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ETHAN GUTMANN

the weekly Standard

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"History is replete with examples of wasteful defense spending, such as the $436 hammer and the $640 toilet seat. The latest is a $2.9 billion alternate engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. This time Congress is to blame, not the Pentagon. Competition does not mean buying two of everything. Unfortunately, members of Congress often ensure that losing bidders receive pork-barrel earmarks."

Tom Schatz, *Council for Citizens Against Government Waste*

"For those who aren't familiar with the alternate engine for the Joint Strike Fighter, it's the military's version of a Bridge To Nowhere. The Pentagon has said repeatedly it doesn't want or need the engine, and both the Bush and Obama administrations have tried to eliminate it. You can't get more bipartisan than that. But a stubborn Congress controls the purse strings and won't relent."

Cal Thomas, *USA Today*

"The $3 billion contract under consideration would fund the program for the next 6 years, on the faulty assumption that this artificially constructed competition will produce savings for taxpayers…we urge you to vote against any funding for the Joint Strike Fighter engine program and look forward to working with you to end the wasteful earmark process as a whole."

Grover Norquist, *Americans for Tax Reform*

"GE typifies the large rent-seeking companies that wage battle not in the marketplace, but in the halls of Congress. Taxpayers and consumers cannot afford to fund the pet projects of politicians and corporations, especially in an economic downturn. Unfortunately, the consumer's voice has been lost in the din of corporations scrambling for government handouts."

Matt Kibbe, *President, FreedomWorks*

"For Congress to insist on an alternative engine, which costs billions on the front end for less-than-concrete savings on the back end, is fiscally unsound. It's time to get out of the alternative engine morass and instead work harder to keep the whole F-35 program on-time and on-budget."

Pete Sepp, *Executive Vice President, National Taxpayers Union*

"The three billion dollars that supporters of this program are seeking for a favored contractor through the earmark process is money that the White House and the Pentagon under both Republican and Democratic Presidents feel does not need to be spent for any valid national security or defense purpose."

David Keene, *Chairman, The American Conservative Union*

Look at the facts. Some in Congress still wish to continue wasting $2.9 billion on an extra engine for the Joint Strike Fighter. All while outsourcing hundreds of American jobs to factories in the United Kingdom. Budget watchdog groups agree that taxpayers and our nation can't afford it. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates says his department doesn't want this earmark, can't find a business case for the extra engine that makes sense, and that there is no benefit to further competition. Tell your Congressional representatives to stop the funding for this wasteful earmark **at f135engine.com.**

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COVER: NOËL COWARD, BY MARK SUMMERS

Giving Thanks for Our Warriors

What follows are excerpts from remarks by Marine Lt. Gen. John F. Kelly to the Semper Fi Society of St. Louis on November 13. Kelly's son, Marine 1st Lt. Robert Michael Kelly, 29, had been killed in action four days earlier in Sangin, in southern Afghanistan, while leading his platoon on a combat patrol:

'Those with less of a sense of service to the nation never understand it when men and women of character step forward to look danger and adversity straight in the eye, refusing to blink, or give ground, even to their own deaths. . . . No, they are not victims but are warriors, your warriors, and warriors are never victims regardless of how and where they fall. Death, or fear of death, has no power over them. Their paths are paved by sacrifice, sacrifices they gladly make . . . for you. . . .

"Two years ago when I was the commander of all U.S. and Iraqi forces, in fact, the 22nd of April 2008, two Marine infantry battalions, 1/9 'The Walking Dead,' and 2/8 were switching out in Ramadi. . . . Two Marines, Corporal Jonathan Yale and Lance Corporal Jordan Haerter, 22 and 20 years old respectively, one from each battalion, were assuming the watch together at the entrance gate of an outpost that contained a makeshift barracks housing 50 Marines. . . . Yale was a dirt poor mixed-race kid from Virginia with a wife and daughter, and a mother and sister who lived with him and he supported as well. He did this on a yearly salary of less than $23,000. Haerter, on the other hand, was a middle-class white kid from Long Island. They were from two completely different worlds. . . . But they were Marines, combat Marines, forged in the same crucible of Marine training, and because of this bond they were brothers as close, or closer, than if they were born of the same woman.

"The mission orders they received from the sergeant squad leader I am sure went something like: 'Okay you two clowns, stand this post and let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass. You clear?' I am also sure Yale and Haerter then rolled their eyes and said in unison something like: 'Yes, Sergeant,' with just enough attitude that made the point without saying the words, 'No kidding sweetheart, we know what we're doing.' They then relieved two other Marines on watch and took up their post at the entry control point of Joint Security Station Nasser, in the Sophia section of Ramadi, al Anbar, Iraq.

"A few minutes later a large blue truck turned down the alley way—perhaps 60-70 yards in length—and sped its way through the serpentine of concrete jersey walls. The truck stopped just short of where the two were posted and detonated, killing them both catastrophically. Twenty-four brick masonry houses were damaged or destroyed. A mosque 100 yards away collapsed. The truck's engine came to rest two hundred yards away knocking most of a house down before it stopped. Our explosive experts reckoned the blast was made of 2,000 pounds of explosives. Two died, and because these two young infantrymen didn't have it in their DNA to run from danger, they saved 150 of their Iraqi and American brothers-in-arms. . . .

"What we didn't know at the time, and only learned a couple of days later after I wrote a summary and submitted both Yale and Haerter for posthumous Navy Crosses, was that one of our security cameras, damaged initially in the blast, recorded some of the suicide attack. It happened exactly as [Iraqi policemen on the scene] had described it. It took exactly six seconds from when the truck entered the alley until it detonated.

"You can watch the last six seconds of their young lives. Putting myself in their heads I supposed it took about a second for the two Marines to separately come to the same conclusion about what was going on once the truck came into their view at the far end of the alley. Exactly no time to talk it over or call the sergeant to ask what they should do. Only enough time to take half an instant and think about what the sergeant told them to do only a few minutes before: 'Let no unauthorized personnel or vehicles pass.' The two Marines had about five seconds left to live.

"It took maybe another two seconds for them to present their weapons, take aim, and open up. By this time the truck was halfway through the barriers and gaining speed the whole time. Here, the recording shows a number of Iraqi police, some of whom had fired their AKs, now scattering like the normal and rational men they were—some running right past the Marines. They had three seconds left to live.

"For about two seconds more, the recording shows the Marines' weapons firing nonstop . . . the truck's windshield exploding into shards of glass as their rounds take it apart and tore into the body of the son-of-a-bitch who is trying to get past them to kill their brothers—American and Iraqi—bedded down in the barracks, totally unaware of the fact that their lives at that moment depended entirely on two Marines standing their ground. If they had been aware, they would have known they were safe . . . because two Marines stood between them and a crazed suicide bomber. The recording shows the truck careening to a stop immediately in front of the two Marines. In all of the instantaneous violence Yale and Haerter never hesitated. By all reports and by the recording, they never stepped back. They never even started to step aside. They never even shifted their weight. With their feet spread shoulder-width apart, they leaned into the

danger, firing as fast as they could work their weapons. They had only one second left to live.

"The truck explodes. The camera goes blank. Two young men go to their God. Six seconds. Not enough time to think about their families, their country, their flag, or about their lives or their deaths, but more than enough time for two very brave young men to do their duty . . . into eternity. That is the kind of people who are on watch all over the world tonight—for you." ♦

Another Expensive Bridge to Nowhere

Connoisseurs of the *New York Times* will recall its breathless, voluminous coverage of the conception and birth of Air America, the left-wing alternative to conservative domination of talk radio. Curiously, the swift collapse and demise of Air America did not rate the same saturation coverage—in fact, other stories seem to have crowded that one altogether from its pages—but the episode did affirm the *Times*'s status as the herald of Good News for right-thinking people. Which is why The Scrapbook chuckled with delight the other day when we noticed another glimmer of progressive hope in the pages of the *New York Times*: "Effort to Set Up Liberal Counterweight to G.O.P. Groups Begins."

As readers are no doubt aware, Republicans never prevail in elections on the basis of issues, or as winners of a contest between liberalism and conservatism. Republicans win because their candidates are actors who know how to hypnotize the electorate (Ronald Reagan), or because of race-baiting Willie Horton ads (George H.W. Bush), or because the governor of Florida conspired with the U.S. Supreme Court to steal an election (George W. Bush), or this year's excuse—that malevolent, anonymous "outside" groups spent untold millions to paralyze Democratic voters.

Well, help is on the way. "In what may prove a significant development for the 2012 elections," writes reporter Michael Luo,

> David Brock, a prominent Democratic political operative, says he has amassed $4 million in pledges over the last few weeks and is moving quickly to hire a staff to set up what he hopes will become a permanent liberal counterweight over the airwaves to the Republican-leaning outside groups that spent so heavily on this year's midterm elections.
>
> Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, a former Maryland lieutenant governor and the eldest of Robert F. Kennedy's 11 children, has agreed to serve as the chairwoman of the group, which will be called American Bridge, lending to the still extremely nascent undertaking the weight of what remains one of the most significant families in American politics.

The Scrapbook cannot help but admire Mr. Luo's deft deployment of the English language. American Bridge, it turns out, is nothing more than a new, ever-so-slightly-dodgy fundraising vehicle for the ever-so-slightly-dodgy David Brock's Media Matters organization. It even features the same deep-pocket leftists—the ubiquitous George Soros, Taco Bell heir Rob McKay, and Elizabeth Hurley's baby daddy, Hollywood producer Steve Bing—who regularly shower Brock with cash and may now contribute "openly" to American Bridge or secretly to something called the Media Matters Action Network, a 501(c)(4) lobby.

But of course, that is not quite the way the *Times* sees it. This standard political fundraising sleight of hand

is depicted in its pages as something that "may prove a significant development for the 2012 elections" (wanna bet?) conceived by a "respected political player" (David Brock?) who is "moving quickly" to hire staff whose figurehead is a member of "one of the most significant families in American politics."

THE SCRAPBOOK need hardly point out that Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, despite the significance of her DNA, managed to lose her race for governor of one of America's bluest states, and that the booster rhetoric of this particular *Times* story is indistinguishable from its coverage of Air America. But we are not complaining! So long as the *Times* and its progressive readers continue to believe that only money separates Democrats from success at the ballot box, and that David Brock is anything other than a well-financed Pied Piper, we look forward to the continuing saga of Air America—or, rather, American Bridge. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'No one can completely understand the motivations of the North Koreans, but it is entirely possible that their recent revelation of their uranium enrichment centrifuges and Pyongyang's shelling of a South Korean island Tuesday are designed to remind the world that they deserve respect . . . " (Jimmy Carter, the *Washington Post*, November 24, 2010). ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 50108, Boulder, CO 80322-0108. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Full Slab

Is some food, in one of the leading cant phrases of our day, sexist? Food cannot of course take political positions, but some food, let us agree, has a greater masculine than feminine appeal, and probably always will. Try as I might, I cannot imagine the Chicago Bears linebacker Brian Urlacher whispering at half-time to one of his teammates that he cannot wait for the game to be over, because he has a reservation that night at a restaurant where they serve the most divine *salade Niçoise*.

No food is more masculine than ribs. I know women who eat ribs, and even show a genuine appetite for them, but at bottom ribs are a guy meal. What makes them so is their fundamental coarseness. Not always but usually one has to pick them up with one's hands. Many napkins are required to remove sauce from one's hands and around one's mouth. The spectacle of a man eating ribs is reminiscent to me of a 1940 movie called *One Million B.C.*, starring Victor Mature and Carole Landis. I can still see Victor Mature, who had glistening rib-lips to begin with, gnawing meat off a bone. Men, the movie underscored, are brutes.

Ribs were not served in the home in which I was brought up. Neither of my parents was religious, but my mother clung, culturally, to some of the old habits of keeping kosher with which she had grown up: no pork of any kind was allowed in her kitchen, and, along with her belief that all politicians were crooks, she also never veered from her equally firm belief that a kosher chicken was superior to a nonkosher one.

My first ribs were eaten in a neighborhood restaurant called Miller's, owned by a man, a bachelor, in the heating and air-conditioning business, who needed a place to spend his evenings and so opened this restaurant. Mr. Miller must have had nearly unlimited funds, for several times he bought the champion steer at the Chicago Stockyards and exhibited it in a small pen in front of his restaurant. Beef in its ideal, its all but Platonic, forms was available at Miller's: hamburger, steak, prime rib, and of course ribs.

DAVID CLARK

In Chicago, traditionally a beefy town, even though the city no longer has an active stockyard, many men pride themselves upon their rib connoisseurship. The late Chicago journalist Mike Royko used to run and judge a rib-cooking fest at the end of summer in Grant Park. "It's the sauce," is the motto of a rib joint in my neighborhood called Hecky's, where the ribs served are, as a friend once put it, industrial strength.

Ribs come of course in different forms: beef and pork, regular and babyback, short and now St. Louis, which are alleged to be meatier. Some ribs fall off the bone, and can be eaten with a knife and fork; some ribs are baked rather than grilled. A few years ago I was taken to a famous—is it still?—New York restaurant called Daniel, after its chef and owner Daniel Boulud, where I ordered short ribs. A mistake. Should have ordered the *salade Niçoise*. The Chinese know how to cook ribs but not the French.

Subtlety has nothing to do with ribs, either in their preparation or their devouring. Ribs come, after all, in slabs, not a subtle word or form. A full slab of ribs—how the very phrase must make vegetarians quiver, vegans faint dead away!

The last place to find either vegetarians or vegans is Mike Ditka's restaurant in Chicago, where I was taken a few years ago by George Will and his son Jeffrey, who was my student at Northwestern and is now in the FBI. ("Betcha can't guess which of us at this table is packing heat?" George asked once we were seated.) A strong notion, if not the actual aroma, of Mike Ditka's, its food and ambience, is available upon my mentioning a single item from the appetizer section of its menu: Pot Roast Nachos. I won't say that every size-46 suit in town was in the restaurant that night, but you would not have found many men in leotards.

Having neglected to major in nutrition in college, I cannot say for sure that ribs are, under the current health-food craze, among the most dangerous foods one can eat, but I should guess that they are probably up there. The cholesterol, the calories, the fat grams in a full slab of ribs—the numbers must be dizzying. Thus far the surgeon general has not pasted a label on ribs warning that they are dangerous to your health, though I suspect they are. Might this make them all the more enticing, at least to men? Men, as I mentioned earlier, are brutes.

Joseph Epstein

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the weekly Standard

The Sixty Years War

On November 12, North Korean scientists took Stanford professor Siegfried Hecker and two colleagues to the Yongbyon nuclear complex. The North Koreans led the Americans to a building that Hecker, former head of the Los Alamos nuclear laboratories, had visited in February 2008. The structure had been transformed into a "stunning" uranium enrichment facility, Hecker would later write.

That revelation brings to an end the long-running debate inside the U.S. intelligence community over whether the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has an active uranium enrichment program. North Korea acknowledged that it had such an effort back in 2002. But the North Koreans later claimed their admission was a misunderstanding. And in the years since, the intelligence community has had little knowledge of the North Korean nuclear program—it is, after all, the most secretive project of the world's most secretive regime. There was no fresh intelligence to cast doubt on the program's continued existence, because there was little new information about the program at all.

South Korean villagers watch smoke rising from Yeonpyeong island near the North Korean border.

AP IMAGES

This absence of evidence led to a split in the U.S. intelligence community. The State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), along with analysts at the Department of Energy, voiced strong skepticism about the existence of a North Korean enrichment program. But others, most notably analysts at the Defense Intelligence Agency and most of the leadership at the CIA, were convinced that enrichment work was continuing. By 2007, the consensus of the U.S. intelligence community on the existence of an enrichment program was downgraded from "high-confidence" to "mid-confidence," and pro-engagement policymakers were comparing the worrisome intelligence on North Korea to prewar intelligence on Iraq.

Meanwhile, Bush administration policymakers eager for engagement with North Korea—led by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and functionary Christopher Hill—downplayed the likelihood of DPRK enrichment efforts and mocked those who worried about them. "Some people imagine there is a building somewhere with a secret door they can open and find a group of scantily clad women enriching uranium," Hill commented.

Well, we don't know about the women. But just two months after Hill's dismissive comments, the evidence of a secret enrichment program continued to build. In June 2008, North Korea presented documents to the United States that were intended to verify the DPRK's claims regarding plutonium production. In an underappreciated irony, analysts found traces of highly enriched uranium on the 18,000 pages of materials. The CIA and DIA argued that the new evidence confirmed their suspicions. INR and DOE found reasons to doubt it.

Stephen Hadley, national security adviser under George W. Bush, mentioned the dispute in a little-noticed speech he delivered two weeks before leaving office. In his remarks, Hadley warned that North Korea would be "an early challenge" for the Obama administration. "This is especially true because some in the intelligence community have increasing concerns that North Korea has an ongoing covert uranium enrichment program." Originally intended for use in a speech by President Bush, this carefully vetted claim, coming from the preternaturally cautious Hadley, raised eyebrows among Korea-watchers. The White House meant it as a marker—something that would provide an official, on-the-record indication of the state of intelligence on North Korea's nuclear program.

It was also an incongruous coda to four years of failed engagement with a rogue regime. During that time, North Korea had tested a crude nuclear weapon and been caught red-handed providing assistance to Syria, a leading state sponsor of terror, in the construction of a nuclear reactor. And yet, after stern denunciations, Bush officials had continued to reward North Korea's occasional, symbolic diplomatic gestures with bilateral meetings and relief from sanctions.

Which brings us to the current impasse. On November 23, 2010, just two days after the DPRK's uranium enrichment program was revealed in the pages of the *New York Times*, North Korea launched an unprovoked, 50-minute artillery barrage on the South Korean island

of Yeonpyeong that killed two South Korean marines, two civilians, and injured dozens of others. The Obama administration expressed concern about the nuclear revelations and condemned the attacks. A White House official told ABC's Jake Tapper that the administration would not be "rushing into six-party talks" with North Korea because "we see that as rewarding bad behavior."

Not rewarding bad behavior is good. Punishing bad behavior? That's better.

Yet the nuances of the Obama administration's position have little to do with the severity of punishment and everything to do with the speed of capitulation. Almost as quickly as the Obama administration expressed its determination not to reward "bad behavior," the White House announced its intention to do just that. That same day, Ambassador Stephen Bosworth, special representative for North Korea policy, said the administration would "continue our coordination of moves designed to lead eventually to the resumption of the six-party talks." Perhaps anticipating questions about the wisdom of seeking new agreements on nuclear disarmament with a regime that has violated every other such agreement, Bosworth added: "We are very concerned as to the sincerity of the DPRK's approach to this."

But not concerned enough to change course. On the evening of November 23, with fires still burning on Yeonpyeong, a statement on the website of the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that the United States had agreed to seek an immediate resumption of the six-party talks. Bosworth, addressing reporters in Beijing after meeting his Chinese counterparts, said: "We agreed on the essential need for us to continue coordination and consultation on this issue, the uranium enrichment program, and of course on the subject of how . . . to bring about a resumption of the Six Party process."

And so the cycle begins anew. Kim Jong Il feels neglected. He does something provocative. America and her allies offer statements of concern. Negotiations resume. The U.S. side offers generous concessions while threatening to tighten sanctions. North Korea makes promises it does not intend to keep. American diplomats celebrate their "achievement." And, after a period of relative quiet, Kim Jong Il begins to feel neglected again and does something else provocative.

