the weekly Standard

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IS THE GOP IN FIGHTING TRIM?

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JONATHAN V. LAST
JOHN McCORMACK
on the bouts to watch next week

NOVEMBER 2, 2009 • WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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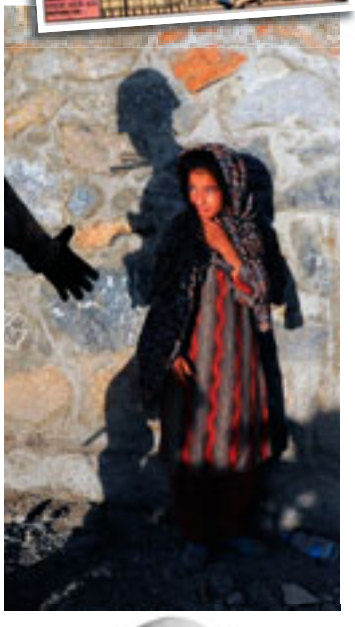


COVER ARTIST: THOMAS FLUHARTY

The Muhammad Cartoons & Yale

Christopher Caldwell has written in these pages of the craven decision by Yale to censor a book on the Danish cartoon controversy, forcing the author to remove from the manuscript at the eleventh hour not only the cartoons she was writing about, originally published in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* in the fall of 2005, but several historic illustrations depicting Muhammad. (See his "Drawing Conclusions: A Danish political scientist revisits the cartoon controversy," in our issue of October 19.)

There was less uproar than one might have hoped to see from the academic community, usually quick on the trigger when it comes to denouncing threats to free expression. Thus it was gratifying to see at least one prominent voice raised to the proper decibel level. Sarah Ruden, whose celebrated translation of the *Aeneid* was published last year by the offending Yale University Press, wrote a bracing letter to the editor of the *New Criterion*, which we reproduce in part below:

"I believe that some expression of solidarity on the part of other Yale Press authors like myself is essential. It was just too outrageous that the Yale and Yale University Press administrations cut the images from Jytte Klausen's book *The Cartoons that Shook the World*—a book about images and a dispassionate, useful book that could be objectionable only to radical Islam.

"For my own part, I have already banned the Press from bidding on further books of mine. This is, first of all, a self-protective move. I don't think there's any coffee good enough that I'd enjoy being told over it that my finished, fully edited manuscript is going to be neutered because of a report I'm not allowed to see without swearing secrecy. Since I write about politics and religion, such a scene is a likely danger for me. But I would urge all authors who are even considering a relationship with the Press to stay away from this non-publisher. A doctor who prostitutes a patient, selling her body, shouldn't be called a doctor anymore but a pimp. Yale Press, after breaking a crucial relationship of trust with an author's mind and work, should be called a lickspittle of fanatics and forfeit any respect or consideration from other authors." ♦

H.J. Kaplan, 1918-2009

H.J. Kaplan—"Kappy" to his friends (and almost everyone who met him was a friend)—died last week in his adopted city of Paris. By dint of his association with *Partisan Review* in its glory years of the 1940s, Kappy might almost have been considered a founding member of that fiercely disputatious tribe known as the "New York Intellectuals," except he was never quite a New Yorker, his career took a turn unlike those of his fellow literary intellectuals, and he was anything but fierce.

A sense of the span of his life can be grasped in the fact that he was contributing a regular "Paris Letter" to *Partisan Review* at the time George Orwell was writing his "London Letter" for the same journal. The Army had interrupted Kappy's studies of Proust at the University of Chicago, taking him first to Algiers and then to Paris, where he would stay for a decade and return many times thereafter. He introduced the French literary world to its American counterpart in those years and vice versa, both in his writing (he was Raymond Queneau's translator) and as a famously gregarious host in Paris.

But despite the circles he moved in, his politics were always sane: He was a liberal internationalist and an American patriot to the core. Of genial disposition, he straddled otherwise hostile ideological camps: Years later he wrote of Albert Camus, "our acquaintance was slight. In his famous battle with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Beauvoir & Co., I was on his side and said so, but it was they who had been my friends."

Some of those friendships must have been strained by his career in the U.S. Foreign Service, although a search of the memoirs and histories of the *Partisan Review* set will turn up not an unkind word being said against him, a remarkable record as those steeped in the history of that world can attest. When The Scrapbook first made his acquaintance 25 years ago as a young writer, he was generosity and sweetness incarnate.

About that Foreign Service career: He was the State Department's spokesman in Saigon in 1965 and 1966, defending the war in Vietnam, and later would be the American spokesman in Paris, during the peace talks with the North Vietnamese. He picked up his pen again in the 1980s, with no diminution of literary power and wrote witty and worldly reminiscences of those episodes that are well worth seeking out in the online archives of *Commentary* magazine.

Condolences to his friends and family, including his son Roger, a valued contributor to these pages. ♦

Farewell, Vic Mizzy

A little over a year ago The Scrapbook took note of the death of Earle Hagen, composer of innumerable classic television jingles, and in passing mentioned his kinship with "the great Vic Mizzy, whose theme songs for *Green Acres* and the *Addams Family*

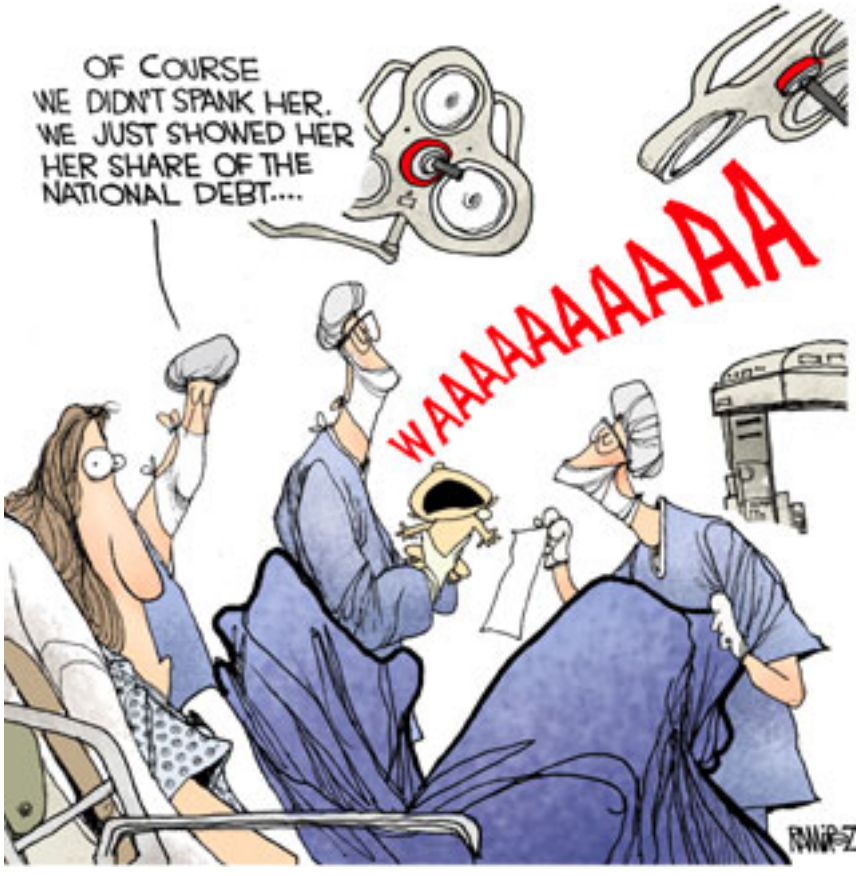
will live as long as Americans pay for cable and watch reruns." The Scrapbook is now sadly obliged to report that Vic Mizzy, too, has died, age 93, at his home in Los Angeles.

Mizzy's genius was not for quantity—Hagen was responsible for many more compositions—but a kind of insidious ability to plant his tunes and lyrics deep in the brain, and make sure that they stayed there, more or less indefinitely. We recently learned about a nursery school in Ashburn, Virginia, that teaches its charges the days of the week by setting their names to the *Addams Family* melody: "There's Sunday and there's Monday, there's Tuesday and there's Wednesday . . ."

Both *Green Acres* and the *Addams Family* have certain distinctive features that were the hallmark of Vic Mizzy. Both rely on a pair of quarternotes for periodic emphasis—memorably rendered by snapping fingers in Addams—and both employ unsung phrases to drive home the surreal quality of their subjects: "Neat / Sweet / Petite" for the *Addams Family*, "Chores / Stores / Fresh air / Times Square" in *Green Acres*. To The Scrapbook's knowledge, no other television theme songs employ these devices, and who remembers those songs today?

The *Green Acres* song—"I just adore a penthouse view / Darling, I love you, but give me Park Avenue"—is a conventional melody rendered in a comparatively straightforward style. But the *Addams Family*, which debuted in late 1964, contained certain otherworldly elements that strongly suggested to viewers that the balance of the decade was going to be a bumpy ride.

To be sure, some of the rhymes are a little forced—"spooky / ooky," "see 'em / scream"—but the multiple harpsichords and voiceovers (Mizzy's voice, by the way), as well as vignettes of Morticia clipping blossoms off flower stems, a soiled Uncle Fester staring vacantly into the camera, the disembodied Thing enticing viewers—prompt The Scrapbook to consider the *Addams Family* the greatest theme song ever written—and that includes *77 Sunset Strip* and the *Love Boat*. ♦



Sentences We Didn't Finish

"The golden years in American journalism lasted from World War II to the collapse of the Soviet Union. Those were the years when international news became a vital source of information that touched the lives of all Americans. Whether they listened to the radio to hear the crisp, haunting reports of CBS correspondent Edward R. Murrow from wartime London or . . . " (*Junk News: The Failure of the Media in the 21st Century*, by Tom Fenton). ♦

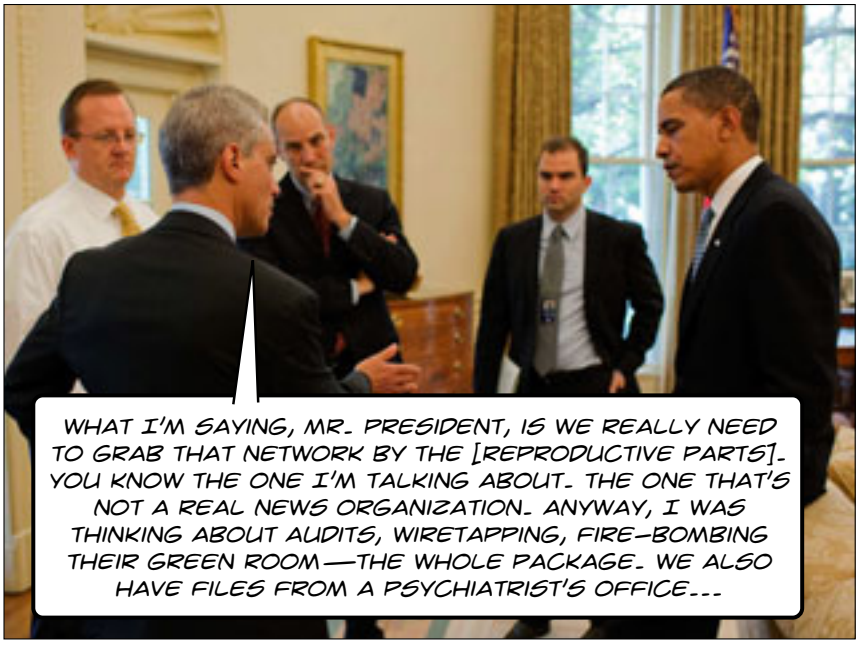
Obama's War

Barack Obama has finally found a war worth fighting and properly resourcing. The enemy is Fox News, and the administration has even deployed America's most effective weapon—the Obama charisma—to defeat the network that forced its competitors to hold their noses and report on things they would prefer to have ignored: like black separatist, Communist, 9/11 Truthers working inside the administration, and community-organizing pals of the administration counseling a 19-year-old prostitute on how to evade taxes on the profits she would make pimping out a small village of underage Salvadoran girls.

Late last month, the *New York Times* reported, Obama tried to resolve his differences with the network through his preferred method of conflict resolution—negotiation without precondition. Obama sent senior adviser David Axelrod to New York for a meeting with Fox News Supreme Leader Roger Ailes. The negotiations failed to produce a breakthrough after three weeks—so the administration went to war.

Shockingly, the rest of the media did not fall into line as the Obama administration had almost certainly expected they would. When the White House excluded Fox from a

What Were They Thinking



LANDOV

round of interviews with the administration's pay czar, the other networks expressed their solidarity with their Fox colleagues by refusing to conduct their own interviews until the White House reversed course. And of course the White House did reverse course (not that America's enemies should deduce from this that the Obama administration is easily rolled).

Even for Ken Rudin, the political editor at National Public Radio's Washington bureau, the administration had embarrassed itself. On NPR's *Talk of the Nation*, Rudin spoke truth to power:

> Well, it's not only aggressive, it's almost Nixonesque. I mean, you think of what Nixon and Agnew did with their enemies list and their attacks on the media; certainly Vice President Agnew's constant denunciation of the media. Of course, then it was a conservative president denouncing a liberal media, and of course, a lot of good liberals said, "Oh, that's ridiculous. That's an infringement on the freedom of press." And now you see a lot of liberals almost kind of applauding what the White House is doing to Fox News, which I think is distressing.

The comparison to Nixon must have caused too many NPR listeners to spit out their lattes. Because 24 hours later, Rudin apologized. "Comparing the tactics of the Nixon administration—which bugged and intimidated and harassed journalists—to that of the Obama administration was foolish, facile, ridiculous and, ultimately, embarrassing to me," Rudin wrote. "I should have known better and, in fact, I do know better." Rumors of an overnight stay and waterboarding at NPR reeducation camp cannot be confirmed. ♦

Life Imitates Parody

We thought we were exaggerating a bit in last week's Parody when we compared Harry Reid to Darth Vader—Reid's son, Rory, is running for governor. Both father and son will be on the same ticket next year, leading us to suspect that together they will rule the galaxy. Or at least the state of Nevada. But then we get word from the *Washington Times* that an anonymous member of Harry Reid's staff said they would "vaporize" their opponent. Just like the time Lord Vader vaporized the planet Alderaan. Perhaps Reid senses something; a presence he hasn't felt since . . . 1994? ♦

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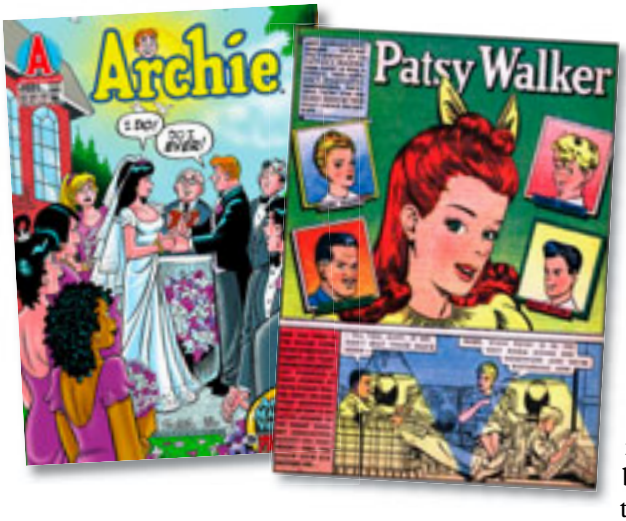
Casual

Funny Papers

I see where my old friend Archie Andrews has got his rear-end in a sling. Seems he married the wrong girl, the sleek and wealthy, raven-haired Veronica Lodge, when most people were hoping that he would eventually wind up with the very blonde though less than bombshell Betty Cooper, the girl—or at least everyone's idea of the girl—next door.

Archie Andrews is of course the eponymous hero of the old *Archie* comic books. As a boy, I loved *Archie* above all other comics books. I could work with *Superman*, *Batman*, and *Captain Marvel*, and was less enamored of *The Green Hornet*, but I much preferred the uncluttered drawings of *Archie*, with its small cast of regular, entirely predictable characters: the crabby teacher Miss Geraldine Grundy, the high-school principal Mr. Waldo Weatherbee, the slick rich boy Reggie (Reginald Mantle III), and above all Archie's sidekick Jughead, who wore a beanie and the same gray jersey with an S on it.



I also liked, but had to read on the sly, a comic book published for girls called *Patsy Walker*. Once more I was taken by the clear, even more realistic drawings of Patsy, her boyfriend Buzz Baxter, and her rival Hedy. I must have read *Patsy Walker* standing up at the comic-book rack at West's Pharmacy on Sheridan Road, for I couldn't have bought it or taken it home lest I be accused of being insufficiently masculine. (*Patsy Walker*, Google reports, ran out after 124 issues, while *Archie*, begun in 1942, is still alive and in its 605th issue.) What my tastes in comic books showed, I now realize, was an early preference for realism in literature over fantasy and science fiction—a taste I have maintained throughout my reading life.

As with so many others of my generation, my first memory of reading was of reading the comics, which in the newspapers in those days were also sometimes called the funny papers. A radio show in Chicago read the Sunday funny papers over the air, with kids instructed to follow along. In our family, owing to my father's detestation of the *Chicago Tribune*, especially of its publisher, the isolationist Anglophobe Colonel Robert McCormick, the *Tribune* wasn't allowed in the house. This was a personal setback—and the first time in my young life that politics interfered with pleasure—for the *Trib* had far and away the best comic strips of all the city's papers, *Dick Tracy* and *Terry and the Pirates* notable among them. The best the *Daily News*, our family paper, could counter with was *L'il Abner* and, on Saturdays, a soap-operaish strip called *Rex Morgan, M.D.*

By the sixth grade, I had weaned myself off comic books and began to read the sports books of John R. Tunis: *All-American*, *The Kid from Tomkinsville*, *High Pockets*, *The Kid Comes Back*, *The Iron Duke*, and others. Still, I was far from being a passionate reader. I fell back into the clutches of comic books in the seventh grade, when we had to do weekly book reports, and I did mine courtesy of an enterprise known as Classic Comics. Week after week I reported on one lengthy book after another—*The Count of Monte Cristo*, *David Copperfield*, *The Three Musketeers*, *The Last of the Mohicans*—all cribbed from the 25-or-so-page Classic Comics version of these monumental novels.

