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ANDREW FERGUSON

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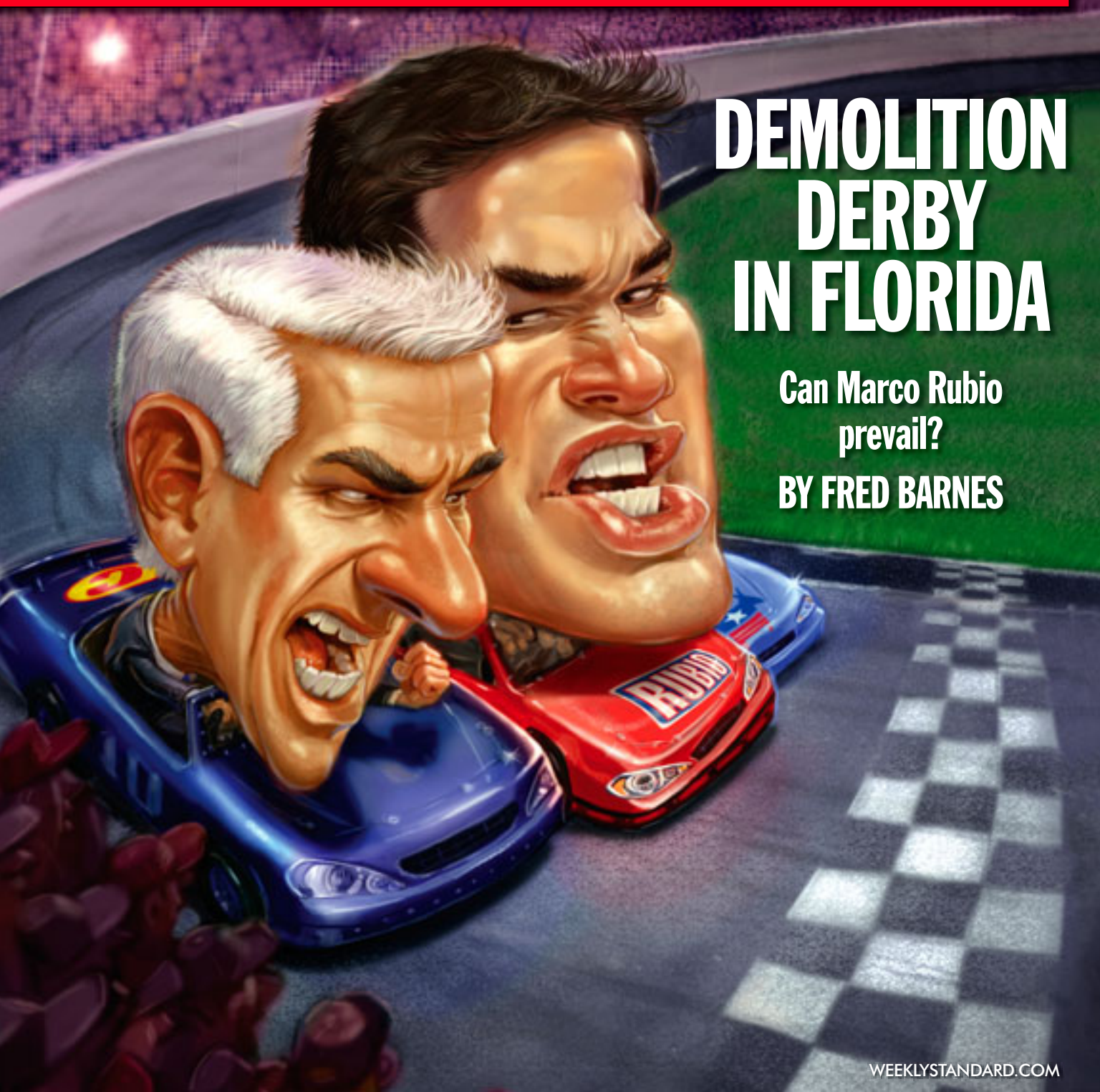

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BY FRED BARNES

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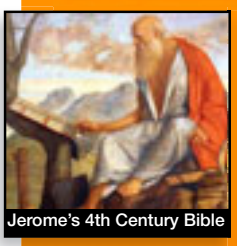
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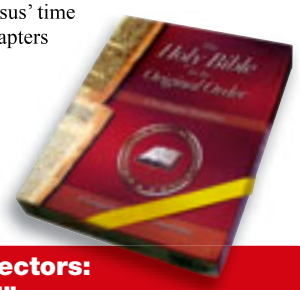

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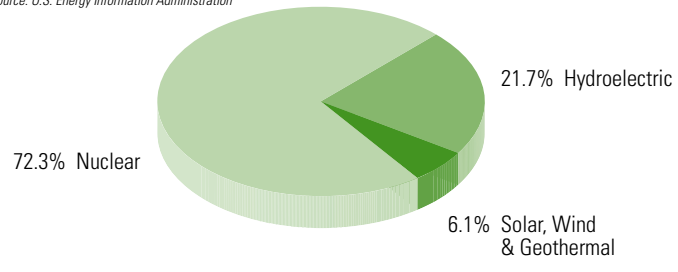

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COVER BY GARY LOCKE

Hugo Chávez, Tomb Raider

The Scrapbook confesses that it takes a certain unhealthy interest in recent accounts of Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chávez's exhumation of the corpse of Simón Bolivar. No disrespect to the Liberator is intended here, of course; but the details could hardly be invented.

Chávez seems to believe that he is the (literal) reincarnation of Bolivar, and is also convinced that Bolivar did not die of tuberculosis in 1830, as is generally understood, but was murdered—probably, in Chávez's imagination, by Colombia or the United States.

To be sure, the fact that Chávez is so attached to the man who won Venezuela's independence from Spain—he keeps an empty chair at cabinet meetings in case the Liberator should stop by—is a puzzlement in itself. Hugo Chávez seems to have a kind of obsessive hatred for the United States of America and its system of government; Simón Bolivar was not just a friend and admirer of the U.S. presidents of his day, but regarded himself as a Jeffersonian democrat, and carried a copy of Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* into battle against the Spanish.

But The Scrapbook expects neither logic nor rationality from the man who has appropriated the name and image of South America's great democratic leader in his quest to transform Venezuela into a socialist dictatorship. Nor does it expect what we might call appropriate mortuary behavior. When Bolivar's remains were removed from their coffin and teeth and bone fragments were excised for "testing," Chávez gazed intently at the Liberator's skeleton, and declared, "Yes, it is me." Then he inquired of the bones, "Father, is that you, or who are you?" To which Bolivar responded, according to Chávez: "It is me, but I awaken every hundred years when the people awaken." (Thor Halvorssen, a distant relation of Bolivar's, tells the story well in the July 25 *Washington Post*.)

Readers will be interested to know that Chávez tweeted the proceedings, as Bolivar was moved from his burial place into a new coffin featuring the Chávez government seal, and that Chávez delivered a speech on Venezuelan television in which he implored Christ (unsuccessfully, as it turns out) to raise Bolivar from the dead.

All of which raises an interesting, and ominous, problem. The global village has often harbored national leaders who might be described as mildly eccentric—Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia, Italy's Silvio Berlusconi—and a few whose eccentricities lapse into malevolence: Libya's Muammar Qaddafi, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe. But Hugo Chávez, in The Scrapbook's considered view, appears to be insane: unstable, delusional, paranoid, violent. This has not prevented him from earning the allegiance of assorted foreign admirers—Sean Penn and Oliver Stone from Hollywood, Amy Goodman of radio's "Democracy Now!"—but it deepens the misery of the Venezuelan people and surely endangers Venezuela's neighbor, Colombia. Indeed, the Colombian government has recently demonstrated, in categorical detail, that the Chávez regime provides safe haven for thousands of FARC guerrillas, whose narcoterrorism has sought to destabilize Colombia for years.

It's tempting—in truth, it's irresistible—to delight in the lunatic behavior of Hugo Chávez as he carries on his necromance with the late Simón Bolivar. But the comic details of such bizarre behavior mask a deeper, and catastrophic, pathology of misrule and regional peril. ♦

Speaking Ill of the Obituarists

In their obituaries for Daniel Schorr last week, both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* touched on a disgraceful episode in the late reporter's career—a dishonest story he concocted for CBS during the 1964 presidential campaign. The obituaries were equally dishonest. Here's the *Times*:

> Mr. Schorr, while at CBS, reported on the enthusiasm of right-wing Germans for Goldwater as he secured the presidential nomination that year. Mr. Schorr noted that a planned post-convention Goldwater trip mainly involved time at an American military recreation center in Berchtesgaden, site of a favorite Hitler retreat.

And here's the *Post*:

> Amid the 1964 election, Mr. Schorr enraged Republican presidential nominee Barry Goldwater when he reported that Goldwater had formed an alliance with some right-wing Germans and planned to spend time at one of Adolf Hitler's retreats.

There's no hint in either of these accounts that Goldwater's rage was justifiable: The story was a crock. In a 2001 review in these pages of Schorr's memoir, *Staying Tuned*, Andrew Ferguson set the record straight:

"Nowhere in his memoir does Schorr discuss his personal politics, but anyone who has followed his career from CBS to NPR will know that they are the standard-form liberalism of the professional journalist—that tidy little packet of principle and prejudice that gets issued along with the press card. But Schorr's views had a sharper edge, and unlike his colleagues he was clumsy about disguising them behind the niceties of journalistic convention. His first serious bout of trouble came during the presidential campaign of 1964, when the national press corps was seized by anti-Goldwater hysteria. The contagion was strong enough that Schorr caught it in Germany.

"On the eve of the Republican convention in San Francisco, Schorr was asked to prepare a report on German reaction to Goldwater's impending nomination. Why *German* reaction? In the nation's news rooms, if nowhere else, the relationship seemed obvious: Goldwater means right-wing, right-wing means fascist, fascist means Germany. Schorr did not disappoint. The morning after his report aired, Goldwater's political enemies placed a transcript under the hotel room door of every delegate in San Francisco. Goldwater denounced CBS at a press conference and barred its reporters from his campaign. Even some executives at the network, notably its founder William Paley, grumbled privately about Schorr's reporting. (Like many great media honchos—from Henry Luce to Harold Ross to David Sarnoff—Paley was a Republican who hired only Democrats.)

"What happened? The untutored reader of *Staying Tuned* can only wonder what the fuss was all about. Schorr's account here is, to put it kindly, incomplete. When CBS asked him for a story, he writes in his memoir, he learned from his reporting 'that Goldwater had plans, as yet unannounced, to leave directly after the convention for a vacation in Germany as guest of . . . Lt. Gen. William Quinn. They would spend their time mainly at an American army recreation center in Berchtesgaden in the Bavarian Alps. Berchtesgaden was famous as Hitler's favorite retreat. This, along with the obvious enthusiasm of right-wing Germans for Goldwater, I reported from Munich in my analysis.'

"In his own autobiography, Goldwater gives a fuller account, quoting at length from Schorr's actual report. Schorr opened the report like so: 'It looks as though Senator Goldwater, if nominated, will be starting his campaign here in Bavaria, center of Germany's right wing,' also known, Schorr added helpfully, as 'Hitler's one-time stomping ground.' Goldwater, he went on, had given an interview to *Der Spiegel*, 'appealing to right-wing elements in Germany,' and had agreed to speak to a conclave of, yes, 'right-wing Germans.' 'Thus,' Schorr concluded, 'there are signs that the American and German right wings are joining up.' Now back to you, Walter, and have a nice day!

"Today Schorr's story, with its hints of paranoia, seems merely quaint, an almost comical artifact of the era that gave us the *Manchurian Candidate* and *Seven Days in May*—except that this was broadcast as a genuine bit of news, in the middle of a real campaign. Though easily checkable, it was false in all its particulars. Goldwater had spoken vaguely of vacationing in Europe but had made no plans to visit Germany, and he hadn't spoken to Quinn, an old friend, in more than a year. Goldwater's interview in *Der Spiegel* was a reprint of an interview that had appeared elsewhere, and he had not even considered addressing the group Schorr mentioned. More important, the story was false in its obvious implication of an *Anschluss* between German neo-Nazis and U.S. Republicans.

"If Schorr was embarrassed by the Goldwater episode, his memoir shows no signs of it." ♦

Insinuendo

Sarah Palin has suffered a certain amount of flack—and some praise as well—for her inadvertent neologism, "refudiate." As readers of last week's editorial ("Refudiate Liberalism!") will recall, Palin implored "peaceful Muslims" (on Twitter) to "pls refudi-

ate" plans for a multi-story mosque near Ground Zero in Manhattan. As she later explained, the word was not a deliberate invention but serendipity: Obviously, she was thinking of "refute" and "repudiate" and, as people sometimes do, hurriedly combined the terms in her mind, and—presto!

Comment, as THE SCRAPBOOK would have guessed, has fallen along partisan lines. Admirers of Palin think "refudiate" is an amusing, even clever, slip of the typing finger; critics of the former governor think it's emblematic of implicit wickedness. The most pompous reaction, by any measure, came from one John F. Andrews, O.B.E., president of the Shakespeare Guild, who objected strenuously to Palin's assertion that "English is a living language . . . Shakespeare liked to coin new words, too" by condemning "refudiate" as a "bastard currency [and] means to certify a failed governor." To which THE SCRAPBOOK responds: Put a sock in it, John F. Andrews, O.B.E.

"Refudiate" is in fact a dandy term that neatly combines the essential meaning of two separate ideas, and creates a novel word that is subtly distinct from its components. Indeed, it reminds us of another favorite (if officially unauthorized) combination, "insinuendo." Modern tradition ascribes the coining of this happy marriage of "insinuate" and "innuendo" to the late Mayor Richard Daley of Chicago; but the Oxford English Dictionary claims a reference as far back as the South Carolina legislature in the 1880s.

Whatever the truth of the matter, THE SCRAPBOOK has a longtime attachment to "insinuendo." Not only is its definition instantly obvious, and convenient for a variety of uses, it is (like refudiate) just plain fun to pronounce ("She habitually engages in insinuendo") and, not least, sounds like the title of a song that might have been sung in the 1950s by Frankie Laine. Imagine a long, orchestrated chord, followed by Frankie for two or three bars: "In—sin—u—en—do . . . " ♦

Refudiation for Sale!

Speaking of our neologism du jour, the boss's "Refudiate Liberalism!" editorial last week generated a ton of email, snail mail, and phone calls from our esteemed readers. And a remarkable number wrote to suggest the creation of a Refudiation Party, with appropriate bumper stickers and T-shirts.

We're nothing if not responsive to our readers, so we've gone ahead and done just that, as you'll see from the ad below. Don't be seen at your next dangerously patriotic tea party, closed-mindedly uncosmopolitan neighborhood picnic, or gated community barbecue, without your "Refudiate Obama" or "Refudiate Socialism" or just plain old "Refudiate" T-shirt.

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H is for Huuuuge

Not long ago, I took my three-year-old son to the doctor. I was reading to him in the waiting room when an old man and his wife sat on the couch directly opposite ours—the only seats that weren't occupied on that busy morning. The man introduced himself, and we began chatting. As we spoke, I noticed Conner staring curiously at his wife, who was wearing a patch over her left eye.

I continued my conversation and Conner continued glaring at the woman. Finally, after what must have been two full minutes of examination, he spoke up.

"Are you a pirate?"

"What did he say?" the woman asked me.

I'm rarely without words, but I was not going to tell her that my son thought she was a pirate. So I said nothing.

Conner, however, heard her question and filled the awkward silence by loudly repeating his question.

"I saaaaid: Are you a pirate?"

This time she looked to her husband. "What's he saying?"

His hearing was apparently only a little better. "He wants to know if you're a parrot."

These kinds of things happen all the time. Conner has no filter. He tells you what he sees and says exactly what comes to his little mind.

At a recent gathering with family friends, Conner engaged an elderly woman in conversation and at some point said something funny. The woman let out an ear-splitting cackle. Conner was clearly startled, and the expression on his face became serious.

"Are you a witch?"

Like the pirate, the witch was hard of hearing. But even if she'd heard him, I suspect she might have laughed along with us.

What's more difficult is when Conner makes matter-of-fact observations that reflect exactly what I'm thinking but would never say aloud.

Two hours after his younger sister was born, I took Conner and his older sister, Grace, to the hospital cafeteria. We were soon joined at our long table by a gaggle of women in scrubs, the friendliest of whom was also the largest. She asked Conner what he was doing at the hospital.

KEN WESTPHAL

"My mommy just had a baby," he said. They chatted a bit about the baby's name and the "Super Brother" cape he was wearing (a brilliant brainstorm of his mother's). Suddenly, Conner seemed to stop paying attention to what she was saying. His eyes shifted from her face to her round stomach. I knew what was coming.

"When are you having your baby?"

Her colleagues looked down and started picking at their food. She looked to me for an explanation. Seriously, what do you say in that situation? I managed a sympathetic smile meant to remind her that kids really do say the darnedest things.

"He says that to everyone," I told her, as if he would have made the same comment to Kate Moss.

He told our neighbor's 30-year-old daughter that he likes her "nipples" (by which he means breasts). He told a man at the grocery meat counter: "You have a faaaat tummy!" At a crowded restaurant last week, he pointed to a young man wearing a tank top and yelled: "Why is that guy wearing a ladies' shirt?"

Sister Grace tries to be helpful. "We need to read him the chapter on tact from *E is for Ethics*," a book they were given by their grandparents.

My wife and I tell ourselves that all of this is innocent, not meant to make mischief. Conner is a sensitive soul. He just talks a lot. He doesn't seem to understand when we explain that it's impolite to say these things aloud. At his morning preschool, he serves as a one-man welcoming committee. In his year-end report card, Conner's teacher noted that he "is very comfortable expressing himself verbally" and often makes "unique observations of the world." (This is not always a bad thing. She also wrote: "Conner enjoys using the chalkboard and will often narrate what he is drawing, usually pictures of his dad and his strong muscles.")

And, after all, any parents of young children can tell similar stories. One friend told me that his son, upon seeing a woman with a large belly, shouted: "She had a huuuuge lunch!"

But then the other day my wife pulled into a gas station and was helped by two attendants. One of them was losing his hair, something Conner pointed out. "You are very bald." The non-bald attendant roared with laughter.

My wife, horrified, explained to Conner that it's impolite to make such observations and told him to apologize. And so he did.

