the weekly Standard

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the weekly Standard

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

D Is for Disgraceful

Lincoln Steffens, the famous muckraking journalist of the early 20th century, referred to Philadelphia and its politics as "corrupt and contented."

The Scrapbook would like to think that the City of Brotherly Love has made some progress since Steffens's day, but we were reminded of the phrase by a turn of events last week in another old American city, Boston, where Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick (D) appointed Paul G. Kirk Jr. (D) as a United States senator to succeed Edward Kennedy (D), who died last month.

No surprise there: Massachusetts and its statehouse are safely in Democratic hands, and Kirk is not only a faithful Kennedy family retainer—executor of the late senator's estate, among other things—but a veteran, um, party operative, having served as chairman of the Democratic National Committee.

Take a look at the fine print, however, and you find the contented corruption. Kirk was appointed for the brief interregnum between now and the special election that Massachusetts law requires in January, five months after a Senate seat becomes vacant. That law was enacted in 2004 when the legislature, anticipating that Senator John Kerry (D) was about to be elected president, moved swiftly to strip then-governor Mitt Romney (R) of the governor's historic power to appoint someone to fill a Senate vacancy.

The fig leaf which Massachusetts Democrats have affixed to this obscene do-over is the notion that the Commonwealth would be facing an unprecedented "emergency" if the Bay State enjoyed the services of only one senator for the next few months during the national debate on Obamacare. (Oh yes, and Democrats in the U.S. Senate would be one vote short of a filibuster-proof majority.)

The absence of an active, voting senator did not seem to constitute an "emergency" for Massachusetts while Edward Kennedy (D) was away from the Senate for nearly a year before his death. But let's not get distracted by hypocrisy: It was Kennedy (D), after all, whose last public act was to sign a letter demanding that the 2004 law be overturned to allow Deval Patrick (D) to appoint a deserving Democrat to Kennedy's (D) soon-to-be-vacant seat.

Of course, The Scrapbook, as a small "d" democrat, bows to the inevitable: The Massachusetts legislature is overwhelmingly Democratic, and what the Democrats want the Democrats will get, no matter how cynical and corrupt.

For the sake of clarity, however, and to avoid future confusion, we would suggest that the statute be amended just one more time to make it official: In Massachusetts, Democratic governors have the right to fill U.S. Senate vacancies by appointment, but Republican governors do not have the right to fill U.S. Senate vacancies by appointment.

A little peculiar, perhaps, but honest, for a change. ♦

Hair Today, Gone Tomorrow

The Scrapbook notes with regret the gradual disappearance over the past few months—as chronicled in these photographs from the *New York Times*—of New York governor David Paterson's beard and mustache.

Granted, as beards go, it was not much of one—more of an Arafat stubble—and the mustache never had a chance to achieve Geraldo Rivera proportions. But New York has not had a governor with a mustache since Thomas E. Dewey, or a governor with a beard since Charles Evans Hughes. In his brief tenure since succeeding the disgraced Eliot Spitzer, David Paterson has brought little distinction to the office of governor, but his hirsute status gave him a certain Trivial Pursuit-style renown.

Gov. David A. Paterson from beard in June to clean-cut Wednesday.

Come to think of it, maybe it was the beard and mustache, with their echoes of Hughes and Dewey, that prompted President Obama to publicly humiliate his fellow Democrat last week by suggesting that Paterson not stand for election next year. Both Dewey (1944, 1948) and Hughes (1916) ran for president and, on two occasions, came very close to election. Maybe Obama wants to clear the field of competitors for his job. Or maybe Paterson wants to more closely resemble Fred Armisen, the *Saturday Night Live* actor who

impersonates him. Either way, we'll miss the whiskers. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"For many years I carried a regret, the feeling I had missed one of the great opportunities in life. It was back in 1996, and the offer I got was made by one of the most powerful men of the time: Jiang Zemin, the President of China. It was at a private meeting at the leadership compound in Beijing, in the same room where Mao had received his guests. The reason for Jiang Zemin's invitation was *Megatrends*, a book I had written in 1982 analyzing the economic, political, social, and . . . " (from the prologue to *China's Megatrends: The 8 Pillars of a New Society*, by John and Doris Naisbitt). ♦

The Waltz of the Commissars

The Scrapbook thinks the dozens of so-called "czars" employed by the Obama White House might better be termed "commissars," in the grand old Soviet tradition of sending a party hack to make sure every factory manager, agricultural co-op boss, diplomat, army general, or other bureaucrat toes the party line. Former green-jobs commissar Van Jones, for instance, was typical of the apparatchik made famous by Tom Courtenay as Pasha Antipov in the movie version of *Doctor Zhivago*—right down to his little wire-rimmed glasses and spouting of Socialist nonsense.

And the ultimate goal of the Obamissars? Elementary, my dear comrades: They are merely the agents of "Change You Can Believe In," striving for that heavenly day when all American families will make $75,000 a year—no more, no less—and live in a little green house, with a little green car, and have two little green children with nice "free" health care, "free" college education, and a giant windmill in the back yard. Hooray! ♦

Ismael Roldan, 1964-2009

The Weekly Standard is deeply saddened to learn of the loss of one of its longtime talents, caricaturist Ismael Roldan, who died in New York September 15. A frequent contributor especially during the magazine's first decade, the genial Roldan was widely admired for his witty, hard-edged likenesses and known among his peers for accessibility and encouragement.

As another of our contributing artists, Jason Seiler, put it, Ismael's "work was inspiring to look at. Great exaggeration and likeness, great structure, humor, draftsmanship, perspective—you name it, he was what I wanted to be like. . . . I feel as if I have lost a friend, a mentor, an inspiration, but mostly, a brother." ♦

Sandra Day O'Connor by Ismael Roldan

Irving Kristol, 1920-2009

The following remarks were delivered by William Kristol at the funeral service for Irving Kristol, Congregation Adas Israel, Washington, D.C., September 22, 2009.

In 1994, my father wrote a piece for the *Wall Street Journal* titled "Life Without Father." It dealt with the subject of the family and poverty and welfare—with my father drawing for his argument, as he so often did, on a combination of social science, common sense, history, and personal experience. In the course of the article, my father briefly discussed his father, Joseph Kristol—who, he wrote, "was thought by all our relatives and his fellow workers to be wise, and fair, and good. I thought so too."

So have Liz and I always thought about our father. To us, he was wise, and fair, and good. I honestly don't think it ever occurred to us that we could have had a better father. So as we enter the rest of our life—a life without our father—we are overwhelmed not by a sense of loss or grief, though of course we feel both, but by a sense of gratitude: Having Irving Kristol as our dad was our great good fortune.

Now my father would often speak of his own great good fortune. That was meeting my mother. Shortly after graduating from City College, my father—a diligent if already somewhat heterodox Trotskyist—was assigned to attend the meetings of a Brooklyn branch of the young Trotskyists. As my father later wrote, the meetings were farcical and pointless, as they were intended to recruit the proletarian youths of Bensonhurst to a cause they were much too sensible to take seriously. But the meetings turned out not to be entirely pointless, because my father met my mother there. They were married, and remained happily married—truly happily married, thoroughly happily married—for the next 67 years.

Dan Bell, who knew my parents for that whole span, called my parents' marriage "the best marriage of [his] generation." I only knew my parents for 56 years, so I can't speak with Dan's authority—and my first couple of years with my parents are something of a blur. But I know enough confidently to endorse his judgment.

During the 1960s and 1970s, when Liz and I were growing up, everything is supposed to have become complicated and conflicted and ambiguous. Not so with respect to my parents' love for each other. Or with respect to the love and admiration that Liz and I—and, later, Caleb and Susan—had for my father. Our love for him was always straightforward, unambivalent, and unconditional.

As was the love of his five grandchildren for him. And as was his love for them. Almost seven years ago, my father was scheduled for lung surgery. As we were talking the night before, my father matter-of-factly acknowledged the possibility he might not survive. And, he said, he could have no complaints if that were to happen. "I've had such a lucky life," he remarked. (Actually, I'm editing a bit since we're in a house of worship. He said, "I've had such a goddam lucky life.")

But, he said, it would be just great to get another five years—in order to see the grandchildren grow up. That wish of his was granted. He got almost seven years. So he was able to see Rebecca and Anne and Joe graduate from college. He was able to attend Rebecca and Elliot's wedding. He—a staff sergeant in the Army in World War II—developed a renewed interest in things military, as Joe trained to be, and then was commissioned as, a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps.

And he was able to see Liz's children grow up too, to watch Max and Katy become poised and impressive teenagers—it turns out that's not a contradiction in terms. My father was able to get to know them, and to talk with them, in a way you can't with much younger kids. So that too was a great source of happiness.

Everyone knows of my father's good nature and good humor. He kept that to the end. In the last couple of years, his hearing loss—and the limitations of even the most modern hearing aid technology—sometimes made it difficult for him to understand everything that was being said in a noisy restaurant or a busy place. But he compensated. A few months ago, my parents were out for brunch with the Stelzers and the Krauthammers. After a stretch where he couldn't quite pick up some exchanges between Irwin and Charles, my dad said to the two of them: "I can't hear what you're saying. So I make it up. And," he added, smiling, "sometimes you disappoint me."

But my father was in general not the disappointed sort. It's true that he loved dogs and never had one. But he made up for that by doting on his two granddogs—Liz and Caleb's Sandy, and of course Patches, whom he saw more of because of our proximity. Patches really loved my father—and, as many of you know, Patches is choosy in his affections.

Just a day or so before he slipped from consciousness last week, my father was greeted by one of those well-trained dogs that visit hospitals, in this case a big golden retriever. He patted it and communed with it

for a while. Then, as the owner led the dog away, my father commented to us, as if for the ages—"dogs are noble creatures."

My father liked humans too—though I'm not sure he thought they quite rose to the level of dogs as noble creatures. Still, as I look around today, I do wish my father could be here, because he would have so enjoyed seeing and talking with all of you.

In one of the many, many emails and notes I've gotten in the last few days, a friend commented, "When I'd stop by the *Public Interest* office in the 1980s, your dad would always start a conversation with, 'How's the family?' I suppose that was his standard opener. But I noticed in the last few years, when I'd see him at AEI or somewhere else in D.C., he'd ask about 'the family' and then 'how's everyone?' If I mentioned some former *PI* editor or writer, he'd beam—as if it were news of his own extended family."

My father's extended family ended up being pretty large. In politics and law and business and journalism, in New York and Washington and elsewhere—even in the strange outposts of modern academe, there are scores, legions—hordes they must seem to those who disapprove of them—who have been influenced, and not just casually, by my father.

How did he do it? I do think that in my father was found an unusual combination of traits—confidence without arrogance; worldly wisdom along with intellectual curiosity; a wry wit and a kindly disposition; and a clear-eyed realism about the world along with a great generosity of spirit. He very much enjoyed his last two decades in Washington, but he had none of the self-importance that afflicts us here. He loved intellectual pursuits, but always shunned intellectual pretension. For example, I don't think I ever heard him use the phrase "the life of the mind," though my father lived a life of the mind.

Beneath the confident wit and the intellectual bravado, my father had a deep modesty. My father spoke with gratitude of his good fortune in life. He wouldn't have claimed to deserve the honors that came his way—though he did deserve them.

Perhaps in part because he was a man who was marked by such a deep sense of gratitude, he was the recipient of much deeply felt gratitude. Even I've been surprised, judging by the emails and phone calls since his death, by the sheer number of those befriended by my father, by the range of those affected by him, by the diversity of those who admired him. I expected the appropriate remarks from distinguished political leaders and professors, and we were moved by eloquent testimonials from people who've known my father well, in some cases for many decades. But what struck all of us in the family were the emails from individuals who met my father only once or twice, but who remembered his kindness or benefited from his counsel—or from people who had never met him, but who were still very much influenced by his writing or other enterprises he was involved in.

For example—this, from a young Capitol Hill aide: "Your father was one of the first people I met, totally by accident, when I went to work at AEI a few years ago. And I will always remember how incredibly gracious and kind he was toward me, an utterly clueless research assistant." Or this, an email forwarded by one of our kids: "Sorry to hear about your grandfather. He was ahead of his time and provided the intellectual underpinnings for the only conservative kid in his Jewish youth group in Tulsa, Oklahoma." Of all the communications my mother and my sister and I have received, I suspect my father might have gotten a particular kick out of that one.

Leon Kass said to me last week, after a final visit to my father: "It's hard to imagine a world without Irving Kristol." So it is. But, as Leon would be the first to say, we're not left simply with a world without Irving Kristol. It's true that his death leaves the world a poorer place. But it's a world made richer by the life he lived, and the legacy he leaves. ♦

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the weekly Standard

The Obama Show

Unemployment is close to 10 percent. The government is embedded in the auto, banking, housing, and insurance sectors. The president's domestic agenda hangs in the balance. Things aren't rosy on the global front, either. Public opinion has turned against the war in Afghanistan just as a major decision on troop levels must be made. The Iranians are busily working to obtain nuclear weapons. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains as intractable as ever. It's a dangerous world at an uncertain time, and last week the president responded by going on the *Late Show with David Letterman*.

It's all too apparent: Faced with the choice, President Obama prefers the comforts of celebrity to the duties of leadership. In addition to Letterman, there was his appearance on the *Tonight Show with Jay Leno* last March and his running commentary in the ESPN broadcast booth during baseball's All-Star game last July. You might imagine a lame-duck president making such media appearances, but not one barely nine months into his term. Obama clearly sees himself as a sort of salesman-in-chief, and considers endless speechifying and interview-giving as the best way to further his agenda. The adoring crowds, raucous applause, and obsequious press coverage that accompany his appearances are cherries on top.

CHRIS MORRIS

So, in order to pressure Congress to act on health care and "call out" all the lying racist nihilist cynics who stand in his way, Obama delivered his major address to a joint session of Congress on September 9. He followed that up with giant *Si Se Puede* rallies in Minnesota, Pennsylvania, and Maryland and a dizzying turn on five Sunday morning news shows. Amazingly, Obama has also found time in September to deliver a speech to the nation's schoolchildren; give major addresses on the financial crisis and climate change; and contribute remarks at Walter Cronkite's funeral. The month isn't even over yet, and the salesman-in-chief already resembles the late pitchman Billy Mays.

The public doesn't really seem to mind the president's omnipresence: Obama, as we are routinely informed, enjoys decent job approval ratings and higher personal ones. And, yes, he has every right to use the bully pulpit; presidents of both parties have done so to both useful and annoying ends. Nonetheless, there are plenty of reasons to be skeptical of the White House's permanent campaign. Chief among them is that presidential appearances are a lot like the money supply: The greater the quantity, the less each individual piece is worth. The public is slowly but surely tuning Obama out—look at the declining ratings for his four nationally televised press conferences. And a president who's always yukking it up is a president susceptible to gaffes. Obama may have survived his latest PR blitz unscathed, but don't forget his tasteless Special Olympics joke on Leno and his petty swipe at Nancy Reagan last December.

What's truly unusual is that the president persists in this media strategy even though it shows no signs of succeeding. Obama's job approval may be decent, but it has fallen quickly and dramatically and now hovers slightly above 50 percent in the Gallup poll. More people continue to disapprove than approve of the president's approach to health care, with significant numbers of seniors and independents turning against him. Last week's NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll showed that the Republicans have narrowed the Democrats' advantage in the congressional generic ballot to three points, the best number for the GOP since 2004. And Republicans are favored in November's elections in New Jersey and Virginia.

Obama isn't in this situation because the public doesn't see enough of him. He's in it because his policies have so far failed to produce economic recovery. He's in it because his big spending gives deficit hawks heartburn. The president and his courtiers could try to deal with such concerns, but instead they devote themselves to the nostalgic task of recreating the conditions surrounding his storybook presidential campaign. That might satisfy Obama's vanity. But it leaves the rest of us ready to change the channel.

—Matthew Continetti

A Genius of Temperament

Joseph Epstein remembers Irving Kristol

At home in New York, 1981

KEITH MEYERS / THE NEW YORK TIMES

As the last of the New York intellectuals depart the planet, it becomes apparent that Irving Kristol, who published less than most of them, had a wider and deeper influence on his time than all of them. Just how and why is not all that clear, but it is so. Nor is it clear how best to describe Irving. He wasn't a writer exactly, or at least not primarily; neither was he chiefly an editor, though he in fact edited some of the best intellectual magazines of his day. He wrote political journalism, but to call him a political journalist is severely to limit him. That baggy-pants term public intellectual doesn't do the job, either. He was over his lifetime associated with various institutions—magazines, universities, think tanks—but he always seemed somehow slightly outside of, somehow larger than, all of them.

Irving was the ultimate free-lance. If my father were alive, he would say of Irving Kristol that he worked out of his car, with the irony added that Irving, who grew up in New York to immigrant parents, never learned to drive. Sui generis was what Irving was—an amazing figure, whose like we shall probably not see again for the simple reason that no one quite like him existed before.

He wrote with clarity and force, subtlety and persuasiveness, but, unlike a true writer, didn't feel the need to do it all the time. He was a splendid speaker, non-oratorical, casual, off-the-cuff division: witty, smart, commonsensical, always with a point to make, one that one hadn't considered before. I recall once hearing Irving introduced by Christopher DeMuth in a room that had a large movie screen behind the speaker's desk. "I see," said Christopher, "that Irving has brought his usual full panoply of audio-visual aids." "Yes," replied Irving, "a cigarette," which he took out of his pocket and tapped on the desk before beginning to speak.

Joseph Epstein is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard. *His third collection of short stories,* The Love Song of A. Jerome Minkoff, *will be published in 2010.*

Irving's reigning intellectual note was that of skepticism. As an intellectual, he lived by ideas, but at the same time he greatly distrusted them. All ideas for him, like saints for George Orwell, were guilty until proven innocent. "Create a concept and reality leaves the room," Ortega y Gasset wrote, and my guess is that Irving would have seconded the motion. In the realm of ideas, he preferred those that existed in the world as it is as against those that had to be imposed by elaborate argument or government fiat.

At the same time, he liked to play with ideas. I remember a Chinese dinner with him at which he tried out the idea that Modernism in the arts was the devil's work. He meant the actual capital-D Devil. Was he serious? I'm not certain even now, but the discussion, in which Irving argued that Modernist art undermined tradition and as such human confidence in institutions, was provocative in the best sense, causing a true believer (that would be me) to defend Modernism by arguing that the best of it was based precisely on tradition.

Irving himself did not provoke. I never saw him angry. Polemical though he could be in his political journalism, I never heard him put down political or intellectual enemies in conversation. If I could have any of his gifts, it would be his extraordinary ability not to take things personally. Accusations, insults, obloquy, all seemed to bounce off him. He had a genius of temperament.

