of Esther,' 1625

For some reason, child prodigies abound in music and math, but they occur rarely in literature and almost never in the visual arts. One possible explanation is that music and math are closed systems that can, if necessary, be mastered to a degree of stunning competence without imagination or emotional maturity. But painting, like literature, seems to require both if one is to achieve any kind of success.

Picasso famously claimed that, by the age of 14, he was able to draw like Raphael; but as so often in his moments of self-assessment, he was lying. And Raphael, while we're at it, may have been a precocious draughtsman, but little that he produced before he was 20 was really noteworthy. Of the very few commonly acknowledged exceptions to the rule, two artists came of age, one hundred years apart, in the Dutch town of Leiden: Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533) and Jan Lievens (1607-1674), who is currently the subject of "Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered," a show that began at the National Gallery in Washington and is now at the Milwaukee Art Museum.

Jan Lievens
A Dutch Master Reconsidered
Milwaukee Art Museum,
through April 26

Which of these two Leiden natives was the better painter is a matter worthy of debate. But it seems likely that only Lucas van Leyden achieved true greatness as an adolescent. The early Lievens surely qualifies as a child prodigy: He had his own studio by the age of 12, after he had apprenticed with the history painter Pieter Lastman. But as frequently occurs with such prodigies, in whatever discipline, the defining mark of his precocious success was his arriving early at a mastery that more conventional humans attained only later in their development.

Thus, his "Feast of Esther" (1625) is a sturdily competent, entirely professional, and somewhat charming product; but little distinguishes it from what a hundred other contemporaries were turning out. Lievens was well into his twenties before he began creating the works that have earned him a place in art history.

As one might expect in a show like this, the curators wish to make the best case for their subject. But the manner in which Lievens's career is presented—and in which, predictably, it has been received in the press—buys into the inaccurate and slightly annoying subtext that art historians have somehow been unfair to this rebel painter, that they have gone out of their way to favor the more "establishmentarian" Rembrandt, his friend, rival, and fellow Leiden native. Thus, in a generally balanced catalogue essay, curator Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. writes, "The cruel irony is that Lievens' artistic achievement . . . has come to be viewed almost exclusively in relation to Rembrandt during his early Leiden years. To the detriment of Lievens, those comparisons are nearly always tinged by the cult of genius that surrounds Rembrandt."

In truth, even at his best, which is rare, Lievens cannot really compete with Rembrandt, who is very often at his best. Once the air is cleared of that erroneous subtext, visitors will be in a better position to judge and enjoy Lievens's paintings, drawings, and prints, and to acknowledge that, even if he is not as forgotten as some would suggest, he deserves a wider audience than he has received.

Like Rembrandt, Lievens was a versatile artist who turned his hand to many of the genres available to the artists of his day: history painting, portraiture, landscape and genre scenes, even the occasional still-life. But while there is a self-consistent and sustained

NORTH CAROLINA MUSEUM OF ART / CORBIS

James Gardner is the former architecture critic for the New York Sun.

character to Rembrandt's multitudinous art, a somewhat sullen and introverted quality that is evident in both his earliest and latest efforts, Lievens, by contrast, is pluralistic, almost chameleon-like in his channeling of eight or so very different styles. Pieter Lastman and Rembrandt, Anthony van Dyck, Adrian Brouwer, and any number of Caravaggio's followers make equal and powerful claims upon his allegiance.

But sometimes Lievens is his own man, and that is when he becomes interesting. If Rembrandt can be defined by his moody tenebrism, Lievens is equally defined by a lightness of touch and a brightness of palette that are visible even in works that are supposed to be somber. Rembrandt's earth tones define Dutch painting in a general way, but Lievens, as though through a natural affinity, yearns for the variegated palette of the south, of Naples and Rome. Despite the relentless reinventions of his career, despite his traveling to places like London, Antwerp, and Berlin, this is his one fairly fixed and constant point. There are few men of his dark century who were quite as enamored of light as Lievens.

"Profile Head of an Old Woman" (ca. 1630), one of his best works, is a good example of this affinity. Among the many excellences of this bright image is the naturalism of the sitter's sunken cheeks and drooping eyes, and the translucent veils that cover her head and, at the top, achieve a painterly bravura that calls to mind the kinetic drip patterns of Jackson Pollock.

The same blond tonalities ignite a "Young Girl in Profile" (1631), one of Lievens's finest achievements. This composition is dominated by the child's billowing hair and a complexion that calls to mind several overripe fruits. From the same year, "Bathsheba Receiving King David's Letter" depicts a female figure who could be a younger version of "Old Woman" and an older version of "Young Girl." This time her shimmering hair spills over her shoulders, achieving the delicacy of silver-point.