"I'm sorry, … bald sir!"

Stephen F. Hayes

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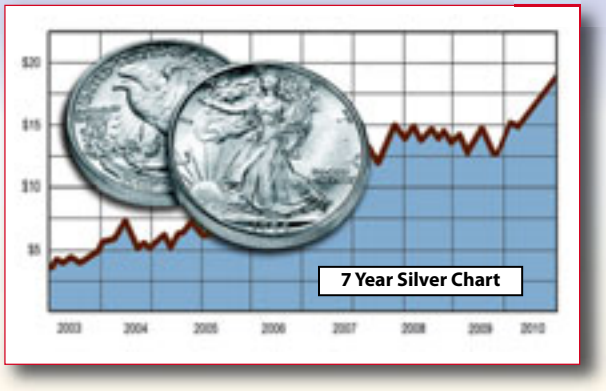

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Memo to the President

A failed presidency is a terrible thing to witness. A failed presidency with more than two years left to run is also dangerous for the country. So, even though it would be easy for The Weekly Standard to allow your administration to continue on its current path to perdition, thereby ensuring massive GOP gains this November and a likely victory in 2012, we offer, in a spirit of bipartisanship and patriotism, some advice. Here are three simple steps that you can take that would help right your presidential ship, reduce the scale of what now looks like a huge blowout in November, and give you a chance to govern successfully over the next couple of years.

All you have to do is . . .

1. EXTEND CURRENT TAX RATES.

This one is easy. You're headed for a slugfest over extending current tax rates (aka the Bush tax cuts). You want to retain them for families earning less than $250,000, and Republicans want to do so for everyone. If there's a big brawl and no deal is reached in September, Republicans will be able to say truthfully that a Democratic president and Congress have set the stage for an across-the-board tax hike on January 1, 2011. Good luck explaining to voters that you'll fix this looming tax hike in a lame-duck session in December.

If, on the other hand, you prevail in insisting on tax hikes this September, and the economy stays slow, Republicans will scream and yell, using quotations from your own White House economist, Christina Romer, and your Fed chairman, Ben Bernanke, to argue things would be better if you hadn't raised taxes. Or if you lose the fight in Congress, with Republicans picking up enough Democrats to pass their tax bill, you'll have to veto the legislation—in which case you're back to having done nothing to stop the coming tax hike—or sign it amid Republican chortling and Democratic recriminations.

So your best option is to say this: You've consulted widely with economists and businessmen, and you think it's safer for the economy to freeze all rates for two years. You've abandoned your ideological preference and have decided to err on the side of stability and predictability for businesses and on the side of reassuring markets and fostering economic growth and job creation. You could use last Friday's discouraging second quarter GDP number as an excuse for announcing that you're now willing to accept a two-year extension of current tax rates. This would pass with large majorities in both houses when Congress returns in September. There would be some ineffectual sniping from the left, but it would suddenly be harder for Republicans to label you some kind of rigid and threatening ideologue. And the economy would benefit.

2. RESCIND THE JULY 2011 AFGHANISTAN DEADLINE.

You're now committed to the war in Afghanistan. You're not going to overrule Petraeus, and you're not really going to be able to draw down much in July 2011 anyway. But the sense that there is a "deadline" is doing harm in Afghanistan and the region. Get rid of it. If things go badly over the next year and you eventually decide we do have to get out, you can still make that decision. If things go decently, on the other hand, you'll get credit for statesmanship in adjusting your original plan. The key is to overrule the deadline in the next month—perhaps on a surprise trip to Afghanistan, making the announcement while standing with Petraeus and the troops.

3. COME OUT AGAINST THE GROUND ZERO MOSQUE.

Americans by a margin of nearly 3 to 1 think the 15-story mosque and community center, planned by a shadowily financed Wahhabi imam to dominate Ground Zero, is offensive. You don't have to (yet) move to do anything legally to stop it. Just say that in your opinion it's a bad idea, that it's unnecessarily divisive and likely to pit American against American, faith against faith, neighbor against neighbor. Urge the sponsors, financiers, and developers of the mosque to rethink their plans, and the various entities of the City of New York their approval. You might announce this on 9/11, but that could be a little late—you'd be behind the curve by then. So it would probably be better just to volunteer next week. The plans to build the mosque will collapse, and you'll get the credit.

So: No tax hikes, no Afghanistan deadline, no Ground Zero mosque. It's really pretty easy. They're all the right thing to do (as you surely know with respect to Afghanistan and the mosque, and must suspect with regard to taxes). Doing these three things will stabilize your approval rating and could lead to an uptick before the election. November will be rough but not disastrous.

Then major cuts in domestic discretionary spending in the budget early next year, and military action against the Iranian nuclear program—and you'll have a real shot at a successful presidency.

—William Kristol

Are Americans Closet Statists?

Despite what liberal pollsters say, we don't secretly worship big government.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

THOMAS FLUHARTY

So maybe Americans aren't so different from Europeans after all? If you read a lot of the opinion press—poor lamb—you might be getting the idea that we're all social democrats now. This would be sad news for Republicans.

Since the dawn of the Obama Tyranny, they have been hoping to frame a stark political contrast between themselves on the one hand, as guardians of American exceptionalism—the spirit of entrepreneurship, small government, self-reliance, individualism, robust commerce, and all the rest of it—and, on the other, Democrats who, while perfectly nice people and terrifically patriotic, have tendencies in the opposite direction, toward an expansive, European view of government intervention, stricter regulation of business, a more lavish provision for the poor, a preference for public over private action, and all the rest of *that*.

The contrast would flatter Republicans, Republicans reasoned, because Americans themselves are great examples of American exceptionalism, and believers in it. Thus the election this fall and the one two years from now would be a clash of world views, with contending ideas about America's uniqueness and its place in the world, about what kind of country we all want to have. It would be exhilarating! If true.

And now come many people willing to tell us it isn't true—even people who wish it were. The notion has been in the air for a while, but I first picked up its scent in a review of *The Battle*, a new book by Arthur C. Brooks, in the liberal magazine the *American Prospect*. The theme of *The Battle* is this same clash-of-world-views idea—the battle of the title is the national argument over American exceptionalism that Brooks thinks is fast approaching. The reviewer, Brink Lindsey, works for the Cato Institute, the libertarian hothouse. A small government guy himself, he might have been thought to be sympathetic.

But no. Lindsey mocked Brooks's argument by caricaturing it: "Supporters of free markets are defending a unique and precious American heritage, while [their Democratic opponents] have thrown in with the foreigners—worst of all, with effete, decadent Europeans." In rebuttal Lindsey cited polling data showing that average Americans, when they're given a pop quiz on economics, are not nearly as amenable to free market ideas as even liberal economists are. A *New York Times* poll this spring, moreover, found that "76 percent of Americans think 'the benefits from government programs such as Social Security and Medicare are worth the costs of those programs.'" Even Tea Partiers, the *Times* reported, gave overwhelming support (62 percent) to Big

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Government programs. Americans are statists at heart.

Lindsey didn't use the word "hypocrites" to describe a populace that flatters itself for its rugged individualism while panting after the cushy life promised by collectivism—for talking American and living European. The charge of mass hypocrisy came from a columnist for the *Washington Post*, Anne Applebaum, who wrote a column picking up where Lindsey left off. "Hypocrisy is hypocrisy," she wrote. "Look around the world and we don't seem as exceptional as we think." In fact, we're worse. "We not only demand ludicrous levels of personal and political safety, we reserve the right to rant and rave against the vast bureaucracies we have created . . . to deliver it."

This is an old argument, and it never goes away for long. It's usually revived when articulate people with strong political convictions suddenly see the public, which moments before had been agreeing with them, veering off in a seditious direction. Only a little more than 18 months ago, American voters elected a well-schooled sophisticate to the presidency and thereby demonstrated a long overdue spiritual maturity. Now, having turned on him, they are demonstrating their bad character. Today's Tea Partiers are up-to-date versions of the Angry White Males who fomented the Republican takeover of the House 16 years ago. One fed-up pundit back then described his feelings about these ingrates with unusual heat: "They are, in short, Big Babies." Nyah, nyah, *nyah*. From the wisdom and sophistication they had shown only two years before in electing Bill Clinton and strong Democratic majorities in Congress, they had regressed to the crib, like Benjamin Button.

Republicans, of course, assume that these big babies, these hypocrites and spoil sports, are getting a bad rap (for the time being, at least—if they suddenly start voting for Democrats again, today's wise constitutionalists will suddenly degenerate into sheep, soft and pampered and easily led, bought off by the politicians of the welfare state). Yet there's something more going on. For the picture of the public that emerges from the polls, even those cited by Lindsey and Applebaum, is more bewildering than they let on—not merely contradictory but nonsensical, and probably worthless.

Only a shifty partisan or someone who's succumbed to wishful thinking (or a demographer who's getting paid by a shifty partisan) can pretend to derive a reliable and nuanced assessment of American attitudes from the daily fusillade of numbers that pollsters let loose. Last week the Center for American Progress (CAP), a liberal think tank, issued a poll-riddled paper titled "Better, not Smaller: What Americans want from their Federal Government." To their credit, the CAP demographers refused to call American voters hypocrites for disagreeing with them. Instead, they refused to believe that American voters disagree with them.

CAP, of course, promotes more federal involvement in priority areas such as energy, poverty, and education. And hey look: "Clear majorities of Americans of all ages," says its report, "want and expect more federal involvement in priority areas such as energy, poverty, and education." Fewer than 25 percent of respondents told the pollsters they wanted less involvement in those areas.

At the same time, however, the demographers admitted that from some perspectives—theirs, most notably—a lot of the numbers look terrible. Only 33 percent had some or a lot of confidence in the federal government's ability to solve problems. A slightly higher number, 39 percent, agree that "the government should do more to solve problems"; 57 percent say "government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals."

A paradoxical people, these Americans: eager to have an incompetent government that they don't trust do more of the things that they don't want it to do. CAP's pollsters square this circle by announcing that what Americans really want is a "federal government that is better not smaller," which, as it happens, is what the Big Government liberals at CAP say they want, too. (Big Government conservatives also want this: their ideal is a government that is "energetic but limited," like the Incredible Hulk isometrically flexing his muscles under a straitjacket.)

There are easier ways to resolve the paradox. Maybe the problem is in the pollsters and not the respondents, in the questions rather than the answers. Simple, one-step questions are a dull blade with which to probe attitudes about a hypothetical future.

Ask "Would you like a Ferris wheel in your backyard?" and a shockingly high percentage of Americans might say yes. Complicate the question, however—"Would you like a Ferris wheel in your backyard if it tripled your electric bill and bumped off the family dog?"—and the number would drop. Either/or questions aren't much better. In its poll, CAP asked: "Please tell me whether you'd like to see more federal government involvement in [the following] areas, less involvement, about the same amount, or no federal government involvement." Clear majorities (51 percent in the case of health care) answer "more, more, more." CAP takes the result as an indication that Americans have a European-like craving for centralized power.

Yet a more complicated question would likely yield different results. "Would you like more government involvement in health care if it meant that . . . your insurance premiums rose or your employer might choose to drop your insurance . . . ?" The issue becomes less abstract when costs as well as benefits are introduced with any specificity. The *Times* poll that Lindsey and Applebaum cited merely asked respondents whether Social Security and Medicare were "worth the costs," without saying what the costs are or might be. Indeed, even in CAP's poll it appears that in some cases, the closer Big Government gets, the less Americans like it. Ten years ago 73 percent wanted more federal involvement in health care. Now that they're about to get it—good and hard—the percentage has dropped to 51 percent.

You could even make the case that the biggest threat to Big Government is Big Government. Karlyn Bowman, poll maven at the American Enterprise

Institute (a small-government think tank run by Arthur Brooks), points to a survey from 1958, in which respondents were first asked how often they could trust the federal government "to do what was right." Seventy-three percent said "always" or "most of the time." A Yankelovich poll found similar attitudes in 1964.

Twenty years later the percentage was down to 44 percent. Seymour Martin Lipset, in his book *American Exceptionalism*, reported that in 1964 only one out of three Americans thought his government served special interests rather than the public interest. Thirty years later the number was 80 percent, roughly where it is today in the CAP poll.

What happened between 1964 and 1994? Lots of things: war, scandal, booms and busts, Jimmy Carter. Also, in 1965, Lyndon Johnson and an eager Congress launched the raft of programs known as the Great Society, which forever expanded the region of national life in which the federal government felt free to muck around. No one has been able to shrink the sphere since, though voters seem to like politicians—Richard Nixon, Ronald Reagan, even George W. Bush—who promise to try, and for this reason, I suppose, liberal commentators have told us we've been living through an age of conservative dominance.

Now, in post-LBJ America, when a pollster asks adults whether they'd prefer a larger government with more services or a smaller government with fewer services, Americans have in almost every instance chosen the latter. The more tasks the government takes on the more likely it is to fail, and for citizens to see it as a failure. As the government changed, so did the public's attitude toward it.

So we're all libertarians, then—good American-style conservatives, the unEuropeans? Well, no. The poll numbers are too muddled to say that, or much of anything. CAP's picture of a public hungry for government is confirmed in a 2006 Fox News poll. It asked whether people would rather pay higher taxes to increase spending for a variety of programs—or cut their funding and leave taxes as they were. Large majorities said they'd rather pay more in taxes than cut funding for eight of the nine programs listed. Two years later, in a poll by the National Opinion Research Center, similar majorities said the government was spending too little on education, the environment, health care, cops, even drug treatment programs—everything but culture and the arts.

In his great book, Lipset conceded these contradictions as inevitable artifacts of polling in a country where people are expected to have considered opinions even when they don't. But he didn't think the confusion undercut the idea that Americans are different from their counterparts in the social democracies of Europe.

"Given their anger about politics in the United States," Lipset wondered, "what accounts for the continued stability of the American system?" He answered by pointing to another instance of American exceptionalism: the unbending belief that Americans had in their future. "The American dream is still alive, even if the government and other institutions are seen as corrupt and inefficient." He wrote that in 1996. And—polls show!—it is still true, even with distrust in government greater than it was then. Karlyn Bowman cites a recent Pew poll. Sixty-four percent of the population thinks the future is bright for themselves and their families. Sixty-one percent are optimistic about the future of the United States. Americans continue to believe, over all, that they will be better off tomorrow than they are today.

Their lack of faith in government, in other words, is not reflected in a lack of faith in their country—probably because, unlike some people I could name, they know the difference between the two. ♦

Our Predatory Trading Partners

How Russia and China take advantage.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

America runs large and persistent trade deficits. Our partners figure out how to make lots of things we want, and we can't figure out how to produce an equal amount of stuff they want—or are permitted by their governments to buy.

So it is good news that at last American industry has something the Chinese want to buy. Well, not buy exactly. "Extract," or "appropriate" would be better words, "steal" being a bit harsh. Their Russian counterparts also want a piece of this particular action. It seems that U.S. technology is something that neither of these trading partners can duplicate without the help of our government—which has to issue export licenses for militarily sensitive items—or of our CEOs in Silicon Valley.

The American business community has long been in the forefront of the lobbying effort to prevent retaliation against China for its currency manipulation and its subtle and not-so-subtle barriers to imports. In return for access to China, big business was expected to plead the regime's case whenever an issue arose that might put a strain on U.S.-Chinese relations. In a sense, big U.S. firms became lob-

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byists for the Chinese government, their fee being access to China's markets and its low-paid workforce.

After all, a huge market beckoned as China's masses got richer. Take General Motors, the car company owned by the U.S. government, and not exactly a roaring success in its home market. Sales to China's cash-rich consumers increased by almost 50 percent in the first half of this year, compared with the same period in 2009, and now account for a quarter of the company's global sales. Surely, that points the way for other companies.

Well, not exactly. It seems that China, its vaults overflowing with dollars, has no need for investment from the United States unless it brings something more than mere dollars. And with its membership in the World Trade Organization secured in 2001 by a spate of market liberalization policies, China has no further need to pander to the free trade inclinations of the West with still more liberalization. So bare-knuckled protectionism is now the order of the day.

China's $500 billion government procurement market has been all but closed to foreign suppliers, despite its promise to sign on to the WTO's Government Procurement Agreement "as soon as possible" when it joined the WTO almost ten years ago. China now thinks another five years, and the opening of one-fifth of its procurement market might be reasonable. Meanwhile, government agencies and state-owned enterprises buy only products that incorporate indigenous Chinese technology.

But that's the least of the problems America's executives and former spokesmen for China's interests face. It seems that they are not being allowed to build plants in China unless they turn over the associated technology. Worse still, the regime is subsidizing the construction of plants by domestic companies intent on capturing market share from the Americans. General Electric, which once predicted that its sales in China would hit $10 billion this year, is having to settle for $6 billion, as heavily subsidized Chinese companies wrest not only domestic customers from it, but customers throughout Asia, especially in the manufacture and sale of wind power equipment—the stuff that President Obama says is so crucial to the new age of American green manufacturing.

Foreign manufacturers' share of China's wind turbine market has fallen from 71 percent to 14 percent in just five years, according to *Bloomberg Businessweek*. Jeffrey Immelt, the CEO of GE, regards the issue as so serious that he has moved from friend to private critic of China, if reports of his dinner conversation are to be believed. Too little and too late: He has to protect his investment in that country, can't tell his restive shareholders (who continue to mourn the retirement of Jack Welch) that he has misread the market, and China anyhow has moved from attracting foreign investment to developing national champions.

Then there is the question of intellectual property rights, which the Chinese authorities are not inclined to

respect. They want American technology, especially "core software," and if they cannot bludgeon U.S. firms into making it available, they will simply take it. Which is easy enough. As the *Financial Times* points out, "Even when paper commitments exist, such as China's pledge to respect intellectual property rights, the country frequently lacks mechanisms—such as informed, neutral courts—needed to implement them." Confident in his country's rising economic power, vice premier Wang Qishan told a group of European businessmen after hearing their complaints, "You are going to invest [in China] anyway."

And so it seems they are: Foreign investment continues to pour into China, despite last week's report by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce pointing out the danger to the American economy of China's rise to a technology superpower in the next decade or so. China's "indigenous innovation policy," says the report, is forcing U.S. technology companies "to anguish over balancing today's profits with tomorrow's survival." So far, today's profits are receiving pride of place.