For much of the foreign policy establishment, the familiarity of this cycle provides comfort. When North Korea declares itself a nuclear power, or tests a crude nuclear weapon, or launches missiles into the Sea of Japan, or blows up a South Korean ship, or reveals to an American scientist a state-of-the-art centrifuge operation—the response is the same. It's just Kim Jong Il being Kim Jong Il, people say.

But this is false comfort. Nineteen out of twenty times, Kim's actions can be explained as diplomatic gamesmanship. But the consequences of being wrong that one time—the consequences of misjudging a belligerent and dying dictator with nukes—are grave.

It is up to the White House to break the cycle of futility. The Obama administration's cool attitude toward North Korea during its first 20 months in office was a welcome change from the Bush administration's overeager engagement. Getting serious about North Korea, however, requires dispensing with two comforting but inaccurate assumptions that have guided the diplomacy of administrations from both political parties for nearly two decades. The first is the notion that Kim Jong Il can be talked out of pursuing nuclear weapons. The second is that China and the United States share fundamental security interests in disarming North Korea.

For years, U.S. policy on North Korea has been outsourced to China. Successive presidents have asked that Beijing use its muscle to control its combative ally. It hasn't worked, because the Chinese believe that the status quo is preferable to escalation. The Obama administration needs to flip that equation by making the status quo less acceptable. Rather than asking China politely to do our diplomatic spadework, why not use our diplomatic and economic leverage over China to demonstrate that there are consequences for Beijing's recalcitrance?

In the short term, we can reimpose the tough sanctions that were unwisely lifted by President Bush in the summer of 2008, and immediately return North Korea to the list of state sponsors of terror. The administration could also urge South Korea to end its participation in the Kaesong Industrial Complex—a zone of joint economic cooperation with North Korea in which South Korean companies provide capital and North Korea provides labor. Beyond that, America can aggressively seek to interdict North Korean ships suspected of carrying illicit materials, and increase the number of regular, high-profile joint naval exercises we conduct with South Korea.

No doubt, it will be tempting for President Obama to take the easier path—to pursue meaningless nonproliferation agreements, to offer platitudes about a nuclear-free world, to restart the six-party talks and otherwise seek dialogue about disarmament with regimes committed to nuclear weapons. But as French president Nicolas Sarkozy reminded Obama at the U.N. Security Council last year:

> The people of the entire world are listening to what we're saying, to our promises, our commitments and our speeches. But we live in a real world, not a virtual world. We say: Reductions must be made. And President Obama has even said: 'I dream of a world without [nuclear weapons].' Yet before our very eyes, two countries are doing the exact opposite.

And what have the repeated offers for dialogue produced? Sarkozy answered his own question.

"Nothing."

—Stephen F. Hayes

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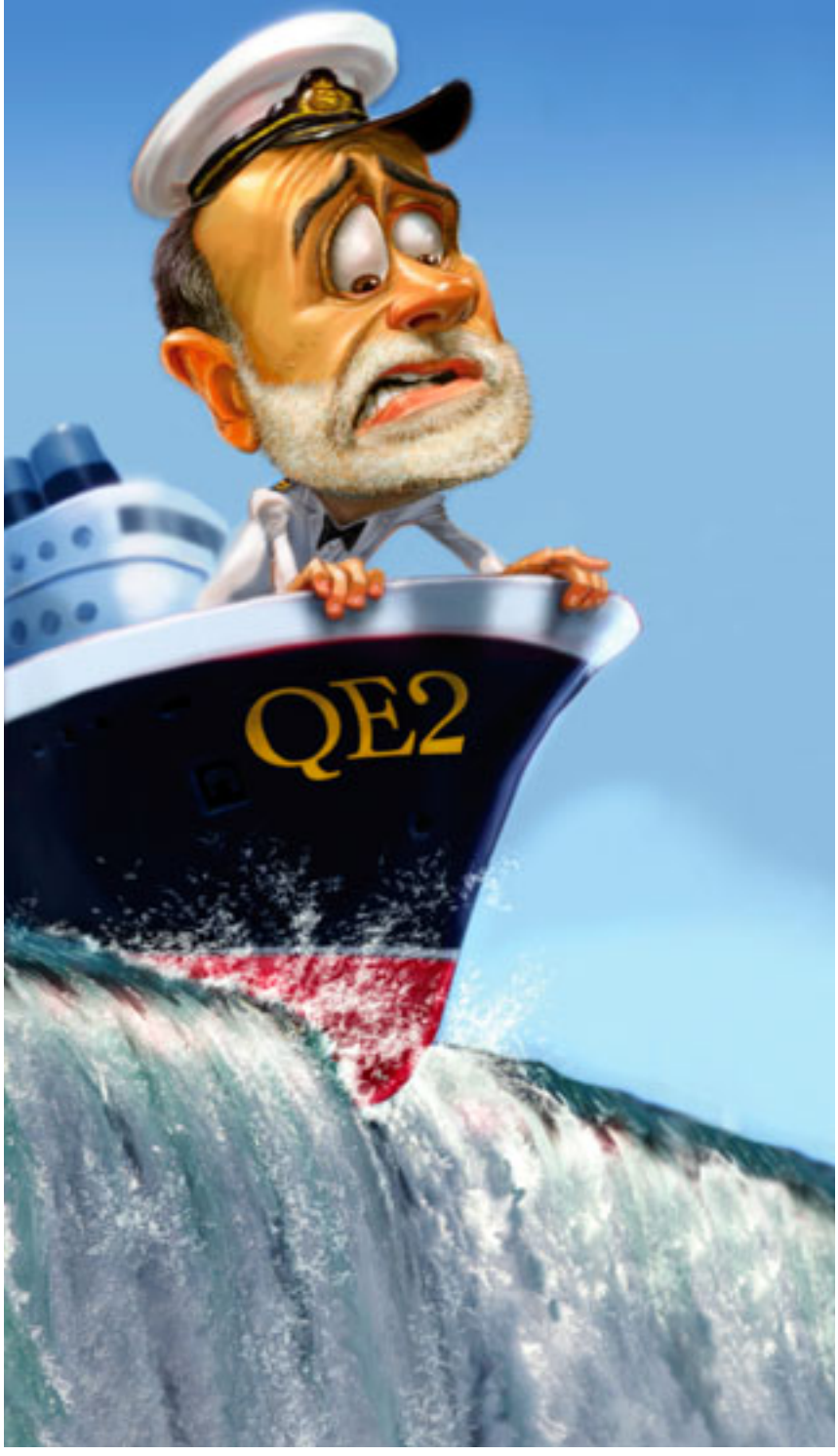
The Fiscal Trap

Quantitative easing won't solve our deeper problem.

BY LAWRENCE B. LINDSEY



GARY LOCKE

Fed chairman Ben Bernanke concedes that, while necessary, a new large purchase of government bonds by the Fed to help cover the deficit will not completely solve our problem of slow growth. Many in the markets and around the world express the same sentiment in a more negative way—saying this latest round of "quantitative easing" won't work. Only time will tell, and our best guess is that, because it is only modestly effective by itself, quantitative easing will probably be part of Fed policy for quite some time. One reason we must hope that quantitative easing is not too successful is that its near term success would mean a catastrophe for government finances.

By the Fed's reckoning, a successful quantitative easing policy will return us to a more normal economic environment with fairly low but stable inflation, similar to the inflation environment of the last two decades. But a normalization of inflation will also mean a normalization of interest rates. And normalized interest rates will mean much higher interest payments, especially by the world's biggest debtor: the government of the United States.

Consider the math. This year the government will pay $200 billion in interest on debt held by the public (i.e., non-U.S.-government institutions) of $9 trillion. The average interest rate paid on the debt is 2.2 percent.

To simulate what will happen going forward, assume for the sake of argument some moderate reductions in future deficits from ending higher-end tax cuts, limiting the growth in discretionary spending to the rate of GDP growth, and cutting defense. Under these assumptions, the debt held by the public will rise to $13.1 trillion by 2015 and $16.7 trillion by 2019.

But if interest rates remain at current levels, interest payments will still be relatively manageable: $290 billion in 2015 and $355 billion in 2019.

Now suppose quantitative easing is "successful" in the way the Fed

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intends, taking inflation close to the average 2.4 percent rate of the last two decades and government borrowing costs back to their two-decade average of 5.7 percent. To get an idea of what happens to the budget, assume this transition happens over three years, so that by 2013 interest rates are back to "normal." This "return to normal" will mean the government's interest costs will rise to $847 billion by 2015 and $1.15 trillion by 2019.

The increase in annual interest costs in 2015 alone—$557 billion—is nearly six times the additional revenue that is supposed to be collected by letting the higher end of the Bush tax cuts expire, the centerpiece of the current fiscal policy debate in Washington. The increase in interest costs in 2019—$795 billion—is two-and-a-half times the value of all the Bush income tax cuts of 2001 and 2003 that are due to expire. On the spending side, just the extra interest cost from a quantitative easing "success" would swamp, say, the entire defense budget for the rest of the decade. No plausible increase in taxes or reduction in spending could fill a gap of that magnitude.

Interest rates could also rise for a variety of other reasons. Much faster real economic growth could have the same effect. An additional point of real growth for five straight years would help by raising revenue by about $450 billion over five years, but a parallel increase in real rates would raise interest costs by $700 billion over the same period. The higher real rates and larger deficit would likely put a lid on the sustainability of any growth spurt. Alternatively, an increase in borrowing costs caused by international creditors' demanding higher real yields is also possible. One of the leading possible causes of such a rate spike would be a loss of faith in the dollar as creditors could demand higher yields to offset currency depreciation.

This is the nature of our developing fiscal trap, and those familiar with Japan will recognize a lot of similarities. There, debt is so large that even at rates way below American levels, interest payments consume a quarter of all tax revenue. A switch in Japan from modest deflation to modest inflation, with a corresponding rise in rates, would lead to debt service costs consuming the entirety of tax revenue.

Our situation is not nearly as dire—yet. But a continuation of quantitative easing without significant moves toward a balanced budget would land us in Japan's shoes within five years. Currently quantitative easing makes shrinking the deficit easier by holding down borrowing costs. It also offsets some of the economic contraction that deficit reduction may cause. But unless we get control of the deficit, quantitative easing will eventually lead to higher inflation or a loss of confidence in the dollar, or both. At that point, the resulting higher borrowing costs will swamp any of the current supposedly dramatic deficit reduction plans that are on the table.

That is why immediate action on the deficit is required.

The co-chairs of the president's deficit commission came up with a plan to stabilize both taxes and spending at 21 percent of GDP over time. The plan would raise the tax share of GDP from its current artificially low level of 14.6 percent to 19.3 percent by 2015 while bringing down the spending share from 23.8 percent to 21.4 percent. Even though taxes make up the majority of the deficit reduction, the improved efficiency from the tax reforms being proposed would likely offset the drag on growth. And, despite some knee jerk comments in opposition to the proposal from some on the left, both the tax code and the Social Security system are made more progressive in the process. While one can quibble with the details, thoughtful people across the political spectrum could support this plan.

But action is needed immediately. Even the sweeping reforms the commission is suggesting will be overwhelmed if borrowing costs rise. We can either act or slide Japan-like into a deflationary future with rising unemployment. We can live well for a bit longer, with high deficits covered by printed money, but then pay the consequences through ruinous inflation and a loss of faith in the dollar. Either way, the fact is that this is probably our last chance to escape our fiscal trap. ♦

Not Yet a Great Race

The GOP field for 2012 is not where the action is.

BY FRED BARNES

Why do the potential Republican presidential candidates (with one exception) seem so old, dull, and uninteresting? There are a few simple answers. Most of the candidates are a generation older than most of the new Republican luminaries, compared with whom they are indeed duller and less interesting. At the moment they're not where the political action is either. They're not quite irrelevant, but close.

Ask yourself these questions: Would it be more illuminating to talk to Mitt Romney, age 63, or Representative Paul Ryan, 40, about cutting spending and reforming entitlements? Would it be more interesting to chat with Haley Barbour, 63, or Bobby Jindal, 39, about maximizing the power of states? Would it be more stimulating to meet with Marco Rubio, 39, than with any of the presidential candidates?

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

The answers are obvious. In 2010, Ryan, Jindal, and Rubio emerged as Republican stars. Ryan updated the Roadmap for saving America from fiscal and economic collapse that he'd introduced in 2008. It not only survived Democratic attacks in the midterm elections but now is gathering bipartisan support—parts of it are, anyway. Jindal went toe-to-toe with President Obama during the Gulf oil spill and came out well ahead. And after defeating Florida governor Charlie Crist, Rubio arrives in Washington as the most exciting new senator since John F. Kennedy in 1952.

Those three aren't the only Republicans who are overshadowing the presidential candidates, just the youngest. The most sought-after speaker at Republican events anywhere in the country is Governor Chris Christie, 48, who has mounted a popular assault on New Jersey's tax-and-spend culture. The governor whose state has fared the best over the past decade is Rick Perry of Texas, 60, elected to a third term on November 2. The era of Texas as America's most prosperous and influential state has begun, social critic Joel Kotkin wrote recently, replacing the era of California. It happened on Perry's watch.

One thing Ryan, Jindal, Rubio, Christie, and Perry have in common is they're not running for president. I asked Jindal, who's already announced for reelection as governor of Louisiana in 2011, if he has any intention of seeking the Republican presidential nomination in 2012. He gave a one word answer: "No."

Among possible presidential candidates, the lone exception to being eclipsed is Sarah Palin, 46. Whatever she does or says or writes attracts lavish media attention. Unlike the others, she has a large and enthusiastic following. Palin is the biggest star in the Republican firmament. Though she wasn't on the ballot, 2010 was a great year for her.

It was an even greater year for Ryan. His Roadmap began the year as an obscure plan to reform federal spending, Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the tax code, and health care, and became the most important statement of Republican aspirations in Washington. At the seven-hour White House summit on health care in February, Ryan took apart Obamacare in a six-minute speech that quickly went viral on the Internet. Obama said he would respond to Ryan at the summit, then didn't, and never has.

Democrats were certain the Roadmap would be an albatross for Republican candidates. It wasn't. After the election, the leaders of the president's debt commission, Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson, issued a plan that included parts of the Roadmap, especially its version of Social Security reform. And two weeks ago, Alice Rivlin, former budget director for President Clinton, backed Ryan's ideas for reining in Medicare and Medicaid. Ryan, as chairman of the budget committee, will draft the House budget for next year.

Jindal sparred with the Obama administration and with the president

himself over the slow pace of their effort to contain the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. On *Meet the Press* last week, he said Obama was more interested in his reputation than in cleaning up the Gulf. Obama urged him, Jindal said, not to go on TV "to criticize me." But "the frustration was actually getting a response [from the administration], actually getting them to move the assets on the ground," he said. "Time and time again, they wouldn't listen to local fishermen, … to people who lived down there, who know the waters like the back of their hands."

Jindal, by the way, is doubtful Obama will move away from his liberal positions, despite being rebuked in the 2010 elections. "For the good of the country, I hope he changes direction," Jindal told me. "But I would not hold my breath."

Few freshman senators have been as eagerly awaited in Washington as Rubio. His life story as the son of poor Cuban immigrants, his leadership in the Florida legislature, his defiance of the anointing of Crist in the Senate race by the Republican establishment in Washington, his 19-point victory in the election—these are important.

But what makes Rubio stand out are his power as a speaker and what he speaks about. His speeches during the campaign emphasized his belief in American exceptionalism, about which he differs sharply with Obama. Rubio's first Senate speech is bound to attract full press coverage.

In Palin's case, the media treat her every wink and nod as newsworthy. Reporters and columnists are obsessed with her. And some Republicans fear she could lead their party to defeat in 2012. What this assumes is amazing: that she can sail through the primaries and win the nomination. That's quite an assumption.

Palin is making the most of her prominence. Her criticism of the Federal Reserve's printing of more money was sensible and well ahead of the curve. And she instantly defended Juan Williams when he was canned by NPR, noting that, like her, he'd gone "rogue." Palin looks increasingly formidable.

At this time four years ago, the presidential race was about to take off. But the center of gravity in politics and government has shifted. The big play is now in Congress with Republicans in control of the House and in the statehouses with governors like Jindal, Christie, Perry, and a slew of newcomers like Scott Walker in Wisconsin, John Kasich in Ohio, and Rick Scott in Florida. The presidential contest will have to wait. ♦

Bonfire of the Cedars

Lebanon's problems are made in Tehran.

BY LEE SMITH

Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri's planned trip to Tehran Saturday, November 27, is perhaps best understood as a coda to Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's tour of Lebanon two months ago. With that visit, the Islamic Republic of Iran effectively declared that the tiny country of 4.1 million on the Eastern Mediterranean is nothing more than an Iranian victory garden, to be chewed up in the next round of war between Israel and Iran's Lebanese surrogate, Hezbollah.

Ahmadinejad's trip finally awakened the Obama administration to the fact that its Lebanon policy had gone awry. The White House dispatched Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman to Lebanon and Saudi Arabia to consult with allies, and now Lebanon is back on Washington's front burner, almost as in the heyday of the Bush administration's freedom agenda. The U.N. Security Council's Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) is due to hand down indictments in the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafiq Hariri. The threat of Hezbollah—Iran's client and Syria's partner in murdering Hariri—to take over all of Lebanon has the White House up in arms.

But the Obama administration may be too late to save an independent Lebanon. Hariri, the Lebanese Sunni leader, has shown by his journey to the citadel of Shia power that if you want to contest the fate of Lebanon, as with so much else in the

Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Middle East these days, the doors to knock on are in Tehran.

This is an unhappy turn of events for Lebanon, which just celebrated the 67th anniversary of its independence. President Obama marked the day with a cursory promise to protect that independence, even as his policy ideas have undermined that goal since the earliest days of his candidacy. Unlike Bush, we were told, Obama would reach out to Syria and find common ground. After all, as the senator from Illinois explained on the campaign trail, talking to your enemies is not a reward for them. Maybe not in theory, but in practice, talking to Damascus meant selling out the anti-Syrian politicians of Lebanon's Cedar Revolution.

Fearing that Washington was about to sacrifice its Lebanon policy in the name of entente with Syria, as it had done throughout the 1990s, the one-time pillar of Lebanon's pro-democracy March 14 movement, Walid Jumblatt, changed sides, traveling to Damascus to kiss the ring of Bashar al-Assad. Perhaps more important, Saudi Arabia, patron of Lebanon's Sunni community, actually chose friendship with Syria over its Lebanese partners.

Oddly enough, after all of this jockeying for Syrian favor, Damascus turns out to be a distraction. "Hariri's trip highlights the fact that Damascus is no longer a central actor," says Tony Badran, research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies. "The Syria-Saudi initiative is a sideshow, and the Iranians have been saying this for a while: The Saudis have to negotiate with [Tehran], but the Saudis don't want to consecrate this fact."

Iran is now the power on the ground in Lebanon, via Hezbollah's arms. Its general secretary, Hassan Nasrallah has renewed his warning that Hezbollah will cut off the hands of anyone who tries to touch the weapons of the "resistance," in part no doubt to scare off the Hariri assassination tribunal from issuing indictments of Hezbollah members. In the event of such indictments, the Party of God's reputation would suffer another blow in the court of Arab opinion for murdering a Sunni leader.

