'IF YOU TAX THEM THEY WILL LEAVE'
FRED BARNES ON GOVERNOR CHRIS CHRISTIE OF NEW JERSEY

the weekly Standard

APRIL 26, 2010 $4.95

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BY STEVEN F. HAYWARD

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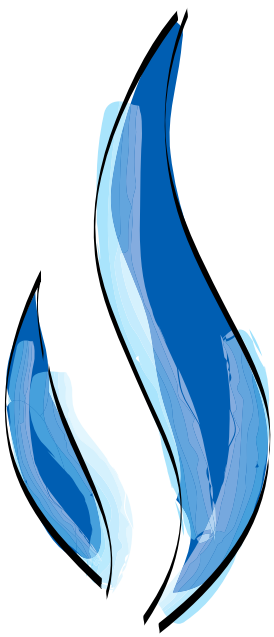

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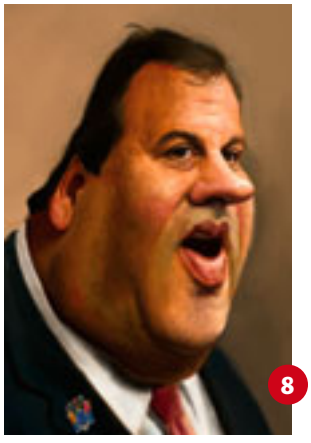


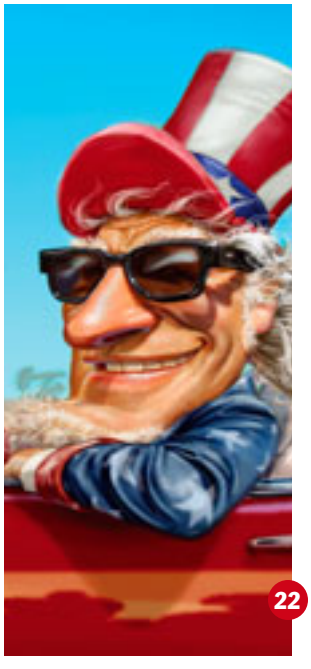


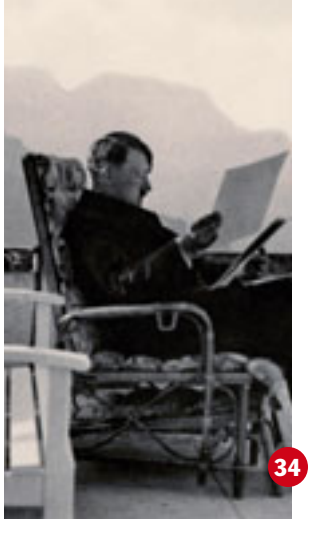




## Articles



## Features



## Books & Arts



COVER BY GARY LOCKE

# Obama and the Press

The press corps, its Washington cadre at least, always turns against a president at some point. With Republican presidents that point varies—sometimes two, sometimes three, sometimes as many as four days go by after the oath of office before the honeymoon fizzles. With Democratic presidents there is greater suspense. Most reporters are liberals and have a rooting interest in seeing a liberal president succeed. But they also have guild interests that eventually militate against cheerleading, especially when their respect for the president is not reciprocated. Could we be reaching that tipping point with Barack Obama?

The Scrapbook would like to enter into evidence a couple of exhibits from last week's *Washington Post*. First is the astonishing front page array of photos from Tuesday's paper, showing Obama greeting 11 of the 46 foreign leaders who descended on Washington for the much-ballyhooed nuclear summit ("the largest gathering of world leaders called by a U.S. president since FDR's" time, as the breathless Obama camp followers kept repeating). Outside of the White House's own website, you would be hard-pressed to find more thoroughly promotional coverage of the president. Note, especially—if you can tear your eyes away from the drama of Obama's grip-and-grin with Tarja Halonen, president of Finland—the congratulatory headlines flanking the ego wall: "Obama presses for unity on Iran" and "President's team is optimistic on deficit." Well, bully for them.


The Washington Post

President's team is optimistic on deficit

Obama presses for unity on Iran

NUCLEAR SUMMIT OPENS

*'Washington Post' front page, April 13*

As an aside, we're not sure the *Post* was 100 percent successful in achieving the desired effect. A residual pang of journalistic conscience, perhaps, led them to include in the tableau a photo of Obama bowing, as is becoming habitual with him, to his Chinese overlord, Hu Jintao. And the hagiographic effect, we think, would have been heightened had the *Post* chosen just one large photo rather than 11, which subtly sends the signal that the nuclear summit was something of a large advertising campaign for Brand Obama. But all in all, it looks like David Axelrod was brought in for the day to serve as the paper's front-page editor.

The next day was a different story. The *Post*'s Dana Milbank aired the perennial complaint of Washington reporters—that their affection for the president is no longer reciprocated (*he never writes, he never calls*).

## Signs of the Times

The ad shown below appeared last week on the Washington, D.C., pages of Craigslist. The Scrapbook notes the job-seeker's entrepreneurial spirit and keen awareness of the value of a public-sector job in these hard times. We suspect, however, that his "awsome skillset" may end up landing him in a government institution other than the civil service. ♦


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Thanks for looking.

But while it is a perennial complaint, and not one that necessarily endears reporters with the public, this marks its first prominent appearance of the Obama era. Milbank complained:

> World leaders arriving in Washington for President Obama's Nuclear Security Summit must have felt for a moment that they had instead been transported to Soviet-era Moscow. They entered a capital that had become a military encampment, with camo-wearing military police in Humvees and enough Army vehicles to make it look like a May Day parade on New York Avenue, where a bicyclist was killed Monday by a National Guard truck.
>
> In the middle of it all was Obama—occupant of an office once informally known as "leader of the free world"—putting on a clinic for some of the world's greatest dictators in how to circumvent a free press.
>
> The only part of the summit, other than a post-meeting news conference, that was visible to the public was Obama's eight-minute opening statement, which ended with the words: "I'm going to ask that we take a few moments to allow the press to exit before our first session."
>
> Reporters for foreign outlets, admitted for the first time to the White House press pool, got the impression that the vaunted American freedoms are not all they're cracked up to be.

Some of this is guild-like special pleading, but that doesn't mean it's insignificant. Obama's disregard for the media is epic, and will eventually be reciprocated, at least by the reporters trying to cover the White House. Milbank's column is a hint that day may be approaching sooner than you think.

The other factor in play is Obama's plummeting poll numbers. Gallup last week reported a new low of 47 percent approval for the job the president is doing. White House reporters tend to see falling poll numbers as a sign of incompetence, if not a character flaw. If the president's numbers keep falling, friendly reporters will start getting snippy. Though given their psychic investment in "The One," the attacks will probably land more heavily on his top advisers. ♦


## Iceland Unveils Debt-Reduction Strategy

Under the headline above, a banker friend of The Scrapbook emails what looks like a ransom note in Icelandic. Translation: "Leave 30 billion euros in a plastic bag at the Iceland Embassy tonight and we will switch off the volcano. Do not call the police!" ♦

## From Russia with Love

In a world where presidents insult traditional allies and yuck it up with Third World strongmen, The Scrapbook should not be especially surprised by the conduct of the Russian president Dmitry Medvedev while visiting the United States. But The Scrapbook was, indeed, surprised—and not a little irritated too.

It began on April 9 when George Stephanopoulos of ABC's *Good Morning America* interviewed the Russian leader, who had been in Washington to attend the "nuclear safety" conference. Stephanopoulos asked Medvedev what he thought of President Obama, and the Russian president—in time-honored fashion—offered the usual anodyne words of praise, including his opinion that Obama is "a thinker."

At which point, however, Medvedev strayed from diplomatic etiquette in ways The Scrapbook had never observed before. Obama's status as a "thinker," he continued with a wink, "distinguishes him from many people." Stephanopoulos's well-coiffed

# What They Were Thinking

I HAD NO IDEA HIS NOSE WAS SO ENORMOUS. IT IS MESMERIZING. LIKE A SKI SLOPE OR THE BEAK OF A LARGE CARNIVOROUS BIRD. I WONDER IF HE CAN SMELL THE FOOD IN PARIS. DOES HE NEED A STRAW TO DRINK?...

CHIP SOMODEVILLA / GETTY IMAGES

*President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia and President Nicolas Sarkozy of France at the Washington summit on nuclear security*

hair appeared to stand on end, and he leaned forward to catch Medvedev's next bon mot: "Obviously I do have someone in mind. I don't want to offend anyone." Thereupon Stephanopoulos giggled so hard that the Russian president could scarcely keep a straight face.

In one sense, THE SCRAPBOOK is sympathetic to Medvedev: If he had made a public joke about the brainpower of his predecessor as president, Vladimir Putin, he might well have faced arrest upon his return to Moscow—or worse. So now that George W. Bush is safely out of office, how much easier it is to make juvenile comments on American television about the twice-elected president of the United States, who once graciously referred to Medvedev in public as "a smart guy."

Or maybe not so smart. What stunned THE SCRAPBOOK, of course, was the idea that Medvedev would not just demonstrate the traditional bumptiousness of modern Russian leaders—a murderer's row of mass killers, drunks, KGB thugs, and geriatric tyrants—but would choose to insult an American president in the president's own country. Evidently, the Russians still have much to learn about civility.

As for Stephanopoulos: The transition from enabling an impeached Bill Clinton to giving smirking performances on early morning TV seems to have taught him nothing at all. ♦

## Sentences We Didn't Finish

'A year ago in Prague, Barack Obama—treading deliberately and dramatically further down the path of disarmament than his predecessors of either party had dared to go—drew his portrait of a world substantially freed from the fear of atomic annihilation. This week, responding to his leadership, the nations of the world—with a few notable exceptions on both sides of the Arab-Israeli divide—sent their leaders to Washington to signal their assent . . . " (David Broder, "Obama and the Challenge of Slow Change," *Washington Post*, April 15). ♦


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# Get Coach!

Say goodbye to Mondays. Twelve girls have signed up, the assistant coach has committed to another season, and I can't actually say no. I will again wake up an hour early on Mondays, go to work early, and leave early to coach my daughter's soccer team of 6- and 7-year-old girls, the Marauders—though this year we might change our name to something not so bellicose, a little less burn-your-house-and-ravage-your-land.

Do you know what it's like to be in charge of small children but not really in charge? You say *shhh*, and they begin screaming? You pull them off a wobbly bookcase as they attempt to scale it, but then they run to the kitchen to play with steak knives?

A friend told me a story recently. She'd asked her sister, a mother of two, what she and the kids were up to that afternoon. "Well," said the sister, "we went outside and began to play in the new driveway. But instead of playing with the ball, the girls ate loose pieces of the fresh blacktop, and I tried to stop them." As a parent and now as a coach I've had my share of the-kids-are-eating-blacktop moments.

I knew I was overmatched about 30 seconds into our first practice last year. We began by gathering around in a circle and saying our names. The first girl said, "Hi, I'm Melinda." The next said, "Hi, I'm Roseanne." And the third said, "Hi, I'm sarcastic."

Sarcastic was a beautiful little girl with a funny, shrill laugh who, if I left her in the game a second too long, simply lay down on the soccer field and began to rest, no matter what was going on around her. During a practice, after I had made yet another attempt to redirect her energy away from wisecracking and toward the actual playing of soccer, one of her friends, Jill, a 5-year-old, turned to me and said, "She really annoys you, doesn't she?"

"What are you talking about, Jill?" I replied, all poker face. "I love playing soccer with Sarcastic."


MATT COLLINS

"It's okay," Jill said, "you can tell me."

"Jill," I said, "this is a totally inappropriate conversation."

"I was just joking," said Jill, and then a half-second later, "but she does annoy you, right?"

The people who run the league all emphasize the importance of teaching young players that soccer is fun. My girls don't need to be won over. When I start talking about the fundamentals of dribbling and passing and how to make a corner kick, I get maybe 10 seconds of grudging silence and then it's, "Can we play now, Coach?"

Except for Sarcastic, my girls seem to have an inborn hunger to play soccer, and to play it better than anyone else. When they hit the field they become voracious little warrior-princesses.

In our league we don't officially keep score. But the girls do. And, actually, the coaches need to keep track as well, because if their team is more than five points ahead, they are supposed to bench their highest-scoring player. Nothing more effectively alienates me from my players than this rule, because in their minds the only thing more inviting than the prospect of winning by 20 points is the prospect of winning by 30 points.

It's happened a few times that I've pulled my highest scorer only to watch my next highest scorer step up and begin scoring just as many goals, too many to continue playing; and then, once I've put my second highest scorer on the bench, I watch as the little girl who was originally the third highest scorer, in turn, also scoring at will—but her I can't put on the bench because I have no more subs.

The highlight of every practice is a scrimmage, though arguments break out whenever a ball goes out of bounds. I need to keep two lists in my head, one for the blue team and one for the red, keeping track of who has had a chance to kick the ball inbounds and who has not. Because the girls fight over everything that's up for grabs.

The worst part of practice is a game the girls call "Get Coach." This is not one of my dribbling or set-kicking drills. Get Coach is a game the girls made up, and I only have to say, "We are not playing Get Coach," for a game of Get Coach to begin.

The game's object is to catch me, jump on me, push me to the ground, and then pinch, squeeze, and grab at me until the parents come off the sidelines, mortified, and begin peeling these little women off my tired person. To look at the faces on these parents, you'd think their kids were eating blacktop.

**David Skinner**

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# The Iran Pretense

On March 31, Admiral Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, revealed that the U.S. military had discovered a "significant shipment" of arms from Iran to Afghanistan. Responding to a question at a press conference in Kabul, Mullen, the nation's highest-ranking uniformed officer, said he was disturbed by Iran's increasing influence in Afghanistan. "I was advised last night about a significant shipment of weapons, you know, from Iran into Kandahar not too long ago, for example." How significant was the shipment? "I was taken aback," Mullen said.

Any shipment of arms from Iran to Afghanistan is worrisome. But the timing of this one, shortly before the surge fighting shifts to Kandahar this summer, is particularly troubling. Mullen added that the Iranians' "desire to be influential is increasing."

Indeed. A week earlier, CNN reported that Iran was training Taliban fighters—in Iran. "We've known for some time that Iran has been a source for both materiel and trained fighters for Taliban elements in Afghanistan," said Army Lieutenant Colonel Edward Sholtis.

Although the support from Iran is clearly growing, it is not new. Last fall, CBS reported that Iran had stepped up shipments of deadly EFPs (explosively formed penetrators) and armor-piercing bombs. "More worrying still," the report continued, "U.S. intelligence believes Iran is supplying surface-to-air missiles to the Taliban—the very same weapon the United States supplied to the Afghan resistance to bring down the Russians."

The level of Iranian support for the Afghan insurgency does not yet match the crucial support Iran has provided to Shiite militias and Sunni militant groups in Iraq. And the insurgency in Afghanistan would exist with or without Iranian backing. But Iran's aggressive and deadly activity in Afghanistan is growing, and its support for insurgents in Iraq continues.

Iran is the only nation that is actively supporting the forces fighting against the United States in both places. This war—or proxy war—is not led by rogue elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard or military. It is directed by the Iranian government and approved at the highest levels. It is regime policy.

This shouldn't be surprising. Iran has been designated for years by the State Department as the world's leading state sponsor of terror. Tehran doesn't hide its support for Hamas and Hezbollah. And it has long harbored senior al Qaeda leaders, including Osama bin Laden's son.

All of which provokes two questions: Why doesn't President Obama talk about Iran and terrorism? And why hasn't this president, so quick to issue formal condemnations of Israeli apartment construction, ever once publicly rebuked Iran for arming and training those who are killing Americans?

Last week, world leaders gathered in Washington for a summit to address nuclear terrorism and proliferation. President Obama told them that nuclear terrorism is "one of the greatest threats to global security." Iran—an active sponsor of terror now racing toward nuclear weapons—should have dominated the agenda. It didn't. In fact, the most serious discussion of Iran came at the closing press conference, when reporters asked why it had been overlooked.

Clearly, talking about Iran and terrorism complicates Obama's diplomacy. Since the first moments of his administration the president has chosen to believe that the Iranian regime might voluntarily give up its nuclear weapons program. To a great extent, his approach depends on maintaining that assumption.

It is hard to understand how Iran, in the context of its quiet war with the United States, will suddenly become a good faith negotiating partner on its nuclear program. And it becomes more difficult to pretend that the same Iranian leaders responsible for this aggression might willingly abandon a weapon that would instantly make their nation a regional superpower.

For the past two months, administration officials have told reporters (on background) that China and Russia will eventually support sanctions. And each time, a representative of the Russians or the Chinese downplayed the claim and raised questions about the effectiveness or the desirability of tough sanctions. Or both. And two weeks ago, when reporters from the *New York Times* tried to get Obama to embrace Hillary Clinton's description of the sanctions his administration was pursuing as "crippling," he balked.

So the Obama administration, after allowing the mullahs to miss deadline after deadline while it waited for some sign of compromise, is no longer even pushing for tough sanctions. And Iran, its centrifuges spinning, continues to supply those who target Americans with impunity.