It may well be that the Chinese have decided that they no longer need American business executives as spokesmen in Washington. These quasi-lobbyists can be replaced with the powerful farm bloc. American farmers' annual sales to China now total $14 billion, and the United States is running a $1 billion *monthly* trade surplus with China in the market for agricultural products such as soybeans, cotton, and animal feed. It is not unreasonable to expect that farm-state senators will have a friendlier attitude towards the nation that is enriching their constituents than, say, those from our sclerotic industrial heartland.

Russia is taking a slightly different path to the same destination. On his recent visit, President Dmitry Medvedev not only shared cheeseburgers in Arlington with President Obama (anti-obesity czar Mrs. Obama was nowhere to be seen) but dangled before the rulers of Silicon Valley the prospect of huge sales in Russia. Bring us your technology, he told the bosses of our leading high-tech firms, and we will welcome you to our country—the land of Mikhail Khodorkovsky (anyone remember Yukos Oil?) and others who have watched as the Russian state snatched the fruits of their labor—either by imposing large, retroactive tax bills or by transferring ownership to friends of Vladimir Putin.

This is a country whose de facto ruler, Putin, was pictured in the *New York Times* looking sternly across the desk of Vitaly Savelyev, the CEO of Aeroflot, rebuking the executive for buying aircraft from Western companies. "That won't do," Putin told Savelyev, who presumably can guess what a firm stare and such an admonition from the former KGB officer means. "There was nothing artificial about the message. . . . Russian airlines will be under pressure to buy Russian jets," reported the *Times*.

Esther Dyson, chairman of EDventure Holdings, says, 'There is a huge amount of creativity in Russia. . . . It's simply not channeled and disciplined.' Vladimir Putin in particular will savor the notion of disciplined creativity.

Not good news for U.S. and European manufacturers. Or for our military. Sukhoi, the state-created aircraft manufacturer best known for its fighter jets, needs large orders from Aeroflot to increase the viability of its commercial sector, which can then give support to the military end of the business. But this restatement of Russia's protectionist policies has not deterred Obama from reaffirming his determination to have Russia admitted to the WTO, after President Medvedev promised to end Russia's ban on the import of American chickens.

So the U.S. trade agenda looks something like this. Led by Cisco, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs have agreed to pour billions in high-tech investment into Russia to reduce its dependence on commodities exports, and to help bring its industries, and presumably its military, up to modern standards. Medvedev is planning an innovation hub at Skolkovo, outside of Moscow, to house laboratories, manufacturing facilities, and apartments for engineers, programmers, and the like. Our entrepreneurs will help. Esther Dyson, chairman of EDventure Holdings and well regarded in high-tech circles, says, "There is a huge amount of creativity in Russia. . . . It's simply not channeled and disciplined." Putin in particular will savor the notion of disciplined creativity.

Meanwhile, President Obama will help Russia gain entry into the WTO. In return, Russia will import more chickens, but definitely not more aircraft. And it has plans afoot to pour $320 million into subsidies for its wheat farmers, who are taking their share from America in world markets, thanks to the efficiencies produced by the replacement of Russian tractors with American-made machines, according to Kirill Podolsky, CEO of a major Russian wheat exporter.

Trade, in short, is now a matter of national strategy as much as of economics. China and Russia know this. They want American technology for reasons other than improving their trade balances. They want membership in the WTO, which China is already using to its advantage without regard to the reciprocal behavior expected of all members. Russia wants to duplicate that feat while at the same time making sure that the state maintains control of industries it deems of strategic importance.

Lenin, who once said that the capitalists will sell us the rope with which we will hang them, must be smiling up at his successors. While Obama presses hard on his reset button. ♦

Farewell to Feingold?

Businessman Ron Johnson aims for an upset.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Lake Geneva, Wisconsin

During a two-hour fundraising cruise in southeastern Wisconsin on Sunday, July 18, Republicans feasted on bratwurst, sauerkraut, and beer as they chatted about their good chances of sending a Republican to the U.S. Senate for the first time since 1986. Polls show a tight race developing between Democrat Russ Feingold, the three-term incumbent, and Ron Johnson, an Ayn Rand-loving, pro-life Lutheran, plastics manufacturer from Oshkosh. Johnson led Feingold 48 percent to 46 percent in a July 29 Rasmussen poll.

Ron Johnson

Democrats thought they had dodged a bullet when former Republican governor Tommy Thompson decided in April not to run, but Johnson has emerged as a formidable candidate. First, he doesn't have Thompson's baggage of having been both a Washington lobbyist and a Bush administration official. When Johnson delivers brief remarks to the 200 Republicans aboard the boat, he makes it clear he didn't like the spending spree of the last administration. Republicans were racking up "$300 [or] $400 billion deficits. But now we're talking $1.5 trillion. And our national debt is $13 trillion. That's simply unsustainable. It's intergenerational theft. It's wrong. It's immoral. And it's gotta stop." The crowd cheers enthusiastically.

Before announcing his candidacy in May, Johnson tested the waters by speaking at Tea Party rallies, where he received a warm response. The successful 55-year-old businessman has less political experience than any GOP Senate candidate in a competitive race this year (almost all have held office at the state or federal level). But Johnson is a "quick study," says Wisconsin GOP congressman Paul Ryan. "He's not one of these wealthy guys who decides to run for office one day and doesn't know what he doesn't know." Johnson is personable and rolls off facts, figures, and anecdotes with ease when discussing the issues.

He says the passage of Obamacare compelled him to run. "When it wasn't defeated, that to me was the straw that broke the camel's back," Johnson tells me. "I totally want it repealed, and then I just want to do modest, commonsense reforms that don't cost a lot of money." His "personal motivation" comes from his family's reliance on rapid medical advances when his daughter—now a neonatal nurse—had heart surgery as an infant in the 1980s. Obamacare will "lower the quality of care and lead to rationing," Johnson says. "There's a reason the premier of Newfoundland came down to America to get his heart surgery."

Feingold, for his part, would like to talk about anything but health care and the economy. He touts himself as a fiscal conservative and gun rights supporter, who voted against the financial regulation bill. Feingold scoffed at early polls showing Johnson within a couple points, but the senator now appears scared. Known for running positive campaigns with light-hearted ads, Feingold's first TV spot about Johnson attacked him as a supporter of drilling for oil in the Great Lakes. Factcheck.org called the ad "misleading"—in June, Johnson expressed support for domestic drilling, but it wasn't clear he meant the Great Lakes. The day before the ad was released, Johnson said he rejects "any and all efforts to drill in the Great Lakes," but Feingold went ahead with his ad anyway. Johnson retaliated with an ad noting that Feingold had voted against a permanent ban on Great Lakes drilling (the measure was included in the 2005 energy bill, which Feingold opposed on fiscal and environmental grounds). This incident "shows that Russ is very nervous, and it shows that he's going to run the kind of campaign that he's never run before," says Ryan, who considers Feingold a friend.

Johnson calls Feingold's signature campaign finance reform legislation the "McCain-Feingold incumbent protection act," and with good reason. In 2004, Feingold outspent his opponent, who had little time to raise money after the September primary, nearly two to one. But Johnson has the money to match Feingold dollar for dollar, attack ad for attack ad. He built a successful plastics manufacturing company with his brother-in-law and is reportedly willing to spend $10 to $15 million of his own money on the race.

None of Feingold's victories was a landslide; he got 53 percent of the vote in 1992, 51 percent in 1998, and 55 percent in 2004. Facing a strongly anti-Democratic year for the first time, Feingold appears to believe his best hope is to paint Johnson as an extremist. "It's becoming clear that [Johnson is] the third part of that Rand Paul, Sharron Angle tripartition," Feingold told *Politico* in June. "He's refused to say whether he favors the continuation of Social Security and Medicare. He hasn't even said he supports the Civil Right Act."

But unlike the Kentucky and Nevada GOP candidates, Johnson hasn't committed any big gaffes. Johnson says the

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suggestion that he doesn't support the Civil Rights Act is ridiculous, and he's straightforward about his support for entitlement reform. Johnson calls Paul Ryan "courageous" for trying to solve our fiscal problems and admires senators Jim DeMint, Judd Gregg, and Tom Coburn. "I am serious about tackling these issues," says Johnson, "but it is not my life's ambition to be a senator."

Like such conservative stalwarts, Johnson is primarily interested in fiscal issues, though he doesn't shy away from other topics as well. On Afghanistan, Johnson says, "You don't go into war with a timeline. You go into war with a plan to win and a commitment to win." (Feingold sponsored an amendment to create a timeline for withdrawal from Afghanistan that got the support of only 18 senators.) On immigration, Johnson says, "That is the biggest surprise as I've traveled all over the state—how much of a hot button the issue is." People are outraged, he says, that "we're paying out welfare benefits to people in the country illegally." (Feingold voted against a measure to stop the federal lawsuit against Arizona's immigration law.)

Johnson's biggest liability may be a tendency to speak honestly. Though Democrats blasted him for likening Social Security to a "Ponzi scheme," Johnson wouldn't soften his point. "The problem is that Social Security funds have been spent," he told the *Wall Street Journal* in July. "They're gone. I'm just describing the problem."

Johnson may have opened himself up to an even stronger Democratic line of attack in our conversations. Brett Favre is regarded as a traitor by many Wisconsinites for playing for the Minnesota Vikings. But Johnson, a big Green Bay Packers fan, admits that once the Packers were out of the playoffs last year he was pulling for Favre to win. "He plays the game with such joy," says Johnson. "I wanted to see Brett Favre win. I took it probably every bit as hard when he threw that interception in the last play of the Viking [playoff] game." The way this campaign is going, look for a Russ Feingold ad next week depicting Ron Johnson in a Minnesota Vikings jersey. ♦

The Party's Over

The Colorado Model goes national.

BY ADAM SCHRAGER & ROB WITWER

Earlier this decade, Colorado progressives pioneered a political strategy for electing Democratic majorities in what had once been GOP strongholds. Since then, the strategy has been quietly deployed in at least 18 other states in time for the 2010 election cycle. And while nothing may be able to prevent Democrats from losing ground this November, they are hopeful the Colorado Model will act as a levee against the coming storm, minimizing losses in a bad year—and laying the groundwork to maximize future gains.

In a nutshell, the Colorado Model is about infrastructure. Following the passage of state and federal campaign finance reforms in 2002, Colorado progressives recognized that the Democratic party could no longer raise enough money to fund the kind of organization necessary to sustain a long-term political movement. So with backing from a handful of large donors, they built a network of specialized, coordinated nonprofits to fill the void.

The results were stunning. In 2004, Colorado Republicans held the governor's mansion, both U.S. Senate seats, five of seven congressional seats, and both houses of the legislature. After the 2008 election, the opposite was true.

Even taking into account political and demographic trends, there can be no doubt the Colorado Model intensified the state's shift from red to blue. Seth Masket, a professor of political science at the University of Denver, recently calculated that in the 2004 and 2006 elections Democratic legislative candidates supported by left-leaning nonprofits enjoyed a 4 percentage point bump in their final vote tallies—enough to swing close seats.

In Masket's view, the Colorado Model's significance is more than tactical; it portends a major change in the way politics is practiced. "This new model of campaign activity may in fact represent a new form of political party," Masket writes. "It is a form that has arisen as an unexpected consequence of campaign finance reforms; with parties limited in their ability to directly fund campaigns, party actors have developed innovative ways of using campaign resources to aid preferred candidates."

Led by Colorado strategists Ted Trimpa and Al Yates, progressives have made a major push to expand their "independent sector" strategy to other states. On the eve of the current election cycle, elements of the Colorado Model have been developed in California, Florida, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

An example is ProgressNow, a network of state-based nonprofits that uses online organizing and media outreach tools to generate, push, and amplify negative information about Republican candidates. Originally formed in Colorado in 2003, ProgressNow boasts an $8 million budget, a grassroots network of more than 2.4 million people, and chapters in 12 states.

ProgressNow's state chapters are already using multimedia, online organizing, and "rapid response" communications tactics to target a number of Republicans in close races, including gubernatorial candidates Tom Emmer in Minnesota

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and Tom Corbett in Pennsylvania, as well as Senate candidates Carly Fiorina in California, Sharron Angle in Nevada, Dino Rossi in Washington, and Ron Johnson in Wisconsin.

Progressives hope extensive opposition research conducted over the past 12 months will offset some of the strong headwinds Democrats face in 2010. "Ultimately the commodity we're dealing with is political power," says ProgressNow founder and CEO Michael Huttner. "It's all about building political power at the state level. We're trying to replicate our model in every state."

But ProgressNow is just the tip of the iceberg. Under the auspices of a group called the Democracy Alliance, progressives are stitching together dozens of left-leaning nonprofits into a cohesive, tightly controlled national network.

The Democracy Alliance is an association of more than 100 donors who have agreed to pool their resources in furtherance of what they call "progressive philanthropy." Its members are among the wealthiest and most powerful people in the country. According to Matthew Vadum of the Capital Research Center, the list includes financiers George Soros and Steven Gluckstern, Hollywood personalities Rob Reiner and Norman Lear, Taco Bell heir Rob McKay, SEIU secretary-treasurer Anna Burger, Progressive Insurance founder Peter Lewis, Families USA founder Philippe Villers, Quark founder Tim Gill, and medical device heiress Pat Stryker.

Conservatives who routinely battle left-leaning nonprofits are learning only now of the ties that bind these groups together behind the veil of the Democracy Alliance. According to Vadum, Democracy Alliance donors have supported over 30 entities, including America Votes, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), the Center for American Progress, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), Emily's List, Media Matters for America, ProgressNow, and the Sierra Club.

According to its website, the Democracy Alliance is committed to providing "long-term patient capital in the form of multi-year, general operating support to organizations that are key to the progressive infrastructure." In other words, Democracy Alliance donors are in for the long haul whether Democrats win or lose in November.

Among the Democracy Alliance's most ambitious projects is Catalist, a massive voter database containing detailed information on millions of Americans. As Colorado progressives did before them, Democracy Alliance donors use their financial leverage to force left-leaning organizations to share data amongst themselves, eliminating redundancy and instantly enhancing the outreach capabilities of like-minded groups.

Voter files are nothing new, but Catalist's ability to evolve in real time makes it the gold standard. Unlike vendor services that simply lease data-

bases to political campaigns, Catalist also collects voter response data from its more than 90 partners, forming a comprehensive, up-to-the-minute file. The more it's used, the better it gets.

According to internal Catalist documents, in the 2008 election cycle, organizations using its information

> completed over 127 million contacts to more than 49 million unique individuals. Of these, 28 million voted on Election Day, representing over 20 percent of all votes cast. Furthermore, and of greater significance, is that 82 percent of this work occurred in 16 swing states, accounting for 37 percent of all votes cast in these states.

In the coming months, progressive nonprofits will again be using these data to contact voters in targeted political races across the country, especially below-the-radar state legislative races.

And this is where the Colorado Model's most significant impact may be felt.

Unlike other large donors before them, the Colorado Model's founding funders eschewed high-profile races in favor of less expensive local campaigns, where they could have a greater impact. Since then, wealthy progressives have funneled millions in direct and indirect contributions to a handful of targeted state legislative races, in the process affecting the balance of power in legislative chambers in Colorado, Iowa, Michigan, and Oregon.

With states preparing to redraw the congressional map following the decennial census, legislative seats take on added importance. In 2010 progressives will devote unprecedented resources to down-ticket races, aiming to influence not only statehouses in the near term, but Congress in the coming decade.

For conservatives, there is good news: At least a few leading strategists appear to have embraced the necessity of beefing up their political infrastructure outside the Republican party. And while such efforts are embryonic and, for now, unproven, they're a tangible sign that conservatives have internalized and begun to copy key elements of the Colorado Model. ♦

Private Sector Blues

What Obama thinks is good for America is bad for business. BY JOHN CHETTLE

In dealing with our current economic crisis, we might remember that a recession is not a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Although economists differ on just what constitutes a recession, there have been some 47 in the United States since 1790. There have been 11 since 1945, and they have averaged 10 months in length. In truth, since World War II, it has not been an overwhelming task to bring the American economy out of recession. The sheer dynamism of our economy, the strength of its entrepreneurial drive—what Keynes called its "animal spirits"—has been enough to revive it very quickly.

Indeed, despite President Obama's complaints that he had been left "an economic crisis as deep and dire as any since the days of the Great Depression," he and his advisers did not suggest initially that the future was going to be bleak. Christina Romer, chair of the White House Council of Economic Advisers, famously predicted that the unemployment rate would shortly top out at 8 percent.

Compare that with what Ronald Reagan had to deal with to overcome the Carter "malaise" in 1980: inflation at 11 percent, mortgages at 15 percent, and, by the time he had broken the inflationary cycle, unemployment at 10.8 percent. As Reagan noted in a microphone test which inadvertently went into the press room prior to his weekly radio broadcast on November 20, 1982, "My fellow Americans, I've talked to you on a number of occasions about the economic problems and opportunities our nation faces, and I'm prepared to tell you, it's a hell of a mess."

Reagan got the country out of the mess because he cut taxes, cut regulation, set clear objectives, and let ordinary Americans make money. Obama is failing to get the country out of a recession because he's telling Americans what money they can make, what kind of jobs should be created, what extra regulations will be imposed on them (once he and his dysfunctional party have made up their collective minds), and how much more they're going to be taxed once that has been decided by all the committees that have jurisdiction. In short, he has done the one thing he should have avoided like the plague—he has created uncertainty.

Obama and the belligerent anti-business cartel running Congress have created an increasingly hostile environment for businesses to operate in. It is hard to keep track of all the sectors which have incurred Obama's wrath or over which he has asserted control. He told the banking industry that he did not run for office to help out "a bunch of fat cat bankers on Wall Street." He has threatened the health insurance industry, saying that the administration wouldn't hesitate to block mergers or "to require the settlement concessions necessary to protect consumers." He extracted concessions from the pharmaceutical industry and then double-crossed them. He used the BP oil spill as an opportunity to close down drilling operations by all companies at depths greater than 500 feet. He has revived all the uncertainties of the coal and utility industries with his promotion of cap and trade legislation.

John Chettle is completing a book on what presidents read and why it matters.