My final encounter with comic books came in high school with the item known in Chicago as "eight-pagers," which put comic strip characters through standard pornographic exercises. Eight-pagers were purported to have been created up in the print shop of Lane Technical High School on the city's north side by evil young geniuses whose craft was as impressive as their taste was coarse.

I bring up my rich background in comic-book reading, to say nothing of my love for movie cartoons—I still do a strong impersonation of Elmer Fudd: "Scroo you, you cwazy wabbit"—chiefly to make the point that today I not only am bored royal blue by comic-book drawing of the kind that appears in so-called graphic novels but cannot watch any television show or film that is done in animation. I have been told by intelligent people that *The Simpsons* is filled with a fine anarchic humor, but on the few occasions that I have attempted to watch it my mind leaves the room more quickly than it does during a Mahler symphony. Other people my age I know who have been brought up on comic books have told me they find themselves in the same condition.

I recently read that Archie Andrews's marriage to Veronica has been so badly received by the comic book's still substantial number of readers that its creators have had, in effect, to annul it and remarry the amiable redhead to Betty. I have no plan either to attend the wedding or to send a gift.

Joseph Epstein

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The Inevitability Myth

Did the Democrats become Calvinists when we weren't looking? Lately they've been talking an awful lot about predestination. They want to claim that Obamacare's victory is foreordained, that the health care debate is over and—surprise, surprise—the liberals won.

So: Paul Krugman wrote on his blog that an "aura of inevitability" surrounds Obamacare. The *Washington Post*'s health care blogger wrote that this month's pro-Obama vote in the Senate Finance Committee "convinced many that health care reform was more of an inevitability than a possibility." A blogger for the *Atlantic Monthly* wrote that health care reform is a "*fait accompli*."

Pas encore. Yes, the chances of some sort of health bill passing, at some point, are by no means negligible—unfortunately. But there are many reasons to be skeptical of the future of Obamacare. Here are three:

The Landscape. "Our government rests in public opinion," Abraham Lincoln said in 1856. "Whoever can change public opinion, can change the government."

DAVID CLARK

Public opinion is not on the Democrats' side. Most Americans remain satisfied with their health care. It's true that certain elements of the proposed reform, when isolated from others, poll well. But Congress isn't going to hold separate votes on each piece. Congress will be voting for the whole package. And the fact is that, ever since Congress began to assemble that package, more people have opposed the health care plan than favored it. The polls are striking. Since September 9, President Obama has campaigned strenuously for his plan, and it continues to lose support. And the Gallup poll says that Obama's ratings plunge over the last three months is the largest quarterly drop for an elected president since 1953.

In other words, a polarizing chief executive is asking Congress to enact a $1 trillion entitlement and tax hike against the public's wishes. Won't Democrats whose seats are up in 2010 think twice before acceding to his demands?

The Money. A glance at the polls reveals the alarm at our ballooning national debt. The Congressional Budget Office concluded that the Senate Finance Committee's health care bill would pay for itself in its first 10 years, but only by imposing taxes and cutting Medicare. There is no reason to believe that the reform that comes to a floor vote will resemble the Finance bill. This bill is far too stingy for liberals. They are ready to add to the debt in order to achieve their social vision. They want universal coverage. They want more generous subsidies.

But a left-liberal health care reform is a dicey proposition. Consider what happened last week in the Senate. Medicare is scheduled to reduce doctor's payments by more than 20 percent in 2010. The Democrats wanted to restore those cuts at a cost of $247 billion in unfunded liabilities. But, when Harry Reid tried to end debate on the measure last week, he failed. Joe Lieberman and 12 Democrats voted against the Senate Democratic leadership and for fiscal responsibility. Reid can't get 60 votes for a payoff to the American Medical Association. What makes the White House think he can get 60 for Obamacare?

The Calendar. Obama originally wanted a bill before summer's end. Didn't happen. Back in September, lawmakers expected Pelosi to hold a vote by the end of that month. No go. Then the deadline was the end of October. Another fantasy. Now we're told the vote won't come before early November.

But November features off-year gubernatorial elections that look favorable for Republicans. In Virginia, Republican Bob McDonnell holds a commanding lead over Democrat Creigh Deeds. When Obama won the state last year, the reigning opinion was that his coalition was strong enough to move the Old Dominion firmly into the Democratic column. A McDonnell victory would shatter this illusion. It would give pause to the center-right Democrats about to tie their fortunes to the president. It would show that the enthusiasm in American politics is all on the right.

Southern and Western Democrats may begin to ask, *What's the rush?* And then the longer the health care debate goes on, the more the momentum for grand reform will fade. Big schemes will be abandoned.

The health-reform Calvinists are wrong. Politics isn't physics. Legislative logrolling isn't gravity. Nothing is inevitable.

—Matthew Continetti

Virginia Turns Back to Red

Obama's slide leaves Democrats floundering. BY FRED BARNES

GARY LOCKE

Creigh Deeds, the Democratic candidate for governor of Virginia, has a Barack Obama problem. Obama won Virginia in last year's presidential race—the first Democrat to do so in 44 years—but his popularity in the state has plunged since then. Deeds is conflicted. Asked if he's an "Obama Democrat," Deeds said he's a "Creigh Deeds Democrat," whatever that is. And he's skipped two of three Obama appearances in Virginia during the campaign season.

The rub is Deeds can't live with Obama, and can't live without him. His campaign is sputtering, he trails Republican Bob McDonnell by 7 points or more in every poll, and the Democratic base is demoralized. He needs Obama's help in arousing voters and creating a Democratic surge in turnout on November 3.

The downside is Obama motivates Republicans as well and is likely to have little effect on independents. In 2006 and 2008—disastrous election years for Republicans in Virginia—"the independents were behaving like Democrats," says former Republican congressman Tom Davis. They had turned sharply against President Bush and the war in Iraq. With Bush gone, independents are increasingly leery of Obama. For Deeds, the president is a "net negative," Davis says.

The Obama problem isn't unique to Deeds. It's likely to afflict many Democratic candidates in 2010. A strong economic rebound and a rise in Obama's approval rating would ease the problem. But for the foreseeable future in regions where Obama is relatively weak—Sunbelt, border, plains, Rockies—Democratic candidates will be skittish about being linked to the president.

Virginia 2009 is the test case. Since 2004, Democrats here have won a presidential race, a second straight contest for governor, three House seats, two U.S. Senate seats, and control of the state senate. That's a powerful Democratic trend. Virginia seemed to have moved from Republican stronghold to blue state almost overnight—or at least to swing state that tilts Democratic.

But maybe not. The political landscape a year later looks quite different. John McCain lost to Obama by 53 percent to 46 percent in 2008. Davis says if the probable shape of the turnout next week—fewer students and blacks, more Republican-leaning independents and angry seniors—had been the case last year, McCain would have won the state. Polls of likely voters suggest the same.

When Deeds, a rural state senator, won the Democratic primary in June, Democrats were optimistic. With his moderate-to-liberal record, Deeds seemed well positioned to unite Democrats, attract independents, and win the governorship. Republicans, who'd expected former Democratic national

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

chairman Terry McAuliffe, to be the nominee, were rattled. Deeds led McDonnell in two polls.

It's been all downhill from there. Democrats would have you believe the blame rests with Deeds and his inept campaign. There's some truth in that. In contrast, McDonnell, who defeated Deeds for attorney general by 323 votes in 2005, has run a crisp, disciplined, inclusive campaign from the start.

He's overcome one big obstacle. In late August, the *Washington Post*, chronically hostile to Virginia Republicans, uncovered McDonnell's 1989 master's thesis. It was remarkable for its social conservatism, especially its criticism of working women. Deeds leaped on it, making the thesis the centerpiece of his campaign and airing TV ads on it for weeks. McDonnell repudiated parts of the thesis, insisted he supports women in the workplace, and moved on. The tactic worked. McDonnell took a hit in the polls but never fell behind.

Then, in mid-September, Deeds made a critical error. During a debate, Deeds said he would not raise taxes. Afterwards, he told reporters he was only referring to "general revenue" taxes. His evasiveness infuriated the *Washington Post*, which had backed Deeds in the primary on the sole issue of his willingness to increase taxes to finance road building. The paper's endorsement was crucial in his come-from-behind victory.

Three days later, a *Post* editorial slammed Deeds for "trying to fudge the issue." He responded by unveiling "my transportation plan," which the *Post* published. (At the debate, McDonnell had held up a blank piece of paper, calling it the Deeds plan.) In the op-ed, Deeds said he would "sign a bipartisan bill with a dedicated funding mechanism for transportation—even if it includes new taxes."

That thrilled the *Post*. In an editorial the next day headlined "Honesty on Transportation," it praised Deeds for having "unequivocally committed himself to support higher taxes to rescue the state's sclerotic road system." Last week, the paper endorsed Deeds in an unusually lengthy editorial that trashed McDonnell. It conceded Deeds lacks good candidate skills, but said "there are plenty of reasons why [he] is the better choice," particularly taxes.

Now it was McDonnell's turn to leap. He has attacked Deeds relentlessly, in speeches and television spots, for proposing to raise taxes in a recession. His steadily improving poll numbers indicate the attacks have been effective. McDonnell's transportation plan, by the way, involves selling state-run liquor stores and no new taxes.

Does an off-year governor's race really matter in the national scheme of things? Absolutely. In New Jersey, the election is all about the incumbent Democratic governor, Jon Corzine. In Virginia, with its one-term rule, there's no incumbent. So it's one party against the other. And to the dismay of Deeds, McDonnell has injected Obama and his liberal agenda into the race. Further tying Deeds to Washington is Obama's pick for Democratic national chairman, Virginia governor Tim Kaine.

The Virginia election isn't a referendum on Obama. At a minimum, though, it will be clear evidence of what a state that voted for Obama in 2008 thinks of him now. Desperate to stir Democratic turnout, Deeds has embraced Obama in the waning days of the campaign. He's broadcasting an ad in which Obama lauds him. The president is to make a final campaign appearance in Virginia this week—joined this time by Deeds. If Obama gives Deeds a significant boost, so much the better for Obama and Democrats. But if the drift to McDonnell continues, we'll know what Virginia voters are saying about the president. ♦

Dede's Losing, Call the Cops

A wild three-way race in upstate New York.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Lowville, N.Y.

At the Lewis County GOP dinner at the Elks Lodge, Republican congressional candidate Dede Scozzafava sounds defensive and even a little bit angry. "Some of us in the room might have a disagreement about a couple of my issues," she says to the 100 or so Republicans at the dinner. "I believe they're individual choice issues. I believe those are conservative values. I don't think government belongs in individual lives. I think those are personal decisions that need to be made. I think that's conservatism."

To hear Scozzafava tell it, her support for gay marriage and taxpayer-funded abortion-on-demand (the couple of issues that she isn't naming) are the only things a Republican might disagree with her about. But she leans left on plenty of other issues, too. She supported the $787 billion stimulus package, favors card-check (which would do away with secret-ballot union elections), and won't say how she'd vote on the House Democrats' health care bill. Her liberalism has created an opening in this Republican-leaning district for the grassroots insurgency of conservative Doug Hoffman. A

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Siena poll released on October 15 showed Hoffman trailing Scozzafava 23 to 29 percent, and internal polls have them even. But both trail Democrat Bill Owens (who garnered 33 percent in the Siena poll) in the race to succeed John McHugh in New York's 23rd congressional district—which stretches from Lake Ontario to Vermont on the Canadian border. McHugh vacated the seat (held by Republicans continuously since 1871) this fall after being confirmed as Obama's Army secretary.

Scozzafava's problems as a candidate aren't limited to ideology. She simply rubs people the wrong way. The Siena poll reported that—by a 16-point margin—voters who had seen her commercials found that the ads made "them less likely to support her." "Let me tell you something," Scozzafava says at the conclusion of her seven-minute speech at the Elks Lodge. "The best revenge in all of this—because it's been ugly and nasty, my family has been personally attacked, I've been attacked, there's been lies—that the best revenge in the end is to win."

I experienced firsthand Scozzafava's politics of personal revenge at the Elks Lodge event. After I persisted in asking her questions about card-check, taxpayer-funding of abortion, and whether her pledge not to raise taxes meant she'd vote against any health care bill that raised taxes, her husband—a local union boss—called the police.

Officer Brandi Groman showed up in a squad car with its lights flashing minutes later. "Maybe we do things a little differently here, but you know, persistence in that area, you scared the candidate a little bit," Officer Groman told me, as she took down my name, date of birth, and home address.

"[Scozzafava] got startled, that's all," she added. "It's not like you're in any trouble."

The next day, the Scozzafava campaign released a statement claiming that I "repeatedly screamed questions (in-your-face-style)" at the candidate. I didn't. The Associated Press asked to listen to my tape of the event and confirmed my side: "The reporter didn't raise his voice, but repeated his unanswered questions several times."

After this bizarre incident, George Joseph, Republican party chairman of Oneida county, which is part of the sprawling 23rd congressional district, told a conservative website that Scozzafava would almost certainly lose on November 3. The race had "turned into a tainted runaway election," Joseph said. "I wasn't sold on Dede from the beginning."

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Those not inclined to vote for a liberal Democrat or a liberal Republican are left with Doug Hoffman, a soft-spoken, sober-minded certified public accountant and Army National Guard veteran. Outside a local NPR station in Oneida after wrapping up an appearance on October 20, the self-described Reagan Republican tells me: "I never wanted to be a politician. I never had any desire for it. I probably had more disdain for it than anything." Hoffman, who was passed over for the GOP nomination by local party bosses, says he's in the race because he's fed up with excessive taxes, spending, and government regulations.

"It shouldn't take a CPA to go to Washington and explain to people you can't spend money you don't have," he says. "But, on the other hand, maybe it does, and so that's why I'm here." A fiscal and social conservative, he says the stimulus package hasn't worked and would like to see some of the money redirected to job credits and incentives for small businesses.

Later in the day, Hoffman attends a local Rotary Club luncheon with about 60 people. "If you're looking for a smooth-talking fast-talking politician," he says, "I'm not your man." True enough. His is not an electrifying stump speech—NPR is a much better medium for him—but he does effectively explain the issues he's running on: opposition to card-check and cap and trade, a free-market approach to health care reform, and support for the war in Afghanistan. His campaign commercials tout his pro-life stance (the outgoing McHugh was solidly pro-life), but on the stump Hoffman doesn't usually bring up social issues.

Though Hoffman appears an attractive and viable alternative to Scozzafava—and one with the backing of influential conservatives like Fred Thompson and Sarah Palin and seemingly every grassroots political action committee—most of the Washington GOP establishment is backing the official Republican candidate. The RNC and National Republican Campaign Committee are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on her campaign, and former House

speaker Newt Gingrich made the case for Scozzafava on a radio program last Thursday:

> I would say to every Republican: You have a chance to elect somebody who has signed the no tax pledge. She's endorsed by the National Rifle Association. She is opposed to cap and trade and energy taxes. She is opposed to the Obama health plan, and, she will vote against Nancy Pelosi as speaker.

The problem with Gingrich's argument is that Scozzafava actually waffles on many of these issues. She won't say if her no-taxes pledge means she'd oppose a health care bill that raises taxes. She refuses, in fact, to say how she'd vote on a comprehensive health care bill. And this summer her husband was in discussions with Democratic leaders about her potentially running as a Democrat for the seat she is now seeking as a Republican. She may be the only candidate ever endorsed by both Newt Gingrich and Markos Moulitsas Zuniga of the leftist website Daily Kos. He called her "actually the most liberal candidate in the race" and said, "It's official, I'm rooting for the Republican to win."

It's not clear why Republicans—or Democrats—would want her in their caucus. Last week, she held a horribly stage-managed campaign event outside of Doug Hoffman's office that was all about calling for more debates, even though she was the one who had declined Hoffman's offers to debate. Surrounded by sign-waving Hoffman supporters, the event was another embarrassment for Scozzafava and her supporters.

The race remains tight and the split between Scozzafava and Hoffman could very well deliver the seat to Owens—but maybe only for a year. Hoffman tells me he's "absolutely" committed to running for the seat in 2010 no matter who wins. "Depending on who wins" on November 3, he says, "I will run in the Republican primary and let the voters decide who's the true Republican for this district, or I will run as the only Republican." ♦

Corzine's La$t $tand

The New Jersey governor can't buy love, but he still has a chance to win. BY JONATHAN V. LAST

East Brunswick, New Jersey

On the surface, the race in New Jersey doesn't make much sense: Jon Corzine is a Democratic millionaire incumbent in a very blue state. He is outspending his Republican opponent, Attorney General Chris Christie, by more than 3-to-1. He has behind him the stars of the Democratic firmament. And yet Corzine has run behind Christie from day one.

The climate is that bad for Corzine in New Jersey. Unemployment is 9.8 percent. There's a budget deficit of $8 billion. Taxes are rising across the board. After Christie won his party's nomination in June, he jumped to a double-digit lead. Unable to move his own numbers—he's polled over 42 percent only once since January—Corzine went negative, trying to drive some of the anti-Corzine vote away from Christie and to Chris Daggett, an independent candidate who, luckily for Corzine, raised enough money to qualify for matching funds and to be included in the debates.

Chris Christie

The governor attacked Christie for an undisclosed loan to one of his subordinates. He attacked the husky Christie for his weight. He attacked Christie for being a tool of the Bush/Rove/Ashcroft axis of evil, which is awfully brazen, as Christie first achieved national notice as one of the U.S. attorneys *fired* by the Bush Justice Department. To some degree, though, the ads worked. In June, the polls had Christie at 50, Corzine at 37, and Daggett at 4. Today it's Christie 40, Corzine 39, and Daggett 14—Daggett's gains have all come from Christie.

Thrilled to be anywhere close to even, Corzine began last week with a big rally in Edison with Joe Biden as his very special guest. Hundreds of people packed a gymnasium to hear the vice president testify about how vital Corzine's help has been to the Obama administration. While talking about Obama's stimulus bill, for example, Biden said: "I literally picked up the phone and called Jon Corzine and said 'Jon, what do you think we should do?'" The next day, Corzine held two rallies with Bill Clinton, each drawing more than a 1,000 people. On Wednesday, President Obama headlined an event in Hackensack, which drew a crowd of 3,500, and New York's almost senator, Caroline Kennedy, barnstormed with the governor.