Ten years later a slight murkiness has begun to infiltrate and adulterate Lievens's clarity, but even in a work like "The Lamentation of Christ," a shimmering brightness remains the conceptual basis of the painting, and continues to dominate its center, whatever darkness might have begun to gather at the edges. This painting demonstrates the artist's admirable skill in depicting anatomy. It also attests to a compositional flair that is even more evident in "The Raising of Lazarus" (1631), one of the most original images of the 17th century.

Presaging the Symbolist movement by more than 250 years, "Lazarus" embodies the same operatic spirituality that one finds in that later movement. As Christ stands above the tomb of Lazarus, the painter, through a stroke of compositional genius, allows the brilliantly lit shroud to spill downward into the grave, from which two ghostly hands emerge.

Such originality is rare in Lievens's later paintings, whose colors turn somewhat muddier (without ever quite losing their defining brightness) and whose details lack the exquisite sharpness of his earlier work. Above all, his compositions become awkward as he aspires to a complexity that, more often than not, escapes his control. Still, with roughly 50 paintings on view, together with 40 drawings and an equal number of prints, this exhibition has enough to satisfy anyone up to the task of separating what is truly good from what is merely good enough. ♦

BCA

'Battlestar' Rules

In the wasteland of TV drama, an intergalactic tour de force. **BY ELI LEHRER**

When it premiered to high ratings in 1978, the producers of *Battlestar Galactica* promised their show would bring feature-film standards to network television. It didn't. Although it offered state-of-the art special effects, cute kids, furry space pets, an over-the-top score from the London Symphony Orchestra, and a then-unheard-of budget that topped a million dollars an episode, the show featured predictable plots, pseudo-philosophical ramblings that drew heavily on Mormon theology, pedestrian writing, and endless reuse of the same stock footage.

Viewers quickly lost interest, and the show died a largely unlamented death after one season.

In 2004, a new show, also called *Battlestar Galactica*, materialized on the SciFi Channel. This program, which borrows the title and some elements of its premise from its 1978 forebear, never made any bold promises. And despite good reviews and a cast that included Edward James Olmos (*Miami Vice*, *Stand and Deliver*) and Mary McDonnell (*E.R.*, *Dances with Wolves*), it never attracted a mass audience. As it wraps up its fourth and final season, *Galactica*'s ratings remain about a third of those for NBC's hidden-camera show, *Howie Did It*. Indeed, the new *Galactica* may well succeed in creating a new form of television where the original version and many other shows failed: Through its creative production strategy, complex plot, and wholehearted embrace of the Internet, *Galactica* could well signal the creation of a template for producing ambitious, quality drama in a fragmented television landscape.

And it is a good show by any standard. This new *Galactica* tells the story of a group of refugees, self-described "Colonial" humans, fleeing 12 home worlds following a nuclear holocaust carried out by human-created creatures called Cylons. The humans, about 50,000 of them to start, live in a ragtag space defended by a space aircraft carrier—

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a "Battlestar"—called Galactica, and for most of the series, engage in an off-again/on-again search for a mythical home planet called Earth. Cylons, they find, pulled off a massive sneak attack, in part, because they managed to create robots that look and feel as if—and sometimes even believe—they are human. The penultimate run of new episodes ended with finding Earth (maybe, or maybe not, our Earth) as a nuclear wasteland. Around the same time humans find that some of their leaders—characters that viewers have known since the early episodes—are themselves Cylons. The humans then form an alliance with a group of renegade Cylons.

While it avoids "modulate-the-phase-shift-dialators" technobabble and silly-looking space aliens, the show still possesses a high geek factor. It is, after all, a story of an aircraft carrier in space. But despite the fundamentally geeky premise, the new *Galactica* is deadly serious: As befits the nuclear holocaust that began the series, *Galactica* is relentlessly dark, has a cast made up almost entirely of morally ambiguous characters (the only morally upright character killed herself at the beginning of the current run of episodes), and often asks intriguing questions. At various times, plot arcs have provided sympathetic explorations of terrorists' motivations, questioned the value of democracy in times of crisis, raised intriguing questions about the nature of human identity, and critiqued organized religion.

The show is smart enough to expect viewers to recognize allusions to the Nuremberg war crime tribunals, follow a truly labyrinthine plot, and accept sympathetic characters whose views don't match the orthodoxy of the Hollywood left. (McDonnell's character, Colonial president Laura Roslin, speaks forcefully against legal abortion at a key moment in the story.) The show's producers almost certainly aren't either pro-terrorist or pro-life, but their willingness to ask the questions suggests their willingness to take on difficult issues.

