the weekly standard

FEBRUARY 21, 2011 • $4.95

AFTER MUBARAK
REUEL MARC GERECHT
STEPHEN SCHWARTZ • DANIEL TWINING

THE RAHMBOMB

JOSEPH EPSTEIN
on the Chicago mayor's race

DEFENSE AND DEFICITS
Andrew Ferguson
Gary Schmitt & Thomas Donnelly

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

WHO ARE THE 9.2 MILLION AMERICANS WHOSE JOBS ARE SUPPORTED BY THE OIL & NATURAL GAS INDUSTRY?

i'm one

Ashley F.
Landman

Ashley is a landman for an oil and natural gas company. She is one of 2.1 million Americans working directly in a job that brings you the oil and natural gas you depend on. But that's only part of the story. The industry's $1 trillion lift to the U.S. economy each year actually supports another 7.1 million jobs in other sectors, from logistics to manufacturing to research to retail. All in all, that's real fuel for America's recovery.

Let's discuss the state of American energy at **EnergyTomorrow.org**

Source: *The Economic Impacts of the Oil and Natural Gas Industry on the U.S. Economy*, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP, September 2009 (Sponsored by API)

HEARTLAND QUALITY
OMAHA STEAKS®
SINCE 1917

Save 64% on the Family Value Combo

Plus, 3 Free Gifts
to every shipping address in your order.

FREE
6-piece
Cutlery Set
FREE
Cutting Board

6 FREE
Omaha Steaks
Burgers

Family Value Combo 45069XHZ

2 (5 oz.) Filet Mignons
2 (5 oz.) Top Sirloins
4 (4 oz. approx.) Boneless Chicken Breasts
4 (4 oz.) Omaha Steaks Burgers
4 (3 oz.) Gourmet Franks
4 (5¾ oz.) Stuffed Baked Potatoes

Save $89.01

Reg. ~~$139.00~~ | Now Only $49.99

Limit of 2 packages. Free Gifts included per shipment.
Offer expires 4/15/11. Standard shipping and handling
will be applied per address.

To order: www.OmahaSteaks.com/steaks56
or call 1-888-409-1719

12714-f

MONUMENTAL WASTE.

AN EXTRA ENGINE FOR THE JOINT STRIKE FIGHTER DOESN'T MAKE SENSE EITHER.

Voters elected a new Congress to fight against wasting taxpayer dollars. And this is a case where *one is enough*. The JSF's current F135 engine won a marketplace competition in the mid-1990s and fully meets our military's requirements. Taxpayers don't want Congress to continue wasting $2.9 billion on an extra engine that Secretary of Defense Gates and military leaders don't want or need, especially when it will cost hundreds of U.S. jobs. Tell your Congressional representatives to stop spending billions on this monumentally wasteful earmark at **f135engine.com**.

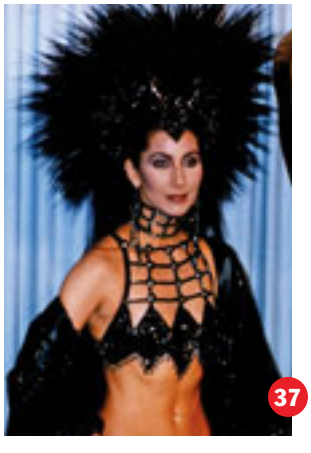
It's in our power.™

United Technologies

CARRIER | HAMILTON SUNDSTRAND | OTIS | PRATT & WHITNEY | SIKORSKY | UTC FIRE & SECURITY

Contents

February 21, 2011 • Volume 16, Number 22



COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Ray LaHood: Unsafe at Any Speed

The Scrapbook invites you on a trip down memory lane—a slightly harrowing place, about a year ago, but well worth the journey for a little lesson in the way things work. Remember the Toyota Crisis of 2010? It was (statistically speaking) one of the principal stories of the year, commanding network news time and dominating the front pages of America's newspapers. And the news was frightening: Electronic devices used in Toyota gas pedals were accelerating "spontaneously," prompting cars to lurch forward at uncontrollable speeds, causing untold hazards to millions of Americans who, in their innocence, own and drive Toyotas.

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood announced that "Toyotas are unsafe," and the Democratic Congress swung into action. Multiple hearings were held in which Reps. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) and Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.) not only featured anecdotes of lethal acceleration, but accused Toyota executives of lying about the problem and deliberately concealing what they knew. Rep. Bobby Rush (D-Ill.) referred to Toyotas as "killing machines." The nation's leading newspapers, news magazines, and television networks ran numerous stories on the killing-machine theme; ABC's Brian Ross concocted footage for the purpose. Toyota was fined a record $48.8 million for what the Obama administration considered its inadequate response to the crisis—three recalls totaling some 12 million vehicles—and Toyota's stock price and market share declined.

Well, as Emily Litella used to say on *Saturday Night Live*, "Nevermind." After an exhaustive ten-month investigation by Ray LaHood's Transportation Department, assisted by NASA engineers, the United States government has officially concluded that there is no evidence—no evidence whatsoever—of any mechanical or electronic defect in Toyotas that would cause sudden, unintentional acceleration. No killing machines, no Watergate-style corporate cover-up—and no comment, of course, from Henry Waxman or Bobby Rush. Secretary LaHood did insist, for the record, that his department's findings never suggested the possibility of "human error" in generating this manufactured crisis—he prefers the delightful technical term "pedal misapplication"—but he did acknowledge that "Toyota vehicles are safe to drive."

Which must be cold comfort for Toyota, the Japanese-based manufacturer of safe, efficient, high-quality, popular automobiles for the American market for several decades. Nevertheless, The Scrapbook has conducted its own exhaustive investigation—with no help from NASA!—and reached a few conclusions about this extraordinary episode.

First, it seems clear that the Obama administration's decision to go after Toyota—that is, to throw the full weight of the federal government into the cause of injuring a successful, law-abiding, and profitable business enterprise—was taken in tandem with the government's financial takeover of General Motors. There's a Chicago-style logic at play here: The recovery of a bankrupt GM was never guaranteed, but the destruction of a principal competitor couldn't hurt.