The *New York Times* has also been riding shotgun. To kick off Corzine's big week, the Sunday edition of the

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Times gave him an emphatic endorsement. On Monday, the paper ran a blockbuster story in which unnamed sources suggested that the subordinate to whom Christie had loaned money *might* have done favors for Christie and that it was *possible* that *some* of these favors *might* have been improper. The breathless, anonymously sourced piece was eerily reminiscent of the *Times*'s McCain-lobbyist-affair hit job from February 2008. To cap off its run, the *Times* produced a poll showing Corzine magically leading Christie by 3 points. (Of the dozens of polls conducted this year, only one other survey has suggested Corzine was doing so well, and that came from a Democratic research firm.)

But Corzine's real strength is his money. He has only raised $1.2 million, but has kicked in $15.6 million of his own money to wage a massive ad war. That number, which includes only donations made before October 6, will be a lot higher at the conclusion of the race, but it brings his lifetime total of spending on his political races to $120 million. The money has made Corzine ads ubiquitous in both the Philadelphia and New York markets.

Corzine's real problem, though, remains unchallenged: He's wildly unpopular. His campaign has tried out three messages to overcome this: (1) Corzine has done a good job, and New Jersey is better off now than it was before; (2) these are scary times and we can't trust a right-wing Republican like Chris Christie; (3) Barack Obama will be disappointed if Corzine loses.

The first case is particularly unconvincing, and even Corzine's people don't seem to believe it. Bill Clinton, for instance, tried to bolster Corzine's accomplishments by noting that Jersey's foreclosure rate, while still high by the state's historical standard, is down by 30 percent. Ticking off the governor's top accomplishments, Representative Rob Andrews boasted that "Someday, you'll be able to take a train from Camden to Glassboro because of Jon Corzine." (If you aren't from Jersey, try to imagine celebrating future ferry service between Hades and Limbo.)

The charge that Christie is a conservative nut is no more convincing. At one rally last week, Corzine attacked Christie by non sequitur, saying that he "would have sided with Sarah Palin and Mark Sanford" on the subject of stimulus money.

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The third message is all about nationalizing the race. Corzine is blaming New Jersey's lost jobs on George W. Bush and invokes the Obama mantras "Si se puede" and "Yes we can" on the stump. At the rally in Hackensack, Corzine supporters wore T-shirts proclaiming "Yes We Can 2.0." Clinton began his remarks by telling the audience, "I'm here because I want the president and our people in Congress to succeed in bringing this country back." Another surrogate noted ominously that if Christie wins, "on the morning after the election, the president's chief of staff will walk into the Oval Office and have to say, 'Mr. President, we're sorry, but someone who opposes your agenda and wants to take the country back to where it was under George W. Bush won the election.'"

Christie wants no part of this larger narrative. The only prominent Republican to campaign for him has been Rudy Giuliani, who is as much a regional figure as a national one. He never talks about ideology and actually welcomed Obama's presence last week, "It's a wonderful thing for the president to come to the state of New Jersey. I've always said, if the president of the United States, no matter what party they're in, comes to New Jersey—even if they're coming to campaign against me—it's good for the people of the state of New Jersey to see their president." He even went so far as to release a web ad which unironically runs a voiceover of the president's "change" speech from the 2008 campaign while positing Christie as the inheritor of Obama's ethos.

A couple hours after Corzine and Biden took the stage together, Christie held his only event of the day in the house of Dan and Allison Brown, on a middle-class cul-de-sac in East Brunswick. He sat in the Browns' living room with nine people from the neighborhood. No stage, no lights, no theme music, no out-of-town superstar supporters. The Browns have two small children, and a Pack-and-Play was tucked into one corner of the room. The glass and wrought-iron coffee table in front of Christie had its edges wrapped in child-proof padding. Besides the nine voters, four local TV cameras and four print reporters were present. The candidate talked for barely two minutes before opening the floor to questions, first from the neighbors and then from the reporters.

Christie started out emphasizing property taxes, his campaign's main focus for the home stretch. When he ran four years ago, Corzine had promised to cut property taxes by 40 percent. Instead they're up across the state, by an average of $1,000. (In East Brunswick, they're up 19 percent.) But Christie quickly went off message. He answered questions on

point, instead of turning them back to his preset theme. So, for instance, he talked seriously about state constitutional conventions, urban education, AG appointments, the state supreme court, pension overhaul, and the regulatory hell New Jersey foists on businesses. He is friendly without being cloying, charming without being smarmy. He's asking for your vote, not your love.

Truth be told, Christie isn't an electric campaigner. Since winning the nomination he has run a relatively no-nonsense reform campaign. Christie's initial case was that Corzine had made a hash of New Jersey and that, as a crusading, reform-minded attorney general, he was the guy who could clean it up. Voters already agreed with the first half of this proposition. And while Corzine might plausibly blame part of the problem on macroeconomic conditions, he has only made matters worse with increases in income taxes, the sales tax, and property taxes. (He also hiked tolls on the state's highways and recently said that he's "more than happy" to consider raising the gas tax after reelection.)

Christie's is a very simple message: "lower taxes, lower spending." He sometimes loses sight of it and gets sidetracked with small potatoes like Corzine's questionable use of his private foundation. But the Christie campaign plans to be on air hammering taxes and spending these last two weeks.

If they do, Christie has a good chance to win. It's unlikely the independent Daggett will actually get the 15 percent he's polling at now. Third-party candidates generally underperform polls on Election Day, and New Jersey's electoral rules mean that Daggett's name will be muddled in with a large group of independent candidates. If Daggett drops and Corzine polls at the 40 percent he's been hovering near all year, there's a path to a narrow Christie victory.

Christie has been the frontrunner from the start. But if he topples Jon Corzine and his many friends, it'll still be an upset. ♦

Obama's Minions Are Ingrates

The Bush administration did leave a plan for Afghanistan. BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

On October 18, White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel appeared on the Sunday morning talk shows and, in the process of answering questions about Barack Obama's strategy on Afghanistan, accused the Bush administration of failing to ask the most basic questions about that country and our war there.

> The president is asking the questions that have never been asked on the civilian side, the political side, the military side, and the strategic side. What is the impact on the region? What can the Afghan government do or not do? Where are we on the police training? Who would be better doing the police training? Could that be something the Europeans do? Should we take the military side? Those are the questions that have not been asked. And before you commit troops . . . before you make that decision, there's a set of questions that have to have answers that have never been asked. And it's clear after eight years of war, that's basically starting from the beginning, and those questions never got asked.

Then, after former vice president Dick Cheney used a speech on October 22 to accuse the Obama administration of "dithering" on Afghanistan, White House spokesman Robert Gibbs responded by claiming that the Bush administration did not care about U.S. troops.

"What Vice President Cheney calls 'dithering,' President Obama calls his solemn responsibility to the men and women in uniform and to the American public," said Gibbs. "I think we've all seen what happens when somebody doesn't take that responsibility seriously." Gibbs went on, calling Cheney's comments "curious" and claiming that a request for troops from General David McKiernan during the final year of the Bush administration "sat on desks in this White House, including the vice president's, for more than eight months."

So there are two separate and very serious charges that Obama White House officials are making about their predecessors. First, that the Bush administration had no real Afghanistan policy and failed for eight years to ask the important questions about the war there. And second, that the Bush administration ignored requests from commanders on the ground to increase troops in Afghanistan.

Bush administration officials were furious.

"The idea that we just sat on our f—ing asses—it's really a slander," says one senior Bush administration official. "It's just not credible that we didn't take this seriously."

In fact, the Bush administration did ask those questions. From mid-September to mid-November 2008, a National Security Council team, under the direction of General Doug Lute, conducted an exhaustive review of Afghanistan policy. The interagency group included high-ranking officials from the State Department, the National Security Council, the CIA, the office of the director of national intelligence, the office of the vice president, the Pentagon, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Its objective was to assess U.S.

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policy on Afghanistan, integrating a simultaneous military review being conducted by CENTCOM, so as to present President Bush with a series of recommendations on how best to turn around the deteriorating situation there. The Lute group met often—sometimes twice daily—in a secure conference room in the Eisenhower Executive Office Building. (The group used the room so frequently that other national security working groups that had been meeting there were required to find other space including, occasionally, the White House Situation Room.)

The Lute review asked many questions and provided exhaustive answers not only to President Bush, but also to the Obama transition team before the inauguration. "General Jones was briefed on the results of the Lute review, and that review answered many of the questions that Rahm Emanuel says were never asked," says Bush's national security adviser, Stephen Hadley. Jones and Hadley discussed the review, and Lute gave Jones a detailed PowerPoint presentation on his findings. Among the recommendations: a civilian surge of diplomats and other nonmilitary personnel to the country, expedited training for the Afghan National Army, a strong emphasis on governance and credible elections, and, most important, a fully resourced counterinsurgency strategy.

Jones asked Hadley not to release the results of the Lute review so that his boss would have more flexibility when it came time to provide direction for the U.S. presence in Afghanistan. Bush officials reasoned that Obama was more likely to heed their advice if he could simply adopt their recommendations without having to acknowledge that they came from the Bush White House. So Hadley agreed.

"Mr. Emanuel either did not know about our review or chose to lie about it," says Eliot Cohen, who served as counselor to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and was one of the principal participants in the Lute review. Virtually nobody believes Emanuel is clueless. In any case, the author of the review, Doug Lute, remains a senior Afghanistan adviser in the Obama White House.

Perhaps more infuriating for Bush veterans was the suggestion by Gibbs that the Bush administration ignored requests for more troops. It's nonsense, they say. McKiernan wanted more troops—he asked for three additional brigades in the summer of 2008—but he understood that he could have them only when they became available. "McKiernan was making requests down the line," says a Pentagon official, "and late in 2008 we did have the ability to commit more forces. So we did." Indeed, Bush sent nearly 7,000 additional troops to Afghanistan before he left office, including one brigade that had been repurposed from Iraq.

One Bush veteran asks, "If it's true that the Bush administration sat on these troop requests for eight months, is the White House suggesting that the Pentagon was incompetent or negligent or both? That would be a good question to put to the defense secretary—and President Obama is in a position to make him talk."

I couldn't reach Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, but I did talk to a senior defense official who serves with him. This person stressed that Gates has gone to great lengths to avoid being dragged into political fights between administrations. Nonetheless, he offered a strong rebuke to the present White House political team.

"There was no request on anyone's desk for eight months," said the defense official. "There was not a request that went to the White House because we didn't have forces to commit. So on the facts, they're wrong."

When Obama took office, he ordered an Afghanistan review of his own. Led by former CIA official Bruce Riedel, the Obama review team looked at Afghanistan and made its recommendations. On March 27, the president announced his new Afghanistan strategy—one that included many of the recommendations of the Bush administration's review. And that is another indignity. Not only did the Obama administration understand full well that the Bush administration had conducted a comprehensive assessment of Afghanistan, and not only had Jim Jones asked that the Bush review be withheld from the public—but Obama's "new" strategy bore an uncanny resemblance to that prescribed by the Lute review.

Says Eliot Cohen, "My challenge to the Obama administration is: Why don't you declassify both documents—the Bush administration's Afghanistan review and your own."

Not surprisingly, Republicans were among the most outspoken supporters of Obama's strategy announced in March. And while Democrats on Capitol Hill did not, for the most part, voice their opposition in public, they registered their concerns in private conversations with White House officials.

They had a receptive audience. Several top White House officials, including Emanuel, Jones, David Axelrod, and Joe Biden, remain skeptical of escalating U.S. military engagement in Afghanistan. And according to the man who conducted the Afghanistan review for the Obama White House, Bruce Riedel, politics is at the center of those concerns.

"I think a big part of it is, the vice president's reading of the Democratic party is this is not sustainable," Riedel told the *New York Times*. "That's a part of the process that's a legitimate question for a president—if I do this, can I sustain it with political support at home? That was the argument the vice president was making back in the winter."

It is a legitimate question for a president. Why then, as Obama again nears a decision on the way forward in Afghanistan, would Rahm Emanuel pick a fight with Republicans—the very people who gave the president his most ardent backing the last time he announced a new strategy?

Could it be that Emanuel hopes to foreclose one of Obama's options—the one Emanuel opposes—before the president makes his decision? ♦

Keeping Up with the Hoosiers

Ohio comes down with a case of casino envy.

BY DAVID WOLFFORD

Ohio voters have defeated four gambling proposals in two decades and recently saw their governor jam a slot machine provision into the state budget. Now, facing a casino issue on November's ballot, they feel as though they're being pressed into a game of three-card monte.

Governor Ted Strickland—a Democrat, a psychologist, and an ordained Methodist minister—has a record of opposing gambling on moral grounds. He has called it "an insidious condition that can ruin lives." In June he declared, "I do not believe that this is the right way for Ohio to deal with our budget or to try and fund education."

Then Strickland suddenly called for the Lottery Commission to install slot machines at Ohio's seven horse tracks. The hope was to bring $933 million into the treasury. After struggling to persuade the legislature and threatening a go-it-alone executive order, the governor worked language into his 2009 budget request to accomplish this end.

Before the state could install the one-armed bandits (actually, video lottery terminals or VLTs), a group of conservatives formed LetOhioVote to stop Strickland. The group is not opposed to gambling per se, says founding member Gene Pierce, "We're just saying people have the right to vote on it." Pierce and two other plaintiffs filed suit against the state.

On September 21, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled 6-1 in their favor, temporarily stopping the governor. The ruling will delay LetOhioVote's ballot measure until November 2010. Strickland's Plan B: rescind scheduled tax cuts.

The governor's about-face, his stretching of executive authority, and his delaying of a tax cut have not helped his image. The *Columbus Dispatch* called his administration "one of the most dysfunctional in Ohio history." Franklin County GOP chairman Doug Preisse remains puzzled: "He crusaded against gambling in the past. When it's expedient for his budget, we see him flip flopping." Strickland's job approval has dropped from 63 percent to 48 percent.

NEWSCOM

Ted Strickland

While Strickland, LetOhioVote, and the supreme court were working through the matter of the VLTs, casino operators prepared to roll the dice with voters for the fifth time. Issue 3, if passed this November, will entitle two casino operators—Penn National Gaming and Cleveland Cavaliers owner Dan Gilbert—to open four casinos in Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, and Toledo and enshrine their monopoly in the state constitution. If successful, the proposal will also impose a one-time licensing fee of $50 million per casino, create a fixed 33 percent tax on gross casino revenues, and distribute those revenues to local governments, public schools, regulatory agencies, law enforcement, and remediation for gambling addiction.

Proponents promise a windfall in taxes and economic stimulus. The casinos' PAC, the Ohio Jobs and Growth Committee, commissioned a University of Cincinnati study that estimated the scheme would produce 19,000 construction jobs and 15,000 permanent casino positions, with an average annual salary of $26,300. Charlie Luken, who chairs the PAC, is a former mayor of Cincinnati. "As mayor," he said, "I was always an advocate to bring casinos. I'd see money going from our area to Indiana, just 30 minutes from the mayor's office." Three other states bordering Ohio—Michigan, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia—also offer some form of casino gambling. And even the fifth neighbor, Kentucky, has tried to add slots at its sacred race tracks. Pro-Issue 3 commercials show Buckeye gamblers departing on tour buses to cross state lines.

Penn National Gaming, Gilbert, and their allies also suggest new casinos will increase sales at nearby restaurants, bars, and hotels. Skeptics acknowledge that the big new employers will create temporary construction and long-term casino jobs, but they question the ripple effect. You can bet the proposed facilities will resemble typical casinos: no clocks, no windows, climate controls set for comfort, bargain buffets, and cocktail waitresses serving complimentary drinks. This is not a scheme for sending gamblers across town to spend elsewhere. Issue 3 would even bar local governments from preventing casinos from staying open 24 hours.

Many question the economic forecasts. "This proposal looks like an

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economic lifeboat, but it is a sinking *Titanic*," says Democratic state representative Tyrone Yates. Several Democratic officials have endorsed Issue 3; Yates notes that pressure to fund local programs in a time of economic crisis makes gambling an easier sell.

Yates is a member of TruthPAC, which is leading the charge against Issue 3. TruthPAC objects to enacting a proposal drafted by, and overly beneficial to, casino owners. Spokeswoman Sandy Theis accuses the "gambling cartel" of buying support, saying, "They're passing out more cash prizes than Monty Hall." Issue 3 includes money for law enforcement—and voilà, the Ohio Fraternal Order of Police endorsed it. The casinos hired former state GOP chairman Bob Bennett, and according to the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, Bennett pressured Republican county chairs and held a fundraiser for Cleveland's Democratic mayor, Frank Jackson, a casino supporter who's up for reelection.

"As soon as the issue went on the ballot, we started looking for natural allies and unnatural allies to defeat it," said Theis. She's right that anti-gambling conservatives and gambling interests make strange bedfellows. Both out-of-state casinos and Ohio race tracks oppose Issue 3. MTR Gaming—which runs a resort in Chester, West Virginia, and a Columbus horse track—doesn't want to be boxed out of the cartel, nor does it want to lose its Ohio customers. Horse track operators hope that Strickland's VLTs will eventually arrive—and they don't want to compete with full-scale casinos.

"No one with a financial interest in the casino debate is wearing a white hat," says Yates. "They're all gangsters in this one." In last year's general election, a Minnesota casino company, Lakes Entertainment, fought for exclusive rights to a planned casino resort in Wilmington, Ohio, and Penn National donated over $37 million to defeat it. Penn, which owns Argosy Casino just across the state line in Indiana, feared the Wilmington facility would steal its customers. Now Penn is pushing for Issue 3, while MTR Gaming helps bankroll TruthPAC.

MTR refused to comment on its involvement. According to the most recent campaign finance reports, which include donations and expenses through October 12, Ohio Jobs and Growth has raked in about $35 million, while TruthPAC has received nearly $6 million. The difference is telling, but considering last year Penn kicked in over $10 million in the final days of the campaign to defeat its competitor, MTR may raise the stakes during the final hand. In Ohio, there is no limit on contributions for ballot issues.