He also seemed to be without vanity. I never heard him claim credit for any of the things that obituarists are now claiming for him: helping to elect Ronald Reagan, launching neoconservatism, discovering youthful talent, and the rest of it. I never heard him quote himself, or remind other people of things he had written, or make any claims about himself whatsoever. I once told him that I thought *Encounter*, which he edited with Stephen Spender in London, and on which, I am certain, he did the lion's share of the work, was the best intellectual journal of my lifetime, but my praise appeared only to embarrass him. He didn't seem to wish to talk much about it.

Irving's specialty was the insertion of common sense into places where one wasn't accustomed to find it. He advised the young not to bring along a novel when being interviewed for a job, because, however mistakenly, it creates the impression of dreaminess. When Michael Joyce became the head of the Olin Foundation, with responsibility for doling out large sums of money, Irving, while congratulating him, told him that in his new job he could promise him two things: First, he would never eat another bad lunch; and, second, no one would ever speak truthfully to him again. I once gave a lecture on friendship in which I made the argument that we mustn't expect our friends to share our opinions, but look instead for something beyond mere opinion to that more important entity, point of view. Irving, who was in the audience, told me afterwards that I had a good point, and he agreed with it, "except of course for Israel and Palestine."

Irving and Bea were the Nick and Nora Charles of American intellectual life. They were always on the case together. They had a marriage in which the question of equality seemed simply never to have arisen. Congruent in their opinions, perfectly joined in what they valued, they were as united as any couple I have ever known.

The older one gets as a writer the fewer people are around whose approval means much. Irving was one of those remaining people for me. When I heard that he took pleasure in my short stories, I was genuinely delighted. He once introduced me at a talk I gave at the American Enterprise Institute, saying that I was in the tradition of the cosmopolitan wits. I was so pleased by this that before beginning my talk I couldn't refrain from saying that being introduced in this way by Irving I felt as if I were Andy Williams introduced by Frank Sinatra saying this guy can really sing, or Rodney Dangerfield introduced by Charlie Chaplin saying this guy has some wonderful moves.

Irving was an extraordinarily selfless husband—a feminist in action if decidedly not in ideology. By this I mean that in Irving's biography, in the early 1940s, there is a lacuna, during which he took time away from his own then youthful career so that his wife Bea (who is of course Gertrude Himmelfarb, the historian of Victorian intellectual culture) could do her graduate studies at the University of Chicago and later research for her doctorate in London. How many men, of whatever political views, would have done that 60 years ago?

Irving and Bea were the Nick and Nora Charles of American intellectual life. They were always on the case together. They had a marriage in which the question of equality seemed simply never to have arisen. Congruent in their opinions, perfectly joined in what they valued, they were as united as any couple I have ever known.

One of my fondest memories is of a panel at Harvard on which sat Irving, Michael Walzer, Martin Peretz, and Norman Podhoretz. I don't recall the subject, but only that Irving, without being the least pushy about it, dominated, lighting up the room with his easy wit and charming good sense. I looked over at Bea, who was sitting a few rows in front of me and to my left, and could see how utterly enthralled she was by her husband's brilliance. After more than 50 years of life together, she still had a crush on him. I didn't have the least difficulty understanding why. ♦

Outsourcing Hate

The burdens of conservatism in the Obama age.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Whew, I'm pooped. Jimmy Carter has got me run ragged with all the hating I'm supposed to do. Jimmy says I'm a racist because I oppose President Obama's health care reform program. Even Jimmy Carter can't be wrong all the time. And since Jimmy Carter has been wrong about every single thing for the past 44 years, maybe—just as a matter of statistical probability—he's right this time.

I hadn't noticed I was a racist, but that was no doubt because I was too busy being a homophobe. Nancy Pelosi says the angry opposition to health care reform is like the angry opposition to gay rights that led to Harvey Milk being shot. Since I do not want America to suffer another Sean Penn movie, I will accept that I'm a homophobe, too. And I'm a male chauvinist due to the fact that I think Nancy Pelosi is blowing smoke—excuse me, carbon neutral, biodegradable airborne particulate matter—out her pantsuit.

Also, I'm pretty sure Rahm Emanuel is Jewish, and you can't be against (or even for) President Obama without the involvement of Rahm Emanuel, so I'm an anti-Semite. Furthermore, although I personally happen to be a libertarian on immigration issues, I do agree with Joe Wilson that you can't say you're expanding health care to the poor and then pretend you're going to turn those poor away if their driver's licenses look a little Xeroxy and what's on their Social Security cards turns out to be a toll-free number for a La Raza hotline. Thus I'm prejudiced against Hispanics as well.

I'm a 61-year-old man with three young children and a yard to rake. While I appreciate the attention from our most ex- of ex-presidents, I'm really too busy to properly accomplish all this loathing and detestation. I quit smoking so I don't even have a lighter to set crosses on fire. We don't happen to own white bed sheets and I'm five nine and—dressed in Ralph Lauren candy stripes and tripping on fitted corners—I'd feel like a fool at Klan rallies (and Tea Parties and Town Hall meetings, to the extent that there's a difference).

Then I have the task of finding people to disrespect, denigrate, and discriminate against. I know people who are black, gay, Jewish, and Hispanic. But, unfortunately, I like them. When you like a person it's difficult to treat him (or even her) with the kind of vigorous and unrestrained bigotry that Jimmy Carter expects me to engage in. I have to go looking for people (people of the proper race, creed, and ethnic origin) whom I can't stand. That jackass from the gas company who kicked my dog (even though Valkyrie hardly broke the skin) won't do. The meter reader is a New Hampshire Yankee.

This is exactly the problem. I live in rural New Hampshire and we are, frankly, short on people who are black, gay, Jewish, and Hispanic. In fact, we're short on people. My town has a population of 301. When it comes to bias we're pretty much reduced to an occasional slur against French-Canadians. But my grandfather was French-Canadian, so I feel that it is somewhat inappropriate for me to express scorn for Frenchies. That is, liberals have a monopoly on self-loathing as a result of neurosis entitlements and affirmative anxiety programs for which I, as a Republican, do not qualify. Thus it is that I have to drive all the way to Dorchester and then out to Provincetown and down

THOMAS FLUHARTY

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to New York City and back to be narrow minded enough to satisfy Jimmy Carter, Nancy Pelosi, Rahm Emmanuel, and their friend Hugo Chávez.

When it comes to oppressing those who are differently gendered, I have the opposite difficulty. With two daughters, a wife, and a female dog that bites, I'm badly outnumbered. It's all I can do to make an occasional wisecrack about time spent in the bathroom (or kennel) with the hairdryer. Even then I end up sleeping in the car. (The dog gets the couch.)

I thought about going to a "Hate Coach" to help me focus my insensitivity and anger. But all the radio hosts were booked months in advance. Instead I've decided to follow the example of large capitalist institutions (which are themselves famous for racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism, maltreatment of illegal aliens, and glass ceilings for Nancy Pelosi, who will become a senator from California about when Arnold Schwarzenegger gets the Billy Crystal role in a remake of *When Harry Met Sally*). I am outsourcing my hate.

I have contracted with al Qaeda, Russia, and Cuba. When it comes to treating women and gays like hell (not to mention Jews), it's hard to beat the Islamic fundamentalists. The Russians are no slouches with a pogrom either, and they are racists *par excellence*. Russians not only vehemently despise blacks, they believe Africa begins at the Ukraine border. And when it comes to repression of Latinos, Cuba takes the gold, tyrannizing 11,184,022 out of 11,184,023 Cubans.

Fortunately for me the Obama administration has taken time out from its pursuit of health care reform to go wobbly in Afghanistan, cuddle up to Havana, and scrap the missile defense system in Eastern Europe to appease Moscow. This puts Osama bin Laden, Raúl Castro, and Vladimir Putin in a position to destroy the minorities and the disadvantaged in America. Of course, they'll destroy the rest of us too. But, meanwhile, I'm spared a lot of effort and aggravation. And I may have time to get all the autumn leaves bagged before the apocalypse. ♦

NEWSCOM

Passive-Aggressive at the U.N.

Obama boldly proclaims a new meekness.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

In his speech to the United Nations last week, President Obama really broke the presidential pattern. At a glance these annual turns before the General Assembly are all alike. The president stands alone, dwarfed by the absurdly outsized dais angled together from blue-green granite, while the extravagantly dressed audience sits through long stretches of stony silence. The speech itself is always grandiose. Even back in the 1990s, when the world appeared to be going swimmingly, relatively speaking, the president of the United States felt he had to inform the assembled nations about "the great challenges" that "still confront us."

Obama at the U.N., September 24

It's a safe bet that great challenges will be confronting us, because even if they weren't, the world's political and diplomatic leaders would invent them to keep themselves busy. Boldly (always boldly) asserting the existence of such challenges lends an urgency that earns the president's speech a mention on the evening news, at least. And it makes the president appear indispensable—not only as the man who calls the world's attention to great challenges but also as the man who, with help from his attendants, will wrestle the challenges to the ground.

Or so it usually went, until last week. This time the new president, in his U.N. debut, tried something altogether different. He worked hard to present himself as just one of the guys—one more world leader yakking it up with all the other world leaders down at the bar at the World Leaders Club.

He began the speech conventionally enough, by proclaiming a bold challenge. "The time has come for the world to move in a new direction." What challenge could be bolder than moving the world in a direction? So far, so normal. But note the passive voice. There was no *we* moving the world, and certainly no *I*. The world would be moving itself.

"No one nation can or should try to dominate another nation," he said, by way of explaining this strange unmoved movement. "No world order that elevates one nation or group of people over another will succeed." The bipolar world of the "long-gone Cold War," in which two powerful nations pushed or pulled the world this way or that, is no longer possible, he said. And then he went an unexpected step further: Even the unipolar world, in which

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one country assumes leadership by virtue of its wealth or moral standing, isn't going to work, either. The president himself would see to that, by relinquishing any claim to indispensability. He was introducing us to the no-polar world.

In the no-polar world, according to the president, everybody is doing everything all at once. "Persistent action," the president called it. "The future will be forged by deeds and not simply words." The deeds, however, will entail a great many words; on most occasions, words exclusively. There will be summits, conferences, negotiations, and consultations. And in this important work, "America intends to keep our end of the bargain," which isn't to say we'll be bossing anybody around.

Take, for instance, the issue of nuclear disarmament. Boldly the president pledged that the United States would "pursue a new agreement with Russia." We would "work with others" to enforce a treaty after we "move forward with ratification." We would "complete a Nuclear Posture Review." And we would "call upon countries to begin negotiations." Pursuing, reviewing, working with, moving forward, and calling upon—dirty work, but somebody has to do it. And when all this labor has ended, the president promised, he will "host a summit" that "will work to strengthen the institutions and initiatives that combat" nuclear proliferation. (The word "combat" was not meant to be an endorsement of violence.) The sentence from the speech that best expresses our new no-polar world was this one: "We will develop regional initiatives with multilateral participation, alongside bilateral negotiations."

We've been told that most presidents appear to the rest of the world to be too aggressive, especially if they're Republicans, and especially when they stand before the General Assembly on that silly dais, talking grandly. But at the U.N. last week the world got its first look at a passive-aggressive president. For now Obama's co-leaders like their new colleague. They rewarded his speech with applause on thirteen occasions. (In his speech to the General Assembly last year, our previous president, Mr. Aggressive-aggressive, wasn't interrupted by applause at all, not once.) Hugo Chávez of Venezuela said he'd been particularly moved by Obama's vision.

Yet there's a kink in the logic of the president's performance, and it will become hard to ignore. For his speech was a particularly grandiose refusal to be grandiose—a high-handed refusal to be high-handed. Who is he, after all, to declare a no-polar world? Only the leader of the most powerful nation in the world would have the nerve to announce to the world that from now on, by his decree, no nation will be more powerful than any other. The declaration subverts itself, cancels itself out, as he'll discover when he comes to reap the dividends of his new no-polar world.

"Those who used to chastise America for acting alone," the president insisted, "cannot now stand by and wait for America to solve the world's problems alone." It's only a matter of time before the other guys at the bar start to think: Oh really? Who are you to say we can't? And what are you going to do about it? ♦

Medicare's New Critics

Why is the Obama administration trashing a health program that works?

BY FRED BARNES

Medicare Advantage (MA) is the crown jewel of government health care programs. It allows seniors to choose a health insurance plan that fits their needs. It gives them extra benefits, including eyeglasses and hearing aids, and pays for preventive care such as physical exams. Under MA, seniors don't need to buy supplementary Medigap insurance. It covers prescription drugs, in many cases beyond what the regular Medicare prescription drug program does. It requires lower deductibles and copayments, and thus is more affordable. Roughly one in four Medicare beneficiaries has signed up for MA. That's 10.6 million seniors. A disproportionately high percentage of them are poor African Americans and Hispanics.

You'd think President Obama and his congressional allies would love MA. It provides almost everything they've been demanding in health care for years. But Obama is trashing it. He claims it will give $177 billion in "overpayments" to insurance companies over the next 10 years. He wants to cut that amount from Medicare Advantage. The Democratic bill drafted by Senate Finance Committee chairman Max Baucus would cut $113 billion. House Democrats would slash $160 billion.

Frugality, however, is not their motive for bludgeoning MA. There are three things about it that Obama and Democrats loathe: (1) It's a Republican program, enacted as part of President Bush's prescription drug bill in 2003; (2) it brings free market competition and private, profit-making insurers into Medicare; (3) it uses a pool of money they'd rather spend on other programs.

And they won't tolerate even the mildest of criticism of their plans

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from providers. After Humana wrote its MA patients about the possible effect of the cuts, Baucus asked the Obama administration to bar insurers from communicating with seniors. HHS dutifully issued a gag order. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader, called this "an outrage" and a violation of the First Amendment right of free speech. He and seven other Republican leaders promised to hold up nominations to Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) posts until the order is lifted.

The Humana letter was entirely inoffensive—except to those eager to gut MA. "Congress is considering significant cuts to Medicare Advantage now," it said, "and your Members of Congress will want to know why this program is valuable to you because those cuts could mean higher costs and benefit reductions to many on Medicare Advantage." Indeed they could.

The letter was an honest warning, while Obama's attacks on MA have been distortions. His only excuse could be that he's been misinformed about the way MA works. But for the supposed master of the health care issue, that would be a weak alibi.

The $177 billion he wants to cut is neither "a 14 percent premium" for insurance companies nor a subsidy for them. The 14 percent is the extra amount Medicare spends on average for MA seniors. It allows them to choose either additional benefits or cost reductions. Obama claims they get "services that Medicare already provides." Not true. They get more.

And if the 14 percent is an "overpayment," it's chiefly an overpayment to seniors who join MA, not to insurers. Their profit margin in MA is a modest 4 percent. Another Obama complaint is that MA "doesn't follow free market principles" and "is not competitively bid." This is a distortion, at best, and confusing. MA injects competition into Medicare. Insurers compete on price and the attractiveness of their product. In effect, they make competitive bids. Seniors are the consumers. They choose.

Despite the president's insistence that no one would lose benefits under Obamacare, the Congressional Budget Office reported last week that the proposed cuts would mean MA-enrolled seniors would lose some of their extra benefits. In truth, they'd probably lose more than that as there would be less competition as insurers dropped out. But if MA grew as expected, without the cuts, it would add 3.4 million beneficiaries, CBO said. Obama's plan would limit growth to 600,000. Also, the loss of benefits would probably cause some in MA to return to regular Medicare, which no doubt would please Obama and Democrats.

Obama and the Democrats won't tolerate even the mildest of criticism of their plans from providers. After Humana wrote its Medicare Advantage patients about the possible effect of the cuts, Baucus asked the administration to bar insurers from communicating with seniors. HHS dutifully issued a gag order.

MA was designed to allow seniors to buy private insurance that gives them better and more comprehensive care than traditional fee-for-service Medicare. The only rub is that MA costs the taxpayers more. Under MA, HHS sets a benchmark. It's a ceiling on how much Medicare will pay for each MA senior. Offers by providers are routinely lower than the benchmark, but insurers don't collect the difference. Seniors get 75 percent in more benefits or cost savings and the remaining 25 percent is returned to the government.

Minorities and the poor have turned out to be wise consumers of health care. A study by professors Adam Atherly and Ken Thorpe at Emory University found that nearly 53 percent of Hispanic seniors and 40 percent of blacks chose MA, as did only 33 percent of white seniors. Seniors with incomes between $10,000 and $20,000 a year also joined MA at a higher rate. One result: They don't have to tap Medicaid to help pay their medical bills.

Medicare Advantage has another, very large benefit. It provides coordinated care, partly through more IT hardware, that allows providers and doctors to keep track of patients and their health. It limits duplicative care. In a sense, MA is the future of medical care, though increased competition and other ways of reducing costs are needed. For Obama and the Democrats, however, MA lacks an important feature. "They are not getting a political advantage from Medicare Advantage," says health care expert Grace-Marie Turner of the Galen Institute. That's a sad fact, but true. ♦

Sarkozy, Brown, and Obama

Obama's Iran Formula

Speak timidly and don't carry a stick.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

When Barack Obama strode on stage to scold Iran for its failure to disclose the existence of a second uranium-enrichment facility in the country, his message was timid and at times almost apologetic. When the tough language came, it was because French president Nicolas Sarkozy had taken the podium. Sarkozy excoriated the Iranians for their deception, saying that the revelations have caused "a very severe confidence crisis" and issued a time-specific warning about oft-threatened (but never implemented) sanctions. "We cannot let the Iranian leaders gain time while the centrifuges are spinning," he declared. "If by December there is not an in-depth change by the Iranian leaders, sanctions will have to be imposed."

In fact, it was the third time in a week that Sarkozy had been tougher than the U.S. president on nuclear issues. Earlier in the week, the French president had insisted that the United States strengthen language in a nonproliferation resolution before the U.N. Security Council and admonished other world leaders for addressing nuclear issues without focusing their discussion on Iran and North Korea.

British prime minister Gordon Brown joined Obama and Sarkozy for the statement Friday. He, too, was stern. "The level of deception by the Iranian government, and the scale of what we believe is the breach of international commitments, will shock and anger the whole international community, and it will harden our resolve."

Obama should have been taking notes. Three times in his brief statement Obama used bizarre couplets to soften his already gentle critique of the Iranian regime:

> As the international community knows, this is not the first time that Iran has concealed information about its nuclear program. Iran has a right to peaceful nuclear power that meets the energy needs of its people.
>
> And:
>
> It is time for Iran to act immediately to restore the confidence of the international community by fulfilling its international obligations. We remain committed to serious, meaningful engagement with Iran to address the nuclear issue through the P5+1 negotiations.
>
> And:
>
> To put it simply: Iran must comply with U.N. Security Council resolutions and make clear it is willing to meet its responsibilities as a member of the community of nations. We have offered Iran a clear path toward greater international integration if it lives up to its obligations, and that offer stands.

The offer stands? Iran has been caught lying about its nuclear program three times in the last decade. The mullahs fixed the June 12 election and violently suppressed the brave Iranians who had the audacity to say so. The Iranian regime is continuing to train, fund, and arm terrorists in Iraq and Afghanistan whose primary purpose is the killing of American soldiers. And the U.S. State Department considers Iran the world's leading state sponsor of terror.