But many analysts inside and outside Lebanon believe that Nasrallah is bluffing. It's not clear that Hezbollah has anything to gain by extending its South Lebanon satrapy over the whole national territory. It already proved itself capable of doing so in May 2008 when it overran Sunnis loyal to Saad Hariri in West Beirut and surrounded Jumblatt's Druze in the Chouf Mountains. Indeed that near-coup so damaged Hezbollah's reputation with the region's Sunni majority that it is hard to see how indictments might further tarnish it, or how a genuine coup against the Sunnis would protect it. Maybe more to the point, the Iranians would prefer to keep their asset in reserve for the next round of fighting with Israel rather than spend it for uncertain gain.

In any case, it is difficult to see how indictments of Hezbollah would be enforced: Who is in a position to arrest suspects and bring them to account? The Lebanese Armed Forces is already penetrated by Hezbollah. The chief of the Internal Security Forces, one of Saad Hariri's confidants, has himself just been identified as a possible accomplice in the murder of Saad's father by a Canadian Broadcasting Corporation report. Surely neither the U.S. government, nor the U.N., nor the "international community" is going to lay its hands on suspects.

If the Bush White House let its Lebanese allies get slaughtered in May 2008, then the Obama administration is even less likely to intervene, even as it is putting out word that it's not going to take Hezbollah's threats lying down. A Lebanon under overt Hezbollah control, American diplomats are letting on, will be treated like a pariah state. That raises the bleak prospect of Lebanon as the new Yemen, with Hezbollah in the crosshairs of drone strikes. It's a far cry from the "Freedom, Sovereignty, and Independence" of the Cedar Revolution, only five years ago. More likely, though, Hezbollah will simply continue its slow-motion, behind the scenes takeover of the Lebanese state.

You can certainly argue that Lebanon has little strategic value and that it was foolish for the Bush administration to see it as a gemstone of its policy to promote democracy and freedom in the Arab world—a piece of sentimentality that the Obama administration has outgrown. Defenders of the Obama approach will say as much in their cold-blooded moments. The human cost in Lebanon, of course, is horrific, and nowhere more so than in the story of Wissam Eid, a Lebanese policeman and terrorism investigator.

As the CBC reports, Eid single-handedly pieced together the telecommunications evidence that pointed to Hezbollah's complicity in the Hariri assassination. Eid's report was misplaced by the U.N. investigation team and when they discovered it two years later it got the attention of Hezbollah agents. Shortly after Eid met with the investigators in January 2008, he was blown up in a car-bombing in a Beirut suburb.

But there is a strategic cost, too, missed by those who think Lebanon's fate is ultimately unimportant. The story of Lebanon's victimization is not just that of a small country caught in the vise of power politics—it is as well a story of the incompetence, indifference, and finally cowardice of leaders in Washington, Europe, and the U.N. Security Council who call for the cooperation of moderate Muslims and Arabs and then do nothing to protect those moderates against our mutual adversaries, or to avenge them when they are murdered. Even aside from its nascent nuclear weapon, the Islamic Republic of Iran can only be encouraged when it looks at the Eastern Mediterranean. Its investment in Hezbollah is paying handsome dividends, and the Khomeinist revolution goes from strength to strength. ♦

If you were asked to surrender your will, would you? Probably not. But have you considered the countless times people do surrender their will each and every day? "No," you say, "I don't, and I never would!"

Richard W. Wetherill
1906-1989

Well, think about how you surrender your will to the laws of nature. Do you argue with gravity, ignore friction, grab a live wire, lean to the left turning right?

People have learned to surrender to creation's natural laws, but there is a law of nature that virtually everybody has been ignoring.

While people eagerly surrender to familiar laws such as gravity and friction, sometimes a mistake is made. For example, if they lose their balance by slipping on a wet surface, everybody instinctively struggles to conform to the appropriate natural laws.

Early in the past century, a natural ***law of behavior*** was identified by the late Richard W. Wetherill. In 1952 he presented it in the book, *Tower of Babel*.

He called it the ***law of absolute right***, and it specifies ***behavior that is rational and honest*** to replace choices based on a person's likes and dislikes, wants and don't wants, judgments and beliefs, thereby, over time, putting together his/her own plan of life.

Nature's law of absolute right states that right action gets right results, and if wrong results occur, the law was somehow disregarded.

What kinds of results are presently occurring? The news media daily report on the tragedies of international warfare, political corruption, criminal activity, economic disasters, foreclosures, and afflictions labeled "cause unknown."

You might be wondering, who thinks that conforming to a natural law could stop those wrong results?

The answer comes from persons who have surrendered their will to ***creation's law of absolute right***. They enthusiastically report right results occurring, as they drop old behavior patterns and respond rationally and honestly to whatever happens.

The nonprofit group financing this public-service message is telling people that their safety and security exist in trusting the laws of creation rather than trusting the laws and beliefs of human origin. Every natural law requires the action it calls for, thereby enabling the law to complete its rightful purpose.

That is easily observed when using gravity as an example. When people stumble and fall, they do not form criticisms of gravity. They are more likely to look around for someone or something to blame—sometimes their own carelessness.

But to achieve success and avoid failure at whatever activity or task they are engaged in, people instinctively know they must obey nature's laws of physics.

Prior to the identification of those laws, the ancients worshipped natural phenomena and/or idols. It required aeons until people identified the natural laws creating forces to guide their activities and that ***those laws expressed the will of the creator***—not to be worshipped but to be obeyed.

Thus creation's law of absolute right calls for rational and honest responses to whatever happens.

Visit our Website www.alphapub.com where essays and books describe the changes called for by nature's law of absolute right. The material can be read, downloaded, and/or printed FREE.
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This public-service message is from a self-financed, nonprofit group of former students of Mr. Wetherill.

Into Thin Airwaves

How a handful of unknown Chinese martyrs aided the cause of freedom around the world

By Ethan Gutmann

Back in January 2010, Secretary of State Clinton gave a pay-any-price, bear-any-burden address calling for the liberation of the global Internet. The price Washington was willing to pay? It promised $50 million to groups developing "new tools that enable citizens to exercise their rights of free expression by circumventing politically motivated censorship." The burden it would have to bear? The only group that has actually pulled this off is named Falun Gong.

Now, it is a fact that if you ever have the desire to see a Chinese administrator do a squirmy, unpleasant little dance, you have only to mention the name of that officially despised Buddhist revival group. But it is also a fact that the State Department reads the *New York Times*, which credited the Global Internet Freedom Consortium—essentially a group of Falun Gong computer engineers—with the creation of revolutionary web systems that not only have enabled millions of Chinese citizens to surf beyond the Great Firewall, but also provided the platform for the vast majority of the citizen reportage that reached the West during the aborted Green Revolution in Iran. By May, the State Department, breaking a Washington taboo against sustained contact with Falun Gong, was reportedly ready to offer $1.5 million to the Global Internet Freedom Consortium.

The last known photograph of Liang Zhenxing

Miraculously, for once, the squirmy dance hadn't had its full intended effect. And for some Falun Gong practitioners, the timing seemed to carry a touch of divine justice, if not an outright Hollywood ending. For just days before the *Washington Post* reported the State Department's decision, in early May 2010, the man whose ingenuity had spurred the group's work on Internet freedom died in China.

All movements—even pocket-protector ones—have their legends and their origin myths, often set in an older, simpler place and time, as is this one. But although he never won a Nobel Prize, the man who died was real. And in 2002, when China experts in the West universally judged that his cause was a failure, he commanded the most successful Falun Gong action ever undertaken on Chinese soil—the hijacking of a massive city's television signals for nearly an hour. Pulled off by a small gang with minimal experience or resources, the operation was strikingly uncharacteristic of Falun Gong at the time, but from it would grow far more sophisticated challenges to Chinese Communist party control over information in the years to come. Television hubs would become Internet routers, guerrillas would be replaced by geeks, infocops and robbers would go virtual, and the brawl would spill out from China into Atlanta, Tehran, and the State Department. But it all started in the city of Changchun with a man named Liang Zhenxing.

In the last known photograph of Liang—probably taken in mid-March 2002—his jaw is set, and his eyes seem fixed on some point outside the interrogation room. Connecting the dots—the six head-level stains

Ethan Gutmann, an adjunct fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, thanks Leeshai Lemish for research and translation and the Earhart Foundation, the Peder Wallenberg family, and the National Endowment for Democracy for research support.

on the wall—some observers detect a trace of blood on Liang's left temple. Either way, Liang's posture speaks clearly enough: His run is through.

Liang could hardly have assumed that Westerners would see the picture. The Chinese police briefly published it online as a trophy—and a warning to the Chinese people—confident that no Western media outlet would bother to publish anything substantial on one more captive Falun Gong practitioner. Liang endured for eight more years, but he ultimately died in Chinese police custody on May 1, 2010, in Gongzhuling's Central Hospital. The cause of death was routine by Falun Gong standards: inexorable physical deterioration from beatings, electric shock, sleep deprivation, force-feeding. Under the strain, Liang may have accelerated things by throwing himself down a stairwell during a prison transfer, suffering a cerebral hemorrhage. In historical terms, Liang may have had an incredible run, but by the end he could no longer speak.

Liu 'Big Truck' Chengjun

Falun Gong sources such as *Minghui*, the internal web-based Falun Gong spiritual samizdat, reported his demise, but no extraordinary efforts were made to promote his obituary. Perhaps there was an unconscious reluctance there; Liang's actions were still controversial. And Liang himself had always been an outlier practitioner—a heartland Horatio Alger, a real-estate player, a mover and a schmoozer and a playboy, giving his sudden conversion to Falun Gong a cross-and-switchblade veneer. In short, Liang was a product of Changchun.

Changchun lies in the center of Northeast China. And in the center of the city, just south of Victory Park and north of Liberation Road, lies the concrete-tiled expanse of Changchun City Cultural Square. Below the faux-soaring modernist arch, a cast iron socialist-realist muscleman throws up his arms in triumph, or perhaps despair. Few Westerners see him; foreigners seldom sightsee or invest in this city of more than seven million. Yet just as there is a certain gritty security in Changchun's role as a "pillar industry" town—the cradle of the state-owned Chinese automotive industry—there's a certain native freedom in not having to perform for outsiders either. For Cultural Square, in all other respects a monument to the ascendancy of the New China, also served as the birthplace of Falun Gong.

It was there in 1992 that one Li Hongzhi, who lived a few blocks away in a rundown apartment block, chose a neglected leafy corner and began teaching meditative exercises to anyone who was interested. In the wake of the 1980s qigong exercise craze, there was nothing about this to catch the eye of the authorities, particularly as money didn't seem to be changing hands. But something about Li inspired unshakable loyalty among his first students, and underneath the baby-faced appearance of the man and the apparent simplicity of the movements lay a deep coding: a hardcore Buddhist morality system of compassion, truthfulness, and forbearance. The novel twist was that these moral precepts were to be carried out in Changchun, rather than a monastery. And Li didn't attract a narrow market segment, like most qigong spiritual masters, but individuals from all walks of life: old ladies and young soldiers, wealthy industrialists and illiterate unemployed wanderers from rural villages. As their numbers grew, they moved out from the leafy corner.

Liang Zhenxing lived a block away, just across Liberation Road, in comfortable housing. Sometimes, in the half-light of an early winter morning, he would watch the masses of down coats and mittens hypnotically swaying in unison, right below the naked muscleman, while frigid winds whipped trash across the square. One cold morning in 1996, Liang woke up, threw on his coat, and walked over. Initially, the practitioners were nervous about Liang: his paunch (his full-lotus was considered comical), his brash way of speaking, and his skeptical wife. But within a month Liang started bringing in recruits: family, real-estate contacts, intellectuals he met in the park, and working guys he met in dark clubs. Whatever passed for a hierarchy within Falun Gong quickly agreed to make Liang a coordinator, free to teach the exercises and run his own study group. Some practitioners whispered that Liang hadn't read enough or didn't have experience, but he was immune to gossip; he told a friend the great thing about Falun Gong is that after three months you don't care about power anymore.

Yet in the eyes of the party, even the desire not to have power, if shared by enough people, becomes dark matter—a hidden gravitational force that pulls state enemies and party members alike into its orbit. So a few years on, when Chinese internal intelligence revealed that Falun Gong had reached 70 million followers, 5 million more than party membership, traps were laid. Plainclothes agents appeared at practice sites, critiques were planted in state papers, and silent makeshift demonstrations were documented and interpreted as treason. On July 20, 1999, the arrests began in Beijing. Three days later, as the sun rose

over Changchun's Cultural Square, Liang looked out. Only policemen stood beneath the triumphant muscleman.

Two months later, Liang made the acquaintance of his first interrogation room. Many Changchun practitioners had been there by now. Liang had held back from public action, reasoning the Master Li legacy meant Changchun security was abnormally high. Instead, Liang and a hundred other practitioners planned to go to the Beijing appeals office—the only legally permissible action available to a Chinese citizen—on October 1, National Day. Such a large group was easily infiltrated, and the police rounded them up before they boarded the train.

In detention, Liang refused to damage the cause by signing a public condemnation of Falun Gong or informing on his co-conspirators. The police responded by instructing the drug addicts and criminals to play tedious power games (*Please may I eat? Please may I scratch? Please may I use the toilet?*), where the practitioner, dedicated to compassion and nonviolence, becomes a hapless object of amusement and torture. Most practitioners quietly endured, believing that humiliation and pain have spiritual value. They hoarded indignities like money in the bank. Liang hated this, so when the criminals told the practitioners to shout party slogans as they marched in the courtyard, Liang said he wouldn't shout anything and took the beatings. Yet what really pained Liang was that no practitioners joined his mini-rebellion. He analyzed his failings: He had the will, yet he couldn't quite articulate why his resistance mattered. Still flabby in spite of his hunger-strike, he didn't inspire physical courage. But Liang had heard of someone who did.

Liu 'Great Sea' Haibo

Liu Chengjun was a practitioner from a small town in Jilin Province not far from Changchun. As a stockroom clerk, he was just another migrant worker in the big city, but he had access to a truck. Liu's response to the Falun Gong crackdown was to load his truck with "truth-clarification" pamphlets and drive them up highway 302 to his home in Nong'an and the surrounding villages, which, as a country boy, he knew well. That, and the fact that he was unusually large, strong, and even-featured, won him the nickname "Big Truck."

Like Liang, Big Truck didn't go along with the prison games. But he went further; other practitioners would get their legs kicked out from under them if they moved a muscle during roll call, but Big Truck would casually stroll over to the nine-foot wall of the detention compound. Confronted, he didn't raise his hand or bare his teeth. He didn't need to; the frank stare and unyielding posture, like a warrior in a Beijing Opera, warned the guards of untold consequences if they dared to touch him. The guards developed myths: Big Truck was connected; Big Truck ate pork buns in a single bite; Big Truck was a go-to guy for organized crime. One chilly morning in late October, as everyone slept, Big Truck got up, leapt to the edge of the wall, and pulled himself up and over. The guards retroactively claimed they had released Big Truck, but when Liang heard about the escape, a thought flashed across his mind: He had found his general.

Nine months later, on July 12, 2000, Liang was transferred to a Fengjun labor camp cell shared by Big Truck (already back in prison) and a skinny little guy with glittering eyes who never seemed to shut up. Big Truck whispered to Liang that little smart-smart was a radiologist from Chuncheng Hospital, Changchun. His name was Liu Haibo, but everyone called him "Great Sea," both as a play on his Chinese name and because of his uncanny ability to memorize swaths of Master Li's writings in a single night, a data retrieval system that could seemingly have other applications. Liang was initially unimpressed with Great Sea's story: Changchun practitioner '96, two arrests, two Falun Gong renunciations, two rejections of his renunciations, never met his newborn son, Tianchun, and so on. Yet there was one incident that stood out. Shortly after the crackdown, some party apparatchik had put up an exhibition of Falun Gong "atrocities" at a Changchun elementary school. Liang knew of it; the authorities' forcing children to see practitioner "suicides"—hanging from nooses or with their guts hacked out—had turned like a knife in his own stomach. But don't worry, the exhibition is gone now, Great Sea said. Great Sea related that he had walked in, ripped the posters down, and thrown them away. They were poison, Great Sea said, without a trace of anger or drama. Liang realized that Great Sea was that rarest of birds in China: a scholar without fear.

They were an odd trio, Great Sea, Big Truck, and Liang, and initially they had no plans, no journey to the West. Instead, larger events would conspire to bind them together on their personal pilgrimage. From 2000 to 2001, practitioners—perhaps 150,000 or more—had gone to Tiananmen Square to protest the Falun Gong ban. It hadn't been effective; they wafted in about 500 a day, gust-

ing up to 4,000 or so on special occasions. Even then, they unfurled their yellow banners according to some internal conscience-clock rather than a preconceived strategy and were easy pickings for the security forces. But Tiananmen had given practitioners a focal point, a commonly respected means of sincere expression that dated back to imperial China. Indeed, the Chinese public had never been persuaded by the party's campaign. The more strident media reports on Falun Gong—a dangerous cult, Li Hongzhi is like Hitler, participants will kill themselves or their parents—simply led most Chinese to silently wonder: Why is the party so deeply threatened? Why don't they leave those people alone?

Lei Ming

On the afternoon of January 23, 2001, five protesters, including a mother and a daughter, walked onto Tiananmen, doused their bodies with gasoline, and set themselves on fire. The footage played for weeks, and public disgust was real. Any remaining inhibitions about fair treatment for incarcerated practitioners were replaced by death quotas and mass disappearances to military hospitals. Falun Gong was finally being erased.

Incarcerated in Changchun's Chaoyang Gou prison, Liang's gang discussed the gaping holes in the immolation story: Crucially, Falun Gong teachings decried suicide. Plus there were rumors that CNN hadn't provided the footage as the authorities claimed. Brushing aside the strange camera angles and inexplicable police behavior, Great Sea recalled a story translated from the *Washington Post*: A reporter had traveled to the burning mother's home town only to discover the self-immolator was not a practitioner, but a paid nightclub dancer, that is, a prostitute.

Hou Mingkai

They had all used "truth-clarification" techniques: Liang liked tapes and remote loudspeakers, Big Truck swore by his mountains of pamphlets, Great Sea favored slogan-balloons. All seemed faintly ridiculous now. Yet an article on "broadcast interruption" in *Minghui* had caught Liang's eye while in detention. The article spoke of the theoretical possibility of intercepting television transmissions by climbing up telephone poles, splicing into wires, and connecting DVD players. No specifics, but Great Sea's experience in radiology gave him some purchase on the electronics, while Big Truck worked on getting back into shape.

At the end of 2001, Liang's gang stopped hunger-striking and adopted a cooperative attitude. They were soon released. Immediately they began assessing transmission lines throughout Changchun. It seemed impossible at first—just a series of lines running in every direction. But Liang's familiarity with Changchun's geography kicked in, and he noticed that each neighborhood appeared to have a box. Tracing the wires, he wondered if each box was an electronic hub. Big Truck scaled a conveniently placed wall and confirmed it. Yet even if they could map the system, there were many hubs, only three pairs of hands, and walking around craning their necks heavenward had already attracted curiosity, never mind climbing a wall (even Big Truck was afraid to climb a pole). They began sniffing around Changchun for young, athletic practitioners who were prepared to risk their lives.