Proponents of Issue 3 avoid any discussion of social costs, and those opponents who raise them tend to be the less well funded and less able to command air time. But Citizens for Community Values, a 25-year-old group based in Cincinnati that "exists to promote Judeo-Christian moral values," is on the case. They cite studies projecting that the costs of crime, bankruptcy, suicide, and damage to families brought in gambling's wake will more than outweigh any benefit to the state from the proceeds of casinos.

In the past, such arguments have resonated in Ohio. Indeed, the state has shown consistent and widespread opposition to casino gambling. But this new offer comes at a difficult time. Unemployment is 10.8 percent statewide, up four points from last year. Polls in recent months show voters favoring gambling. County GOP chairmen report less vigorous opposition than usual among Republicans. Past attempts have won majorities only in the counties slated to host gambling or those next door. This time the casinos have played their cards carefully, making economic promises to the four most populous metropolitan areas. Several leaders in these cities have endorsed Issue 3, as has the AFL-CIO. Unless TruthPAC can hammer home its long list of concerns, the casinos just might hit the jackpot in Ohio. ♦

Absolutism in Disguise

Yes, Obamacare does mean federally funded abortion.

BY IVAN KENNEALLY

During his presidential campaign, Barack Obama adopted the two-step strategy on abortion that has become standard among liberal politicians: oppose abortion as a matter of personal conviction but deny that that conviction is relevant to public policy. This rhetorical sleight of hand is meant to accomplish two things: First, it creates the impression of an ideological neutrality regarding public administration that is the characteristic pretense of technocratic politics—rather than the evangelical proselytizing of his predecessor, Obama promises scientific objectivity and nonjudgmental open-mindedness. Second, Obama styles himself a small government federalist who insists on the limitations of any administration to effectively play the role of moral umpire—this is what he meant when he claims the issue of abortion is above his "pay grade."

If one were to take seriously the central premise of Obama's ersatz science of politics—the distinction between political facts and moral val-

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ues—the inescapable conclusion is that our president turns out to be a staunch libertarian proponent of minimal government. Abortion, however, reveals, maybe better than any other issue, the brazen disingenuousness of such small-government posturing, and the convenient faux libertarianism often espoused by leftist proponents of greater centralized bureaucracy. It also illuminates the moral dogmatism that often lurks behind any technocratic claim to be guided by an administrative science unencumbered by moral attachments.

Obama has repeatedly said that any health care reform bill he signs would maintain the "status quo" on abortion, which essentially means upholding the Hyde amendment's prohibition of any federal funding for elective abortions. That 1976 amendment is a genuine model of legislative compromise—while it prevents the flow of federal dollars into any plan that covers abortion, including Medicaid, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, and S-chip, it does not interfere with a private insurance plan that covers abortion with its own money (and most do) or even with states that do the same (17 opt to subsidize it).

In short, the Hyde amendment permits those who wish to have an abortion to pay for it themselves or to find an insurance company that will, while ensuring that the federal government doesn't compel those who find abortion morally repugnant to pony up as well. It resigns itself to an irresolvable contest of interests over a moral controversy instead of attempting a merely cosmetic harmony through shallow demagoguery. The position staked out in the Hyde amendment is meant to be a respectful and equitable arrangement between opposed constituencies, and it recognizes the limitations placed upon the federal government as an arbiter of a moral dispute between such profoundly divergent convictions.

The Capps amendment, proposed by California representative Lois Capps but largely written by pro-choice champion Representative Henry Waxman, amounts to a wholesale revision of the current law. Instead of maintaining a strict distinction between private choice and government-mandated public support, the Capps amendment effectively makes the coverage of abortion a part of a new "public option" regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services. In this scheme, there's simply no way around the fact that funds used to pay for the abortions of those covered by the public option will be drawn from the federal treasury. Likewise, funds used to reimburse private insurers subsidized by the government will as well. The grand scale socialization of health care makes any real compartmentalization of the public and the private impossible; in fact, the entire point of Obamacare is that private industry and choice become absorbed by public superintendence and bureaucratic mandate.

The technocratic claim to scientific neutrality regarding values, if it were sincere, would actually *require* a private health care industry inoculated from governmental intrusion. The current compromise allows individuals and states to formulate their own views and policies on abortion while permitting the federal government the detachment necessary to avoid endorsing one position over another. Without a demarcation between private and public funds, the government will inevitably have to choose a position that undermines the Hyde compromise—it will have to refuse the allocation of tax dollars to abortion, effectively prohibiting it if private insurance is ultimately eliminated, or force those who morally oppose abortion to subsidize it. Of course, there is no way Obama's administration will refuse federal money to those who want abortions. Given the collapse of the private into the public Obamacare pines for, the public option makes a mockery of individual conscience when it comes to abortion—whether you like it or not, you're going to support it.

And the public certainly doesn't like it—according to a Rasmussen poll released in September a paltry 13 percent of Americans are in favor of using federal dollars to fund abortion. This might explain Obama's often impatient protestations on the subject; during his September 9 speech to a joint session of Congress he unambiguously declared, "Under our plan, no federal dollars will be used to fund abortions." Back in 2007 he also promised Planned Parenthood that his plan would "provide all essential services, including reproductive services." Indeed, he went even further, declaring that such services would be "at the center, and at the heart of the plan that I propose." While Obama has taken the familiar liberal position that he wants to help make abortions "safe and rare," he has voted against any legislation that would limit recourse to the procedure, refusing to support bans on partial birth abortion or even an Illinois law that would have provided protection for infants that survived botched abortions. Despite insistent claims to the contrary, his own political efforts have only made abortions more frequent and unsafe, at least for the unborn.

Obama's small government libertarianism is insincere but instructive—the left has often embraced a robust sense of privacy, going so far as to invent constitutional protections for it, to advance their liberationist sexual agenda. In fact, the pro-choice argument for abortion, as well as for the radical deconstruction of traditional marriage, has always been based upon the moral primacy of individual choice free from the despotic intrusions of government. For example, NARAL Pro-Choice America and Planned Parenthood have both been aggressively arguing that a public option limited by the Hyde amendment would lead to decreased access to abortion, since the only plans that could insure it, private plans, will eventually be crowded out by government-provided alternatives. Keep in mind that these groups are working on the *assumption*, despite Obama's claims to the contrary, that the public option will inevitably lead to the demise of private insurance.

Still, the left's argument from privacy and sovereign individual choice is an incoherent one since they want that choice to come with the full sup-

port of the federal government and public tax dollars. Rather than the liberty to make moral judgments and choices shielded from regulation, the leftist brand of libertarianism wants its ideological attachments to be funded by those who don't share them. Behind the thin veneer of advocacy for individual rights is, therefore, a crude collectivism that prioritizes one set of moral commitments over another. The distinction between issues of private conscience and the demands of public policy that is Obama's default position is really an illusion designed to import a clandestine ideology through the backdoor.

Health care has become a signature issue for Democrats in part because the umbrella of health encompasses the contentious areas of sexual morality and the family—those who get to decide who gets treated for what become the moral superintendents of which private behaviors get praised or blamed. So one typical feature of the left's technocratic view of governance—the reduction of moral and political problems to ones of specialized bureaucratic expertise—finds a congenial home in a health care system that recasts private issues of morality as clinical issues for governmental determination.

For those who take moral issue with abortion, the stakes are extraordinarily high. Prior to the Hyde amendment the federal government funded some 300,000 abortions each year. The amendment has always required annual reauthorization, and that can hardly be taken for granted with a radically pro-choice president, a radically pro-choice secretary of health and human services, and a Democratic Congress. However divisive the cleavage between our pro-choice and pro-life factions, it provides compelling if tempestuous evidence that we are still free as citizens to draw our own moral conclusions and engage in debate about those issues that matter most. The public option, by contrast, is intended to eliminate not only private insurance but, more ominously, the meaningfulness of private moral choice when it comes to abortion. ♦

All Crisis, All the Time

The American addiction to overreaction.

BY IRWIN SAVODNIK

Americans are overreacting to events: to the "Great Depression" of 2009, to the increasing numbers of young people with Attention Deficit Disorder, to the histrionic fantasy that climate change will become global boiling. None of these issues is without substance, and none of them should be ignored; but in one way or another, we are overreacting by turning each of them into a crisis.

We seem to have fallen in love with crises, and the more crises we find the more animated we seem to be. We are immersed in a Crisis of Crises, replete with illogic, a surfeit of emotion, and strings of events vying for crisis status.

"Crisis," literally, means separation, and involves a break with the past by supplanting the existing order with a new one. Tectonic departures from precedent such as the transition from B.C. to A.D., from the *ancien régime* to the French Republic, from the Romanovs to the Bolsheviks, were set off by crises. Both the Russian and French revolutions included a change in their calendars. Illegal immigration, farm "crises," daily energy "crises," credit card "crises," E. coli contamination "crises," and education "crises" express substantive concerns, but they are not and never were crises in the strict sense of the term.

So what is overreaction? Simply put, overreaction is characterized by its reliance on emotion, its episodic time frame and, ultimately, its retreat from reality. Take the worldwide swine flu pandemic. No doubt, researchers have locked onto a serious health threat that will require a forceful response—immunization, rapid diagnosis, public health precautions, and ongoing research. An important moderating factor is the high probability that anyone who was infected with the virus between 1946 and 1953 is likely to be immune to the disease.

But the public has responded with less moderate emotions, donning surgical masks, avoiding crowds, and gulping down "immune-boosting" pills. No doubt, swine flu infection is a real phenomenon, and a scary one which, by dint of a single mutation, could cast a giant shadow across the American continent. But when we look at the facts we find both our feet on the ground. H1N1, as infectious disease specialists call it, is closely related to influenza virus A, which brings the flu each winter. The most recent attack, one that was carefully studied, took place in Mexico in late April, and the death rate was calculated at 0.6 percent.

Admittedly, H1N1 has hogged the airways because it is the same virus that caused the Spanish Influenza of 1918 and killed 50-100 million people worldwide. But the reaction to the news about H1N1 has been nearly hysterical, not by researchers who calmly poke their noses into high-risk settings but by ordinary people who imagine large-scale scenarios of death and dying. Given the changes in our ability to launch an antiviral "war" we should regard this disease as a serious problem—and one for which we have a coordinated repertoire of responses. A serious problem, Yes; a crisis, No.

A captivating example of overreaction involves the volatile responses to a 1998 article in *Lancet*, which described an alleged new disorder

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called autistic enterocolitis. The authors stated unequivocally that they had *not* established a connection between the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine and this new condition. But at a post-publication press conference, one of the authors surprised his coauthors and recommended that children should have the opportunity to receive the vaccines separately, with a year between doses. Though the article itself had not made a splash, this single remark ignited a furious reaction that caught the imagination of the media. The result was a decrease in the number of children whose parents approved of the vaccine, a decrease that produced a *real* threat of an outbreak of measles—and all because of the overreaction of the press and public to one stray remark from one coauthor that was disavowed by his colleagues.

In the firefight that followed that single comment, the debate on the subject turned into a "crisis," and collective emotions crowded out potential candidates for the cause of autism. Researchers seek to provide premises that are true, and the combination of logic and fact is at the heart of science. Denying the value of either is what overreaction is about. But by avoiding reality, some parents ignored the ordinary standards of evidence, and crazy ideas flourished.

Overreaction points to mythical thinking, a way of embodying our emotions and impulses in tales of our fears, vulnerabilities, and guilt in strange, often colorful, stories. We dread our powerlessness and concoct magical cures for our weakness. Such thinking is regressive. That myths are the outcome of the flight from reality, that we hop from one myth to the other and supplant reason with emotion, tells us that we have regressed. We've chosen ways of thinking found in children, tribal cultures, and dreams.

There is a moral dimension to all this. We are not children anymore. We are not mere mythmakers. We know fairy tales don't solve the problems that plague us. We have a choice between thinking in Dr. Seuss terms, and in reflective adult ways. When we don't acknowledge this internal dichotomy, we are acting in bad faith.

A troubling side to this collective self-deception—the detachment of people from themselves—is what we call alienation. In order to construct myths that replace reality, we deny not merely the world beyond ourselves, but the world within. To varying extents, we have to distance ourselves from our own identity, from the knowledge of who we are, what we want, and how we want to live. That many Americans have fled from themselves seems self-evident, given their total immersion in diversionary activities, in multiple iterations of ESPN or the Internet, in their surrender to the panoply of forces that have usurped their privacy and in their vague displeasure that things are not going their way.

What is the difference between reaction and overreaction? At the simplest level, a reaction to a *real* event means responding in a realistic way—taking facts into account, avoiding fairy tales, and being logical. People who act in their own best interest assess things realistically. They don't use mythical ideas; they don't reason with their emotions; they don't hop from one crisis to another.

In the case of overreaction, just the opposite applies. The hyperemotionality attached to the mythical imagination eclipses logical reflection, while the serial, episodic nature of excess emotion moves on to new pastures with strange regularity. Overreaction, by definition, ignores reality—even though reality is the provenance of the challenging event. Instead of realism, it withdraws into a private, subjective realm of dreamy thought, lacking logical structure and ignoring the facts of the case.

In increasing numbers, we are choosing our own interiors over the real world in which we live. ♦

Unfortunately, Failure Is an Option

Barack Obama faces a choice in Afghanistan. The safe middle ground may be the most treacherous.

By Lawrence B. Lindsey & Reuel Marc Gerecht

One of the standard accoutrements of the decision making process in the West Wing is the three-option "decision memorandum." The memo itself is drafted by the national security adviser, the National Economic Council director, or the assistant to the president for domestic policy, depending on the issue. It then goes through "clearance" to make sure it is acceptable to each of the president's key advisers. Typically, these advisers cluster around a consensus approach, but there are outliers; some favor doing a bit more than the consensus, some a bit less. Hence, three options: Option A is the "go all out" plan or "do too much" approach; Option C is the "don't do it" or "do too little" approach; while Option B is the safe consensus that the bulk of the staff prefers, and the one the president usually picks.

Given the leaks coming out of the White House on Afghanistan, decision making in the Obama administration appears little different from that under other presidents. Aides even talk on the record about "doing the middle option," and sympathetic outsiders like Richard Haas, head of the Council on Foreign Relations, write opinion pieces extolling the virtues of some moderate approach. "Afghanistan is important, but not that important" is a reasonable paraphrase of Haas's argument.

Picking the proverbial Option B is a standard result of most models of organizational behavior, and the White House is no exception. But by its very nature Option B defines a problem as being too serious to ignore and thereby requiring resources, yet commits fewer resources than would guarantee success. This increases the odds of failure and of having to revisit the issue at a later date. In the case now before us, President Obama has already rejected Option C, the view that Afghanistan is "the graveyard of empires" and therefore an imprudent place in which to invest American lives. But by hesitating to embrace General Stanley McChrystal's plan for an additional 40,000 troops—Option A—he is implicitly selecting an option that will likely prove more costly in the long run in both lives and treasure.

After Osama bin Laden's attack on the U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998, President Clinton was presented three options for how to respond. Option A, a full-scale military assault on al Qaeda and the Taliban, was not seriously considered. The administration was not bellicose. The CIA and the State Department didn't want to believe that bin Laden and the Taliban leader Mullah Omar had become religiously and ideologically inseparable. Diplomacy with Saudi Arabia and Pakistan was still the preferred means of neutralizing al Qaeda. Option C, ignoring the attack as President Clinton had ignored the Iranian-backed bombing of Khobar Towers in Saudi Arabia in 1996, was also dismissed. Choosing Option B, Clinton unleashed cruise missiles against rockhut training camps in Khost and bombed a suspected weapons-of-mass-destruction facility in Sudan linked to both al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein. The adverse reaction to the bombings in Europe and the United States inclined President Clinton to choose, and later George W. Bush to stick with, Option C after al Qaeda nearly sank the USS *Cole* in Aden in October 2000.

Most ironically, the current administration's decision making strategy carries an eerie resemblance to that which

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led Bush to Option B in Iraq in the early years of the U.S. intervention. Until the surge of 2007, President Bush opted for moderation in the war. Before hostilities commenced, Options A, B, and C contended for his attention. The maximalists wanted a replay of the Powell Doctrine: Option A was no war unless we had more troops from Europe and Asia deployed to the Middle East, with allies, especially the Turks, given their strategic position for resupply, all lined up. The minimalists' Option C would have kept some pressure on Saddam by maintaining 140,000 troops in the region, but would have avoided an invasion and let the United Nations continue its seemingly endless round of inspections while the clock ticked.

Into this mix came Plan B—advanced by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and others: We could topple Saddam Hussein without overwhelming force, using just the number of troops already available. The plan showed action, but spared the president and the Pentagon the kind of full-scale personnel and budgetary commitment that might have created political waves. And Rumsfeld was right about the punch required to topple Saddam. The deed was done with minimum casualties and in a time frame—six weeks—that was less than expected. In the late spring and summer of 2003, Rumsfeld's approach was hailed as a success—barring the looters' rampage in Baghdad after the fall of Saddam—even by those (virtually everyone on all sides of the issue) who came to criticize him later.

With the advantage of hindsight, it's obvious that Option B was the wrong choice. We did not have sufficient troops to keep the peace and convince the Baathists and the Arab Sunni community that they had permanently lost power. The total victory promised by Option A, which would have cost us much more to launch, could well have prevented the Sunni insurgency, the Shiite counterattack, and the death of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Americans and tens of thousands of Iraqis. The enormous loss of American prestige overseas that began when Iraq went south, the palpable disarray and ennui that consumed the Bush White House, and the real nastiness that defined the American public square during Bush's second term all likely could have been averted. Only Bush's decision to launch a surge coupled with a much more intelligent counterinsurgency strategy saved Iraq from the abyss and the United States from a complete strategic rout in the Middle East.

It's a reasonable guess that President Obama today would prefer the Option B approach reportedly advanced by his chief of staff Rahm Emanuel and the vice president. Otherwise, he would have stuck with the "comprehensive new strategy for Afghanistan" he announced in March, after a "careful review" of all options. That first review led to the appointment of General Stanley McChrystal and ultimately his recommendation for more troops. The president may yet have to follow McChrystal's advice, particularly if Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, who seems to have signaled his agreement with McChrystal, becomes more outspoken. A presidential disagreement with the entire chain of command can mean real political trouble. But Option B still looms, undoubtedly tempting the president with the promise of cost savings and the possibility that one doesn't really have to be "all in" in war.