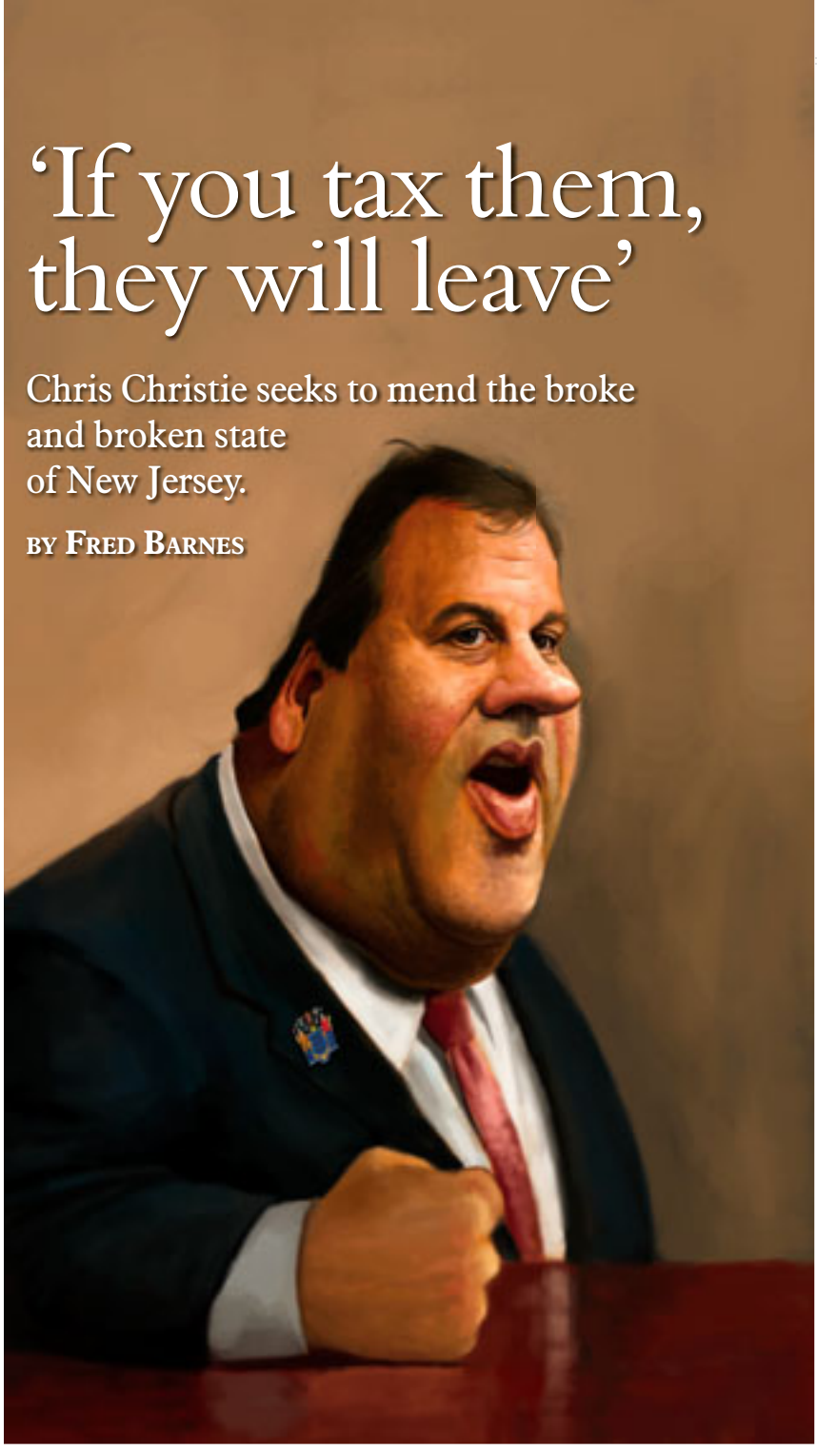
This is not going to end well.

*—Stephen F. Hayes*

# ‘If you tax them, they will leave’

## Chris Christie seeks to mend the broke and broken state of New Jersey.

BY FRED BARNES



*Trenton*

If the citizens of New Jersey like candor, Chris Christie is the governor they’ve been waiting for. Or I should say citizens of “the failed state” of New Jersey, as he tends to call it. It’s a “broken state” and a state that’s “broke.” New Jersey was in “a shambles,” he says, when he became governor in January. It’s “a fiscal basket case,” suffering from the “madness” of tax increases and excessive government spending, a “wonderful state” that’s been brought to “the edge of bankruptcy” and faces “the ruination” of its economy and “the quality of life that we want all of our citizens to have.” New Jersey has “deceitful politics,” and “the defenders of the status quo . . . yell and scream” and “demonize” those, like Christie, who seek change.

The state’s misery is quantifiable, and Christie routinely quantifies it in his speeches. His budget address in March to a joint session of the state legislature—controlled by Democrats—included this riff:

> New Jersey residents are the most over-taxed in the country. We have one of the highest top marginal income tax rates, the second highest sales tax rate, the sixth highest corporate tax rate, and the highest property taxes in the nation. Add it all up, and the sad fact is that we are number one with more state and local taxes taken as a percentage of income than any other state in America. This is one distinction I am prepared to give up.

There’s more. “We are first in the number of college students who, once educated, leave our state,” Christie said. “We are near the top in debt, and number one in getting the least back from Washington for every dollar we pay in taxes.”

And people, at least the more affluent, are fleeing. From 2004 to 2008, New Jersey “experienced a net outflow of wealth of $70 billion,” the governor said. “If you tax them, they will leave.” Unemployment is the highest (9.8 percent) in the region, having doubled since 2007. The state lost 121,000 private sector jobs last year while local governments added 11,300 new employees. There are “two classes of citizens in New Jersey,” Christie said, “those who enjoy rich public benefits and those who pay for them.”

Governors aren’t ordinarily this downbeat about their own state, even when pointing out the mistakes of their predecessors. I can’t think of another example. Christie is notoriously blunt. When reporters tried to question him during a Q&A session last week with businesswomen, he brushed them off, saying questions were limited to “real people.” To a woman who asked if he has a “strategic plan” for the state, he simply said, “No.”

Before running for governor, Christie, 47, was U.S. Attorney for New Jersey with a reputation for single-

PAUL MOYSE

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of* The Weekly Standard.

minded pursuit of corruption by public officials. Though he lacked prosecutorial or trial experience, Christie had sought the job aggressively after raising money for George W. Bush's presidential campaign in 2000. Bush appointed him. His records in seven years was impressive: 125 convictions or guilty pleas from public officials, both Republicans and Democrats.

Christie has a powerful motive for not sugarcoating the state's troubles. His program is radical, at least for New Jersey. He wants to slash $10.7 billion from a 2011 budget projected at $38 billion, reduce taxes, cut regulations, and privatize enterprises such as the state-owned TV network and parking garages. He refuses to consider raising a single tax rate.

This includes the "millionaire's tax." Perhaps only in New Jersey would such a tax apply to personal income starting at $400,000. Passed in 2009, it raised the top rate from 8.9 percent to 10.75 percent before expiring at the end of the year. Democrats declined to renew it in a lame duck session of the legislature in December, leaving the issue to Christie.

"They wanted a twofer," Christie told me. "They wanted the issue and the revenue" (estimated at $900 million in 2011). "My response was, you've got the issue. Now you're not getting the revenue." Christie says more than half the 63,000 taxpayers earning over $400,000 are small business owners. "This is not a tax on the rich. We can't grow jobs if we continue to raise taxes."

The tax issue has spilled into a feud between Christie and the state teachers' union. The governor has asked teachers to forgo a pay raise for one year and begin paying 1.5 percent of their salary for their generous medical benefits. The union answered with TV ads urging Christie to approve the millionaire's tax instead. "All of this stuff is about the union's greed rather than putting the kids first," he said on Fox News.

The feud intensified last week when a union official posted a prayer for Christie's death on the Facebook page of New Jersey Teachers United Against Governor Chris Christie's Pay Freeze. Union president Barbara Keshishian apologized in person to Christie. But when he said the official should be fired, "She left my office in a huff," he says. The union, by the way, ran television ads last year opposing Christie in the governor's race in which he defeated the incumbent, Democrat Jon Corzine.

The breadth of change proposed by Christie—"bold action now to reverse the direction we have taken for many years"—has surprised many New Jerseyans. He was less candid during the campaign, for a reason. Voters "wanted back then what he's doing now," said Russ Schriefer, Christie's media consultant. "But he couldn't do it now if he'd said it back then." Corzine would have killed him with attack ads.

**Raising taxes 'would be insane,' Christie says. 'We have the worst unemployment in the region and the highest taxes in America, and that's no coincidence.'**

"The day of reckoning has arrived," Christie declared in his budget address. "The attitude has always been the same—continue to spend, continue to borrow, and drop the catastrophic sum of all these poor choices into the lap of the next guy. Well, time has run out. The bill has come due."

He stressed his aversion to new taxes. "I was not sent here to approve tax increases. I was sent here to veto them. . . . It is time for the tax madness to end." Raising taxes "would be insane," he said. "If you are unemployed and support tax increases, be ready to stay unemployed. . . . We have the worst unemployment in the region and the highest taxes in America, and that's no coincidence."

Christie's most ambitious proposal is to cap state spending and local property tax increases at 2.5 percent a year. This would require a three-fifths vote of the legislature and approval by voters in a referendum this November. And he wants to curb sharply the power of public employee unions. "We must have collective bargaining reform that respects these new caps." He accused the unions of "excesses" in pay raises, benefits, and pensions.

Though his agenda is far-reaching, Christie has the power to get much or all of it done. New Jersey has "the strongest constitutional governorship in the country," he told me. He has three types of veto authority, one allowing him to rewrite legislation. He appoints the attorney general, controller, every judge and county prosecutor, and the members of 700 boards, authorities, and commissions. "It's a pretty powerful job," Christie notes.

He is using all his prerogatives. Three weeks into office, he declared "a state of fiscal emergency" and froze $2.2 billion in 2010 spending by executive order. He spurned calls to relent on the "millionaire's tax." "There's no chance I'll sign this tax . . . no chance," he told the businesswomen last week.

His lieutenant governor, Kim Guadagno, has been assigned to examine every state regulation for possible elimination. "Whatever she recommends I can do by executive action, I'll do by executive action," Christie says.

He has "a lot of leverage" over the 2011 budget. A balanced budget is mandatory, and the legislature cannot exceed the revenue projection of the state treasurer and the nonpartisan Office of Legislative Services—unless there's a tax increase, which Christie would veto.

He also got Democratic leaders to back him on pension reform, requiring state workers to contribute 1.5 percent of their income for retirement and health benefits. The Democratic state senate president, Stephen Sweeney, has begun sounding like Christie. "The governor and I agree wholeheartedly, we have too much government, there's too many layers, there's too much of it and we need to shrink it and we need to cut it."

But what Christie calls "Trenton's addiction to spending" remains strong.

The legislature approved $800 million in new spending after the election and was still handing out money on the morning of Christie's inauguration. The program of "extraordinary and special" aid to municipalities had been suspended for lack of funds. But extra revenues suddenly appeared. Christie dispatched an official to halt the dispensing of funds moments after he was sworn in. It was too late. Seventy million dollars were already gone.

Now the governor wants the entire state to, as he puts it, "jump off the cliff" with him. "The watchwords of this [2011] budget are shared sacrifice and fairness," he says. "Individuals contribute, businesses sacrifice, local governments tighten their belts, and we end our addiction to spending. Everyone comes to the center of the room—we jump off the cliff together to stave off certain fiscal death for the hope of salvation tomorrow."

With his zeal for smaller government, Christie has prompted comparisons with Ronald Reagan. "Tonewise," Christie says, he reflects "Reaganism with a Jersey edge. Reagan had a better way of making it sunnier than I do. Our personalities are at core a little different." His first vote for president, at age 18 in 1980, was for Reagan.

Christie believes he can accomplish his goals in one term. He wants to trim the tax rate on individual income to 6 percent and see the jobless level sink and compare well with neighboring states, making New Jersey competitive. "Everything else flows from that," he says. "It's a great state to live in. It's just become unaffordable."

There's a bigger goal, too. "We should be seen as the failed experiment for other states and the country," he says. "Spend beyond your means and then kill your tax revenue base by raising taxes 115 times in eight years, and then you're New Jersey," Christie said last week on MSNBC. With a brash recovery, "We can be an example for others." That would be "an extra, added benefit" to success as governor of a state that failed, then mended its ways and flourished. ♦

# It's 1974 All Over Again

## Special elections are a harbinger of November.

**BY SEAN TRENDE**

The first signs that the Republicans were in for a terrible November in 1974 came in February of that year. Pennsylvania's 12th District, nestled in the Appalachian Mountains of West Central Pennsylvania, had elected a Republican to Congress in every election for a century except in the very worst Republican years: 1922, 1934, and 1948. In 1972, it had reelected its 12-term congressman, John P. Saylor, with 68 percent of the vote.

*Murtha in 1974*

Saylor died in October 1973, and a special election was set for February with Republicans expected to keep the seat. But a young Vietnam veteran named John P. Murtha defeated the Republican nominee, Harry Fox, by fewer than 250 votes. The result sent shock waves through Washington, which were amplified two weeks later when Democrat Richard VanderVeen defeated Republican Robert VanderLaan to claim the safe Republican seat of the new vice president, Gerald Ford. More Republican special election losses followed—in Ohio and California—en route to a thorough routing in the general election.

History may be on the verge of repeating itself. Murtha passed away in February of this year, and a special election has been called for May 18. The Pennsylvania 12th is hardly recognizable as the one that elected Murtha in 1974—it was merged into the heavily Democratic 20th District in 2002. But nonetheless the 12th has been moving sharply toward the Republicans in recent years, along with the rest of Appalachia. After preferring Al Gore by 11 points in 2000, it went only narrowly for John Kerry in 2004. In 2008, it went for John McCain and earned the distinction of being the only district in the country to switch its vote from Democrat to Republican.

The area leans Democratic at the local level, where registered Democrats heavily outnumber registered Republicans. Nevertheless, according to polling performed by GOP strategist Gene Ulm, Obama has only a 42 percent approval rating in the district, while health care reform is opposed by 64 percent of likely voters.

Democrats nominated Murtha's district director, Mark Critz, for the seat. Republicans nominated a businessman with no political record: Tim Burns. Polling shows a tight race, with neither candidate having held more than a 5-point lead. The National Republican Congressional Committee has committed $200,000 to the race and is already running advertisements linking Critz to Obamacare.

Although Burns is running in about as favorable an environment as one could hope for in a historically Democratic district, the election will be held on the day of the Pennsylvania primary. Given competitive races for the Democratic gubernatorial and senate nominations, turnout could be a boost for Critz.

If Burns does pick up the seat of a man who was almost the Democrats'

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AP / HARRY CABLUCK

majority leader, all attention will turn to Hawaii. Democrat Neil Abercrombie has held the Honolulu-based 1st District since 1990, but he decided to run for governor and resigned (traveling to Hawaii from Washington, D.C., regularly enough to run a credible campaign is nearly impossible).

Hawaii's election laws conspire to give Republicans a legitimate shot in this heavily Democratic district. First, it is a mail-in vote, with ballots due to be received the Saturday after the Pennsylvania special election. Second, it is a winner-take-all open election with no preceeding primaries. Republicans and Democrats will run on the same ballot, and the candidate who receives the most votes will win.

Republicans have a solid candidate in Charles Djou, a Honolulu city councilman who already represents much of the district. Democrats have two serious candidates seeking the seat. Ed Case is a moderate who represented Hawaii's 2nd District in Congress before challenging Senator Dan Akaka in the Democratic primary. This challenge earned him the enmity of much of the Democratic establishment.

The more liberal Democrat is Colleen Hanabusa, the president of the state senate. While many local Democratic officials have lined up behind her, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) perceives Case as the more electable and has made moves to support him. This has resulted in bad feelings among supporters of both candidates and split the local Democratic party. It leaves the door wide open for Djou to squeak through with a plurality of the vote. A Daily Kos/Research 2000 poll released last week had Djou ahead in a tight race: 32 percent to 29 for Case and 28 for Hanabusa.

Should Burns and Djou win, Democrats will attempt to spin these races as local events that do not bear on the November elections. But the symbolism of Republicans' picking up the seat of a high-ranking Democrat and then the seat of the district where the president grew up would only feed the already growing narrative of massive Republican gains in the fall. ♦

# Stevens, the Radical

## The retiring justice's opinions were anything but conventional. BY ROBERT F. NAGEL

When Justice John Paul Stevens retires this summer, he will have served on the Supreme Court for 35 years. Known for his bow ties and polite questioning of lawyers during oral argument, Stevens is the archetypical elite lawyer. He comes from a wealthy family, attended prestigious schools, clerked for a Supreme Court justice, worked as an antitrust lawyer in a private firm, did a stint of public service (investigating corruption on the Illinois Supreme Court), and then was appointed to the federal bench.

You might expect, then, that Justice Stevens would take a conventional approach to the task of judging. But, in fact, his approach to one central aspect of that task—interpreting the Constitution—is strikingly unorthodox. In ways that are sometimes admirable and sometimes disturbing, Stevens's opinions in constitutional cases present a fundamental challenge to widely accepted legal norms and practices.

The nature of this challenge was put fully on display earlier this year when Stevens dissented from the Court's determination that freedom of speech protects expenditures by corporations and unions during federal elections. This decision, titled *Citizens United* v. *Federal Election Commission*, was, of course, the subject of President Obama's critical remarks in front of the justices during his State of the Union address.

Stevens's dissent in *Citizens United* is extraordinary. Fully 90 pages long, it attacks virtually every aspect of the majority opinion. It is detailed, intellectually ambitious, and alternately careful and passionate. It is also radical in its implications.

Consider, for example, Justice Stevens's treatment of historical evidence about whether the framers intended the Free Speech Clause to protect corporations. Stevens acknowledges that his research has not identified any statements "from the founding era showing that corporations were understood to be excluded from the First Amendment's . . . guarantee." He then notes that "Justice Scalia adduces no statements to suggest the contrary proposition." He concludes that "we cannot be certain how a law [restricting corporate speech] meshes with the original meaning of the First Amendment."

It is not novel for a judge to decide that history does not resolve a particular constitutional argument. But Stevens makes a much broader point. Taking aim at Scalia's basic interpretive philosophy, Stevens questions whether an "impartial judge's application of [historical materials] is likely to yield more determinate answers . . . than his or her views about sound policy."

Thus, Stevens is unabashedly proposing that a judge's beliefs about "sound policy" provide as much constraint on judges' discretion as does evidence about what the words in the Constitution were intended to mean. This turns normal assumptions upside down. Usually it is thought that a judge's opinions about policy *constitute* the discretion that needs to be constrained by legal standards like original meaning.

If policy judgments are understood not as discretionary determinations but as constraints on judicial discretion, such judgments must have the authority of law. Stevens seems to think so. He even suggests that a judge's views about sound policy should be at least as "decisive" in determining constitutional meaning as evi-

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dence about the Founders' intentions.