Liang found three. The first was a 26-year-old named Lei Ming, the little brother of the gang. Changchun at this time was a hotbed of Falun Gong activity; practically every street had a Falun Gong cell involved in making pamphlets or video-discs or banners. Lei had drifted in from Jilin City, with his black leather jacket, black shoes, black pants, and a couple of T-shirts. Previously a short order cook of northern cold dishes like pig knuckles, he was remarkably good with his hands, and he wore a perpetually self-humoring look that could morph into a strangely ominous stare if a stranger showed undue interest. Most of all, Lei was perfectly fit, in part because he'd spent less time rotting in cells than the others. After he unfurled his banner in Tiananmen, he had outrun an entire phalanx of cops, ultimately losing them in the nearby *hutongs*, the spider-web alleyways of Beijing.

The second recruit was a 32-year-old named Hou Mingkai. Unlike the others, he was selected by a local coordinator because of his electrical acumen, his extraordinary fitness, his proven ability to withstand torture, and his charisma. For his part, if Hou felt any misgivings about leaving his lovely wife and daughter to go to the mattresses with Liang,

he masked it by playing the court jester—or, in Chinese terms, the monkey. He had learned how to hustle at the foot of his parents' fried dough-stick stand—the entire city knew they were "long and tasty." Now Hou's absurd impersonations of interactions with police and peasant bystanders as he craned his neck to map the transmission lines (*Dude, a storm is coming. Seen my pigeon? Man, what a crap massage*) even had Big Truck cracking up.

Finally, there was Zhou Runjun, who came in as the group's cook. Zhou also excelled at one other essential Chinese feminine activity: nagging and pestering. Great Sea always wanted to talk, theorize, and hold meetings, but Zhou would storm in from the kitchen snarling that they were all just too chicken to climb. One morning she walked in with a bundle of lineman hooks, twisted a pair onto her boots, and scaled the pole in the backyard, screeching at them as she went. Rather than listen to Zhou call them sissies all day, they followed her example. By evening, even Liang had done it once.

Zhou Runjun

They were getting close now. During the day, they would practice on an abandoned hub pulled out of the junkyard. By night, they would scale poles in strange neighborhoods, always in pairs, with Big Truck, Lei, or Hou scrambling to understand the hub configuration while Great Sea, Liang, or Zhou distracted the neighborhood watch—the old women wearing red armbands.

On the night of February 16, 2002, Liang received word that some television screens in the steeltown of Anshan, a five-hour drive southwest of Changchun, had briefly flickered, gone black, and been replaced with a Falun Gong spokesman clarifying the self-immolation. It was only on cable and it hadn't lasted—a practitioner had been shot or a wire had short-circuited—but it could be done, and the police would know that too. The rehearsal schedule would have to be cut short; Liang designated the evening of March 5 as zero hour, following the kickoff of the National Party Congress, the Chinese state's equivalent of Holy Week.

While they feverishly mapped the lines, Liang faced a rearguard action. Liang kept his cell small, enforcing a no-talk zone with the practitioner community, but word had spread. Even if Liang's plan didn't involve taking over television stations with guns (as rumor briefly had it), most Changchun practitioners were dead set against the hijacking. Cutting wires was illegal, and people would hate Falun Gong even more if they missed their favorite show—yet it all came down to the practitioners' belief that it was purity of motive that counted, not worldly results (a logic that had led to millions of practitioners' arrests throughout China). Liang's plan sounded suspiciously like organized political action. Hadn't Master Li said that practitioners shouldn't get involved in politics? Chinese politics was a filthy business—lies, murders, graft, and karaoke bars. By that standard, Falun Gong was pure as white snow—the red blood of the martyrs only highlighted its radiance.

Tang Feng, a tall and stately Changchun practitioner who commanded universal respect for his convictions, was sent to Liang's hideout to talk them out of it. Liang listened carefully. Then Liang pounced: The Tiananmen get-your-spiritual-card-punched approach is finished—permanently contaminated by the self-immolation. So stop begging the party for mercy and go directly to the people. How people position themselves between Falun Gong and the party will determine their spiritual fates, right? Maybe the people are even with us, but not without the facts. Should only Anshan receive the facts? What about Changchun? There will never be another chance, Liang said.

Following the meeting, Tang Feng quietly informed the other practitioners that he had failed to talk Liang out of it. Actually, he would join the hijackers himself, Tang said, but his skills were better employed writing about these events for *Minghui*. Perhaps everyone should be more discreet about Liang's operation from now on.

On March 1, Liang was woken up by a real-estate buddy asking him to sort some papers ASAP. Liang appeared at his former office an hour later and was suddenly surrounded by police. They drove him back to the now-familiar interrogation room.

That night the gang ate Zhou's dinner waiting for the policemen's knock on the door. It never came, so they went out mapping. Great Sea and Hou had finally cracked a method of splicing wires in advance, so only a last-minute adjustment would be needed. Over the next three nights they would transform every hub into a truth-time-bomb. Using bicycles and cabs, within 15 minutes, they could launch across Changchun simultaneously. But it came down to the interrogation room. Maybe the police knew nothing of the hijacking plan. But they would torture Liang for names, activities, and locations. Somehow, Liang had to hold on.

Four nights later, Tang Feng went into a convenience store at a big intersection near People's Square. People

were standing around watching TV, but with a curiously hunched, agitated posture. Tang looked up. A television program was wrapping up, a sort of bearded Chinese Goldstein calling the self-immolation at Tiananmen Square a "false fire," a lie, and a criminal propaganda campaign by President Jiang Zemin. Then a new program showed vast parades of yellow silk passing under the Eiffel Tower, past Big Ben and the U.S. Capitol, explaining how Falun Gong had spread around the world and is welcomed in other countries. What happened to the TV?, a man asked. Maybe a neighbor is watching a video and the store is somehow picking up the signal, the owner replied, flipping through the channels. They were all showing the same program. A few people started speculating that an anti-Jiang faction had taken over the state.

Tang watched with them, feeding off their excitement, his eyes welling up, a lump growing in his throat: Liang had held on. Now people could finally know the truth about Falun Gong. They could learn about how Falun Gong is treated in foreign countries. Their eyes are wide open. Then the screen went dark, and there was no signal. After a while, Tang knew there would be no more. They must have been discovered. As he walked home, far in the distance, almost imperceptible, Tang thought he heard shouts coming from the direction of Cultural Square.

Liu Haibo's son, Liu Tianchun

The Falun Gong broadcast had played on eight channels for 50 minutes, garnering an audience of over one million people, the ratings building as word spread, people calling each other, saying they should turn on their TV immediately. In some neighborhoods, local party officials grew desperate and cut the power, plunging streets into darkness. In others, such as those near Cultural Square, people spilled into the streets to celebrate. The ban is over! Falun Gong is rehabilitated! A few practitioners emerged from factories and hideouts, openly handing out literature. Neighbors, children, random strangers, even the old ladies with the red armbands approached them, everyone talking at once, bubbling over, laughing, slapping them playfully, congratulating them. A few suspected it had not been a government broadcast, but still they smiled broadly and whispered: How did you do it? You Falun Gong are so amazing! And it was almost beginning to seem as if they had been rehabilitated after all, and the euphoria and laughter did not cease, not even at 10 P.M., when the first practitioner got a phone call from a military friend saying they had orders to round up Falun Gong.

Liu 'Big Truck' Chengjun in detention

Now we're getting to the part in the story that's a bit more difficult. The ascent of the mountain, the view from the top, are interesting, perhaps even inspiring; the descent, the transformation of individuals into howling animals, less so. Yet far more detailed testimony exists about the latter events, because—understandably or perversely, depending on your perspective—it is intensely important to practitioners. Several were even present—for example, tied to a heating pipe—to witness the moment of death. It's best to summarize.

Lei Ming, the little brother of the gang, was captured at 10 P.M. on March 5. Over the four days that he was bound to an iron chair, he may or may not have informed on his colleagues. Lei was ultimately released early and died of meticulously documented spinal injuries on August 6, 2006.

It's unclear whether Jiang Zemin actually gave an order to "kill [Falun Gong] without mercy." Yet there is far less debate over whether the Jilin City head of the 6-10 Office, the agency created to eliminate Falun Gong, said: "This time we will tear their skin off." It is a fact that Changchun and Jilin City officials were warned that they would lose their jobs if another hijacking occurred, plainclothes police were mobilized to stand by television transmission poles throughout Changchun, Western television reporters were ordered not to film any Chinese television broadcasts, and the police rounded up between 2,000 and 5,000 Changchun practitioners while Lei was tied to the iron chair.

On the evening of March 9, Great Sea was arrested in his home along with Tang Feng. The police trussed Great Sea to his living room chair, and broke his ankle in front of his wife and his then two-year-old son. Transferred to the Central Changchun police station in the early hours of March 10, Great Sea was stripped and a policeman named Huo, now living in the United States, observed two police

staff members forcing a high voltage electric baton into Great Sea's rectum. A few minutes later, the policemen began calling around the station that Liu Haibo's heart had stopped. Great Sea was officially pronounced dead at the Changchun Central Hospital.

In the late evening of March 24, over 60 police officers surrounded a wood pile that Big Truck—always the country boy—employed as his hide-out. The police officers soaked the pile with gas, lit it, and when Big Truck emerged, shot him twice in the thigh. Driving Big Truck to the station, the police van overturned, possibly as a result of a struggle. A police photograph taken shortly afterward shows that Big Truck could no longer sit vertically. A shirt is partially draped over him, suggesting that his arms are broken. Soon after, Big Truck spurned a China Central Television crew attempt at an interview. From that point on he was seen being carried between incarceration centers by stretcher. Big Truck was ultimately sentenced to 19 years in the No. 2 Prison in Jilin City, but he died of injuries with his family present on Boxing Day 2003.

Hou Mingkai's wife and daughter

On September 20, 2002, the Changchun Intermediary People's Court sentenced Zhou Runjun to 20 years in prison. It is believed that she died in labor camp.

Hou Mingkai was the last to be caught. Having escaped to neighboring Jilin City, Hou attempted to repeat the hijackings. Failing, he stayed true to his monkey persona by climbing a tree and placing loudspeakers denouncing Jiang Zemin within the public security bureau compound. A bounty of 50,000 yuan was placed on his head. On August 21, Hou was arrested in Changchun, taken to Qingming police station, and beaten to death by 4 A.M. the following morning. The police officers then held an impromptu celebratory meal. It's unclear whether the dough-sticks were particularly long and tasty, but the circumstances suggest they may have been purchased at the Hou family stand.

The hijacking and its bloody aftermath galvanized a wave of copycat attempts, most of them failures, a few wildly successful. But it was a one-trick pony. The Changchun effect would never be repeated; with the publicity surrounding the hijackers' arrests, no one would ever believe again that Falun Gong had been rehabilitated. But no one would ever quite believe the government's version of the Tiananmen self-immolation either. Changchun turned certain checkmate into perpetual check, but there was no international chess federation, or none that cared, anyway, to enforce the draw.

It took Chinese practitioners in the West—elite, highly educated, cool—to realize that Chinese television, and indeed propaganda and counterpropaganda, were mere foothills. The mountain had moved. With names like FreeGate, UltraSurf, and Dynaweb, small cells of practitioners, operating out of offices in northern California and living rooms in North Carolina, began the process of climbing over the great Chinese firewall and forging a permanent Internet connection to China from the West. In 2006, as it became clear that Falun Gong was no longer playing for stalemate, the North American systems administrator of Falun Gong was rolled into a carpet, beaten, and left bleeding in his suburban Atlanta home by Chinese hit men. That same year, practitioners formed the Global Internet Freedom Consortium. A few years later they posted an intro page written in Farsi and—well, you know the rest.

Did Liang understand what he had wrought? It's far from clear that he was told any of this, or even that he would have understood the full implications had anyone told him. Whenever he was allowed fleeting contact with a practitioner, he always asked, in hushed tones: Had the hijackers' story made it into *Minghui*? Did they know?

Yes, the practitioners know. But the story hasn't worked out quite as some had hoped. After Liang's death, the State Department balked at actually funding his Internet successors. Instead, Internews, essentially a media-training NGO, and the well-established research organization Freedom House got most of the money; thus were rewarded the dual principles of political safety and utter irrelevance to the task at hand. It's even possible that the State Department's original stated goal of liberating the Chinese Internet was just a feint to try to get the Chinese to negotiate an end to their own serial hacking attacks on systems in the West. But Falun Gong's howling commandos didn't die for Western network security.

So the Hollywood ending is canceled at this time for lack of investment. Yet the story may not be quite over. We had an election. The new House leadership claims to be principled. There is a chance they will find their way to the mountain. Perhaps someday they will even summon up the guts to climb it. ♦

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Noël Coward as Captain Kinross, 'In Which We Serve' (1942)

The Second Noël

A talent to amuse is celebrated

BY JOHN SIMON

The epigraph for *The Noël Coward Reader* comes from a speech Lord Louis Mountbatten, the British naval hero and aristocratic charmer, made at Coward's 70th birthday party in 1969. It runs:

> There are probably greater painters than Noël, greater novelists than Noël, greater librettists, greater composers of music, greater singers, greater dancers, greater comedians, greater tragedians, greater stage producers, greater film directors, greater cabaret artists, greater TV stars. . . . If there are, they are 14 different people. Only *one* man combined all 14 different talents—The Master, Noël Coward.

The Noël Coward Reader
edited by Barry Day
Knopf, 624 pp., $39.95

I assume that by comedians and tragedians Mountbatten meant actors rather than writers, in which case why the omission of playwrights? Obvious as it may be, it is what Coward is most known for, and it brings his talents to a rounder number, 15. He was, quite simply, a genius, even if of a breezier sort; but must all geniuses be heavyweights? Wit, charm, and sophistication ought to count for something, too.

Editor Barry Day's numerous publications include nine Coward items, written, edited, or coedited. Most recently, there was the compilation of letters from and to Coward, which amounted to something pretty much like a biography, what with Day's cogent comments. Something not dissimilar obtains here, the Coward works supplemented with quotations from the letters, journals, and autobiographies, not to mention Day's enlightening observations. Coward packed a good deal of living into his nearly 74-year lifespan, and he wrote just about everything from satirical poetry parodies to a ballet scenario. And here, except for those two genres, everything else is represented.

Day has sagely included both the well known and the occasional misses, and never skimps on his rather extensive excerpts. There are entire ample scenes from the plays, and complete short stories that are very nearly novellas. There are little-known poems and essays, and good bits from

BRITISH LION / ALBUM / NEWSCOM

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

two remarkable film scenarios. And of course, anecdotes, tributes, and 89 telling photographs of people, posters, programs, and domiciles associated with the man who basked in the nickname "The Master."

The book smartly reveals Coward as not merely the bard of the affluent chattering classes. Himself born into the lower middle class, he wrote with empathy about all levels of society, for the most part without patronization or sentimentality. The *Reader* proceeds, decade by decade, more or less chronologically from the fairly uneventful but not ungraceful Early Years. There are occasional flashbacks and flash forwards, but it is gratifying to see a consistency in the oeuvre from precocious to gracefully aging.

Let us start with the stories. "Me and the Girls" is written from the point of view of a bisexual song-and-dance man who, with a small troupe of girl dancers, has been touring internationally. Now he is dying in a Francophone hospital (in southern France or Switzerland) of an unnamed illness. Periodically visited by one of his girls and checked on by nurses and doctors—one of whom he has a not-entirely-unanswered crush on—he is obsessed also with the mountains on view from the window ignored by him in the past. The stream of consciousness is superbly rendered: bits of memory, bits of hope, bits of melancholy resignation jostling one another.

In a later story, "The Kindness of Mrs. Radcliffe," a middle-aged, class-conscious upper bourgeoise is patronizing to her dullish husband, smug with her married daughter, and ambivalent about her son-in-law. She is unduly proud of some charity to a beggarwoman in the park and yet ultimately touching rather than repellent even in her self-satisfaction. In "What Mad Pursuit," a celebrated British novelist (really Coward himself) is invited by a real-life American socialite-hostess for a Long Island weekend meant to be intimate, but springing on him party after party. Sundry American types plus a titled English lady—well-known figures including, pseudonymously, Grace Moore, Carole Lombard, and Clifton Webb—are gently mocked, not excluding the novelist. In "Mr. and Mrs. Edgehill," a story, and in an excerpt from Coward's only novel, *Pomp and Circumstance*, we get close looks at British colonials on Samola, a fictitious island colony he frequently evokes. They are viewed both critically and forgivingly, many of them harboring a touching nobility under their humdrum façades.

We come next to the poetry, which Coward always modestly called verse. Light verse it certainly tends to be, but of great charm. Consider this unpublished specimen, "I've Got to Go Out and Be Social," from the 1930s.

I've got to go out and be social
I have to forget
The Bohemian set
And discuss with the flower of Burke *and* Debrett
The fall of the franc and the National Debt,
I have to regret
That the weather is wet
There's so much that I can't afford to forget—
As I have to go out and be social.

Or take this, from the much later "Jamaica."

'Neath tropical palms under tropical skies
Where equally tropical stars are
The vocal Jamaicans betray no surprise
However off-key their guitars are.
The native calypsos which seem to be based
On hot-air-conditioned reflexes
Conclusively prove that to people of taste
There's nothing so funny as sex is.

It should be noted that there is little, if any, difference between a Coward poem (or verse) and a rhymed Coward song lyric, and that, accordingly, the rhymed ones come off better than the occasional free verse.

The wonderful song lyrics need hardly be reprised here. Many of them have become common knowledge, safely stored in people's happy memories. They come in four equally effective varieties: guardedly sentimental, as in "Someday I'll Find You" and "I'll See You Again," satirical, as in "Mad Dogs and Englishmen," "I've Been to a Marvellous Party," and "Don't Let's Be Beastly to the Germans" (banned for some time by the irony-challenged BBC), just plain sassily charming, as in "A Room With a View," "Twentieth Century Blues," and "World Weary," or encoded, as in "Green Carnation" and "Mad About the Boy," with hints of Coward's homosexuality, a subject more openly discussed only much later in the 1965 drama *A Suite in Three Keys*.

But then, as Coward declared in a famous lyric that became a kind of signature phrase, *The most I've had is just / A talent to amuse*, a delightful bit of false modesty. Coward's plays do amuse—except the occasional dramas, and even they to an extent—but they are stylish entertainments rather than crass amusements. *Private Lives*, the most popular and frequently revived one, is about the age-old problem of a couple made for each other but unable to coexist without bickering that is less funny for them than for us in the audience. It is the ultimate in sophistication with its expert balance of the cynical and the sentimental, its repartee and romance. Day gives us plentiful excerpts for a sense of the enchanting whole.

Coward's own favorite, we are told, was *Design for Living*, written for husband-and-wife duo Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne and himself. It is a celebration of the *ménage à trois* with a special twist: Not only are the two male members, Leo and Otto, in love with Gilda and she with them; they are also enamored of each other. Thus are heterosexual and homosexual urges equally satisfied. Still other major plays are *Hay Fever*, about the hilarious goings-on at a weekend house party Coward spent at the home of the eccentric actress Laurette Taylor and her bizarre family; also *Fallen Angels*, about a smooth Frenchman visiting with two British women friends with whom, unbeknown to each other, he had had affairs, but who are now married to suspicious spouses.