For another American president, any one of these things might be cause to seek the destabilization of the regime, and all of them together might be cause to seek its removal. Not for Obama. He is determined to pursue "engagement that is honest and grounded in mutual respect," as he has put it. On Friday, a senior administration official briefed reporters shortly after the statement. The official referred to the October 1 negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 negotiating group (made up of the permanent members of the Security Council and Germany) as an "opportunity" for Iran. "This is going to be a critical opportunity for Iran to demonstrate that it's willing to address

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the very serious concerns that have been raised about its intentions in the nuclear area." At one point, the official called the upcoming talks a "test" for Iran.

But of course Iran has failed this test before—and dozens of others. It failed this test repeatedly under the Bush administration, as it steadfastly refused to address any of the concerns that have been raised about its intentions with its nuclear program. And it failed it two weeks ago, when it submitted a defiant 10-page response to international community demands that it suspend uranium enrichment and return to the negotiating table.

The fundamental problem with the Obama administration's approach to Iran is that it treats the nature of the regime as an unknown. Back in June, after a week of mayhem and murder by the regime in the streets of Tehran, Obama said: "I'm very concerned, based on some of the tenor and tone of the statements that have been made, that the government of Iran recognize that the world is watching. And how they approach and deal with people who are, through peaceful means, trying to be heard will, I think, send a pretty clear signal to the international community about what Iran is—and is not."

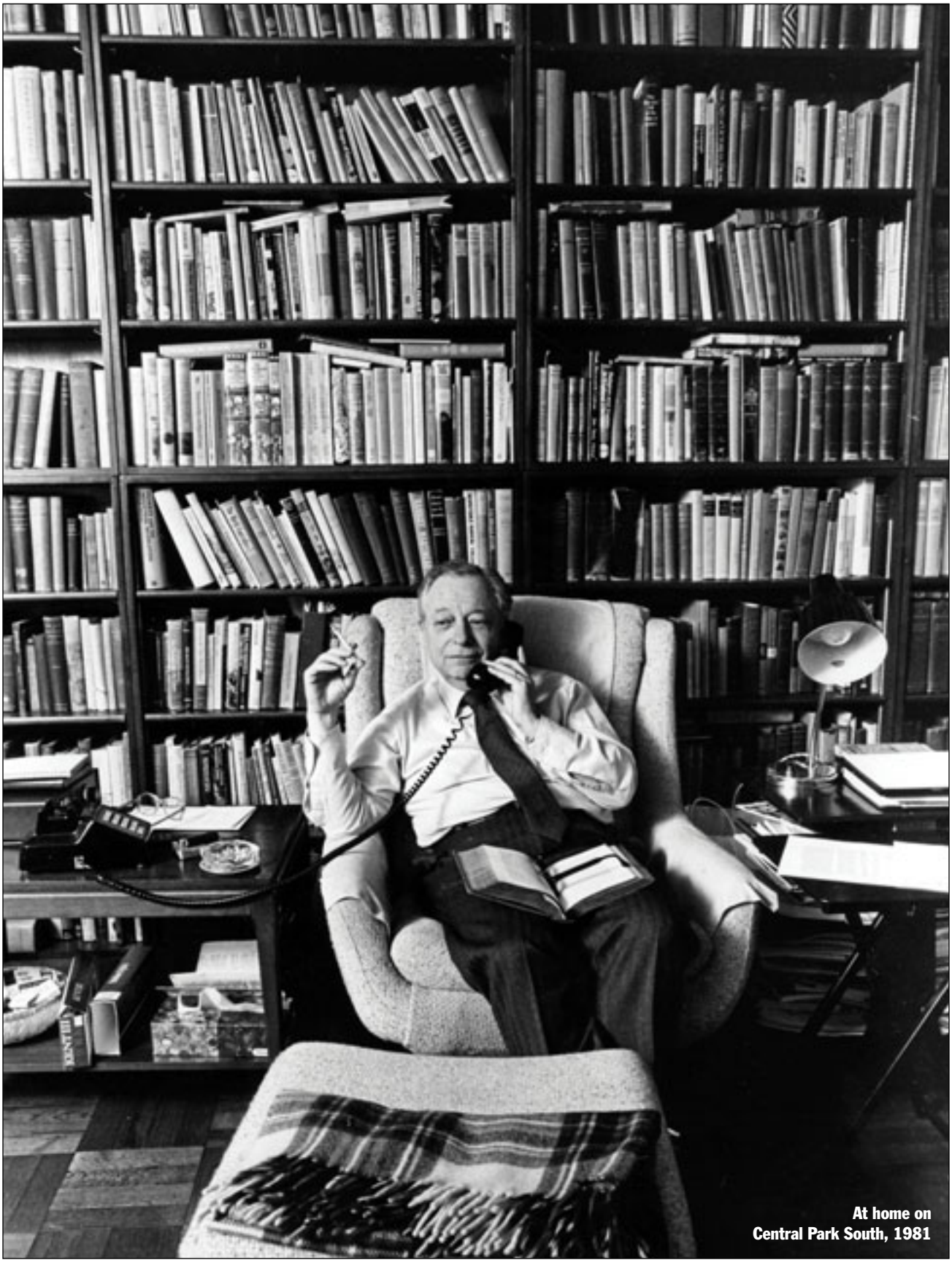
He was right. And the signal was clear to everyone but those determined to ignore it: The Iranian regime is corrupt, despotic, and willing to use terror internally and externally to achieve its goals. And the lesson of its repeated lies about its nuclear program is equally clear: The Iranian regime will stop at nothing to acquire nuclear weapons.

In some respects, the news of the second Iranian facility makes it harder for Obama to pretend that the Iranian regime is something it's not. And one line in particular from his statement Friday would seem to complicate his engagement-at-all-costs strategy. "The size and configuration of this facility is inconsistent with a peaceful program."

It is a line that the U.S. intelligence community would not allow George W. Bush to use. Although Western intelligence services had been looking at this facility for years, they had been unable—or unwilling—to draw conclusions about its purpose. When Obama was first briefed on the facility—as president-elect—the CIA had not determined that the facility was for the production of highly enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon.

We are left with many questions. What, if anything, changed? Was there new intelligence? If so, what is it? If not, why did the CIA change its conclusion and allow the president to use this language? When did Obama learn that the benefit of the doubt he had been giving Iran on its nuclear program was, in effect, helping the Iranian regime perpetuate its lies?

Perhaps most important, will this public revelation of the facility create the political pressure necessary to persuade Obama to finally get tough with Iran? ♦



At home on Central Park South, 1981

KEITH MEYERS / THE NEW YORK TIMES

My Irving Kristol and Ours

What the master taught his apprentices

By Mary Eberstadt

A young woman came by to visit the *Policy Review* offices a few weeks ago. Fresh out of a prestigious graduate school, enamored of both philosophy and creative writing, she'd been sent by a mutual friend and was looking for work. How, she wondered, might someone who loved reading and writing, but had no background in publishing or anything else of professional relevance, break into what used to be called "the higher journalism"—and make a living at it?

Though not exactly the stuff of Proust's *madeleine*, her question did send me wandering back in time. Twenty-five years ago, in 1984, I'd been a girl much like her—straight out of college with similar interests and questions, as eager to make a mark as a writer as I was unqualified for any such thing. Unlike her, however, I'd gotten lucky—about as lucky under the circumstances as it was possible to be. Back when I was in her shoes, I'd had the fantastic good fortune of putting that same question—and as it later turned out, many more as well—to an already legendary writer and editor named Irving Kristol, who died last week at the age of 89.

"More than anyone alive, perhaps, Irving Kristol can take the credit for reversing the direction of American political culture." These words taken from the *Nation* a few years back signal the Irving Kristol the world knows best: the godfather of neoconservatism. As that other titan of neoconservative thought, Norman Podhoretz, has suggested, "grandfather" may be the better label, given the generations of writers influenced by that family of ideas. For years now, at least since Peter Steinfels's 1979 book *The Neoconservatives*, articles and books and documentaries—including several essays by Irving himself—have wrestled with the question of his singular and manifold influence, in the process turning Kristol-gazing into a minor industry of its own.* Cold Warrior, ex-Trotskyist, coeditor with Stephen Spender of *Encounter*, coeditor with Nathan Glazer and Daniel Bell of the *Public Interest*, founder with Owen Harries of the *National Interest*, public intellectual for nearly seven decades, contributor during those same years to the most influential journals and magazines of the day, from *Commentary* and the *New Leader* half a century ago to the *New York Times Magazine* and the *Wall Street Journal*, member of countless boards and all-around intellectual impresario: These are just some of the faces of Irving with which critics and fans alike must reckon.

Yet if history has given us two, three, many Irving Kristols, it has also stinted on the Irving whom I and many other people were privileged to know best. That is the amusing, avuncular, sometimes delphic boss we saw day in and day out thanks to the unique system of apprenticeship that he devised for the *Public Interest*. For almost two years between 1983 and 1985, I was one of the interns privileged to toil for great profit (if little salary) in the tiny, smoky, one-room magazine office in New York—that "halfway house," as David Skinner accurately dubbed it in these pages a few years ago, "for dozens and dozens of young assistants, who typically arrived fresh out of college and stayed a year or at most two before leaving for grad school, or government, or other jobs in journalism."

Only slightly larger than a college dormitory room, that *Public Interest* office was as stuffed with manuscripts and books and magazines as it was with people maneuvering around all the obstacles, including two or three interns, a managing editor, Irving's longtime (and universally adored) secretary Rita Lazzaro, and of course Irving himself, issuing a steady stream of wisecracks, phone calls, and dictated

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*Best by far are a 1995 volume, *The Neoconservative Imagination: Essays in Honor of Irving Kristol*, which features a distinguished cast of writers paying their own tributes to Irving, and an elegiac David Skinner essay, "Farewell to the *Public Interest*," published in these pages in 2005 when the influential quarterly closed.

correspondence into the chaos. There were also the phones ringing on everyone else's desks, the banging Selectric II typewriters, the coffee cups, ashtrays, and cigarettes; some of the interns (like Irving too, back then) puffed away incessantly. Everyone including the boss ate lunch at their desks most days, adding further to the clutter and assault on the senses; and any authors or other hapless types visiting the magazine were further shoehorned into our hazy, bustling little office cubby. In truth, an environment more inimical

Fellow Cold Warriors: Sidney Hook and Irving Kristol in the 1950s

to concentration and privacy can scarcely be imagined. On the other hand, as many were to find out, neither could a more fascinating or rewarding place to pass the days.

I arrived on the fabled doorstep in 1983. At that moment Irving was 63, the magazine, which later moved to Washington, was still in New York and it was roughly halfway through a tenure as remarkable for its longevity (40 years) as for the enduring high quality of its pages. Like most such hopefuls who made their way to Irving, I'd been sent by someone else who knew the shop—in this case Jeremy Rabkin, a professor at Cornell—and also shared the same simple if grandiose ambition of the other interns: We all wanted to be writers when we grew up.

Unlike most of the other helpers hired for the place, though—and herewith my perversely unique credential for offering an essay about Irving—I was unqualified for any such thing: no published work whatsoever to my credit, no background in economics or public policy, no understanding of urban planning, welfare initiatives, or other subjects for which the magazine's pages were renowned. Similarly did I lack any editorial or fact-checking experience, unless one counts a job in college spent poring over the footnotes in that undiscovered masterpiece of opinion journalism, *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*. And when asked by then-managing editor Mark Lilla to produce a piece of writing for Irving to read, I proudly brandished one document that has probably never been used as an entrée to journalism either before or since: a 40-page college paper on "Immanuel Kant's Theory of Aesthetic Judgment." Book Three.

As Irving cheerfully pointed out during the job interview, such was not exactly the stuff of which Horatio Alger stories in journalism are made, and he further observed that he could see no good reason to hire me. But he just as cheerfully did it anyway, thus fortuitously throwing me into the company of a number of other apprentices who by contrast had begun making marks of their own. This cast in 1984 included Tod Lindberg, who had cofounded a magazine at the University of Chicago and was already a paid contributor to numerous magazines (and subsequently an author, columnist, newspaper editor, Hoover Institution research fellow, and now editor of *Policy Review*). Managing editor Mark Lilla would go on to become a professor of social thought at the University of Chicago (and, as it turned out, an itinerant professional critic of his former boss). Thomas J. Main, another assistant editor, had already transformed thinking in public policy circles about a critical social issue, with a seminal essay in the *Public Interest* on "The Homeless of New York."

Those both ahead of and behind us in the intern line showed similar seriousness of purpose. Foreign policy strategist Robert Kagan had passed through the place earlier, as had at various times Steven Lagerfeld (editor of the *Wilson Quarterly*), author and publisher Robert Asahina, defense expert Seth Cropsey, journalist and *Reader's Digest* editor Rachel Flick Wildavsky, the late magazine editor and author Michael Scully, and a slew of others launched into a life of journalism or politics or both by their time at the *PI*. The masthead in the years to follow would witness a similar procession: Richard Starr (now deputy editor of this magazine), columnist and author Diana West, speechwriter and political consultant Daniel Casse, and David Skinner, editor of the National Endowment for the Humanities' magazine *Humanities*, among others. All these and more had Irving Kristol to thank, whether they ever did so or not, for their first and formative experience of what it meant to read and edit and write their way into the world.

This track record is all the more striking because

Irving's intern "program" was less an actual curriculum than a glorified system of learning in a far more effective way—mainly, by grappling with the work of the distinguished authors the magazine published, and by eavesdropping on Irving's dictation and phone calls in that teeny-tiny office. Such eavesdropping, consisting as it did of listening to Irving talk with some of the most interesting and influential people around, turned out to be essential to our crash course in journalism.

So was the *Public Interest*'s salary, which was so low that it was practically guaranteed to jump-start our literary ambitions. To be fair, the workload of a quarterly journal was light enough for Irving to grant us the boon of a four-day work week. But those Fridays off were meant to be used productively, reading and writing. Interns were expected to publish—if not in the *PI* then elsewhere, and if not for literary glory then because it was the only way of paying the rent. Getting a piece into the hallowed precincts of Norman Podhoretz's *Commentary* (where Norman's deputy Neal Kozodoy policed the pages with a legendary editorial ferocity) was a particular coup for those who managed it; so too was any appearance in Bob Tyrrell's *American Spectator* or Bob Bartley's *Wall Street Journal*. Writing and publishing as Irving expected his interns to do also meant making more connections in the wider world, of course. It was this fact, and not the sinister imaginings of subsequent critics of some neoconservative "cabal," that helped Irving's apprentices end up where they did.

Fortunately for us, Irving could no more help teaching young people than we could help taking his extraordinary interest in us for granted. *Be brief*: This was something we learned (or tried to) from Irving's dictations; long before email and instant messaging, his many letters covering all kinds of ground were typically just one or two sentences long. About editing: *Always just cut the text if you have to*, he advised, *never add to what's there*. How well he understood that most writers over-think and over-write, typically burying the lamp of their thought under bushels of dead words. About responding to critics en masse in a published venue: *When answering letters written in response to something you've written, don't use the authors' names. Just lay out their common themes. That way you won't get caught up personally and can just stick to the ideas.*

He taught a thing or two about religion and philosophy, too, to the long line of twentysomethings, some of whom outside the office lived a creed of personal nihilism whose origins he understood better than we did. A student of Gnostic movements throughout history, he recognized far better than we their reappearance on the world stage in modern and postmodern guises. "Think right, live left," we used to joke—though not around Irving; it was, we sensed, probably the one joke he wouldn't have shared.

In fact, though, he seemed to find just about everything else amusing—including some things that we interns did not think amusing at all, such as our all-too-serious ambitious young selves. This brings us to another fact about Irving's intern program: It worked because of his profound understanding of what young people are made of. He knew—and often wrote about—just how deeply modern and postmodern mores had penetrated into young souls. Decades before anyone but George Gilder and Midge Decter were saying so, he knew also that the sexual revolution had been a nearly unmitigated disaster for many people and their families, especially though not only the poor, and especially though not only young women. He knew, in other words, just how consequential the social changes from the 1960s on had been for one particularly vulnerable subset: the young.

That was how he could speak with such authority about "their turbulent sexuality, their drug addiction, their desperate efforts to invent new 'lifestyles,' and their popular music, at once Dionysiac and mournful." I remember those words leaping from the page upon reading them years later. In New York in the 1980s, new wave and punk rock were still reigning but on the way out, hip-hop and techno on the way in, and like everyone else I'd spent plenty of time slumming in clubs and other waystations of the popular culture, imbibing nihilism. Yet here was Irving, a 65-year-old bookworm who probably couldn't have found CBGB's if he were dropped off in front of it on a Friday night (and certainly wouldn't have gone in if he had), managing a decade later in just a few words to speak more truth about the scene than any of its itinerant habitués.

Irving understood what few in our post-authority age understand, which is that a great deal of contemporary youthful anomie is a cry of frustration against the disappearance of orthodoxy itself—and a substitute search for something higher than the low down, dirty, stifling counterculture. "Young people," he observed to a group of divinity professors and students back in 1979, "do not want to hear that the church is becoming modern. Go tell the young people that the message of the church is to wear sackcloth and ashes and to walk on nails to Rome, and they would do it." Furthermore, "young people, especially, are looking for religion so desperately that they are inventing new ones. They should not have to invent new ones; the old religions are pretty good." These knowing words, incidentally, were written on the cusp of the evangelical explosion, and well before the unforeseen turn to neo-orthodoxy by small but significant numbers of young Catholics and Jews.

Working for Irving at the *Public Interest* was an education in other unexpected ways. In particular, it left most of us permanently immune to at least two prominent stereo-

types about neoconservatism that have been making the fevered rounds of commentary ever since. One of these was the charge that those on the right were somehow in it for the money—that nefarious corporate largesse rather than actual conviction accounted for the swelling ranks of young neoconservatives and conservatives. Two-thirds of my *Public Interest* salary, I remember smartingly to this day, went to rent a fifth-floor walk-up in a neighborhood that kids today would call "sketchy" if they were given to understatement. During those years the assistant editors lived off the free lunch Irving provided at Hamburger Heaven (often eating like trenchermen to make the food last into the night) and, many nights, on the free meatballs at happy hour at O'Lunney's bar on Second Avenue. Sometimes for entertainment in the most thriving city on earth, we'd get together and play the board game *Jeopardy* late into the night—because at least that was something we could do for free. (When one of the players, John Podhoretz, became an actual *Jeopardy* champion years later, it was clear that something good had come from our penury.) So much for the neoconservative gravy train!