Second, given the tone and tenor of the congressional hearings, this was clearly Democratic special-interest politics at work. Among Toyota's harshest critics on Capitol Hill were former National Highway Traffic Safety Administration head Joan Claybrook and Clarence Ditlow of the Center for Auto Safety, whose mission was not only to saddle the manufacturer with additional burdensome regulations but to set the stage for years of litigation against Toyota. The tort bar was actively soliciting clients, and Toyota was looking at an endless supply of acceleration "victims," class-action settlements, and John Edwards-style litigators.

Which demonstrates, in The Scrapbook's estimation, two inconvenient truths about life in today's America. One is that, politically speaking, if a certain administration decides it doesn't like you, it can call upon the full resources of the federal government to make your life, at the least, deeply unpleasant. And second, automotively speaking, when a disproportionate number of "unintended acceleration" complainants turn out to be senior citizens, it is possible—just possible—that the cause is something other than a faulty electronic system. ♦

The Vanishing Conservative Dems

The Scrapbook has a fondness for perennial news stories—the growing gap between rich and poor, how the Internet is changing politics, the increasing diversity of the suburbs—but the granddaddy of them all is the troubling disappearance of liberal Republicans.

It takes different forms, but is always the same old plot. The *Washington Post* will find a retired businessman in Ohio who cast his first ballot for Wendell Willkie but now is horrified by the right-wing extremism of George H.W. Bush or John McCain. The *New York Times* will run a friendly profile of the two moderate Republican senators from Maine, Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, who represent the dying breed of moderate Republican senators from

the Northeast. And so on, and on.

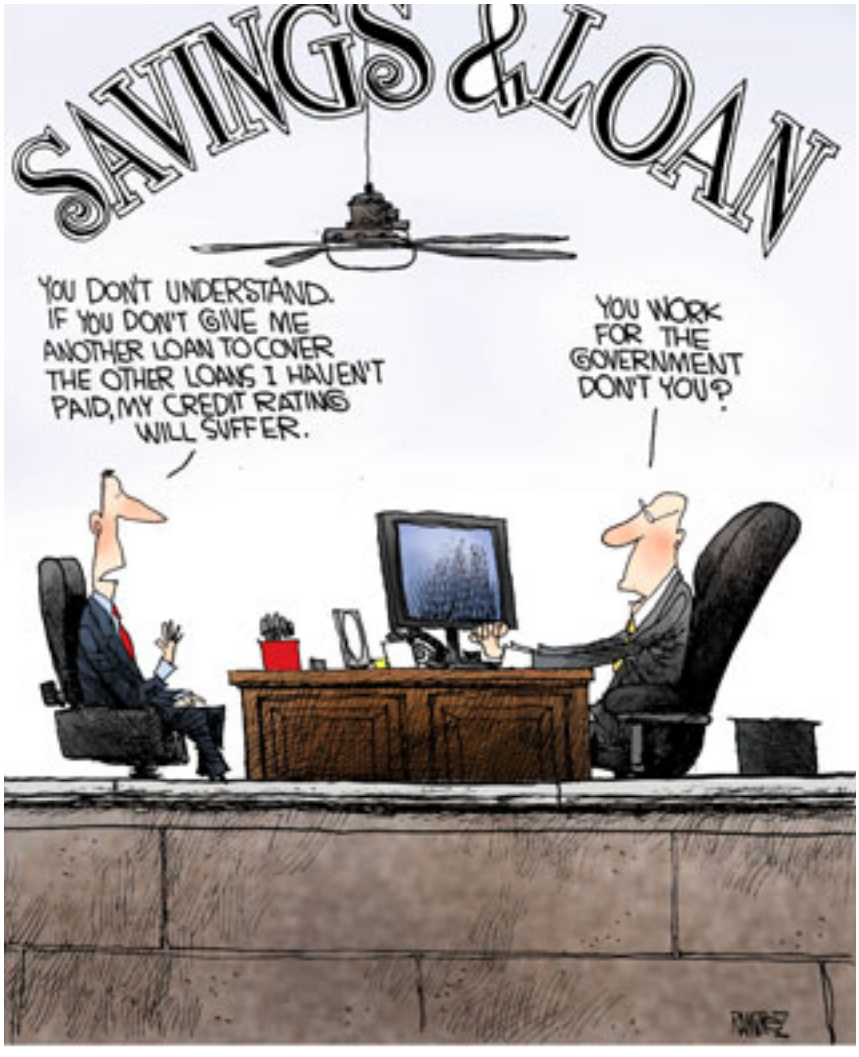
The Scrapbook is happy to concede that the Republican party, like the country generally, has moved rightward in recent decades; and that fewer candidates would today identify themselves as "liberal Republicans"—whatever that may mean—than in, say, 1966. Still, The Scrapbook can't help but observe that, as the GOP has shifted to the right, the Democratic party has lurched decisively to the left, leaving what used to be called "conservative Democrats"—Reagan Democrats, Cold War liberals, Blue Dog Democrats, whatever—as an endangered species within their party. The difference, of course, is that while the press tends to obsess on the thinning ranks of liberal Republicans, it is unaccountably silent about the demise of conservative Democrats.

We were reminded of this last week when the Democratic Leadership Council announced that it was closing shop. At a moment when Nancy Pelosi is the undisputed leader of congressional Democrats, the Obama White House is a wholly owned subsidiary of organized labor, and MoveOn.org and Daily Kos are the intellectual engines of the Democratic party, it is fair to say that the species of moderate Democrat is not only endangered but moving swiftly toward extinction. The last Cold War liberal, Sen. Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, has announced his retirement, as has Rep. Jane Harman of California, whose support for the war on terror, under Speaker Pelosi, cost her the chairmanship of the House Intelligence Committee. Of the 53 Blue Dog Democrats in the House, 21 were defeated for reelection in November, and the 6 Blue Dogs who retired were succeeded by Republicans.