Cynics and realists often claim that the imposition of the justices' policy preferences is what is really going on in constitutional cases. But it is unusual to see this possibility so candidly embraced by a member of the Court. Various opinions of Justice Stevens, however, have long pointed in this direction. He is known for dispensing with established legal doctrines and basing his decisions on his own "balance" of the competing interests at stake in the controversy.

If opinions about "sound policy" (or the appropriate balance of interests) should decide constitutional cases, the American practice of relying primarily on courts to interpret the Constitution is called into question. After all, political leaders and the public in general are as entitled to their views on matters of policy as are the justices.

*Stevens*

In *Citizens United*, Stevens does not flinch from this logic. His dissent is largely based on the argument that the Court should defer to Congress on the wisdom of regulating corporate speech. He depicts the statute under review as "an earnest effort to facilitate First Amendment values and safeguard the legitimacy of our political system." And, quoting from one of his earlier opinions, Stevens asserts, "Congress surely has both wisdom and experience in these matters that is far superior to ours."

If the justices should defer to the political branches on campaign finance regulation, it is difficult to imagine any constitutional issue where deference would not also be warranted. There are, after all, special reasons to be suspicious of congressional regulation of federal elections. To begin with, as Justice Scalia has argued, the temptation to regulate so as to protect incumbents is an obvious reason for judicial oversight rather than deference.

More generally, the dominant consensus in the legal profession is that the judiciary should vigorously protect freedom of speech, especially political speech. One reason is that free speech is thought to be a foundational right, essential for both individual and collective decision making. Another is the natural inclination for politicians to stifle speech that they (or their constituents) find offensive or with which they disagree.

In short, Stevens's willingness to defer to the political branches on the constitutionality of the regulation of campaign speech represents a radical departure from widely accepted notions about the role of the judiciary. This kind of deference, while not typical of Stevens's approach to constitutional law, should not be dismissed as mere opportunism. His deference in *Citizens United* flows naturally from his equally radical equation of constitutional law and sound policy. Taken to its logical conclusion, his position would support a major alteration in the American practice of relying primarily on the judiciary to enforce constitutional values.

The usual argument for judicial enforcement of the Constitution, however, relies only partially on the separation of law and policy. It also rests on the deeply ingrained American belief that the Constitution has superior status to ordinary laws. Thus it is commonly thought that judges have no choice when faced with an unconstitutional statute. The Constitution must prevail.

In *Citizens United*, Stevens challenges even this bedrock idea. In some of the most interesting sections of his dissent, Justice Stevens insists that campaign finance legislation facilitates free speech values. He argues, for instance, that it keeps the voices of corporations from drowning out less well-financed voices and that it promotes political participation by reducing public cynicism about politics. These arguments mean, as Stevens puts it, that the statute "pit[s] competing First Amendment values against each other."

Stevens's argument that the restriction of speech can improve the system of public debate—a position that he has also taken in other cases—makes him one of the few Supreme Court justices to acknowledge that there can be legally paramount values on both sides of a free speech dispute. This is an arresting idea, but it cuts against the assumption that a statute necessarily has inferior legal status in comparison to the Constitution. The statute, after all, is implementing free speech values.

The judicial duty to give effect to the superior legal authority is compromised by Stevens's position. Instead of asking whether a statute is inconsistent with the Constitution, a judge must ask whether on balance the statute improves the system of freedom of speech more than it detracts from it. Deference to the political branches seems especially appropriate when constitutional values are served by the statute, particularly when the relevant judgments are ones of degree and practicality.

Constitutional values are on both sides of many disputes, including those outside of the arena of free speech. Indeed, every time the Supreme Court expands the definition of any constitutional right, it is constricting the reserved powers of the states. Justices normally resist full recognition of this complication because, with superior legal values on both sides of the controversy, it is harder to justify in a plausible way an authoritative resolution.

Towards the end of his exhaustive dissent, Stevens sums up by charging that the majority's decision "elevates . . . assertion over tradition, absolutism over empiricism, rhetoric over reality." Although intended to apply specifically to *Citizens United*, Stevens's bleak depiction applies to a broad array of constitutional decisions, including a number authored by Stevens himself.

The sad fact is that in the modern era the function of judicial enforcement of the Constitution has too often been to dismantle traditional practices and beliefs, to subordinate practicality to abstraction, and to provide the solace of simplification. It is astonishing and sobering that Justice Stevens could have vigorously participated in this destructive activity for 35 years while harboring the seeds of a fundamental critique. ♦

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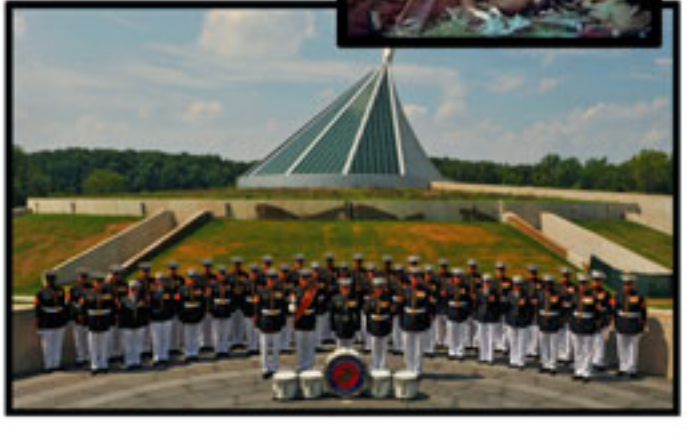

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# The ElBaradei Candidacy

## Egypt's potential savior, Iran's nuclear enabler, or both? BY KHAIRI ABAZA AND JONATHAN SCHANZER

The seemingly interminable reign of President Hosni Mubarak has suppressed Egypt's domestic political scene for decades. The Pharaoh, as he is known, has held an iron grip on power since the assassination of Anwar el-Sadat in 1981. In recent weeks, however, Egyptians have been expressing tempered enthusiasm that political change may be in the air. Their inspiration: the man whom the West should blame if Iran gets a nuclear weapon.

Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency from 1997 to 2009 and winner of the 2005 Nobel Peace Prize, has taken up Egyptian politics. His popularity grows by the day. Crowds throng to catch a glimpse of him at Cairo International Airport. A Facebook fan page, "Mohamed ElBaradei," has more than 131,000 members. This bald and bespectacled former nuclear inspector is a surprisingly strong contender for the 2011 presidential elections.

ElBaradei, however, won't admit that he is actually running. Though supporters created a website called elbaradei2011.com, he insists he is not fighting for Egypt's top office. Rather, he says he is working for a set of reforms that will allow for free and fair elections in Egypt and end the authoritarian rule first established by Gamal Abdel-Nasser after his military coup in 1952. ElBaradei seeks to act as a catalyst for the various opposition and protest movements to herald a new era of liberal democracy.

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ElBaradei believes that failure will lead to violence in Egypt. As he told the Associated Press, "Egyptians are desperate for change. We hope that the fate of the Egyptian opposition will not be that of the opposition in Iran"—a reference to the ongoing clashes between reformers and regime forces in the Islamic Republic.

ElBaradei's reluctance to officially throw his hat in the ring likely stems from the limits imposed by the Egyptian constitution. The way the laws are currently structured, the Mubarak regime decides who becomes president.

For one, the constitution requires independent candidates to have the support of 250 members of parliament. This is an impossible task, since only the ruling National Democratic party has this many elected officials. Opposition candidates must also have held a leadership position for at least one year prior to the election in a political party established for five years with at least 3 percent of the seats in parliament.

ElBaradei knows that he cannot meet these requirements. Beyond the fact that he left the IAEA only last year, if he joined any of Egypt's 24 licensed opposition parties, the regime would have the authority to shut it down. So ElBaradei focuses on reform. His ideas include: ending the emergency laws in place since 1981; amending the constitution to include judicial supervision of elections; limiting the president to two terms; allowing the 6 million Egyptians living overseas to vote; and other measures that would create a more democratic political system.

At its core, ElBaradei's rhetorical platform is a page from the Barack Obama playbook. Promises of change and hope for a better tomorrow are universal messages. In late February, after meeting with a wide spectrum of opposition and independent reformers, ElBaradei created the Egyptian Association for Change, a version of Obama's Organizing for America.

Mubarak has not announced whether he will run again for president in 2011, but he has been grooming his son Gamal to succeed him. Either way, he rightly views ElBaradei's bid for power as a threat. In early March, Mubarak said ElBaradei was welcome to make a run for the presidency in 2011, but only if he abides by the rules, signaling that the current political system, which is inhospitable to an ElBaradei candidacy, must remain intact.

But Mubarak knows that he is contending with the idea of reform as much as the person of ElBaradei. Popular support for ElBaradei on the Egyptian street is swelling. Public figures such as George Isaac from the *Kefaya* ("Enough") movement, former cabinet minister and politician Yehia el-Gamal, and poet Abdul-Rahman Youssef are leading an "official popular campaign for Baradei" on the Internet that has attracted tens of thousands of Egyptian campaign volunteers.

ElBaradei could never have reached this position without having first achieved prominence in the West as the director general of the IAEA—he was previously a bureaucrat in the Egyptian mission to the United Nations and an assistant to the foreign minister of Egypt. His regular appearances on al-Jazeera, al-Arabiya, and other popular satellite news channels as the head of the nuclear watchdog made him famous in the living rooms and coffeehouses of Egypt. The majority of Egypt's 79 million people are proud of the fact that a countryman held such a prominent role on the world stage and won a Nobel.

His reputation in the West is much more ambivalent. A strong argument can be made that ElBaradei sat on his hands while Iran made the most important strides in its illicit drive to

develop nuclear weapons. While Iran has not yet acquired the bomb, analysts are unanimous that the mullahs are getting close. ElBaradei, for his part, seemed unwilling to accept this, even at the tail end of his term, when the evidence was glaring.

In September 2009, he stated that there was no concrete evidence that Iran even had a nuclear weapons program. "In many ways," he stated, "I think the threat has been hyped." The same month when reports surfaced that the IAEA was withholding evidence of Iranian nuclear activity, ElBaradei's organization fired back, insisting again that there was "no concrete proof that there is or has been a nuclear weapons program in Iran." In November, responding to an Iranian announcement that it had started work on a new nuclear plant, ElBaradei stated that the fortified underground site near the city of Qom was "nothing to be worried about."

Considering this record, it is surprising that ElBaradei's reputation is as strong as it is in his home country. Egypt has been at odds with Iran since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The mullahs renounced all ties with Egypt when Cairo granted asylum to ousted Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, and relations became downright cantankerous after Egypt made peace with Israel. After the 1981 assassination of Sadat, Iran erected a four-story mural lionizing the assassin, Khaled Islambouli, on a large building in Tehran.

Egypt, a Sunni state, is alarmed over Iran's violent influence among Iraq's radical Shiites, and the potential for Tehran to create a large sphere of influence—a "Shiite Crescent" —from Iraq to Lebanon and beyond. And then there is Tehran's meddling in the Gaza Strip, which abuts Egypt. Iran helped train and arm Hamas to carry out the violent 2007 coup that gave it control of Gaza and, in the process, brought instability to Egypt's doorstep.

Yet, when it comes to ElBaradei, Egyptians don't care. They view him as the man who can finally bring democracy to Egypt after more than a half-century of authoritarian rule.

Washington, of course, welcomes the idea of a democratic Egypt. Despite the Obama administration's cutbacks in the financing of democratization programs in the Arab world, the State Department still views liberal reform as key to beating back the forces of radical Islam. Egypt would be a big win. Indeed, Arabs refer to Cairo as *Umm al-Dunya*, the mother of the world.

Is Mohamed ElBaradei the man who can bring about this sea change and fulfill the Bush Doctrine in the most influential country in the Middle East? Many Egyptians seem to think he could be. Westerners remain, however, rightly untrusting of the man who was asleep at the switch while Iran defied the world and inched ever closer to its nuclear bomb. ♦

# Le Président Doth Protest Too Much

## A thin-skinned Nicolas Sarkozy takes on the press.

**BY ANNE-ELISABETH MOUTET**

*Paris*

It's hard to think of anything Nicolas Sarkozy could have done worse in his handling of *le scandale* (also known, somewhat unimaginatively, as Twittergate) these past two weeks. What started as vague Internet rumors and idle post-cheese course dinner-party gossip on the love life of the French president and his third wife—safely insulated from any media airing by some of the most stringent privacy laws this side of Beijing—has morphed into a major political crisis, threatening, as no mere opinion poll ratings could, Sarkozy's bid for reelection in 2012.

*Sarkozy*

The facts, if you can call them that, are a couple of blog and Twitter posts, soon alluded to on France's answer to the HuffPost, LePost.fr, suggesting that Carla Bruni-Sarkozy had allegedly moved in with award-winning singer Benjamin Biolay (who once worked on one of her albums) while her husband, supposedly on the rebound, was said to have been giving the benefit of his presidential experience to environment minister (and French karate champion) Chantal Jouanno.

The rumors, carefully avoided by the mainstream French media, fully aware of guaranteed dire judicial and political fallout, then surfaced in the British tabloid press, which went at it with glee, even a certain insouciance. Sarkozy and *Madame* have from the start been a staple of the London popular newspapers, a piñata sent from heaven to revive flagging sales and casual anti-French prejudice (tinged with envy: any poll run by the *Sun* or the *Daily Mail* would find its readers convinced that the elevator-shoed poison dwarf ruling France has more fun and a better sex life than 90 percent of them). British tabloids have bid at auction on nude pictures of Carla Bruni, run endless jokes on Sarkozy's lack of height (and Carla's occasional "wardrobe malfunctions," Fleet Street code for visible lack of undergarments), commented on Sarko's custom-made low-slung lecterns, alleged that he planned to slight the queen at the last D-Day celebrations (with more than a bit of help from White House press secretary Robert Gibbs on that one), have seemingly never quoted La Bruni's name without mentioning her string of famous ex-lovers (Mick Jagger, Eric Clapton, Donald Trump . . .), and in general been having what they see as clean, harmless fun.

So everyone was flabbergasted when, far from ignoring the whole brouhaha in dignified fashion, the Elysée mounted a campaign against what Pierre Charon, a senior Elysée press adviser and old political pal of Sarkozy's, described as "an international plot by foreign financial interests, aimed at sabotaging the 2011 French presidency of the G20." "These rumors have cropped up in coordinated fashion," charged Thierry Herzog, the Sarkozys' lawyer. "Someone *must* be behind this."

There followed, in the age-old French tradition, a witch hunt. A blogger and the web editor of *Le Journal du Dimanche* who had alluded to the rumors were promptly sacked by their publisher, Hachette-Filipacchi Presse, which happens to be owned by a crony of Sarkozy's, Arnaud Lagardère, the missile and aerospace manufacturer. (Hachette-Filipacchi is a perilous place to mention the president's private affairs: The editor of *Paris Match*, the celebrity weekly, was similarly fired two years ago for having run a picture of Cécilia Sarkozy, the president's previous wife, with the man she's now remarried to, on a New York street.) Hachette-Filipacchi also requested a judicial inquiry into the "fraudulent entry of data into a computer network," strongly believed to have been pushed for by Sarkozy. Charon, meanwhile, settling some private scores, accused former justice minister Rachida Dati, now exiled in disgrace to Brussels as a Euro-MP, of spreading the rumors (probably true, but then they were on everyone's lips) and even manufacturing them (unlikely). The glamorous Dati hit back, posing as a victim ("My phones were tapped!") and threatening lawsuits of her own.

If the hoped-for effect was the cowing of the French press, predictably, for all but the Elysée grand strategists, it backfired. Timid (and underfinanced) the Paris newspapers may be, but all this legal activity gave them the perfect excuse: They reported on the cases, never (heaven forbid!) the actual rumors. By early April, all but the names in play were the subject of French front page stories, cover features, and TV news flashes. The last veil was then ripped by Biolay himself, egged on, it was said, by Carla Bruni, who sued France's respected but little-watched international news channel France 24 for mentioning him in a review of the foreign press coverage, and thereby put himself in the glare of any media attention he had until then managed to escape.

By this time Sarko, having first dismissed at length a Sky news interviewer during a visit to London ("I don't have even half a second to consider

RICARDO STUCKERT

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these absurdities . . . "), found himself reduced to sending his wife onto the morning radio talk shows and such friendly venues as *Madame Figaro*, the women's supplement of Paris's most respectful daily, to decry, in pained but restrained tones, the vulgarity and cheapening nature of it all. Bruni, who has more experience of the foreign celebrity media than her husband, laughed off any suggestion of conspiracy, protested that Dati was "a friend," and denied that any police investigations had been ordered. (Unfortunately for her, Bernard Squarcini, the head of DCRI, French homeland security, contradicted her hours later.)

*L'Affaire* is by no means over. Last week Sarko, in Washington, was again quizzed, this time in a Katie Couric interview on Iran's nuclear program. (Couric gave him a much easier time than she did, say, Sarah Palin: "It must get slightly annoying?" she commiserated about the coverage of his private life.) Even austere newspapers like *Le Monde* have run many column inches on the consequences for Sarkozy's reelection in two years. "Can the president keep his cool?" is the implicit question.

As with every ailing regime, leaks now gush out, in print, of every instance of Sarkozy weakness—how he was nearly incapacitated by his 2007 divorce; how he has surrounded himself with courtiers who daren't warn him of obvious mistakes. (Pierre Charon was described to me by an Elysée aide as "*un amuseur*, someone who, 500 years ago, would have worn a parti-colored costume and a hat with bells on around the king.") What makes all this unfortunate is that Sarkozy is still sensible in his political decisions—reforming France's cumbersome state pension system and, abroad, pushing for tougher sanctions on Iran, to cite just two. But unlike most of his predecessors (recall Mitterrand who for 14 years hid the existence of two parallel families, in addition to his legal one, from the public, using the vast resources of the French state), Sarkozy is no cynic. If you prick him, he does bleed. And if you wrong him, he shall want revenge. ♦

# The Sisyphean Candidate

## Michel Faulkner hopes to take down Charlie Rangel. BY ELIZABETH POWERS

From my amateur vantage point there are three kinds of politicians. The first are the "process" types. They may have gone into politics for idealistic reasons or for the opportunities, but in the end, especially if they are long-serving, the process becomes the whole game, and they find themselves gobbled up by it. The result has been bigger and bigger government.