No less notable are the nine marvelous one-acters collectively known

as *Tonight at Eight-Thirty*, some of them musicals, originally performed to great success in London and New York by Coward and Gertrude Lawrence. (A tenth one has since been discovered.) They are wonderfully various, subtly mixing drama and comedy, with one of them, *Shadow Play*, reproduced almost in full. Of lasting interest, too, is *Easy Virtue*, about an unsuccessful marriage between a naïve youth and an experienced older woman. More humorous and successfully revived is *Present Laughter*, about a star actor (once again, really Coward) besieged by various women lovers—one married to a close associate—as well as by a weird aspiring playwright, both reverent and impudently exasperating. Also copiously excerpted is the delicious *Blithe Spirit*, about the ghost of a writer's ex-wife brought back in a séance by a wonderfully funny medium. Hard to exorcise, she proves a great danger to the writer's current marriage.

There is also *This Happy Breed*, about the heroism of working-class Londoners during World War II, and *Peace in Our Time*, about what would have happened if the Nazis had been victorious. *Nude with Violin* is a jolly satire on modern painting; *Waiting in the Wings* is a Chekhovian tribute to elderly actresses, including two former rival lovers of the same man, ancient enemies now sharing the same old actors' home. There is the late musical about cruise-ship imbroglios, *Sail Away*, represented by two of its riotous lyrics, "Why Do the Wrong People Travel?"—*There isn't a rock / Between Bangkok / And the beaches of Hispaniola, / That does not recoil / From suntan oil, / And the gurgle of Coca Cola*—and "Useless Useful Phrases," about a dated Italian phrase book, featuring such things as *This mutton is tough, / There's a mouse in my bedroom, / This isn't my cabin, / This egg is delicious, / The soup is too thick, / Please bring me a trout, / What an excellent pudding, / Pray hand me my gloves, / I'm going to be sick!* We get also the late trilogy *Suite in Three Keys*, whose longest item, "A Song at Twilight," touches—reasonably discreetly—on homosexuality. It is partly based on incidents from the lives of Max Beerbohm and Somerset Maugham ("that scaly old crocodile" to Coward when they were no longer friends) as a former mistress visits a famous older writer, seeking, much to his dismay, permission to publish his love letters.

'Person to Person' with Edward R. Murrow, 1956

Less important, perhaps, are the last finished play, *Star Quality*, about a young playwright's problems with an aging female star, and the unfinished *Age Cannot Wither*, about three middle-aged women who were "girls together," and keep meeting once every year to drink and gossip. A typical exchange:

> *Stella*: Do you really think that when I'm a gnarled old crone of 95 I shall still fuss about my hair?
>
> *Judy*: Certainly. If you've got any left, and if you haven't, you'll fuss about your wig.

It is good of Barry Day to excerpt some unsuccessful, or even unproduced, Coward plays. And then there are the two magnificent movies. First, *In Which We Serve*, codirected with David Lean, its screenplay hitherto unpublished. A superb tribute to the wartime British Navy, it is the story of the torpedoed destroyer HMS *Torrin* from building to sinking, told in flashbacks from images of its survivors floating in the water. Gradually, we concentrate on the stories of some of them, one by one. Coward's performance as Captain Kinross, based on the experiences of a close friend (Lord Mountbatten), is memorably understated but so is the entire stiff-upper-lipped film, in which every part is played by a splendid actor, such as Bernard Miles, John Mills, Michael Wilding, Kay Walsh, Richard Attenborough, and Celia Johnson as Mrs. Kinross. Never has understatement been more moving than in the final scene, where Kinross says good-bye to the surviving half of his crew, up for reassignment. As Day reveals, Coward was recommended by Mountbatten to George VI for a knighthood—which Winston Churchill scotched. (The honor was bestowed only years later, not very long before Coward's death.)

The other great Coward film, *Brief Encounter*, an expanded version of his one-act *Still Life*, remains one of

CBS PHOTO ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

the screen's sweetest and saddest love stories. With a screenplay by Coward and three talented others, it is the tale of a man and woman, both married, who have short weekly meetings at a commuter railway station before boarding their respective trains. They fall deeply in love, but do not consummate it, and eventually the man, a doctor, leaves for Africa forever. Against an ironic background of mundane palaver by some lively minor characters, or inopportunely pounced upon by officious intruders, the lovers, sublimely enacted by Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard, alternate passionate declarations with British restraint and resignation. Rachmaninoff's music adds romantic support, magisterially directed by David Lean.

Throughout *The Noël Coward Reader* we get judicious, incisive, and often witty comments by Day, replete with information about Coward's life in and out of apartments in London, Paris, a Swiss chalet, and two houses in Jamaica, a beach one and a mountain retreat. Also about his travels and performances, including a stint as a kind of secret agent during World War II. I myself witnessed Coward's last public appearance in New York at (to quote Day) "a special performance of the review *Oh, Coward!* . . . Marlene [Dietrich] was on his arm, though it was not entirely clear who was supporting whom. Had he enjoyed the show? 'One does not laugh at one's own jokes.' Then he relented. 'But I did leave humming the songs.'"

Unlike Coward's physique, his writings aged well. Some youthfully flippant, some maturely mellow or dazzlingly witty, they retain an easeful, evergreen charm. They can ambush you with astonishing shifts from humor to pathos or vice versa and, for all their pirouetting cleverness, feel inspired rather than contrived. The smart song lyrics are matched with no less brilliant melodies, Coward being, like Cole Porter and Irving Berlin, equally good with music as with words. Of how many artists can this be said? ♦

B&A

Teen Angels

What, if anything, do they believe?

BY EVE TUSHNET

Thomas Jefferson's most radical declaration of independence isn't his most famous. In 1820 Jefferson created a simplified, reasonable version of the Bible—taking out the miracles, prophecies, claims of Jesus' divinity, and other weirdness which offended his Deism. Kenda Creasy Dean suggests that mainstream Christianity, in virtually all of its manifestations, has been similarly bowdlerized. Instead of the life-changing, culture-challenging demands of the gospel, Dean argues, American teenagers follow a mutant creed best understood as "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." *Almost Christian*, a popularization of the results of the 2002-05 National Study of Youth and Religion, attempts to help Christian parents, youth pastors, and others who are alarmed at the shakiness and incoherence of most teens' faith.

Almost Christian
What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church
by Kenda Creasy Dean
Oxford, 264 pp., $24.95

The content of that faith is simple and as American as a smile in an airport. The tenets of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (MTD) include belief in a god who watches over us and orders life on earth, and whose major moral concern is that humans should be nice to one another: "The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself." These kids aren't hostile to religion; who would kick such a toothless cocker spaniel? Dean argues that adolescents who were able to be articulate and expressive when discussing issues they really cared about suddenly became tongue-tied when the subject of God or religion came up, falling back on phrases such as "I would imagine [God is] a very nice guy."

(These impressions of inarticulateness and incoherence echo similar findings by Donna Freitas in *Sex and the Soul.* Freitas found that students at the most explicitly evangelical colleges were among the very few who could describe their religious beliefs in detail and explain how those beliefs affected their romantic lives and plans for the future.)

This is not the kind of faith that makes saints. It's not the kind of faith that can carry a teenager through the death of a parent. It's not the kind of faith that prompts sacrifices and resistance to the norms and behaviors of one's peers. It is not—as Dean's title indicates—really Christianity at all. And MTD cuts across old denominational and confessional boundaries. It's most prevalent among mainline Protestants and Catholics and least prevalent among Mormons, black Protestants, and "conservative Protestants." In fact, this belief system seems designed to minimize the importance of religious difference, partly as a way of defusing the tensions and passions of a pluralist society. It's as if believing that other people are wrong about God in some important ways is bad manners.

Dean asks where this new belief system came from, and finds that it's not indigenous to adolescents. Teens think this way because their parents do. Parents who show, by their words or their actions, that the tenets and practices of their faith are vague, unimportant, or only tenuously

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The cast of '7th Heaven,' ca. 2002

related to daily life, produce teenagers whose faith is vague, marginal, and unlikely to shape their actions and plans in any significant way. Parents who ask little of their children in terms of faith formation, but a great deal in terms of, say, getting into a good college, make a statement about priorities which their children trust and follow. Churches, youth ministries, and similar groups that trade "send[ing] young people out" for "rop[ing] young people in" wind up with teens who think church is fine, a good place to be—"nice." And who then leave church to act just like all of their friends.

Mormons, by contrast, challenge their teenagers and require a lot of time, study, and leadership from them. Mormon parents rise at dawn to go over their church's history and doctrine with their children. More than half of the Mormon youth in the study had given a presentation in church in the past six months. They frequently shared public testimony and felt that they were given some degree of decision-making power within their community. They shape their plans for the immediate future around strong cultural pressures toward mission trips and marriage. Whatever one thinks of the actual beliefs of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it seems obvious that both adult Mormons and the teens who follow them really, really believe.

Dean wonders whether some of the most apparently committed teenagers, in the Mormon church and elsewhere, are merely parroting words they've heard or going with the flow of their semi-closed subculture: Is their faith "foreclosed," plucked from the tree before it's ripe? Is the mission trip just the Mormon equivalent of studying for the SATs—something you do because you're a good kid and you want to please your parents, not because you want to please God? But overall, she argues that the churches which challenge their children the most also often help the children develop mature, deeply held faith which can withstand shocks, doubts, and suffering.

Dean, therefore, has her own challenge for Christians who work with adolescents: Push them to take hold of their faith and let it reshape their lives. She has qualified praise for short-term mission trips to poverty-stricken areas. She knows why these trips are sometimes derided as "voluntourism," but believes that they can also provide not just a break from middle-class American daily lives but an implicit, radically Christian critique of those lives.

On a more general level, she offers a wake-up call to Christian parents. She has two basic questions, and the more obvious one is, what are you doing to shape your children's faith as Christians? But the deeper question is, do you want your children to be Christians at all? Would you be proud to raise a Mother Teresa, even as your heart trembles for her and you wish she'd come home? Do you *want* your child to be a saint, even if it might mean she's less normal or less happy or less materially successful or less like you? Dean knows that for many parents, MTD is a lot easier to explain to the neighbors than the imitation of Christ.

There's an interesting tension in *Almost Christian.* On the one hand, Dean cites studies showing that teens who are more serious about their religious faith are doing better than more wishy-washy teens on a wide range of sociological metrics, from drug use to hopeful outlooks toward the future. MTD, she notes, promises happiness but doesn't deliver it as consistently as committed Christian faith. And yet on the other hand, Dean wants to challenge precisely these sociological markers of success. She wants teenagers who are willing to follow Jesus' words: "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and that of the gospel will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?" Or to put the point in terms even Jefferson might have acknowledged, *pursuing* happiness might not be the best way to win it. ♦

SPELLING TELEVISION

B&A

Sincere Flattery

The impressionist movement, literary division, on exhibit. **BY PHILIP TERZIAN**

Parody is an acquired taste, and not everyone develops the palate. F.R. Leavis thought parodies "demeaned" the writers being lampooned, but that is seldom the case. If the parody is good, it demonstrates how distinctively familiar a stylist may be; if the parody is not so good, it reflects poorly on the author of the parody, not the intended victim. The vast majority assembled here by John Gross—who knows a thing or two about such matters, as former editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and editor of several other Oxford anthologies—are very good parodies, and some are great. *The Oxford Book of Parodies* is a treat.

The Oxford Book of Parodies
edited by John Gross
Oxford, 416 pp., $29.95

Of course, all parody collections are indebted, to some degree, to Dwight Macdonald's pioneering 1960 collection, and in terms of tone and organization, this one is as well. The main difference is that Macdonald included many more American specimens than are found here, and was comparatively indiscriminate in his choices, including examples he didn't especially admire but believed rated a mention, and throwing everything he couldn't categorize into a catch-all section called "Specialties." Missing here, for example, is Wolcott Gibbs's immortal parody of *Time*style—"Backward ran sentences until reeled the mind. . . . Where it all will end, knows God!"—although it must be admitted that most readers below a certain age won't have any idea what it's about. But H.L. Mencken's version of the Declaration of Independence in American makes the cut—"When things get so balled up that the people of a country got to cut loose from some other country"—and is very nearly as fresh as it was in 1921.

What makes a great parody? The basic literary ingredients are necessary: a good ear, a feel for rhetoric, an appreciation for the rhythm, brain, and vocabulary of the writer. Above all, however, a great parody is based on a decent satirical idea. Wendy Cope is a brilliant parodist of T.S. Eliot, and her bull's-eyes are a combination of incongruous ideas, perfect pitch, and literary criticism. Her conversion of *The Waste Land* into limerick form—*A Phoenician called Phlebas forgot / About birds and his business—the lot, / Which is no surprise, / Since he'd met his demise / And been left in the ocean to rot*—is not only amusing as language, but a deft commentary on the self-conscious desolation of High Modernism. Her notion of a nursery rhyme as conceived by Eliot—*Because time will not run backwards / Because time / Because time will not run* / Hickory dickory—is just funny.

The difference between a good and not-so-good parody is often a question of intent. There are famous parodies—Victor Purcell's labored pastiche of Eliot (*The Sweeniad*), not included here, or Ezra Pound's satire of the medieval "Sumer is icumen in"—which amount mostly to poking fun without a great leavening of wit. The best parodies are often based on the comic principle of incongruity. Stanley Sharpless had the idea of imagining John Betjeman's "Subaltern's Love Song" as written by Chaucer—*A Mayde ther was, y-clept Joan Hunter Dunn, / In all of Surrie, comelier wench was none*—which neatly combines the stylistic tics of both poets. To be sure, certain writers (Poe, Jack Kerouac, D.H. Lawrence's essays) are nearly impossible to parody, and some of the parodies included here are comic versions of the original. An "underground" sample of Cole Porter's "You're the Top," for example, works well enough—*You're the top! / You're Miss Pinkham's tonic / You're the top! / You're a high colonic*—but its broad, mildly obscene lyrics are not much removed from the original, which is no surprise since the author is believed to be Porter himself.

Some of the parodies here have a certain perishable quality. Bertrand Russell's BBC talk about a chat with the Cambridge philosopher G.E. Moore—"'Moore,' I said, 'have you any apples in that basket?' 'No,' he replied. . . . 'Moore,' I said, 'have you then *some* apples in that basket?' 'No,' he replied again, leaving me in a logical cleft stick from which I had but one way out."—from *Beyond the Fringe* is hilarious, especially when recited by its author Jonathan Miller; but also requires knowledge of the middlebrow BBC culture of the 1950s, which few now possess. Similarly, J.B. Miller's extended impersonation of J.K. Rowling ("Harry Potter and the Rolling Stone") presumes a literary reputation which may or may not endure, and there is an imitation of a Tony Blair speech—which would have been a Harold Wilson speech if this book had been published a few decades ago.

But these are minor quibbles. Gross's selection is judicious, ingenious, and accessible, and like any good anthology, rewards the deep reader and dipper-in alike. Above all, it contains a pleasing sample of the greatest parodist of all, Max Beerbohm. Max's superiority is evident in all respects: His humor is subtle and subversive, his ear is unmatched, and his verbal resources appear to be unlimited. A certain amount of Beerbohm parodies, especially in his classic *Christmas Garland*, are of writers now forgotten; but he was scarcely afraid to take on the giants—Shakespeare, Kipling, Dr. Johnson—and mastered the Master himself, Henry James: "She was ever, indeed, the most telephonic of her sex. In talking to Eva you always had, as it were, your lips to the receiver." ♦

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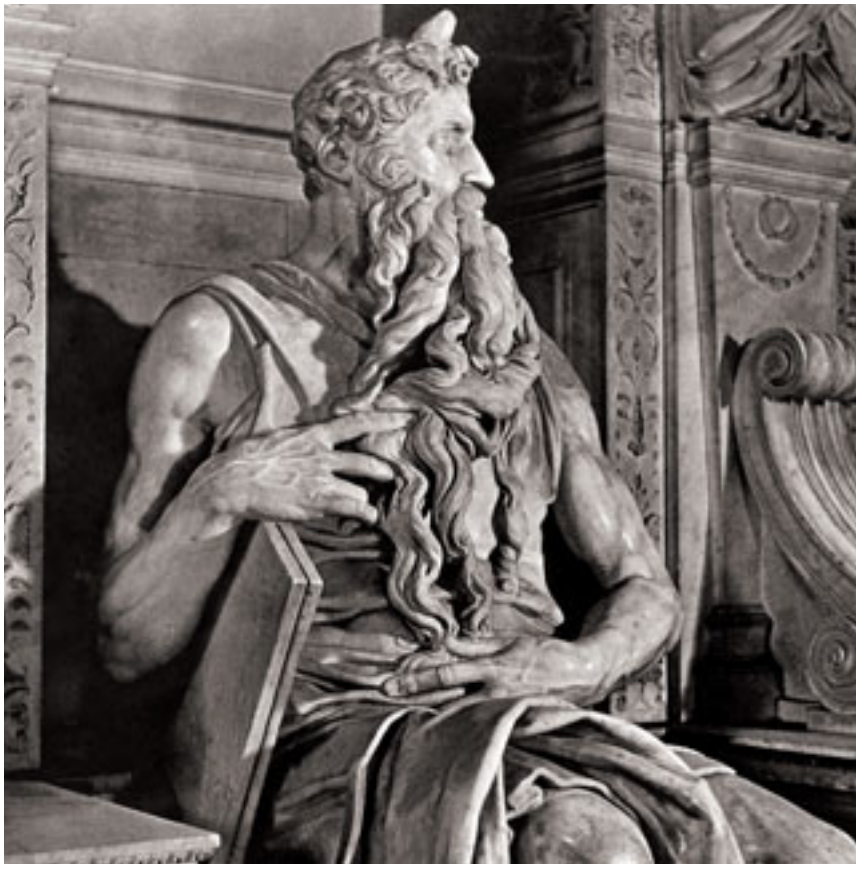
B&A

Big Ten

The Commandments as a blueprint for humanity.

BY JOEL SCHWARTZ



Michelangelo's 'Moses'

David Hazony's study of the Ten Commandments is a worthy addition to an important genre—the close reading and serious analysis of biblical texts. In this respect his book is reminiscent of Leon Kass's interpretation of Genesis (*The Beginning of Wisdom*) and the analysis by Yoram Hazony—David Hazony's older brother—of the book of Esther (*The Dawn*). But in one obvious respect, David Hazony's enterprise differs from Kass's and Yoram Hazony's: Genesis and Esther consist of stories that are replete with characters, whose motivations and actions can be analyzed—as well as plot and dialogue that lend themselves well to literary analysis. By contrast, the Ten Commandments is a comparatively brief legal text. Since several of the commandments are two words long in Hebrew or four words long in English ("Thou shalt not steal"), only a limited amount of exegesis would seem to be possible. How much *explication* can be offered for a *texte* consisting of two words?

The Ten Commandments
How Our Most Ancient Moral Text Can Renew Modern Life
by David Hazony
Scribner, 304 pp., $26

Hazony responds to this difficulty by paying "special attention to . . . the ancient Jewish interpretations" of the commandments, many of which go beyond a close literal reading of the text. One merit of traditional Jewish analysis, Hazony claims, is that it tends to focus more on society than on the individual:

> Classical Christianity focused its teachings on, more than anything else, the moral and religious life of the individual. The Jewish teachings, broadly speaking, added a dimension we may call political. . . . When Jewish tradition came to speak of the Ten Commandments, . . . it looked at them not just as a basis for [individual] righteousness but also as the cornerstone of a good society. Looking at the Ten Commandments in this way can give them new meaning for Western life today.