The political realities in Afghanistan have changed little since March. The fraud-filled presidential election of Hamid Karzai was hardly a shocker—even the Central Intelligence Agency, whose powers of prognostication on Afghanistan haven't been particularly acute, would have predicted that Karzai and his allies would cheat. This is hardly a legitimate reason for delaying a military decision. If it had been, certainly Ambassador Richard Holbrooke would have loudly and publicly told President Karzai that sticking to democratic norms was critical to continued American support for his government. Nor have the opponents of U.S. involvement in the region ever credited the relative success of Iraqi democracy as a reason why the surge succeeded in that country.

What has changed since the Obama administration's "comprehensive strategy" was announced in March is Washington politics. McChrystal's plan is now not Option B—as one would expect the recommendation of the president's hand-picked general to be. That has become Option A because a strong constituency for Option C has emerged. Senator Robert Byrd laid out the don't-do-it position in a rare recent appearance on the Senate floor. Speaker Nancy Pelosi has expressed similar feelings, repeatedly. In the past, a firm rhetorical commitment to the war in Afghanistan was always politically attractive to those who opposed our very real struggle in Iraq. But Afghanistan is decidedly less attractive now that it involves a real force commitment, real casualties, and real budgetary expenditures. And Plan C also

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has supporters on the right, most notably George Will. With the anti-nation-building, democracy-skeptical right now aligned with the antiwar, bigger-welfare-state left, the president has been forced into a box that he could not have imagined when he campaigned for the presidency on a promise to shift resources from Iraq to Afghanistan.

When one considers the likely arguments in the "decision memorandum" it is not hard to see why the White House staff are inclined toward Option B. The McChrystal strategy of adding 40,000 troops, which is itself scaled down from an option asking for an additional 80,000 troops, will put real strain on both military manpower and the budget. Commandants of both the Army and Marines recently opined that they could produce only 30,000 additional personnel in the near term. Unmentioned in most press reports is the likely budgetary impact of the McChrystal option. A force of roughly 105,000 troops in Afghanistan would carry about the same financial commitment as the peak 160,000 force we had in Iraq. Afghanistan is both a more difficult place to supply and a more difficult place in which to move forces. Surrounded by Pakistan to the south and east, Iran to the west, and the former Soviet Union to the north, it increasingly requires air transport for U.S. and allied forces. The critical resupply line through Pakistan is not secure, and the Pentagon has been trying mightily to find alternative land routes that could reduce costs. All of these scenarios require logistical support from Russia and at least one of the "stans" to the north. Earlier this year the Russians applied pressure to make us up the ante to maintain our Central Asian resupply lines. At any time, Moscow can do so again.

Inside Afghanistan, effective full-scale operations would require a fleet of helicopters at least as large as that used in Vietnam. This would involve both an up-front procurement expense and higher operational costs than in Iraq where ground transportation is relatively easy. At a minimum, the McChrystal plan would cost in the range of $8 billion to $10 billion a month, roughly twice what is now being expended. Throw in additional procurement in the $20 billion to $30 billion range over the next three years, and it becomes clear that the Afghanistan commitment would involve expenditures on the order of what Iraq has been costing. And this would come at a time when savings from a wind down of Iraqi operations are yet to materialize. The Afghanization of the war, moreover, would likely prove even more expensive than the reconstruction and retraining of the Iraqi Army since there actually was the tradition of an Iraqi Army, while in Afghanistan we are constructing a force out of what historically were fragmented and fratricidal militias.

So a full-scale operation in Afghanistan will require an additional budgetary commitment similar to what Iraq has ended up costing—not the lesser commitment that the Bush administration first assumed. But the economic and budgetary environment in which that commitment is being made is much worse now. President Bush faced a budget deficit that was roughly 5 percent of GDP and falling rapidly. Obama faces a budget deficit of 10 percent of GDP and likely to remain in the 7 percent to 8 percent of GDP range as far as the eye can see. Adding another roughly 0.6 percent or 0.7 percent of GDP to the annual deficit was not a serious risk in 2003. Today, it is potentially the straw that breaks the camel's back.

On the other hand, Option C is hardly attractive either. The issue is not whether Afghanistan is the proverbial graveyard of empires. None of the nations that has engaged in Afghanistan has done so because of the particular real estate it occupies. Each has done so because of the neighborhood in which the real estate sits. The British were in Afghanistan because of India. The Russians were in Afghanistan because Leonid Brezhnev really believed in the slippery slope—that Communist regimes, no matter how lame, should not fall, especially to neighboring third-world Islamic guerrillas.

A dyed-in-the-wool optimist might call Afghanistan a strategic asset. That would, however, take a level of salesmanship in Washington that even the perkiest real estate agent might have difficulty mustering. A more truthful real estate agent might say that, absent an American presence there, the "wrong type" of people might own the place, and if they did, "there goes the neighborhood."

As the military strategist Stephen Biddle and the counterterrorism analyst Peter Bergen trenchantly pointed out in recent essays in the *New Republic*, the various scenarios envisioning fewer U.S. troops in Afghanistan, a greater reliance on Afghan forces, more focus on Pakistan, an over-the-horizon counterterrorism strategy, and a modus vivendi with the supposedly "good" Taliban against the pro-al Qaeda "bad" Taliban make no sense whatsoever. Only more U.S. troops offer the possibility of success against the Taliban, who have become the cutting-edge of al Qaeda in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Without more U.S. troops, it's only a matter of time—probably not much time—before the Taliban have effective control of as much territory as when bin Laden returned to Afghanistan in 1996.

Without a U.S. surge, the odds of the Pakistani Army and civilian elite remaining firm in a gut-wrenching fight against their own deeply embedded Islamic radicalism are poor. And without more troops, the United States is

looking at the serious possibility that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization will in any meaningful way cease to exist. The Europeans will abandon Afghanistan if we don't go "all in"; they are on the verge of quitting now. It's become chic in leftwing European circles to say that the transatlantic alliance has no relevance in a post-Cold War world. The reality of this, if Afghanistan descends into civil war and the Americans and Europeans retreat into their welfare states, may not be pretty. "Who lost Afghanistan?" will define the transatlantic conversation. The last time we saw a cash-strapped self-centered isolationist Europe and a cash-strapped self-centered isolationist United States was the 1930s.

Option C, then, at bottom amounts to an acceptance that the U.S. intervention on the ground in Afghanistan is doomed. All that is left is to manage an exit strategy so as to least weaken the American position in the world.

Enveloping all three options, of course, is uncertainty—the same uncertainty that President Bush faced when he decided to depose Saddam Hussein. There is no hard-and-fast progression of events that is bound to flow from a gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan, though the sheer magnitude of unattractive possibilities that might well unfold is sobering. Obama confronts the curse that belongs to presidents: a choice between options whose outcomes cannot be foreknown.

If there were only two options before the president—withdrawing from Afghanistan and writing an annual check of $100 billion to *guarantee* that Pakistan would stay on a reasonably pro-Western path and the Taliban would not take over Kabul—it is quite likely that the president, indeed any president, would write the check. Despite the economic risks in the current budget environment, a few tenths of a percent of GDP is really a bargain for eliminating the possibilities of nuclear armed Islamic terrorists, a destabilized or radicalized Pakistan, and a potential nuclear exchange on the Indian subcontinent.

But reality is not so simple. Writing the check will involve the loss of American lives. Perhaps more important, it cannot guarantee what will happen in Pakistan or in Iran. It is in this context that Option B becomes attractive. On the one hand there is a significant chance of potentially catastrophic consequences from a withdrawal. On the other hand, there is the lack of assurance that even a very costly intervention will produce acceptable results. The crafters of Option B therefore offer lower costs and, they claim, a reasonable chance of success. Relative to Option A's "all in," the lower costs are a certainty, but the reduction in the possibility of ultimate success is intangible—assuming the White House downplays General McChrystal's warning that "continued underresourcing will likely cause failure." Relative to Option C, the appearance of doing something to stop a bad outcome earns immediate praise for prudence and deliberation, and does not foreclose the possibility of future course corrections.

What will not be mentioned in the decision memorandum is that, historically speaking, Option B has almost never succeeded. It almost always morphs into some version of either Option A or Option C. Consider Iraq. The failure of 2004-07, as the insurgency took off, led to the surge, after the president and his administration had paid a huge political price. President Johnson tried calibrating the Vietnam war, even deciding which targets in North Vietnam would be hit. Option B tends not to work because the more moderate effort it contemplates takes more time. The American people are generally willing to go to war and make the sacrifices necessary where there is a clear and certain objective that involves protecting the homeland. Option B by its very nature obfuscates. As time drags on, support for the effort flags, and the president must either ramp up operations to have a chance of success or back away entirely from the effort.

President Obama and his staff are doing their best to think through their options. Bush and his staff, Kennedy and Johnson and their best-and-brightest subordinates, did the same. Establishment opinion, often articulated most forcefully by former West Wing staffers themselves, will defend the process and the decision. And given the remoteness and frustrating strangeness of Afghanistan, Option B is an alluring choice. But we've been down this road before. Both history and organizational behavior tell us B is not the best option. It almost certainly is not the final strategy the nation will settle on. But for Barack Obama and his war-weary congressional allies, appreciation of the painful irony may come too late. ♦

Give McChrystal a Fighting Chance

The war effort is succeeding in parts of Afghanistan—with time and troops the gains can be consolidated.

By Max Boot

Kabul

The 30-minute ride from Forward Operating Base Shank, occupied by the 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, is nerve-wracking. This is Logar Province, an area of central Afghanistan that has been the staging ground for major suicide-bomber attacks into Kabul, 45 miles to the north. U.S. troops trying to clear Logar and neighboring Wardak Province since this summer have encountered numerous IEDs—some of them large enough to penetrate even the most heavily armored vehicles. One such blast back in August killed a 22-year-old soldier and seriously injured CBS News correspondent Cami McCormick. As we bounce along the narrow dirt road, the driver of our MRAP (Mine Resistant Ambush Protected) vehicle is clearly nervous. When we pass over a culvert, which insurgents are known to pack with explosives, he mutters, "I hate those f—ing IED holes."

Our arrival at a joint Afghan-American Combat Outpost in Baraki Barak, a small town set among lush farmlands and mountains, is hardly more reassuring. Just as I am getting out of the armored vehicle a loud boom goes off. Incoming or outgoing, I wonder? Turns out it's outgoing. The U.S. soldiers are firing mortar rounds to keep the Taliban off balance and discourage them from planting IEDs. And yet, incongruously enough, before long the talk here turns from combat to economics.

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Gukeisen, the hulking commander of the 3-71 Cavalry Squadron (equivalent to a battalion), explains that the worst fighting is over here. His troops cleared out the Taliban this summer and established a "security bubble" around Baraki Barak. Now they are implementing what they call an "Extreme Makeover," using CERP dollars (Commander's Emergency Response Program) to build projects requested by local villagers. All such projects are designed to provide employment for young men so that they will not be tempted to accept the Taliban's money to plant IEDs. At the same time, Gukeisen is running his own radio station and handing out hand-cranked radios to get out the message that the Americans are here to help and the Taliban aren't. He is publicizing statistics showing that more Afghans than Americans have been wounded in Taliban attacks.

The results have been dramatic. Attacks are down 62 percent and intelligence tips are up 80 percent since August, Gukeisen tells me, adding, "We're not just baking cookies. We're regularly shwacking bad guys based on good intel." But Gukeisen is part of a new breed of Army commanders who know that you can't kill your way out of an insurgency. While it's important to kill or detain insurgents, even more important is to provide durable security and some prospect of a better life to the population. And that's just what he's doing here in cooperation with more than 150 Afghan soldiers and police officers.

Next to the combat outpost is a brand-new district center built with foreign aid money. Inside we sit down to chat with the district governor, Mohammed Yasin Lodin, a natty man with frizzy black hair and a thin mustache, and the police chief, Colonel Amanullah, who is (unusually for an Afghan) clean shaven. Yasin is overflowing with praise for the improvements wrought by the Americans. The Americans later tell me that the governor, for his part, is doing a good job, spending far more time than he used to in the district (his family lives in Kabul) because it is now safe to do so. The Afghan soldiers and police also receive praise for fighting off insurgent attacks on their checkpoints with minimal U.S. help.

"We've got the four horsemen working together," Gukeisen tells me—his nickname for the Afghan National

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Army, Afghan National Police, the National Directorate of Security (the intelligence service), and the district government. Gukeisen, in turn, has the assistance of the State Department, which has sent a District Support Team here as part of a new program to improve local governance. Closely mentored and monitored by the Americans, the notoriously dysfunctional Afghan government is showing itself capable of effective action at least in some areas.

But all concerned know that progress is fragile. What would happen if the U.S. troops were to pull out of Afghanistan, I ask Governor Yasin. "Don't even think about leaving!" he exclaims with a laugh. Colonel Amanullah (like many Afghans he goes by one name) explains: "If the snake is injured, it becomes more dangerous and aggressive. The Taliban are angered but not destroyed. If the Americans leave, we won't be able to do what they are doing. Afghanistan will become a battleground worse than before. That will be a very dangerous situation for the whole world and not only for Afghans."

But what about the resentment supposedly engendered by the presence of foreign troops among the notoriously xenophobic population of Afghanistan? Yasin is dismissive: "We haven't seen resentment so far. If the other American troops act as they do here, the United States will succeed in this war."

A U.S. soldier from the 3-71 Cavalry Squadron offers to shake hands with a young girl in Baraki Barak.

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It is possible, I suppose, to dismiss Yasin's comments as those of a local ally telling American visitors what they want to hear. But there is no lack of self-interested pleading about Afghanistan when it comes to the debate back home. Many Democrats appear eager to minimize our involvement so they can concentrate on health care reform and other domestic priorities. They tell themselves that this is the height of realism because, really, what chance do we have to prevail in the "graveyard of empires"?

If we listen to such advice coming from those who have never set foot in Afghanistan, perhaps it is worthwhile to listen also to the voices of those who are actually here—Afghans and their foreign partners. That's precisely what I did during the course of a 10-day trip across Afghanistan undertaken at the invitation of General David Petraeus. What I heard and saw suggests that many Washington savants are out of touch with the on-the-ground reality.

Yes, winning will be difficult. Tremendous obstacles abound, ranging from the resilience of the Taliban to the ineptitude and corruption of the Afghan government. But it is hardly mission impossible. In areas such as Baraki Barak, U.S. soldiers and civilians have been making impressive progress ever since this summer, when the U.S. troop level in Afghanistan hit 64,000—up from just 32,000 in 2008. (There are now 68,000 troops with the arrival of another brigade from the 82nd Airborne Division devoted to training Afghan soldiers in the south.) But there are still far too few U.S. soldiers here to roll back years of gains by the Taliban in the south and east of the country.

The insurgency is concentrated among the Pashtuns, who number roughly 15 million out of the country's 30 million people. (All such figures are inexact because no census has been taken for decades.) The rule of thumb in the counterinsurgency business is that you need one soldier or cop per 50 civilians. That works out to a requirement for 300,000 security personnel—far below the figure actually deployed. There are 100,000 foreign troops, but 30,000 of them aren't American, and many of those are prevented by national caveats from actually fighting. There are also 184,000 Afghan security personnel—on paper. In practice only 100,000 are actually operational, and the majority of them are police officers who belong to a force that is notoriously ill-trained, underpaid, and corrupt. The Afghan National Army has developed an impressive reputation for fighting hard, but it has only 47,000 troops in the field. However you count, there is a fundamental shortfall of security personnel to combat the well-funded, well-armed Taliban, who operate from secure bases across the border in Pakistan.

Those who oppose General Stanley McChrystal's request for more resources seem to imagine that our troops can somehow sit back on secure bases, train Afghans, and stay out of

the line of fire. It's true that standing up the local security forces is our ultimate ticket out of Afghanistan—just as it is in Iraq. But notwithstanding the bravery and growing skill of many Afghan soldiers and police, their forces are simply too small and too ill-equipped to carry the brunt of the battle right now or in the near future. McChrystal is accelerating the growth of the Afghan forces—the army is supposed to reach 134,000 by the fall of 2010—but all such expansions carry major risks. As one senior officer in the Afghan Army told me, there is a serious risk of focusing on "quantity over quality." That is already happening to some extent, with basic training for new soldiers reduced from 27 weeks to just 8 weeks. That makes it all the more imperative that Afghan soldiers also receive on the job training from coalition allies.

What the United States learned in Iraq is that the most effective training comes not from embedded advisory teams, much less from trainers who stay safely on base, but from American and indigenous units forced to operate side by side as they go into combat. That is happening now in Afghanistan, especially in Regional Command-East, where training teams are being phased out in favor of a concept called "Combined Action." (Regional Command-South lags a bit behind because it has fewer Afghan soldiers for now.) Major General Curtis Scaparotti, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, which has responsibility for Regional Command-East, has even dispatched his assistant division commanders to set up forward command posts at the headquarters of the two Afghan Army corps that operate in his area. Here U.S. and Afghan officers are starting to sit side by side, working on identical computers, to better coordinate their two forces. That kind of partnership extends all the way down to the platoon level, with McChrystal ordering that all NATO operations be undertaken jointly with Afghan forces. But to carry out this edict while the Afghan security forces are expanding, the United States, too, will have to expand its commitment, at least for the short term.

To listen to some critics, McChrystal's efforts are doomed to fail because of the fundamental illegitimacy of the Afghan government—an argument buttressed by the fraud that pervaded the presidential balloting in August. But lack of government capacity is hardly unique to Afghanistan. It has been an issue in every country that has ever faced a serious insurgency. A strong government, by definition, wouldn't allow a major rebellion in the first place. Lack of capacity has crippled some counterinsurgencies over the years but that problem has also successfully been dealt with in many countries that defeated guerrillas and terrorists. The most recent example is Iraq, where Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki had even less legitimacy in 2007 at the start of the surge than Hamid Karzai has today.