Most politicians are process types.

The second type encompasses the rascals. Third World countries have personality cults, but America is small time in this regard. Since I'm from the South, as soon as I heard Bill Clinton, I said to myself, "Southern sheriff." This type includes northern politicians, too. The ethically challenged Charlie Rangel of New York's 15th Congressional District is a promi-nent exemplar.

The third are the leaders. They possess a natural light-up-the-room quality. Ronald Reagan belongs here, as does Sarah Palin. Newt Gingrich should fit in here, but, being very brainy, he got caught up in the process. For a brief, shining moment, Barack Obama was in this select, rare group.

I floated this typology by Michel Faulkner as we sat in the upstairs café of Best Yet Market on Frederick Douglass Boulevard in Manhattan, a neighborhood rapidly becoming the Tribeca of Harlem. Faulkner is challenging Charlie Rangel, who is running for his 21st term representing Harlem, Morningside Heights, northern Manhattan, and part of the Upper West Side. Rangel, whom the liberal-leaning Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington numbers among its "Fifteen Most Corrupt Members of Congress," has recently stepped down as chairman of the Ways and Means Committee while charges against him are investigated.

Michel Faulkner is African-American, which might give him an inside advantage, though 20 percent of the 15th District is white and 45 percent is identified as Hispanic. The district, however, votes overwhelmingly Democratic—Rangel won in 2008 with 89 percent of the vote—and Faulkner is running as a Republican. He is a conservative, moreover, running on a pro-economic growth platform. And he is certain he can win.

Did I mention that Michel Faulkner is a light-up-the-room guy?

Faulkner grew up in Washington, D.C., and went to college at Virginia Tech, where he played football and became an All-American. It was while recovering from a sports injury in 1977 that he underwent a spiritual conversion. After college (a degree in communications), he played pro ball for several years, including one season on the defensive line for the New York Jets, before deciding on the ministry. He counts among his spiritual mentors Jerry Falwell, under whom he served in Liberty University's urban outreach. Since 1988 he has been associated with several Baptist churches in New York City and is now pastor of a small congregation whose goal is to train a new generation of leaders who will "transform their communities and the marketplace through excellence in ministry."

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New York State politics features some of the most venial and self-serving characters to have marred the face of the earth. Some years back the Queens borough president killed him-self after a scandal involving the Parking Violations Bureau. Suicide over parking meters! Isn't Michel Faulkner afraid of taking on this slimy political machine? He smiled at my question. He has, it turns out, "prayed with" and ministered to all of them, including Rangel, including the current governor, David Paterson, himself term-limited by scandal. Most seem to be rascals, if not outright scoundrels.

But people are fond of rascals and scoundrels. People vote for them.

Rascals seem to make their own rules, and we admire them for their deviousness. They get away with things we might like to get away with.

And that is the power of rascals in American politics. They represent the people who have no power, whether their vote has been suppressed or whether they think their voice doesn't count, so why bother voting, anyway? The system doesn't change, and their satisfaction comes from observing the rascal screw the system that is screwing them.

Faulkner is deeply concerned that people don't vote, because it means they have no faith in democracy. And he believes that America has created a system of government that allows its citizens to work hard, discover their God-given potential, and, through their work, leave a legacy to their children and country. In conversation he quotes the Founders often. John Adams, who worried about the future of democratic government, is on his mind a lot.

As I said, he believes he can beat Charlie Rangel. He says it comes down to turnout. The African-American voting record adds flesh to this truism.

Conventional wisdom has it that the Democrats "own" the black vote, and they have assiduously wooed African Americans, to put it mildly. The typically low turnout of black voters, however, 10 to 20 percent lower than that of whites, does not indicate democratically engaged citizens. Just the opposite. "Imagine," writes the partisan website Democratic Strategist regarding the turnout gap, "how Dems could benefit if the gap could be halved."

This was written in 2007, before Barack Obama was a speck on most people's horizon. Charlie Rangel went from 104,000 votes in 2006 to 177,000 in 2008. That so many blacks voted for Obama in 2008 (also providing a Democratic congressional majority) indicates they have not given up on American democracy. Their vote counted.

Faulkner speaks of Barack Obama with something approaching sadness. Obama, he says, recognized early in 2008—which is when Faulkner pinpoints the beginnings of the discontent that would find its voice in the Tea Party movement—that Americans were worried about the country, that they wanted strong leadership, and he seized the moment. The visionary, however, had little experience and quickly became isolated in the presidency. Like a salesman, Faulkner says, Obama stopped believing in the product he had been selling in 2008. Instead, since January 20, 2009, the Obama administration has been all about the process, about growing government. In doing so, it is creating conditions that restrict individual opportunity and, worse, delegitimize dissent. Faulkner believes that "government and big business, as in Germany in the Nazi era, are on a collision course to fascism."

Still, the election of Barack Obama resonates with Faulkner. He agreed with "98 percent" of the Philadelphia speech on race. I have the feeling that he would like to offer the president some pastoral care.

The day he and I met in Harlem, the *New York Daily News* reported Charlie Rangel's claim that opposition to the health care bill was "racist." For Faulkner, race is about the powerful and the powerless, and Rangel, a man with four rent-controlled apartments in Harlem (where one-bedroom apartments now start at half a million dollars), cannot claim a place among the powerless. "Who is oppressing whom?" Faulkner asks. Race is the last refuge of the scoundrel.

Faulkner is now gearing up for the hard work of reaching donors and presenting his pro-growth, anticorruption message to the people. Not that he is a stranger to New York's many constituencies. He served, for instance, on Rudy Giuliani's task force on police-community relations and was on the city's charter review initiative. Among his political mentors he even includes Democratic New York City Council member Gale Brewer ("a friend and an honest liberal"). The day after we met he opened a rally at the Nigerian Mission to the U.N., held to protest the continuing massacres of Christians by Muslims in Nigeria.

Michel Faulkner is also training for the marathon, posting 350 words a day on a Scriptural passage on his church's website, and writing a book entitled *Who Stole the American Dream?* It will be historical, beginning with the Founding Fathers. It is about how each generation has had to fight to secure the American dream. As soon as they realize their idea, the next generation tries to reverse the achievement. Clearly, the African-American experience stands behind the book Faulkner is writing, indeed behind his present political program. The struggle of blacks to achieve the American dream did not end with emancipation. Now, more than ever, the fight for liberty, against oppression by the powerful, continues.

Maybe it was because we were talking right after Passover, and because Faulkner is a man of the Bible, that I thought of a passage in the Haggadah: "In every generation a person is obligated to regard himself as if he had come out of Egypt, as it is said: 'You shall tell your child on that day, it is because of this that the Lord did for me when I left Egypt.'"

Scott Brown won in Massachusetts. Can Michel Faulkner pull off an upset in New York by capturing the "Rangel seat"? Faulkner is convinced he can. ♦

# Falling for the Spin of the Gitmo Bar

## Why do reporters keep whitewashing the records of al Qaeda detainees? BY THOMAS JOSCELYN

On March 27, the *Christian Science Monitor* published an article ("Defending due process for Guantánamo detainees") extolling the virtues of the attorneys who have rushed to the defense of the detainees. It portrays the attorneys as engaging in a noble defense of "due process" rights in the face of widespread threats and criticism. Undoubtedly the attorneys have faced criticism from some corridors, but for the most part they have been lionized in the press, leading to hopelessly skewed media coverage in which dangerous jihadists are presented as lambs and the U.S. military and government as villains.

The *Monitor* story featured attorney Joshua Colangelo-Bryan, who has represented, pro bono, a number of Guantánamo detainees. One of his clients is a former detainee named Juma al Dossari. He was captured near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in December 2001, transported to Guantánamo, and held there until being repatriated to Saudi Arabia on July 15, 2007.

Colangelo-Bryan says he and al Dossari quickly became friends, engaging in playful banter about the attorney's cheapness and single life. During one meeting early in the relationship, the *Monitor* reports, "They told jokes, talked about women, [and] shared childhood stories." Colangelo-Bryan even made sure on one occasion to bring his friend a cheesecake from Junior's, a well-known Brooklyn eatery, all the way to Cuba.

The *Monitor*'s readers are told little of why Dossari was being held at Guantánamo. He was, the story says, "rumored to be an al Qaeda recruiter in Buffalo, N.Y., a jihadi in Chechnya, [and] a member of a Muslim fighting force in Bosnia." But there is supposedly no reason to worry about any of this because:

> When Colangelo-Bryan opened the files, he didn't see much to prosecute. "There were no transcripts of phone calls that had been intercepted involving [Dossari]. There were no photographs of him with bin Laden. There were no fingerprints on incriminating materials. There was really nothing that any judge would consider reliable evidence," he says.

But according to the FBI, Colangelo-Bryan's summary is false. It's true there is no picture of Dossari with Osama, but few al Qaeda members have ever been awarded that privilege, and it is absurd to claim that such evidence is required. The FBI file contains plenty of other evidence against Dossari, including the testimony of convicted al Qaeda trainees.

**The evidence against Dossari was so strong that the FBI 'wanted him back in Western New York to try him.' The Bureau's Peter Ahearn insists the government could have 'convicted him without much difficulty in a New York minute.' Instead he was repatriated to Saudi Arabia in 2007.**

Juma al Dossari's story is intertwined with that of Kamal Derwish. In 2001, the two men convinced a group of Yemeni-American men attending a mosque in the Buffalo area to travel to Afghanistan for training at al Qaeda's notorious al Farouq camp, whose alumni include some of the September 11 hijackers. Dossari and Derwish's recruits came to be known as the "Lackawanna Six." (In actuality, the duo convinced at least seven Buffalo-area recruits to travel to Afghanistan for training. Six of the seven were apprehended and pleaded guilty in U.S. courts to providing material support to al Qaeda.)

According to a summary prepared by the FBI, and obtained by THE WEEKLY STANDARD, it was Derwish who first showed the Lackawanna men the path to jihad. His recruiting strategy was twofold. First, Derwish criticized the men for their Westernized habits and lack of knowledge of Islam. There was only one way, he said, for them to make amends for their transgressions against the faith. They needed to participate in jihad: specifically to travel to Afghanistan for training. Just a few months at a training camp could save the men, they were told. Derwish said he had received such training himself, in an idyllic camp surrounded by trees and a waterfall.

Second, Derwish portrayed the world as embroiled in a conflict between Muslim and non-Muslim forces. He showed the men propaganda tapes highlighting atrocities committed against Muslims in Bosnia and Chechnya, saying that the women in Bosnia even pleaded for birth control so that they would not have to witness their children being murdered. Derwish told his new recruits that he agreed with Osama bin Laden, particularly on the issue of American

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forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. He harped on President Clinton's faults, America's relationship with Israel, and pointed to al Qaeda's bombing of the USS *Cole* as an example of American vulnerability. During a military commission held at Guantánamo, three members of the Lackawanna Six testified that while in Afghanistan they were shown a video produced by Ali Hamza Al-Bahlul, Osama bin Laden's onetime chief propagandist, glorifying the *Cole* attack.

Derwish then brought in the man the recruits would call "the closer": Juma al Dossari. He had been an imam at a mosque in Bloomington, Indiana, and had a reputation as a "fire-breathing imam," former FBI special agent Tom Fuentes told me. Dossari harped on how his fellow Muslims must fight for their religion, and members of the Bloomington congregation were increasingly concerned by Dossari's jihadist agenda. In early April 2001, Dossari left Indiana on a Greyhound bus for Buffalo.

Dossari built upon Derwish's narrative for the Buffalo recruits. He blamed America for the atrocities committed against Muslims in Bosnia, even though the Clinton administration actually intervened in the conflict on the Muslims' behalf. Dossari openly referred to Osama bin Laden as his "sheikh." During a picnic at Tifft Farms Nature Preserve in Buffalo, he described the Arab regimes as illegitimate because of their relationship with the United States. It was all standard al Qaeda fare, but coming from Dossari's lips it proved decisive. His sermons and personal intervention convinced the Lackawanna men to travel to Afghanistan.

After the September 11 attacks, Dossari himself fled to Afghanistan. He told members of the Lackawanna Muslim community that he planned to fight with the Taliban. The FBI found that both Dossari and Derwish had fought in Bosnia and Chechnya. Dossari had also been arrested more than once because of his ties to terrorism. After the Khobar Towers bombing in 1996, for example, he was detained by the Saudis. It is not clear whether he played any role in the bombing or was just swept up in raids against extremists who were thought to be sympathetic to the bombers.

Despite all of this, in 2007 the Bush administration sent Dossari to Saudi Arabia, where he was enrolled in the House of Saud's rehabilitation program for jihadists. This was done over the FBI's objections. "They were card-carrying members of al Qaeda," Peter Ahearn, who was the special agent in charge of the FBI's Buffalo field office, told me. The evidence against Dossari was so strong that the FBI "wanted Dossari back in Western New York to try him." Ahearn insists the U.S. government could have "convicted him without much difficulty in a New York minute."

The *Christian Science Monitor* cited Dossari's transfer as indicative of his innocence. But there is no causation in the release. Dossari was one of more than 100 Guantánamo detainees who were placed in the Saudis' custody. U.S. authorities continually evaluated most of them to be threats, but the Saudis kept lobbying for their release. The decision to transfer these men was in the end a political calculation, not a judgment on their guilt or innocence. More than two dozen of the 100 former Guantánamo detainees sent to Saudi Arabia have since returned to terrorism.

All of the Lackawanna Six received prison sentences, and some have since been released. Another of the men Derwish and Dossari convinced to travel to Afghanistan for training, Jaber Elbaneh, was arrested in Yemen and convicted of being involved in al Qaeda's operations. Elbaneh has been in and out of Yemeni custody, having previously "escaped" from prison.

On November 3, 2002, Kamel Derwish was killed in Yemen when he was riding in a car with Qaed Salim Sinan al-Harethi, who was suspected of playing a role in the USS *Cole* bombing. The car was struck by a Hellfire missile from a CIA Predator in Yemen after an intercepted satellite phone conversation pinpointed al-Harethi's location. Four other suspected al Qaeda militants were also killed in the strike.

Dossari, though, having passed through the rehabilitation program, lives in Saudi Arabia and has reportedly married. He denies any involvement in al Qaeda's terror network. He claims, for example, that he traveled to Bosnia in the 1990s not to fight, but merely to seek a blonde Muslim wife. In August 2008, the *Washington Post* published an op-ed by Dossari in which he detailed his supposedly horrible experience at Guantánamo. The *Post*, like the *Monitor*, did not provide the story on Dossari's troubling past. On November 2, 2008, Dossari was introduced to British prime minister Gordon Brown during a tour of the Saudi rehabilitation facility. The man who called bin Laden his "sheikh" shook hands with Brown.

And Joshua Colangelo-Bryan continues to advocate on Guantánamo detainees' behalf. One of his clients, Abdullah Majid al Naimi, is on the Defense Department's list of "confirmed" recidivists. Al Naimi and six other Bahrainis represented by Colangelo-Bryan were released in 2005. In 2007, he crowed to the *Gulf Daily News*: "While Guantánamo's system of indefinite detention without due process remains in place, at least these six men are not subject to that system any further. Of course, they were subject to it for far too long." The DoD's entry on al Naimi today reads: "Arrested in October 2008; involved in terrorist facilitation; has known associations with al Qaeda." ♦

# The Energy Policy Morass

*'Think, Baby, Think'*

**By Steven F. Hayward**

If you think the health care debate is a tangled mess, try wading into the thickets of the energy sector, which is high on the Obama administration's list of targets to subjugate. Few areas of national policy offer as bad a ratio of blather to substance as energy. It is a field where cliché, wishful thinking, and wince-inducing ignorance dominate the discourse. No matter how patiently or repeatedly the myths and realities of energy are explained, a large portion of the public, along with giddy pundits like Tom Friedman, persist in thinking an energy revolution is one government-sponsored gadget away from being willed into existence. Liberals are the worst offenders, but conservatives have their own energy shibboleths that deserve to be candidly recognized as such. The energy industry itself, meanwhile—including old-line fossil fuel companies, but also rent-seeking manufacturers such as GE and Siemens—contributes to public ignorance and confusion by jumping on the "green energy" bandwagon for mostly bad reasons. Everyone from T. Boone Pickens to Ralph Nader has a plan to "solve" America's energy crisis, while Obama is practicing Clintonian triangulation to see whether Republicans will be cheap dates on an energy bill.

For more than three decades American energy policy has mostly been a muddle, and often a farce. But the time for muddling through is over. As the global economy recovers, oil prices will likely head back over $100 a barrel, with $4 gasoline returning to the United States. American oil production continues its needless long-term decline. Our electricity grid is antiquated and vulnerable to disruptions. As the economy recovers, electricity shortages may begin to appear, even in (or especially in) anemic California. New discoveries of domestic natural gas, however, are revolutionizing our energy outlook, but also complicating ambitions to develop more costly non-fossil fuel energy. Polls reveal significant shifts in long-term public opinion about energy, with majorities now expressing support for more domestic fossil fuel exploration and expanded nuclear power. This is no doubt a large part of the reason for Obama's insincere recent initiatives on oil drilling and nuclear power. But it may be possible to press for more serious steps over the next few years.

The chief reason for the lack of a coherent or serious energy policy is that we've never been able to decide exactly what problem we are trying to solve. At the time of the first "energy crisis" in the early 1970s, the chief concern was the purported scarcity of oil along with worry about securing an adequate supply of electricity for future population and economic growth. The Arab oil embargo of 1973-74 that helped plunge Western economies into recession highlighted the geopolitical risk of dependence on the Persian Gulf for oil. But there was another new force that arose coincident with the awareness of geopolitical risk: environmentalism. In the early 1970s we were getting serious about reducing air pollution, predominantly the byproduct of fossil fuels, although the harmful effects of mining and oil exploration on land and oceans were also prominently on the mind of environmentalists and added to their animus against fossil fuels. So from that very early moment the energy debate has broken down along the familiar fault line of whether to emphasize production (more supply) or conservation (less use), with a dollop of "alternative" or "renewable" energy romanticism thrown in.