Thus Hazony seeks, through his analysis, to show that "the Old Testament's centerpiece, the Ten Commandments, is neither an archaic remnant of a dead past nor an arbitrary set of laws." Instead they incorporate "a whole attitude to life, one that recognizes both the weaknesses and the unfathomable potential of humanity." In particular, he aims to show how the commandments relate to one another, and why these specific commandments were proclaimed, instead of others that might have been put forth. His most striking contention is that "the Ten Commandments are not really a 'religious' text at all. . . . Although they do make statements about God . . . these are a small part of the text." Hazony instead emphasizes "just how much more the Ten Commandments are really talking about us than him, about man's role and purpose in the world rather than who God is or how we ought to relate to him."

(In this respect, it should be noted, Hazony actually departs from the traditional Jewish understanding of the commandments. In the traditional understanding, the first four commandments—which proclaim that God took the Israelites out of Egypt and then forbid the worship of other gods, forbid the taking of God's name in vain, and com-

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mand the observance of the Sabbath—concern man's relations with God. The last five commandments—which forbid murder, adultery, theft, false testimony, and covetousness—concern man's relations with his fellow men. The Fifth Commandment, commanding us to honor our parents, is seen as the bridge between these two subdivisions.)

To support his interpretation, Hazony notes that the First Commandment speaks of God not as the creator of the universe but as the liberator of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. (Like Hazony, I am using the Jewish rather than the Catholic or Protestant enumeration of the commandments, according to which God's proclamation of His divinity constitutes the First Commandment—even though it is not, in fact, a commandment. But then the Hebrew name for what we call the Ten Commandments is actually the ten "statements" or "utterances.")

From the First Commandment's focus on human liberation, Hazony deduces that it is about "the principle of redemption." As such, it "really is not about God at all." Instead, it teaches us that "just as God is at heart a redeemer, so too are we, each of us, potential redeemers." Similarly, Hazony holds that the Second Commandment—which ostensibly forbids idolatry—should in fact be understood as a defense of moral judgment: "The Bible's assault on idolatry is derived from its broader concern for morality, a powerful idea that lies at the bedrock of the entire biblical approach to life." The rejection of idolatry, in fact, rests on "a simple claim"—that "there exists an independent moral measure, a standard for right and wrong that is above our own wills and whims." In short, our "wills and whims" are equated to idols—things that we choose to worship, even though they are far from divine.

In the rest of his book Hazony comments on the subsequent eight commandments. Taken as a whole, he argues, the commandments' power "derives not from their impossibly high standards but from the insistence that real human beings, with all their faults and failings, can improve themselves and the world around them." The First Commandment "sets the tone" for the subsequent nine, "in which the redemptive spirit is explored and elaborated on and applied to every significant area of our lives—morality, integrity, the self, wisdom, life, love, wealth, community, and inner peace." This sentence offers a useful précis of Hazony's thesis, highlighting the key term that emerges from his explication of commandments two through ten.

Hazony's glosses on the individual commandments are far from self-evident but are always, at least, plausible and intriguing. Particularly praiseworthy is the way in which he discerns a logical coherence to the order of the commandments, showing how each of them leads to the next. An example: in the Fifth Commandment, we are enjoined to honor our parents, who gave us "the gift of life, the brute physical fact of our being." It therefore leads logically to the Sixth Commandment: the prohibition of murder. In that prohibition, "life gets its own commandment."

Although this book offers a thoughtful overview of the commandments, I do have some qualms about it. I sometimes worry that Hazony's interpretations may diverge excessively from the simple text of the commandments. For example, he sees the Third Commandment not as a narrow injunction against taking God's name in vain but as a broad injunction against lying, at least in most circumstances: "It is in a context of lying . . . that false oaths become possible." But that reading seems strained; as Hazony himself notes, "The Third Commandment does not say 'You shall not lie' but *You shall not invoke the name of the Lord your God in vain*." Why is lying not prohibited? In Hazony's words, "Lying is itself an ambiguous issue. We all know that there are lies, and there are lies." He gives a wonderful example of a traditional Jewish example of an acceptable lie: "As the rabbis taught, you do not have to tell a groom on his wedding day what you really think about his new bride."

Similarly, I am skeptical of Hazony's interpretation of the Ninth Commandment. He construes its seemingly narrow prohibition of bearing "false witness against your neighbor" as a broader critique of slander: "By fostering a discourse of slander, the false witness threatens the foundations of community." Now it is certainly true that the Jewish tradition vehemently attacks slander. Nevertheless, the Ninth Commandment enjoins not the broader but the narrower practice. Again to quote Hazony against himself, "The false witness . . . is not just slandering an innocent person. He is doing it in a court of law." In both of these cases, I am open to the possibility that these two commandments have in mind the broader moral import that Hazony discerns. But if so, I would like to know why their plain sense seems to point to a reading that is narrower than Hazony's.

These discrepancies between the literal text of the third and ninth commandments and Hazony's interpretations of them suggest that Hazony may aim not so much to interpret the Ten Commandments as to provide a broader understanding of Jewish ethics. The ethical admonitions to which he rightly points (for example, the prohibition of slander) can certainly be found in Jewish ethics—even if they are, in some cases, tied only loosely to their fountainhead in the Ten Commandments. Hazony speaks of paying "special attention to the Ten Commandments' context as part of the Old Testament as a whole"; in other words, I believe that he ultimately views the commandments less as a text that stands on its own than as one particular manifestation (a vitally significant one, to be sure) of a broader Jewish ethical understanding.

Whatever doubts I may have about his interpretations of specific commandments, he succeeds remarkably in articulating this Jewish ethical understanding. My focus here on a specifically Jewish ethical view may also point to an opportunity that Hazony misses: After noting that the Jewish interpretation of the commandments is more political than what seems to him to be the more individualist Christian interpretation, he doesn't say much about how Christians do or should understand them. That is an issue that he might particularly have addressed in

discussing the Fourth Commandment, enjoining the observance of the Sabbath. The Sabbath commandment is of unique interest in this context, since it is the only one that concerns the Jewish ritual or ceremonial law that Christianity abrogated. Focusing as he does on the commandments' relevance to human behavior, Hazony concludes that the "aim of the Sabbath is to spend one day each week diverting the bulk of our energies away from creation and toward recognizing, exploring, and ultimately sanctifying the inner self." If "the highest aim of the Sabbath is our spiritual advancement," can Christians somehow achieve that goal, even though almost all of them reject the specifically Jewish means to that end—the banning of creative activity? I don't know how Hazony would answer that question, and I'd be interested to see what his answer would be. In any event, at least nine of the Ten Commandments (and the Hebrew Bible as a whole) are accepted by Christians as well as Jews. And to paraphrase Meat Loaf, nine out of ten ain't bad. For that reason, it might be better to refer to the worldview that Hazony articulates as broadly Judeo-Christian rather than specifically Jewish.

Summarizing his conclusions, he asserts that

> The Ten Commandments are the Bible's most poignant symbol of both the complexity and the possibilities of life. Far from being a call for perfection, they embrace the nuance of humanity, the spectrum of real experience, the challenges of weakness and hope, and the need for human beings always to take responsibility for their lives.

Thus in Hazony's reading, the Hebrew Bible—and in particular the Ten Commandments—is "a deeply optimistic text, and its optimism flows not in spite of human imperfection, but from it. . . . While the ancient Greek playwrights presented us with stories of tragic fate . . . the Israelites believed that each of us has the power to overcome fate, to rule over the sins that crouch at our door." Despite our flaws, we are capable of improving the world, because we are capable of improving ourselves. ♦

B&A

Machine Dancer

A picture of the man who envisioned movie musicals.

BY RICHARD STRINER

We know a great deal about the brilliant and eccentric Hollywood dance director of the 1930s, Busby Berkeley. Now we know more. Jeffrey Spivak has delved into previously neglected sources that fill in some of the blanks. He has interviewed scores of surviving friends and associates. But while *Buzz* is a very useful biographical fact book, its quality is uneven.

Buzz
The Life and Art of Busby Berkeley
by Jeffrey Spivak
Kentucky, 408 pp., $39.95

Too often it gets lost in its own facts. In the early chapters we learn perhaps more than we need to know about the troubled lives of Berkeley's parents, the local history of towns where they lived, and every single detail of Berkeley's foolish and compulsive insubordination during World War I. Much of this material should have been relegated to footnotes. The book doesn't really come alive until the Hollywood chapters, where the story begins to be compelling. Especially vivid is Spivak's account of a 1935 car crash that led to Berkeley being tried (three times) for second-degree murder. But the narrative starts to meander again in the later chapters.

To his credit, Spivak has a great many interesting facts to relate about Berkeley's creative methods, including some—but not all—of the tricks that he used to create his astonishing production numbers, both for Warner Brothers and for Samuel Goldwyn (these rival studio chiefs waged a bitter contractual war with each other for access to his services). As a result of feuds with Jack Warner, Berkeley moved on to other studios by 1939: to MGM, and then to Twentieth Century-Fox.

Spivak renders some critical judgments on the merits of various production numbers, from the obvious masterpieces, such as "By A Waterfall" in *Footlight Parade* (1933) and "Lullaby of Broadway" in *Gold Diggers of 1935* to the horrors, such as the vulgar blackface number "Goin' To Heaven On A Mule" in the execrable *Wonder Bar* (1934). His subjective verdicts on some of the productions are debatable; but these are, after all, matters of taste. *Buzz* is extremely effective in presenting the high-pressure world of Hollywood in Berkeley's day: the brutal hours, the relentless pace of the production schedules, the effects upon marriages, the battles over budget and control. Berkeley is depicted as a frequent victim of the system at its worst, but he was also a maniacal boss. Esther Williams berated him in scathing terms for risking her life on the set—she broke several vertebrae in executing one of his stunts—and Berkeley comes across as a talented overgrown child: He would lurch between self-defeating antics, brilliant inspirations, and dedicated craftsmanship.

Spivak's approach is to interweave everything in chronological sequence. But this results in a tangled narrative. This is, after all, a hybrid work: a combination of biography, film history, and artistic commentary. The extensive descriptions of film plots

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and dance routines often bog down the narrative as badly as accumulations of biographical trivia. This particular problem might well have been averted if *Buzz* had been divided in half, with descriptions of production numbers and plots removed from the biographical narrative and inserted in the long and complete appendix that Spivak provides at the end: an appendix in which every single Berkeley creation (including nonmusical productions that he directed) is listed. This greatly expanded appendix would have been a house of wonders in which Spivak's readers could browse at their leisure.

Such a strategy might also have freed the author to pursue a much broader exploration in the biographical section: to link the oeuvre of Berkeley to broader cross-currents in the dance world. Berkeley was, in the beginning, just a clever and precocious member of a tribe of producers and directors who specialized in Precision Dance, as it was called. Precision troupes were rife on Broadway in the Twenties. Berkeley learned a lot about coordinating movement in the course of supervising military drills during World War I, but so did other dance directors of the time. Even the creations that Spivak calls the Berkeley "top shots"—with the camera at the ceiling and the bodies of the dancers down below in a kaleidoscopic pattern—had been done by others: A shot of this type is featured in the Marx Brothers' *The Cocoanuts* (1929). Director Robert Florey thought it up.

Many of these dances overlapped with the avant-garde movement *Ballet Mécanique*, whose title was borrowed from the musical composition of George Antheil and the related avant-garde film of Fernand Léger. Such dances depicted the fervent—and oversimplified—debate among writers and artists between the world wars regarding The Machine and its effects upon Western civilization. This theme, stretching back at least as far as the polemics of Thomas Carlyle, was represented during Berkeley's heyday by novels like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932). The "mechanical ballet" to which Spivak refers in his coverage of Berkeley's dances for *George White's Scandals* of 1928 must be understood in this context. On film, Berkeley used this imagery as early as 1931: "We'll Dance Until the Dawn" in *Flying High* contains an overhead shot in which dancers (and their props) create concentric patterns suggestive of interlocked gears and ball bearings.

'Footlight Parade' (1933)

GENERAL PHOTOGRAPHIC AGENCY / GETTY IMAGES

A comprehensive account of Berkeley's creations could make a number of these cultural—and in some cases political—connections. Spivak calls due attention to the elements within the dances (especially given the political sympathies of the brothers Warner) that salute Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. He also points out the very interesting fact that the Berkeley technique had some influential admirers in Germany: Josef Goebbels and Leni Riefenstahl. And this suggests yet another comparison that goes unexplored.

The nightmarish "Lullaby of Broadway" production number bears an interesting (and, upon reflection, obvious) relationship to Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* (1934), released just a year before "Lullaby." The macabre spectacle of "Lullaby" features a dance within a "nightclub" that is vast and surreal: a set containing broad terraces, pendant vanes, and a rostrum-like platform where Dick Powell and Wini Shaw behold dozens of uniformed dancers—women garbed in jet black and young men in black shirts and gray jackets—performing a palms-down salute to the cadence of a massed tap that is suggestive of jackboots. These elements relate to the imagery of Riefenstahl's spectacle: the terraces of the vast Nazi party amphitheater, the swastika banners (pendant), the black-clad men of the SS, who go goose-stepping down the terraces. ♦

B&A

A Symphonic Tale

Conjuring the ghost of Henry James.

BY EDITH ALSTON

Young Iris Nachtigall, recently returned from Paris, sits alone in a Los Angeles movie theater watching a cartoon feature in an audience of children, pondering the score and what she knows of its composer, Leo Coopersmith, a highly successful Hollywood hack once married to Iris's Aunt Bea. Close to the end of *Foreign Bodies*, the scene returns the story to a moment near the beginning: Stopped for a night in Bea's cramped New York apartment on her way to Paris, Iris struck a note on the huge old piano left behind by Leo that resonates to the story's end.

Throughout a long career, Cynthia Ozick has become known for what John Leonard once called her "by now familiar love-hate relationship" with Henry James. The late novels of James were the subject of her master's thesis, she has measured her own prose through several volumes of highly regarded essays against the standards set by James as a literary stylist, and extended some of her writerly arguments with him by making him a character in her fiction. So, in her sixth novel, it is no surprise that she might want to reengage with *The Ambassadors*, which James viewed as his best of the late novels. What surprises is her intention, as declared on the cover of *Foreign Bodies*, to follow the same plot as *The Ambassadors* but make its "meaning" a "photographic negative" of what James wrote.

But in a Paris at a 50-year remove from James's setting at the turn of the 20th century, Ozick has more on her mind than a literary wrestling match with nothing more interesting to watch than where the skins of the stories will meet on the way to the mat. And Bea Nightingale turns out to be a tidy mirroring of James's Lambert Strether, the small town New England gentleman of modest means sent by his august mentor, Mrs. Newsome, to bring home her son, Chad. Like Strether, Bea is in her fifties, a high school teacher of English literature (who has anglicized her name for easier dealings with students), sent by her brother Marvin, a West Coast industrialist, to retrieve his son Julian, who has been in the City of Light, and out of touch with his parents, for three years.

Foreign Bodies
by Cynthia Ozick
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt,
272 pp., $26

Cynthia Ozick

The sweltering European heat wave at the time Bea arrives is nicely rendered in Jamesean detail, which sharpens quickly to the point of crucial severance between the two stories:

> Hot steam hissed from the wet rings left by wine glasses on the steel tables of outdoor cafes. In the sky just overhead, a blast furnace exhaled searing gusts. . . . [N]ow and then the terrible heat was said to be a general malignancy, a remnant of the recent war, as if the continent itself had been turned into a region of hell.

Far from James's *belle époque* of cosmopolitan grace, Bea has landed in a city still psychologically cratered, where post-Holocaust refugees search for footing against lingering undercurrents of surly anti-Semitism seven years after the end of World War II. And Julian had not been found, Bea writes in an exchange of letters with the boorish Marvin as she is returning to New York, and the story triangulates to encompass California. But once Iris has arrived to strike her ambiguous piano note, Bea will return to France on her own, stirred by a long-dormant sense of family and the past, when she finds not just her niece and nephew but the war-scarred Lili, a Romanian refugee and Julian's wife.

Reading *Foreign Bodies*, I confess, I realized it was awhile since I'd dipped into anything by Henry James, and I had never read *The Ambassadors*. For a while the James novel was slow going—like trying to follow the yarn through stitches on the inside of a sweater—with the long convoluted sentences sending my eye back to the top of the paragraph in search of a subject, and pair upon pair of commas jerking and tugging at my mind. Then, after about a hundred pages, I found the rhythm of it—inside the Jamesean bubble, pierced but not burst, I was breathing its air—and moved through its delicate moments of social lightness with the characters, witness to every hesitant and ellipti-

ULF ANDERSEN / GETTY IMAGES

Edith Alston is a writer and editor in New York.

cal expression of manners so carefully circumscribed, so shrewd and very occasionally fierce.

But in 1903 Paris, at the tantalizing peak of its glow, James's American "ambassadors" are off their cultural territory, thrown into postures of defense by the singular Madame De Vionnet, so elegant to Strether, but to others so horrifyingly fitted to her role in transforming young Chad Newsome into a paragon of urban sophistication and charm. In *Foreign Bodies*, charm as a goal has been dispensed with, but Lili, with her history of ravaged sensibilities, may bring greater substance to Julian's life.

But if James's radiant characters suggest silken figures under a bell jar, Ozick's wander in emotional isolation through a shattered world of bitter disconnection, never seeming to gain much from exposure to light and air. And when Bea is moved to act in ways Strether can not, the results are only disastrous, neither telling nor comic. Returned from seeing Coopersmith in California, Bea opens a package to find his new symphony—in the key of "Bea minor," she notes—*The Nightingale's Thorn*. Wondering if this is just another way Leo has found of belittling her significance in his life, she spreads out the pages of the composition and reflects:

> Music the universal language, vibrations that speak—what a lie. Words, the sovereignty of words, their excluding particularity, *this* was language. What was she to make of these scatterings of blotches moving up and down the staff lines like bugs on an escalator? . . . She understood nothing. What did he want from her?

What are we to make of what Ozick wants? Recalling the confrontation in California that goaded Leo into finally achieving the symphony—the dream of his youth—Bea seems only to be drinking the dregs of the marriage gone wrong long ago. At the end of *The Ambassadors*, when Strether, by his own nature, is left alone, James's particularity gives the moment the lift of a hot air balloon. ♦

B&A

Misunderstood Al

A revisionist view of Public Enemy Number One.

BY EDWARD ACHORN

During his 1882 tour of the United States, Oscar Wilde made a wry observation about the local tastes: "The Americans are certainly hero-worshippers, and always take their heroes from the criminal classes." The fantastic popularity of a whole string of movie and television gangsters—Little Caesar, Vito Corleone, Tony Soprano, to mention a few—would seem to confirm Wilde's judgment: Americans adore crime bosses, men who live by their wits and defy the rules, the more brutal the better. The model for all of them, the Babe Ruth of gangsters in the Roaring Twenties, was, of course, Chicago's own Al "Scarface" Capone. A bat-wielding Robert DeNiro offered a chilling rendition of the explosive killer in *The Untouchables* (1987). But was Capone really like that? A gusher of books, most recently *Get Capone*, argue the point.