It would be shortsighted indeed if we were to use Afghanistan's woes as an excuse to write off the country as we did once before in the 1990s with disastrous consequences. It makes more sense to surge military and civilian resources that can enable American commanders to work with their Afghan counterparts to improve governance along with security.

That is precisely what McChrystal is planning to do. He is fed up with foreign forces' looking the other way when they uncover evidence of corruption. He has set up a Combined Joint Interagency Task Force made up of intelligence, law enforcement, and military personnel to investigate major cases of narcotics-linked corruption. This is in lieu of the sort of crop-eradication efforts the United States has supported in the past, which served more to alienate farmers than to de-fund the Taliban. The cases developed by the task force can be turned over to the Afghan legal system or simply used to quietly pressure the culprits to leave office.

This is part of a larger effort to establish accountability for foreign aid spending and to make Afghanistan's public-sector spending more transparent and honest. As part of this effort it would be useful to raise government salaries. The notoriously low wages paid to security personnel and civil servants are a major inducement for corruption. Many government employees cannot live on their salaries, and soldiers and policemen make less money ($160 a month and $110 a month respectively) than the Taliban ($300 a month). It also makes sense to embed foreign advisers with Afghan governors and some district leaders, bringing to the civil sphere the kind of close partnering that goes on among military personnel.

Improving the performance of the Afghan government and improving the performance of Afghan Security Forces are two of the top priorities that General McChrystal has pounded into his command since taking over as head of NATO and U.S. forces in June. He also stresses the need to do a better job in "strategic communications" and in detention operations—the former designed to counter enemy propaganda, the latter to keep enemy fighters behind bars in humane conditions where they can be interrogated.

Another priority is to reduce civilian casualties caused by coalition firepower—a major complaint among Afghans. During a daily briefing with his subordinates that I attended, McChrystal stressed this. The Taliban want to posture as protectors of the people, he said, and collateral damage by coalition forces allows them to do so. "We can't say that's just part of war," he said in a raspy voice. "We can put serious pressure on the enemy while minimizing backlash."

This is one of many changes that he has forced on a reluctant and sometimes somnolent NATO command structure. McChrystal drives his troops hard and himself harder. He has brought a sense of urgency that was missing in the past. One senior European officer I talked with noted that the

preceding commander, General David McKiernan, painted a "pretty optimistic picture" when he claimed (as he did last winter) that coalition forces had achieved "irreversible momentum" in Regional Command-East. McChrystal, by contrast, warns that unless more is done, the coalition is in danger of losing the war. "McChrystal's arrival has brought a reality check," this officer told me. "McChrystal has been frank enough to force us to ask impertinent questions of ourselves."

One of those "impertinent questions" concerns the deployment of small coalition outposts in remote regions of Regional Command-East along the border with Pakistan. Here small numbers of soldiers were isolated and subject to daily attack in bases that could be supplied only by air. What was the point of having soldiers so far from population centers, McChrystal demanded? Previous commanders had asked the same question, only to hesitate to remove them because they knew that this would represent a propaganda boost for the Taliban. McChrystal went ahead with the consolidation even after insurgents nearly overran Combat Outpost Keating in Nuristan Province in early October, killing eight American soldiers, just days before it was to be dismantled. He insists, rightly, that a successful counterinsurgency strategy must be focused on the people, not on terrain, and that's where he's putting his troops.

An officer (second from left) of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines speaks with residents of the Nawa District in Helmand Province.

McChrystal knows that the American public is impatient and that the counterinsurgency strategy will take time to work, but there is really no alternative unless we are willing to cede Afghanistan to the Taliban and their al Qaeda allies. A narrow counterterrorism strategy focused on simply killing insurgent leaders has never defeated any determined group of guerrillas or terrorists. It may seem like we've been at war in Afghanistan for eight years, but given the lack of resources for most of that time, the war effort is really less than six months old in critical parts of the country. "We are essentially where we were in Iraq in 2004," one American colonel told me. "We're just getting started."

The old tactic of going into an area, killing some insurgents, and leaving was about as effective as "mowing the lawn," in the words of another coalition officer. That has been replaced with the classic ink-spot strategy of slowly spreading government control from one population center to another. After this summer's operations, a few such ink spots are scattered across the Afghan landscape in places like Baraki Barak. But as one Marine battalion commander in the south told me, "For an ink-spot strategy to work you need enough ink." The coalition still has too little.

Nawa is one of the more promising ink spots. This is an agricultural district in the Helmand River Valley, where Lieutenant Colonel Bill McCollough, commander of the 1st Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, has been implementing a strategy similar to the one Lieutenant Colonel Gukeisen has employed in Baraki Barak. He has created a "security bubble" around the district and poured in aid to win the people's allegiance for the government. The results have been astonishing—a ghost town has come back to life. Streets that were deserted when the Marines arrived are full of pedestrians and vehicles. Stores that were shuttered have reopened. Abdul Manaf, the white-bearded district governor, raved about the results. "The colonel will write his name in history for what he has done here, everyone will know the name of the colonel," he told me. "The enemy's back has been broken. They cannot fight anymore. We will never forget that the Marines and ISAF and the whole world came to help us."

McCollough is more circumspect. "Everything you see here is an eggshell," he warns. "It's fragile." If Obama sends more troops, the gains achieved at such high cost in places like Baraki Barak and Nawa can be consolidated and expanded. If he doesn't, the effects of this summer's offensive, which resulted in such heavy loss of life among coalition soldiers (261 killed and more than 1,200 wounded between June 1 and October 1), will rapidly wear off and the Taliban will reassert control. That is the choice confronting the White House. Given the stakes, it's hard to see why it is proving so difficult for the president to choose. ♦

NEWSCOM

The burning of Washington, 1814

Getting Underway

The bumpy road to nationhood

BY JAMES M. BANNER JR.

Rare has been the multi-installment, multiauthored history of the United States that has offered the consistently authoritative and readable installments being published in the long-ongoing Oxford History of the United States, of which Gordon S. Wood's book is the eighth segment.

The first installment, Robert Middlekauff's *The Glorious Cause*, on the years of the Revolution, appeared in 1982 and is old enough to have been republished in a revised and expanded edition. Yet there's more to come. The pre-Revolutionary years are still to be covered, as are the decades immediately after the Civil War. Only one subject installment, on American foreign relations, has appeared. We'll be lucky to live long enough to see the completion of the series. And truly so, inasmuch as it includes its installments three Pulitzer Prize recipients, winners of the Bancroft, Parkman, and other prizes, and bestseller list entries.

Empire of Liberty
A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815
by Gordon S. Wood
Oxford, 800 pp., $35

In this respect, there has never been a project like it. And this installment is a superb companion to its worthy predecessors.

Wood's contribution spans the quarter-century between the implementation of the Constitution of 1789 and the close of the War of 1812, years that commenced in exhilarating promise and ended in confusion. The United States had emerged from its second war with Great Britain comparatively unscathed and in a buoyant mood after Andrew Jackson's victory at New Orleans. But the generation of great leaders of the nation's founding was

BETTMANN / CORBIS

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slowly fading from the scene, politics were bitter, the national treasury was in shambles, and at war's end none of the grating issues that had led to it had been resolved.

The United States might be, as Jefferson called it and Wood thinks of it, an "empire of liberty," but it was an empire still more imagined than realized, and liberty may have been on most male minds but was a scarce reality for women, Indians, and slaves.

Gordon S. Wood is known principally for his splendid earlier studies of the ideas and aspirations, both high and colloquial, that fueled the writing and ratification of the Constitution and the emergence of a remorseless tide of democratic beliefs and attitudes in the decades afterwards. One might therefore be surprised to find him here taking on the more concrete, "harder" matters of the past like events, treaties, wars, laws, and institutions of which he's written little before.

Yet he carries off his assignment with characteristic clarity, grace, and force. His two chapters on the law, as well as a single one on religion, are *tours de force*. Known for his unequaled command of original sources and the historical works based upon them, Wood makes this comprehensive work a distillation of a lifetime's reading and reflection. Here, too, he's at his most Woodish in the number, sometimes surfeit, and aptness of the quotations he incorporates, and of his ability to get at the temper of the times of which he writes.

Wood's subject is the seedtime of the republic under the Constitution. That quarter-century saw the implementation of the federal system of government, probably the most freighted challenge in the nation's history. The 1790s were the critical decade; if matters didn't go right, the infant republic might dissolve into separate parts, or other nations might try to claim (or, as it were, reclaim) American territory.

Precedents had to be set. Congressional and executive procedures had to be established. Rules of debate and bearing had to be adopted. And the basic laws of the nation regarding such state-essential matters as the judiciary, immigration, government funding, and territorial administration and settlement had to be enacted.

It was not easy going. From the start, the nation's leaders, James Madison foremost among them, showed that "peculiar American tendency to discuss political issues in constitutional terms—a tendency that had the effect," remarks Wood, "of turning quarrels over policy into contests over basic principles."

It's rare that a book like this can overcome what's a requirement of sorts for all multivolume, multiauthored histories: that interpretive strength be sacrificed to balance and comprehensiveness. Wood is always judicious, unfailingly evenhanded.

Not for Americans, then or now, an unideological approach to public affairs. The challenge of creating a functioning system of federal government was made all the harder by the appearance of what would gradually become political parties and by a politics—their tone, the charges flung, the fears expressed, and dire predictions advanced—far more sulphurous and bitter than today's. Yelling "You lie!" at the president is nothing compared (for example) with the hammer-and-tongs fight on the floor of the House between Federalist Roger Griswold and Democrat-Republican Matthew Lyon that helped inaugurate congressional history. One might have foreseen in those days the makings of parliamentary behavior we associate with other national assemblies.

Yet the 1790s was a decade of extraordinary achievement, equaled only by the 1860s and 1930s. Under George Washington, Congress among other things established the basic lines of the judiciary, guided by Alexander Hamilton set the nation's economy on a firm footing with banking and debt acts, temporarily settled some outstanding issues with Great Britain, passed laws for immigration and naturalization, and entered into (and then, under John Adams, ended) a quasi-war with France. No less significantly, as the new century opened, the nation survived one of its most momentous constitutional crises when Congress found a way to resolve an Electoral College deadlock that allowed Thomas Jefferson to become president.

Next came the unexpected purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France—a fortuitous opportunity unsurpassed in American history. When had another nation doubled its territory at the cost of $15 million and the stroke of a pen? No wonder that Americans could imagine, with Jefferson, that a new era, perhaps one of untroubled peace and unlimited opportunity, had begun.

But such was not to be. France and Britain, at war after 1803, sought to put neutral shipping (like that of the United States) to their own use—and close it down to their enemies. Jefferson's administration came to wreck trying to resolve that challenge with an outright embargo on American shipping. Madison fared little better and had to take the country into battle in 1812. Only in 1815, after an inconclusive and by no means glorious war and a renewed peace with Britain, could the formative stage of the nation's history be said to have ended.

Wood proves a master at narrating all this and at bringing his history alive with brilliant character sketches of public figures (like William Findley, Jedediah Peck, and Matthew Lyon),

many of whom readers will encounter for the first time. None of these portraits is better than Wood's of Aaron Burr, that compelling but never appealing man who killed Hamilton and eventually turned against, if not became a traitor to, his country.

But it is Jefferson who bestrides this work, Jefferson the man whose aspirations, for Wood, were emblematic of the nation's sweeping march to democracy, Jefferson whose spirit infuses his own and later times. There is nothing amiss with such an approach. What it does risk, however, is partiality—in Wood's case, of the most subtle kind. As long as democracy remains at the core of Americans' sense of themselves, then Jefferson can justifiably take center stage. But he does so always at a price. And it's a price that even Wood pays in this work.

Lewis and Clark meet the Omaha and Oto tribes, Council Bluffs, Iowa, 1805

MPI / GETTY IMAGES

For Jefferson was a slaveholder. And slavery, which touched almost every element and permeated most elements of American society, north and south, until its end, and whose legacy marks us still, doesn't put in an appearance until chapter 14, late in the book. Other historians have made a conclusive case, in recent decades, that slavery was a constituent part, not just a chapter or a subject, of American history. And it has to be counted against Wood that he doesn't make more of slavery's role in every dimension of the nation's early history. He sets slavery into the context of reform rather than of centuries of bond servitude, imperial needs, and plain racism. He sees reform as creating racism, not racism as sustaining slavery and impeding reform. By implication, slavery does not compose for Wood an integral part of the population, society, and culture of the United States but is rather a feature subject to "reform." Worse, we get almost nothing of the slaves themselves—their lives, their culture, their struggles, and as we say these days, their "agency."

Yet it's rare that a book like this can overcome what's a requirement of sorts for all multivolume, multiauthored histories: that interpretive strength be sacrificed to balance and comprehensiveness. Wood is always judicious, unfailingly evenhanded. But we miss a sense, for example, of how the propulsive growth of democratic mores and institutions and of comparative equality was everywhere bound to the existence of bond servitude, of how the nation's economy was everywhere dependent on Southern cotton and its slave labor force, of how the effort in most quarters to avoid staring into the moral abyss deformed religion, ideas, and literature as well as politics.

If, as Wood seems to believe, the election of 1800 was, in Jefferson's own terms, "the revolution of 1800"—"an extraordinary and unprecedented experiment in governing," as Wood puts it in typically sweeping fashion, "without the traditional instruments of power"—it was a revolution that in many ways set back the cause of equality and democracy. With it opened decades of white male supremacy and the hammerlock of Southern politicians, by virtue of the three-fifths clause of the Constitution, on national life.

It is only fair that such criticism of Wood's effort be placed in context. That context, I think, is the difficulty that Wood's generation of historians—my own—has had in throwing off the shackles of its own past. Those who have written only of slavery in monographs and synthetic works have almost all escaped the magnetic force that such *echt* American ideals as democracy and liberty exert on us all. They work with a subject that does not yield easily to abstractions; they study slavery and racism up close. And younger historians, most of them cynical to the core about abstract talk of freedom and homes of the brave, feel no pull from the verities that reigned in school and community before the 1960s and the Cold War.

But those of us born before the Second World War, who were affected by a world going up in flames, still want to hold to hopes of a more perfect union, of democracy and representative government on the march, of the spread of greater equality here and abroad. A book like *Empire of Liberty* is witness to this faith. Its approach is neither invalid nor wrong. Who does not want to be swept away, as Wood long has been, by the rush of democracy after 1789? Until there is yet another multivolume history of the United States like this one, Wood's contribution will stand both as an extraordinary achievement of historical synthesis, and as witness to its own time.

It will not soon be surpassed. ♦

B&A

A Master's Stroke

America checks out at the Bates Motel.

BY SONNY BUNCH

It's summer 1960—June, to be exact—and you're looking to escape the heat beating down on the city streets: Why not retire to the local cinema and take in a movie under the refrigerated air conditioning? And look! the new Hitchcock movie is just about to start. Good timing on your part since the portly Englishman has decreed no one shall enter a screening once the movie has begun.

The Moment of Psycho
How Alfred Hitchcock Taught America to Love Murder
by David Thomson
Basic, 192 pp., $22.95

We're dealing with pretty standard fare—slightly risqué, perhaps, with Janet Leigh's Marion Crane shown in her bra a couple of times, but nothing too special. She's engaged in a major theft from her employer, skipping Phoenix with the illicit proceeds and looking for a place to hole up on the way to Fairvale, California.

Ah, look! she's pulling into a motel for the night, just as that intimidating police officer suggested she do. And here's the hotelkeeper, a slight little thing with a jaunty gait and an awkward way of speaking. He's shy, a mama's boy who endures the old woman's shrill taunts, becoming aggravated when they're noticed by the attractive young woman who has washed up on his motel steps.

Norman is his name and, although kind, there's something just a little off about him. Still, his honest manner has impressed Marion, convincing her to return to Phoenix and return the money. No need to turn around right away. A shower and some sleep will do her some good, and then—*REE! REE! REE! REE!*—Bernard Herrmann's iconic strings spring to life; a darkened figure swings a butcher's knife; Marion slumps over in a pool of her own blood and the camera pulls out, lingering over her dead body like an unseemly voyeur gently backing away from a scene at which he glimpsed a little more than he bargained for.

And, David Thomson posits in *The Moment of Psycho*, the world of American cinema—indeed, America itself—would never be the same.

Thomson's argument is three-pronged: *Psycho* did much to break down the censorship regime that ruled the cinematic landscape at the time; by murdering the apparent lead of his film in the opening 40 minutes, Hitchcock initiated a new era of filmmaking in which directors were free to toy with their audience's expectations; and America's loneliness was examined for the first time.

The Moment of Psycho opens with a brief introduction to Hitchcock's standing in the artistic and commercial Hollywood communities before spinning off into an in-depth recap of *Psycho* itself. Imagine the paragraphs that opened this piece of writing, but with a shot-by-shot analysis of the movie as it progresses.

Though at times the effort is tedious, it's important to remember exactly where American movies stood at the beginning of the 1960s, and just what it felt like to be in the theater when that first killing occurred.

"In terms of the cruelties we no longer notice, we are another species," Thomson writes of the desensitized modern cineaste. It's something of a banality to say that the movies have been vulgarized, that nudity and violence and sexuality have all combined into an ugly mélange that leaves nothing to the imagination, allowing generations of filmmakers to reject creativity in favor of a brutal assault on the senses.

Being a banality renders the observation no less true, however. At the time *Psycho* spooled through projectors "no other country required so detailed or technical a code of what could be seen on public screens and what could not. And no other film business so encouraged the ingenuity of directors, photographers, and actors to see what they could get away with."

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

Alfred Hitchcock, Jan. 29, 1960

Thomson's tone, here and elsewhere, is almost wistful, longing for an age well past where audiences were forced to imagine what they couldn't see. So

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it's interesting, when citing the future films that *Psycho* would influence, that he doesn't take that thought to its logical conclusion: *Psycho* is the forebear of the "torture porn" genre.