The first innings of energy policy in the 1970s saw an old-fashioned compromise: We adopted fuel economy mandates for the auto fleet and several other conservation measures (most notably the 55 mile per hour speed limit), but also okayed the Alaska pipeline, enabling the development of the huge North Slope oil field, which went from producing almost nothing in 1973 to nearly 2 million barrels of oil a day by 1988 and accounted for much of the increase in domestic oil production in the late 1970s and early 1980s—the last time American domestic oil pro-

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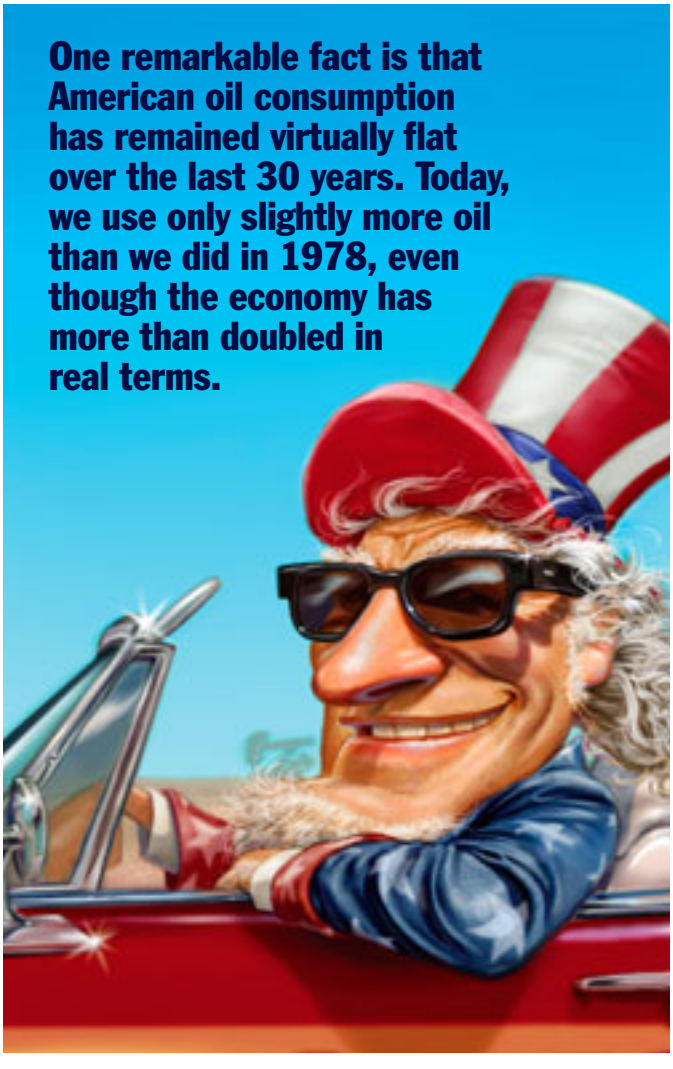
duction increased. Since then environmentalists have successfully lobbied Congress and several presidents of both parties to bottle up development of major new fields in Alaska or offshore, putting off limits nearly three-quarters of an estimated 112 billion barrels of oil recoverable with existing technology. Obama's recent announcement of expanded offshore oil drilling is largely a sham, despite the howls of protest from environmentalists. Obama's policy involves a very slow rollout for new leases and locks up many areas that were in play with the Bush administration's lifting of the offshore moratorium in 2008.

Here emerges one of the most glaring insincerities of the energy debate: While it is neither realistic nor sensible to attempt to produce all of the oil we need from domestic sources (more on this in a moment), we could easily produce enough additional domestic oil to replace all of our current imports from the Persian Gulf, i.e., the "people who hate us," probably from new fields in Alaska alone. Expand production from the outer continental shelf, and we could nix imports from Venezuela (currently about 10 percent of our oil), too. Drilling opponents often argue that oil from Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) would amount to only six months' worth of U.S. oil consumption. This is superficial logic, akin to arguing that the farms of Iowa only produce six weeks' worth of food for American consumers, so why bother planting. While no one knows how much oil may be located in ANWR until serious exploration is undertaken, even a "six-month" field would be substantial. The average oil field may represent only a few weeks worth of total oil consumption, but oil fields aren't produced all at once. Rather, they are pumped out over several decades.

We've done it before. The surge in North Slope oil in the early 1980s enabled us to reduce oil imports by 2 million barrels a day. Oil imports from the Persian Gulf plummeted from 2.2 million barrels a day in 1978 to a low of 311,000 barrels a day in 1985. North Slope production has been steadily dwindling since its 1988 peak; today North Slope production has fallen to about 650,000 barrels a day. Since the 1980s oil imports from the Persian Gulf have risen in almost exact proportion as North Slope production has fallen. Today we are back to importing about 2.3 million barrels a day from Persian Gulf nations, about 13 percent of our consumption.

One remarkable fact is that American oil consumption has remained virtually flat over the last 30 years. Today, we use only slightly more oil than we did in 1978, even though the economy has more than doubled in real terms. This is testimony to the steady improvement in energy efficiency over the last generation, including—yes—our cars and trucks. Since 1975, energy consumption per dollar of economic output has fallen 50 percent. Though efficiency and conservation measures are beloved of environmentalists, it is doubtful any of the government's manifold mandates, tax incentives, or direct subsidies have made a significant difference in the overall trend of energy efficiency in the United States. The basic market drivers—higher energy prices and expanding profits through resource efficiency—account for most of the improvement. So when we hear the handwringing about our growing dependence on foreign oil, now over 60 percent of our total oil consumption, we should be clear that this trend is entirely the result of declining domestic production and not any soaring demand for oil. Domestic oil production has fallen by more than 1 million barrels a day over the last 10 years. The United States now produces less oil than it did in 1947. This is pathetic. And unnecessary.

**One remarkable fact is that American oil consumption has remained virtually flat over the last 30 years. Today, we use only slightly more oil than we did in 1978, even though the economy has more than doubled in real terms.**



GARY LOCKE

The two main reasons oil and other fossil fuels became environmentally incorrect in the 1970s—air pollution and risk of oil spills—are largely obsolete. Improvements in drilling technology have greatly reduced the risk of the kind of offshore spill that occurred off Santa Barbara in 1969. There hasn't been a major drilling related spill since then, though shipping oil by tanker continues to be risky, as the *Exxon Valdez* taught us. To fear oil spills from offshore rigs today is analogous to fearing air travel now because of prop plane crashes in the 1950s. Technology has similarly put us on the path to virtually eliminating air pollution from fossil fuel use. Since 1980 we've reduced tailpipe emissions from cars by 98 percent, with corresponding nationwide reductions in ambient ozone (–22 percent), carbon monoxide (–77 percent), and lead (–92 percent). The same is true for coal: Since 1970 we've doubled the amount of coal burned to generate electricity (a consequence of the successful environmental campaign to shut down nuclear power development in the 1970s), but sulfur dioxide emissions have been cut in half, with more improvements to come.

Of course, global warming came along as a handy new reason for opposing fossil fuel use. Although the Supreme Court doesn't get it, carbon dioxide is not analogous to conventional air pollutants that are byproducts of fuel combustion, and it can't be reduced through similar technological means. Confusion about this basic point lies at the heart of the enthusiasm for cap and trade legislation soon to be introduced in the Senate. A favorite cliché of the cap and trade boosters is that because cap and trade worked well to reduce sulfur dioxide (this is actually overstated, but never mind), it will work the same way for carbon dioxide. It was possible to reduce $SO_2$ emissions without reducing fuel use, through scrubbers or the switch to low-sulfur coal. But $CO_2$ is the product of complete fuel combustion. There is no such thing as "low-carbon coal," and there is no economically available $CO_2$ "scrubbing" technology, though the coal industry is happy to try to come up with it as long as the government will provide subsidies. It would surely be cheaper to switch from coal to natural gas or nuclear power than to carbon capture from coal.

The point is, unlike conventional air pollution, which was reduced without any constraint on fuel use, the $CO_2$ in the atmosphere can be reduced only by the use of massively less coal, oil, and natural gas. But even if the case for catastrophic global warming weren't in free fall, the energy ambitions of the climate campaign remain so extreme as to make King Canute blush. The target the climate campaigners have set for the United States—an 80 percent reduction in $CO_2$ emissions by the year 2050—would require replacing virtually our entire fossil fuel energy infrastructure. Substituting natural gas for coal would deliver only about a 15 percent reduction in $CO_2$ emissions, and even if we replaced every coal plant with a carbon-free nuclear plant, we'd still be less than halfway to the policy target. For the United States, the 80 percent reduction target means reducing our fossil fuel use to a level the nation last experienced in 1910. But since our population in 2050 will be nearly five times larger than the population of 1910, on a per capita basis we're talking about going back to the fossil fuel use of about 1875. This is patently absurd.

Fossil fuels will remain preeminent for a simple reason: They are abundant and offer energy superior to so-called renewables or other alternative sources. One pound of gasoline, for example, has 100 times more energy than a one pound lithium ion battery, which is the main reason why electric cars still aren't very practical and aren't likely to be for some time. Renewables—solar, wind, and biomass—are vastly more expensive, often five to ten times more expensive than fossil fuels, and their costs are not coming down very fast. Nuclear power is cheaper than renewables, but still pricier than fossil fuels. And even if renewables fell in price, they couldn't be deployed on a large enough scale to replace fossil fuels completely, which is the professed goal of environmentalists and the Waxman-Markey "cap and trade" bill that passed the House last June. Even if all the mandates and subsidies of Waxman-Markey worked as designed, renewable sources would provide only about 20 percent of our energy needs a generation from now.

**Fossil fuels will remain preeminent for a simple reason: they are abundant, and offer energy superior to so-called renewables or other alternative energy sources.**

For all of the bipartisan talk of developing new energy sources, we're going to exploit most of our available hydrocarbons sooner or later. And one reason this is likely to happen is the nation's fiscal catastrophe. Some estimates of potential government royalties from opening up more fossil fuel production top a trillion dollars. At some point in the future, even liberals will be forced to decide whether they really want to back environmentalists on locking up domestic fossil fuel production and forgo this revenue while finding other means of propping up the welfare state.

Before conservatives and Republicans revive their "drill, baby, drill" chant, however, there needs to be some clarity about the goals of sensible energy policy. Conservatives are not alone in advocating "energy independence"—a phrase that polls well and hence has been invoked by every president since Richard Nixon. But meant literally as energy self-sufficiency—supplying 100 percent of our energy needs from sources within the four corners of U.S. territory—it makes no more sense than total self-sufficiency in textiles, food, autos, or timber. The United States has in recent years imported as much as one-fifth of its wood product, yet there are no calls for "ending our dangerous dependence on foreign timber." The merits of free trade and globalization are just as strong for energy as for any other commodity or economic activity. Energy independence as self-sufficiency is tantamount to energy protectionism and, like all kinds of protectionism, would make us poorer in the end, in part because our costs of production are higher than those of producers in the Middle East and Latin America. (Ironically, one of the many paranoias in the Arab world is that environmentalist opposition to domestic production is actually a cover for the U.S. strategy of using up Arab oil first while it is relatively cheap, while saving our own resources for the time when oil gets more expensive. There is just enough superficial rationality to this to make it plausible.) Dump our Arab suppliers by all means (though it won't hit their pocketbooks at all), but there is nothing economically wrong or strategically dangerous about continuing to import oil from our largest foreign suppliers, Canada and Mexico.

The phrase "energy independence" ought to be retired along with its cousin, "energy security." What we should be talking about is energy resilience, that is, a diversified portfolio of energy technologies and global supplies that minimizes the economic and political risk of disruptions from any particular region or energy source. To a degree little understood by the public or the political class, the United States is actually less vulnerable to oil price or supply shocks than it was in the 1970s, even though we import much more of our oil. The main reason is that oil accounts for a much smaller share of our energy use than it did in the 1970s, and we have developed backstops to short-term supply disruptions such as the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and the International Energy Agency. In fact, it was IEA actions, through its standby Coordinated Emergency Response Measures (CERM), to supply the United States with gasoline after hurricanes Katrina and Rita disrupted Gulf Coast refineries that prevented serious gasoline shortages and severe price increases in the fall of 2005.

Another reason not to overemphasize the potential for increased domestic oil production is that it will not have a significant impact on world oil prices, chiefly because of surging demand from China and other developing nations. Although the "peak oil" panic is probably overestimated, the era of cheap oil is over. Between rising global demand and higher production costs, a diversification of primary energy sources makes sense. Of course, higher global prices will make possible the economic development of America's vast oil shale deposits—as much as 800 billion barrels worth.

And one area where diversification of supply is already happening—where, ironically, we've been "drilling, baby, drilling"—is natural gas. As recently as five years ago, long-range projections from every public and private forecaster expected that the United States would have to import as much as 20 percent of its natural gas by the year 2025. Price volatility and supply worries led some American companies (Dow Chemical in one spectacular case) to locate new plants in the Persian Gulf rather than in the United States. But in the last five years a revolution in directional drilling technology has unlocked huge new natural gas supplies in the United States, chiefly in old coal beds on private land in the east. (This latter point is crucial: The new gas has been developed largely on private land, immune to the political obstacles of drilling on public land. Environmentalists are doing their best to slow this up anyway, with worries about the effects of the "hydraulic fracturing" that is essential to new production techniques.) It is now conceivable that the United States could become an exporter of natural gas over the next few decades. In any event, abundant supply will diminish the severe price volatility that has roiled the natural gas market over the last two decades.

Natural gas may be a serious alternative to gasoline as a transportation fuel, as T. Boone Pickens and others are recommending, but there are some difficulties. To use gas as a transportation fuel requires it to be compressed, which presents safety risks that gasoline and diesel fuel do not have. Some major fleet operators such as Federal Express have already considered and rejected for the time being converting their fleets to natural gas, chiefly because of the safety risk of having to operate large on-site systems for compressing natural gas. A deliberate government policy or mandate to switch to gas might forestall development of hybrid-electric cars or new biofuels. Gas is also a plausible alternative to coal if we are serious about reducing greenhouse gas emissions, yet all of the proposals on Capitol Hill ironically set about to preserve coal-fired power indefinitely.

The resiliency and adaptability of the American energy sector over the last generation, along with the protection of existing energy interests such as coal, raises a fundamental question: Do we need a national energy policy? Yes, but it shouldn't simply double-down on what we've been doing for the last generation—subsidizing severely limited renewable technologies such as solar and wind power and corn-based ethanol, mandating new energy efficiency standards, or trying to force a new technology that can't hope to make it on its own, such as Jimmy Carter's Synfuels Corporation or more recently various hydrogen schemes. (Hey Governator—how's that "hydrogen highway" working out for you in California?) Unfortunately this is what most proposals on Capitol Hill—Republican and Democratic alike—would do.

There are some areas where national policy is essential. In addition to removing barriers to oil and gas production, there is the electricity grid, which the private sector cannot renovate alone, and next-generation nuclear power. Once again, Obama has played bait-and-switch on nuclear power, promising support for new designs of small, safe, proliferation-proof reactors, but with such a tiny commitment of funding that the program could barely get off the ground even if the morass of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were reformed. There is an easy way around this: Have the Defense Department, which is exempt from the maw of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission when it designs and deploys its own reactors, order up a bunch of small modular plants for use on military bases. If the technology proves itself, it can be scaled up quickly for civilian use.

But the chief obstacle to most sensible changes remains the obstructionist NIMBY mentality of environmentalists, which extends even to modernizing the electricity grid. (Their talk about a "smart grid" is mostly deceptive: Environmentalists have in mind not the expansion of capacity that would aid the efficiency of the overall system, but big-brotherish mechanisms that would allow a central authority to turn off your air conditioner at peak periods in the summer.) Two years ago, $4 gasoline proved to be the threshold at which opposition to more domestic oil production eroded. The prospect of $4 gasoline returning soon is probably why Obama decided to try to get out ahead of the game with an offshore drilling announcement. It may require more blackouts such as the Northeast experienced in 2003 or California in 2000 before lawmakers get serious about upgrading the grid.

Above all what needs to be understood is that energy transitions take a long time. As OPEC's Sheik Yamani once remarked, the Stone Age didn't end because we ran out of stones. Moving beyond fossil fuels will happen eventually for the same reason we moved into fossil fuels in the first place—when a superior and cleaner form of energy is developed and scaled for mass use. Lots of entrepreneurs are working on it—my favorite is Craig Venter's algae biofuels project. But a full-fledged transition to a post-fossil fuel world is still a long way off, and we should stop kidding ourselves that all we need is another bill-signing ceremony at the White House to make it happen. ♦

# Techno-GOP

*Web-savvy is no longer a monopoly of the political left*

## By Mary Katharine Ham

*Austin*

Home to two-term Republican governor Rick Perry, Austin is also the newest outpost of the social networking giant Facebook, which announced it had surpassed Google as the most visited website in the United States around the same time it was announcing it would open a $3 million office here with an estimated 200 jobs. Not a bad catch for the governor, who uses a bless-their-hearts tone towards the California techies in the room when he says, "California's got problems. They just do."

In a second annual event, Perry has invited a group of tech wizards to the capitol from the nearby geek conference known as South by Southwest (SXSW, if you're hip, as all attendees are). And the Silicon Valley types aren't going to make it out of here without a lesson on the combination of tax policy and increasingly sophisticated culture to which Perry attributes his state's success in luring companies away from the West Coast.

Perry gets a Tenth-Amendment glint in his eye as he backslaps the owners of Austin-based Gowalla, who talk about how the tax structure was a reason they based the company there. The founder of Gowalla, a young man in skinny jeans, a western shirt, and an ironic neckerchief, is exactly the kind of businessman Perry is delighted to be keeping from California.

Gowalla, an application that runs on smartphones, is a geosocial networking game—a term whose indecipherability to the average reader is inversely proportional to its popularity with the SXSW crowd. If you believe the conventional wisdom about Republicans and technology—that they're about as well-matched as Jon and Kate Gosselin—Perry should have no clue why Gowalla matters to Texas. But here he is, using a touch-screen smartphone to tell the community of Gowalla users he's "checking in" at the Texas State Capitol. (Gowalla users might be considered, roughly speaking, as urban, information-age equivalents to hikers who collect badges for their walking sticks from all the places they visit.)