Get Capone
The Secret Plot That Captured America's Most Wanted Gangster
by Jonathan Eig
Simon & Schuster, 480 pp., $28

Jonathan Eig, a former *Wall Street Journal* reporter and Chicago resident who has written excellent biographies of Lou Gehrig and Jackie Robinson, draws a generally sympathetic portrait of Capone—a "community organizer, in his own fiendish way" who provides jobs in his neighborhood and a needed service for his customers: whores, gambling, and, especially, booze prohibited by the detested Eighteenth Amendment. In this revisionist account, Capone rarely seems to have blood on his hands. He oversees his vast operation—which the government estimated took in $95 million a year in its heyday, about $1.2 billion in today's money—from a distance. Much is made of Capone's love of family and his oft-stated desire to escape into a placid life, until he begins to come across as a kind of gangland Ozzie Nelson, happily arranging birthday parties at his Miami estate while, in the gentlest manner, overseeing the purchase of cops, judges, and politicians, and the manufacture and distribution of alcohol.

The author takes pains to insist that Capone had nothing to do with the infamous St. Valentine's Day Massacre on February 14, 1929, though he had the means and motive to murder six members of the rival North Side Gang. Eig casts doubt on the story that Capone pulled out a baseball bat at a party and battered to death two of his men. He contends that the *Untouchables* version of events, whereby incorruptible G-Man Eliot Ness brought down Capone, is largely without foundation. (He doubts that Capone ever heard of Ness.) And Eig argues that the federal government treated the gangster unfairly, using the tax code to get him by dubious means after the corrupt legal system in Chicago had failed. In short, Al Capone is basically a good and likeable guy here rather than a psychopathic mass murderer who put his own greed before the good of his community, and showed little compassion for his bullet-riddled victims.

Edward Achorn, deputy editorial page editor of the Providence Journal*, is the author of* Fifty-nine in '84: Old Hoss Radbourn, Barehanded Baseball, and the Greatest Season a Pitcher Ever Had.

As Eig sees it, Capone unquestionably oversaw bootlegging, prostitution, gambling, and murder and was guilty of tax evasion as well. But he fell victim to a "secret" government plot (hence the title) to bring him down, by fair means or foul. The feds unkindly refused to settle his debt with the IRS. A judge threw out a plea deal that had been struck with the Department of Justice. And there were various irregularities during a trial that led to Capone's incarceration for seven and a half years—a punishment that, in Eig's view, greatly outweighed the crime.

Experts in the literature of gangland—and there are a lot of them out there—insist that the government's case was not much of a "secret" since President Hoover publicly and repeatedly stated his intention to prosecute bootlegging and the murderous gangsters running the business. But Eig does bring to the table a long-neglected cache of the papers of George E.Q. Johnson, the shy, soft-spoken, colorless United States attorney who brought the tax case to fruition, managing a meticulous and bloodless campaign against Capone. Johnson seems a distinctly less engaging adversary than Eliot Ness; but in this account, he will have to do.

I found *Get Capone* so choppy and episodic—with 367 pages broken into 44 chapters—as to be distracting. The grand arc of the story, the final showdown, seems lost at times amid false starts and detours. Still, Eig's style is undeniably engaging, reminiscent of snappy dialogue from Thirties movies: He describes early bootleg operators as "mostly gravy-stained losers—men in their twenties who still lived with their mothers." Follies girls "burst from the seams of their gorgeously designed outfits: leggy, tiny waists cinched in, bountiful breasts thrust forward, smooth and sweet as butter." A gangster gunned down on the street is "panting like a racehorse." Another victim in the same hit: "Blackish blood spewed from his mouth, splashing over his face, as if he'd coughed up a bottle of ink." A legman for the *Chicago Tribune* who ends up executed is described thus: "No matter what the time of day or night, he'd arrive looking like he just rolled out of bed and grabbed someone else's clothes by mistake."

Al Capone, 1935

MPI / GETTY IMAGES

Fun, too, is Capone's own repartee with the press. To the considerable dismay of his fellow mob bosses, Capone seemed incapable of shutting up when a reporter was around: a love of headlines that irritated authorities in Washington, who concluded that he was rubbing their noses into it. That, no doubt, contributed to his downfall. He even defended what most would take to be indefensible, the murder of human beings to earn a buck: "What does a man think about when he's killing another man in a gang war?" he asked rhetorically in one interview.

> Well, maybe he thinks that the law of self-defense, the way God looks at it, is a little broader than the law books have it. Maybe it means killing a man who'd kill you if he saw you first. Maybe it means killing a man in defense of your business, the way you make your money to take care of your wife and child. I think it does. You can't blame me for thinking there's worse fellows in the world than me.

Get Capone, naturally, touches on the "Chicago way," the corruption of law and politics in the Second City, and the use of muscle and dirty tricks to accomplish one's selfish goals. This may well have a certain resonance in the age of the Obama White House, a product of Chicago ward politics. It is interesting to note that one of the president's heroes, community organizer Saul Alinsky, consorted with the Capone gang for two years (this is not mentioned by Jonathan Eig) and described Capone as a "public benefactor" and his gang as a "public utility," supplying "what the people wanted and demanded."

The underworld can be a fascinating place, and Americans will always find something compelling about people who thwart society to get their way. Whether the ends justify such colorful means, of course, is a question every reader must answer for himself. ♦

B&A

Boomer Humor

Present at the creation of modern comedy.

BY HELEN RITTELMEYER

Nothing that *National Lampoon* produced in its heyday has lodged itself in our cultural memory, apart from its January 1973 cover, "If You Don't Buy This Magazine, We'll Kill This Dog." That was the *Lampoon*'s "Dead Parrot." It had no "Spanish Inquisition" or "Ministry of Silly Walks." It had a *Holy Grail*—it was called *Animal House*—but the magazine does not get much credit for it.

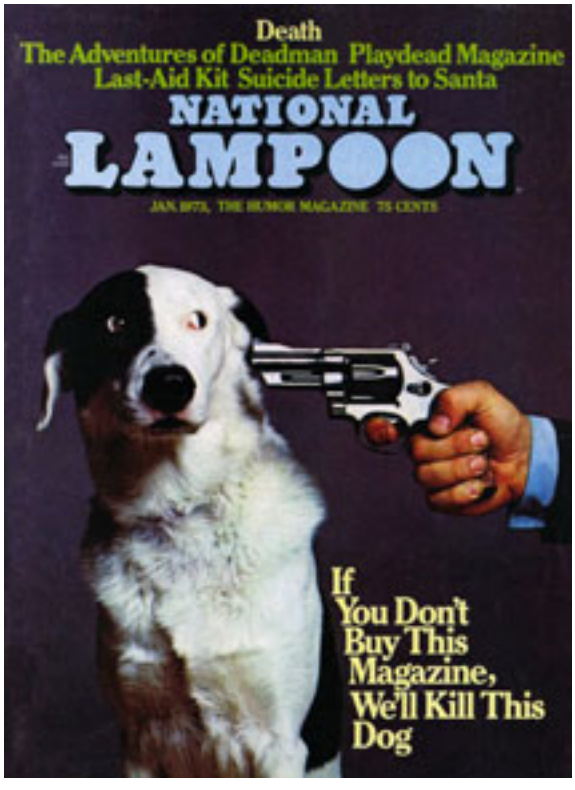
Our amnesia when it comes to *National Lampoon* might be explained by the title of this latest and best anthology of its output: The first few generations of *Lampoon* staffers started out drunk and/or stoned, and they either turned out to be brilliant—in which case they left for successful careers in Hollywood (John Hughes) and journalism (P.J. O'Rourke, George Trow)—or ended up dead (Doug Kenney). No stragglers were left to plump for the *Lampoon* legacy. But *National Lampoon* still has a powerful reputation among men of a certain generation, even if their esteem is short on specifics, and *Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead* does a better job of backing up their nostalgia with evidence than any of the anthologies that preceded it. Author Rick Meyerowitz is an art and design man, and his lavish attention to graphics is just what a *Lampoon* anthology required.

The cartoonists and artists benefit from it, obviously, but so do the writers. The Cold War pamphlet parody "Let's Get America Out of Dutch"—"They've been going around cutting all our doors in half, and *God only knows* what they're baking in those ovens of theirs!"—just wouldn't be the same without the smudgy typewriter print, sub-amateur layout, and bad cartoon depicting the "Dutch Conspiracy" as an octopus wearing wooden shoes. Thankfully, that piece and many others are reproduced exactly as they first appeared in the magazine's pages. In some cases, Meyerowitz has even improved the magazine's original graphic layout. The cover story of the March 1972 Travel issue is "The Stranger in Paradise," a glossy photo spread of Hitler in the tropics. Meyerowitz didn't think the piece quite captured the look of the travel magazines it was meant to mock, so while the pictures are all there—Hitler sunbathing, Hitler sitting around a tribal campfire, Hitler tossing a fresh-picked papaya to his native companion "Freitag"—the formatting has been spruced up a bit. He also includes an introductory essay by the author, Michel Choquette, who tells the story of what happened when one of the magazine's printers showed the piece to his elderly Jewish mother without telling her it was a joke: "She simply shrugged and said, 'So? They found him.'"

Meyerowitz divides up his anthology by author, starting with the magazine's Harvard-boy founders, Doug Kenney and Henry Beard. People who are only dimly aware that Kenney "changed comedy forever" (as the subtitle of his biography says) tend to know two things about him: that he had the good looks and early promise of a golden boy but never delivered a masterpiece, and that no one knows whether his deadly fall from a cliff in Hawaii was an accident or suicide. Surely these things are less important than his actual work, which, if the pieces collected here are anything to go by, was excellent. Not only did he think to parody the Code of Hammurabi, he pulled it off:

> If a man's brother-in-law lives under his roof, and does no work and stirs not, after four years he may be considered furniture and sold.
>
> If a man flog his wife, pluck out her hair, or smite and damage her nose, she shall have been flogged, had her hair plucked, been smote, and had her nose damaged.

Drunk Stoned Brilliant Dead
The Writers and Artists Who Made the National Lampoon Insanely Great
by Rick Meyerowitz
Abrams, 320 pp., $40



Helen Rittelmeyer is an associate editor at National Review.

> If a wet nurse substitutes a changeling for a freeman's son, and the real son returns years later by accident as part of a traveling acrobatic troupe and is immediately recognized by the father by means of a distinctive ring or birthmark, the rights to any resulting poem, song, or bas-relief shall belong to the King.

Next comes Henry Beard, a blueblood whose family background was more Harvard than Kenney's and whose humor was, too; his work is all unflaggingly cerebral. The centerpiece of his chapter is "The Law of the Jungle," ostensibly an excerpt from a textbook for animal lawyers, in which the fundamentals of *lex fauna* are delivered perfectly deadpan: "Articulated legs are patentable, but the technique of using a large number of them in a series is not. See *Centipedes* v. *Millipedes* (566 Pests 49)." The fact that it goes on too long—12 three-column pages of tiny type, with footnotes—seems like a mistake only to those who have never read a law school textbook. In all, it is clearly the work of the man who, after leaving the *Lampoon*, would publish such books as *Latin for All Occasions* and *French for Cats*.

Lesser lights than the founders are also given their due: cartoonists Charles Rodrigues and Gahan Wilson, the underappreciated team of Danny Abelson and Ellis Weiner, and even a young Jeff Greenfield, who moonlighted from his real career in political journalism with such pieces as "The Specialist," about a doctor who gives terminal illnesses to politicians' relatives when their poll numbers start to slip. Especially appreciated is the chapter on George W. S. Trow. A WASP aristocrat who moved among New York's cultural and hereditary upper classes, Trow is easy to picture at William Shawn's *New Yorker*, where he eventually ended up. It is harder to imagine him at a bomb-throwing countercultural rag like the *Lampoon*. But the pieces collected here compare well with his later work, particularly "Lady Sings the Scales," a Billie Holiday parody about Kate Smith in which the fat white singer makes "even the humblest branch manager and the lowliest shareholder proud of their Euro-American ancestry" but is undone by her addiction to eclairs and Mallomars: "The fact is, of course, that dessert was rampant within the white community." His intellectual preoccupations are here, and in his advertisement for a correspondence course in Euphemism, but he handles them more lightly than he would later.

Meyerowitz humbly claims in his introduction that his book will offer neither a history of the *Lampoon*'s golden years nor a case for the *Lampoon*'s place in the pantheon of American humor, but simply as many good pieces as would fit. Meyerowitz delivers more than he promises. The alumni reminiscences he commissioned, taken together, paint a vivid picture of a tight-knit family of twentysomething humorists at the dawn of their careers: their controlled experiments to determine the relative merits of marijuana versus alcohol, their weekends on Long Island when one of them was apt to say, "It looks like it's going to rain all day, so let's dress up as pirates and go play mini-golf." And as far as the *Lampoon*'s place in history goes, that's the content's case to make—and in this anthology, it does so persuasively. ♦

B&A

Business as Usual

The Washington lobbyist as hero and villain.

BY KEVIN R. KOSAR

A well-regarded newspaper once declared that "the word 'lobbyist' is justly deemed a term of reproach which no respectable man is willing to have applied to him." Not much has changed since the *New York Herald* said this in 1875. In the popular imagination, the lobbyist remains perfidious. He is the oleaginous man in the shiny suit who slithers into congressional offices and promises campaign cash and lavish gifts in return for votes. He betrays the republic for "special interests" and his own gain. It was not for nothing that a whoop of joy erupted across the land when Jack Abramoff was thrown into prison a few years back: He fit the image of the evil lobbyist, with his black trench coat and fedora, and his dealings with gambling interests, corporations, and the government of Sudan.

As always, reality is more complex than the Abramoff caricature. Plutocrats are not the only ones who employ lobbyists; you can see this by examining the Senate's Office of Public Records online lobbyist database. Hired guns work for just about every cause and issue imaginable: accounting, advertising, agriculture, aerospace, alcohol and drug abuse, animals—all the way to welfare. Those who hire lobbyists are similarly diverse: AFL-CIO, Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians, Anheuser-Busch, even charities and state and local governments. This year, Senate records show that the Randolph County Commission in Alabama has employed a lobbyist to attain the "development of funding sources for county's economic development, transportation, and criminal justice programs and projects." Like the poor, lobbyists will be with us always.

King of the Lobby
The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man-About-Washington in the Gilded Age
by Kathryn Allamong Jacob
Johns Hopkins, 240 pp., $40

Kevin R. Kosar is the author of Whiskey: A Global History.

In this deft and diverting volume, Kathryn Jacob shows that lobbyists may do good by encouraging elected officials to set aside their differences and work together. No congressman can pass a bill on his own; he needs a couple of hundred colleagues to vote with him. Sam Ward was a paragon in this respect. Known as "the king of the lobby," he was a political force in post-Civil War Washington, a friend and confidante of presidents, congressmen, movers and shakers in town, and he knew how to make the wheels of government turn.

Born in New York in 1814, Ward was the scion of one of the principals of the Prime, Ward, and King bank. Though a bit feckless, Sam Ward was no layabout: He had an appetite for derring-do, and a sharp mind. He learned Spanish, German, and French, and graduated from Columbia at 17. Offered a professorship in mathematics at West Point, young Sam declined and took off for Europe. It was there that he obtained the knowledge that ultimately made his career: gastronomy. Ward ate and drank his way around the Continent and in England, and his family name and connections gave him entry to the right social circles. He networked relentlessly, charming nobles and the *nouveau riche* alike.

He burned through a small fortune, and his father summoned him home in 1836, enjoining him to take up the family business. Sam showed little interest in banking, and spent much time studying academic subjects, palling about with the likes of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Charles Sumner, and other intellectuals, and eating at Delmonico's. The fun soon ended: His father died, and in short order, so did his younger brother, new wife, and first-born son. He remarried badly, and Prime, Ward, and King collapsed. After making and losing a bundle in the California gold rush, 45-year-old Sam Ward landed in Washington in 1859. The nation's capital was a muddy, disheveled town in a swamp plain, whose handful of neoclassical government buildings were separated by dirt streets and rows of straggling cottages.

The Civil War made the Federal City even less attractive. Though hostilities ended in 1865, there were bad feelings all around. The government was undergoing a wrenching growth spurt, expanding attempts to repair the nation and contend with the economic disruption brought by industrialization. "Policymakers," Jacob notes, "lacked the time, staff, money, and expertise to cope with the explosion of business that came with the expansion of the government's powers." Many of them were at each others' throats.

Sam Ward in 'Vanity Fair' (1880)

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

The time was perfect for a man with restless energy, the gift of gab, and a taste for good food and drink. Sam Ward, with his flashy clothes and gift for yarn-spinning, was impossible to miss and made entertaining company. Destitute, he talked his way into the offices of nearly everyone of importance—and once in, was welcomed back by most. He spent his days gladhanding, vacuuming information, meeting with those who wanted to get things done. He was a social connector, a go-between for congressmen and agents of the many new interests in town. The moneyed powers loved Sam Ward, and made him rich. He took their money eagerly, and spent a lot of it on lavish dinner parties where he fostered friendships and brokered political deals.

The press of the time regularly derided the "huge, scaly serpent of the lobby" and the immoral "spider women" who persuaded congressmen. Sam Ward, however, largely escaped criticism. This was not because he was wholly aboveboard—which he was not, lifting government stationery for use in his lobbying correspondence, appropriating congressional franking privileges to mail personal correspondence, giving baskets of peaches, wine, and more to members of Congress, perjuring himself before committees—but compared with the spider women and lobbyists who stuffed the pockets of legislators, committee staff, and reporters with cash and stock, Ward's transgressions were comparatively small beer. Add to this his personal charm and his useful efforts in helping politicians get things done, and reporters had little cause to sully "Rex Vestiari" with bad ink.

After a 20-year run, Ward left Washington and lobbying, and as in his youth, squandered his last fortune. Rascal that he was, he absconded from his creditors, landing in England, then Italy. He died in 1884. After word of his death reached America, the *New York Times* ran a 4,000-word obituary, and dailies around the nation mourned the passing of the "great reconciliator." ♦

B&A

The Low Achiever

A debut novel of alienation and scholastic aptitude.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

Addison Schacht, the protagonist of Sam Munson's debut novel, is a foul-mouthed 18-year-old dope dealer who lives in an affluent neighborhood in Washington. He tells disgusting jokes about the Holocaust. He is rude to his single father, his girlfriend, his teachers, and his fellow students. He has few friends. He's enrolled in the gifted and talented program at John F. Kennedy Senior High School in the District, where he's applying to the University of Chicago. He scored a combined 1420 on the SAT, got excellent marks on his Advanced Placement exams, and won both silver and gold medals in the National Latin Exam. He quotes Virgil. He is, in other words, one of those intelligent, arrogant, and troublemaking teenagers whom you'd want to rap upside the head and ship off to a military academy in rural Virginia.