Irving and his wife Bea, for their part, lived in an inviting and book-stuffed apartment near the New York Athletic Club on Central Park South—in which cozy quarters they made a habit of generously entertaining the interns alongside established writers and other prominent guests. For that reason among others, Irving's interns felt as warmly toward Bea Kristol as they were simultaneously in awe of her public persona, Gertrude Himmelfarb, historian. Irving himself encouraged such intimidation via his omnipresent adulation of her; he made sure we interns were aware of her many distinguished works, and remarked more than once in the office that in a hundred years' time, Bea would be the intellectual whose oeuvre would be left standing. Like Midge Decter, whose offices at the Committee for the Free World were at that time another hangout for young conservatives in New York, Bea took both a personal and an intellectual interest in Irving's apprentices, reading our fledgling writing and unfailingly extending to all the pleasure of her conversation and company.

A couple of times a year the mail would bring individual invitations, set out in Bea's perfect and perfectly tiny handwriting, for a soirée at the Kristols' apartment. There the office team got to meet the regulars on their social and intellectual list—Walter and Irene Berns, Martin and Sydnee Lipset, Midge Decter and Norman Podhoretz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Robert Nisbet, H. J. Kaplan, Roger Starr, George Will, Bob Bartley, and many other writers and editors who would be influencing ideas and politics for years to come. And these are just names from an aperture of two years in the mid 1980s; one can only imagine the parade in full across the decades. Also in the Kristols' apartment, of course, the *PI* interns met the rest of the family. Their children Bill and Liz knew most everyone on the masthead, and many interns over the years became personal friends. Such are among the true and apparently terrifying origins of the "neoconservative media machine" that has since given so many swooning critics a case of the vapors.

The second stereotype that anyone who actually worked around Irving finds very funny in retrospect is the conflation of neoconservatism with Zionism. Going through piles of mail in the hobbity *Public Interest* office, one would occasionally come across a crazy letter—the kind that, back before email made all communications look alike, was identifiable by caked glue and cutout letters, say, or elaborate scrawling script running over both sides of the envelope (always a bad sign). Often such missives turned out to be passionately executed exercises in anti-Semitism, undertaken by correspondents who knew all too well that somewhere between the Trilateral Commission and the *Public Interest* offices lurked a conspiracy of Jews trying to rule the world. In fairness to them, of course, these correspondents may just have been ahead of their time; after all, any number of authors complaining about neocons in recent years have managed to make related, feverish cases, and in some of the best publications—rather than, say, in red magic marker on a dirty envelope.

Sometimes whichever intern was lowest on the totem pole would read aloud these ravings about how the *Public Interest* magazine was the red-hot center of one or another Jewish conspiracy—a ritual that we junior editors found all the more entertaining since most of us during those particular years were cradle Catholics. If the offices of neoconservative magazines really were what so many hysterical critics before and since have insisted, i.e., treacherous tools doing Israel's bidding, it was clear from the kind of people working in them that these Jews must be a lot dumber than their enemies otherwise seemed to think.

A one- or two-year berth at the *Public Interest* also enabled the apprentices to study Irving Kristol in one other way that demands to be mentioned, because it is the most significant of all: as a writer and man of letters par excellence, a virtuoso of his chosen literary form.

None of which is to say that Irving comported himself thus. As Nathan Glazer notes in his essay in *The Neoconservative Imagination*, Irving himself never kept track of his own publications, and "responded with disdain that he keeps no bibliography of his writing, that he leaves that to the scholars, who do indeed keep coming up with pieces he has forgotten" (it is one of many virtues of that book that compiler Mark Gerson has appended his own best stab at

a thorough bibliography at the end). Nor did Irving write books proper, which might have made following his chain of thought somewhat easier (though he once told Tod Lindberg and me of having written, and then burned, a youthful novel). Rather, his chosen vessel throughout the decades was the essay—that deceptively limited-seeming form that is nevertheless, as Aldous Huxley once put it, "a literary device for saying almost everything about almost anything."

And so Irving did, in one venue after another, as the piles of magazines around the office went to show—in *Commentary*, the *Reporter*, the *New Leader*, *Encounter*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times Magazine*, and other venues where one could then measure out one's thoughts in thousands rather than mere hundreds of words. These essays are almost invariably pithy, but they stood on the shoulders of prodigious reading and learning. Irving read incessantly—not only magazines but books, and not only books but good and deep ones—as well as murder mysteries and English novels, Straussian arcana and business lore, everyone else's manuscripts, and a great deal else. That depth is part of why his essays reveal not one writerly virtue or two, but the whole tool kit: epigrams, irony, sustained logical argument, humor, dramatic closings, a knack for translating arcane points of argument into lively prose.

So many of Irving's one-liners have passed into the vernacular that even some of his admirers may not recognize their origins: "The major political event of the twentieth century is the death of socialism." "An intellectual may be defined as a man who speaks with general authority about a subject on which he has no particular competence." "The danger facing American Jews today is not that Christians want to persecute them but that Christians want to marry them." "The enemy of liberal capitalism today is not so much socialism as nihilism." "Democracy does not guarantee equality of conditions—it only guarantees equality of opportunity."

Yet the flair on display in this body of work goes beyond such *bons mots*. His regular *Wall Street Journal* essays, for example, are easily among the best the newspaper has ever published, as are those he did for the *New York Times Magazine*. Many of his longer essays in the "higher journalism" genre, the ones that show up in the collected volumes, are truly great, far outlasting their immediate moments and capable of being read and re-read with profit long after whatever ostensibly occasioned them had passed from the scene. This is true whether the occasion was the American bicentennial ("Adam Smith and the Spirit of Capitalism," 1976), say, or a chance gathering of professors and students of divinity ("Christianity, Judaism, and Socialism," 1979), or even—witness numerous articles on socialism and Freudianism—an entire intellectual movement.

In "God and the Psychoanalysts," for example—written in 1949, a moment when Freudian thought was pre-

The editor at his post, New York, 1976

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eminent, and decades before it would finally be forced into intellectual exile by the accumulated weight of criticism from all sides—Irving not only anticipates the coming psychoanalytic crackup, but also foresees *why* it is coming: because the understanding of human nature on which the Freudian edifice depends is itself fundamentally cracked. Man's "flight from God," he observed in this essay written six decades ago, "has also been a flight from his true self, which had been made in His image. So it was that Freud could build a theory of human nature on the basis of his experience with hysterics and neurotics." This fact, Irving could see clearly, was "a unique and strange achievement which testifies to our modern psychic equilibrium."

It is this gift for penetrating through any number of epiphenomena to the real fault lines beneath that transforms so much of Irving's writings from opinion pieces into lasting essays and at times profound meditations. Consider as one more example a *Commentary* essay written almost fifty years later, in 1994, humorously (if also bitingly) titled "Why Religion Is Good for the Jews." Ostensibly occasioned by a now-forgotten news blip—a prominent fundamentalist's remark that only Christians would

get into heaven when the time came—it makes points far less transient than the event. First comes a gentle if rather obvious religious lesson ("As it happens, Jewish theological teachings do not recognize the doctrine of a second coming of Jesus (or a first), so it is hard to see why Jews should take such offense at these statements"). And second comes the inevitable wisecrack: "It is almost as if Jewish organizations, having fought (quite successfully) against Jewish exclusion from country clubs, now feel it necessary to take on the specter of discrimination in that Great Country Club in the Sky." Both moves are vintage Irving.

President Reagan at the American Enterprise Institute in December 1988, with Irving Kristol, AEI president Christopher DeMuth, and Gerald Ford.

Reading through them again now suggests that two features of these essays have gone chronically under-appreciated by critics. One is the importance of religion to even his earliest thought. "I was born 'theo-tropic,'" Irving observes in his autobiographical memoir written in 1995, "and not even my dismal experience of a decadent orthodoxy could affect this basic predisposition." At another, earlier point in his writing he describes religion as always his favorite subject. It is from religion that Irving reasons time and again to the conservative conclusion that politics is not everything—one of several convictions unifying his thought across the years.

This fact also gives the lie to the frequently thrown contemporary jab about neoconservatism being somehow "messianic," an idiocy that no one actually reading the written record could pen with a straight face. Irving himself specified several times over the decades that neoconservatism was not a movement but a "persuasion" or "impulse" ("more descriptive than prescriptive," as he put it once). Moreover, his most explicit writing on the subject—his introduction to the 1983 collection *Reflections of a Neoconservative*—discusses several points he deems integral to neoconservatism, not one of which concerns foreign policy, which is where the bugaboo about "messianism" is typically lodged.

"The real trouble," he wrote in surveying American society for another jewel of an essay, a 1972 piece called "About Equality,"

> is not sociological or economic at all. It is that the "middling" nature of a bourgeois society falls short of corresponding adequately to the full range of man's spiritual nature, which makes more than middling demands upon the universe, and demands more than middling answers. . . . [The critics of bourgeois society] may speak about "equality"; they may even be obsessed with statistics about equality; but it is a religious vacuum—a lack of meaning in their own lives, and the absence of a sense of larger purpose in their society—that terrifies them and provokes them to "alienation" and unappeasable indignation. It is not too much to say that it is the death of God, not the emergence of any new social or economic trends, that haunts bourgeois society. And this problem is far beyond the competence of politics to deal with.

If these are the words of a messianic thinker, then he is writing himself out of a job.

Similarly, not nearly enough has been made of Irving's sense of humor (perhaps not surprisingly, given the dour critics who have made themselves neoconservatism's Monday morning quarterbacks). Many essays sparkle with good-natured wit—as did Irving in person—and never more than when he is self-deprecating. "I really cannot believe that Americans are a historically unique and chosen people," he observes drolly in one example. "I am myself a Jew and an American, and with all due respect to the Deity, I think the odds are prohibitive that He would have gone out of His way to choose me twice over."

This comedic flair is evident early in Irving's writings. Two of his first *Commentary* essays are overt treat-

ments of humor, one of them the magnificently wistful "Is Jewish Humor Dead?" (1951). Then there are the covert treatments. Another early essay in *Commentary* notes of some forgotten American humorists that "they may not be entirely out of mind, but they are quite out of print—deservedly so." Similarly, in an essay written in 1979 (itself slyly titled "Confessions of a True, Self-Confessed—Perhaps the Only—'Neoconservative'"), he issues his opinion of Peter Steinfels's *The Neoconservatives* thus: "I do not wish to suggest that the book is without merit. There is, for example, an excellent couple of sentences on page 4."

To write about Irving Kristol without understanding either his ineradicable respect for religion or his liberal sense of humor is like trying to describe food without tasting or smelling it. Facts not always being stubborn things, many self-appointed critics of neoconservatism have nonetheless done just that in absurdly offering up the portrait of a godless neoconservative ideologue. Even so, one suspects another, deeper reason for why certain detractors have failed to give Irving his literary due: their resentment of his longstanding and resolutely unapologetic attack on the counterculture and its legacy.

This is the Irving whom critics have truly wanted to hate: Irving the social conservative. As he put it in one 1993 essay that made waves called "My Cold War," what saddened him above all were "the clear signs of rot and decadence germinating within American society—a rot and decadence that was no longer the consequence of liberalism but was the actual agenda of contemporary liberalism. . . . It is an ethos that aims simultaneously at political and social collectivism on the one hand, and moral anarchy on the other. It cannot win, but it can make us all losers." Today, of course, many on the right as well as the left would drive social conservatives from the fold if they could. How quickly they have forgotten just which opinion writers consistently delivered the sharpest and most knowing critiques of modern morals during the past several decades—Irving Kristol, Norman Podhoretz, Midge Decter, and other prominent neoconservatives. Social conservatism itself has been a bigger tent than is typically appreciated.

All of which brings us back to that little smoky office a quarter century ago. One day shortly before leaving the *Public Interest* for good, I was treated by Irving to one other rite of passage in the program, a lunch away from our desks at the New York Athletic Club. He mentioned something that seemed surprising—that, in the long run, he thought the internship program would prove more influential even than the magazine itself. I thought at the time he was referring to the careers that many of his former apprentices would go on to, and maybe he was. A quarter century later, though, I like to think that there may have been another, deeper way in which we interns had given something back to Irving.

After all, for years and years that one-room office amounted to a two-way eavesdropping street. In some sense that we didn't understand, we interns were all babbling Londoners to his pacing Dickens, the background voices to many a passing or written thought. Maybe listening to us was part of how Irving came to know what many people, including many people fighting over neoconservatism today, did not. The figurative kids of the world after the social revolutions of the sixties weren't quite all right after all—but they were worth trying to reach anyway, in whole or in part, one essay, one argument, at a time.

One afternoon in 1985 we were all sitting around the office when a call came in from one of the television networks. Someone was putting together a panel show on censorship, and they were interested in hearing Irving discuss one more essay that had turned into a lightning rod, "Pornography, Obscenity, and the Case for Censorship." Would Irving care to make an appearance on the show? they asked. No, he told them, Irving would not. Why not? Because, Irving deadpanned to us, he never did television. He had done it just once before and regretted it—because "when I saw myself on film, I couldn't believe it. I did not in fact look anything like what I know I look like, which is Cary Grant."

In a way that seems impossible to convey, he *was* just such an outsized, witty, urbane, and perpetually amusing gentleman to his apprentices—and by extension to the many other people he advised over the years, from his business students at NYU to the parade of writers and editors and politicians and more who sought his counsel. Such is even true of the readers who never knew him, but who found in his literary company a most agreeable and persuasive companion.

The critics who have charged neoconservatism with "selling out" its intellectual pedigree have gotten one thing right: *Any* writer following in Irving's footsteps would likely look inferior by comparison. But that does not make his intellectual heirs and beneficiaries wrong. When all is said and done about the contested particulars—the neocons, the magazines, the Jews, the Irvings both real and imaginary about whom his biographers may quarrel till the time comes when we find out who really does get into that Great Country Club in the sky—we are left with the same Irving who's been there all along. That's the writer whose lightning pen willed a whole new political world to life and made a great many people proud to consider themselves his fellow conservatives. Neither his personal nor his literary example will likely be matched in the higher journalism, or what's left of it, ever again. ♦

How Not to Defeat al Qaeda

To win in Afghanistan requires troops on the ground

By Frederick W. Kagan & Kimberly Kagan

President Obama has announced his intention to conduct a review of U.S. strategy in Afghanistan from first principles before deciding whether or not to accept General Stanley McChrystal's proposed strategy and request for more forces. This review is delaying the decision. If the delay goes on much longer, it will force military leaders either to rush the deployment in a way that increases the strain on soldiers and their families or to lose the opportunity to affect the spring campaign. The president's determination to make sure of his policy before committing the additional 40,000 or so forces required by General McChrystal's campaign plan is, nevertheless, understandable. The conflict in Afghanistan is complex, and it is important that we understand what we are trying to do.

At the center of the complexity is a deceptively simple question: If the United States is fighting a terrorist organization—al Qaeda—why must we conduct a counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan against two other groups—the Quetta Shura Taliban and the Haqqani Network—that have neither the objective nor the capability to attack the United States outside Afghanistan? Shouldn't we fight a terrorist organization with a counterterrorist strategy, customarily defined as relying on long-range precision weapons and Special Forces raids to eliminate key terrorist leaders? Why must we become embroiled in the politics and social dysfunctionality of the fifth-poorest country in the world? Surely, some surrounding President Obama appear to be arguing, it makes more sense to confine our operations narrowly to the aim we care most about: defeating the terrorists and so preventing them from killing Americans.

This argument rests on two essential assumptions: that al Qaeda is primarily a terrorist group and that it is separable from the insurgent groups among whom it lives and through whom it operates. Let us examine these assumptions.

Al Qaeda is a highly ideological organization that openly states its aims and general methods. It seeks to replace existing governments in the Muslim world, which it regards as apostate, with a regime based on its own interpretation of the Koran and Muslim tradition. It relies on a reading of some of the earliest Muslim traditions to justify its right to declare Muslims apostates if they do not behave according to its own interpretation of Islam and to kill them if necessary. This reading is actually nearly identical to a belief that developed in the earliest years of Islam after Muhammad's death, which mainstream Muslims quickly rejected as a heresy (the Kharijite movement), and it remains heretical to the overwhelming majority of Muslims today. The question of the religious legality of killing Muslims causes tensions within al Qaeda and between al Qaeda and other Muslims, leading to debates over the wisdom of fighting the "near enemy," i.e., the "apostate" Muslim governments in the region, or the "far enemy," i.e., the West and especially the United States, which al Qaeda believes provides indispensable support to these "apostate" governments. The 9/11 attack resulted from the temporary triumph of the "far enemy" school.

Above all, al Qaeda does not see itself as a terrorist organization. It defines itself as the vanguard in the Leninist sense: a revolutionary movement whose aim is to take power throughout the Muslim world. It is an insurgent organization with global aims. Its use of terrorism (for which it has developed lengthy and abstruse religious justifications) is simply a reflection of its current

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situation. If al Qaeda had the ability to conduct guerrilla warfare with success, it would do so. If it could wage conventional war, it would probably prefer to do so. It has already made clear that it desires to wage chemical, biological, and nuclear war when possible.

In this respect, al Qaeda is very different from terrorist groups like the IRA, ETA, and even Hamas. Those groups used or use terrorism in pursuit of political objectives confined to a specific region—expelling the British from Northern Ireland, creating an independent or autonomous Basque land, expelling Israel from Palestine. The Ulstermen did not seek to destroy Britain or march on London; the Basques are not in mortal combat with Spaniards; and even Hamas seeks only to drive the Jews out of Israel, not to exterminate them throughout the world. Al Qaeda, by contrast, seeks to rule all the world's 1.5 billion Muslims and to reduce the non-Muslim peoples to subservience. For al Qaeda, terrorism is a start, not an end nor even the preferred means. It goes without saying that the United States and the West would face catastrophic consequences if al Qaeda ever managed to obtain the ability to wage war by different means. Defeating al Qaeda requires more than disrupting its leadership cells so that they cannot plan and conduct attacks in the United States. It also requires preventing al Qaeda from obtaining the capabilities it seeks to wage real war beyond terrorist strikes.

Al Qaeda does not exist in a vacuum like the SPECTRE of James Bond movies. It has always operated in close coordination with allies. The anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s was the crucible in which al Qaeda leaders first bonded with the partners who would shelter them in Afghanistan. Osama bin Laden met Jalaluddin Haqqani, whose network is now fighting U.S. forces in eastern Afghanistan, as both were raising support in Saudi Arabia for the mujahedeen in the 1980s. They then fought the Soviets together. When the Soviet Army withdrew in 1989 (for which bin Laden subsequently took unearned credit), Haqqani seized the Afghan city of Khost and established his control of the surrounding provinces of Khost, Paktia, and Paktika. Haqqani also retained the base in Pakistan—near Miranshah in North Waziristan—from which he had fought the Soviets. He established a madrassa there that has become infamous for its indoctrination of young men in the tenets of militant Islamism.

Haqqani held onto Greater Paktia, as the three provinces are often called, and invited bin Laden to establish bases there in the 1990s in which to train his own cadres. When the Taliban took shape under Mullah Mohammad Omar in the mid-1990s (with a large amount of Pakistani assistance), Haqqani made common cause with that group, which shared his ideological and religious outlook and seemed likely to take control of Afghanistan. He became a minister in the Taliban government, which welcomed and facilitated the continued presence of bin Laden and his training camps.