Of course, if you paid attention to the Texas GOP primary, you might not be that surprised. On March 2, Perry beat Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison by more than 20 points with a largely paperless campaign that used no direct mail and almost no yard signs (they were available for purchase upon request). The campaign also did no robo-calls and no newspaper editorial board meetings and focused instead on Internet ads, social networking websites, and person-to-person campaigning.

Perry is just the latest Republican to make headway using technology on the campaign trail, as the party out of power finally learns its way around the Internet. Virginia governor Bob McDonnell's campaign was designed with a nod to Barack Obama's online successes. And Scott Brown's insurgent campaign for the Senate in Massachusetts showed how potent technology can be for a team that's low on money but high on energy.

For the Internet prophets on the right, who've been nudging Republicans in this direction for years with varying success, 2010 represents the long-awaited alignment of grassroots energy, new technology, and necessity that—dare we say it?—make *change* possible. A new, young professional class of right-leaning techies is starting firms and notching wins.

For the left, it was the Howard Dean campaign in 2004 that famously kicked off an era of Internet dominance. Though the dream of Dean for America went down in a barbaric yawp, its young talent spread throughout the campaigns of the left laying the foundations for what became Obama's online success.

A loud, sustained crusade against traditional consultants ("the D.C.-based losers that have helped bring our party to its knees") from leading liberal blogger and activist Markos Moulitsas Zuniga in 2005 and 2006 also helped web-savvy advisers to take a bigger piece of the market from veteran campaign professionals.

For Republican techies, progress was slower. Though George W. Bush isn't closely identified with tech savvy, his '04 team did hold Bush House Parties, organized online, sent volunteers door-knocking with online maps of their neighborhoods, and used commercial databases

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to micro-target persuadable voters in unlikely areas.

The leaders of the online right are heirs to the micro-targeting effort. But now, instead of identifying likely voters by whether they subscribe to *Guns and Ammo*, they can target them if their Facebook page identifies them as, say, a white, female, married, NRA member, or a mother of three who volunteers for the PTA and the church soup kitchen.

Patrick Ruffini and Mindy Finn, cofounders of the EngageDC consulting firm, served as deputy webmasters on the '04 Bush campaign and later as directors of e-campaigns at the RNC. Michael Turk, a partner at the newly founded CRAFT media firm, ran Internet operations for Bush-Cheney '04 and later served as the first e-campaign director at the RNC. Also at CRAFT is Justin Germany, road videographer for Bush-Cheney '04 (and the man who created the online ad "The One" for John McCain). Many of them were in Austin for SXSW, mostly under ideological cover among the overwhelmingly left-leaning technological crowd. They networked and hoped the free beer glossed over whatever political disagreements arose.

Given their establishment pedigrees, you might imagine the group would have trouble challenging the status quo, but Finn and Ruffini were among the group of mostly young tech-savvy Republicans who started an online effort to reshape the party at RebuildtheParty.com less than two days after the McCain loss. Founding it alongside them, incidentally, was Rob Willington, who later went on to head Scott Brown's online efforts and stun the political world.

How did the McDonnell, Perry, and Brown campaigns do it? Internet strategists are prone to shy away from describing "a model, a template" that can be imposed on any race, as CRAFT partner and former Mitch McConnell adviser Jon Henke puts it. But there were some common techniques used in these three races.

When Bob McDonnell started his primary campaign for the Virginia governorship, he wanted web folks at the table from the start. "He had seen what happened with Barack Obama," says Vincent Harris, who worked as McDonnell's online director. "He wanted to make it a priority. Every single thing we wanted online, the campaign gave us."

The money invested in McDonnell's online efforts cannot be overlooked. It was a shift in priorities for a Republican campaign, as McDonnell devoted 8 percent of his ad budget to the Internet. He outspent Democratic opponent Creigh Deeds on technology, five to one. In a statistic that's not necessarily causal, but still interesting, he also won young voters by 10 points. In the past, the problem with Republicans has been that "they don't invest anything and they're surprised when they don't get a return on that non-investment," says Henke.

McDonnell's investment was unprecedented, but only until the Scott Brown campaign, which devoted 10 percent of its ad budget to online buys, notably spending more than $230,000 on Google ads, and racking up 60 million ad impressions within Massachusetts. The Brown campaign's use of Google ads and tools was so extensive that the Google office in D.C. invited Willington for a panel on the subject after Brown's win.

For Willington, the use of Google was an invention born of necessity. At the beginning of the campaign, back when it was still "Ted Kennedy's seat" in the minds of most politicos, Willington told the *Hill*, "There were like three of us in the office. . . . We thought, 'We have to make ourselves look bigger than we are.'"

The use of mobile technology, which Harris said never really hit its stride on the McDonnell campaign, became invaluable for the Brown campaign. Every time their opponent Martha Coakley appeared on a radio show, Brown's campaign texted supporters with the phone number of the radio station. When Coakley started taking calls, the first few were always Brown supporters. This changed the perception of the race for radio listeners, and succeeded in rattling Coakley, who wasn't expecting such vocal opposition in the deep-blue state.

A case study of the Brown campaign's social media presence by Word Stream, a search engine marketing company, actually identified Brown's momentum before polling or the political class did. Their final count found he had a ten to one advantage in web traffic, ten to one in YouTube views, three to one in Twitter followers, and four to one in Facebook followers.

Perry proclaimed himself a "gadget guy" to a group of Austin technologists over a beer at the Chili Parlor. "It's a very normal thing for me in my life to be using a GPS when they first came out, and LORAN before that," referring to the radio-based navigation system that was a precursor of the modern GPS.

His staff says he often surprises people when they see him tweeting on his mobile phone. "Governor Perry has made [technology] a priority in his everyday life. It's because he can change the way he interacts with the people of Texas," says Will Franklin, director of new media for the campaign.

Enthusiasm from the candidate was a key for all three campaigns. Henke, who has helped Republicans online for several election cycles, says campaigns are starting to learn that the online communications team is some-

times getting "exponentially more information" from voters by monitoring social networks, and may therefore have "more tactical intelligence."

Finn and Ruffini, whose firm worked on the McDonnell campaign, wrote in a case study that the traditional strategists had to learn to "treat the online action network [of volunteers] as another headquarters." Perry strategists held a volunteer boot camp in June, which attracted 500 activists. Staff and volunteers guided tech newbies through signing up for Facebook and Twitter. Franklin said they saw a huge spike in Facebook activity on behalf of the governor after the camp. The campaign also treated bloggers with equal or more consideration than traditional journalists. "We got zero endorsements," says Perry campaign manager Rob Johnson, with a tone closer to triumphalism than regret. "We circumvented the traditional media."

The Perry campaign created almost 40,000 "Perry Home Headquarters"—a brigade of volunteers who talked up Perry in their homes and daily lives. Those volunteers were connected not to a field office but to a field officer with whom they interacted online and in person.

The approach bothered some voters, the staff admitted, but it also invigorated voters they didn't expect. "We cornered these nontraditional Republican primary voters," Johnson said. "A lot of November Republicans came to vote."

Finally, the campaigns made it a priority to test their methods and determine what worked. The constant flow of metrics from social media gives instant feedback, as long as strategists are paying attention to it. The McDonnell campaign did an internal audit of its online operations between the primary and the general elections and learned, for instance, that simply adding a request for email addresses and mobile numbers to volunteer scripts increased the campaign's rolls considerably going into the general election.

The appetite of the Perry team for data analysis is legendary among techies. Their strategists studied Alan Gerber and Donald Green's *Get Out the Vote*—an analysis of campaign tactics—before the 2006 election and brought in four professors to Austin to conduct further experiments in 2005. One of the four, James Gimpel, wrote in *National Review* of their finding that "impersonal modes of contact such as direct mail and automated calls . . . were worthless," despite heavy use in traditional campaigns.

As Gimpel notes, the "jury is still out on just how effective some of these new strategies are," and whether they can work in all kinds of races, but the experimental spirit certainly worked for the Perry team.

The picture is not entirely rosy. When the Net-savvy folks on the right look out across the ideological divide online, they see gaps. Henke regrets that, after several years of ActBlue's domination of online fundraising on the left ("$127,207,762 raised online since 2004," their website boasts), there has been no comparable breakthrough on the right.

This is partly a question of talent. Developers dedicated to the conservative cause are hard to find, said David Almacy, former White House Internet director under George W. Bush, which means Republican candidates pay more for expertise than opponents. The same holds true for graphic designers, but Almacy says the outlook is improving. Some hope the rise of fiscal issues (and relative decline of social issues) will help attract more libertarian programmers and tech-savvy young people.

The commitment and enthusiasm of party leaders certainly can't hurt, as the GOP sheds its stodgy image by out-Twittering and out-YouTubing the left, regularly leading Democrats in number of Twitter followers, number of representatives who tweet, and overall online presence.

When it comes to surveying a political Internet movement, Markos Moulitsas, founder of the Daily Kos, knows a thing or two. When he watched Scott Brown raise more than $1 million online on January 11, in the right's first successfully executed "money bomb," it took him back to his insurgent days, when he was touting Paul Hackett—an anti-Iraq war veteran—in an August 2005 special election for Congress in Ohio's 2nd District.

"Scott Brown reminds me of Paul Hackett. Like Hackett, Brown will lose, but grassroots [conservatives are] learning how to better organize." Well, he got the first half of that prediction wrong, but he was right about the organizational lessons.

In retrospect, the left turns out not to have had a natural monopoly on web visionaries. Though they got off to a slower start, there were some visionaries on the right, too, in offices in Washington, in the Texas State Capitol, and even in the Kennedys' backyard.

When Willington was profiled by the *Boston Globe* in 2007, the then-executive director of the Republican party in Massachusetts talked about his focus on technology as a way to take the party places no one thought it could go.

"People always shake their head and say, 'Massachusetts Republican party, boy, that must be difficult.' We don't have the governor's office, we don't have any of the statewide constitutional offices, the legislature is 87 percent Democrat. I look at that and say, 'This is exciting.'" If the past year is any gauge, it's about to get a lot more exciting. ♦

*Sarah Miles takes aim in 'Great Expectations' (1974)*

# Writer By Trade

## *Charles Dickens, professional novelist*

**BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.**

To begin with a mild apology: This reviewer's first serious encounter with Charles Dickens (apart from *A Christmas Carol*, which English-speaking children once heard from their cradles) was with *David Copperfield*, under the genial tutelage of Professor Harry Kitsun Russell in Chapel Hill, circa 1954. Since we are approaching the writer's 200th birthday in 2012, this bicentennial reprise demands some refinement of memory, and since my last Dickens binge passed decades ago and, moreover, I feel no present urge to reread *Copperfield* (Dickens's own favorite at 974 pages, his only plausibly autobiographical novel) or *Bleak House* (at 933 pages, one of his midcareer masterpieces), a remedy suggested itself: a first reading of *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, the detective story he had only half finished when he was mortally stricken one June day in 1870, aged 58.

**Charles Dickens**
*A Life Defined by Writing*
by Michael Slater
Yale, 720 pp., $35

The "mystery" of the story is that having broken his childhood engagement to the fetching Rosa Bud (Dickens's penchant for odd names is sometimes cringe-making) young Drood abruptly disappears, and foul play is suspected of two other male characters, themselves smitten by Rosa, jealous of Drood, and unaware that the engagement has been broken—with what warrant Dickens doubtless intended to reveal in the last serial numbers of his tale. Many guesses have been made at the outcome, including a farcical "trial" of the chief suspect in London in January 1914. It starred such participants as George Bernard Shaw, G.K. Chesterton (as presiding judge), and Arthur Waugh, father of Evelyn, and it ended with the suspect found guilty. Dickens's novels invariably contain a vein of mystery but *Drood* was to be his first contribution to the detective-story genre, inspired in part by the whodunits of his younger friend and collaborator, Wilkie Collins.

Dickens died shockingly young by our standards, and to read *Drood* today is to find his fabulous powers undimmed. No point exploring the entrancing but incomplete *Drood* in detail, except as it illustrates the undiminished power

MARY EVANS / RONALD GRANT / EVERETT COLLECTION

*Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of a historical novel,* Lions at Lamb House, *imagining a 1908 encounter between Henry James and Sigmund Freud.*

of the novelist's characterizations—for instance, in the person of Hiram Grewgious, London barrister and trustee of Rosa Bud:

> He was an arid, sandy man, who, if he had been put into a grinding mill, looked as if he would have ground immediately into high-dried snuff. He had a scanty flat crop of hair . . . so unlike hair that it must have been a wig but for the stupendous improbability of anybody's voluntarily sporting such a head.

Here, we are reminded of such improbable but unforgettable figures as Mr. Krook, of *Bleak House*, who, overfilled with gin, expires of "spontaneous combustion."

No matter how many inventive twists the art of fiction has undergone since Dickens left *Drood* unfinished, he remains in the forefront of our literary consciousness, as firmly fixed there as Chaucer and Shakespeare, his mentors in the creation of the unforgettable. Like the foregoing Mr. Grewgious, his characterizations transcend odd names to insinuate themselves as permanently in the readerly imagination as Falstaff or Macbeth or the Wife of Bath. Who can forget Uriah Heep, or Mr. Micawber, or Scrooge, et al., nearly *ad infinitum*, or the tags they trail along: Heep's cringing humility, or Micawber's improvident but incurable optimism, or Scrooge's gruff stinginess?

But in Dickens's history there is an enduring touch of the cultic, too. At a recent New York auction, the novelist's ivory and gold toothpick, engraved with his initials, was purchased for almost $10,000. And at almost the same time it was reported that the young Vincent van Gogh, sent at 20 to London, fell in love with the city as imperishably mediated by the pen of—Charles Dickens. And Holden Caulfield, of *Catcher in the Rye*, could be sure that readers of his punkish pseudo-autobiography would get the point when he promised to omit "all that David Copperfield kind of crap."

Dickens's durability is hardly freakish, however. It bears testimony to the survival power of art. He has accordingly benefited from persistent critical attention, likewise emblematic of permanence. Edmund Wilson, writing in the 1930s, sought to rescue him from faddish efforts of the Depression era to recruit him, inveterate scold as he was of official torpor and malpractice, for Marxism and other ideologies. Wilson insisted that Dickens was actually a proto-modernist, a pioneer of the use of symbolism—notably in the perverse equity proceedings of the Court of Chancery, with its banks and swirls of fog. George Orwell, amplifying Wilson's point, found in Dickens no solid understanding of the political or social structures he scorned, but also acknowledged his greatness. The palm for critical enthusiasm must go to Lionel Trilling, who pronounced in 1956 that Dickens "is one of the two greatest novelists of England, Jane Austen being the other"—an eccentric judgment, not so much because it elevates Dickens and Austen as because it neglects such claimants as Conrad, George Eliot, and the half-English Henry James. And of course many others.

*Dickens as seen by André Gill in 'L'Eclipse' (1868)*

LEONARD DE SELVA / CORBIS

Then there is Vladimir Nabokov's rhapsodic appreciation of *Bleak House* in the "Lectures on Literature" that Fredson Bowers distilled from Nabokov's lecture notes at Wellesley and Cornell, lit crit at its most magisterial: "We just surrender ourselves to Dickens's voice," gushed the future author of *Lolita*. "If it were possible I would like to devote 50 minutes of every class meeting to mute meditation, concentration and admiration of Dickens."

Enter now Michael Slater, emeritus professor of Victorian literature at Birkbeck College, London, and past president of the International Dickens Fellowship, with this mammoth new study of Dickens as a professional writer. Slater's imposing work has "bicentennial" written all over it. It is academic biography at its weightiest, exhaustive, and meticulous. Its only defect is, at times, so to flatten the terrain of Dickens's life and work as to render creative mountains indistinguishable from quotidian molehills. But since there are no Mozarts of writing; and the sometimes prosaic details of a writerly apprenticeship drag drearily along, these developmental symptoms are essential to the understanding, even, of genius.

The rewards are considerable. If you wish to know, for instance, all there is to know about Dickens's public readings—he had a big histrionic streak and his performances at the podium were winningly theatrical—you will savor here the details Slater offers about his prompt books, with measures of their size, content, and binding; how, before the age of microphones, a cloth screen amplified his voice to thousands of eager listeners in packed SRO halls; how gaslight jets illuminated his reading text at a waist-high reading desk; how Dickens dressed in formal evening attire, the better to assure middle-class audiences that they were not squandering their shillings on louche theatrical events but attending a gentleman's at-home entertainments. Those who recall Emlyn Williams's evocative *faux*-Dickens act in the 1950s will recognize the flavor.

If, meanwhile, you find yourself gasping, in sympathetic breathlessness, at Dickens's astonishing energy, and

wonder about its toll, it is to the point to read that his friends thought, in his later years, that he was dangerously overstraining himself. You will be intrigued to learn that as he wrote *Great Expectations* (1861) he suffered from chronic facial pain that vanished only as he wrote the last lines. Like many of the great Victorians, Dickens was a walker, who covered miles as others cover yards or furlongs—sometimes 20 or even 30 at a time. Walking was apparently essential to his abiding sanity, even when it apparently produced a gimpy leg. But Slater, sticking to his brief, rarely ventures into the tricky realm of psychosomatic speculation.

In the early stages of the English novel, readers followed developing tales in monthly paperbound numbers. Later readers often have a sense that the Victorian novelist was plotting his stories as he went along, as indeed Dickens did for some years, occasionally moderating plotlines that failed to please readers. This was Dickens's practice in his first great hit, *The Pickwick Papers*, signed with the nom de plume "Boz," and for a time thereafter. Not until he projected *Dombey and Son* (1848) did he first outline in advance how and where his lengthy tales would end. Not that this entirely eliminated their episodic feel and bumpy pace.