You wouldn't know it from the abuse it endured from within its own party's ranks, but the Democratic Leadership Council was hardly a conservative organization. Formed in 1985 after the Mondale debacle, it sought to inject a measure of fiscal responsibility into Democratic dogma and put some distance between the party and the protectionist AFL-CIO. After the defeat of Michael Dukakis in 1988, it earned the active support of senators such as Charles Robb of Virginia and Sam Nunn of Georgia, as well as governors such as Bill Clinton of Arkansas. And it may well be said that Clinton's most enduring achievements as president—welfare reform, NAFTA, deregulation, budget surpluses—were largely in accordance with DLC doctrine.

But that was then. Al Gore, John Kerry, and Barack Obama turned their backs on the policies that had elected Bill Clinton to two terms in the White House, and Howard Dean, as presidential candidate and Democratic National Committee chairman, was a relentless public antagonist of the Democratic Leadership Council. Its influence is long gone, and its demise was overdue.

Admittedly, The Scrapbook doesn't lose sleep over the wayward path of the Democratic party. But if we have to read yet another story about an anguished Republican voter in Oregon who can't abide the Tea Party, it would be nice to read an accompanying profile of a lonely pro-life Democrat in Pennsylvania who supports the war on terror and is distressed by "stimulus" spending. ♦



Correction of the Year (so far)

'An article on Jan. 16 about drilling for oil off the coast of Angola erroneously reported a story about cows falling from planes, as an example of risks in any engineering endeavor. No cows, smuggled or otherwise, ever fell from a plane into a Japanese fishing rig. The story is an

urban legend, and versions of it have been reported in Scotland, Germany, Russia and other locations" (*New York Times*, February 6, 2011). ♦

Great Moments in Acknowledgments

"For well over twenty years, one of the greatest pleasures during campaign season has been the companionship of journalist-author Joe Klein; we have broken bread from one end of the country to the other, and on several occasions have gathered a gaggle of colleagues for lengthy lunches and dinners. Beyond that, Joe is a good friend and a one-man generator of ideas . . . " (from *Then Everything Changed: Stunning Alternate Histories of American Politics: JFK, RFK, Carter, Ford, Reagan*, by Jeff Greenfield (Putnam).

Sentences We Didn't Finish

"The Republican Party tries to claim the Reagan mantle but has moved so far to the right that it now inhabits its own parallel universe. On the planet that today's GOP leaders call home, Reagan would qualify as one of those big-government, tax-and-spend liberals who . . . " (Eugene Robinson, *Washington Post*, February 8, 2011). ♦

the weekly Standard

www.weeklystandard.com

William Kristol, *Editor*
Fred Barnes, *Executive Editor*
Richard Starr, *Deputy Editor*
Claudia Anderson, *Managing Editor*
Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson, Victorino Matus, Lee Smith, *Senior Editors*
Philip Terzian, *Literary Editor*
Stephen F. Hayes, Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, *Senior Writers*
Matthew Continetti, *Opinion Editor*
Jay Cost, *Staff Writer*
John McCormack, *Online Editor*
Daniel Halper, *Deputy Online Editor*
Kari Barbic, Emily Schultheis, Kelly Jane Torrance, *Assistant Editors*
Michael Warren, *Editorial Assistant*
Philip Chalk, *Design Director*
Barbara Kyttle, *Design Assistant*
Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistant*

Max Boot, Joseph Bottum, Tucker Carlson, Noemie Emery, Joseph Epstein, David Frum, David Gelernter, Reuel Marc Gerecht, Michael Goldfarb, Mary Katharine Ham, Brit Hume, Frederick W. Kagan, Robert Kagan, Charles Krauthammer, Tod Lindberg, Robert Messenger, P.J. O'Rourke, John Podhoretz, Irwin M. Stelzer,
Contributing Editors

Terry Eastland, *Publisher*
Nicholas H.B. Swezey, *Advertising Director*
Catherine Lowe, *Marketing Director*
Richard Trocchia, *Fulfillment Manager*
T. Barry Davis, *Senior Advertising Manager*
Kathy Schaffhauser, *Finance Director*
Nik Nelson, *Marketing Assistant*
Taybor Cook, *Office Manager*
Andrew Kaumeier, *Staff Assistant*

Advertising inquiries:
202-293-4900

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 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. 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 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. 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.

Taking It to the Streets

On an August night 15 years ago, I drove to Coney Island to play basketball. Arriving just after dinner, I set up camp at a court on the corner of Mermaid and 25th Street, nestled beside a large public housing project. I ran games late into the night with a small group, including a hulking gentleman named Tank who had a mouthful of gold teeth, and a younger chap, Nick, who was missing a finger on his right hand. Nick's torso was dotted with small, round scars from old gun wounds.

Nick, Tank, and all the others I played with were affable and kind, as nice a group as you would ever want to meet. The neighborhood felt neither threatening nor unsafe. The only aspect that was truly alien to me was the presence of children: Small kids, some as young as three or four, ran around in packs, unsupervised, all night long. Some played on the adjoining playground. Others brought basketballs and ran little games of their own wherever there was spare blacktop.

I went to Coney Island because the court at Mermaid and 25th was Stephon Marbury's home. Marbury was a legendary playground point guard who went on to become a dazzling (though ultimately self-destructive) professional player. I wanted to see the court where he grew up.

America is proficient at producing great athletes in a wide variety of sports. Not just basketball, baseball, and football, but also hockey, skiing, figure skating, tennis, golf, volleyball—every sport you can think of and some you can't (like curling).

The lone exception is soccer. At any given time, about 10 million of the 60 million American kids between the ages of 5 and 18 are involved in organized soccer. Yet high-level success is elusive. American soccer has never produced a Stephon Marbury, let alone a Babe Ruth or a Michael Jordan.

Most Americans are sublimely indifferent to this national failure, but a small group—our national youth development professionals—are not. They are intent on building a better soccer star. And they believe that one of the obstacles is our bourgeois culture.

Some sports require intense practice and coaching to achieve excellence. Gymnasts and tennis players, for instance, are shaped by adult coaches from a fearfully young age. Other sports, such as baseball and golf, require organized repetition—thousands of hours playing catch or hitting balls. But a few sports are accessible enough that players can learn and emerge on their own. In these, a heavy regime of organization might actually inhibit development.