Bin Laden and al Qaeda could not have functioned as they did in the 1990s without the active support of Mullah Omar and Haqqani. The Taliban and Haqqani fighters protected bin Laden, fed him and his troops, facilitated the movement of al Qaeda leaders and fighters, and generated recruits. They also provided a socio-religious human network that strengthened the personal resilience and organizational reach of bin Laden and his team. Islamist revolution has always been an activity of groups nested within communities, not an undertaking of isolated individuals. As American interrogators in Iraq discovered quickly, the fastest way to get a captured al Qaeda fighter talking was to isolate him from his peers. Bin Laden's Taliban allies provided the intellectual and social support network al Qaeda needed to keep fighting. In return, bin Laden shared his wealth with the Taliban and later sent his fighters into battle to defend the Taliban regime against the U.S.-aided Northern Alliance attack after 9/11.

The relationship that developed between bin Laden and Mullah Omar was deep and strong. It helps explain why Mullah Omar refused categorically to expel bin Laden

after 9/11 even though he knew that failing to do so could lead to the destruction of the Taliban state—as it did. In return, bin Laden recognizes Mullah Omar as *amir al-momineen*—the "Commander of the Faithful"—a religious title the Taliban uses to legitimize its activities and shadow state. The alliance between al Qaeda and the Haqqanis (now led by Sirajuddin, successor to his aging and ailing father, Jalaluddin) also remains strong. The Haqqani network still claims the terrain of Greater Paktia, can project attacks into Kabul, and seems to facilitate the kinds of spectacular attacks in Afghanistan that are the hallmark of al Qaeda training and technical expertise. There is no reason whatever to believe that Mullah Omar or the Haqqanis—whose religious and political views remain closely aligned with al Qaeda's—would fail to offer renewed hospitality to their friend and ally of 20 years, bin Laden.

Mullah Omar and the Haqqanis are not the ones hosting al Qaeda today, however, since the presence of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan has made that country too dangerous for bin Laden and his lieutenants. They now reside for the most part on the other side of the Durand Line, among the mélange of anti-government insurgent and terrorist groups that live in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. These groups—they include the Tehrik-e Taliban-e Pakistan, led until his recent death-by-Predator by Baitullah Mehsud; the Tehrik-e Nafaz-e Shariat-e Mohammadi; and the Lashkar-e-Taiba, responsible for the Mumbai attack—now provide some of the same services to al Qaeda that the Taliban provided when they ruled Afghanistan. Mullah Omar continues to help, moreover, by intervening in disputes among the more fractious Pakistani groups to try to maintain cohesion within the movement. All of these groups coordinate their activities, moreover, and all have voices within the Peshawar Shura (council). They are not isolated groups, but rather a network-of-networks, both a social and a political grouping run, in the manner of Pashtuns, by a number of shuras, of which that in Peshawar is theoretically preeminent.

All of which is to say that the common image of al Qaeda leaders flitting like bats from cave to cave in the badlands of Pakistan is inaccurate. Al Qaeda leaders do flit (and no doubt sometimes sleep in caves)—but they flit like guests from friend to friend in areas controlled by their allies. Their allies provide them with shelter and food, with warning of impending attacks, with the means to move rapidly. Their allies provide communications services—runners and the use of their own more modern systems to help al Qaeda's senior leaders avoid creating electronic footprints that our forces could use to track and target them. Their allies provide means of moving money and other strategic resources around, as well as the means of imparting critical knowledge (like expertise in explosives) to cadres. Their allies provide media support, helping to get the al Qaeda message out and then serving as an echo chamber to magnify it via their own media resources.

Could al Qaeda perform all of these functions itself, without the help of local allies? It probably could. In Iraq, certainly, the al Qaeda organization established its own administrative, logistical, training, recruiting, and support structures under the rubric of its own state—the Islamic State of Iraq. For a while, this system worked well for the terrorists; it supported a concerted terror campaign in and around Baghdad virtually unprecedented in its scale and viciousness. It also created serious vulnerabilities for Al Qaeda in Iraq, however. The establishment of this autonomous, foreign-run structure left a seam between Al Qaeda in Iraq and the local population and their leaders. As long as the population continued to be in open revolt against the United States and the Iraqi government, this seam was not terribly damaging to al Qaeda. But as local leaders began to abandon their insurgent operations, Al Qaeda in Iraq became dangerously exposed and, ultimately, came to be seen as an enemy by the very populations that had previously supported it.

There was no such seam in Afghanistan before 9/11. Al Qaeda did not attempt to control territory or administer populations there. It left all such activities in the hands of Mullah Omar and Jalaluddin Haqqani. It still does—relying on those groups as well as on the Islamist groups in Waziristan and the Northwest Frontier Province to do the governing and administering while it focuses on the global war. Afghans had very little interaction with al Qaeda, and so had no reason to turn against the group. The same is true in Pakistan today. The persistence of allies who aim at governing and administering, as well as simply controlling, territory frees al Qaeda from those onerous day-to-day responsibilities and helps shield the organization from the blowback it suffered in Iraq. It reduces the vulnerability of the organization and enormously complicates efforts to defeat or destroy it.

The theory proposed by some in the White House and the press that an out-of-country, high-tech counterterrorist campaign could destroy a terrorist network such as al Qaeda is fraught with erroneous assumptions. Killing skilled terrorists is very hard to do. The best—and most dangerous—of them avoid using cellphones, computers, and other devices that leave obvious electronic footprints. Tracking them requires either capitalizing on their mistakes in using such devices or generating human intelligence about their whereabouts from sources on the ground. When the terrorists

operate among relatively friendly populations, gaining useful human intelligence can be extremely difficult if not impossible. The friendlier the population to the terrorists, the more safe houses in which they can hide, the fewer people who even desire to inform the United States or its proxies about the location of terrorist leaders, the more people likely to tell the terrorists about any such informants (and to punish those informants), the more people who can help to conceal the movement of the terrorist leaders and their runners, and so on.

Counterterrorist forces do best when the terrorists must operate among neutral or hostile populations while under severe military pressure, including from troops on the ground. Such pressure forces terrorist leaders to rely more on communications equipment for self-defense and for coordination of larger efforts. It greatly restricts the terrorists' ability to move around, making them easier targets, and to receive and distribute money, weapons, and recruits. This is the scenario that developed in Iraq during and after the surge, and it dramatically increased the vulnerability of terrorist groups to U.S. (and Iraqi) strikes.

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Not only did the combination of isolation and pressure make senior leaders more vulnerable, but it exposed mid-level managers as well. Attacking such individuals is important for two reasons: It disrupts the ability of the organization to operate at all, and it eliminates some of the people most likely to replace senior leaders who are killed. Attacking middle management dramatically reduces the resilience of a terrorist organization, as well as its effectiveness. The intelligence requirement for such attacks is daunting, however. Identifying and locating the senior leadership of a group is one thing. Finding the people who collect taxes, distribute funds and weapons, recruit, run IED-cells, and so on, is something else entirely—unless the counterterrorist force actually has a meaningful presence on the ground among the people.

The most serious operational challenge of the pure counterterrorist approach, however, is to eliminate bad guys faster than they can be replaced. Isolated killings of senior leaders, spread out over months or years, rarely do serious systemic harm to their organizations. The best-known example is the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, founder and head of Al Qaeda in Iraq, in June 2006, following which the effectiveness and lethality of that group only grew. It remains to be seen what the effect of Baitullah Mehsud's death will be—although it is evident that the presence of the Pakistani military on the ground assisted the high-tech targeting that killed him. Such is the vigor of the groups he controlled that his death occasioned a power struggle among his deputies.

One essential question that advocates of a pure counterterrorism approach must answer, therefore, is: Can the United States significantly accelerate the rate at which our forces identify, target, and kill senior and mid-level leaders? Our efforts to do so have failed to date, despite the commitment of enormous resources to that problem over eight years at the expense of other challenges. Could we do better? The limiting factor on the rate of attrition we can impose on the enemy's senior leadership is our ability to generate the necessary intelligence, not our ability to put metal on target. Perhaps there is a way to increase the attrition rate. If so, advocates of this approach have an obligation to explain what it is. They must also explain why removing U.S. and NATO forces from the theater will not make collecting timely intelligence even harder—effectively slowing the attrition rate. Their argument is counterintuitive at best.

Pursuing a counterinsurgency strategy against the Taliban and Haqqani groups—that is, using American forces to protect the population from them while building the capability of the Afghan Army—appears at first an indirect approach to defeating al Qaeda. In principle, neither the Taliban nor the Haqqani network poses an immediate danger to the United States. Why then should we fight them?

We should fight them because in practice they are integrally connected with al Qaeda. Allowing the Taliban and the Haqqani network to expand their areas of control and influence would offer new opportunities to al Qaeda that its leaders appear determined to seize. It would relieve the pressure on al Qaeda, giving its operatives more scope to protect themselves while working to project power and influence around the world. It would reduce the amount of usable intelligence we could expect to receive, thus reducing the rate at which we could target key leaders. Allowing al Qaeda's allies to succeed would seriously undermine the counterterrorism mission and would make the success of that mission extremely unlikely. ♦

The Trouble with Obama

He only seemed to be all things to all people

By Noemie Emery

For a talented man who ran a textbook campaign and was declared a great president before he even took office, Barack Obama has been having a rather hard time. The Midas Touch of 2008 has seemed to desert him. The famed oratory has not made a difference. The uniting president has turned into the ultra-divider. The music has died.

It's less that McCain voters oppose his proposals than that his own voters are turning against him: His approval ratings, above 70 percent when he first took office, now are near or less than 50 percent as independents, who gave him his win last November, give him negative ratings, and are dropping away. Presidents tend to drift down to earth as good will is ground down in the process of governing, but Obama's decline has been sudden and swift. Democrats predictably blame this on race, as if the strain of feigning enlightenment had become too much all at once for millions of people, but this seems unlikely in the case of a figure who only a few months ago was so widely adored.

In fact, he may have been adored rather too widely, by too many people wanting incompatible things. As disillusion sets in, it becomes more and more clear that he and his country misread one another. People embraced him for opposite reasons, while he held mistaken ideas about them; lies were not told, but conclusions were drawn that were not wholly accurate. He is what he seemed, only not that completely. And here are just five of the ways.

I. The Insular Internationalist.

On the surface, Obama is a man of the world and of varied experience, who has had an existence of contrasts, and seen many aspects of life. He has seen life in Hawaii, Jakarta, and mainland America, life in Cambridge, Manhattan, Chicago, and Washington; he has genetic connections to Kansas and Kenya; he knows the life of the privileged (the political elite and the academic community), the life of the in-between (his childhood family), and the life of the poor (on the South Side of Chicago, where he held his first job). Few American politicians have ever had a geographical reach so diverse and so dazzling—or a political planet so narrow and small.

Obama has spent his entire adult life confined in the bubble of deep blue America—a place that makes up less than one-fifth of the country—in blue states, in blue cities, in blue states of mind. His city neighborhoods—Morningside Heights, Hyde Park, and Cambridge—are the back yards of elite universities; he worked in the ghetto (and met its denizens again in Jeremiah Wright's congregation); and he rose in the urban ethnic machine of Chicago: the perfect trifecta of liberal politics, where people's looks, speech, and dress may seem to be varied, but the voting and thinking go only one way. It is a real world, but a small one, and in a real sense misleading; one that sees suburbs and small towns as strange, foreign countries; where centrists are rare, and the right nonexistent; where Bill Ayers really is just a guy from the neighborhood (and the Reverend Wright is nothing unusual), and where no one and no party disputes that the state is the answer, that "social justice" demands redistribution, that less wealthy whites cling to God and to guns out of "bitterness," and that racist white cops (all white cops are racist) always act "stupidly" when they are forced to have dealings with blacks.

Obama knows people who make laws, and people who teach law, and people who depend upon help from the government, but few people who make things, or run things, or work in the market economy; in other words, he doesn't know his own country, and has no sense where its center of gravity lies. He seems surprised at the resistance to his agenda: Who knew there were so many millions who are staggered by deficits, who don't see the point of identity politics, and want the state largely out of their lives? Not he, and he still doesn't seem to believe it, viewing the fringe (the far left) as the majority, and the

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center-right that is the core of the country as a demented fringe element that can be dismissed, condescended to, or shoved off to one side. A man of the world, but not of his country, he is just sensing the depth of his own lack of knowledge. He doesn't seem eager to learn.

II. Too Much, Too Soon

As the biracial son of an absentee father, his life less than smooth in its formative stages, Obama was sold as a much-vetted figure, matured by the pressures of life. Once again, this is true, but in some ways, it isn't: His struggles were real, but were not overwhelming, and compared with others', his sufferings seem slight.

Ronald Reagan's father was alcoholic, and often embarrassed his family. Bill Clinton's father died before he was born, his stepfather was violent, and his working mother (much like Obama's) was sometimes away. Theodore Roosevelt struggled with asthma, and nearly went mad when his beloved young wife suddenly died in her twenties. Franklin Roosevelt had a nerve-wracking marriage, and was crippled by polio. John Kennedy lost a brother, a brother-in-law, and his favorite sister before he (and they) had reached 30; saw a retarded sister institutionalized after a long fight by his family to raise her as normal; was wracked with pain and expected to die in his forties (he did), and had last rites performed four times before he was murdered. It is true that he and the elder George Bush were chauffeured to private school in the depths of the Depression, but both belonged to a war generation, volunteered for the service (Bush in his teens), nearly perished in combat, and saw many friends die. Others faced many professional setbacks: Ronald Reagan's Hollywood career flickered out in his 40s, and he had to start over in midlife, as far less than a star. George H.W. Bush lost a Senate race to Lloyd Bentsen and the nomination to Reagan 10 years after that; Bill Clinton was almost destroyed by his reelection loss after one term as governor; George W. Bush was a failure until he reached 40. Obama was not born a Bush or a Kennedy, and he was denied the normative two-parent idyll, but his adult years have been free of large setbacks and losses. And his political life has been charmed.

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Obama entered politics in 1996 as a state senator, and 12 years later was president, after a rise so nearly free of struggle (he lost a congressional primary) that it appeared to be greased by the gods. He wanted to run for the state legislature, and the incumbent retired. He wanted to run for the U.S. Senate, and his two major rivals were sidelined by scandal. (Republicans had to import a talk show host from out of state for a doomed run against him: Obama walked away with 70 percent of the vote.) Tapped to deliver the Democrats' keynote speech at their 2004 convention in Boston, Obama emerged with even more luster, and entered the Senate a star. Three years later, he was running for president, while crowds swooned, shrieked, and passed out at his rallies. He held a small, steady lead through most of the summer, but fell briefly behind for two weeks in September, when John McCain's surprise pick of Governor Sarah Palin made the ticket catch fire. Then the markets imploded, and the election fell back in his lap.

In the end, he won more states than anyone since the elder George Bush two decades earlier, vanquished two weighty figures of national stature, and broke a race bar once thought to be permanent. Before he was sworn in, he was declared a great man by most of the media, and ranked next to Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt. "He ventured forth to bring Light to the World," wrote Gerard Baker, in what seemed at the time only partly a parody. "As he grew, the Child walked in the path of righteousness," Baker informed us. "And the Elders were astonished at what they heard and said among themselves, 'Verily, who is this Child that he opens our hearts and minds to the audacity of hope?'" John Kennedy, a previous golden boy, was younger than Obama was when he was elected, and his career too had had a dazzling upward trajectory. But he had served 14 years in Congress, his first Senate win was a hard-fought upset against the odds, and as president he carried a note with "100,000" on it, for the number of popular votes by which he had beaten Richard M. Nixon, as a hedge against hubris and vanity. But past childhood, Obama had never lost anything, had few close calls, and never had to work all that hard for his victories. His hubris would be unconstrained.

The scholar Charles Murray has said that no one should work in the White House until he has been chastened

by disappointment and hardship, and taught the frustrations and limits of life, and of governance. But Obama's experience has taught him the opposite lesson: that he is invincible, that there is nothing on earth that he cannot accomplish, that magical forces steer fortune his way. Why can't he push four giant programs through Congress in six months? He's the first nonwhite president. Why can't he remake the structure of government? He beat John McCain and Hillary Clinton, an iconic war hero and a former first lady who was backed by her husband, the president. To Obama's mistaken belief that the whole country thinks as do Chicago and Berkeley, he has added the belief that if it does not, he can get his way anyhow, as he has already worked miracles. To insularity, he is adding the arrogance born of easy and early successes, which is setting him up for his first major failure.

III. A Matter of Temperament

The third reason Obama is now in trouble is that his demeanor and his agenda don't fit. Obama's demeanor is calm, cool, and rational. It reassures, and it soothes. It is essentially conservative in its implications, in that it seems to move calmly, and in predictable ways. In the campaign, it was no less than pure magic: It set him apart from the more intense John McCain and Hillary Clinton; it was the reason the associations with Bill Ayers and the Reverend Wright failed to gain traction; it was the reason an audience, wrung out by eight years of Clinton Fatigue topped by eight years of still more intense Bush Exhaustion, looked at its owner and swooned. "The man is calm. The man is unflappable," David Brooks said on PBS after the third presidential debate last October.

"There is just an eerie almost coolness about him," Mark Shields interjected. "I think his steadiness, his temperament, has been the dramatic theme of this campaign, dramatic in being undramatic," Brooks later told Charlie Rose. "What struck me is how incredibly even he is. . . . It's like you're camping, and you wake up one morning, and there is a mountain. And the next morning, there's a mountain. Obama is just the mountain. He is just there."

There is reason to think that Brooks is correct, and that voters did vote for this "there-ness," this even demeanor, this cool. But moderate temperaments have always meant moderate politics: Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy were cool, and they defined the Cold War consensus; Colin Powell is cool, and he occupies the dead center of American politics, which is why he would have won in a landslide if he had ever appeared on a national ticket—and why he could never have done so, as he would have driven the bases of both parties insane.

But if they are the rule, Obama is the exception that proves it, and millions of people who voted for him because they had fallen in love with the mountain are stunned to find out that he wants to move it, and in directions they never had dreamed. Obama won because, while his agenda appealed to the far-left and activist base of his party that wanted sweeping and radical action, his temperament drew in the moderate middle, which wanted a rest, and a rather more modest change in direction. The good thing from his point of view is that his smoothness helped him put together a really big coalition. The bad thing is that the two wings of the coalition now want two quite different things.

This is the reason Obama's battles are being waged inside his party, as his two different classes of backers collide. The "temperament" voters want the "small c" conservatism that is incremental and patient, and never moves terribly far from the center, while the "agenda" supporters want the "big l" liberalism that means sweeping and radical change. The temperament voters are unnerved by the bailouts, by Government Motors, by deficits in the trillions, and by public control of the health care professions; the agenda voters want even more of all of the above. The temperament voters want to tamp down the partisan warfare, the agenda voters want to ramp it up further; the temperament voters want a do-over on health care that is at once incremental and bipartisan; the agenda voters want to force radical fantasies down the throats of dissenters. The temperament voters, some of whom are independents, are peeling off from Obama, as the agenda voters become even more fervent. And there are more issues on which they may soon disagree.