The sheer perversity—the ideological rigidity of the administration—is well illustrated by its treatment of Milwaukee-based Bucyrus International. Bucyrus stood to win a three-year, $600 million contract to supply mining equipment for a coal-fired power plant in India, subject only to its getting favorable financing rates from the Export-Import Bank. The deal met all the criteria, including the more stringent environmental standards imposed by the Obama White House. The bank denied the financing because the "carbon footprint" of the project was too large. This is not going to stop the construction of the power plant, which is due to open in 2012, as other countries will be happy to supply the machinery. It will just deny jobs to American workers.

But all this is the merest drop in the gusher of complexity and uncertainty which has engulfed business. Read the 54-page report by the Business Roundtable on "Policy Burdens Inhibiting Economic Growth" and you will understand the paralyzing precariousness of industries confronting laws that have not been laid down, regulations in a continuing state of flux, departments and agencies with no clear sense of direction, liabilities that change like the weather, and the certainty that the one force that will not be controlled is tort lawyers.

You will also realize that the model here is the administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. ("I would put these four months," said Obama after four months as president, "up against any prior administration since Franklin Roosevelt.") FDR, according to the myth, gave the country the courage to face its problems, and Democratic leaders believe that Roosevelt succeeded because of his tough rhetoric against the rich. The truth is almost exactly the opposite. Roosevelt's economic policies were a failure. If it had not been for the war that came in 1939, Roosevelt would have retired as a discredited president, having failed for eight years to build the confidence that was essential to restoring the economy.

It would have been hard to have devised an economic program more calculated to deepen the Depression than the one employed in FDR's second term. And indeed it did—unemployment climbed back above 17 percent in 1939. Hoover had raised the top marginal tax rate from 25 to 63 percent, but Roosevelt, over the protests of his secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, boosted it to 79 percent and then later to 91 percent. Morgenthau presciently argued, "We must have additional revenue, but in my opinion the way to make it is for businessmen to make more money." Roosevelt refused to make any reduction in personal or corporate taxes, dismissing it as a "Mellon plan of taxation," a reference to the secretary of the Treasury who had spurred growth in the 1920s by lowering the top tax rate to 25 percent.

Bedfellows: Obama, FDR

Keynes himself wrote a letter to Roosevelt telling him that it was time to stop talking about the "wickedness" of the utility holding companies and to consider a guarantee of fair earnings on new investment. "Businessmen have a different set of delusions from politicians," Keynes wrote. "You could do anything you liked with them, if you would treat them (even the big ones), not as wolves and tigers, but as domestic animals by nature, even though they have been badly brought up and not trained as you would wish." Keynes was politely told to get lost.

But it is not just that Obama views the abuse of businessmen, erring or otherwise, as a political masterstroke in the Roosevelt tradition. The truth is that Obama himself knows nothing about business. There is a good example of his fundamental lack of economic understanding in his book *Dreams from My Father* when he describes his thoughts on returning to Chicago after completing his law degree at Harvard:

> I tried to imagine the Indonesian workers who were now making their way to the sorts of factories that had once sat along the banks of the Calumet River, joining the ranks of wage labor to assemble the radios and sneakers that sold on Michigan Avenue. I imagined those same Indonesian workers ten, twenty years from now, when their factories would have closed down, a consequence of new technology or lower wages in some other part of the globe. And then the bitter discovery that their markets have vanished . . . [and] they would settle into their own Altgeld Gardens, into a deeper despair.

This was written more than halfway through a 20-year period in which 40 million new jobs were created in the United States, and several hundred million more abroad—including in Indonesia, China, and India—all of which combined to create an unprecedented global prosperity. Obama's account is based on the belief that the workers in Indonesia were somehow leading idyllic lives weaving their baskets.

The Obama administration consists of politicians who believe that a crisis is too good to waste, academics whose main contact with business has been soliciting money for endowments, bureaucrats impervious to economic considerations, environmental visionaries, and—to the extent that there is anyone who has spent time in business—quick buck artists who went briefly into "finance" to translate their political connections into money. Obama has appointed a cabinet and a White House staff which contains not a single former business executive. It is an administration whose only contact with Main Street is shopping. ♦

Demolition Derby in Florida

Can Marco Rubio prevail?

By Fred Barnes

Orlando

One speech, delivered often, has rarely meant more in politics than it does to Marco Rubio, the Republican candidate for the Senate in Florida. Why? Because the Rubio campaign *is* the speech, with its all-encompassing message on domestic and foreign issues, and Rubio's Senate bid is the most watched race in the country this year.

For conservatives, he is the most important candidate in the midterm election. His defeat would deprive them of a new national star. His victory would mean the emergence of a leader among Republicans and a powerful, young conservative voice. Rubio is 39.

He's already a national figure. "Everywhere I go I'm asked about Marco," says former governor Jeb Bush. "The race hasn't gotten as much attention in Florida as it has around the country." Bush says, "Mark me down as a huge supporter." In February, Republican senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina endorsed Rubio with this catchy line: "I'd rather have 30 Rubios [in the Senate] than 60 Arlen Specters."

At 35, Rubio was House speaker in the Florida legislature. A more surprising Rubio feat: driving popular governor Charlie Crist out of the Republican party. Crist was the prohibitive favorite to win the Senate primary when Rubio jumped into the race last year. One poll had Crist 35 points ahead. But once Rubio opened a large lead, Crist decided to run as an independent.

The defeat of Rubio in November would probably mean the election of Crist. Since dropping out of the Republican primary in April, Crist has been changing his positions from right to left with breathtaking speed, raising the expectation—the near certainty, really—he would join Democrats in the Senate.

Thus a Crist victory, which is quite possible, would be a loss of a seat for Republicans and almost surely deny them a chance to gain the 10 seats needed to take control of the Senate. The winner will succeed Republican senator George LeMieux, appointed by Crist when Mel Martinez resigned in 2009. LeMieux, Crist's campaign manager, gubernatorial chief of staff, and close friend, advised Crist to stay in the Republican race. When he didn't, LeMieux endorsed Rubio.

By the end of the campaign in November, nearly every voter in Florida with a television or a computer or who has attended a Rubio event should have heard Rubio's speech or at least pieces of it in TV ads or online videos. In every appearance, including my interview with him in late July, he delivers the speech in whole or in part. There's a reason for this: It's an awfully good speech. It's intensely patriotic and focused on how he'd like voters to see the choice they face in the election. It's better than any speech I've heard from a Republican candidate or elected official in a long time. And Rubio delivers it passionately.

Rubio gave the essence of the speech in his farewell address to the Florida legislature in March 2009. He delivered it again at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington last February. He repeated parts of it during his debate with Crist on *Fox News Sunday* in March. I heard him give the speech to the Florida Family Policy Council in May and to business groups in Orlando in July.

The core of the speech is a paean to American exceptionalism. He mentions the word "exceptional" repeatedly, perhaps to highlight the contrast with President Obama, who suggested to a French audience last year that America is no more exceptional than any other country. The election, Rubio told the Southeast Building Conference, will decide whether America will "continue to be exceptional or be like everybody else."

At CPAC, Rubio dwelt on the theme of exceptionalism. "I am privileged to be a citizen of the single greatest society in all of human history," he said.

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> There's never been a nation like the United States, ever. . . . It's sometimes easy to forget how special America really is. . . . What makes America great is that there are dreams that are impossible everywhere else but are possible here. . . . This is the only place in the world where you can open up a business in the spare bedroom of your home.

Rubio often cites one of Ronald Reagan's stories. A Cuban exile told Reagan, "Don't feel sorry for us. We had somewhere to go. Where are Americans going to go if they lose this great country?" The idea is "you could lose what made us exceptional," Rubio explains. "Reagan kind of represented this re-embrace of the notion that America could remain exceptional." Now Rubio does, or will if he's elected. "It's certainly not inevitable" that America will become "just another important country. It's a choice."

America's greatness "didn't happen automatically, didn't happen accidentally, and won't continue automatically," he says. Voters must choose the future they want. Here's how Rubio described the choice to me:

> There are those who believe the country is headed in the right direction, who believe that jobs are created by the president and the U.S. Senate and the Congress and government, and who believe the world is a safer place if America retreats from it and weakens itself. People who believe those things should not vote for me. There are two other candidates running they can support.
>
> If, on the other hand, you believe it's the private sector and only private sector growth that will create the kind of revenue that we need in our country and the positive economic influence that we need, if you believe the government should not spend more money than it takes in, and if you believe the world is a safer place when America is the strongest country in the world, I'm the only candidate with ideas to help accomplish that. And that's what the choice is going to be in November.

That's a pretty stark choice. But "people are looking for voices that offer them serious choices, policy choices," Rubio insists.

> I think what they're tired of is a political process that's full of people who will say or do anything to get elected, people who treat elections like a high-stakes beauty pageant where all you have to do is shake a few hands and memorize a few lines that test well.

The key point in Rubio's speech, apart from his defense of American exceptionalism, is economic growth. "You can't build your national defenses if your economy is not generating revenue that will pay for it, and you can't pay down your debt," he says.

> I think the way you do it is you grow your economy, you find more people jobs, you create more entrepreneurs. You create new industries that multiply the number of jobs created. . . . What we are getting out of Washington today and all levels of government is anti-job creation.

His speech emphasizes the big picture, but Rubio also has a wonkish underside. Last week, he put out a dozen "simple ways to cut spending," starting with cuts of 10 percent in the budgets of the White House and Congress. Earlier, he announced 12 ways to "grow our economy" and 11 to "help the Gulf Coast economy to recover." His economic ideas include permanently extending the Bush tax cuts and ending "job-destroying double taxation of capital gains, dividends, or death."

In 2005, Rubio circulated books with blank pages, asking people to write down their "innovative ideas for Florida's future." It was a stunt that worked. The next year, he published a book with the 100 best ideas. "We passed all 100 of them in the House [and] 57 of them became law or policy in the state of Florida," he says. The ideas "are all over the place."

As a candidate, Rubio is rigidly disciplined. He refuses to discuss campaign tactics and strategy. When CNN's Wolf Blitzer interviewed him last month about extremism in the Tea Party movement, Rubio stressed his free market message. Tea Party people "want to see policies implemented at the highest levels of government that will keep us exceptional," he said.

Another example:

> BLITZER: If you were elected, would you be part of the Tea Party caucus in the United States Senate, let's say with Rand Paul, he's a Republican candidate in Kentucky, or Sharron Angle, a Republican candidate in Nevada? Would you be part of a caucus like that?
>
> RUBIO: Well, I don't know what the need for that would be obviously. . . . I'm more interested in being a part of a caucus that would lower taxes in America and create an environment where jobs are going to be created in the private sector, creating an environment where the private sector can grow and create prosperity.

When I interviewed Rubio, he answered nearly every question with snatches from his speech, no matter what I asked. Will a significant bloc of Democrats vote for Crist, as polls currently indicate? "I don't really break the electorate down that way," Rubio said. Then he invoked his idea of an electorate that chooses between candidates who like the country's direction and those who don't.

Who might the Obama White House throw its weight behind in the general election, Crist or the Democratic nominee? When his four kids are grown, "they're not going to be talking about who the White House supported," he said. They're going to be talking about whether the country chose the right direction in 2010.

Rather than challenge Crist in the Republican primary,

Rubio was urged to run for state attorney general. What was his wife's advice?

> She reminded me that this election was about the kind of country my kids would inherit . . . if we allowed them to be the first generation of Americans to inherit a diminished country. . . . Had I run for these other offices, I think she would have felt that I was just running for the title and not the issues.

Were the CPAC address and others I'd heard his basic speech? "It's the basic message," Rubio said. "Our message hasn't changed one bit." Indeed it hasn't. Then he summarized it succinctly. What are Florida's problems? Chiefly unemployment (11.5 percent), he said. Again, he delivered a capsule version of his speech.

The ability to stick to a fundamental message and ignore the small stuff is the mark of a good candidate. Recall the politicians who were skilled at this. Reagan was. So was George W. Bush. Rubio is in good company.

But all of this—the message, Rubio's strength as a speaker, his energy and passion—doesn't guarantee him a safe path to the Senate. "No one's ever seen a race like this in Florida," says LeMieux. It's unusually complicated. A Quinnipiac poll last week gave Crist a 5 or 6 point lead over Rubio, depending on who wins the Democratic primary on August 24, congressman Kendrick Meek or billionaire Jeff Greene. Rubio was ahead by 2 points in a Rasmussen poll of likely voters.

When Crist switched to independent, he was regarded as a goner. But he's recovered. His handling of the Gulf oil spill has been skillful, and his flip-flops on issues haven't hurt him appreciably. "Republicans see it as treason," says Quinnipiac's Peter Brown. "Independents see it in a different light. Democrats like it."

At the moment, Crist is getting a quarter of the Republican vote. This probably won't last. "This is a great year to be a Republican," says LeMieux, a perceptive analyst of Florida politics. "A lot of those Republicans who like Governor Crist personally are going to come home." And vote for Rubio.

This means Crist's ability to attract Democratic votes is critical. He's hired Josh Isay, a former aide to Democratic senator Chuck Schumer, and his Democratic consulting firm SKDKnickerbocker, along with several other Democratic strategists.

The White House surely could have blocked Democratic operatives from signing on with Crist. But neither President Obama nor Rahm Emanuel, his chief of staff, intervened. Obama endorsed Meek months ago but has done little to help him. Meek got 13 percent in the Quinnipiac survey.

A competitive Democratic nominee would actually help Rubio by keeping Democrats from defecting to Crist. "I can't imagine the Obama administration's political machine abandoning the Democratic nominee, especially if it's Meek," Jeb Bush says.

Meek, who is African-American, would insure a large black turnout that votes for him, not Crist. Greene, who leads Meek at the moment, might drive blacks to Crist, but he could cause a problem with independents. "Because of Greene's unlimited checkbook, it is quite possible he could hurt Crist more among independents than he would help him among blacks," according to a Florida consultant.

Despite the complications, Rubio's prospects are brighter than Crist's. He outraised Crist in the second quarter, $4.5 million to $1.8 million, and should continue to. Just as important, Rubio can rely on a massive Republican voter turnout operation. Whatever turnout machinery Crist puts together will be woefully overmatched. Meek and Greene? Their chances are minimal.

So I'm betting on Rubio. He's more conservative than the state of Florida, but not by much in 2010. As Jeb Bush says, "He's the right candidate at the right time. He's one of the most inspirational speakers I know. He lifts people's spirits. The message is we can do great things."

Sounds like Reagan, doesn't he? There are similarities. Reagan relied on a single big speech, delivered over and over with minor alterations. So does Rubio. Reagan was a conviction politician with strong patriotic feelings and an optimistic outlook about reviving America. So is Rubio. Reagan was disciplined in politics, as is Rubio. Reagan read the conservative classics. Rubio read *Atlas Shrugged* during his first session (9 weeks) of the Florida legislature, then read it again. He read the Federalist Papers after each Republican member was given a copy.

On the other hand, Reagan was inordinately likeable, had a mischievous sense of humor, and confessed that having been an actor really came in handy in politics. Those aren't traits I'd identify with Rubio, though he's anything but humorless.

Rubio is a product of a different America. His parents were part of the first wave of immigrants from Castro's Cuba in 1959. He grew up in Miami and Las Vegas. He sees America not as a "city on a hill," as Reagan did, but as a haven for freedom-seeking people around the world who view this country as exceptional.

And the issues have been turned upside down from Reagan's time. Reagan's overriding mission was to defeat communism. Rubio's is to restore prosperity—jobs, growth, innovation—at home. As one of 100 senators, assuming he's elected, Rubio won't have the ability to do things on a presidential scale. But he knows, having packaged it in a speech, what he's for and what he's against. And what America needs. ♦

The Secret History of Climate Alarmism

A very German story of power politics disguised as environmentalism

By John Rosenthal

Changes in the earth's atmosphere, the additional greenhouse effect and the resultant changes in the climate . . . represent a global danger for humanity and the entire biosphere of the earth. If no effective counteracting measures are taken, dramatic consequences are to be expected for all of the earth's regions.

This warning will undoubtedly seem familiar, perhaps even mind-numbingly so. But if the substance sounds like the same-old same-old, the date on which it was issued might seem surprising. It was not in the run-up to the Copenhagen climate summit or indeed anytime in the last decade. The above passage is nearly two decades old. It comes from a resolution adopted by the German Bundestag in September 1991.

The resolution in question summarizes and endorses the recommendations of a parliamentary commission of inquiry on "Taking Precautionary Action to Protect the Earth's Atmosphere." The commission had been set up in October 1987. Appearing before the Bundestag some seven months earlier, Chancellor Helmut Kohl had warned that the "greenhouse effect" threatened to bring about "a grave pattern of climate change" and had called for the burning of fossil fuels to be limited, not just in Germany but "worldwide."

The June 1987 motion to form the commission envisioned "greenhouse gas" emissions producing "a global warming of from three to seven degrees Celsius" and called for counteracting measures to be taken even in the absence of scientific corroboration of the supposed threat—since otherwise, the document concludes darkly, "in a few decades . . . it could be too late."

August 1986: at the birth of climate alarmism

The original impulse to take action had come from the German Physics Society, which in January 1986 published a "Warning of an Impending Climate Catastrophe." Just over six months later, in August, the newsweekly *Der Spiegel* popularized the German physicists' "warning" in a spectacular cover story headlined "The Climate Catastrophe." The image on the cover of the magazine depicted Cologne's historic cathedral surrounded by the waters of the Atlantic Ocean: a consequence of the melt-

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ing of the polar ice caps, as was explained on the inside of the issue. Thus was the "global warming" scare born. In Germany, in 1986.

In a report submitted to the Bundestag on October 2, 1990, the commission of inquiry laid out a veritable "roadmap" for concerted international action to combat "climate change." The commission called for CO_2 emissions to be cut by 30 percent by the year 2005 in all "economically strong industrialized countries." Germany itself was called upon to meet this goal. But the formulation "economically strong industrialized countries" was clearly tailored to fit Germany's major economic rivals: Japan and the United States. The report also calls for a 20-25 percent reduction in CO_2 emissions among all the countries of the then European Community and a 20 percent reduction for all industrialized countries. "One needs to convince the other countries concerned of the necessity of such ambitious targets," the report explains, "and to arrive as quickly as possible at corresponding international agreements." The report declared it to be "urgently necessary" that a first international convention on "climate-relevant emissions" be adopted "at the latest in 1992 during the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Brazil."