The November Criminals
by Sam Munson
Doubleday, 258 pp., $24.95

Schacht chooses to describe his best and worst qualities for his college application essay. What follows is a discursive and gripping story that describes the brutal murder of one of Schacht's classmates, Kevin Broadus, and Schacht's attempt to identify Broadus's killer. A quiet, well-liked member of the school band, Broadus and two coworkers were gunned down while working at a coffee shop in Georgetown the summer before his and Schacht's senior year. The gunman left no trace. The only thing he stole was Broadus's wristwatch. The eagerness of school administrators to put the shocking murder behind them provokes Schacht into action. The fact that Broadus is African American also plays a role: The community's apparent eagerness to forget the murder of a young black man and get on with life represents, to Schacht, a much larger betrayal of American ideals.

Or something. It soon becomes clear that Schacht's investigation into Broadus's murder is more about satisfying some unfilled need in Schacht than in pursuing justice. For the truth is that, by the end of the book, the reader still hasn't figured out what makes the narrator so angry. That he is angry is unmistakable: Indeed, he is a living, breathing embodiment of antisocial behavior. The drug dealing and abuse are just the beginning. He curses at everyone he meets, including the reader. He skips school. He breaks into homes. He disrupts class. He and a friend hold a suspect hostage at gunpoint; the friend has just shot dead the suspect's dog.

Schacht lies. He lies to his father about his after-school activities. He lies to the police and teachers and Kevin Broadus's parents when he tells them that he and the victim were friends. He lies to himself when he pretends that there is no emotional content to his sexual relationship with Phoebe "Digger" Zeleny, another teenager who believes herself superior to her environment and who is the closest thing Schacht has to a best friend.

The college essay that comprises the novel, moreover, is a kind of double lie. Either Schacht won't submit it, in which case he'll betray his sense of superiority and subversive honesty, or he will submit it, in which case he'll betray his pretensions of ambivalence over his future. Schacht himself seems aware of the duplicity that characterizes his existence: "I believe with all firmness that I am a November Criminal," he says, "a betrayer by nature. Someone guilty at the feet of everyone else for his petty, sordid life and his petty, sordid crimes. An ontological failure."

Harsh stuff. But it doesn't take a cynic to see that it's also stuff that might appeal to a college admissions officer looking to place the next Kerouac or Rimbaud in Chicago's Class of 2004. It may be that Schacht is more calculating and manipulative than he appears: His text is filled with arcane cultural references and difficult vocabulary intended to set him apart from the bulk of college applicants. Take the Virgil, for example. He also digresses at length about *The Sorrow and the Pity*, the documentary on French collaboration with the Nazis, which he says he watches "at least" twice a year—and which has been required viewing for wannabe intellectuals since Alvy Singer dragged Annie Hall to see it in 1977. He references obscure works of German historiography. He often uses *italics* to *emphasize* all the *important things* he is *saying*. The ironic and dramatic humor that infuses his story makes for an entertaining read. Schacht is a heck of a writer. I'd admit him.

Munson's portrait of Schacht is so finely wrought that it is easy to mistake this fictional narrator for an actual person. What makes *November Criminals* such a good debut, then, is that it is really two mysteries. There is the puzzle of Kevin Broadus's murder, to be sure; but there is also the larger conundrum of Addison Schacht. Why does a young man of so much ability and promise hold such contempt for society? The reader comes across a clue when Schacht mentions his mother, who died of a brain hemorrhage when he was seven years old. Later, during a visit to his marijuana distributor—an obese child of privilege who dropped out of school to live in one of Washington's "transitioning" neighborhoods— Schacht attends a dogfight and is revolted by the cruelty he witnesses.

"Remember what I said before about how you can't manage tragedy?" he asks.

Matthew Continetti, opinion editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author, most recently, of* The Persecution of Sarah Palin.

"You can't. You can't stop Mr. Circumstance. He waits everywhere, with infinite patience and zero mercy. You can't avoid or efface the bleak sight of the wrecks and ruins he leaves among us."

The problem Schacht is trying to solve, in other words, is the problem of evil. That evil exists makes no sense to the budding rationalist. He lacks an explanation for why bad things happen to good people (his mother, Kevin Broadus) or innocent creatures (dogs). He is thrown, therefore, into the same existential despair and moral relativism that has plagued many Western writers for more than a century. This is why it is important to learn that Schacht and his father, while Jewish, have no religion. Schacht's intellectual dilemma doesn't even rise to the level of theodicy, *i.e.*, reconciling the existence of God with the existence of evil. Theodicy presupposes belief in the divine. In Schacht's corner of the nation's capital, however, there is room for wealth and sex and drugs but none for the supernatural. There is no map to life, no binding moral code.

No wonder he is confused and angry. The death that bothers Addison Schacht the most, the reason for his fury at the world around him, is not the murder of Kevin Broadus. It is the death of God. ♦

B&A

Rules of Learning

The problem isn't absence of money but absence of values. **BY JOAN FRAWLEY DESMOND**

Over the past 18 months Race to the Top—the Obama administration's $4.35 billion program designed to advance public school innovation and student achievement—has prompted furious competition between state and local school districts, raising expectations that some sort of breakthrough in K-12 education may be at hand. Yet skeptics might be forgiven for harboring doubts about an imminent turnaround, despite the eye-popping stimulus-funded incentives and number-crunching requirements. As Davis Guggenheim's *Waiting for "Superman"* makes clear, the absence of federal funding and mandates hasn't been the problem.

Guggenheim targeted the teachers' unions but set aside issues like rigorous academic standards and practices that inspire a school-wide culture of mutual respect and high achievement. The fine points of reform won't keep movie audiences on the edge of their seats, but Samuel Casey Carter argues that school leaders imperil reform by ignoring foundational work and the ambitious, disciplined follow-through that produce change.

On Purpose
How Great School Cultures Form Strong Character
by Samuel Casey Carter
Corwin, 208 pp., $30.95

On Purpose aims to remedy the data-driven tendency to focus on limited strategies to boost scores and transmit technical facts and skills. Carter seeks to renew an appreciation for the way an engaging, morally grounded school culture nurtures and guides students' aspirations for fulfillment and academic success. The most effective school leaders accomplish this through "purpose-driven" principles and practices that make full use of the entire school day, leaving nothing to chance. Twelve detailed case studies of schools link organizing principles with classroom practices, and their mission statements echo a desire to "harness character to drive achievement," and to this end, have created what Carter calls a "comprehensive rather than programmatic approach."

Carter is brutally honest on one salient point: The creation of a school "family" with institutionalized rules of conduct is not for the faint of heart. He reached this conclusion during an unusual career as both an educator working on charter schools and as a reform-minded scholar. In *No Excuses: Lessons from 21 High-Performing, High-Poverty Schools* (2000), he repudiated the common justifications for inner-city school failures, and then served as president of National Heritage Academies, a charter school management company that oversees more than 60 schools in six states.

This present volume is the result of an ambitious study commissioned by the Center for Education Reform, where Carter recently directed a review of 3,500 schools renowned for their records on character formation. Researchers excluded elite private establishments, "strict observance" religious schools, and military academies. Carter looked for schools that encourage students to make "explicit, voluntary choices" to excel and do good.

The impetus for creating a healthy school culture usually arises "in response to a need." In the case of a middle-class public high school in Illinois with a tradition of fierce athletic competition, for example, two student suicides prompted a reassessment of bullying. Once an urgent need is established, administrators and faculty look for principles capable of prompting a shift in values and behavior.

But the most daunting task in the process still lies ahead: introducing and testing new practices that make virtues "explicit." At a California middle school, daily student-run broadcasts present a virtue of the month, and in one show, two popular teachers help their audience refine their understanding of "integrity." Such exercises help students distinguish

Joan Frawley Desmond, who writes on religious and social issues for a variety of publications, lives in Maryland.

between right and wrong—no small thing, really—but they also draw teachers out of their comfort zone. At a top Virginia magnet school, teachers issue weekly progress reports that keep students alert, parents informed, and faculty on their toes.

This engaging, jargon-free primer will be helpful to founders of charter schools, as well as principals of traditional public schools poised to upset the status quo. But its author remains pessimistic about any system-wide adoption of his approach, and the most formidable obstacles are the familiar ones: educational bureaucracies and federal mandates that discourage distinctive approaches. For that matter, most teacher certification requirements repel the kind of engaged, academically strong candidates who believe "the true, the good, and the beautiful can be experienced firsthand." ♦

B&A

Accidental Spy

Temptation and redemption in the atomic age.

BY RONALD RADOSH

You would think that, at this late date, there would be very little left to explore about the espionage case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. But Allen Hornblum has proved this wrong: In his riveting page-turner, he sets his sights on a key, neglected figure in the case, a Philadelphia industrial chemist named Harry Gold who, as courier for the German-born British spy Klaus Fuchs, enabled the Soviets to build an atomic bomb. Hornblum finally brings Gold out of the shadows and answers a question that has remained a mystery: What motivated this man who was not a Communist to engage in espionage for almost two decades? He paints a sympathetic portrait of Gold, who, through a set of circumstances, set out on a path that would lead him to betray his country.

The Invisible Harry Gold
The Man Who Gave the Soviets the Atom Bomb
by Allen M. Hornblum
Yale, 464 pp., $32.50

The rather nerdy Gold was 39 years old when the FBI came to him in 1950, suspecting that he was Fuchs's courier. He confessed immediately and told the bureau in detail how he got the material to his Soviet handlers. Not only had he spent years passing nuclear secrets from Fuchs, but he told the agents that he had also been to Albuquerque in 1945 to retrieve other material from a man who worked in the machine shop at Los Alamos, whose name he did not remember, but who was a young sergeant. The soldier turned out to be David Greenglass, the brother of Ethel and brother-in-law of Julius Rosenberg, who had put together a network of Soviet agents composed of relatives and friends he had met while studying engineering at CCNY.

Greenglass, too, would confess, and his testimony against his sister and brother-in-law, combined with Gold's testimony, led to the conviction for "conspiracy to commit espionage" of the Rosenbergs. While the Rosenbergs were executed, Greenglass was sentenced to 15 years but served 10; codefendant Morton Sobell was also released before his sentence of 30 years was up. But Gold, condemned by the Rosenbergs' defenders as a liar and traitor, received a longer sentence than the government asked for, despite his cooperation, and was paroled only after serving 15 years.

Gold, as Hornblum writes, told the truth—often not the most popular thing to do. The left labeled him a "delusional psychotic" and fabulist who had made up a nonexistent life in espionage and did the government's bidding to condemn an innocent progressive couple. But the fact is, as Hornblum writes, that "it was Gold who told the truth about his career as a spy, and Julius Rosenberg who lied." Unlike the Rosenbergs and Sobell, Gold was not a Communist. His weakness, however, was easily exploited by those who saw him as the perfect prey. Gold was selfless and always willing to help those in need. Even in the depths of the Depression, when his father lost work and the family was on the verge of starvation, Gold lent some of his meager earnings to friends who had less than he. Always willing to help a friend, he soon fell under the spell of Tom Black, a Communist who took him to party meetings, which Gold found boring, but more important, helped him get a job.

Gold apparently bought what many of the broad left-wing community believed at the time: that the Soviet Union was the only entity standing, in the 1930s, against the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Germany. As Gold himself wrote years later, he believed the propaganda that "the Soviet Union had become the first nation to make 'anti-Semitism a crime against the state.'"

"It seemed all the more necessary," he explained, "to work with the utmost vigor, to fight any discouragement, and to do everything possible to strengthen the Soviet Union, for there such [anti-Semitic] incidents could not occur. To fight anti-Semitism here seemed so hopeless." When Black and others urged him to help the Soviets obtain industrial solvents they needed to strengthen their economy, Gold agreed to spy against his own employer, the Pennsylvania Sugar Company, although its boss

Ronald Radosh, an adjunct fellow at the Hudson Institute, is coauthor of The Rosenberg File *and blogs on PajamasMedia.com.*

was Gold's mentor and had helped him advance in the firm. Gold would quickly learn that, once the Soviet espionage apparatus had its hands on you, they meant it to be for keeps. His handlers threatened him with exposure to both his employers and his relatives, and made veiled threats about what would happen to him if he stopped working for them. He often wanted to stop—especially when, after months of inactivity which he hoped was permanent, the NKVD would suddenly give him new orders.

Gold would have to work a full day, then depart from Philadelphia to points like Cambridge or New York, wait all night to receive instructions from his handler or make a contact, and then return to work the next morning. The antithesis of a James Bond, no one would suspect that the "dumpy fellow with the odd gait and glum expression was a Soviet spy trading in industrial and military secrets." He might look odd standing all night on a dark street corner, apparently waiting for someone to appear, but even a skilled counterintelligence agent would not think, if they happened to pass him, that this man was a danger to national security.

Once apprehended, Gold worked hard to give the FBI whatever information he had that could lead to closing down Soviet networks that might still exist. He could have used legal mechanisms to mount a reasonable defense, but Hornblum points out that

> he could not fathom becoming some sort of *cause célèbre*, declaring his innocence, and mounting a public campaign while knowing all along that he was guilty of the crime. He couldn't imagine dragging family and friends into such a quagmire. "They would all rally around me," he would one day explain, "and how horrible would be their disappointment and let down when finally it was shown who I really was."

Gold even broke up with the woman he described as the love of his life, rather than marry her and risk his secret life being exposed, implicating her.

A different course was taken by the Rosenbergs, who lied to their own sons and handed them the burden of working for the rest of their lives to prove their parents' innocence. Gold did not want to lie and cause such disillusionment among those he cared for. And of course, since he was not a Communist party member, he did not face having to betray ideological comrades once he decided to cooperate. So it was easy for him to be relieved of the years of dissembling, and to tell the agents, "There

Harry Gold in custody, 1950

BETTMANN / CORBIS

is a great deal more to this story. . . . I would like to tell it all." Unlike the Rosenbergs and Morton Sobell, Gold did not seek out a Movement lawyer. Instead, he got pro bono aid from one of Philadelphia's most prestigious law firms, and from one of its partners, John D.M. Hamilton, former chairman of the Republican National Committee and counsel to the Pew family. Hamilton's associate defending Gold was Augustus Ballard, a descendant of one of the city's most prominent legal families. Against advice from those who thought defending Gold would taint them, Hamilton and Ballard worked tirelessly through many years to clear Gold's name, to emphasize how he had made amends for his treachery, and to point to the many levels at which he was cooperating with the United States in hunting down other Soviet agents.

Hamilton and Ballard took Gold's case because they believed the system guaranteed every defendant the right to a solid defense. They immediately told Gold that the government's case against him was weak—it had only Gold's confession—and the FBI had held him in a hotel room for days, during which they interrogated him constantly. This was done without Gold having legal counsel or advice; it would have been easy to have the case thrown out. Moreover, Klaus Fuchs was imprisoned in Britain and had given no corroboration that Gold had been his courier for the NKVD. Yet Gold refused to seek a way out, preferring to own up to what he had done and pay whatever penalty the court prescribed. He sought no mercy, nor did he seek to appeal to public opinion. As Ballard told Hornblum, "Gold was so full of mea culpa. He wanted to come clean. There was no changing his mind. He was such a decent guy. He was ashamed of having betrayed his country."

Without romanticizing Harry Gold, or excusing his actions, Allen Hornblum has succeeded in writing a critical study of a man for whom one cannot help but feel sympathy. Gold never meant to harm his own country; ensnared by a so-called friend, and maintaining a gullible belief that the Soviets were fighting anti-Semitism, he was led down the dark path of espionage. Unlike the unrepentant atomic spy Theodore Hall, who admitted his espionage and was proud of what he did, Gold did his best to make up for the lost years in which he betrayed the country he loved. For acknowledging that he was wrong he has been forever anathema to the left; but the truth is that, ultimately, he did the right thing and, compared with the rest of the atom spy crew, may be described as a hero. ♦

"On Wednesday President Obama will pardon the National Thanksgiving Turkey in a Rose Garden ceremony. Both the turkey and a 'vice' turkey alternate will then be driven to George Washington's Mount Vernon estate, where they will reside. In previous years, the turkeys had gone to Disneyland." —News item

PARODY

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PARDONED BIRDS 'DISAPPOINTED, FRUSTRATED' AT MOUNT VERNON

Alternate Turkey Calls Decision 'Big [Expletive] Deal'

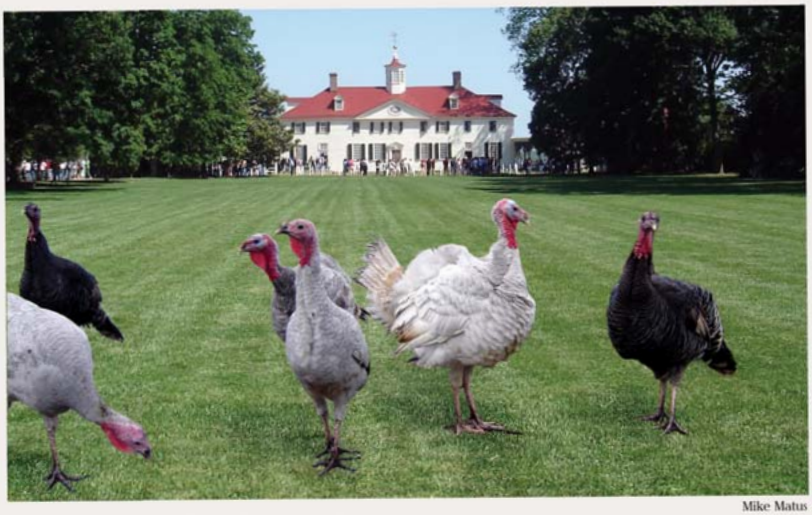
By JOHN HARWOOD

MT. VERNON, Va. — Despite having the freedom to roam the historic surroundings of George Washington's estate, the turkeys pardoned by President Obama last month could not have cared less. Their caretakers have described them as seeming "disappointed and frustrated," and suspect they would have preferred Disneyland.

Last week, the staff at Mount Vernon enlisted a team of veterinarians to attempt an understanding of their behavior. At a press conference on Monday, the doctors presented their findings, which are nothing short of stunning.

According to lead veterinarian Dr. Roy Hinkley, "the prime turkey refuses to change his ways despite his changing environment. He faults himself for not doing a better job communicating to his caretakers his desire to go to Disneyland." Hinkley added that the bird had such charisma when it came to being selected for the pardon, but now "that charisma comes off as hollow."

The "vice" turkey, meanwhile, was described as a bit scatterbrained and more than a little "fowl-mouthed." By interpreting the way he gobbles, said Hinkley, "you can tell he thinks his exile to Mount Vernon is a 'big [expletive] deal.'" Based on the team's assessment, the bird was also behaving territorially—as if he preferred Mount Vernon to be divided into three distinct and autonomous regions. (So upset was the "vice" turkey that he ruffled his feathers to the point where he needed new feathers to be implanted in certain spots.)



Mike Matus

Mt. Vernon's pardoned turkeys don't view themselves as exceptional.

"Still," the doctor insisted, "the alternate is quite fond of his companion. You can tell by the way he pecks at him that he finds the prime bird to be articulate, bright, clean, and a nice-looking turkey."

"It's fight or flight time, and what these bird-brains need to do is fight," complained Democratic strategist James Carville. "If not, we're talkin' turkey tetrazzini." Others, however, took a more tempered view. "Although these noble birds must adjust to their new surroundings, they shouldn't forget all their many accomplishments," said presidential adviser David Ger-

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Prince William, Kate Middleton: 'We Want to Chip In, Do Our Part'

Royals Agree to Pay for Videographer, D.J.