IV. The Color of Justice

As the first half-Kenyan to become an American president, Obama was a hero to two groups of people, who looked to him for opposite things. He was both and at once the racial avenger and biracial healer; the promoter of identity politics, and the man who would kill it; the man who would promote race-conscious remedies and make the issue central to the national discourse, and the man who would lead us into the postracial future, in which race would never be mentioned again.

The first group cheered Sonia Sotomayor as the Wise Latina who would bring her ethnic perspective to Supreme Court decisions; the second was fine with her gender and background, but bristled at what looked like her assertion that her background and gender made her sure to rule well. The first group cheered Obama when he said Sgt. James Crowley acted "stupidly" when he briefly arrested presidential friend Henry ("Skip") Gates during a fracas following a report of a break-in at Gates's residence; the

second group applied the description to Obama himself. The first group agreed when Maureen Dowd and others said townhall and tea-party fury was fueled by the worst sort of prejudice; the second did not.

The White House has been smart enough to realize that while the first group was noisy and frequently organized, the second was a great deal more numerous, and that for every racist who had been correctly tagged, there were a great many others who were maligned by the charges, and would only be further enraged. This, and the fact that Sotomayor was confirmed only after denying repeatedly that she thought Latinas were inherently wiser than others, and that Obama's poll numbers dropped after the Cambridge fiasco, should warn the president that he is playing with fire, that his race-conscious friends are also his enemies, and that he is walking a tightrope it would not be too hard to fall off.

V. Except for What?

Barack Obama is often described as an inspiring figure, in the vaunted tradition of Reagan and Kennedy, who can arouse in his hearers a sense of great purpose, and set them to dreaming great dreams. He's a fine speaker, but Reagan and Kennedy inspired by their message: the idea that the country is unique among nations, has a singular mission to promote freedom everywhere; in effect, that the country is great. On this point, Obama is dumb. He stresses the country's faults, not its virtues; goes on apology tours, where he asks the forgiveness of nations with much grimmer histories; calls his country arrogant and dismissive of others, who deserve more respect. Cities on hills, beloved of Reagan and Kennedy, are not in his lexicon, and the idea of the "last best hope" of humanity has not crossed his lips. He finds the country exceptional only in its pretense to be so, and has been at pains to let England and Israel, who gave us our values, know that they're also not much. He doesn't seem to be moved by democracy either, as shown by his indifference to those fighting for it in Iran and Honduras, and his indulgence of oppressive regimes.

A normal candidate who struck most of these notes would quickly be tossed on the ash heap of history, but this isn't your average bloke. He is in himself a historical moment, whose breakthrough election was, as was the moon landing, a great giant step for mankind. While denying American greatness, he seems to embody it: No other country had ever atoned for its sins in so stunning a manner, or come quite so far quite so fast.

The candidate at once of the left and the center, of the hot and the cool, of the race conscious and colorblind, he is the candidate too of those who deny that their country is special, and those who believe that he proves that it is. The upside of this is that it allows him to run down the country and still seem aspirational; the downside is that public tolerance for his world view has always been limited (think Jimmy Carter), and sooner or later the truth will come through. If he becomes Carter II, then the glow will fade quickly. No president who hasn't stood up for American greatness has ever been loved for too long.

These are the five contradictions to Barack Obama that have misled the public, without the intent to deceive. He does have a complex, exotic, and intriguing background; he did rise by his gifts from inauspicious beginnings; he does have a genuinely moderate temperament (it is not possible to lie for this long about one's personality); and it is hardly his doing that being biracial—a net minus when he was born at the start of the civil rights movement—had, by the time he was running for president, turned into a tactical plus. But these things, which were true, were not the whole story. His background was wide, but his political world was remarkably limited; his early years were hard, but his political rise was too easy and effortless; his temperament was cool, but his agenda was otherwise; and in a number of areas he appealed at the same time to quite different people, whose desires were wholly opposed.

If his backers were fooled, so was Obama, who misread the electoral mood. He was fueled by his base, but the voters he won with were the slice in the middle, who gave him a slight, steady lead in the election year summer, switched to McCain after the St. Paul convention, and then switched back with a vengeance after the great market meltdown tipped the election into Obama's lap. This gave him his ultimate 7-point margin, shifted some red states in his direction, and secured him the huge lead in the House and the Senate that is one of his sources of strength. That slice in the middle wanted a center-left tilt (emphasis on "center") and not the progressive agenda. They wanted the "small c" conservative temperament; the post-racial healer; the barrier breaker, who would prove that their country was great.

Marc Ambinder laments on the website of the *Atlantic* that "the majority that elected Barack Obama . . . has gone silent" in the face of the recent vigorous protests, "or, if not silent, isn't nearly as potent as they were nearly ten months ago." But "the majority that elected Barack Obama" has ceased to exist, having hemorrhaged millions on millions of voters, some of whom are now going to protests themselves. The trouble with Barack Obama is that he was too many things to too many people, and no one liked all of them. He was simply too good to be true. ♦

Whittaker Chambers testifies against Alger Hiss, August 25, 1948.

Speaking Volumes

Four titles that helped the good guys win

BY HARVEY KLEHR

A distinguished medievalist now retired from Princeton, John Fleming appears an unlikely candidate to write a fascinating account of four books that helped make anti-communism a powerful intellectual and popular force. An expert on Chaucer is not usually a source of insight on the primary ideological war of the 20th century. But his careful reading of these books' themes and how they were received demonstrates that some intellectual distance from a topic can provide fresh and surprising insights.

Fleming's interest in the topic was sparked by his hobby as an amateur bookbinder. One day, in the process of recycling old book covers while discarding the books themselves, he began to read the contents of a rather large book instead of destroying it. It was Jan Valtin's *Out of the Night*.

The Anti-Communist Manifestos
Four Books That Shaped the Cold War
by John V. Fleming
Norton, 368 pp., $27.95

Enthralled by the story, and embarrassed to learn that he had never heard of the best-selling book from 1941, Fleming recalled an earlier conversation with a onetime colleague who had praised another book he had never read by a Russian defector, Victor Kravchenko's *I Chose Freedom*.

Since he had, for years, taught Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* in a course on European literature, and knew how controversial Whittaker Chamber's *Witness* had been, Fleming decided to analyze the role of these four books in teaching Americans and the West about communism.

Although he consulted a variety of sources and archives, particularly to uncover details about Valtin and Kravchenko, Fleming deliberately avoided producing a scholarly monograph, eschewing footnotes and writing in a conversational style, moving in a sometimes-meandering path. This yields some of the charm of the book, as Fleming digresses on the nature of autobiography or the etymology of Latin phrases used by Chambers. It also produces its only major flaw, an occasion-

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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ally rambling style, exacerbated because the book ends rather abruptly, with no concluding chapter or summary.

There have been a plethora of books and articles documenting the powerful Communist influence in literature and the arts. A generation of historians has excavated, praised, or publicized the "Communist turn" among American intellectuals and denounced, derided, and ignored their opponents. Although a popular stereotype has anti-communism as the province of anti-intellectualism, Fleming notes that these four books are the most outstanding representatives of a genre that changed the way the citizens of democracies thought about communism. All were wildly popular, serialized in the mass media, making best-seller lists, and earning their authors money and plaudits. They were also wildly controversial, stirring up fierce debates, lawsuits, and torrents of denunciation.

With the exception of Koestler's novel, Fleming argues, none of the books has gotten the credit it deserves. All four were powerful literary works which stand out in sharp contrast, not only to the many pedestrian (or worse) examples of anti-Communist memoirs or exposés, but also to the large number of extravagantly praised paeans to communism. One of the wittiest and most perceptive comments Fleming offers is his remark that while history may often be written by the winners, the story of the literature of communism and anti-communism has been written "by the losers, most of them sore losers at that." As a result, the reputations of these writers, as well as some of the literary brokers, journalists, and editors who assisted them, men like Max Eastman, Isaac Don Levine, and Eugene Lyons, have been ignored or minimized.

Despite his admiration for their message and writing, Fleming is hardly hagiographic. He catalogues the tortured and sometimes scandalous lives of these authors, noting that great literature is not necessarily produced by upstanding, or even attractive, human beings. Koestler abused women, Valtin and Kravchenko treated those who aided them shabbily. Chambers was a dour, paranoid man with a tendency towards pomposity. (Fleming does note that the paranoia of ex-Communists was often richly justified.)

Their human flaws, however, were hardly the reason they were so viciously denounced. Most of the French intelligentsia, with the honorable exception of Raymond Aron, savaged Koestler. It was not that his descriptions of the Soviet purge trials and denunciation of Communist morality were incorrect, but that they provided aid and comfort to reactionary American imperialism. Jean-Paul Sartre memorably explained that "every anti-Communist is a dog."

Simone De Beauvoir, who had a torrid affair with Koestler, at first praised *Darkness at Noon*; later she denounced it, part of her "habit of reading and liking books, only later to discover that she was supposed not to like them." Such sentiments testify to the hatred and venom with which all four of these books were received on the political left. Chambers was called a pervert, a fantasist, and a "moral leper." Kravchenko was denounced as a thief, a deserter, a warmonger, and, to boot, "a mentally unstable alcoholic and moral degenerate." Valtin was described as a Gestapo agent, and efforts were made to deport him.

The most serious charge brought against the three authors who wrote autobiography was that they were frauds. Chambers, as every literate American knows, accused Alger Hiss of having been a Soviet spy and testified in two trials and before congressional committees and a grand jury about their relationship. For decades his detractors have labored to discredit him. A website hosted by New York University to this day continues to propagate absurd and ever-more elaborate conspiracy theories to explain away the mountains of evidence that Hiss was guilty.

Although Fleming discerns a few fictionalized elements in *Witness*, he argues that, over the years, evidence from a variety of sources has buttressed its truthfulness. But he bases his arguments not on the details of the case but the style and texture of the book. Chambers portrayed his fellow Communists as interesting, individualistic men and women, many of whom he continued to admire, even if he deplored the ideal to which they had committed themselves. The "thick description" of the book, with a plethora of names, dates, places, and details, very few of which have been successfully challenged, is a powerful argument for Chambers's veracity.

Kravchenko's veracity was tested in a landmark libel trial that arose from his book. An engineer, he had been sent to the United States in 1943 to work for the Soviet Purchasing Commission and had resolved to defect, which he did the following year. He was, in many respects, Fleming writes, the "very paradigm of 20th-century Russian history." A Ukrainian born in 1905, he had experienced the Bolshevik Revolution, benefited from a Soviet technical education to become an engineer and an expert on pipe-rolling, served as an executive, and witnessed the horrific sufferings caused by the famines of the 1920s, the purges of the '30s, and World War II, during which he had briefly served at the front. Unlike Valtin, whose tales of derring-do often invite skepticism, Kravchenko painted a chilling and utterly believable picture of life in a repressive and evil regime.

After a French Communist newspaper published a scathing review of *I Chose Freedom* by a supposed American journalist named Sim Thomas that claimed Kravchenko was not the author but a CIA stooge, and that his stories of Soviet labor camps were fictional, he sued. The trial in Paris in 1949 marked a turning point in the fortunes of the French Communist party. While the Soviet disregard for civil liberties could be (and was) excused by many intellectuals on the grounds that the Soviet Union faced a crisis, or lacked a tradition of individual rights, the testimony of dozens of survivors of the Gulag offered on Kravchenko's behalf was devastating.

Particularly riveting was the testimony of Marguerite Buber-Neumann, former daughter-in-law of the Jewish theologian Martin Buber and wife of the German Communist Heinz Neumann, whom Stalin had purged and murdered. Buber-Neumann had served time in the Gulag and then been handed over to the Nazis after the Hitler-Stalin pact and

survived Ravensbruck. Her argument that there was no difference between the two regimes made a powerful impression in a country with fresh memories of Nazi concentration camps.

For the first time, leftwing French intellectuals had to face the testimony of those who had endured the reality of Soviet communism. Kravchenko's legal victory, followed by another by one of his French supporters, discredited communism and its apologists as no other event until the publication of *The Gulag Archipelago*.

Most readers will be least familiar with Jan Valtin, the pseudonym for Richard Krebs, a German-born functionary for the Communist International, whose adventure story offered "a thrill a minute" with "battles, street brawls, deceptions, betrayals, and narrow escapes galore" with interludes of sex and tragedy. A Communist waterfront organizer and thug, Valtin described escapades including a conviction in Los Angeles for assault, for which he served time in San Quentin. Deported, he worked for the Communist underground throughout Europe before being arrested and tortured by the Nazis.

He claimed to have pretended to work for the Nazis in order to escape their clutches. Resuming his Communist allegiance, he was denounced by his former comrades, who issued a wanted poster with his picture. Signing on as a seaman under a pseudonym, he jumped ship and illegally entered the United States in 1938. An illegal alien who had been convicted of a violent felony, imprisoned, and deported, he produced a book filled with details about a life of deception and illegality carried out for the party.

Valtin was a pen name and the Communist press at first denied that his story was true. He was quickly identified as Krebs, and critics anxious to discredit him attacked him as a Gestapo agent and traitor. There were demands for his deportation, and he was briefly detained at Ellis Island. Valtin, who had harbored literary ambitions ever since he took courses while imprisoned at San Quentin, had wavered between writing an autobiography with novelistic features and a novel based on his own life. Fleming convincingly demonstrates that he took some liberties with the facts of his life (including false claims that the Nazis had murdered his wife), exaggerated his own importance in the Comintern, and may even have briefly worked for the Nazis. Valtin himself later admitted that his character in the book was a composite of people he had known. Fleming concludes that the book is "morally true though often novelistic in detail."

Arthur Koestler, 1967

Koestler and Chambers were both intellectuals who wrote intricate and allusive works. Dealing with their books, Fleming deploys his skills as a student of literature, offering nuanced and learned accounts of their literary techniques and references. Chambers, in particular, performed the rare feat of writing a very complicated book that appealed to a mass audience. *Witness*, Fleming judges, is "perhaps the greatest American masterpiece of literary anti-communism," deserving of being included among the great autobiographies of the modern age. Even readers immersed in the minutiae of the Hiss-Chambers story will find new insight in Fleming's dissection of Chambers's intricate thoughts on penance and his use of Christian imagery. Koestler, by contrast, remained to the end of his life a secular humanist. Despite this fundamental divide, Fleming finds a "philosophical identity" between them on the relationship of means and ends.

Valtin and Kravchenko were assuredly not intellectuals. Critics questioned whether either of them actually wrote his book. Fleming carefully parses the contributions of translators, ghostwriters, and editors to their finished products, crediting what they added, but concluding that in both cases the final voice was genuinely that of the listed author, even if some liberties were taken with the facts, particularly in Valtin's case. Whatever their books lacked in philosophical depth, they provided detailed and horrifying portraits of lives lived under Communist discipline.

Koestler went on to write numerous books on a variety of themes before committing suicide in 1983 with his wife. Chambers retreated to his Maryland farm, dying of a heart attack less than a decade after *Witness* was published. Valtin quarreled with many of his former supporters, wrote two poorly received novels, and died in 1951. Kravchenko wrote a book about his libel trial and then invested in a mining business in Peru that failed. He committed suicide in 1966.

Their collective legacy is that books matter. Although these four writers were hardly the first to make the arguments, they popularized and cemented in the public mind a number of impressions and lessons about communism. Koestler insisted that Communist morality was fundamentally at odds with traditional notions of individualism and human dignity. Valtin taught Americans that the Communist movement was a worldwide criminal conspiracy. Kravchenko drove home the fact that the Soviet Union was a vast slave empire. Chambers spotlighted the dangers of Communist internal subversion.

Twenty years after the implosion of communism in Europe, these are lessons worth remembering. ♦

GETTY IMAGES

B&A

A Delicate Balance

How professional women meet the needs of life and work. **BY SABRINA L. SCHAEFFER**

MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES / GETTY IMAGES

Dolly Parton in 'Nine to Five' (1980)

Somewhere between Helen Reddy's "I Am Woman" and today, the modern feminist movement came to be defined by a legislative wish list. "Hear me roar" no longer; hear me demand a government handout. Government legislation such as the FMLA, Lily Ledbetter Act, and Paycheck Fairness Act has become the leading source of power for women—or at least for women's organizations.

But Reddy's song might be ready to make a comeback, according to the authors of *Womenomics*, a self-help guide for professional women trying to balance high-powered careers with everyday life. Senior national correspondent for *Good Morning America* Claire Shipman and BBC Washington Correspondent and news reader Katty Kay tell us, without qualification, that "women have power" and that it is, in part, because we now occupy vital positions "in numbers too big to ignore."

Womenomics
Write Your Own Rules for Success
by Claire Shipman and Katty Kay
HarperBusiness, 256 pp., $27.99

When the authors write about power, they are not referring to a new bill. According to Shipman and Kay, women have real, hard-earned, measurable power that allows them "to stop juggling and struggling" and start finding a balance that fits their lifestyle. This female muscle, they claim, starts with knowing the facts. Readers might not be aware, for instance, that companies that employ more women make more money. Women account for more than half of the educated workforce. And women buy a lot of things. Employers, therefore, *need* female brainpower.

Knowledge of one's worth leads to confidence. Confidence in that worth leads to power. And power gets you what you want. But what *do* women want? The core of the book revolves around this and other questions regarding lifestyle choices and options, with the authors walking readers through several chapters of pop psychology to figure out what women really want.

This introspection reaches its crescendo with the "Womenomics Gut Check"—a brutally honest list of questions aimed at helping women determine where they place the most value in their life: "How much of the way you work is about satisfying your ego?" "Are you prepared to give up money to get more time?" "Would having more time to devote to family or yourself make a difference in your life?"

What emerges from this analysis is a subtle and unstated recognition that the modern feminist movement failed in many ways. Yes, women have shattered the ceiling in politics, medicine, law, media, and corporate America. But many women still find themselves unhappy (and unsuccessful) trying to balance the high expectations of corporate America with family—or just life.

And then the authors come out and say it: "We actually *don't* want to make it to the very top of the ladder," Shipman and Kay write, "if it costs us so much else in our lives." They add, "We have discovered we'd prefer a New All; a tapestry of family and work in which we define our own success in reasonable terms." By no means does this "New All" suggest a return to the pre-*Feminine Mystique* world. But, were she alive today, Betty Friedan might be uncomfortable with their claim that men and women are different—and want different things.

The authors are not blind to the friction between our "pioneering feminist forebears" and women today. "Many women may understand they are not working according to their own true goals," they write, "but they still don't take action—because that would mean pushing through a thicket of ego, financial, and even feminist barricades."