Torture porn refers to a subgenre of horror films primarily obsessed with showing, in graphic detail, the horrible suffering a human body can absorb, embodied most succinctly by the *Saw* series. When you remove the censors and encourage filmmakers to have at it without restraint, this is the inevitable endpoint. Thomson probably overemphasizes *Psycho*'s role in breaking down the censorship regime with regard to sex—foreign and art house films were largely operating without the restraints imposed by domestic ratings boards and thriving as a result—but Marion Crane's bloody death was certainly a key moment in the evolution of just how much viscera could be exposed to the audience.

More interesting, from a critical perspective, is Thomson's assertion that "the new tone in cinema said 'Believe less in the story and its characters, but study the game being played.'" This new meta-cinema, which is concerned first and foremost with form and subverting the viewer's expectations, can be trying, at times. But when done well—as Steven Soderbergh and Tony Gilroy proved this year with *The Informant!* and *Duplicity*—it's a treat for audiences.

Did *Psycho* change America? More to the point, did *Psycho* change the way America looks at itself? Probably not. Public interest in murder dates to well before the year Alfred Hitchcock washed up on our shores. Just look at the heroes we made of public enemies plaguing Midwest banks in the 1920s and '30s, or the folk status the murderous cowboy Jesse James achieved after his death—and in part *because* of his violent death.

Nevertheless, *Psycho*'s impact on the movies is undeniable, a key moment in Hitchcock's *oeuvre* that has had as lasting an impact as anything the great auteur ever directed. David Thomson's rereading of *Psycho* a half-century after its release shows us just how far we've come. And in some ways, how far we've fallen. ♦

B&A

Forever Green

A dreamer's voyage, a voyage of dreams, between two continents. **BY MICHAEL DIRDA**

In a lifetime of reading, I've seldom encountered a stranger book than Herbert Read's *The Green Child* (1935). It overturns every expectation and keeps the reader constantly off-kilter, with one surprising twist after another, starting with its brilliant opening paragraph:

> The assassination of President Olivero, which took place in the autumn of 1861, was for the world at large one of those innumerable incidents of a violent nature which characterize the politics of the South American continent. For twenty-four hours it loomed large in the headlines of the newspapers; but beyond an intimation, the next day, that General Iturbide had formed a provisional government with the full approval of the military party, the event had no further reverberation in the outer world. President Olivero, who had arranged his own assassination, made his way in a leisurely fashion to Europe. On the way he allowed his beard to grow.

Olivero isn't, in fact, a South American at all. His real name is Oliver and he was, 30 years previous to his "assassination," a schoolmaster in a small English village. Now in his early fifties, the ex-president-for-life of Roncador has suddenly felt a tug of nostalgia, a desire to revisit his native land and birthplace. So just as he once cast aside his old English life to seek a new one in the interior of South America, he now shucks off all that he has accomplished in Roncador and disappears "in a cloud of glory."

To return to—what? Perhaps Olivero himself doesn't quite know, though he later says that he had always wondered about the fate of the Green Children.

They had appeared in his little north country village on the very day he left it. There were originally two of them, a boy and a girl:

> apparently about four years old, who could not speak any known language, or explain their origin, or relate themselves in any way to the district—indeed, even the world—in which they were found. Moreover, these children, who were lightly clothed in a green web-like material of obscure manufacture, were further distinguished by the extraordinary quality of their flesh, which was of a green, semi-translucent texture, perhaps more like the flesh of a cactus plant than anything else, but of course much more delicate and sensitive.

The two uncannily silent, oddly ageless, children were soon adopted by a local widow; but the boy, we later learn, died *en route* to the church where he was about to be forcibly baptized. Are we to infer from this a pagan aversion to Christian ritual? English folklore abounds with disturbing images of the so-called Green Man, usually depicted as being made of leaves and foliage. Similarly, the girl is said to have walked "like a fairy."

Dictators and fairies? What kind of book is this?

If Herbert Read (1893-1968) is remembered at all these days, it is as a critic, mainly of modern art, though this man of letters also wrote poetry, a useful guide to clear writing called *English Prose Style* (1928), and a vibrant memoir of his early life in a North Yorkshire village, *The Innocent Eye* (1933). My old Century Library edition of *The Green Child* carries a preface by Graham Greene, who regarded Read as something of a mentor. He certainly refers to the man in essays

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and letters with obvious fondness and has called *The Innocent Eye* "one of the finest evocations of childhood in our language."

In his preface, Greene maintains that Read was—in his poetry and prose alike—obsessed with a somewhat idiosyncratic notion of glory. In Read's own words, glory is "the radiance in which virtues flourish. The love of glory is the sanction of great deeds; all greatness and magnanimity proceed not from calculation but from an instinctive desire for the quality of glory. . . . Glory is gained directly, if one has the genius to deserve it: glory is sudden."

In this light, *The Green Child* describes the unexpected onset of glory, first in the political realm—"there is no joy comparable to the joy of government"—and then in the spiritual. In the novel, Read repeatedly juxtaposes the man of action and the man of imagination, insisting that courage and glory aren't restricted to the former. Despite his revolutionary past, Olivero views himself as primarily a man of the imagination.

When this melancholy ex-dictator eventually alights at the train station near his old home, it is evening. As he walks along the river toward the village, meditating on the past, he is suddenly struck by an anomaly: The river's current appears to be flowing in the wrong direction. In every memory he can dredge up Olivero visualizes the water running the other way. Mystified and troubled, he resolves to follow the river toward two old mills, hoping to find there an answer to this apparent alteration in the system of nature.

Instead, he happens upon a scene of horror. At one of the mills he glimpses a figure carrying a lamb into a ground floor room. He peers through a window:

> On a bare table to the right lay the lamb; its throat had been cut and was bleeding into a large bowl, over the edge of which its head hung pathetically. In the middle of the room the man stood, drawing back the head of a woman by the hair and compelling her to drink from a cup which he held in his hand. So much was clear at a glance; then Olivero noticed that the woman, who was extraordinarily frail and pallid, was bound by a rope to the chair in which she was seated, and that her expression was one of concentrated terror as she struggled to refuse the proffered cup. The blood which she was being forced to drink dribbled down each side of her mouth and fell in bright stains down the front of her white dress.

As the reader guesses, and Olivero eventually confirms, the woman's "skin was not white, but a faint green shade." What's more, her fingernails are pale blue and her flesh emits a sweet heavy odor "like the scent of violets." In the village, this frail creature is prosaically called Sally, but her real name, we later discover, is Siloen.

HAYWOOD MAGEE / PICTURE POST / GETTY IMAGES

Herbert Read, 1956

The Green Child is divided into three sections, and by this point we are only halfway through part one. Following this recognition scene, we are told about Siloen's earlier life in the village and of Olivero's own long-ago relationship with her captor, a former pupil with a cruelly perverse nature. In the middle and longest section of the novel, we find out about Olivero's post-village life, first in London doing accounts for a Jewish tailor, then in Spain as a political prisoner, and finally in South America as a revolutionary.

But neither of these two sections prepares the reader for the visionary last, in which Siloen returns to the realm from which she strayed into our world. The ever-restless, dissatisfied Olivero follows her on what appears a suicidal journey with the same glad precipitateness with which he left his village, left London, left Spain, left Roncador. He leaps into the unknown and there experiences a final glorious metamorphosis.

"Courage," Olivero concludes, "is the ability to act as if death were a fantasy."

Herbert Read writes with a classic, no-frills purity, but he invests each of his novel's three parts with its own specific feel. The opening is dominated by images of night and nightmare—of romantic mystery and phantasmagoria, leading up to a feverish combat and a sudden epiphany.

The second is a small-scale *Bildungsroman*, tracing Olivero's life and political evolution, culminating in his 25-year rule in Roncador. These pages could be a rather muted Joseph Conrad story. Last, the final section might be a fantastic vision *à la* E.T.A. Hoffmann, a glimpse of the utterly alien, a prose poem about the nature of transcendence.

All three sections describe three versions of Utopia—a quiet English village at the onset of the Industrial Revolution, a freshly minted republic in the backlands of South America, and a strange Shangri-La of crystal and silence. Only this last brings Olivero the self-fulfillment he seeks—but only after he has exhausted the joys of sensuality, the gratifications of service to others, and the pleasures of philosophy. In Siloen's austere realm of grottos and rocky ledges, time seems not to pass, the beating of the heart is mere "anxious agitation," and death itself arrives quietly, gloriously, as the final diamond-like perfecting of a man or woman's life.

Every so often writers pour everything they know or feel into a single book, and it becomes a *sui generis* masterpiece. One thinks of H.H. Bashford's scathing (and hilarious) study of religious hypocrisy, *Augustus Carp, Esq.*, or Hope Mirrlee's astonishing fantasy about forbidden fruit, *Lud-in-the-Mist*, or G.B. Edward's beautiful reminiscence of lost love and things past, *The Book of Ebenezer Le Page*.

To this select company I would add *The Green Child*, Herbert Read's account of one man's circuitous search for self-transcendence, for harmony with the universe, for glory. ♦

B&A

Sour Notes

Exile from Europe to Southern California wasn't all sun and fun. **BY JOHN SIMON**

Erich Korngold and family arrive in Los Angeles, 1936.

This is, as the subtitle informs us, the story of "Hitler's —Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California." It concerns primarily composers and conductors, more marginally instrumentalists and singers, and considers how they and their families fared there in preference to the more cultured Northeast. Also how, despite some serious hardships, many of them preferred staying on after World War II had ended.

Southern California seemed to musicians like a climatic paradise, a financial bargain compared with the East, a professional El Dorado, with the film industry presumably hungry for composers and the region starved for cultural colonists to compose, perform, and teach. Music being a universal language, there wouldn't even be the problem facing writers. Except for Southern California's being a comparative cultural desert, these musical carpetbaggers were wrong about pretty much everything.

A Windfall of Musicians
Hitler's Émigrés and Exiles in Southern California
by Dorothy Lamb Crawford
Yale, 336 pp., $35

The book begins with a chapter recapitulating the horrors of 1930s and '40s Europe. Even those, mostly Jewish, musicians able to escape to free countries found Hitler's invading armies pulling the rug out from under them in country after country. Great Britain, too, seemed conquerable; only America appeared safe.

The chapter entitled "Paradise?" tells how living in the perpetual summertime was less than easy. Two following chapters center on the great conductor Otto Klemperer, a pivot for other musicians. The first, on his career at the Los Angeles Philharmonic; the second, on his brain tumor, leaving so many struggling in his absence, and on his eventual salutary return. "Innovative Teachers in the Performing Arts" deals primarily with the activities of the fine opera coach and conductor Hugo Strelitzer, and those of the famed opera director Carl Ebert.

We learn also about the conductor Richard Lert, married to the popular author Vicki Baum; about the private music teacher Fritz Zweig; and, because the book goes on as far as 1970, about the conductor Herbert Zipper, who in two concentration camps hauled excrement from latrines and narrowly escaped typhoid.

The chapter on Arnold Schoenberg, an extremely touchy and difficult man, records his extraordinary clashes with *everyone* while being kicked from pillar to post. This especially since his twelve-tone compositions left him stranded to the point where some orchestra members played deliberately false notes, and where he became inordinately sensitive to real or imagined slights.

The chapter on the gifted composer Ernst Toch reveals his disadvantage, especially with movie people, from lack of aggression and self-promotion. We are introduced to Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who managed to be successful both as a film and concert composer, often revamping his movie music as classical compositions. Frederick Hollander wiggled his way into American citizenship and continued supplying Marlene Dietrich with hit songs, as he had already done when still called Friedrich in Germany. Hanns Eisler's leftist politics led to his being deported. Franz Waxman managed back-to-back Oscars with *Sunset Boulevard* and *A Place in the Sun*, but most often he was rushed into hack work. Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco could stand it for only three years; Eugene Zador arranged and orchestrated for his fellow Hungarian Miklós Rózsa for 23 years without ever getting credit.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

John Simon is the author, most recently, of John Simon on Music: Criticism 1979-2005 *(Applause Books).*

Kurt Weill managed to get some of his stage musicals onto film where, however, they were decimated—or "adapted" by hack studio composers who usually got all the credit. Like the other émigré composers, Weill was resented and obstructed by most of the studio regulars. Sadly, he observed, "a whore never loves the man who pays her. She wants to get rid of him as soon as she has rendered her services. That is my relation to Hollywood. (I'm the whore.)" Ernst Toch complained that one "is blocked by such an amount of ignorance, stupidity, and bad taste that it is really hopeless."

Igor Stravinsky was as good a self-promoter and businessman as he was a composer. In contrast to the impractical Schoenberg, Stravinsky always surrounded himself with devoted disciples and skilled amanuenses—climaxing in the dogged Robert Craft—who not only helped with and performed his music, but also translated his verbal forays, and propagandized for him in books, essays, and lectures. A veritable translation, publishing, and publicity workshop, the Stravinsky circle promoted his undeniable genius into a thriving, eventual million-dollar, business enterprise.

Typical of Stravinsky's financial acumen was, after the copyright on his European works had lapsed, the reorchestration of them in a less lush, though perhaps less attractive, mode: In this way he not only regained the copyright but, with the spare orchestration, extended performability to numerous smaller aggregations.

Dorothy Lamb Crawford has been a teacher, lecturer, and broadcast interviewer in music, as well as singer and opera director, and is the author or coauthor (with her husband) of two previous books on music. Ironically, she has reversed the journey of the *Windfall* émigrés: After 24 years in Southern California she now resides in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Along with some notable quarrels, she also tells us about a good deal of socializing and solidarity in this émigré ghetto. Besides Klemperer, there were seven other conductors, including the great Bruno Walter; pianists, including Arthur Rubinstein; and violinists, including Joseph Szigeti. Also two master cellists, Emanuel Feuermann and Gregor Piatigorsky, and in Santa Barbara the legendary soprano and teacher Lotte Lehmann.

Figuring here, too, are the Parisianized Pole and wartime American exile Alexandre Tansman, and a bit further north, Darius Milhaud and the Europeanized (but repatriated American) George Antheil. All of these musicians fraternized with the émigré writers, such as the Mann brothers, Thomas and Heinrich, Bertolt Brecht, Franz Werfel (married to Alma Mahler), Alfred Döblin, Lion Feuchtwanger, Erich Maria Remarque, Ludwig Marcuse, and the director/critic Berthold Viertel, who was married to the fabled hostess, memoirist, and Garbo scriptwriter Salka Viertel.

The paradisiac heat of California was so injurious to his health that Eric Zeisl prayed for fog and rain. Igor Stravinsky suffered from the smog, and the asthmatic Arnold Schoenberg rarely went out in the evening.

The musicians also socialized with movie people, and not just the Germans or Austrians like Max Reinhardt and his son Gottfried, William Dieterle, Ernst Lubitsch, and Billy Wilder, but also earlier immigrant and American movie stars. There are amusing accounts, such as that of a dinner party where "the rigid Dr. [Thomas] Mann was delighted with [Charles] Chaplin, laughed like a schoolboy and lost a little of his German dignity. Chaplin admitted to not having read a single line of Mann's, but was very pleased with him as an audience and put on a Big Show"—as the equally delighted Ernst Toch reported to Clifford Odets.

But it was far from all parties and fun for the émigrés: A great many of their hopes were dashed by the film industry. Toch, who dreamed of a genuine film-opera ("of its essential success there is no question"), found that Paramount wouldn't let him orchestrate his own music, and inflicted intolerable deadlines. He accepted every kind of movie work, most of it uncredited, to help his 69 cousins stuck in Nazi Austria, and toiled on low-budget films at Columbia, Paramount, and Fox, enduring someone else's getting credit for an Oscar nomination owed him.

In those days, said Alexandre Tansman, who beat it back to postwar Paris as soon as possible, "Hollywood was a kind of contemporary Weimar. All the European elite were in Hollywood or somewhere on the Californian coast." Or as the composer Ingolf Dahl put it in later years, "It is still a bewildering fact that the city with perhaps the greatest number of important composers per square mile has a public musical 'life' in inverse proportion to its resident talent." This was in reference to concert and opera; in the "picture business," things were worse yet.

As someone at Universal Pictures recalled, "Music was at the bottom of the heap. . . . 'Keep that goddamned music down' was a popular battle cry." Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco said that music was considered a necessary evil, less important than automobile and airplane noises, and that to complete a score in the shortest time, up to 13 composers would labor on it simultaneously. One MGM executive asked him to compose "for an intimate scene a 3-and-a-half minute violin sonata in the style of 'Oh, you know, Brahms, Franck, and maybe a little Debussy.'"

As Crawford notes of Castelnuovo-Tedesco, "During the three years he worked at MGM, contributing to some 200 scenes a year, his name never appeared on screen [and] only

his worst was requested . . . with credit given to old-timers who had contributed the least."

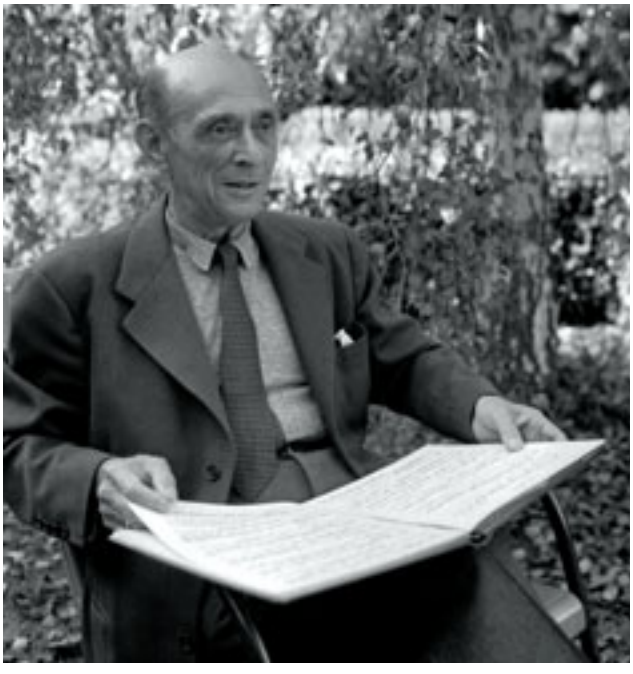
There was a wholesale dashing of hopes. Kurt Weill had prophesied that a "new artwork may develop from the movies" and Castelnuovo-Tedesco declared that "musical cinema would become the true national art form, exactly as opera [has] for Italy." But as their colleague Hanns Eisler lamented, "What hell for [studio] composers, who year after year have to write the same type of music and thus are faced with the prospect of becoming hopelessly dimwitted."