And so it would come to pass. It was at the 1992 U.N. conference—more commonly known as the "Rio Earth Summit"—that a certain American senator began his career as would-be prophet of warming-induced gloom and doom. Al Gore's book *Earth in the Balance* was timed for release just before the summit began. It was also here that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was opened for signature.

It would be wrong to say that the climate change convention was merely "anticipated" by the work of the German Bundestag's commission of inquiry. The commission's 1990 report contains *a full draft* of such a "framework convention." The proposed convention was supposed to be supplemented later on by a protocol establishing the concrete emissions reduction obligations of the parties. This would become the Kyoto Protocol.

The German commission stated that the protocol should "come into force by 1995 at the latest." In this respect, however, the international community was not able to keep to the schedule laid down by the German parliamentary commission. The Kyoto Protocol would first be adopted in 1997, and it would only come into force in 2005—as is well known, without the participation of the United States. Under the terms of the treaty, the assigned emissions targets are supposed to be met by the end of 2012.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the Kyoto Protocol. The German plans to unite all the industrialized countries in a common effort to reduce "greenhouse gas" emissions gave rise to a treaty that placed the overwhelming bulk of the emissions reduction burden on the United States and, to a lesser extent, Japan.

American criticism of the protocol has typically focused on the pass given to major industrializing nations like China and India. The treaty creates no concrete obligations for so-called developing countries. Only the 39 countries named in Annex I of the framework convention are assigned emissions reduction or limitation targets. All other parties to the agreement got, in effect, a free ride. Indeed, some are even paid to ride. By participating in what is known as the Clean Development Mechanism, developing countries may actually earn revenue under the Kyoto arrangements by selling "carbon credits" to countries with treaty obligations.

But the fact is that even many "Annex I" countries have no obligation to reduce their emissions under the Kyoto arrangements. Some are even expressly permitted to increase them. This group includes not only Australia and Norway, but also, thanks to an ancillary agreement, several EU member states. Others are only required to keep their emissions stable. Still others are assigned nominal emissions reduction targets, which, however, on closer inspection turn out to be de facto licenses to increase their emissions. Perhaps most remarkably of all, Germany—the would-be pacesetter in the global effort to reduce emissions—ended up having at most only a relatively trivial reduction requirement under Kyoto.

To understand how this could be so—and, above all, how it could have been so widely overlooked—we should return to the German commission of inquiry's report and consider the date of its submission. October 2, 1990. One day later, German reunification took place. When the commission proposed its ambitious target of a 30 percent reduction in CO_2 emissions for Germany and other "economically strong industrialized countries," the inevitable demise of East Germany's highly inefficient, enormously carbon-intensive industries was already underway. This is significant because the commission also proposed backdating the reference year for measuring emissions reductions to a year before the actual coming into force of the treaty. The reference year that would finally be settled upon was none other than 1990.

This reference year assured Germany a substantial carbon savings windfall from the phasing out of East Germany's obsolete industrial infrastructure. According to official statistics, from 1990 to 1995 CO_2 emissions in the eastern German states fell by a whopping 44 percent.

Germany was, moreover, not the only country to benefit from its statistical good fortune. A little-known feature

of the Kyoto agreement permitted Germany to "share" its windfall with other European countries. The Bundestag's commission of inquiry had called on the German government to establish a common emissions reduction target with its EU partners. The actual individual contributions of each of the countries could vary and were to be decided amongst themselves. Article 4 of the Kyoto Protocol is clearly designed to accommodate such an arrangement—known as a "bubble" among Kyoto *cognoscenti*.

Thus, under the terms agreed in Kyoto in 1997, each of the 15 countries that then comprised the EU is nominally committed to reducing emissions by 8 percent from 1990 levels. But, thanks to their formation of a "bubble," in reality the "EU-15" are only committed to *collectively* reducing their emissions by 8 percent. The real individual commitments of each of the countries were agreed upon prior to their ratification of Kyoto in 2002. It should be noted that, in keeping with yet another German initiative, the emissions reduction targets concern not just CO_2, but rather a bundle of "greenhouse gases" of which CO_2 is the most important component. The addition of the other gases further improved Germany's emissions record.

Germany agreed to a 21 percent reduction in emissions. This was a far cry from the 30 percent reduction in CO_2 emissions alone that the commission had recommended. It was also less than a 25 percent emissions reduction goal that the German government had set for itself. Nonetheless, a 21 percent reduction seems on first glance to represent a very generous contribution.

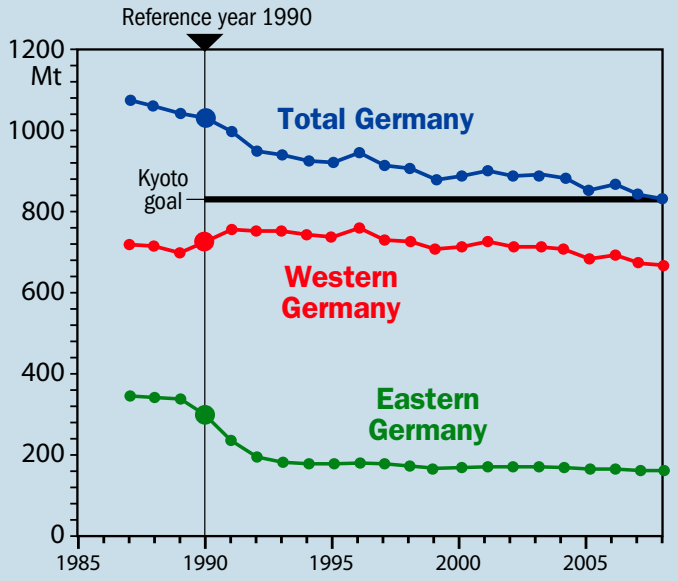
This impression is, however, deceptive. The graph above illustrates the evolution of German carbon dioxide emissions. It has been adapted from a 2010 textbook on *Renewable Energy and Climate Change* by Volker Quaschning of Berlin's University of Applied Sciences. As the blue curve shows, even if we consider just CO_2 emissions, the country has already met its Kyoto target. But as the other two curves in the graph make clear, this seemingly impressive achievement is largely just a statistical byproduct of the precipitous fall in eastern German emissions in the early 1990s. The evolution of CO_2 emissions in eastern Germany is represented by the green curve. The red curve represents the evolution of CO_2 emissions in western Germany. As can be seen, on Quaschning's calculations, they have barely diminished from 1990 till today.

To the degree that Germany has recorded any additional decline in CO_2 emissions in recent years, incidentally, it would appear mostly to be due not to the development of renewable energy sources, but rather to a simple shift away from coal—the most carbon-intensive of the fossil fuels—to oil or natural gas. The United Kingdom recorded reductions in CO_2 emissions due to the same pattern of substitution.

On closer inspection, Germany thus got off with what is in fact a remarkably light emissions reduction "burden." Thanks to the sharing of the German emissions windfall, other members of the EU-15 were let off the hook altogether.

Not All That It Seems

Carbon dioxide emissions in Germany (in metric tons)



SOURCE: Volker Quaschning, *Renewable Energy and Climate Change*

For instance, France. In his victory speech in May 2007, president-elect Nicolas Sarkozy lectured the United States on the fight against "global warming." "A great nation like the United States has the obligation not to obstruct the struggle against global warming," Sarkozy intoned, "but, on the contrary, should take the lead in this combat, since what is at stake is the fate of all humanity." It was easy for him to say. Many commentators have noted that France covers by far the greater part of its electricity needs with nuclear power and hence has only a limited dependence on fossil fuels. Less well known, however, is the fact that under the EU "bubble" arrangement France has no obligation to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions at all. It is only supposed to hold them steady at 1990 levels.

All told, seven of the 15 EU member states forming part of the EU "bubble" have no emissions reduction requirement. Five members of this group are indeed permitted to increase their emissions. Greece, for example, is permitted to increase its emissions by 25 percent; Portugal by 27 percent. According to the European Environmental Agency's 2009 report on "Greenhouse gas emission trends," of the eight EU-15 members that accepted reduction targets, only Germany and the U.K. are on track to meet them.

As for the 12 current EU member states that were still just candidates for EU membership at the time of Kyoto's adoption, these countries got even better deals. Cyprus and Malta were simply left out of Annex I. The other countries, all of them "post-Communist" Eastern European states, were assigned reduction targets of either 6 percent or 8 percent. But they were classified as "Economies in Transition" and as such permitted to opt for a year other than 1990 as their base year or to use the average over a period of years.

The choice of 1990 was already sufficiently advantageous for many of these countries, but, unsurprisingly, some of them opted to employ a base year or period upstream of 1990 when their still Communist-era industries were pumping out the maximum amount of CO_2. It is thus likewise no surprise that almost all of these countries will meet their targets without any difficulty. Miceal O'Ronain has calculated that by the end of 1998, Romania's CO_2 emissions, for example, had fallen by a whopping 56 percent from its emissions levels in its Kyoto base year of 1989. This means that Romania's nominal "obligation" to reduce emissions by 8 percent was in reality a license to increase them by more than 100 percent.

Despite the fact that the Kyoto Protocol requires little of Germany and its EU partners—or perhaps, more to the point, precisely *because* it requires so little of them—the EU has become the major promoter of climate alarmism and Kyoto-style solutions to the ostensible problem. From 2002 through 2009, the European Commission awarded nearly 300 million euros in support to European and international research projects on "climate change" and "climate change mitigation." (The disgraced "climate scientists" of the University of East Anglia were beneficiaries of no less than 12 such grants.) The EU also provides regular operating subsidies to NGOs engaged in "climate activism."

Russia is another country greatly favored by the 1990 Kyoto base year. The protocol merely requires Russia to hold its emissions steady at 1990 levels. Given the collapse of Soviet-era industry, it was and is far below those levels. Thus, the nominal "obligation" in fact guaranteed that Russia would have a vast reservoir of phantom emissions to sell on the international "carbon credits" market.

Other industrialized countries also received what amount to special indulgences. Australia was not only given the benefit of a positive target. By virtue of what is referred to in the literature as the "Australia clause," it was also allowed to include emissions from land clearing in the calculation of its emissions total for the 1990 base year. The effect of this was massively to inflate its 1990 emissions total—on some estimates, by as much as 30 percent—thus rendering its real allowance even greater.

But perhaps the most revealing example of how eager Kyoto's promoters were to swell the ratification registry—and thus isolate the United States—is provided by the case of Israel. For the purposes of the Kyoto protocol, Israel is somehow treated as a "developing" country. Consequently, it incurs no obligations under the treaty.

The United States, by contrast, neither drew any benefit from the choice of the 1990 base year nor received any other sort of indulgence. Its 7 percent reduction target means 7 percent. In light of all the legerdemain employed to render the nominal commitments of other countries meaningless, it is hardly surprising that according to the calculations of Yale economist William Nordhaus, the United States alone was slated to bear some two-thirds of the total costs of the treaty and four times the costs borne by the EU-15.

It should not come as a shock that German negotiators sought to advance German interests in the Kyoto negotiations. A curious detail about the Bundestag's commission of inquiry sets in relief the amalgam of Green idealism and brass-tacks pursuit of national interest that has characterized Germany's pushing of the "climate protection" agenda. The chairman of the commission was one Bernd Schmidbauer. In December 1991, Schmidbauer would be named the chief coordinator of all German intelligence agencies. He would hold the position for the next seven years.

The real questions that Americans need to ask concern their *own* negotiators. How could they have permitted the United States to be boxed into such an obviously prejudicial corner, and why did neither they nor the Clinton administration as such do anything to expose the ruse?

Of course, that was long ago and the persons responsible have undoubtedly moved on to other things. Take Todd Stern, for instance, who led the American negotiating team at Kyoto. Nowadays, Stern is the Obama administration's "Special Envoy on Climate Change." In this capacity, he is again America's chief negotiator in the current round of talks on a Kyoto follow-up treaty. ♦

History Corrupted

The worst textbook ever when it comes to teaching about Islam

By Stephen Schwartz

The state of California, a major player in the American textbook market, introduces its students to Islam in the seventh grade. For this purpose, the California State Board of Education has recommended the use of, among others, a world history textbook entitled *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*, issued by the Teachers' Curriculum Institute of Palo Alto. A review of the 2005 edition of this book (first published in 2004) provides a dismaying example of what has been, and in some states continues to be, wrong with public school teaching about Islam.

Not to put too fine a point on it, in these pages the history and beliefs of Islam receive special treatment accorded no other religion. This curious emphasis and flattery deserve scrutiny at a time when the three states that dominate the textbook market—California, Texas, and Florida—are officially in the process of reviewing learning standards and content for new textbooks, to be printed in 2011-13. California, however, has suspended its review process for lack of funds, which means that the standards used in producing this volume remain in force, and the textbook remains authorized for public schools. Today, given the challenge of radical Islam to the American system of liberties and the persistent conflicts involving Israel in the Middle East, what American youths are taught about Islam, and about relations between Muslims, Christians, and Jews, is of singular importance.

California's pillars of Islam

History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond has already elicited harsh comments from textbook critics. William J. Bennetta, editor of the Textbook Letter and president of the Textbook League, is an energetic monitor of falsifications and distortions in authorized teaching materials. His work has been praised by education expert Diane Ravitch. Bennetta has called the volume under review "corrupt" and "pseudohistorical," warning that it imparts a "vividly sectarian, vividly promotional" attitude toward Islam amounting to "illegal religious indoctrination." A fresh and objective look at the book confirms Bennetta's judgment of its content. But before proceeding to document that, we should note that the volume also exemplifies the current view of education and textbooks as "edutainment," framed to compete with popular culture for the attention of students. Edutainment products are like movies: When their messages are not straightforward, the underlying biases, distortions, errors, and gaps must be understood by inference.

History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond covers world history from the fall of Rome to the Enlightenment. Quite properly, the book gives most space to Western history and culture as the principal source of American civilization. Fourteen of its 35 chapters address the legacy of Rome, European feudalism, the growth of towns, the Byzantine Empire, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the age of exploration, and the scientific revolution. Other units treat the culture and kingdoms of West Africa (4 chapters), imperial China (4 chapters), medieval Japan (3 chapters), and the pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas (5 chapters). What will detain us here, however, is the unit on "The Rise of Islam," notewor-

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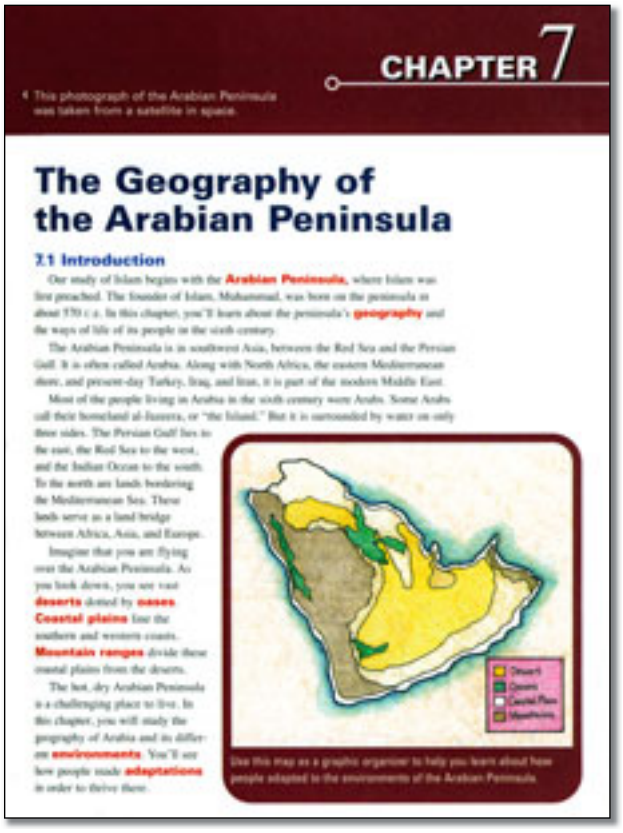
Stephen Schwartz is the author of The Two Faces of Islam: The House of Saud from Tradition to Terror *and* The Other Islam: Sufism and the Road to Global Harmony.

thy because it provides several varieties of detail no other strand of world history receives. Its 5 chapters cover the geography of Arabia, the life of the religion's founder, the teachings of Islam, the contributions of Muslims to world civilization, and the Crusades and the Spanish reconquest. Remarkably for a book of medieval history, these pages include seven photographs of Muslims engaged in religious observance today, strongly hinting at its real agenda: to depict Islam as unchanging over time, in line with the beliefs and aims of Islamist ideologues.


CHAPTER 7

A photograph of the Arabian Peninsula was taken from a satellite in space.

The Geography of the Arabian Peninsula

7.1 Introduction

Our study of Islam begins with the **Arabian Peninsula**, where Islam was first preached. The founder of Islam, Muhammad, was born on the peninsula in about 570 C.E. In this chapter, you'll learn about the peninsula's **geography** and the ways of life of its people in the sixth century.

The Arabian Peninsula is in southwest Asia, between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. It is often called Arabia. Along with North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean shore, and present-day Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, it is part of the modern Middle East.

Most of the people living in Arabia in the sixth century were Arabs. Some Arabs call their homeland al-Jazeera, or "the Island." But it is surrounded by water on only three sides. The Persian Gulf lies to the east, the Red Sea to the west, and the Indian Ocean to the south. To the north are lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea. These lands serve as a land bridge between Africa, Asia, and Europe.

Imagine that you are flying over the Arabian Peninsula. As you look down, you see vast **deserts** dotted by **oases**. **Coastal plains** line the southern and western coasts. **Mountain ranges** divide these coastal plains from the deserts.

The hot, dry Arabian Peninsula is a challenging place to live. In this chapter, you will study the geography of Arabia and its different **environments**. You'll see how people made **adaptations** in order to thrive there.

Use this map as a graphic organizer to help you learn about how people adapted to the environments of the Arabian Peninsula.

Although this textbook contains plenty of maps, the only portion of the globe whose geography is the subject of an entire chapter, intended for one week's study, is the Arabian Peninsula. This establishes from the outset the Arabocentric focus of the textbook's presentation of Islam. A preface to the unit on Islam entitled "Setting the Stage" concedes that "today Arabs are a small minority of Muslims worldwide." Nevertheless, the text insistently depicts Arabia as the central reference point for Islam. Arab Christianity is absent, even though ancient Christian communities existed throughout the period under study and survive to this day in Arab lands including Egypt, Lebanon, and Iraq. While the Persians and the Turks, the Indians and the Southeast Asians, receive passing mentions, none of these Islamic civilizations rates a chapter or even a subhead. All this reinforces the sense that Islam is "the Arab religion."