DAVID GOTHARD

Take basketball. Almost to a man, the best players develop on playgrounds, spending lots of time learning and experimenting by themselves or with other kids. One of the reasons so many great basketball players hail from the inner city is that environments like Coney Island—where kids come and go as they please—are perfect incubators of basketball talent. Before he became a pro, Marbury was one of those kids I saw, running around playing basketball at all hours. To put it gently, for basketball development, the social dynamics of urban poverty are more help than hindrance.

When it comes to developing talent, soccer is a lot like basketball. In recent years, the American coaching establishment has concluded that the nation's soccer infrastructure is flawed. There are 5,500 accredited soccer clubs, each with a panoply of peewee, youth, travel, and select teams. These clubs run rigorous practices and carefully arranged games and tournaments. An army of parents caravan their *kinder* from field to field, while the win-loss records of teams of 11-year-olds are dutifully tabulated. Because that's how the middle class believes winners are made.

But all of that hyper-regimentation does little to foster high-level brilliance. Sam Snow, the director of coaching education at U.S. Youth Soccer, laments that we now "over-coach and we over-organize." It's a quintessentially American problem: Our professional soccer failure is a product of our middle-class cultural success.

The solution put forward by the soccer establishment is "street soccer." Here's how it works: In order to give kids the opportunity to play on their own, parents drop them off at special practices where the coaches toss out a few balls and let them put together their own games with only quiet adult oversight. It's free-play—only organized. And supervised.

Street soccer, then, is an attempt to mimic (in carefully controlled bursts) the conditions of poverty that aid athletic development—to replicate Mermaid and 25ths all over the country and conceive little Stephon Marburys *in vitro*. Only without the housing projects, the gun wounds, or any actual impoverishment.

JONATHAN V. LAST

"Democracy is worth dying for, because it's the most deeply honorable form of government ever devised by man." —President Ronald Reagan

Visit

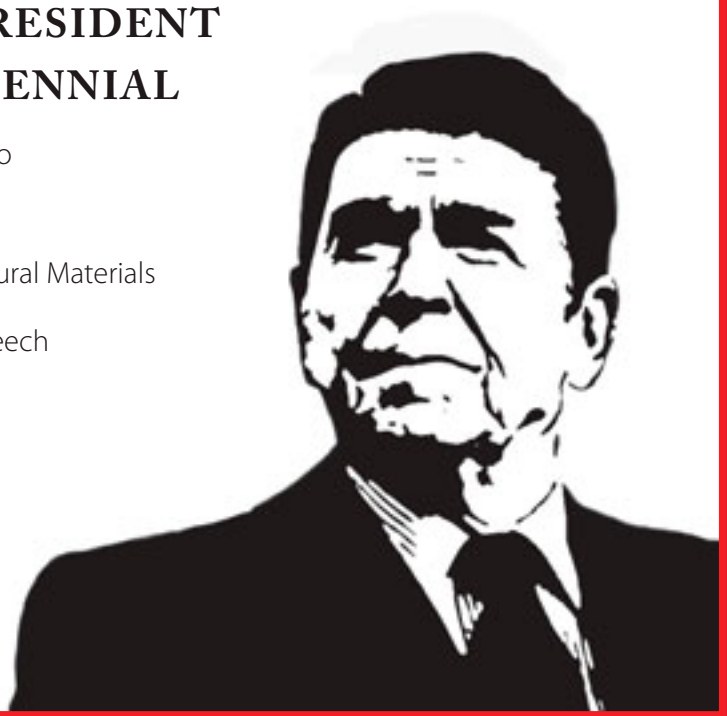
The American Presidency

A Glorious Burden

Exhibition

On the Occasion of President Ronald Reagan's Centennial

- New History Channel Commemorative Video Highlighting the 40th President's Life
- Additional Objects on View including Inaugural Materials
- Reenact Reagan's "Tear Down This Wall" Speech



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center
14th and Constitution Ave. N.W.

Due to Metro Station Work President's Day Weekend, Please use Metro Center Station (Red Line) or Park Nearby at the Ronald Reagan Building on 14th Street.

the weekly Standard

A Limited Government—and a Strong Defense

Now begins the great business for which the voters recalled the Republican party to power in Washington: reestablishing the habits of limited government. Starting with the debate on the 2011 continuing resolution—last year's Democratic majorities having failed to fund the government for the full year—and the building of the 2012 budget, conservatives will commit to the Sisyphean task of putting America's fiscal house in order.

Republicans will not just resize the government but reshape it, ensuring that Washington does well those jobs it alone must do, and otherwise giving private enterprise and civil society the greatest opportunity to flourish. And the one indispensable task of the federal government—indeed a principal reason why the Founders felt the need to replace the Articles of Confederation with the Constitution—is national defense. The saliency of this need is no less apparent now, when we are fighting a war in Central Asia and globally against Islamist terrorists, facing an increasingly ambitious China, dealing daily with securing the great commons of the sea, space, and cyberspace, witnessing continuing instability in the Middle East, and may soon face not one but two rogue regimes armed with nuclear weapons.

The good news is that, in the reconsidered 2011 continuing resolution, the House Republican leadership is prepared to treat defense differently than domestic discretionary spending, adding about $8 billion to the defense levels now in force. This is an important assertion of principle, particularly in light of the impulse to put "everything on the table," in the spirit of lowest common denominator bipartisanship. More important, the leadership courageously held the line on defense when fiscal conservatives demanded $26 billion in cuts above those in the original resolution—and took all the additional cuts out of domestic discretionary programs.

House leaders are also committed to pushing through a complete defense bill rather than settling for another continuing resolution. The current CR already has created havoc in the Defense Department, providing monies for programs no longer needed and no monies for new starts, and forcing the services to divert funding—particularly from the "operations and maintenance" accounts that fund training and some war-related activities. Unpredictable funding exacerbates the problems of the Pentagon bureaucracy and actually drives up costs.

It is, however, undeniably the case that the defense budget levels in the resolution the House leadership brings to the floor will be lower than those requested by Barack Obama in his FY2011 budget submission. It's a world turned upside down when Democrats can plausibly assert that they are "stronger on defense" than conservative Republicans.