Galactica, furthermore, has told a story with a beginning, middle, and end. As befits any well-told story, bad things often happen to good people: At least a half-dozen significant sympathetic characters have died violent deaths. Of course, *Galactica* isn't the first prime-time show with a continuing plot arc; it isn't even the first prime-time drama where the producer mapped out many important plot elements in advance. But it is longer and more complex than almost any other prime-time serial.

Battlestar Galactica and its creator/producer, Ron Moore, have also heartily embraced the view-on-demand Internet world. Its episodes rank among the most popular on the download site hulu.com, and its producers have offered more than 20 brief Internet/Video on-demand-only "webisodes" that advance the story and add depth during hiatuses. Moore has kept a semiregular blog about the show, answers email from fans, and provides audio podcasts giving background and details on the show. Although only the podcasts appear to have originated with *Galactica*—even the webisodes have had a few previous runs—*Battlestar* has been the first show to embrace all of them at once.

Tricia Helfer as Number Six

The show's production system, furthermore, breaks new ground: It's reasonably cheap, but doesn't show it. There's little expensive location shooting, and most of it takes place in Canadian parks and forests. Everything else takes place on sound stages and in computer graphics (almost all dark-colored so that they look reasonably realistic without the latest computer technology) that substitute for most exteriors. Documentary-style, *cinéma vérité* camera work and clever editing often serve to cover space battles and other events with little more than a few lines of dialogue. And while Olmos and McDonnell are talented, moderately well-known actors, neither had found a lead film role or steady television series in the decade before *Galactica* premiered. The rest of the cast consists of talented unknowns. In short, the show works well on the cheap.

Of course, the *Galactica* formula doesn't guarantee success or make the show good; that's still a matter of writing and acting. But it does point toward a way that ambitious, dramatic television can remain viable, even in an era where TV dramas no longer represent a key part of common pop culture knowledge. The four major networks have essentially given up on the idea of doing anything with hour-long drama. Only four such dramas on the spring schedule fall clearly outside the formulas of police and medical procedurals. (Top-rated CBS has dramas oriented towards police work, and number-two Fox has only two shows—one almost certainly headed for cancellation, the other with law-enforcement elements—that break the police/medical formulas.)

This isn't to say that network drama is bad. A few shows that arguably fall into the genre (Fox's *24*) defy genre conventions. Others, like Fox's *House* and NBC's *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, feature good writing and acting. Even decidedly second-rate shows (CBS's *Cold Case*) offer production and narrative values better than just about anything that ran on television two decades ago. But creatively, network television drama appears to have reached a dead end.

Battlestar Galactica, by contrast, is a good show that proves television can change and adapt. ♦

PAUL OCKENFELS / NBC UNIVERSAL, INC.

Tony and Juliet

A revival of 'West Side Story' is a rehabilitation.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

One of the great cultural disappointments of my life came at the age of 23, when I watched the Academy Award-winning film version of the Broadway musical *West Side Story* for the first time as an adult. I had seen the movie at least a dozen times on television and loved it beyond measure.

West Side Story
Directed by Arthur Laurents

At some point, I had already begun to see a few shortcomings. Like the way Natalie Wood's brown pancake makeup, intended to make her look Hispanic, instead gave her the aspect of a shrunken-headed kewpie doll. Or how the extremely fey Richard Beymer seemed almost physically ill when the script called upon him to kiss Wood, then one of the most beautiful women in the world. But what the hell. It was *West Side Story*, and who could object?

Then came the nightmare moment, when I journeyed to the American Film Institute's theater at the Kennedy Center in Washington to see *West Side Story* on the big screen. And it was . . . awful. Draggy scenes. Inappropriately theatrical lighting. And the dialogue! Hep cat blather from the late 1950s, including the peerlessly comic moment when one of the skanky girlfriends of the white gang offers the following words of wisdom: "Ooh . . . ooh . . . ooooble-dy ooh."

By the time Natalie Wood cradled the dead Richard Beymer in her arms, I was cradling my head in my hands. The songs were still great, and the dancing too, but everything else about *West Side Story* seemed overdone, overcooked, and dreadfully dated—a problem drama about juvenile delinquency and racial strife that might have resonated in the early 1960s but which seemed quaint and silly two decades later.

A new revival of *West Side Story* has just opened on Broadway, the first in nearly 30 years, and I sat through it last week not with head in hand, but with heart in mouth. The evening was one of the most thrilling I have ever spent in a theater. It turns out that the distance of a half-century from the show's opening has drained it of any specific relevance; no longer ripped from the headlines, *West Side Story* turns out instead to be a high melodrama. In terms of the emotions it evokes, *West Side Story* is more akin to opera than any other Broadway musical ever written.