So, for instance, Franz Waxman scored 144 scenes in 32 years. Although Korngold was able to get away with only two films a year (he almost turned down *Robin Hood*!), Max Steiner, one of the studio regulars, ground out 8 to 10. On the whole, as Crawford concludes, the idealized "picture business" proved more like the dictatorship the émigrés had fled.

Of course, donkey work was still better than unemployment—but hardly comic, as Hindemith thought when rebuffed by the Disney studio. Even the prolific Frederick Hollander was at one point so poor that his wife was reduced to shoplifting food. Eric Zeisl was assigned by MGM to compose two-minute uncredited "moods"—which could be reused in countless pictures—at $25 a piece.

As his wife related, "In the summer, when private lessons stopped, it was really a matter of life and death . . . we didn't have money for the next meal." Moreover, the paradisiac heat of California was so injurious to his health that Zeisl prayed for fog and rain. Stravinsky suffered from the smog, and the asthmatic Schoenberg rarely went out in the evening. Eisler, at the lower end of the pay scale, was driven to drink. Schoenberg couldn't afford to attend musical events, and claimed that financial reasons prevented him from finishing his opera, *Moses und Aron.* Even when Toch was hired by the University of Southern California to compete with UCLA's Schoenberg, the USC president held him to a miserly salary. Carl Ebert couldn't afford a car and had to endure daily 90-minute bus rides to and from his USC classes.

Even good things came at a price. Where nature abounded in beauty, as in the view of the Santa Monica and San Gabriel mountain ranges from his desk, the sensitive Toch, easily distracted, had to block it out with dark curtains. Others found the weather, beaches, and excursions so inviting that the systematic turned sybaritic: "Isolation and a natural anti-intellectualism encouraged by the climate [was] hard for the refugees to accept," Crawford writes. "My God, my God," Klemperer exclaimed, "I didn't know that such lack of intellectuality existed." While Ernst Krenek brilliantly lectured on Renaissance composers at the Southern California School of Music and Arts, the larger number of his students, jazz musicians on the GI Bill—there largely to collect the money—were playing pinochle in the back rows.



Arnold Schoenberg, 1944

For someone uninvolved, the situation had ludicrous aspects. The popular pianist Oscar Levant put up $100 for a piano piece by his teacher Schoenberg, who then turned the piece into a concerto, whereupon Levant withdrew with cold feet. This was the same Levant who proclaimed his beloved Schoenberg "the greatest teacher in the world."

For their teacher Castelnuovo-Tedesco, students Lionel Barrymore and Mickey Rooney both composed a symphony. Jeanette MacDonald, "the queen of MGM," became one of Lotte Lehmann's pupils. Dahl turned touring pianist for Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, as well as becoming accompanist/arranger for Gracie Fields, Victor Borge, and, on the radio, the swing trombonist Tommy Dorsey. For classical music lessons, Benny Goodman paid him $20.

Arnold Schoenberg enjoyed gifted students like John Cage (whom he called an inventor of genius but not a composer), as well as Lou Harrison, Leon Kirchner, and film composers such as Alfred Newman, Hugo Friedlander, David Raksin, and Leonard Rosenman, not to mention the hit songwriters Ralph Rainger and Leo Robin. This despite English so poor that he needed someone next to him to help with the necessary words. Schoenberg always considered it one of his greatest achievements to have discouraged the majority of his students from composing!

"In all the time I studied with Schoenberg," remembered John Cage, "he never once led me to believe that my work was distinguished in any way. He never praised my compositions, and when I commented on other students' work in class, he held my comments up to ridicule. And yet I worshiped him like a god."

Leon Kirchner recalled: "It took me years to really understand deeply what Schoenberg taught. At the time I would think I understood, but there was such depth to it, it took a long time to realize its implications." Schoenberg himself wrote to Oskar Kokoschka, "I'm living in a world in which I nearly die

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of disgust." Stravinsky, his great rival, had a better time of it: While a disgruntled Schoenberg felt compelled to return to tonality, the formerly hostile Stravinsky followed him to 12-tone composition. Whatever was begrudged Schoenberg was instantly condoned in Stravinsky.

For composing slowly and charging a lot, Stravinsky never got to do much movie work, but rejected film scores were promptly transmuted into concert work and gainfully performed.

"Film music?" said Stravinsky, "That's monkey business, and for monkey business, my price is too high." George Antheil was shocked by Stravinsky's way of "invariably turning idealistic musical conversations into mercenary channels." The Russian flattered California, declaring that it left a good impression on him, and even abandoned his natty European clothes for local denim, sandals, and socks. Having to deal now with many Jews, he tempered his anti-Semitism. Vodka made him friendly with the popular Sergei Rachmaninoff, and they chummily discussed what Russian royalties they would have earned—but for the Revolution. Stravinsky befriended Arthur Rubinstein, who was useful to him, as well as émigré writers such as Aldous Huxley, W.H. Auden, and Christopher Isherwood, all good publicity.

Even after Schoenberg's death in 1951, the war between the Schoenberg and Stravinsky partisans continued undiminished. Leon Kirchner recollected that

> there were rival gangs that roamed the beaches and canyons of Santa Monica. . . . These gangs centered about deities like Stravinsky and Schoenberg. . . . At [one] rehearsal [of a group work] . . . these two towering figures in the twentieth—or any century's—music appeared. They veered off like two opposing forces. They were cathode and anode, and with them were their surrounding bodies and antibodies following them into their separate zones or territories. Neither group looked at the other.

A Windfall of Musicians makes for steadily rewarding and entertaining reading. ♦

B&A

Signs of Decay

This is what happens when the medium is the message.

BY LANCE ESPLUND

Jenny Holzer's artistic aphorisms—her text-laden T-shirts and posters; projected wall-size slogans, and large, running LED signs—at first are cause for alarm.

Read as stream-of-consciousness warning signs, their cryptic meanings and clinical delivery can be sobering. Holzer's language art, which she has been making for the last three decades, fires off its messages—prophetic and apocryphal, public and private, dealing with heartache, politics, religion, and war—like a running ticker tape of all the world's problems. She deploys language so that words are dropped into our consciousness, bit by bit, like Chinese water torture.

Jenny Holzer
Protect Protect
Fondation Beyeler
Sonderausstellung
Basel, Switzerland
Nov. 1, 2009 - Jan. 24, 2010

When her cautionary haikus are at their best—"Decency Is a Relative Thing," "Private Property Created Crime," "Abuse of Power Comes as No Surprise," "With You Inside Me Comes the Knowledge of My Death"—her language is as unnerving for its brevity and bite as it is for its billboard-scale browbeating.

In her recent retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, now on exhibition in Basel, we are treated to a spare yet in-your-face selection of Holzer's artworks from only the last 15 years, which makes it not a proper retrospective *per se*. Some of her text works, which have been projected onto surfaces including building façades, trees, cliff faces, and ocean waves, have looked more innovative and convincing than they do here. To its credit, however, "Protect Protect," for better or worse, includes no documentary images of previous installations. This exhibition is more concerned with the here-and-now.

Although Holzer continues to recycle her sayings from as far back as the 1970s, "Protect Protect" presents the artist basically as she is today, with her most recent, technologically advanced, and, in terms of subject matter, up-to-the-minute art.

Organized by Elizabeth A.T. Smith at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and Sam Keller, director of the Fondation Beyeler, the exhibit comprises mostly Holzer's large, signature LED installations, eight from the last two years which—generally made up from an amalgam of the artist's sayings, past and present—are the most engaging works in the show.

Holzer's LED installations have the pulse and pull, as well as the annoying demands, of advertising signage. The show's colored, rhythmic lights, difficult to ignore, beckon viewers from gallery to gallery. Forever lingering in "Protect Protect" is the promise that if you stay long enough you will be edified, enlightened, or at least entertained.

That allure is partly what holds people transfixed in the first gallery. There you encounter the mammoth work "For Chicago" (2008), eleven 48-foot-long streaming, yellow LED signs, which are placed parallel approximately two feet apart in a corner on the gallery floor. The layered, yellow text—animating the floor while reflecting and bouncing off the walls—rushes by beneath you like highway dividing lines. In other galleries, tall

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columns or crisscrossing banks of stacked, curving LED signs race up and across the walls or gallery corners. Or they cascade, like a waterfall of text, from wall to floor and back again. "Red Yellow Looming" (2004), which can be read from opposite directions, comprises 13 signs that crisscross between two parallel walls of a hallway.

"Protect Protect" also includes suites of artworks whose sole subjects are the Iraq war and the Middle East, as well as atrocities committed in the former Yugoslavia. The Iraq and Middle East works, titled "Redaction Paintings" (2005-09), are reprinted images of formerly classified documents that were deemed too sensitive for public consumption. They include altered prisoners' handprints and tinted maps of Baghdad, as well as declassified military documents, all with lines redacted (blacked out by government censors), and then blown up by Holzer and silk-screened in oil on canvas.

The Yugoslavia-based works consist of incised marble benches and "Lustmord" (1994), a sculpture comprising human bones—some wrapped with silver bands and inscribed with text, like specimen labels or ankle bracelets—all laid out in rows on a wooden table.

The documentary artworks, text-ridden, make for slow-going gallery viewing. Unlike Holzer's streaming signs, which rhythmically force-feed their information through the medium of colored lights, the documents must be sought out and pored over. They include letters from distraught parents of soldiers, accounts of military engagements, and autopsy and interrogation reports. Surprisingly, although sometimes extremely personal, they are not that engaging to read.

Aesthetically vacant, the documentary artworks have the self-righteous, finger-pointing air—at times verging on invasive or exploitative—of a television-style exposé. The handprints, attempting to humanize the documents but adding little in the way of graphic punch, come off as trite. And the human bones, a common denominator which should provide a shot of morbid reality (if not shock value) here lack the weight even of relics or artifacts, and feel more like store-bought stage props.

Add these works to the exhibit's blitzkrieg of streaming LED text, and the political pulpit-pounding becomes tiresome, almost too much to bear.

Holzer, born in Ohio in 1950, came of age in an art world that, fueled by conceptualism, puts ideas ahead of, and separate from, form—lopping art's head from its body. Like Barbara Kruger, Holzer is a figurehead in a movement that believes that, in art, having something to say is more important than how one says it. Here, as in any political arena, getting the message out there takes precedence over delivery, which is something of an afterthought.

Holzer is anything but subtle. But her work's bullying can be tempered by the cold, factual mechanics of her delivery, which mimics Times Square signage and public information systems, including the ubiquitous news crawl. When she is at her best, her quips, sometimes borrowed from actual poets, are as intriguing and prophetically vague as Chinese fortune cookies.

In small doses, Holzer's art, especially in LED form, can burn, if not brand itself into your consciousness: Her sayings, like patient birds of prey, can glide at the peripheries of awareness. Or they can leisurely trail through the mind like advertising banners sailing behind airplanes. They can also surprise, like machine-gun bursts. But like all art with a message, Holzer's work, especially *en masse*, can quickly become less than alarming or inspirational; and in large quantities, her messages verge on the strident and ranting.

"Protect Protect" was named after one of Holzer's best-known, recurring statements: "Protect Me From What I Want." The statement speaks to our collective victimhood, greed, exploitation, and self-deception. Yet it also betrays the artist's need to amuse us—to propagate the easy adage, to pay lip service to problems. Yet the job of art and artists, no matter how political, is not to badger or facilitate social change. Art has higher and more mysterious purposes.

On both occasions when I visited the retrospective at the Whitney, an assaultive yet somnambulistic air filled the darkened galleries, some of which were lit only by their carnival rain of words colored red, yellow, purple, and blue. Visitors, like sleepwalkers, looked dazed and confused. One Whitney employee, dressed in coveralls, rushed through the gallery to attend to something. As he passed through the barrage of text, he sheltered his eyes and said, to no one in particular, "This show drives me crazy!" ♦

Jenny Holzer with LED sign

LOUIE PSIHOYOS / CORBIS

B&A

Boy Gone Wild

Beautiful scenery but no story equals cinematic Sominex. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

The film version of Maurice Sendak's picture book *Where the Wild Things Are* is wildly original and imaginative, arrestingly beautiful, and entirely heartfelt. It is also excruciatingly boring, an airless exploration of the consciousness of a little boy that compelled me to explore the inside of my eyelids on several occasions.

Where the Wild Things Are
Directed by Spike Jonze

I never fall asleep during movies, not even when I had a baby who woke up four times every night; but for me, *Where the Wild Things Are* was cinematic Sominex.

Which just goes to show that originality, imagination, beauty, and purity of intent are no substitute for a good story. In fact, they may make the lack of a narrative seem all the more glaring. The problem with *Where the Wild Things Are* is that its ambition isn't to tell a tale but to map out the psychosexual terrain of boyhood.

Yes, you read that right. In this sense it differs from Maurice Sendak's beloved book, which has a simpler goal—one that was all the rage among progressive-minded and pretentious children's authors like Sendak, William Steig, and Dr. Seuss in the late 1950s and early '60s. They sought to demonstrate their own intellectual sophistication by incorporating the wisdom they had gleaned from psychoanalysis about the structure of the human personality into their books for kids.

Thus, the "wild things" of Sendak's title, as well as Thing One and Thing Two from *The Cat in the Hat*, are metaphorical representations of the chaotic force Freud called the Id. (The fish in *The Cat in the Hat* is the superego, as is the unseen mother in *Where the Wild Things Are*.) It was because of flourishes like these that people in New York, where the wild middlebrows are, were inclined to take Sendak seriously as a semi-thinker upon the release of his celebrated tome.

In Sendak's rendering, a four-year-old named Max behaves badly, is called a wild thing, and when he's sent to bed without supper, dreams of becoming the king of a group of monsters who worship him. Eventually he decides to go home, which means he awakens to find his dinner waiting for him, "and it was still hot." Sendak's monochromatic illustrations are beautiful, and so is the rhythm of his language. But it is the simplicity of its message—even Ids eventually need and crave the comforts of home—that explains the fact that this odd book has sold 19 million copies since its publication in 1963.

The movie version is far more psychologically ambitious, and as a result, is far less satisfying. For one thing, Max is eight or nine, a child of divorce with an older sister who was once his playmate but has since discovered boys. When he sees his mother kissing her new boyfriend, he explodes in a rage and bites her. She chases him; he runs out of the house into the night and down into a ravine, whence his fantasy of journeying in a boat to the land of the wild things commences.

The early scenes of the movie are exciting. Max is a formidable little boy (played by a formidable little actor named Max Records), and the gravity with which he responds to the frustrations and disappointments in his life is just right. Its director, Spike Jonze, creates an intimate feeling with extensive use of a hand-held camera and a low-to-the-ground perspective.

But the movie also goes sodden. Max is not a wild thing, but an angry, depressed, and self-pitying thing who lies in his bed in the middle of the day (while nauseating minor-key indie rock music plays on the soundtrack). In any case, it makes little sense for the Max of the Sendak tale to be an older kid. The dream of becoming a king in a monster fantasyland is only something a very little boy would indulge in.

And what kind of fantasy world is this, anyway? The five Wild Things argue amongst themselves, carp and kvetch and mope and stomp around. Why on earth would any little boy seeking an escape dream of hanging around with them?

It seems that Jonze and his co-writer, Dave Eggers, aged Max because they have a different kind of wildness they want to explore here. Their interest isn't in Max as a child but Max as an emerging sexual being. Forgive me for being this blunt, but this is a movie obsessed with vaginas and birth canals. Max begins the movie in a tunnel, which is destroyed by his sisters' friends. He and the wild things build a palace out of wood sticks that is round with a round entryway; and when he needs to hide at one point, he does so by jumping into a female Wild Thing's mouth and spending a few minutes inside her. When he emerges from her mouth, he is covered in placental goo.

The Wild Things are riven with unresolved and somewhat inexplicable sexual tension. And a rivalry develops between Max and his best Wild Thing friend over the female Wild Thing who swallows and then gives birth to Max.

There are a great many ideas at play here. But none of them is all that interesting, really. Neither were Sendak's, but it takes only three minutes to read his book. Jonze and Eggers want you to sit through a hundred minutes of their take. That's 97 minutes too many. ♦

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

TOBER 27, 2009 FOR YOU, ONE DOLLAR

Bill Clinton Abandons Charity Work

'If I Can't Get a Nobel By Now, Why Bother?'

By PETER BAKER

VIRGIN GORDA, BVI — Sitting under a coconut tree and drinking his third Painkiller cocktail of the afternoon, former President Bill Clinton said he had no second thoughts about giving up the bulk of his charitable efforts around the world and spending the rest of his time as an international playboy. "What's the point?" asked the former president. "If I can't get a Nobel by now, why bother?" At which point an enormous platter of conch fritters arrived at his beachside table.

Mr. Clinton insists he is not bitter that President Barack Obama received the Nobel Peace Prize less than nine months into his administration. "Barack is a great guy. He's done much to change the tenor of the conversation and his speeches alone have dramatically improved our diplomatic relations with most of the world. Not bad for the second black president in our history." As for the Nobel committee itself, Mr. Clinton was less kind. "They can go [expletive] themselves."

Nevertheless, the former president claims he is still a goodwill ambassador. He is currently involved with the international release of the "Girls Gone Wild" video series. "I know this show like the back of my hand," he offered. "I even provide some of the narration and a director's commentary. The world is going to love this—especially the New Orleans Mardi Gras episode." As for the Clinton Foundation, the president says it will continue to focus on important issues affecting adults, the entertainment sector, and the combination of the two.

Mike Matus for Worldwide Image

President Clinton, seen here dictating a memo to his assistant, tells members of the Nobel Peace Prize committee exactly where they can stick their medal.

"I frankly don't care what others think anymore," said Mr. Clinton. "I mean, if saving tens of millions of lives, whether it be in Africa or Asia, can't get me a little medal, nothing will. Pass the conch fritters."

Tomorrow the former president leaves for Los Angeles where he will be auditioning for a role on MTV's "Real

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Obama Distances Self From Losing Candidates, Calls Them 'Losers'