NEWSCOM

U.S. Marines take positions at Mirage patrol base, Musa Qala District, Helmand Province, on February 6, 2011.

The difference between the president's request and the leadership plan is about $13 billion—a cheap price to risk one of the most consistent strengths of the Republican party.

Moreover, in deference to their new members' budget-cutting zeal, the House leadership has designed a process of open rules to allow any member to offer deficit-reducing amendments. With luck, the increased cuts in the bill the leadership brings to the floor, which will allow fiscal conservatives to claim they achieved their campaign promise to reduce 2011 spending by $100 billion, will result in more cohesion, thereby preserving defense from further reductions.

But there is much more required than simply preserving the military we have now. That force is magnificent,

but it has done too much with too little for too long. As the bipartisan Quadrennial Defense Review headed by former Secretary of Defense William Perry and former National Security Adviser Stephen Hadley summarily put it, "The general trend has been to replace more with fewer more-capable systems. . . . [B]eyond a certain point, quality cannot substitute for quantity." Republicans should therefore think twice before demanding that our armed forces do more with even less.

The debate on the 2011 continuing resolution is just a warm-up for the 2012 budget. That document will be written from scratch by the Republicans in the House, whereas the CR cleans up the mess left by the prior Congress. And the 2012 plan will be written against the background of the more than $300 billion already slashed from the Pentagon's budget by the Obama administration, and the additional $78 billion announced just last month. When the 2012 budget is released, we will truly know whether the new Republicans have the wit and the steadfastness to resist the temptation to slash defense mindlessly, and to insist that a strong defense is entirely compatible with a fiscally responsible and appropriately limited federal government.

—Gary Schmitt and Thomas Donnelly

Third-Rail Splitters

Tea Partying House Republicans recently went into revolt over the largest cuts in government spending in decades. Why? Despite their size, the cuts in spending that Rep. Paul Ryan proposed for the rest of fiscal year 2011 didn't appear to meet the Republican campaign pledge to shave $100 billion from the budget. The unexpected fury drove the GOP leadership back to the drawing board last week, where they redesigned the continuing resolution that will fund the government through October 1.

But here's the question: Given that the initial cuts brought such a dramatic reaction from the freshman class, what will happen if House Republicans ignore entitlements in their 2012 budget plan?

The answer is plain: A GOP budget that said nothing about Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid would send the conservative street into an uproar. And for good reason. A Republican House that failed to address these main drivers of America's deficit would look like a con.

That doesn't mean the GOP House has to relitigate the 2005 fight over personal accounts, or shut down the government if President Obama refuses to accept Paul Ryan's plan for Medicare. What it means is Republicans have an opportunity to stake out a position in the inevitable debate over the American welfare state. They have a chance to begin a public education campaign on the necessity and feasibility of reform now versus austerity later. This is an occasion where Republicans actually could govern according to conservative principles. It'd be an awful shame if they blew it.

Leave aside the self-evident absurdity of a limited-government party that turns a blind eye to the overwhelming bulk of government expenditures. Opinion polls and the political dangers that accompany any discussion of entitlements have persuaded some conservatives that the GOP can afford to wait another two (four? six?) years to reveal its plans for Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid. They're wrong.

It's true the polls show no great hunger for cuts in entitlement spending. But that's precisely the point. Tackling these programs now would not only prevent the coming fiscal crisis, it would diminish the chances of punishing cuts in benefits for current retirees. Change America's bad spending habits soon, and people in or close to retirement can enjoy the benefits promised to them. That won't be the case forever.

The public, moreover, is likelier to approve of an adult discussion about fiscal responsibility today than a bond-market-imposed, slash-and-burn austerity tomorrow. Americans are likelier to reward politicians who level with them than those who cavil and hide behind the other party's inaction.

It's also true that the Democrats will demagogue any Republican proposal to make entitlements fiscally sustainable. But the Democrats always say Republicans want to kick Grandma out into the cold—so why not be ready with an actual proposal, with facts and figures and graphs and charts, to expose such falsehoods? Why not seize the initiative and call the Democrats' bluff, pointing out that they have no answer to America's fiscal crisis other than massive tax hikes? Republicans are already being attacked for significant cuts in domestic discretionary spending, and so it would look silly not to go where the real money is. Better to be attacked for boldness and courage than exposed as timid and cynical.

The dangers of entitlement politics are overstated in any case. The Democrats have been on the offensive relentlessly since Paul Ryan debuted the first version of his Roadmap for America's Future in 2008. But their misrepresentations have failed to unseat Ryan—or prevent the election of dozens of Republican congressmen and senators who are fond of or intrigued by or committed to entitlement reform.