Professional women, they claim, maintain a complicated relationship

Sabrina L. Schaeffer, a visiting fellow with the Independent Women's Forum, is a managing partner of Evolving Strategies.

with the feminists of the 1970s and '80s, "part gratitude, part admiration, part guilt, part rejection." And it's the rejection part that they use to make readers feel it's okay *not* to take the promotion.

Despite pages of casual jargon, personal stories, and some self-help psychobabble (at which even the authors poke fun) the heart of this book remains in the important and deeply American tradition of self-improvement. Not quite *The Education of Henry Adams*, or even *The Americanization of Edward Bok*, but a refreshing look at how women can use their education, expertise, and success to get more flexibility in their jobs and get control over their lives. And Shipman and Kay are candid about which women they're talking about. This is for educated, relatively high-earning career women.

> Many of us are lucky. As professional women we often *do* have choices, even if they don't seem easy or obvious. It helps to remember that fact on days when the juggle seems too much. We have options less fortunate women can only dream of.

But they restrain themselves from taking this observation one step further. Nowhere do they push for greater government protections; in fact, while I anticipated at least a plug for the re-introduction of the Equal Rights Amendment in their epilogue, I was met with something quite different. They spend the final pages recounting the many different ways corporations have adopted flexible work plans that meet the needs of *all* their employees.

"Companies increasingly realize that what's important is what you produce, not how, where, and when you do it," they write. In short, the market is playing a vital role in directing employer-employee relations. And fortunately, this is increasingly becoming the case for the broad middle class of women, not just the lucky elite. If you're good at your job, and your employer would feel your loss, you have leverage.

Still, a few questions linger in my mind: Would *Womenomics* have received the same level of praise from women in the corporate and media worlds had it been written by Laura Ingraham and Megyn Kelly? Did this shift in the discussion have to come from the center-left? And does it matter where it comes from if it reflects a pivotal shift in the way society views women and women view themselves?

For too long, the assumption has been that society is hostile to women and that women are victims in need of government protection. And yet today, it seems, the outdated image of the activist feminist has been replaced by a new ideal: the self-empowering woman. That's not to say women are the *same* as men, or that they don't need men. Quite the opposite: Simply that victimology has become passé.

My first job in Washington was as an assistant to the former United Nations ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick. The first woman to serve in this cabinet post, a professor at Georgetown, wife, and mother of three sons, she clearly helped tear down some walls of her own. What I remember most from my experience with Jeane Kirkpatrick, however, has little to do with foreign affairs. One day, in her office, she said to me: "Women can do anything they want—just not everything at the same time."

I suspect Shipman and Kay would agree. ♦

B&A

Spymaster

Charles McCarry may be the best novelist of his kind.

BY DAVID SKINNER

Charles McCarry, the spy novelist, has a number of bestsellers to brag about, if not the numbers or recognition of John le Carré.

Still, many discriminating readers think he is better than le Carré. He is also the author of three grisly though impressive political novels, all of which trade liberally in satire and suspense. Praised for their prescience (two of them seem almost prophetic of shocking real-world events) they, too, can seem to be second-place finishers, with little of the cachet reserved for a Christopher Buckley or the audience enjoyed by, say, David Baldacci.

McCarry seems to have what's required for literary stardom: winning characters, beguiling plots, fine prose, illuminating research. And the problem cannot be a matter of credentials. A former CIA operative who has worked in many locales, McCarry also has experience in Washington, where he's circulated in high-level politics and the upper reaches of magazine journalism.

Sony pictures has an option on *Shelley's Heart*, and a forgotten Sean Connery movie was made of *Better Angels*, but Hollywood hasn't made enough of his work. *Old Boys*, a 2004 novel which revived McCarry's career, seems like an obvious candidate for a Clint Eastwood or Jack Nicholson production. In it, a likable bunch of old men, all retired CIA, take off for one last border-crossing, gun-toting, law-breaking adventure to find their missing friend, Paul Christopher, the sad-hearted hero of McCarry's spy thrillers.

It is McCarry's most fun book, and its commercial and critical success led to a frantic market for copies of his other novels, all of which had been out of print. But Overlook Press began reissuing them, and the Washington-set *Shelley's Heart* was re-released this year.

Old Boys is tighter than most of its predecessors. Tight is a subjective quality, of course, and nothing so annoys

David Skinner is a writer and editor who has worked for The Weekly Standard, Doublethink, *and other magazines.*

a writer as an editor saying his work "needs tightening." But there is no other word for how McCarry can sometimes give the reader just a little more action and information than can be easily assimilated: As the story lunges forward, the reader feels slightly, pleasantly behind.

Close to the time of printing, it turns out, McCarry went over his 185,000-word manuscript and cut out 57,000 words, with few cuts longer than 20 words in length. That is, he cut out as many words as would fill a novella, not by heaving long sections or extraneous subplots into the wastebasket but by snipping away word by word and line by line. This is like cutting down a small grove of trees by trimming away with garden shears.

McCarry has a talent for headlong conceits that intrigue the mind and focus the action of potentially long, involved stories. In *Tears of Autumn*, his second novel and a bestseller, the conceit was an alternative theory, utterly speculative though very compelling, of the Kennedy assassination. In *Old Boys*, it is another alternative theory, less persuasive but equally diverting, of the life of Christ.

He also excels at satisfying the reader's hankering for exotica. *Old Boys* takes off for Europe, Russia, and the Middle East where a group of Arab falconers are hunting the houbara bustard, an endangered bird whose amazing speed and low flight path inches above the desert floor have made it a tantalizing prey and put it on the verge of extinction. The next stop is in the mountains of Central Asia for a sporting match between Tajik horsemen and a group of Kyrgyz, called a *buz kashi* that McCarry explains is like polo but "a blood sport with the carcass of a goat as the ball."

A former *National Geographic* editor and writer, McCarry loves anthropological digressions that tend to reveal some basic human characteristic seemingly forgotten by the modern Western mind. Man is essentially tribal in McCarry's fiction, a truth as manifest in the jungles of Africa as in the hotel lobbies of Washington.

After buying a copy of *Old Boys* off the remainder table at Book Revue, a nice store in Huntington, Long Island, I started reading my way through McCarry's novels. Not regularly a reader of thrillers or spy novels, I was surprised at how they lit a fire in me. Sensing an essay in my future, I arranged to interview the author.

"The Harbor," the McCarry home in the Berkshires, is like the Berlin apartment of his characters Lori and Hubbard Christopher: "They lived ashore as they lived on their boat, everything ship-shape, with nothing more than they needed." And his cooking was reminiscent of food preparation in his books: simple, light, Mediterranean. For our lunch he made the best crab cakes I've had outside of Oceanaire.

KATHERINE EASTLAND

McCarry is tall and bald, with a hairless face and owl-like eyes that betray little but a constant flicker of mental processing. His manner is formal and restrained, but his conversation, like his fiction, has a naughty edge. Explaining why his prose avoids metaphors and similes, the 79-year-old writer gives an example: "If you say, 'Her [genitalia] smelled like the Rose of Sharon,' in the first place it's not accurate, in the second it's a diversion."

A gifted student who "never met a teacher who didn't hate me," McCarry was accepted at Harvard but, lacking money for tuition, joined the Army. There he learned the trade of journalism. Returning home to Massachusetts, he earned money cutting wood, then took his earnings to Ohio to serve as best man at a friend's wedding. After the nuptials, McCarry ended up paying the preacher—and broke. Checking in at a nearby unemployment office, he found a job as a reporter for the *Lisbon Evening Journal* and the *Youngstown Vindicator*. In the village square of Lisbon, McCarry met a pretty librarian "with an even prettier smile," Nancy Neill. Today, they have four sons and have been married for 56 years.

In April 1956 a friend wrote to him about a speechwriting job at the Department of Labor. After taking a writing test, McCarry started working for Secretary James P. Mitchell, who deputized him as his representative to a committee for the National Stay in School campaign, a good-government public relations effort to address the social illness of rebellious, disaffected youth. Soon the young speechwriter was recruiting well-known athletes and actors to record radio spots, which he wrote himself and for which he popularized the term "dropout"—as in "Don't be a dropout. Stay in school."

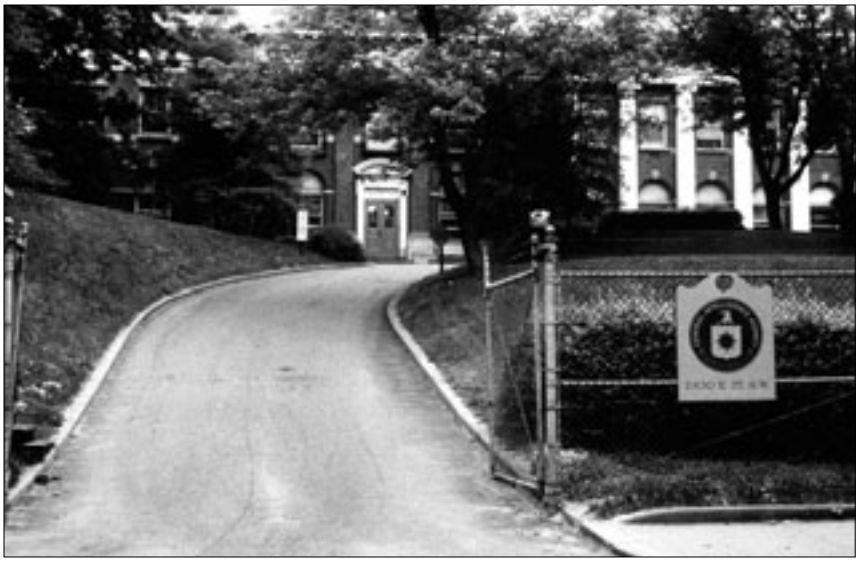
On weekends, he began writing for men's magazines—*True*, *Argosy*, *Cavalier*—with an eye to saving enough money to move, with his wife and two small children, to Majorca, where he was going to hunker down to write the Great American Novel. After rejecting a job offer to write speeches for President Eisenhower, McCarry submitted his letter of resignation. Before he left town, however, Secretary Mitchell called and invited him to lunch in his office. When McCarry arrived, Mitchell was waiting for him with another man, a lofty government figure to the young speechwriter. After introductions, Mitchell left, suggesting McCarry and the other man have a chat.

It was short, pleasant, and partly in French, the first of several foreign languages McCarry learned to speak.

The lofty figure asked McCarry to join the CIA. McCarry asked: What could I possibly do for the CIA? "That is not your problem," the lofty figure replied. "We must find out what it is you want to do and make it possible for you to do it."

"Which," McCarry observes, "is the most succinct definition of covert action I have ever heard in my life."

The CIA contact said the agency would pay for his family's air fare to Spain and gave him six months to write. "I didn't finish the Great American Novel, by the way; I never did. But we had a great time in Majorca." Then, as planned, the 28-year-old writer started working for the CIA.



CIA headquarters, Washington, 1960

The family moved to Geneva, where Charles ("Mac" to his friends) took a job working for the director of the International Labor Office of the United Nations while pursuing operations for the agency. A singleton, "I worked by myself," under deep cover, with great freedom. "I could think up projects, mention them, and get them approved."

McCarry offers little more about his covert work, citing his oath never to betray the agency. He does say his description of operations work in his novels is "authentic," but is less vague only when talking about CIA culture. McCarry always describes intelligence work as *intelligent* work, and the CIA, he found, was full of gifted minds, many with literary tendencies.

"Nothing was so highly valued" at the CIA, he says, "as the ability to write." The writerly mind shares certain functions with espionage work: "An operation," McCarry says, "is a plot."

One can go further and say the spy is a writer—and vice versa. McCarry's fictional master-spy Paul Christopher is a recovering poet and has an actual day job writing for American magazines—just like his creator. Christopher's fictional birthday is the same as McCarry's, and the name of Christopher's family home in the Berkshires is also "The Harbor." Discussing whether Christopher's specific adventures as a spy are realistic, McCarry assures me that they are, saying that his own life as a CIA operator was similar to Paul Christopher's.

In all of his novels, the air is thick with conspiracy. And the writer-spy is in a unique position to unveil the truth, as in the real truth about how the world really works. McCarry plays with the hunger for pat explanations, even comes close to delivering them; but at his best he refuses to give what the human mind, in its weakness, is begging for.

The classic conspiracy question—who benefits?—is the guiding question of McCarry's greatest novel, *Tears of Autumn*. The conspiracy that needs unraveling has led to the Kennedy assassination. The instrument, of course, was Lee Harvey Oswald. But who was using the instrument? Who had the motive? With an intuitive leap, Paul Christopher, after an almost-ecstatic vision, suddenly knows the answer: The Ngo family of Vietnam, taking revenge for American complicity in the assassinations of Ngo Dinh Diem and Ngo Dinh Nhu. In this cold-blooded scenario, Kennedy is partly to blame for his own assassination.

The reader is never offered proof that this theory is correct. Asked if he believes it himself, McCarry acknowledges it is only a theory—but adds with a mischievous twinkle of the eyes, and in a voice somewhat halting from age, that it *is* an interesting theory.

The Miernik Dossier is even stingier with the resolution of its central question: Is Tadeusz Miernik a Soviet agent? Told through competing field dispatches, the story offers only exquisite frustration about the ultimate truth.

The Paul Christopher books (*Tears*, *Miernik Dossier*, *Secret Lovers*, *Second Sight*, *The Last Supper*, *Christopher's Ghosts*) portray espionage as truth-seeking. The Washington novels (*Better Angels*, *Shelley's Heart*, and *Lucky Bastard)*—and this will come as a shock to observers of congressional debate—sideline truth and give priority to the quest for power. Characters who are a little too good at everything (learning foreign languages, writing poetry, making love) give way to grotesques with a feral desire to dominate others.

The great gain in McCarry's shift to political fiction was a blossoming of his gift for comedy and caricature. Charlotte, the decadent British wife of television superstar Patrick Graham, tells some young party guests:

> Stay! … We're going to have a wonderful discussion. Want to speak to you about the virtuous qualities of your president. Wonderful chap. New type of human, only took two and a half centuries of feverish cross-breeding to produce him. *Homo americanus.* [Screws] no one but his wife. Great example to the rest of us.

In 1967 McCarry resigned from the CIA, making his living strictly as a magazine writer until he began publishing

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

books. His former life as a spy came to the surface in 1975 when he began promoting *Tears of Autumn*. His publisher had learned from another CIA man (drunk at the time) about McCarry's days in the agency, and was eager to use their author's striking résumé to publicize his spy novel. McCarry demurred, but when he appeared on *The Today Show*, the very first question was about his days in the clandestine service.

A lot, possibly too much, has been made by McCarry's fans about his days as an agent. And little attention has been paid to his time in politics. In 1960 he went on leave from the Department of Labor to write speeches for Henry Cabot Lodge, Richard Nixon's running mate—an experience that later helped fire his imagination about the possibility of stealing a presidential election and helped inform the plot of *Better Angels*.

In 1972, McCarry published an authorized, although not very flattering, biography of Ralph Nader, *Citizen Nader*. After being profiled by McCarry, Nader invited him to write the biography and allowed him significant access to his life and family. But the scourge of General Motors could not have been pleased when McCarry delivered his skeptical report on Nader, his "raiders," and their scare tactics. It also contained a tough chapter on Nader's half-hearted commitment to union reformer Jock Yablonski who, with Nader's encouragement but limited assistance, campaigned, unsuccessfully, for the presidency of the United Mine Workers against a corrupt leadership. After the election, Yablonski, his wife, and daughter were all murdered in their home.

During the Reagan era, McCarry worked on Donald Regan's score-settling memoir, *For the Record*, which became a bestseller after divulging that Nancy Reagan had been consulting an astrologer to help her husband. Alexander Haig was another of McCarry's collaborators. Haig's memoir *Caveat* and his later *Inner Circles* both featured the literary efforts of Paul Christopher's creator.

For those who crave *vérité*, McCarry's years in government, on the campaign trail, and his share of face-time with impressive politicos should lend his Washington fiction every bit as much authenticity as his CIA days lend his Paul Christopher novels.

The Washington novels have also delivered important news. *Better Angels* introduced, long before 9/11, the suicide bomber who uses his own body as a delivery device and boards commercial planes, seeking to blow them up mid-air. *Shelley's Heart*, published three years before the impeachment of Bill Clinton, showed America's two major parties dueling in Congress for control of the White House, as a recently appointed Supreme Court justice (who bears a strong resemblance to Ralph Nader) looks to manipulate the chaotic hearings to effect a transition from the traditional separation of powers to a rule of one—himself.

McCarry always describes intelligence work as intelligent work, and the CIA, he found, was full of gifted minds, many with literary tendencies.

One might suspect the heart of a conservative to be beating inside McCarry's chest. In his books Kennedy represents much that is wrong in politics, and before Watergate McCarry chided journalists for their prejudices against Nixon. He's apt to praise Ronald Reagan ("for letting the CIA be the CIA") and his representative right-wing character, President Franklin Mallory, shares the two unifying traits of all his most estimable characters, intelligence and good taste.

But Mallory and the party of the right represent fascism. They love America but hate humanity. The president and the party of the left, meanwhile, represent foolishness and utopianism. They hate the Constitution and love only what America *could be* if remade in the image of their dreams. Both parties threaten freedom, the one by tending toward a police state and the other by being a patsy for revolutionaries (Communists in particular) and other would-be tyrants.

In *Lucky Bastard*, a stand-alone satire about the left's weakness for anti-American infiltration, McCarry makes a Clintonian antihero of an erotomaniac with a gift for politics. John Fitzgerald Adams grew up short of a mother and father but with the wall-eyed notion that his birth was the result of a wartime alliance between John F. Kennedy and his late mother, a former military nurse.

At their best, McCarry's Washington novels are about as entertaining as any by Christopher Buckley, though more intellectual. He is superb at showing how social and institutional life in Washington work, and the account is not flattering. His touch for comedy, though at times excellent, is not light. The ideas that distinguish McCarry—some of which are truly probing, a few of which are crankish—also keep him from being to everyone's taste. He tells the story of a liberal reader who complained to him that when his books describe liberals, "they actually describe our enemies." In response, McCarry said, "Precisely."

Readers who take to McCarry do so with a vengeance. Christopher Buckley himself and P.J. O'Rourke both insist this fellow scholar of Washington absurdity is more than a good scribbler, in fact an important one. And connoisseurs like Otto Penzler and fellow spy novelists like Richard Condon have called McCarry's spy novels the best by an American writer.

In the late 1970s McCarry heard about another great fan. While writing a travelogue on the southwestern United States for National Geographic Books, he paid a visit to Lady Bird Johnson in Texas who, as she showed off the wildflowers on the grounds of the LBJ Ranch, turned and asked, "Are you the Mr. McCarry who wrote *Tears of Autumn*?" McCarry allowed that he was.