"The influence of Arabia became far more powerful with the rise of Islam," we learn. "From its central location in Arabia, Islam spread rapidly throughout the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Europe. Great cities like Cordoba in Spain, Cairo in Egypt, and Baghdad in present-day Iraq became important centers of the Islamic world." The impression is left that the global Islamic community was directed from Arabia, when in reality the Muslim lands, soon after the death of Muhammad, divided into competing domains. Neither Cordoba nor Cairo nor Baghdad in its period of greatest power and influence was ever politically subordinate to Arabia. The chapter summary repeats the aggrandizement of Arabia in world history, stating, "Arabia and nearby lands are at the crossroads of Asia, Africa, and Europe." But Arabia did not have close relations with Europe until the 20th century and the growth of energy income.

More remarkable than the singling out of the Arabian Peninsula for this exceptional treatment is the similar honor accorded one individual: The Prophet Muhammad is the only person whose life and influence merit a full chapter in this book. Indeed, Muhammad is the only individual so much as named in a chapter title. *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond* offers no age of Justinian or Charlemagne, Dante or Shakespeare, Columbus or Elizabeth, Luther or Newton or Locke. More to the point, perhaps, it contains no chapter—no paragraph even—on the life of Jesus, although the founder of Christianity is at least as consequential a figure in world history as the founder of Islam—far more so for American civilization—and his life falls within the scope of the introductory chapter on the legacy of Rome. For that matter, even so elementary a point of information as that Jesus' birth is the hinge event dividing the Western calendar is not taught in this book—though pupils do learn, in the course of their weeklong study of the life of the prophet, that "the year of Muhammad's hijrah [flight from Mecca to Medina] later became the first year in the Muslim calendar."

A few times in the chapter on Muhammad, the qualifying phrase "according to Islamic teachings" prefaces an assertion; for the most part, however, the biography of the prophet is presented as history. The student is never informed that for Muslims the portrayal of Muhammad is a component of faith rather than contemporaneously attested fact. Again the contrast with the treatment of Christianity is sharp: The sole sentence on the life of Jesus reads, "Christians are followers of Jesus, who, according to Christian Scripture, was put to death on a Roman cross in the first century C.E." What's more, even the delineation of Muham-

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mad's life is selective. The text mentions Muhammad's first wife, Khadijah, for instance, but leaves out the 10 or so other wives he married after her death—even his favorite, Aisha—as well as his concubines.

The discussion of the extension of Islamic power during and after Muhammad's life is among the parts of the textbook most open to criticism for its often euphemistic wording. While "armies" and "conquests" are mentioned, the section skips over battles led by Muhammad himself, which are a major element of Islam's foundational narrative. There is one reference to a Muslim raid on a caravan, but this hint of military activities by the early Muslims is followed by the benign comment, "Muhammad convinced other tribes to join the Muslim community."

The last section of the chapter discusses in generally reassuring terms Muhammad's successors and the building of the Muslim empire.

> When some tribes tried to break away, Abu Bakr used military campaigns to reunite the community. Under his leadership, Muslims completed the unification of Arabia. Then they began to carry the teachings of Islam beyond the Arabian Peninsula. After Abu Bakr died in 634 C.E., Caliph Umar expanded the Muslim empire. In addition to spreading the faith of Islam, conquest allowed Muslims to gain new lands, resources, and goods.

The acceptance of Ali as the fourth successor to Muhammad is mentioned, along with the war launched against him by the Umayyads, adherents of Caliph Uthman, and Ali's assassination. Even so, the split in Islam between the Sunnis (who submitted to the rule of the Umayyads) and the Shias (who supported Ali's descendants) is dealt with sketchily, though this division within Islam is relevant to such important present-day phenomena as the radical Islamist regime in Iran and sectarian conflict in Iraq.

And the Arabocentrism continues: "Slowly, the lands of the Muslim empire took on more elements of Arab culture. Muslims introduced the Arabic language. Along with Islam, acceptance of Arabic helped unite the diverse people of the empire." References to the Persian role in the development of Islamic civilization are few and perfunctory. The pupil would scarcely divine that the Islamization of Persia—once a leading ancient empire—did not result in the Arabization of its extensive and expansive culture. Rather, it fostered the emergence of a distinctive Islamic tradition, one of several. The Persian language became a medium for Muslim religious scholarship equal in status to Arabic. And Persian rather than Arab Islam was spread through Central Asia, among Turkic peoples, and penetrated the Indian subcontinent. Islamic consolidation did not survive the divisions and rivalries within the Muslim dominions beginning with the death of Caliph Ali. These elements of discord and competition are no less important than those represented by the split between Rome and Byzantium described in an earlier chapter, but the authors of this textbook do not give them an equally full discussion.

Islamic history is controversial not only among critics of the faith and of religion in general, but also among Muslims. To remove the contested elements of Islam's origins—above all the prevalence of war in early Islam and the substance of the Sunni-Shia division—from a textbook approved for use by American 7th graders implies indoctrination in a specific sectarian view, the radical Islamist view. This seemingly bland but intellectually distorted presentation is epitomized in the chapter summary, which states that Muhammad "taught equality. He told his followers to share their wealth and to care for the less fortunate in society. He preached tolerance for Christians and Jews as fellow worshipers of the one true God." This laudatory perspective—coming after a portrayal of medieval Christendom devoid of any reference to the teachings of Jesus but diligent in describing inequality, poverty, superstition, and religious persecution—skews history to present the Prophet Muhammad as the unique moral hero of the medieval world. The textbook also removes from consideration the reality that, notwithstanding the principles of Islam, Muslim societies have been (and continue to be) known for social inequality, neglect of the poor, and intolerance.

Much more objectionable material is on display in the chapter entitled "The Teachings of Islam." The prefatory section states,

> If you visited *any* city [emphasis added] in a Muslim country today, you would notice many things that reflect the teachings of Islam. Five times a day, you would hear a call to prayer throughout the city. While some people hurry to houses of worship, called mosques, others simply remain where they are to pray, even in the street. You would see people dressed modestly, and many women wearing a head scarf. You would find that Muslims do not drink alcohol or eat pork. You might learn how Muslims give money to support their houses of worship and many charitable works. Soon you would come to understand that Islam is practiced as a complete way of life.

Apart from being out of place in a work of medieval history, this passage encapsulates a fundamentalist view of Islam. In many Muslim-majority cities in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, the Balkans, Turkey, Central Asia, Russia, the Indian subcontinent, and Southeast Asia, among other countries and regions, the call to prayer is frequently ignored, people seldom, if ever, pray in the street, women wear Western-style dress, and numerous Muslims drink alcohol. (Consumption of pork is generally unknown because of limits on farming of pigs and sale of their meat,

which are easier to enforce than regulations against alcohol.) Mosques today are more often supported by state financing than, as in the past, by charitable donations.

Above all, the repeated claim that "Islam is practiced as a complete way of life" is a declaration of radical Islam, not a description of reality. Islam, like other world religions, includes wide variations in attitude and practice. These encompass the jihadism of Osama bin Laden; the rigid fanaticism of Saudi Wahhabis and Iran-backed clericalists, who insist on control over the individual's "complete way of life"; the humanistic spirituality of the Sufis; and the secularism of Muslims who embrace universal principles of individual freedom and respect for others. Millions of Muslims who are largely indifferent to the observance of religious rituals are still considered believers by traditional Islamic authorities.

The chapter goes on to introduce the Five Pillars of Islam—the declaration of faith, prayer, charity, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. To these it adds the Koran and the Sunnah (the example set by Muhammad); jihad, defined as "Muslims' struggle with internal and external challenges as they strive to please God"; and *sharia*, Islamic law. A large eight-pointed diagram on the first page of the chapter shows the Five Pillars joined to jihad, *sharia*, and the Koran and the Sunnah. The message is obvious: Jihad and *sharia* are equal in standing to the Five Pillars and the Koran and Sunnah as essential components of Islam. This projection conflicts with the reality of Islam today but faithfully reproduces the arguments of Islamist ideology.

Each of these points of doctrine or practice then receives a detailed exposition, always in tune with Islamist indoctrination. We read, for instance, "The Koran holds a central position for Muslims everywhere, guiding them in all aspects of their lives." But this is, to emphasize, false. Many Muslims in many countries treat Islam as a personal spiritual matter and are guided in other aspects of their lives by secular law and local custom. Koranic totalism about daily life is a marker of fundamentalism, not Islam in general. The doctrine that Islam dictates every aspect of experience sets the Muslim against the world in which he lives and puts him directly on the road to radicalism.

Similarly, students read that "fasting teaches Muslims self-control and makes them realize what it would be like to be poor and hungry." It would be more honest and useful in the education of Americans to admit that poverty and hunger are widespread in the Muslim world.

The section on jihad is predictably one of the worst in *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond*. It begins, "The word jihad means 'to strive.' Originally in Islam, it meant physical struggle with spiritual significance." Note the deliberate slipperiness of this phrasing—it as much as admits that jihad refers to religious war, yet it could just as well describe martial arts instruction. The fastidious use of language continues: "The Koran tells Muslims to fight to protect themselves from those who would do them harm or to right a terrible wrong. Early Muslims considered their efforts to protect their territory and extend their rule over other regions to be a form of jihad."

Put plainly, Muslims waged jihad to conquer new territory and spread their religion. Of immediate relevance to American students is the fact that Muslim radicals today, like those who flew planes into the World Trade Center, justify terrorist acts as jihad. Yet the textbook insists on an ameliorative treatment of this important and contentious topic. It states on the same page that Muslims who are engaged in jihad

> might work to become better people, reform society, or correct injustice. . . . Muslims should fulfill jihad with the heart, tongue, and hand. Muslims use the heart in their struggle to resist evil. The tongue may convince others to take up worthy causes, such as funding medical research. Hands may perform good works and correct wrongs.

But American students need to know that, in addition to these, there has always been a military interpretation of jihad. Today, Muslim extremists claim to reform society, correct injustice, resist evil, and correct wrongs by unrestrained violence including terrorism targeting civilians, both Muslim and non-Muslim alike.

The section on Islamic law similarly adopts a sanitized vocabulary. Omitted is any mention of Muslim practices offensive to most present-day Westerners, such as polygamy, forced marriage, forced divorce, public beheadings, and judicial punishments such as amputations, cruel floggings, and stonings, even though these are regularly imposed as *sharia* penalties in, most notably, the kingdom of Saudi Arabia, allegedly the world's Islamic leader and ideal.

In the matter of clothing, students are informed that "Muslim women usually wear different forms of modest dress. Most women cover their arms and legs. Many also wear scarves over the hair." The millions of Muslim women who dress in Western styles and do not affect head coverings are written out of the narrative, just as extremists seek to exclude such women from the Muslim community. That Muslim women in full face or body coverings are a minority within the religion goes unmentioned. That *sharia* interpretations in Saudi Arabia and Iran mandate punishment for women who do not obey fundamentalist dress codes is also ignored. To the extent that contemporary customs have any place at all in a textbook of medieval history, these are issues in the lives of Muslim women about which American students need to be informed.

Before leaving the subject of Islamic teachings, I must stress that no other religion receives anything like equal

time in this book. The chapter on the role of the church in medieval Europe does state, after the sentence quoted earlier about Jesus' death, "Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God, that God sent him to Earth to save people from their sins, and that he rose from the dead after his crucifixion." And two pages later, a chart displays the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church, explained as "sacred rites that Christians believed brought them grace, or a special blessing from God." But the thrust of the chapter is institutional and cultural, with sections on pilgrimages and monasticism and the great cathedrals.

The two chapters on the Reformation are somewhat more informative about Christian teachings. The Protestant reformers' insistence on making the Bible available to ordinary people in their own languages (rather than the original Hebrew and Greek or in Latin translation, accessible only to priests and scholars) is reported, as is their insistence on the Bible as the ultimate authority in religion and Jesus as the true head of the church. Even the reformers' doctrines of salvation by grace, justification by faith, and predestination are touched on. Yet the contents of the Bible, Jewish and Christian, are never described. The student—having studied each of the Five Pillars of Islam in detail and learned how the angel Gabriel revealed messages to Muhammad over the course of 22 years that were "imprinted on his mind and heart" and memorized by his followers and eventually collected into the Koran—is left in pristine ignorance of what the Bible is and contains. He will study this book's account of 1,200 years of Western experience without ever so much as hearing of Genesis, Exodus, or the prophets, the psalms or the proverbs, Job or the Song of Songs, the epistles or Revelation. The lone mention of the "gospels that tell of the life and teachings of Jesus" comes in the chapter on the teachings of Islam.

The last chapter of the unit on Islam is entitled "From the Crusades to New Muslim Empires." In a concession to the inconsistent character of Muslim rule over people of other religions, it acknowledges that, "depending on the policies of various Muslim rulers … non-Muslims' rights and freedoms varied from time to time. Some Muslim rulers allowed the destruction of important Christian churches." This and other references hint at the motive for the First Crusade—recovery, after four centuries of Islamic rule, of Jerusalem, the ancient Jewish capital where Jesus preached and was persecuted. Considering that the text has previously left out any mention of Muslim mistreatment of Jews or Christians, to say nothing of other non-Muslims—and has instead repeatedly asserted that Islam respects Jews and Christians—this minor admission is so nebulous as to be meaningless. A section on "Jews and the Crusades" is the first extensive (half-page) discussion of Jews in the book. The sole intent of the section, which recounts the attacks on Jews that accompanied the First Crusade and the ghettoization of European Jews in the later Middle Ages, is apparently to portray Christians negatively and Jews as victims.

Why would the state of California approve a textbook that affords special treatment to Islam? One might hazard that when the California standards that resulted in this wretched volume were put forward—in the late 1990s, before 9/11—state authorities saw Muslims as yet another constituent group to be catered to under the official policy of multiculturalism. But the subtextual motive in *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond* is not just to improve the self-esteem of minority students, the usually advertised goal of multiculturalism in schools. More important, there is the need to accommodate powerful ethnic lobbies. This is the obvious explanation for the inclusion in this volume of a three-chapter unit on Japan—in a state where the descendants of Japanese immigrants are seen as a political minority—but no discussion of India or of the Celtic and Slavic cultures that flourished in the Middle Ages. The ethnic lobbies, acting through their influence on elected officials, academic "educators," and public-employee unions, have achieved a monopoly over the content of textbooks, successfully pressing for the adoption of their favored items.

Among the most powerful of these lobbies are the Arab-inspired, Saudi-created entities that decades ago seized public leadership of Muslims in the United States. In 2005, California curriculum authorities proudly cited their use of guidelines provided by the radical fundamentalist Islamic Society of North America (ISNA, a darling of the Obama administration) and the Council on Islamic Education (CIE) in drawing up a framework for the treatment of religion in public schools.

This review of *History Alive! The Medieval World and Beyond* makes no claim to be exhaustive—far from it. Close examination would yield many more examples of bias. The discussions of Islamic intellectual contributions and the spread of Islam in Central Asia and West Africa, for instance, are conspicuously problematic. But the evidence offered here should be sufficient to sustain the obvious conclusion.

The book advances a fundamentalist Islamist agenda that erases from consideration conflicts within Islam from Muhammad onward that are relevant to understanding Islam in the past and Islam today, including its radical, aggressive variant. This book is not history. It is, instead, an example of sectarian and ethnic favoritism, indeed, of cultural discrimination, separatism, and propaganda for Islamic supremacy, which California and the other states that have adopted it should repudiate. ♦

Martin Amis, Tina Brown at the London launch of 'The Diana Chronicles' (2007)

Dead in the Water

The Age of Irony won't grow up

BY DAVID GELERNTER

Martin Amis's most recent novel told a story about the summer of 1970 from a modern standpoint. Strange fact: *The Pregnant Widow* revealed, without exactly meaning to, that cultural attitudes have gone virtually nowhere in the last 40 years.

It's not one of Amis's best, but *Widow* (reviewed here by Ted Gioia in April) is a memorable and striking book. It is also a case study despite itself. The story is about sex, money, and religion (mainly sex) in the minds of European young adults four decades ago. Through the varied translucent colors of the characters we see the cultural background of 1970—which is strikingly familiar. Feminism, victimism, contempt for the West and especially America, hostility to religion, indifference to art. The intellectuals, academics, reporters, and the other culture leaders who have seats in the choir of Western civilization have been at this dirge for nearly half-a-century. If they seem testy at times, who can blame them? The song is tired, but it's the only one they know. If hell is other people, it is also a song that repeats forever.

One of the most important characteristics of this postmodern age is so familiar we often miss it: It doesn't move. We are stuck. Imagine a novelist in 1970 writing about the world of 1930—or for that matter, of 1950: The changes in educated attitudes, in ways of talking and thinking, would have been large and obvious. The word "postmodernism" itself is a sign of our stuckness and refusal to think. Postmodern tells us what we used to be, not what we are.

It's easy to account for this stuckness once we have bothered to notice it. This postmodern era is the Age of Irony. Irony implies detachment. Detachment is invaluable, up to a point. But when irony tyrannizes your thinking, you are in danger of being detached from everything—of being a barge adrift, with nothing to tug or push you forward. You are going nowhere (nothing moves you) and are passionate about nothing (nothing moves you). You have shot the albatross; you are dead in the water. Self-love and self-hate are the only emotions that thrive. That is postmodernism, the age of irony: going nowhere, moved by nothing.

You see the deadness of today's educated worldview in, for example, our own special brand of environmentalism. Love of nature is a recurring theme in Western history, but it has nearly always been associated with a thrill of sublimity. The beauty and power of nature and the ocean-swell of emotion it cre-

PAUL HACKETT / REUTERS / CORBIS

David Gelernter, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *is a professor of computer science at Yale and the author, most recently, of* Judaism: A Way of Being.

ates leads to thoughts of God, or at any rate of man's more-than-natural nature (frogs and chickens don't go into transports when contemplating waterfalls) and of our spiritual duties and possibilities: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; / what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" (Psalm 8:3-4).

But today's environmentalism is hard and dry—like so much else that was young in the 1960s. It tells us only how small man is, not how large he could be, and generates scalding steam clouds of apocalyptic press releases and naggings and scoldings in lieu of great literature. This is the Sterile Age. We need to awaken from this age as desperately as Coleridge's becalmed and dying mariner needed wind in his sails.