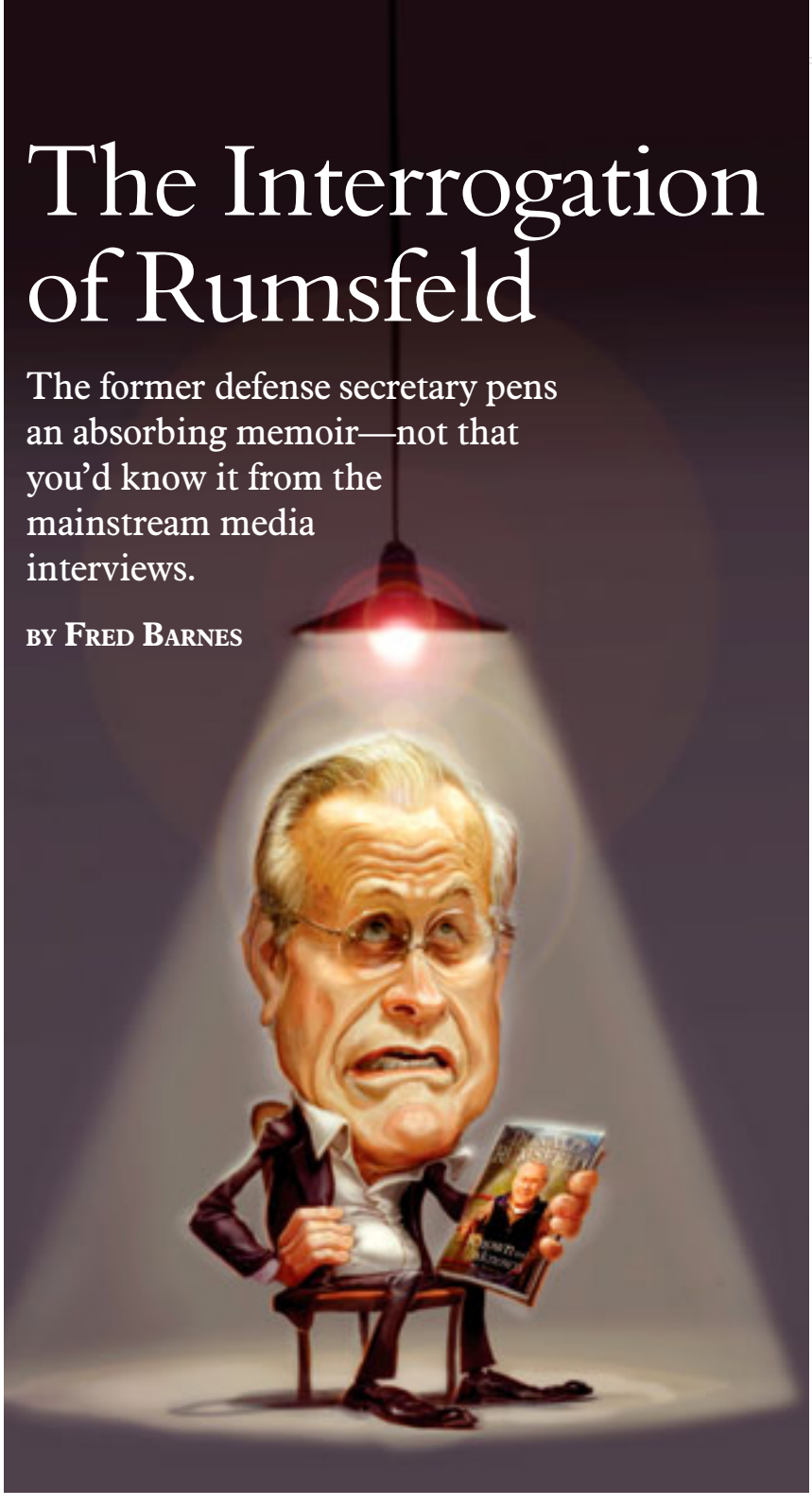
The third rail of politics is not what it used to be. Like the rails in the Washington Metro, it's old and poorly maintained and prone to malfunction. The openness to serious changes in the American welfare state at the grassroots, state, and federal levels is like nothing we've seen in a long time. Beginning the hard work of reform now would lay the groundwork for removing the obstacle in the White House in 2012.

—Matthew Continetti

The Interrogation of Rumsfeld

The former defense secretary pens an absorbing memoir—not that you'd know it from the mainstream media interviews.

BY FRED BARNES



GARY LOCKE

The Bush administration trilogy was supposed to arrive in this order: President Bush's book first, then Vice President Cheney's, and finally Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's. But Cheney, because of heart trouble, couldn't finish on time. So Rumsfeld stepped forward last week with *Known and Unknown*, his absorbing and vigorously argued memoir, accompanied by hundreds of recently declassified or previously unreleased documents available online at www.rumsfeld.com.

Bush got off relatively easy with the press when *Decision Points* came out last year, and the book has sold an extraordinary two million copies. Rumsfeld hasn't been so lucky, though his book, with a first printing of 290,000 copies, was an immediate bestseller.

Rumsfeld is "controversial" and "polarizing" and "defiant," as ABC News described him. These are media jargon for "we don't like the guy." But since ABC offered a good deal for publicizing his book and gained exclusive interview rights on broadcast TV, Rumsfeld had to run the gauntlet there: *ABC World News* in the evening, *Nightline* later that night, and *Good Morning America* the next morning. It wasn't pretty.

After a few obligatory questions about Egypt, *GMA* host George Stephanopoulos got to the point. "You concede in the book that the Iraq war came at a very high price. I want to show for our viewers some of that price," he said. A graphic popped on the screen: "4,408 U.S. military deaths, 32,000 wounded, 115,000 Iraqi civilians killed, $700 billion (CBO estimate)."

"I've read the book. I've read the reviews. I watched your interview with Diane [Sawyer]," Stephanopoulos said, "and it seems like the one question that most people want answered is the one you most don't want to address. What responsibility do you bear for those costs?" Most people? Please. In any case, Stephanopoulos didn't mention the war in Iraq had been won.

The interview quickly became an argument. Stephanopoulos said Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein had been "contained" prior to the American invasion. He said there had been "many warnings [that] more troops could have helped, by advisers on the ground." Rumsfeld: "No, that's not correct." Stephanopoulos: American envoy Paul Bremer "said that—it is correct." Rumsfeld: "It is not correct."

And so it went. Stephanopoulos asked Rumsfeld to concede that if he'd stayed in office after 2006, "there would have been defeat in Iraq and the surge would not have taken

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

place." Rumsfeld: "Oh, no, absolutely not." Stephanopoulos: "Why is it so difficult, sir, for you to say, 'This is the mistake I made. This is what we should have done different. This is what I'm sorry for'?" Rumsfeld didn't take the bait.

At the end, Stephanopoulos said he wished they "had a lot more time to talk." I suspect Rumsfeld felt otherwise.

Diane Sawyer, the top ABC anchor, was also eager for Rumsfeld to admit mistakes. Here's how her *Nightline* interview was introduced: "Diane Sawyer goes head to head with Donald Rumsfeld as never before. . . . The big question: What did he get wrong?"

Rumsfeld said he got some things wrong, as he does in his book. He said "it's possible" he was slow to react to deterioration of the military situation in Iraq. He regretted saying "stuff happens" to explain the looting after American troops captured Baghdad. He said Bush should have accepted his resignation after the Abu Ghraib prison scandal was revealed in 2004.