The former first lady smiled and said, "Lyndon loved that book." ♦

B&A

King Burger

Harry and Esther Snyder and the fastest food in the West. **BY KARI BARBIC**

Store #82

"Double-Double, grilled onions, ketchup and spread only"—I repeated what has been my standard order for the last 10 years. I perfected my In-N-Out Burger order in high school after several years of good, but less-than-perfect, variants. Ask any Californian or expat their In-N-Out order and they'll be able to recite it for you on the spot.

I left California for college, and then later moved to the east coast, so In-N-Out visits are now more precious because of their rarity. It had been eight months since my last visit, and now it was time for my first meal back in California. Just south of the intersection of Highways 99 and 41 in Fresno stands Store #82. The Double-Double, named for its double helping of meat and cheese, was just as fresh and glorious as I remembered.

Here's my testimonial: In-N-Out Burger quality is one thing you can count on in the state of California, quality that began over 60 years ago and has been kept fresh ever since.

In-N-Out Burger
A Behind-the-Counter Look at the Fast-Food Chain That Breaks All the Rules
by Stacy Perman
HarperBusiness, 352 pp., $24.99

In *In-N-Out Burger*, Stacy Perman examines the success of a California culinary classic. At the end of World War II, Harry and Esther Snyder set out to make a living by making a good hamburger in Baldwin Park, California. They founded In-N-Out Burger on October 22, 1948. "Do one thing and do it the best you can" was Harry's mantra, and he established his business on a three-word motto: "Quality, Cleanliness, and Service." Perman follows the company's timeline and development to show how this motto has affected every aspect of the empire, from its inception to its continued growth and popularity.

The simple menu of hamburgers, french fried potatoes, and milk shakes is much as it was when the first store opened—other than occasional price increases, of course. The company likes to boast that it does not own microwaves or heat lamps because everything on the menu is fresh, from veggies to all-beef (never frozen) patties to fresh cut french fries from real potatoes. All hamburgers are grilled fresh to order. It's simple fare done well, and the customers keep coming back.

I can still recall the anticipation and excitement that accompanied the opening of the first In-N-Out in my hometown of Bakersfield in 1991: Store #65. From the day it opened, the place was packed. Crowds are normal at any In-N-Out Burger, especially during the lunch rush, but long lines pose little deterrence to faithful customers.

Perman sets the stage with the opening of Store #207 in Tucson, on April 24, 2007, and its more than enthusiastic reception:

> Ravenous customers began arriving in the dark of the night, long before the store's 10:30 A.M. opening. Actually, people began lining up at 2:00 A.M. the day before, some sleeping in their cars. . . . By noon . . . hundreds of people [had] descended upon the fast-food restaurant and its signature crossed palm trees. Marveling at the thick, snaking procession of people, Phil Villarreal, a reporter for the *Arizona Daily Star*, recalled Soviet-era bread lines in Moscow.

I've never witnessed bread lines, but I can understand the enthusiasm accompanying a new outlet. Before Store #65 (Bakersfield), In-N-Out was a rare road trip treat for our family on our way to or from Los Angeles. That was nearly a two-hour excursion, but now we could drive through any day of the week with #65 a mere ten-minute drive from home.

In the early days of my In-N-Out experience, my order was simple: a single hamburger with ketchup only, and a chocolate milk shake. At the age of eight I had an immature understanding of what an all-beef patty should be; I would not discover the joys of the "special sauce" until I was a freshman in high

KARI BARBIC

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school. With a local In-N-Out, I had the opportunity to experiment with various toppings, and learn the "secret menu."

Since all their burgers are made fresh and to-order, and the primary goal is to please the customer, In-N-Out encourages ordering creativity. This is what led to the infamous "secret menu"—"secret," in the sense that it was originally passed by word of mouth. Although it still does not appear on the standard menus, the company publishes most items from the secret menu on its website.

Employees readily recognize the secret menu lingo. According to Perman's documentation, these "secret" favorites developed from frequent special orders. Orders such as "Protein-style" (*sans* bun, lettuce leaf-wrapped burger) and "Animal-style" (mustard-basted patty) are now In-N-Out trademarks, along with the traditional offerings such as the Double-Double. Theoretically, of course, you can order as many patties and cheese slices as your appetite may require (3x3, 4x4, and so on). Perman tells the story of one group of friends who ordered a 100x100 at a Las Vegas store. Their order was filled and "the tab . . . $97.66."

The joy of having a simple hamburger made fresh and to *your* specifications has earned not only popularity with the hungry masses but respect from gourmet chefs too. Perman cites some Michelin-starred chefs and their love and admiration for In-N-Out: from Daniel Boulud, inventor of the gourmet hamburger, who noted the quality and striking simplicity of the In-N-Out burger, to *Hell's Kitchen*'s Gordon Ramsay, who proclaimed his enthusiasm in a *Sunday Mail* interview, calling the burgers "extraordinary" and admitting to finishing a Double-Double only to double back for seconds.

Even the Hollywood elite cannot resist its simple appeal: It's a catering favorite for Oscar night parties, and in one of the book's more enjoyable illustrations, we see Helen Mirren in her designer gown, sitting down to consume an In-N-Out hamburger at the *Vanity Fair* party. Because whenever the opportunity to enjoy one of these burgers presents itself, you sit down, even with Oscar in hand, and enjoy. ♦

B&A

The Good Book

Everybody used to read 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Now you should, too.

BY BARTON SWAIM

There was a time, now just beyond living memory, when everyone had read *Pilgrim's Progress*. Bunyan's great work was, as Paul Fussell writes in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, "the one book everybody knew."

> Because Dante has never really been domesticated in Protestant England, when an English sensibility looks for traditional waste and horror and loss and fear, it turns not to the *Inferno* but to *Pilgrim's Progress*. It would be impossible to count the number of times "the Slough of Despond" is invoked as the only adequate designation for churned-up mud morasses pummeled by icy rain and heavy shells.

Bunyan's book isn't altogether forgotten; it's perpetually in print, and scholars are still attracted to Bunyan generally and to *Pilgrim's Progress* particularly. But it hasn't been a book read by "everybody," or even most people, for nearly a century. This new Penguin Classics edition won't change that, unfortunately, but it is an outstanding work of scholarship and deserves attention.

The task of annotating *Pilgrim's Progress* is a complicated one. To begin with, the text is saturated with biblical allusions, many of them subtle and unreferenced in Bunyan's text. ("Prick him anywhere," said the Victorian preacher Charles Spurgeon of Bunyan, "and you will find that his blood is Bibline.") Then there are the theological concepts and the myriad works of "controversial divinity" with which Bunyan was in constant interaction. Roger Pooley has done a splendid job of noting relevant material without burdening the reader with useless data or irrelevant speculation. If you haven't read *Pilgrim's Progress*, (a) you should be ashamed of yourself, and (b) this edition is an excellent introduction.

The Pilgrim's Progress
by John Bunyan, edited by Roger Pooley
Penguin, 384 pp., $11

John Bunyan was born in 1628 in Elstow, near Bedford. He had a few years of schooling, but was for the most part self-educated. He was a thinker, as his father had been. In 1644 he was conscripted into Cromwell's New Model Army, in which he may have had some contact with radical ideas but in which the religious disputes then vexing the nation seem to have made no impression on him.

At some point in the early 1650s he began to worry about the state of his soul. *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, a spiritual autobiography of extraordinary emotional intensity, relays the series of events by which he became a Christian writer and preacher. The encounter with the poor women of Bedford is the book's key moment:

> And me thought they spake as if joy did make them speak: they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world, as if they were people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned amongst their Neighbors.

(There's an allusion there, to Numbers 23:9: "Behold, a people dwelling alone, and not counting itself among the nations.")

Barton Swaim is the author of Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere: 1802-1834.

Soon he was an energetic member of the separatist Bedford Baptists, a writer of anti-Quaker pamphlets, and a lay preacher. In November 1660, just after the Restoration of Charles II, Bunyan was arrested during a service he was conducting in a barn. He was offered freedom on the condition that he promise not to preach any more, which was a promise he would not make. He remained in jail for the next 12 years, and he supported his family by making shoelaces and writing books and pamphlets.

He was imprisoned again, briefly, in 1676 and 1677. It was during this latter imprisonment that he finished the first part of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The story's point of departure is the prison cell: "As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place, where was a den; and I laid me down in that place to sleep: and as I slept I dreamed a dream."

He goes on:

> I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book, and read therein; and as he read, he wept and trembled: and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry; saying, "What shall I do?"

Pilgrim's Progress is among the most powerful arguments ever made for the primacy of the individual conscience. The story's villains don't want to kill Christian so much as persuade him to abandon his pursuit. Apollyon himself offers to spare Christian's life, "if now thou wilt turn again, and go back." In that respect, at least, *Pilgrim's Progress* is as essential to the American character as the Declaration. No book had greater influence over the development of American piety. And the evidence of that influence is all around us: There is no higher virtue in our politics than "staying true to your principles, regardless of the cost."

What makes the book so special? How is it that an allegory told by an unlettered latter-day Puritan—a Baptist whose intellectual interests extended to the Bible and a few other books—can hold so much power for believers of every Christian tradition—and, indeed, for agnostics and unbelievers as well?

Part of the answer lies in the sheer simplicity of its idiom. It is surely the least self-consciously literary book in English literature. Bunyan's story isn't quite an allegory in the usual sense, for the word allegory—a story intended to illustrate something else—implies an element of artifice that's plainly absent from *Pilgrim's Progress*.

Frontispiece of 'Pilgrim's Progress,' 1684

An allegory is the thing signified, not the thing itself, but Bunyan constantly threads between the two. Sometimes Christian is a pilgrim traveling to the Celestial City; sometimes he is a Christian believer laboring to maintain his belief in a world of doubt and cynicism; somehow he is both simultaneously. The effect is magical: The reader sits poised between the real and the unreal, with the result that "suspension of disbelief," as Coleridge had it, seems weirdly unnecessary.

But what really makes *Pilgrim's Progress* a great book is what makes all great books great: its author's insight into what makes people behave as they do. Bunyan had a marvelous gift for presenting human propensities in the abstract, but doing so in ways that strike one as deeply—indeed uncomfortably—familiar. Everyone has a favorite passage; my own appears in part two when Christiana (Christian's wife, who makes the journey in part two) visits the house of Interpreter.

Interpreter shows Christiana and her fellow pilgrims a room where there was

> a man that could look no way but downwards, with a muck-rake in his hand. There stood also one over his head with a celestial crown in his hand, and proffered to give him that crown for his muck-rake; but the man did neither look up, nor regard, but raked to himself the straws, the small sticks, the dust of the floor.

Interpreter—this is an allegory within an allegory—explains that the spectacle "lets thee know that earthly things when they are with power upon men's minds quite carry their hearts away from God." He continues: "'Give me not riches' is scarce the prayer of one of ten thousand. Straws and sticks and dust with most are the great things now looked after."

With its archaic diction and its severe, sometimes terrifying vision of religious life, *Pilgrim's Progress* isn't an easy read. But it has the power to lift one's gaze, if just for a moment, from straws and sticks and dust. It's worth the effort. ♦

CORBIS

Love on the Heath

The passion of Fanny Brawne—and somebody named Keats. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

John Keats was a Romantic poet. Note the capital "R." The project of the Romantics, and it was a radical project, was to establish an intrinsic connection between Man and Nature—as opposed to a connection between man and God—and to oppose the elevation of reason over emotion. Keats is a character in a superficially gorgeous new movie called *Bright Star*, in which he is a romantic poet. Note the lower-case "r."

Bright Star
Directed by Jane Campion

No pre-Victorian radical here; rather, the Keats of *Bright Star* is the dreamiest non-vampire this side of *Twilight*, a pretty and droopy young man with exquisite manners and deep morals who wins the heart of the girl next door on Hampstead Heath. She is a bosomy and quick-tongued seamstress named Fanny Brawne, who makes bizarre outfits of her own design.

He stares at her with googly eyes which show not a glint of the limpid super-intelligence that came up with the concept of "negative capability," according to which the greatest minds are capable of "being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts without any irritable reaching after fact & reason." Keats's assertion that the highest form of intelligence was the ability to accept ambiguity changed the world. The Keats we see here could barely change a candle. Meanwhile, Fanny is cute and sassy and carefully stitches ruffles. It's as if the towering genius of our age were smitten with the second runner-up on *Project Runway*.

The writer-director Jane Campion, universally celebrated 16 years ago for having a weird guy with Maori tattoos fondle a deaf-mute chick in 19th-century New Zealand around and about the titular *The Piano*, demonstrates the worst kind of cultural literacy—the kind that says, "You cannot criticize me for my pretensions or my silliness because I am so amazingly high-minded."

Campion's directorial method here is ridiculously schematic. In the movie's first third, as Fanny and Keats get to know each other, the rooms in which they sit are bleak and forbidding, the skies gray. When they fall in love, suddenly the sun shines and violets bloom; Keats climbs to the top of a tree and lies upon it like Bono upon the arms of his screaming fans in a mosh pit. And when Keats takes ill and dies—slowly, slowly, although he never looks anything less than completely fabulous—the rain falls like tears from the sky. . . .

The oddity of the movie is that it isn't about Keats at all, who was, obviously, a very compelling person, but about Fanny and her awakening into love with a penniless man. Campion blessed herself with the choice of the Australian actress Abbie Cornish in the role. Cornish is an uncommonly vivid and fascinating screen presence, and an amazing camera subject, at one moment stunning, at another stunningly plain. Every feeling she has is inscribed on her face and brow, and she is heart-rending as she suffers the pain of separation, both temporary and eventually permanent, from her love.

And yet what goes on in *Bright Star*? Keats goes away and Fanny waits for his letters. When they don't arrive, she is sad. When they do, she reads them over and over. When he is forced to leave their block of houses, she cries out, "Why do they call this love when there is so much suffering?"

Why, indeed? The real Keats was, in fact, betrothed to a woman named Fanny Brawne, but that is probably the least interesting thing about him. He achieved before his death at 25 a degree of artistic and intellectual maturity that made him the unattaintable model, for better or worse, for would-be poets for a century or more.

The only well-crafted character in *Bright Star* is Keats's sponsor Charles Armitage Brown (Paul Schneider, an American actor speaking in a flawless Scottish accent in a revelatory performance)—portrayed here as an amusingly hedonistic reprobate who feels his own life is of secondary importance to that of his young, gifted, and very pale friend. The movie offers no way for us to understand this devotion except to make us think Brown is secretly gay. (Maybe that's because the British actor Ben Whishaw, who plays Keats, continually purses his colossal lips at Brown.) But in fact, Keats was attended by other contemporaries who understood they were in the company of someone whose work would endure forever, and who kept feeding the flame of his reputation after his death until it caught and has never yet died, as the very existence of *Bright Star* demonstrates.

I offer all these encomia, by the way, despite the fact that I loathe Keats's poetry. That's my attempt at "negative capability," at "being in uncertainties." How did I do? ♦

NEWSCOM

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

Speaking from random, handwritten notes, Libyan president Muammar Qaddafi delivered a rambling, sometimes incoherent, monologue on a variety of disconnected topics to the United Nations General Assembly last week. **—News item**

Area shown below in detail

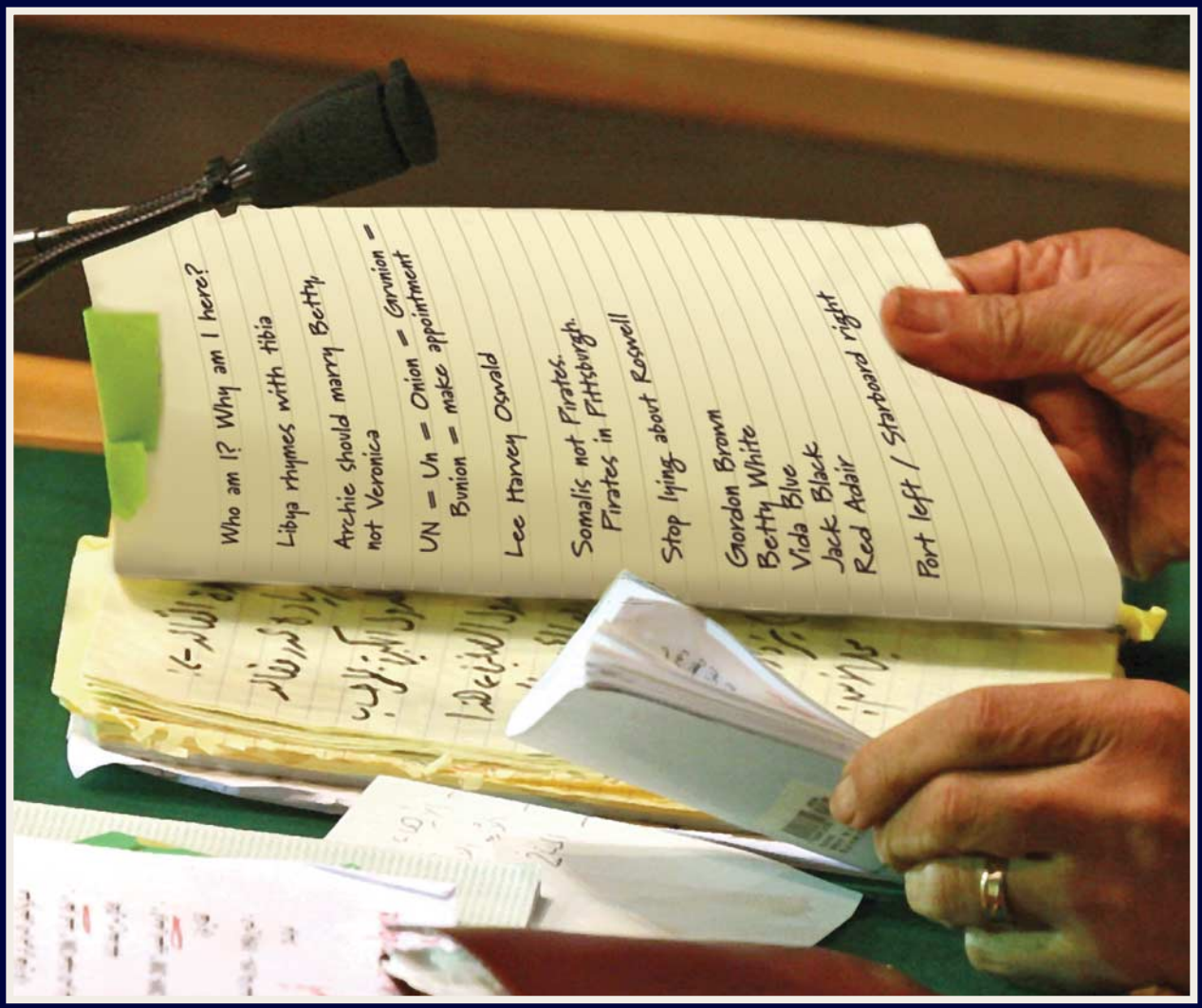

PHOTO: THE NEW YORK TIMES; PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: THE WEEKLY STANDARD