There is an (appropriately ironic) demonstration of our sterile stuckness in Amis's fine new novel, especially if we consider it alongside two related novels by other authors.

In the summer of 1970, as Amis reports it, art has become an ironic joke. Religion has become an ironic joke. Love has become an ironic joke. The hero is a budding poet who spends the summer reading doggedly through a pile of major English novels, inspired by none and moved by none. These grim young people are spending the summer at a lavishly modernized Italian castle belonging to the family of one of the girls, somewhere between Naples and Rome; but art means nothing to them. Music means nothing. In reality, summer-of-'70 conversation among mainly English young people would almost surely have been full of the Beatles—who had just released their last album and disintegrated—and other rock bands. But Amis makes a point of omitting such talk, as if, on reflection, it had meant nothing after all.

Religion figures as a plot gimmick designed, like a mustache inked onto a photo, to make it look ridiculous. In other respects Amis keeps his hero at arm's length: They have characteristics in common but are clearly distinct; only in their shared clownish view of religion do they melt together. An important sexual event is ruined when the hero jokes about religion, and two of the main girls turn out to be religious. Later, their supposed faith is exposed in both cases as a shallow façade; and the religion joke, for that matter, isn't even the real reason why the event was cancelled. One mask hides another and another.

Political attitudinizing hasn't changed much in the meantime. When Vietnam comes up in 1970, the dominant attitude is about the same as the hero's in later, epilogal years on the topic of Iraq: "American presidents, in wartime, are always re-elected. There would be regime change in Baghdad, in 2003, so that there would be no regime change in Washington, in 2004." That long-ago Italian summer was stiff with lust but wholly innocent of passion. Amis makes the point by showing us young men whose desires focus not so much on particular girls as on particular anatomical strong points of particular girls. Love is an ironic joke. In the epilogue, the hero marries, but the attraction between husband and wife was "just love," and so the marriage never had a chance.

Irony is quintessentially the attitude of someone at a dinner party who wants you to know that he can't leave but would rather be anyplace else.

Widow shows us that nihilism, like swamp gas, had stolen into the air of 1970 and smothered everything passionate, genuine, and serious. To these sad young adults, the cultural revolution of the late 1960s was Vesuvius exploding in a fog of killer irony. And Amis's characters, according to the longish epilogue, stay trapped in these same attitudes decade after decade, like living mummies. And as for today's young adults: On the whole they are indistinguishable from Amis's 1970 models. The novel rarely even bothers with the incidentals that distinguish then from now. The hero smokes, and that's about all.

The *Widow*'s story hinges on a single sex act that changes everything. The hero duly notes "the arrival of sexual intercourse, in 1966," imitating Philip Larkin's famous report (which Amis quotes) that "Sexual intercourse began / In nineteen sixty-three." Only it didn't, and this is a consequential misconception. Sex had been regarded as a satisfying activity, worth pursuing despite technical difficulties, for some time.

Martin Amis's father was the novelist Kingsley Amis, whose best book appeared in 1960, *Take a Girl Like You*. Like *Widow*, it is about the single sex act that changes everything. (Many novels can be described this way: reductively, or simplistically, or ironically.) *Take a Girl* is nowhere near as brilliant as *Widow*, nor is Kingsley capable of writing Martin-style—fuming, corrosive prose that smarts and bites. But *Take a Girl* is a more humane book than *Widow*. And it is set in a period (circa 1960) that today's culture leaders have never heard of. Religion, especially in Europe, was a feeble old man, seemingly spent. Sex before marriage was commonplace. And yet many girls did not choose to indulge. Larkin's famous poem informs us that "Up to then"—before the great discovery of 1963—"there'd only been / A sort of bargaining, / A wrangle for the ring." (As if a woman's wish to be married were childish petulance.) But *Take a Girl* shows us a heroine whose objection to sleeping with her boyfriend is not religious and does not depend, either, on their not being engaged.

Nor does she object because she is too frigidly unliberated to enjoy sex: She wants to sleep with him (she is very clear about this), yet chooses not to. But in the end she does. Why? Because she has fallen in love with him. Even so, she is torn; but ultimately, being in love, she wants to please him.

What happened between Kingsley's 1960 and Martin's 1970 to change a young heroine's opening position from no to yes? From "no unless I love you" to "yes unless I don't like you"? What happened during the 1960s was not the gorgeous burst-into-blossoming of the sex tree but the collapse, like an aston-

ished building that, having been dynamited, falls suddenly out of the sky, of the complex structure of chivalry, religion, and tradition that used to support and succor the girl who said no. And again, once the big change had taken place, nothing much else changed in the next four decades.

Ordinarily you'd barely notice that, in *Take a Girl*, the hero's love of American jazz is part of the story. It's only noticeable in comparison to *Widow* and that balmy Italian summer of 1970, where nobody seems to love anything. The circa 1960 idea of love and sex being somehow intertwined in many female minds, of men and women approaching sex in fundamentally different ways—not because women have been warned off sex, or pettishly insist on marriage or an offer first, or have a superstitious reverence for virginity—still less because they are worried about the failure rates of contemporary contraceptives. All this is, ironically, too subtle for modern ironists to understand.

Ada (1969) is Vladimir Nabokov's masterpiece, and also asks to be compared to Amis's *Widow*. Amis admired Nabokov: *Visiting Mrs. Nabokov* (1994) is one of his essay collections. Amis's writing is Nabokov-like in its wit, dazzle, and phosphorescent vividness. At its very best—and no one can sustain this level for long—it has the sheer blazing sunlit brilliance for which Nabokov is famous. But Amis lacks Nabokov's playfulness—Amis is as playful as a pet shark—and none of his prose has Nabokov's lyrical depth and beauty. But to say that Amis's English sometimes recalls Nabokov's is saying a lot.

Ada, too, is the story of the single sex act that changes everything, although it is a sex act that does not happen. *Ada* is every bit as sex-soaked as *Widow*. Unlike other sex-obsessed modern writers, Amis and Nabokov are even capable of writing about sex erotically. But *Ada* is not only the story of a sexual relationship that lasts from puberty through old age; it is also the story of an all-consuming, lifelong love affair that shapes the lovers' lives and becomes their world. They live in it and spend their lives discovering it. The heroine's love of nature, and the literary obsessions hero and heroine share, feed the book's warmth and passion and make it as exalting as *Widow* is, ultimately, funereal.

Where did all the irony come from? What pole sent this glacier that has pinned modern culture under its massive arrogance? Irony asserts implicitly that you are superior to the thing you are ironizing over, or to its maker. Ordinarily it is a useful, important color in our emotional paintboxes. But when we paint everything this color, its character changes. Irony is quintessentially the attitude of someone at a dinner party who wants you to know that he can't leave but would rather be anyplace else. The educated elite of America and the West has been feeling mighty ironical ever since the cultural revolution: They have denounced and forsworn Western culture but never had any intention of leaving the table while the feed was underway. So they have had to settle for letting everyone know how much smarter they are than the other guests, how little they are enjoying themselves, and how superior they are to the culture they themselves superintend. (Nothing is more characteristic of the Obama administration than its heavy, graceless irony when it is trashing the opposition. But in the end this is no political issue; it is psychological and emotional.)

What did we accomplish in that great cultural revolution that created the new ice age, the Sterile Age, the Age of Irony? We manfully whacked down virginity and, crashing to earth while we celebrated it, crushed the idea of purity in the mud. And then we toppled art, which fell backwards and smashed sanctity to splinters. And then spitting on our hands we shouldered loveless sex and paraded it in triumph, which had the unplanned consequence of exalting sterility and grinding out passion among the cigarette butts. And our dry ironic laughter, which has always been joyless, has come to sound like labored breathing on a deathbed. ♦

B&A

America Mapped

How the Old World saw the New World in perspective.

BY LAWRENCE KLEPP

One of the striking things about the Age of Exploration is the central role that imaginary places played in it. The two young Germans who literally put America on the map in 1507, coining the name and attaching it to a southern slice of new world, also put the medieval legends Gog and Magog and the Kingdom of Prester John on the same map.

The Fourth Part of the World
The Race to the Ends of the Earth, and the Epic Story of the Map That Gave America Its Name
by Toby Lester
Free Press, 462 pp., $30

Late medieval travelers had looked all over for Prester John's realm—Asian steppes and mountains, India, Africa. Columbus sailed west expecting to find Cathay and Cipangu (idealized versions of China and Japan) conveniently located on the other side of the Atlantic, and never stopped thinking he had reached their vicinity. Before and after him there were fortunate isles and fountains of youth and seven cities of gold and other mirages to lure explorers on. If it weren't for illusions, it seems, no one would ever leave the house.

The America map itself took on a fabled aura since for centuries not one of the thousand original copies could be

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found. Finally, in 1901, as if out of something better than fiction, an Austrian Jesuit professor named Father Joseph Fischer, combing through dusty old volumes in the tower of a Bavarian castle, pieced together sections of a large map found in perfect condition between the beechwood covers of a 16th-century folio, and realized that he had found the missing map, almost 400 years after it was made. The "most sought-after map of all time," as Toby Lester calls it in this absorbing, suspenseful, and beautifully illustrated history of the map and the voyages, conjectures, blunders, and earlier maps that led to it, was sold to the Library of Congress for $10 million in 2003, at which time it was described as "America's birth certificate."

The map was the painstaking work of two members of a circle of scholarly and idealistic Germans in what was then the Duchy of Lorraine. Matthias Ringmann was a humanist in his early twenties who had studied in Italy. Martin Waldseemüller, for whom the map is now named, was a cartographer of about 30. Their world map would synthesize ancient learning and modern discoveries—from the newly resurrected treatise by the second-century Egyptian-Greek geographer Ptolemy to Marco Polo's matter-of-fact Far Eastern wonders to the recent travels of Amerigo Vespucci, a Florentine renaissance man whose descriptions of his voyages on Portuguese ships far down the coast of South America had raised the possibility that what was out there wasn't the east end of Asia but a new continent in need of a name.

Ringmann was among the first Germans to master Greek, and in his letters and poems he was, like other humanists, fond of inventing new words out of reshuffled Greek words. Lester suggests that Ringmann's proposal of "Amerigen or America" for the newly discovered land, offered in the book that was companion to the map, *Introduction to Cosmography*, wasn't just a tribute to Vespucci. He was also playing on the whimsical Greek echoes of "newborn" and "noplaceland" that bounce off the two coinages. In any case, Waldseemüller chose the catchier of the two, America, for his map—so we can thank him for being Americans rather than Parrotlandians, which might have been the ungainly result if an earlier name for the terra incognita had won out.

What became America was, itself, a largely imaginary place at first. A dubious (or highly embellished) letter of Vespucci's, given the title *Mundus Novus*, became a sensational early best-seller across Europe in 1503. It declared, as the title suggests, that the discovered lands weren't part of Asia but of a new world, unsuspected or considered impossible by all the best ancient and medieval authorities. It then launched the patented formula for modern publishing success by supplying lurid sex and scandals. The natives went naked, their lustful women enlarging mens' members with the strategic bites of small poisonous animals, and incest and cannibalism were practiced (not at the same time).

But the Arcadian aspects of the letter had more influence. The natives happily did without kings and priests and social divisions and private property as well as clothes. Because of abundant fruit and game, they had no need of farming and didn't have much work to do. Their rare illnesses were easily cured with local herbs, and they lived to be 150. They were stoically fearless in war and otherwise serene and joyful.

The impact of this view of an uncorrupted, idyllic America was reflected immediately, Lester points out, in Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516)—another playful coinage out of Greek, suggesting both "good place" and "no place." And it's also at work a little later in Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" (circa 1578). Both of these humanist classics satirically suggest that the intruding Europeans are the savages, not the natives. You don't have to believe in devout noble savage myths or *Avatar* to think they had a point: The reader of this book will have his stomach turned by the way the Portuguese, when they reached the Canary Islands, immediately began to dispossess, kill, and enslave the initially welcoming and generous natives, and by the early stages of the same story as it was repeated in Africa and the New World.

But of course, Lester is concentrating on the admirable, earnest, and odd characters who did the exploring, thinking, and mapping: medieval merchants, southern and northern European voyagers, Florentine and German humanists. There's the fat Franciscan monk John of Plano Carpini, who made his way across Europe, Russia, and Siberia, enduring ordeals by blizzard and hunger and marathon horse rides, to call on the Great Khan of the Mongols, who was terrorizing Europe in the 13th century. He carried with him a

highly unrealistic diplomatic overture from the pope advising the Tartars, as they were known, to cease and desist and convert. They laughed at him, but John somehow made it back alive, and his account of the journey turned him into a celebrity. The more familiar stories about Marco Polo, Vasco da Gama, Columbus, John Cabot, and others still offer, in Lester's retelling, new angles and revelations.

Finally, there are the maps. They quickly went from being iconic medieval devotional objects, dominated by religious symbolism and dividing the world into its three ordained, symmetrical, smoothly contoured parts (Asia, Europe, and Africa), to the meticulous, elaborately colored and illustrated and inscribed maps of Waldseemüller and others that depicted the world in all its seductive irregularity and mystery, and changed the way it was understood.

They are wonderful to look at. You start wishing that the world deserved the beautiful maps that have been made of it. In any case, for those who love old maps and traveler's tales, Toby Lester's book is a sumptuous feast in the storied, opulent kingdom of Prester John. ♦

B&A

Cities of Tomorrow

The future of urban America is horizontal.

BY WILLIAM MCKENZIE

My wife and I spent a delightful weekend with our twin children in New York City as the school year ended. Being only seven, our young Texans had never set foot in New York. But they knew about it, thanks to Eloise's haunts at the Plaza. New York held a special fascination for our daughter after she read umpteen jillion Eloise books and watched hours of Eloise DVDs with her brother.

Many people hate New York, but it has a special draw for other Americans. Put me in that camp. I love its density, crowds, and pace. But the reality is that the typical American city is moving away from the model of New York, especially Manhattan. Many Americans, including those of us who love New York, are choosing to live in newer cities such as Phoenix, Denver, Atlanta, and Dallas. (The latest census data show Dallas-Fort Worth is America's fastest-growing metropolitan area.)

They operate with a set of arrangements that contrast with the European-style city you see in New York, Chicago, or San Francisco: walkup apartments, towering skyscrapers, pedestrian traffic. Those feed the pulse of Manhattan, Chicago, and San Francisco, much as Paris and London thrive around the clock with restaurants, groceries, and shops that residents walk to on their way home, or stop by late at night. As Joel Kotkin expertly explains here, American cities are mostly operating on a new template. They are "multipolar, auto-car-dependent, and geographically vast," he writes. Kotkin contends that these decentralized cities benefit from their vast geography and "smaller constellation of subcenters."

The Next Hundred Million
America in 2050
by Joel Kotkin
Penguin, 320 pp., $25.95

The Next Hundred Million is worth reading on several levels, but Kotkin's analysis of the type of metropolitan areas we are living in today is the most important. Whether you are just curious about what's ahead, a real estate developer looking for the trends shaping America, or a political strategist thinking about what the public square will look like over the next few decades, his ideas must, at least, be considered.

Sure, cities like Houston present a "wow" skyline and ample new options for living in the central core, often built up around new downtown stadiums. And within the confines of those downtowns, you can have the urban lifestyle that attracts people to New York, Chicago, or San Francisco. But their downtowns are only one node among many. Once you leave the central business district, the skyscrapers fade away into miles of low-rise residences and businesses until you hit the next set of high-rises, office towers, and multilevel shopping malls. That is certainly true for Dallas and Houston: They are more like Los Angeles, the granddaddy of the new American city, in that they have a business district in their downtowns, a medical district someplace else, a technology corridor (or what's left of one) over yonder, and big shopping districts built up around malls. Each node is connected to the other by freeways, which allow people to move fairly quickly from point to point.

Those who love the New York model may loathe the car-dependent, decentralized nature of places like Phoenix. But Kotkin, who lives in Los Angeles, points out that their big size allows them to remain affordable for middle-class families. There is room for more people, which keeps the supply-and-demand curve in relative balance. And he offers a great term for these new metropolitan areas: He calls them "aspirational cities." They don't have a Broadway or a Times Square, which "superstar cities" such as New York offer, but they aspire to greatness through creating opportunities. And they do so largely through being relatively easy places in which to live. Housing is more affordable; quality schools exist in their suburbs; new art centers provide good cultural offerings.

One thing that struck me after moving back to Texas from Washington in 1991 is how many times you hear transplants to Dallas say that they like the "ease" of the place, even if they don't like the heat and the flatness. They also

William McKenzie, a Dallas Morning News *editorial columnist, won this year's Pulitzer Prize for editorial writing.*

like getting more bang for their housing dollars. That not only includes getting more square feet at a reasonable price, but also a large lot, often in those suburbs that Kotkin extols. They are a major part of the decentralized city, offering people "a spot of land and a little breathing room," as he puts it.

I confess that my family and I live in an old neighborhood near downtown Dallas where you don't see many strip malls or big box stores. So I'm one of those who cringe while driving through Dallas's many suburbs with their malls, chain stores, and same old-same old restaurants. But those suburbs are what keep places like Dallas affordable. Kotkin calls this "the power of vanilla," and their ordinariness keeps them accessible places, especially for families with children. By contrast, the middle class is being squeezed out of Manhattan, which is increasingly a luxury city for high-income workers. (Kotkin notes that a recent Brookings Institution study reports that New York has the smallest share of middle-class families in America.)

There's a temptation, even in aspirational cities, to focus money and attention on developing "glamour zones" such as New York offers. We have one in Dallas, built up around a new basketball arena. There's nothing wrong with destination attractions, per se, but Kotkin's point is that aspirational cities must not forget that good jobs, safe neighborhoods, and affordable housing are what draw people to them.

One interesting wrinkle in this tale of the suburbs surrounding the "new American city" is that they are getting more diverse, as Kotkin reports. He considers them the new melting pot. You can see this diversity in one of Dallas's oldest white-bread suburbs, Richardson, where its school district now educates children who speak dozens of different languages. Its Asian shopping district hums with food stores you wouldn't find anywhere else in North Texas. And perhaps not so notably, it was home to the Holy Land Foundation, which the Bush administration busted on charges of financing terrorism.