But a full-throated apology from Rumsfeld—for the war, its cost, bad intelligence on WMD in Iraq, his tardiness in supporting the troop surge in 2007, and more—is what his critics in the mainstream media crave. A review in the *Washington Post* was headlined: "Rumsfeld remains largely unapologetic in memoir." Indeed he does.

The *Post* was one of a handful of publications given early copies of *Known and Unknown* by a New York bookstore. The *New York Times* was another. Its reviewer, Michiko Kakutani, called the book a "tedious, self-serving volume . . . filled with efforts to blame others." Tedious, it isn't. Rumsfeld tells his side of the story in policy struggles and internal conflicts in the Nixon, Ford, and Bush 43 administrations. And he is comfortable in naming those with whom he found fault and why he did.

This is why his memoir is such an enthralling read, even if your knowledge of those administrations is sketchy. It's not solely an account of how policies developed. We can be thankful for that. Nor is it simply a narrative of hopping from one administration post to the next, all the while neglecting the historically important clashes among officials at the top levels in Washington. Memoirs of Washington titans often gloss over personal battles and feuds, and their books, unlike Rumsfeld's, are laborious and sometimes unreadable.

Rumsfeld insists his book isn't "score-settling" with old foes. "It isn't at all," he told me. "It's descriptive. I think it's honest." He says Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state, urged him "to tell it like it was," as Kissinger himself has in his memoirs. "And I did," Rumsfeld says.

Rumsfeld says he got some things wrong. 'It's possible' he was slow to react to deterioration of the military situation in Iraq. He regrets saying 'stuff happens' to explain the looting after American troops captured Baghdad. But there are no full-throated apologies.

He alerted many of those whose names pop up in the book or in the documents posted on his website to what was coming. He called 7 of them, including former Secretary of State Colin Powell, and sent notes to 20 more.

Powell, Rumsfeld writes, "was valuable as an adviser and respected as a man of considerable accomplishments, but his department seemed to remain skeptical about President Bush and less than eager to implement his policies." The State Department under Powell was also the source of constant leaks damaging to the Defense Department and the White House, he says.

Condoleezza Rice's deficiency as national security adviser in Bush's first term was her insistence on bridging differences between advisers. "Rice seemed to believe that it was a personal shortcoming on her part if she had to ask the president to resolve an interagency difference," Rumsfeld writes.

He's no fan of John McCain, calling him "a man with a hair-trigger temper and a propensity to fashion and shift his positions to appeal to the media." And going back to his time as Ford's chief of staff in 1974 and 1975, he writes that Vice President Nelson Rockefeller was a bully who "would badger and pester subordinates until they said what he wanted to hear." Kissinger, he says, was chronically late to meetings.

Washington memoirs are often short on anecdotes. Rumsfeld has sprinkled his book with them. When he was a congressman from Illinois, he was reading a bill when Republican John Byrnes of Wisconsin approached him. "Don't start reading that stuff, Don," Byrnes said, "or you'll never make it around here." Byrnes was joking, Rumsfeld insists.

One episode in *Known and Unknown* is troubling. Rumsfeld is sharply critical of Paul Bremer, who headed the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that governed Iraq after the invasion in 2003. Rumsfeld says he gave Bremer "considerable latitude for decision making," but Bremer exceeded his instructions and, in particular, was unwilling to give Iraqis any real say.

Bremer was also Bush's man in Iraq, a fact that Rumsfeld laments. Bremer had a one-on-one lunch with the president before he left for Baghdad. "The president could of course have lunch with whomever he wanted," Rumsfeld writes. "But in Bremer's case, such actions contributed to a confused chain of command." Bremer, however, didn't appear to be confused. Though he reported to Rumsfeld, his ultimate boss was the president.

"Most troubling," according to Rumsfeld, "was that Bremer proved reluctant to cede any significant authority to the Iraqis." Not for long. He created an Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) to advise him and handle some administrative duties. In May

2004, a year after Bremer arrived, the IGC named Ayad Allawi prime minister of an interim government. In 2005, a full-fledged Iraqi parliament was elected. That strikes me as a reasonably fast transition.

And as two 2003 documents posted on Rumsfeld's website suggest, Bremer followed the administration's guidelines. Its "principles for Iraq" included the requirement that the CPA "assert authority" and "impose order." It also was to provide "hands-on political reconstruction." Bremer complied. He basically adhered to the "Iraqi Interim Authority Action Plan," which outlined the path to an Iraqi government.

When I talked to Rumsfeld last week, he appeared to soften his criticism of Bremer. There were "a lot of good things accomplished" under Bremer, he said. The Pentagon and State Department simply disagreed on the "pace" of transition to Iraqi self-rule. Rumsfeld wanted to "do it fast," as had been done in Afghanistan. "The State Department did not agree," he said. Nor did Bremer.

In *Known and Unknown*, Rumsfeld acknowledges he was a "latecomer" to supporting the surge of troops in Iraq. He emphasizes its psychological effect as much as its military impact, annoying some surge backers. Still, he promoted the surge—after his departure had been announced—when "there was not a lot of support in the Pentagon," Rumsfeld told me. "I made it my job to work with the military so that when the decision was made the department would be supportive of the president and . . . supportive of the [surge] concept."

To flack his book, Rumsfeld has relied heavily on Fox News, especially Sean Hannity, and conservative talk radio. He was treated the roughest by ABC News, his first foray into the mainstream media. "Everybody is so eager to know what is the lesson you learned, . . . " Sawyer asked, "about you." Rumsfeld looked exasperated. "Oh, my goodness," he replied. Later, I asked if he had any complaints about ABC's questions. He shrugged but didn't complain. ♦

The Egyptian Army and Obama

The generals in Cairo will now test the president's tolerance for autocracy. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

An unrelentingly severe critic of the fallen Tunisian dictator Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, my longtime Tunisian taxi driver Moussa, who has lived in Brussels for 20 years, sounded an optimistic note last week. "[The army] may not screw us. The officers know that Tunisia has fundamentally changed. I can't believe what the Tunisian press is saying now—nothing is off-limits—and the army hasn't tried to stop them. The army knows that the people will never forgive them if they again imprison and torture people." Though the old regime is far from dead in Tunisia, Tunisians are collectively crossing their fingers that the military, as an institution, is willing to take a risk on a new order where its perks are far from guaranteed.