A biographer of Slater's learning and distinction is entitled to choose his own narrative strategy. But we are taken here on a lockstep chronological march, as if to a silent drumbeat; and some narrative thrust is sacrificed to it by the intrusion of secondary detail. And there is that in great plenty: Dickens's collateral work as the editor of two successful monthly magazines, pamphleteering journalist, entertainer, actor, producer of amateur theatricals, traveler, and activist in charitable causes. Even those with a nodding acquaintance with the novels may regret Slater's failure to provide reminders of plot and character in this teeming world. But then, it is his aim to deal definitively with Dickens's career as a professional writer. He shows that Dickens was a pioneer in that professionalization, looking to the enhancement of what he called the "dignity" of literary storytelling, and the need to emancipate novelizing from aristocratic and official patronage.

We learn all there is to learn about the novelist's writing habits, his nomadic household wanderings, and not least his sympathetic preoccupation with forlorn children, having been one when his father was sent for three months to debtor's prison and he himself was abandoned, as a child of 12, to labor in a shoe-blacking factory in the Strand. Dickens never forgot the humiliation of being gaped at through the windows of the firm, as he and other urchins (one of whom became the namesake of the evil Fagin) washed bottles and pasted labels. Nor did he forget, nor fail to resent, his mother's strange wish that he go on washing bottles, even after his father's release from the Marshalsea.

Slater is at his most vivid when he comes to a shocking personal episode: Dickens's brutal separation from his wife of more than 20 years (and 10 children!) in 1858. He had all along romanticized his wife's younger sister who died early, whose short life he idealized and mourned. He clearly was more in love with her than her sister to begin with. More to the point, Dickens was smitten in 1857 by the teenaged actress Nelly Ternan, a passion that could not be acknowledged for fear of scandal. English divorce laws did not permit release from his marriage. His resort was to a separation, cruelly signaled by orders on his part to wall off Catherine's bedchamber from his workroom and to replace a connecting door with a bookcase.

In correspondence, he went to the length of portraying his wife as a Medusa who turned her own daughters to "stone." Little more is known of all this now than in 1858, though it calls down an unusual tone of censure. Some inflation of Dickens's ego by mass adulation and fantastic earnings may be suspected; and perhaps the story is less heartless than the sparse details suggest. But rarely has the disparity between genius and personal character been more troubling. ♦

B&A

# Ladies' Entrance

*Counting the numbers of women in science.*

**BY SABRINA L. SCHAEFFER**

Washington coughs up a new commission or report almost every day. Typically, they're products of an executive order or congressional act calling for a "comprehensive analysis" of X, Y, or Z. Not too long ago the Agriculture Department's *Household Food Security* report made headlines; most do not. So it would hardly be surprising if readers somehow missed the National Academies' *Beyond Bias and Barriers: Fulfilling the Potential of Women in Academic Science and Engineering*, the latest contribution to the line of reasoning that forced Lawrence Summers to resign as president of Harvard following his observation that innate biological differences might account for some gender disparities in math and science. Despite the fact that roughly 50 percent of medical school students are female, and veterinary classes are (on average) 75 percent women, Congress and several federal agencies are determined to solve the "crisis" of women in science—more specifically, the underrepresentation of women in the hard sciences.

**The Science on Women and Science**
edited by
Christina Hoff Sommers
AEI, 200 pp., $20

Christina Hoff Sommers's new anthology is a response, and the ideal

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antidote to this vision of gender. Rather than cling to a dead-end paradigm, *The Science on Women and Science* opens up the debate and brings new evidence to bear on the vexed issue of gender and the sciences. Sommers, a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and former professor of philosophy at Clark University, is known for her critique of the second wave of feminism. Specifically, she objects to 20th century "gender feminism" which, she claims, uses and abuses sex differences in order to manufacture equal outcomes in every societal nook and cranny—even in the science classroom. By bringing together scholars from clinical psychology, evolutionary biology, and pediatric neurology, among other fields, she offers a comprehensive investigation into why women are underrepresented in certain fields of mathematics and science.

While there are many shades of gray, the contributors fall broadly into two camps: Those who claim societal constraints such as bias and outright discrimination are to blame for gender inequality in the sciences, and those who point to other, namely biological, reasons. But unlike the National Academies, which is dogmatic in its assertion that there are "no significant biological differences between men and women in performing science and mathematics," Sommers's work proposes a wide range of explanations, including genetic makeup, brain structure, evolutionary development, even natural proclivities, values, and motivation.

Simon Baron-Cohen argues that men are naturally prone to systematize while women are inclined to empathize. But Rosalind Chait Barnett and Laura Sabattini fear that highlighting biological differences such as these only helps to solidify preconceived notions that women are, in fact, less capable of the time-intensive, detail-oriented work required for math and science. After working through what is, at times, some dense academic research, it is clear to the reader that the gender gap is not the result of any one factor; there are many different variables at play. In fact, a theme throughout this collection is the scientific *uncertainty* among researchers but the political *certainty* in Washington. By concluding definitively that biological differences between men and women do not account for "average abilities," the NAS committee (and Congress) is overlooking fascinating research, and putting politics ahead of what's good for science and the nation.

Ultimately that's what troubles Sommers, and others on the biological side of the argument, about the NAS report. There's an assumption in Washington that the academic sciences are openly hostile to women, and that the federal government must step in to create a more female-friendly environment. The National Science Foundation's goal is to make university science departments more "cooperative, democratic, and interdisciplinary, as well as less obsessive and stressful." And Congress aims to "transform the culture of American science to make it gender-fair." But if that isn't sexism, what is? What are statements like these saying about women other than that they can only succeed in *nice, polite* environments? More than a few female physicians, judges, and academics might object.

*Jane Seymour as 'Dr. Quinn, Medicine Woman' (1992)*

BOB GREENE / CBS BROADCASTING

*Beyond Bias* is the first step toward implementing Title IX-style legislation for physics, mathematics, and engineering departments. But Sommers reminds us that "the physical sciences are the exception, not the rule . . . women now earn 57 percent of bachelor's degrees and 59 percent of master's degrees overall." And Charles Murray offers a series of comparisons from the 1950s to today: "In math and statistics," he writes, "women got 27 percent of the bachelor's degrees and 6 percent of the doctorates in 1960. In 2005, the comparable figures were 45 percent and 30 percent."

*The Science on Women and Science* remains optimistic about women's prospects. There is consensus among most of the contributors that women are in a considerably better professional position today than a half-century ago, and that they expect to see even more success in the future. Barnett and Sabattini acknowledge that "between 1966 and 2004, the percentage of women completing a PhD went from 5.8 to 30.3; similarly, the proportion of women completing an S&E master's program went from 9.6 percent to 32 percent." And Joshua Aronson, who writes about the "stereotype threat" on the social-construct side of the argument, stresses that the gender gap "shows signs of closing. . . . For the past three decades women have been catching up to men, even overtaking them, in many other areas of academics."

But the question remains: Is full parity in the sciences necessary for women to achieve equality with men? Or can society accept that men and women will, no matter how balanced the circumstances, always have some different preferences and aptitudes? And what does this mean for the future of science? It's obvious that considerable uncertainty persists regarding what causes women to gravitate toward some fields and what causes men to gravitate toward others. What *is* certain is that readers should fear the notion of the federal government micromanaging academia, implementing quotas, and changing the culture of science in America in the name of gender equality. ♦

B&A

# Hitler Reading

*Is there much to be learned from a portion of his books?*

BY MICHAEL MCDONALD

*Hitler at Berchtesgaden, 1936*

'Hitler is explicable in principle," the historian Yehuda Bauer has said, "but that does not mean that he has been explained." Nor, one is tempted to add, as the stack of books devoted to figuring him out grows ever higher, does it necessarily mean that he ever will be. How is it possible that a man so contemptuous of civilized values could rise to rule over one of Europe's most civilized nations? What enabled him to retain the support of the German people as he openly pursued his plans for war and genocide? Was he an actor, or a true believer? A typical tyrant (but one with modern means of control and destruction at his disposal) or a *sui generis* singularity?

*Michael McDonald is a writer and attorney in Washington.*

**Hitler's Private Library**
*The Books That Shaped His Life*
by Timothy W. Ryback
Vintage, 320 pp., $16

In *Explaining Hitler* (1998), Ron Rosenbaum cast a critical eye on the many attempts to make sense of Hitler hoping to learn what they tell us about such important social assumptions as free will, individual responsibility, and historical determinism. He concluded, though, that we may lack sufficient historical evidence to answer once and for all the key questions about Hitler's malignant personality. And yet, given the enormity of Hitler's crimes, it doesn't seem right to give up; hence the search continues, as scholars return to "the unpleasant subject"—Golo Mann's wry euphemism for the Führer—in search of explanations. The latest study holding out the promise of illumination is *Hitler's Private Library.* Formerly a Harvard lecturer and cofounder of the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation, Timothy Ryback currently serves as the deputy secretary general of the Académie Diplomatique Internationale in Paris.

Hitler is commonly regarded as a book-burner, not a book-lover; with good reason, his image is that of a demagogic public ranter, not a demure private reader. But Ryback disagrees, claiming that books were central to Hitler's life and that a thorough analysis of Hitler's reading will reveal his true nature. He promises not merely to take us into "Hitler's private library" but, as his subtitle emphasizes, to reveal the books "that shaped his life." To do this he will inspect the marginalia and inscriptions found in a limited number of books known to have been owned by Hitler and thereby reconstruct the role these books played at critical stages in his life.

"Like footprints in the sand," he asserts, Hitler's handwritten marginal comments "allow us to see where his attention caught and lingered, where it rushed ahead, where a question was raised or an impression formed."

Ryback's claim about the importance of books to Hitler is certainly plausible. Intimates of Hitler from his earliest appearances in Munich to his final days in Berlin testify that he read voraciously. One described his nocturnal reading habits as "one book per night, either at his desk or in his armchair, always with a cup of tea," and another claimed that "the very first piece of furniture" for his Munich apartment "was a wooden bookcase, which he quickly filled with books from friends and antiquarian bookshops." Photographs of Hitler immersed in reading or surrounded by books—several of which are reproduced here—seemingly cement the connection. Reliable historical reports estimate that Hitler's personal library, divided between Berchtesgaden and Berlin, grew to well over 16,000 volumes by the 1940s. Dozens of books were at his bedside in the bunker.

Moreover, it's easy to believe that our minds are affected if not determined by what we read. Thus Ryback calls attention to Pope's famous admonition—*A little learning is a dangerous thing / Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring*—about the ill effects of ill-digested books. Ryback also draws methodological support for his inquiry from a lively

IMAGNO / GETTY IMAGES

personal essay by Walter Benjamin, entitled "Unpacking My Library." In this essay Benjamin, reviewing the contents of his own personal library in 1931, reflects on how a book collector's true character is revealed through the books that he accumulates over time. As Ryback explains in his preface:

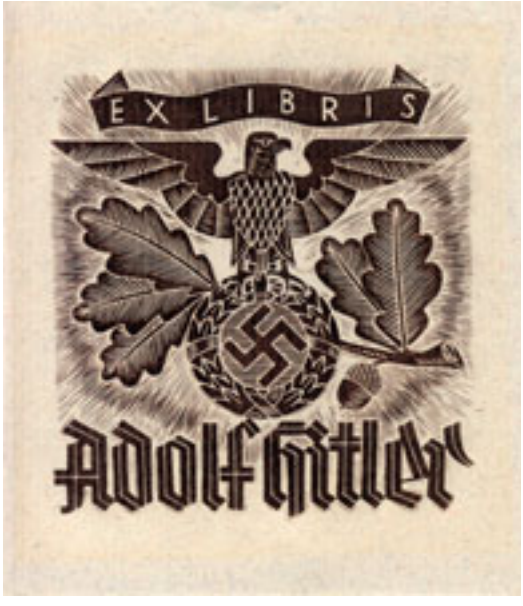
> Benjamin proposed that a private library serves as a permanent and credible witness to the character of its collector, leading him to the following philosophic conceit: We collect books in the belief that we are preserving them when in fact it is the books that preserve their collector. "Not that they come alive in him," Benjamin posited. "It is he who lives in them."

Ryback embraces this conceit wholeheartedly, and his *modus operandi* is to single out surviving books from Hitler's library that seem to have played an important part in his life. He tells us a bit about each book's author and contents and then uses the books as a springboard to discuss broader historical issues that influenced the development of Hitler's *Weltanschauung*. For example, in the opening chapter, Ryback relates how, during World War I, Hitler walked into the French town Fournes one day while serving as a message runner on the Western Front and purchased an architectural history of Berlin by the celebrated art critic Max Osborn. The book, a chauvinistic paean to Prussian grace, constitutes one of the earliest traces of Hitler's lifelong obsession with the German capital. It survives, smudged and paraffin-stained, in the Library of Congress's rare book collection. Examining it, Ryback notes how it "evidently spoke to the young Austrian corporal as indicated by the volume's dog-eared pages and broken spine." With even greater insight, Ryback observes how the very purchase of the book reveals the artistic ambitions that consumed Hitler:

> In November 1915, for a frontline corporal to pay four marks for a book on cultural treasures of Berlin, when cigarettes, schnapps, and women were readily available for immediate and palpable distraction, can be seen as an act of aesthetic transcendence.

It is a telling anecdote that reveals Hitler's aesthetic bent of mind and his lifelong interest in the arts, which, as Frederic Spotts has observed in *Hitler and the Power of Aesthetics* (2003), would prove to be as intense as his racism.

In the following chapter Ryback discusses an inscribed copy of a German stage adaptation of Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*, given to Hitler when he was in his early thirties. Hitler received the book as a gift from Dietrich Eckart, who ran a publishing house that specialized in anti-Semitic literature and




was, according to Ryback, the man who "scripted Hitler's role as history's most infamous anti-Semite." Ryback speculates on the appeal that *Peer Gynt*—the story of a youth from a provincial Norwegian village who is intent on becoming "king of the world"—would have had for Hitler and uses Eckart's biography to explore the early days of the Nazi party in Munich.

Ryback knows the history of this period exceptionally well, and has a good eye for spotting and highlighting revealing vignettes; the links he establishes between the books and the life invariably make for absorbing reading. All told, he concludes that Hitler seems to have read (surprise!) mostly rightwing and racist books by Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Paul Lagarde, and Henry Ford that the Nazi publisher J. F. Lehmann gave him over the years.

When it came to literature, Ernst Jünger's battlefront memoir *Fire and Blood* seems to have exercised a considerable attraction on Hitler during a period when he considered writing a war memoir of his own. Needless to say, Hitler was persuaded by Jünger's insistence upon "the transformative effects of slaughter" and "the hardening of heart and soul" that occurs in combat. Hitler also had a penchant for the Saxon novelist Karl May's Wild West adventure stories, which he had reissued in a special field edition for German soldiers at the front and later recommended to his military commanders as manuals of strategy. (Don't blame the innocent May, whose entertaining tales of the wise Apache Chief Winnetou and his "white blood brother" Old Shatterhand were also a favorite of Albert Einstein.)

On the whole, however, what we may call serious literature held no interest for Hitler, and is totally absent from his surviving library. In its place Ryback notes scores of books devoted to Hitler's lifelong preoccupation with the occult—the prophecies of Nostradamus and the like—together with works that deliriously describe the interaction between the realms of matter and spirit. A personal favorite of Hitler's in this latter category was a man by the name of Ernst Schertel, who wrote a dense tome "proving," so he thought, how the creative, "truly ektropic" (sic), genius possessed the demonic power to free himself from empirical realities and, in effect, will new worlds into existence through sheer force of personality. And so on, up to Ryback's final chapter on how Hitler's reading of Thomas Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* gave him hope in the bunker that, somehow, Germany would win the war.

Ryback deserves praise for his investigative labors and, especially in our increasingly virtual and digitalized age, for recognizing what the physical nature of books may reveal about their owners. He also deserves a reader's gratitude for being a graceful and interesting writer.

Nevertheless, Ryback's approach is seriously flawed. First, as he himself

readily admits, only a small part of Hitler's library was available to him for study: More than 10,000 of the books that made up Hitler's private library are gathering dust somewhere in Russia after having been trucked out of Berlin by the Red Army. As a result, Ryback had access to only 1,300 books (almost all of them now at the Library of Congress) and concentrated on only 120 to 150 that could have been personally significant to Hitler. We have no idea whether the books that he examines are representative.

Second, Ryback has an exaggerated faith in what marginal notations can reveal. In this respect he calls to mind the touching, naïve figure of Tatyana, a character in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*, who attempts to unlock Onegin's mind by entering his library and examining his marginalia. Marginal notes as a window into the soul? It's a truly romantic notion, one that Ryback hypes ever further by writing portentously about how "a penciled mark [in the margin of a book owned by a dictator] can become state doctrine." But in fact, Hitler's "trenchant marks" are not very revealing: Only several dozen books contain handwritten marginalia that seem convincingly to have been inscribed by Hitler, and in these cases, most of the markings are limited to penciled underlinings or exclamation marks.

Ryback exaggerates Hitler's intellectual seriousness. Just as Nazi ideology itself was, in the words of the German political scientist Karl Dietrich Bracher, essentially "an eclectic conglomeration of ideas and ways of thinking," Hitler himself was little more than (to refer once more to Frederic Spotts) "a notorious pickpocket in the marketplace of ideas." For this reason, any attempt to unlock Hitler's character by examining the remnants of his library is ultimately unconvincing. Hitler did claim to be an obsessive reader—but even if that were believable, being an obsessive reader is not the same thing as being a selective or thoughtful one. Ryback himself points to Hitler's method of reading, as disclosed in *Mein Kampf*: First you decide what you want to know, then you collect information that confirms what you already believe. Hitler did not read to expand his knowledge, and his earliest and perhaps greatest education came from stridently nationalistic and anti-Semitic newspapers, not from books.

Ryback seems ultimately to have fallen prey to what Ron Rosenbaum termed "the pseudosophisticated snares of explanation." Hitler once claimed to have carried Schopenhauer's five-volume collected works in his knapsack throughout the Great War, and yet we know that he couldn't even spell the philosopher's name correctly. He was more of a mountebank than an intellectual, the kind who used books as props to advertise his genius to others.