Diversity figures prominently in *The Next Hundred Million*, and smart conservatives will listen up. Some may dislike the prevalence of immigrants in our communities, but immigrants will drive America's growth—especially if we make room for them through a saner immigration system. At the outset, Kotkin contrasts the projected growth in America's population, that next hundred million, to the flat population rates projected for Europe and parts of Asia. The fact that people want to come here speaks to the vibrancy of our society—and to what will keep our economy growing as well. And not just in creating low-skill jobs—which no society should bet its future upon—but in generating high-skill jobs, which attract educated immigrants.

There is a risk, of course, if we don't manage immigration right, and that is where conservatives are right to worry. We need to make sure we master the assimilation of immigrants into our society. As Kotkin writes, "It will not be bloodlines but the ideals and attitudes shaped by a uniquely diverse society." He believes the "binding principles" that differentiate us from the rest of the world will be "a common belief system and a spiritual core, a sense of a shared destiny, a culture of opportunity and a recognition of the importance of community and family."

Perhaps we could add a few more principles to this, such as understanding the history of the United States of America. But he's basically correct, particularly with that last part about community and family.

As it happens, my newspaper is engaged in a campaign to close the gap between Dallas's wealthier northern half and its poorer southern half. We've been writing about economic strategies, but we're also focusing on the difference that strong families can make in turning around the southern districts of Dallas where many new immigrants live. Good schools are a big part of the equation, and not just in Dallas: They are the key to social mobility and to acquiring a sense of America's binding principles. Here's hoping Republicans will take up where George W. Bush left off with his important emphasis on good public schools.

I don't buy all of Kotkin's points. He's too down on downtowns, for example, seeing them as having mostly symbolic importance in the future. (In Dallas, at least, many businesses still flock to the central city.) But his main point is an important one: America's future doesn't rest with Washington calling the shots but with the evolution of our local communities. New York remains a helluva town, but there's a counter-reformation going on across the rest of urban America. ♦

Dallas skyline, 2005

B&A

God Help Us

The conquest of disbelief in the midst of the modern world. **BY JOSEPH LOCONTE**

People of faith have long assumed that the Devil's principal stratagem is to tempt his victims with thoughts of revenge, deceit, lust, pride, and other deadly sins. In his diabolical classic *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis suggests a very different approach: "It is funny how mortals always picture us as putting things into their minds," explains Screwtape, a senior demon advising his protégé. "In reality our best work is done by keeping things out."

The Rage Against God
How Atheism Led Me to Faith
by Peter Hitchens
Zondervan, 224 pp., $22.99

If true, this insight helps explain the radically divergent paths of the British-born author-brothers Christopher and Peter Hitchens. Both men rejected the Christianity of their youth and turned to Trotskyism and secularism. Christopher eventually abandoned Marxist ideology and transformed his atheism into a sideline of book publishing and public debates. A stint as a Moscow correspondent helped Peter shed his leftist illusions as well. Yet he eventually returned to the Anglican faith because he couldn't keep certain ideas—provocative, chastening, awful ideas—out of his mind.

In *The Rage Against God* he delivers a spirited defense of Christianity that is a mix of memoir, cultural critique, and history lesson. He is well-positioned for the task: A columnist for the *Mail on Sunday*, Hitchens has reported from all over the world and in 2010 won the Orwell Prize for foreign reporting. He has written several books on the moral and political decline of Britain. His latest work, with its candor about the failings of Christianity there, may not endear him to members of the church establishment; nevertheless, his treatment of the social and spiritual threat of the new atheism—what he calls "the League of the Militant Godless"—should be required reading for people of all faiths.

There can be little doubt that Peter Hitchens's rejection of Christianity was as thoroughgoing as that of his famous brother. While a teenager on the playing fields of his Cambridge boarding school, Hitchens burned his Bible in a "full, perfect, and complete rebellion against everything I had been brought up to believe." Enlightened self-interest would function as his moral compass.

With an impressionistic style, he describes the loss of faith in England after the Second World War, a story that contrasts starkly with the American scene. In the triumphant, dynamic, postwar United States, American religion was booming: robust church attendance, the popular crusades of Billy Graham, Hollywood blockbusters such as *Ben-Hur* and *The Ten Commandments*. In Great Britain, by contrast, the decline of empire and a grim economy became linked in many minds to the bankruptcy of the Church of England. It was a season of severe disillusionment: "Those who fought so hard to defend Britain against its material enemies did so at a terrible spiritual cost," Hitchens writes. "War does terrible harm to civilization, to morals, to families, and to innocence."

His embrace of Soviet communism would prove even more disappointing. In Moscow he witnessed the degradations of an atheistic regime: its despotism, staggering inequities, coarseness, and everyday hopelessness. He recalls its victims being discovered in unmarked graves in parks near his Moscow residence. He saw a society "from which the whole apparatus of trust, civility, and peace has been stripped," and it led him to ponder how these qualities could be preserved in the absence of religious conviction.

Although he commendably avoids personal attacks on his brother, he takes him to task on this point, particularly as it appears in his recent *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. Christopher never fully confronts the innate malevolence of atheistic communism; he even seeks to blame Soviet savagery on religion itself. This is an intellectual deceit that Peter cannot abide, and his sketch of the Soviet Union's assault on Christianity—its "institutional loathing for the teaching of religion"—is expertly drawn.

Peter Hitchens can be brutally frank about the problem of politicized religion; he abhors the corrupting influence of faith-based patriotism. Yet here he goes too far. He allows the excesses of the Allied effort against the Nazis, for example, to overshadow the central achievement of the Second World War: the preservation of a measure of justice and humanity that would have perished in the racist fury of Hitlerism. Is there no role for religion in inspiring the virtues required for fighting just wars? The bitterness of Hitchens's youthful disenchantment with British patriotism seems to linger.

Nevertheless, there are greater dangers in play. Hitchens describes, as only an ex-Communist could, a new specter haunting the West: the specter of belligerent atheism. He points to various campaigns to defame Christian belief, to denounce the religious education of children as child abuse, and to exclude religious ideals from democratic life. "A new and intolerant utopianism," he writes, "seeks to drive the remaining traces of Christianity from the laws and constitutions of Europe and North America." It is a resuscitated version of the League of the Militant Godless, the

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name of a Soviet-era social movement to eradicate religion. The ultimate objective, he says, is man's radical liberation from his Creator.

The burden of *Rage* is to insist that along this path lies the eclipse of freedom, personal and political, as the new elites consolidate control. And Hitchens's alternative vision is anchored in history and in personal experience. Surrounded by secular and sophisticated colleagues all his life, he nonetheless couldn't ignore "the old unsettling messages" of mortality and sin. In the 1990s, on a trip to Burgundy in search of fine wine, he took an artistic detour and found himself gazing at Rogier van der Weyden's *The Last Judgment*. The depiction of individuals fleeing the pit of hell—naked, suffering, mournful, terrified—seized him.

> I had a sudden, strong sense of religion being a thing of the present day, not imprisoned under thick layers of time. A large catalogue of misdeeds, ranging from the embarrassing to the appalling, replayed themselves rapidly in my head. I had absolutely no doubt that I was among the damned, if there were any damned.

Peter Hitchens's lucid memoir of a prodigal son reminds us that these are not thoughts which, once allowed to enter the human mind, naturally serve the Devil's purpose. Indeed, as C.S. Lewis suggested, such ideas can become a means of divine grace, for they help awaken a man's reason, as well as his conscience. "And once it is awake," asks Screwtape, "who can foresee the result?" ♦

B&A

Over the Transom

Chilling tales from the literary slush pile.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Last year I was talking to a literary agent and friend about the dire manuscripts I am sometimes asked to read by neighbors, troubled youths, swains of hairdressers, and the man in the dark trench coat who stands at the back of the room at every book-signing, and then thrusts a grimy manuscript into your hands whose first paragraph describes the ritual dismemberment of someone on *Friends*. I told my friend that I had to handle situations like this about twice a year, and that it was the part of my job I most dreaded, because I never looked at a manuscript without warning the fledgling author that I would tell him exactly what I thought of it—and then, if necessary, alert the forensic pathologists at Quantico.

This straightforward approach always, always ends badly: You are never forgiven for lording it over the hapless amateur, even though you yourself never tried to sneak into the publishing world this way when you were young and unpublished. Nor did you ever ask anyone to read a novel about a doomed interracial romance between star-crossed ghosts, or a retelling of the *Iliad* with Beantown *mafiosi* as the principals. But on the few occasions when I have deviated from my principles, and encouraged the resolutely giftless, they soon turned up with yet another abysmal manuscript. And then I had to let them have both barrels right between the eyes.

There were books about phlegmatic vampires and books about the spiritual side of anorexia.

My friend had little sympathy for my plight. A big part of her job was to sift through dozens of idiotic query letters pitching books every day, seeking the proverbial needle in a very unappetizing haystack. That afternoon she began sending me the worst query letter she received each day. Eventually she simply sent me the first one she read each morning, because they were equally imbecilic, so singling one out as the very worst seemed pedantic.

The proposed books—most of them already written—were hair-raisingly bad, so bad that they twice made my computer crash. Yet often enough they bristled with a chutzpah bordering on arrogance: This is your last chance to get in on the ground floor, sister. There were how-to-be-successful books by people who did not have jobs. There were books about women from whose bosoms love had been ripped in the very spring of youth, alas. There were books about phlegmatic vampires. There were books about the spiritual side of anorexia. There were books about dissolute mermaids. There were proposals for books that had not yet been written because they required 20 percent more letters than the conventional 26-letter alphabet the rest of us use. There were books that explained how the universe worked, written by the structurally unemployed. There were lots of abuse books. Some involved vampires. There were books about how baking a pie could change the world. There were books about unforgettable dogs the public needed to get to know better. There were books about wraiths, specters, hermaphrodites, gargoyles, libertarians.

The thing the fiction proposals had in common was that they involved characters with names that do not appear in nature: Logan, Ariadne, Portia. The writers wrote badly, if at all. But the truth is that they did not really want to write; they wanted to rewrite. They had persuaded themselves that they could write as well as Stephen King, James Patterson, Danielle Steel. Their stories were variations on stories that had been written many times before: Jade teams

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up with Lance, Cheyenne, and Cujo to stymie the Scottish vampires laying waste to antebellum Louisiana while slimy extraterrestrials plan the big haymaker for a nation that never, ever suspects that mutant albino survivors of Chernobyl have planted viruses in the global financial network.

In short, a twice-told tale.

At first I would laugh at these things. They were jubilantly brainless. But after awhile they didn't seem so funny: These were real people sending in these pitch letters, and no matter how moronic their plots, and no matter how stilted their language, and no matter how improbable it was that they would ever get the four-book deal they sought—nay, demanded!—these were real people with real dreams. Little by little I started to feel sorry for them. I felt even sorrier when I read an article in the *Wall Street Journal* reporting that Random House had last accepted an unsolicited, un-agented manuscript from the slush pile in 1991.

But quickly that sympathy gave way to a different kind of sympathy for my friend the agent, and all those like her. What was it like to have to deal with these abysmal proposals and manuscripts every single day? What was it like to have to keep saying no to people who would never, ever hear the word "yes"?

"It's exhausting," she said. "It's very hard to keep managing the emotional expectations of people you have never met. You try to be as nice to them as you can, but if they're persistent you have to stop answering their calls and emails. Sometimes they can be scary."

I then consulted an editorial assistant at a major publishing house who reads, perhaps, 200 manuscripts or book proposals a year, mostly culled from the slush pile. Not one has ever made it into print. Not one was even in the ballpark. So how did she approach this heartrending situation on a day-to-day basis?

"If I'm already feeling depressed and nostalgic, I don't read anything from the slush pile because it will make me feel more depressed," she said. "The books are massively overwritten, and it's heartbreaking to realize that people have been working on them for 10 years. They don't understand the business. They don't even understand that book publishing is a business. They don't want to be read; they just want to be validated. And they expect me to validate them. They don't even want a career. If they could, they would bypass the publishing process altogether, just so they could have readers who love them. And that is sad."

The agent and the editorial assistant had similar stories about overbearing phone calls, copious tears, hopelessly unpublishable writers trying to sneak past security to wangle a face-to-face meeting during which they could bring the full force of their *Oprah*-ready personalities to bear before the cops turned up. There were also genuine concerns that some of the writers might do themselves grievous bodily harm.

"I try to be as nice to them as I can," said the editorial assistant. "But it doesn't always work. Sometimes they get mad. Then they get crazy. And then they get mean."

"The first rule is: Don't engage," added the agent. "You send them a note saying that this is not right for us and wish them good luck and hope that they go away. But some are very persistent. And they can be scary. Men trying to write as women are the worst. They come up with some very creepy concepts."

That afternoon, as if on cue, my agent friend sent me a proposal from a man who asked if she would rather get rich working with him, or be like everybody else and perform a sex act on a famous Hollywood producer who had stolen all of the author's ideas, leaving him penniless.

I told my friend that if she wanted to stop forwarding the proposals, I would be okay with that. ♦

B&A

The Truman Show

Sometimes a piece of pop fluff is just that.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

A successful work of pop culture is usually the result of a happy series of accidents that bring together a bunch of disparate, often disharmonious, people who nonetheless manage collectively to produce something notable and enduring. Producing a good movie, or a good TV show, or a good mass-market anything, has to be accounted among the most fortuitous events in the annals of art, popular or otherwise.

The reason that luck plays such a role in popular culture is that, no matter what snake oil its makers try to sell about their aesthetic goals, their ultimate motivation is money, not art. And while you can buy almost anything, you can't buy the abstract qualities that make a work of art memorable—originality, in particular. Sammy Cahn, one of the great Tin Pan Alley lyricists, used to answer the age-old question, "Which comes first, the music or the lyrics?" with the tart reply: "The phone call." That phone call came from the man with the checkbook.

Joseph L. Mankiewicz, whose writing and direction of the backstage comedy-drama *All About Eve* provided us with another Hollywood high-water mark, and whose creative control over his own work should have suggested he might consider himself a kind of artist, turned the very idea into the setup for a self-deprecating punchline. "I am never quite sure whether I am one of the cinema's elder statesman," he said, "or just the oldest whore on the beat."

Pop culture matters; its influence is undeniable, and vast. But individual works of pop culture rarely matter

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in and of themselves. They are just too thin, too fleeting, too unimportant—more a reflection of the social moment in which they were made than a generator of social change in themselves. This makes it very difficult to subject pop-culture works to study without the study itself coming to seem somewhat ridiculous. Serious examination of pop culture tends to ascribe unwarranted profundity to works that cannot bear the weight of such scrutiny because that weight destroys the very qualities that made them interesting or charming or notable in the first place.

That can even be true of cultural studies that try to keep it light and fluffy. This is what has happened with a new book, a confectionary consideration of one of the most fortuitous Hollywood accidents. Sam Wasson's *Fifth Avenue, 5 A.M.: Audrey Hepburn, Breakfast at Tiffany's, and the Dawn of the Modern Woman* (Harper, $19.99) is a 256-page book about a single movie, the gloriously glossy 1961 comedy-drama *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. It takes far more time to read Wasson's exegesis than to watch the source material, even twice over. The book has 150 more pages than the Truman Capote novella from which the movie derives. Imagine that the old Signet Classics paperback you had of *Oliver Twist* had featured an introduction five times longer than Dickens's novel itself and you get a sense of the absurdity of Wasson's project. (Granted, the Talmud has many more pages than the Hebrew Bible, but then, we're talking about the Talmud and the Hebrew Bible, not *Breakfast at Tiffany's* and *Fifth Avenue, 5 A.M.*)

Wasson doesn't try, the way an academic film scholar would, to deconstruct the movie or place it under a critical microscope. Rather, the book is an endless behind-the-scenes account of the movie's genesis combined with a ludicrously airy semi-thesis about the way *Breakfast at Tiffany's* heralded a new sexual and social maturity in Hollywood's portrayal of America, and in America's understanding of itself. Plus it introduced the little black dress, tailored by Givenchy for its star, Audrey Hepburn.

I suppose if you're interested in the history of the little black dress, this will either come as news to you or as a nostalgic confirmation of something you already know. But the notion that *Breakfast at Tiffany's* represented a leap forward into new adult moviemaking even at the time it was made is silly, no matter that Wasson gets the venerable film critic Judith Crist to say as much. It was part of a wave of pictures, beginning in the mid-1950s, that staged an assault on the social status quo established by Hollywood's self-censors in the 1930s. It was no dirtier than *How to Marry a Millionaire*, which came out in 1953 and also portrayed girls on the make for rich guys in New York. It was far from the first movie, or the first comedy, to feature premarital sex; even the relationship between its male lead, Paul, and the woman keeping him was taken directly from *An American in Paris*, the Gene Kelly musical that came out a decade earlier, in 1951.

What makes *Breakfast at Tiffany's* so remarkable, so delightful, and so worthy of repeated viewings even now, 50 years after its release, is its continually shifting tone. It moves from wild comedy (including the best party scene ever filmed) to rueful romance to pointed satire to family melodrama, cast against the backdrop of a wonderfully idealized New York of brownstones and nightclubs full of glamorous models and naïve millionaire industrialists.

The glue that holds *Breakfast at Tiffany's* together is Holly Golightly—or rather, the magical way writer George Axelrod, director Blake Edwards, and Hepburn convert Capote's sordid character, who was basically a hooker, into a classic cinematic dreamer. In the end, Holly is just a backwoods kid living a dreamy big-city life. "She's a phony," says her movie-agent friend O.J. Berman in one of the cinema's most memorable lines. "But she's a real phony, know what I mean?"

Audrey Hepburn peering into Tiffany's window

NEWSCOM

It took all of them working together —Edwards, Axelrod, and Hepburn —to get this right, and they didn't even know that was what they needed to do. If any of them slipped, got it wrong, missed a beat, Holly's intolerable qualities would have been revealed and the movie would have turned sour and discomfiting. Instead, their collaboration successfully turns the "real phony" into a madcap heroine. It's a lie, and a pretty bald lie at that, and one Capote, who was no sentimentalist, didn't tell in his book. But it's the kind of lie at which Hollywood, at its best, excels. And it's probably wisest not to look too closely at it. Certainly not over the course of 200-plus pages. ♦

Not a Parody

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"The one thing that does frustrate me sometimes is the sense that we shouldn't be campaigning all the time. There is a time to campaign. And then there is a time to govern."

—Barack Obama on* The View*, July 29