The director, Arthur Laurents, makes this almost explicit with an inspired decision to allow the Puerto Rican characters to speak Spanish to each other for the most part, and (again for the most part) to sing their songs in Spanish as well. The choice works, and works brilliantly, because it makes the characters seem less like ethnic stereotypes and more like recognizable people.

The fact that the lyrics of two songs are entirely in Spanish doesn't prove at all onerous, because the songs in question ("I Feel Pretty," "A Boy Like That") are so familiar that we remember what the words mean. But even if we didn't, like a Verdi aria in the days before opera houses provided supertitles, Leonard Bernstein's remarkable music conveys the emotion. (And to be honest, the lyrics in question are ghastly, as their author, Stephen Sondheim, himself has admitted; the show benefits from our not having to hear "A boy like that, who kill your brother/ Forget that boy and find another.")

Part of the problem with the movie is the use of close-ups; they make the instant love affair between Maria, the girl just off the boat, and Tony, the white-ethnic gangbanger who's gone straight, seem preposterous. On a stage set that evokes the streets of New York but remains largely barren and abstract, we almost don't notice the lovers discovering each other across a crowded gym floor until they are embracing. Four immortal songs, coming at you over the course of 20 minutes, make the romance between Tony and Maria rapturous and infectious: "Something's Coming" and "Maria" and "Tonight" and "One Hand, One Heart."

The revival was directed by the author of the libretto, Arthur Laurents, who is 90 years old. Judging from this production and his work last year at the helm of his other peerless musical libretto, the one for *Gypsy*, Laurents the nonagenarian has achieved a purity of vision and an ability to bring out the most heartfelt aspects of his own work that mark him forever as one of the great directors in the history of Broadway. He is building here, as he did for *Gypsy*, on the original work of the director-choreographer Jerome Robbins, but the clarity of feeling seems entirely original to Laurents.

By bringing out the delicacy and beauty of the relationship between Tony and Maria, Laurents causes the audience to hope against hope that they will indeed secure the future together they deserve—even though everyone watching knows full well that all will end tragically. This injection of blissful teenage optimism makes the dark turn of the plot (the show is, of course, based on *Romeo and Juliet*) all the more painful and gripping.

Musicals triumph when music, lyric, story, and dance all combine to produce an indelible emotional response in the audience that is akin to joy. Even though the new Broadway *West Side Story* ends with the sound of weeping, taken as a whole, it is a transporting experience—and, for a onetime admirer turned betrayed skeptic, a restorative one. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

"A U.N. panel of expert economists pressed Thursday for a new global currency reserve scheme to replace the volatile, dollar-based system and for coordinated steps by rich countries to stimulate their economies."
—Agence France-Presse, *March 26, 2009*

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UNITED NATIONS ANNOUNCES NEW UNIVERSAL CURRENCY

Federation Credit To Be Accepted Around World, Galaxy

By EDMUND L. ANDREWS

After several weeks of intense deliberations, a United Nations panel of economists announced yesterday its decision on a new universal currency aimed to stabilize the financial markets. Officially called the Federation Credit, it would replace the U.S. dollar as the preferred reserve currency throughout the universe.

As economist Joseph Stiglitz, head of the U.N. Commission of Experts, explained, "The panel spent three or four hours figuring out the mechanics of the new currency, how it would impact the global economy, and finding ways to make it non-inflationary. The rest of the time we focused on a name, design, color, layout, texture, smell, and, most important, whose pictures should adorn it." According to sources inside the commission, other competing currency names included the ducat, doubloon, Starbuck, 'Bou Buck, clam, and Venusian. (One central European economist pushed unsuccessfully for the Reichsmark.)

"Racking our brains over a universal currency," says Stiglitz, "it suddenly dawned on us to create something quite literally universal. And what could be more appropriate for the United Nations than the currency used by the United Federation of Planets?" Although the federation only exists in the fictional world of Star Trek, one commissioner says it is the spirit of one world in harmony that matters: "This currency boldly goes where no currency has gone before," says economist Pedro Páez. "With the Federation Credit in your wallet, you can travel and spend freely whether you are in my native Ecuador, Mozambique, Moscow, or Cardassia Prime."

Images on the Federation Credit paper currency (whose denominations are similar to the U.S. dollar) reportedly include Dag Hammarskjöld, U Thant, Boutros Boutros Ghali, Kofi Annan, and Gene Roddenberry. Faces on the coin credits are said to feature Kurt Waldheim and Kahless the Unforgettable.

Current United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon assured critics that the administration of the new currency will be fair. Headquarters will remain in New York while printing operations will be moved to Beijing. Russian panel members, however, have urged the secretary-general to distribute financial powers to a board of regional governors

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Obama Admits Filling Out Second NCAA Bracket

'I Really Meant to Pick Villanova Over Duke'

the weekly Standard
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