Ryback did well to look to Walter Benjamin for guidance, but overlooked the truly pertinent *aperçu* found in notes that Benjamin took for an unfinished essay on Hitler: "So much luster surrounding so much shabbiness." ♦

B&A

# Art of the Faithful

## *Spain's Counter-Reformation as seen by its artists.*

**BY MAUREEN MULLARKEY**

The medieval spirit, steeped in sacred purpose, penetrated Spain's Golden Age in Counter-Reformation guise. Through the 16th and 17th centuries, Spanish imagination bore the militant stamp of a mission to gird the Roman Catholic Church—its catholicity shaken—against the cudgeling of Protestant reformers.

**The Sacred Made Real**
*Spanish Painting and Sculpture 1600-1700*
National Gallery of Art
Through May 31

Evangelism was particularly keen in Spain, fortified by the Council of Trent and leavened by Christian mysticism. Great masters of the spiritual life emerged: Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Ignatius Loyola—aristocratic apotheoses of broad popular enthusiasm for contemplative piety. Ignatius's Society of Jesus, a key instrument of the Counter-Reformation, reignited embers of the medieval *devotio moderna* and promoted the secular arts for confessional purposes. Devotion itself flamed, once again, into an art. By the 1600s painting and sculpture had joined music, theater, and architecture, even dance, as spiritual exercises, prompts to prayer.

*The Sacred Made Real: Spanish Painting and Sculpture, 1600-1700* showcases that plenitude of religious emotion that makes the art of Spain's *siglo de oro* so very—well, Spanish. While Italians worked their marble and bronze, the Spanish, often thought to have no sculptural tradition, transformed polychromed wood sculpture, a medieval staple, with Renaissance realism. Like the Gothic that preceded it, it was an applied art, wed to the agony of the *via dolorosa* and created to induce pathos in God-seeking souls. Most of the masterworks on view are little known outside Spain; some are still in living service to worship. The National Gallery in London, in tandem with our own in Washington, organized the exhibition to reclaim these devotional pieces—including saints and the Virgin—from neglect rooted in Enlightenment disdain for objects of papist veneration. It is a disdain, admit the codirectors, "often mingled with the Protestant distaste for Mariolatry and martyrs."

Originating in London with 30 works, the exhibition has shrunk to 22 in Washington. Despite regrettable omissions, the emotional weight of the initial ensemble survives in the power of the remaining selections. Canvases by Diego Velázquez and Francisco de

*Maureen Mullarkey is a painter who writes on art and culture.*

Zurbarán accompany painted and gilded sculpture by artists with less name recognition here but equal command of the melancholy corporeality—immoderate to modern sensibilities—that marked the devotional tenor of the age.

On loan from a Franciscan convent in Madrid, Pedro de Mena's remarkable *Christ as the Man of Sorrows* (c. 1673) kindles remembrance of the Passion, a theme dear to St. Francis and ubiquitous in Gothic art. This half-length spectacle of desolation shatters detachment. Christ stands bound, a common prisoner released from a near-lethal Roman scourging. No hint of divinity relieves the stark reality of torment. Blood streams in dimensional droplets down the face, the battered torso, and into the folds of a loincloth. Eyes are swollen partly shut. Every device to enhance verisimilitude is put to use: glass eyes in the sockets, eyelashes of real hair, ivory or bone teeth visible between half-open lips. For many viewers, such figures, together with crucifixes, are anthropological curiosities that flutter on the edge of morbidity. ("Alien to . . . Anglican sensibility . . . profoundly uncomfortable to look at . . . [bordering on] macabre," wrote Michael Prodger in *Standpoint*.) Conviction, by contrast, beholds the drama of a sovereign love stooped to raise fallen man from the depths.

Distinction between what the eye sees and what faith affirms is irreconcilable. What are museumgoers to do? Carting with them the dry bones of a secular age, most retreat to modernity's inevitable default mode: the neutralizing process of aesthetic appreciation. To sustain a neutral framework for interpretation, the curators supply a blameless art-historical rationale in the reciprocity between 17th-century Spain's painting and sculpture. These exquisitely carved paintings-in-the-round, so stunning and disquieting, were guild-regulated collaborations between painters and sculptors that cross-pollinated their separate disciplines. Nevertheless, the heart of the exhibition lies in the vigor of a Lenten imagination, not in formal relations among *objets d'art*.

These ardently post-Tridentine works turn tepid aestheticism to their own purposes. The pity of the Word made flesh is all the more piquant for the masculine comeliness and calm of Velázquez's painting *Christ after the Flagellation Contemplated by the Christian Soul* (c. 1628). Signs of the Passion—a whip, a bundle of thorny wood—substitute for the ordeal itself. Only a few discreet flecks of blood are visible. A sturdy angel directs a child's gaze to Christ's back, "all with bloody scourges rent" but unseen by the viewer. Golgotha is yet to come. The child, symbol of the Christian soul, kneels in regret at the price of redemption. Vivid staging brings to life the claims of dogmatic theology.

*'Christ as the Man of Sorrows (Ecce Homo)' by Pedro de Mena (1673)*

PHOTO GONZALO DE LA SERNA

Similarly, anatomical beauty partly screens the cruelty of flagellation in Gregorio Fernandez's life-sized *Ecce Homo* (before 1621). Carved to include genitalia, later covered with stiffened cloth, the figure—seen from the front—is first of all a graceful male nude in a classic *contrapposto* pose. Not until you circle around does the polychromy make palpable the startling physicality of pain.

Designed for a monastery's mortuary chapel, Zurbarán's sublime 1628 painting of the 13th-century martyr Peter Serapion pulses with suggestive reticence. Serapion was a member of the Mercedarians, a communal fraternity who pledged their own lives as ransom for Christians captured by the Moors. Gruesomely butchered and partially beheaded by Barbary pirates, the saint appears here intact. His body slumps between outstretched arms bound to poles; his head lists to one side. But his billowing white habit, shroud-like, is unspotted and cleansed of gore. The slaying is finished. What follows is a quietude more of sleep than of death. A double-sided Christological parallel, the composition both alludes to the crucifixion itself and insinuates the promise of the Easter liturgy: That man is "washed clean of sin / and freed from all defilement" by Christ's ransom on the cross. The ease of sleep informs, too, Zurbarán's *Christ on the Cross* (1627). A relaxed, unbloodied corpus appears almost to be standing, feet uncrossed, on the stipes' shallow foot rest. Details of execution recede into the dark. Lighting emphasizes the extramundane swell of a luminous, unblemished loincloth in a *tableau vivant* that points past Good Friday.

It hardly takes a Catholic eye to see these emblems of sanctity and solitary suffering. Nevertheless, to greet them as something more than relics of the Castilian Baroque requires sensitivity to the high poetry of theological expression. Each of these works is a call to recollection before it is a specimen of style. A rich word, *recollection*—and so different from *appreciation*, the term that clings to art like a trained spaniel. Recollection, confessors know, is the penitential spirit in play: It is a summons inward toward an examination of conscience, that hard awakening to one's own trespasses that ends in contrition. Appreciation inclines, instead, toward the museum shop. ♦

B&A

# Still Being Felt?

*Not all past events have ramifications for today.*

**BY JOE QUEENAN**

Recently I got around to reading Donald Kagan's majestic study, *The Peloponnesian War*. Boy, was it majestic. Adroitly delineating the circumstances that led to the demise of the Athenian republic, Kagan makes it clear that the unnecessary conflict was one of the worst tragedies ever to befall mankind.

In the end I had only one quibble with the brilliant scholar from Yale: In his introduction, Kagan says that the lessons of the conflict can be applied to modern times, likening the conditions leading to the war to the "rivalry between NATO and the Warsaw Pact." A bubbling review on the dust jacket describes it as "a magisterial work of historiography . . . whose lessons are especially resonant today."

Frankly, I just don't see this. Try as I might, I cannot see how the lessons of a small-scale civil war that happened 2,500 years ago are still being felt today. I don't see it at the global level, the national level, or the municipal level. Nor am I feeling any reverberations in the spiritual, metaphysical, or emotional realm. I agree that the war was a catastrophe that brought the world's first experiment with democracy to a screeching halt. I agree that it would be better for all of us if it had never happened. But in the 2,500 years since Athens fell to Sparta, I think it's safe to say that the reverberations from the disaster have abated. By this point, we've all pretty well recovered from the Peloponnesian War. We've turned the page. We've put it behind us.

We've moved on.

The attempt to give the Peloponnesian War a contemporary resonance falls into that category of overly ambitious claims. It's like applying the strategic principles espoused by Attila the Hun to the mass-marketing of adult diapers. It sounds ingenious, but it won't hold water. Writing is a form of sales, and insisting that the reverberations of a long-ago war are still being felt today is a classic case of overselling the merchandise.

Well, no sale to this customer. I am more than ready to believe that the lessons of the English Civil War—reflected in the traditional English-speaking voter's fear of men on horseback—are still relevant today. I am equally willing to believe that the impact of the Versailles Treaty is still very much with us—at least inasmuch as the daft British partitioning of the Ottoman Empire in the Middle East virtually ensured the perpetuation of tribal hostilities in places like Iraq. But those are events of relatively recent vintage; the Peloponnesian War ended a long, long time ago. The waves of historical and cultural influence have long since gone out to sea.

This subject prompted me to compile a list of similarly ambitious claims I have often heard over the years. Some are plausible; some are preposterous. Here are just a few:

*The reverberations from Muhammad's flight to Medina are still being felt in the 20th century.* Well, duh. And you can put Christopher Columbus's discovery of America in that same general category. Ditto Christ's birth in a stable in Bethlehem.

*Pop music would be a whole lot better today if Kurt Cobain hadn't died so young. His death haunts the idiom still.* You got me there. No point of entry into *that* conversation. Insufficient data at my end.

*The reverberations from the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 are still sending shock tremors throughout Europe*. Nope. Sorry. Not buying that one. Nobody even remembers what the Holy Roman Empire was, and those who cannot remember the past cannot possibly still be feeling its reverberations.

*The long-term fallout from Mozart's early death and Beethoven's losing his hearing at such an early age continue to affect music to this day*. No, they don't. Mozart got plenty of points on the scoreboard before he checked out at age 35. And Beethoven did just fine without being able to hear anything. If you don't believe me, listen to the Ninth Symphony.

*The lessons of the French Revolution continue to ripple through Western society to this very day*. No two ways about it. The French Revolution was a seismic upheaval ultimately pitting those who believe in man's essential goodness against those who are terrified by man's capacity for evil. On these shores, the central argument of the French Revolution is still the fundamental philosophical difference between the Democratic and Republican parties. This is one of the only cases on record where alleged reverberations are actually still reverberating.

*The fallout from going off the gold standard in 1971 is still wreaking havoc today*. Stop it. Stop saying that. Stop right now. You're getting on everybody's nerves.

*The reverberations from Yoko Ono's breaking up the Beatles can be felt to this very minute.* No doubt about it. REM was never quite up to the job; neither was U2. Personally, I am more upset about the demise of the Beatles than I am about the extinguishing of the flickering flame of freedom in the Athenian cradle of democracy. That's because democracy can be rekindled, but the Beatles can't.

Recently, I read an enthusiastic review of Edward Luttwak's new book *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* in the *Wall Street Journal*. Sure enough, this otherwise brilliant book includes this line:

> The epic struggle to defend the empire for century after century . . . seems to resonate especially in our own times.

Say that one more time, Ed, and I'm going to smack you. ♦

*Joe Queenan is the author, most recently, of* Closing Time: A Memoir.

B&A

# Hate to Love

*Misanthropic boy meets philanthropic girl.*

**BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

"Due to an extraordinarily high number of complaints about *Greenberg*, we must limit refunds to an hour past the start time of the film so business operations are not hindered." This message was taped to a box-office window; a photo of it was sent to the movie blogger Jeffrey Wells, who ran it on his site. *Greenberg* is the latest intimate drama from writer-director Noam Baumbach, whose autobiographical film about the divorce of his parents, *The Squid and the Whale*, is among the highlights of American moviemaking over the past decade.

**Greenberg**
Directed by Noah Baumbach

*Greenberg*, which shares with *The Squid and the Whale* a wholly original satirical contempt for exactly the sort of pretentiousness one has come to expect from American independent film, is a brilliant and many-layered piece of work. But for many (probably most) people, this unvarnished portrait of a 40-year-old loser/narcissist and an affectless 26-year-old girl whom he repeatedly takes up and discards will be the cinematic equivalent of listening to a fingernail dragging on a chalkboard for 90 minutes. And for those moviegoers drawn to the theater because the eponymous protagonist is played by the mainstream comedy star Ben Stiller, *Greenberg* must certainly come as a repellent shock from which an angry exit of the sort anticipated by the multiplex manager quoted above would seem the only rational response.

It might even be the response of Greenberg himself, who is in the habit of writing enraged letters to businesses and institutions that do not live up to his exacting standards. *Greenberg* is about a man who has constructed an airtight series of rationalizations for his unending string of failures; the fault always lies elsewhere, with the imperfections of the world around him, the hypocrisies and idiocies of other people, the inability of Starbucks and American Airlines and Hollywood Pet Taxi to deliver the level of service he expects. We've all known a person, or have been related to a person, like Roger Greenberg. There can be something entrancing about such uncompromising negativity, at least until the point at which it becomes intolerable.

Greenberg was once an up-and-coming rock musician before he scuttled his band's record deal. The label supposedly wanted him to do things that would have violated his integrity—a move that ended not only his own burgeoning career, but also that of his wounded best friend (Rhys Ifans), who has become a computer tech. We can intuit that the 15 years between Greenberg's decision and the moment we first encounter him as a 40-year-old recently released from a mental hospital, housesitting for his successful brother in Los Angeles, have been calamitous. He has taken up work as a carpenter, but complains that sharing space with three other wood workers at a space in the ramshackle Brooklyn neighborhood of Bushwick is "very political." The L.A. native is no longer able to drive and has a panic attack attempting to swim across his brother's pool. He walks the sun-drenched streets of West Hollywood in long sleeves and a winter jacket.

His brother has a competent, responsible, and oddly unformed assistant named Florence (Greta Gerwig), a pretty girl uncomfortable in her own skin who longs for connection and will take it any way she can get it. Having just been dumped by a long-term boyfriend, she meets a guy at a "gallery thing" and tells him she doesn't want to jump into another relationship. "This isn't a relationship," he tells her, and she goes to bed with him.

Then she meets Greenberg, who simply advances on her one evening because he's lonely and doesn't have anyone else to hang out with. There follows one of the more painful—and truthful—portraits of a neurotic courtship ever put on film, along with two sex scenes that are so entirely the opposite of erotic they must be the proximate cause of the walkouts that caused the theater manager to put up that sign.

She can barely get out a coherent sentence, and seems to have few interests, but she has an open and tolerant heart. Later, groggy from anesthetic, Florence tells Greenberg, "You like me so much more than you think you do." She has that exactly right; the drama here is whether Greenberg's soul has so withered that he can no longer recognize this life preserver in human form.

*Greenberg* is not in any way a misanthropic film; rather, it is an unsentimental critical portrait of a certain type of misanthrope. As such, it is close to flawless. But the movie might, like Greenberg himself, be a little too full of its own integrity. In subjecting Florence to a painful degree of embarrassment and humiliation at Greenberg's hands, writer-director Baumbach is, in effect, subjecting the audience to them, too. People are used to witnessing embarrassment and humiliation in a Ben Stiller movie, but that's because Stiller's specialty is playing Job for comedic purposes and suffering untold agonies for our amusement.

In *Greenberg*, Noah Baumbach turns the tables by making Stiller the cause of another's pain: a young woman who deserves better but doesn't seem to know she does. Baumbach's reversal, and Stiller's genuinely fearless performance, makes for a far more original and valuable movie than most of his other fare. Still, it's no wonder people hate *Greenberg* so much. ♦

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***"Islands in the Indonesian archipelago are literally disappearing as thieves dig them up and sell the sand and gravel for construction projects in China, Thailand, Hong Kong and Singapore, the Times of London reports. At least 24 small islands have disappeared."***
**—New York Times, *March 28, 2010***


OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET

MEMORANDUM

APRIL 15, 2010
TO: THE PRESIDENT
RE: EMERGENCY FEDERAL FUNDING OF JOBLESS BENEFITS TO BANKRUPT STATES.

Per your instructions, OMB staff have been working closely with the Department of the Interior to "think creatively" about the funding of further unemployment benefits to 33 states that have already borrowed $40 billion from the federal government. Among this nation's bountiful resources is a particularly rich supply of islands, currently a hot commodity on the Asian market. So here's a sample of how we're thinking we can leverage this abundant inventory and put those isles to work:

CALIFORNIA—debt: $8.4 billion
Merchandise Catalina Island. The Army Corps of Engineers advises that Catalina's location off shore in the Pacific makes it ideal for being towed away in one piece. This could even be done at night.

NEW YORK—debt: $3 billion
New York's St. Lawrence Seaway boasts of its Thousand Islands vacation area. Does it really need to be one thousand islands? Wouldn't 500, or even 250, be just as impressive? Considering the benefits of improved river navigation alone, we're confident the New York State Tourist Board could easily rebrand the area as the One Hundred Islands. Twenty, maybe?

VIRGIN ISLANDS—debt: $13 million
Legal is working out whether we're actually entitled to market these at all, but assuming we get the go ahead, the plan is to unload the whole shebang. "Virgin" sand could have unique appeal in newly emerging Middle East markets.

VIRGINIA—debt: $317 million
Chincoteague Island is, yes, the setting for the charming children's book "Misty of Chincoteague." But as you have rightly pointed out, we live in an era of hard choices. Now is not the time to get teary over pygmy ponies. Could be value added if we throw in the herd. Think "Misty of Choa Chu Kang."

RHODE ISLAND—debt: $204 million
Ok, technically, not an island, but we're betting that some of our clients might not actually be picky. Why? Because they'd be acquiring an area roughly the size of Rhode Island—actually, exactly the size of Rhode Island.

MICHIGAN—debt: $3.78 billion
Michigan's state motto is, "If you seek a pleasant peninsula, look about you." The state seems historically unsentimental about other land formations and would likely be willing to part with Mackinac Island, 2,200 acres of pure profit that's always been just a little too close to Canada anyway.

MASSACHUSETTS—debt: $279 million
Solution: Martha's Vineyard or Nantucket. Let us know which island you plan to vacation on this summer, Mr. President, and we'll dump the other one.