Should we expect the Egyptian military—the first Arab army to be "modernized" (Tunisia's was the second)—to remain true to "the Arab street," which has now downed the most powerful Arab dictator? The army in Egypt is massively invested in the dictatorial status quo that President Hosni Mubarak built after he assumed power from the slain Anwar Sadat in 1981. Where once the military life guaranteed at best a genteel poverty, senior Egyptian officers now live like pashas, with incomes far beyond their official salaries. Add to this pyramid of military privilege civilian relatives of senior military officers who've used their access and protection to game Egypt's system of crony capitalism, and mid-ranking officers who can't conceive of themselves outside of the orbit of their uniformed patrons, and you've got a legion of men and women who really don't want Egypt to change that much. The enemy of reform and democracy in Egypt—and everywhere else in the Arab world—isn't only the power of dictators and their families but also the appetite and expectations of their armed forces, which created modern authoritarianism.

The democratic wave that has finally struck the Arab world is, among other things, a civilian protest movement against the militarization of Middle Eastern life. Old Oriental despotisms, for all their unpleasantness, did not fundamentally assault the civilian nature of Muslim societies, where men of the cloth, letters, the bazaar, and small-town aristocracies defined the "good and noble." The Egyptian Gamal Abdel Nasser, the icon of modern, demagogic militarism, swept away the old world and promised a nationalist and Arabist renaissance. Spiritually crushed by the 1967 Israeli victory, and economically impoverished by socialism, this new-age authoritarianism halfheartedly discovered capitalism in the 1980s. Robbed of ideology and military purpose (defeating Israel became a millenarian dream, like the ancient Arab aspiration to conquer Constantinople), Arab armies became instruments of political oppression and private enrichment.

They did, however, remain conscript armies. Unlike the despotisms

Reuel Marc Gerecht is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *and the author of* The Wave: Man, God, and the Ballot Box in the Middle East *(Hoover Institution Press).*

of old, which were dependent on small, professional armies of slave soldiers (in Egypt, they were called "mameluks"), modern autocracy has depended on the common man. Nationalism, the most successful Western export to the Muslim world, is sacred for most Egyptians—even for the Muslim Brotherhood, whose universalist Islamic aspirations have been in a tug-of-war with Egyptian nationalism for 80 years. And this patriotic common man has increasingly embraced democracy as the only legitimate organizing political ideal.

How much has the seductive idea of democracy percolated from the bottom up, and from the top down via intellectuals, into the officer ranks of the Egyptian Army? Do the senior officers really believe in a "soft landing" in a democratic Egypt? A democratic Egypt, cursed with bloated bureaucracies and a still vibrant socialist ethic, would likely cut back military expenditures severely in an effort to maintain public-sector civilian jobs. More or less, the Egyptian Army has been able to wall off its defense budget—and senior officers' posh lifestyles—from economic reality. America's yearly billion-dollar military-aid package has allowed the Egyptian Army to enjoy toys— advanced Abrams tanks, F-16 aircraft, and Israeli-ship-killing surface-to-surface missiles—that would be unthinkable if purchased only through Egyptian taxes. It's a decent guess that a democratic Egypt will distance itself from America's military largesse—seeing it, not incorrectly, as an enabler of autocracy. A democratic Egypt will demand a more humble, less well-fed military establishment. Do Egyptian military officers believe that angry liberals and even angrier Muslim Brothers won't eventually expropriate all that their families have accumulated under martial rule?

The denouement of Mubarak's reign may give hope to the military for a soft landing. The lack of violence in the demonstrations throughout the country—despite the bloody provocations of Egyptian security forces—has been astonishing. It would be unwise to underestimate the vengeful sentiments that are undoubtedly widespread or to overestimate the moderating effect of Egypt's age-old settled culture, which has little of the open nastiness so common in Algeria or Iraq. But the restraint of the demonstrators has been—for the Egyptians themselves—ennobling. This pacifism has certainly deterred the army from brutality; it may well push the military towards backing more representative government over the coming months.

We should, however, assume that the military's recidivist impulse is strong. We should also assume that the Egyptian Army doesn't yet view the events of January and February as the prelude to a real revolution, but only as an uprising that required Mubarak to depart in order to preserve "the system."

President Obama appears to be abandoning the pro-authoritarian, status-quo realism that had defined his administration's policy toward the Middle East. The June 12, 2009, electoral earthquake in Tehran barely shook the White House (the diplomatic effort to stop the mullahs' quest for nuclear weapons trumped whatever pro-democracy empathy President Obama may have felt for the Iranian demonstrators). But Tahrir Square may have finally broken the hold that Washington's authoritarian-tolerant liberal foreign-policy establishment (think the pro-Mubarak emissary Frank Wisner) had on the president. Bill Burns, Middle Eastern dictators' favorite diplomat at the State Department, may still be number three at Foggy Bottom, but it's a good guess that he will no longer be making quips about how U.S. foreign policy aims to turn "Putin into our [Russian] Mubarak." (The idea actually now has a certain appeal.)

Contrary to so much chic leftist chatter, the United States still has an important role to play in Egypt's democratic transition. We still possess considerable financial leverage on Egypt's military; we should not hesitate to use it if the army doesn't immediately end the draconian police-state emergency regulations and soon establish a transitional government whose membership includes prominent nonmilitary men. A transitional government should be open to all—including members of the Muslim Brotherhood—and must have real authority. That government, not the military, should set the calendar for new elections and decide whether Egypt's current constitution can be revised or is better chucked into the trash bin. (Probably the latter.)

As President Obama may know now, the most difficult time for his administration lies in the months ahead, when the Egyptian Army will test to see how much autocracy (and wealth) it can keep in its hands. There will surely be an enormous temptation in Washington, on both the left and right, to side with the army for a "slow" transition or even a "restrictive democracy," where the Muslim Brothers are excluded from parliament. Much of Washington, like most in the European Union, wants to support democracy in Egypt, but a democracy that follows the exact same policies as Mubarak's dictatorship.

Such a democracy is unlikely to be born. Egyptians need the liberty to grow as they see fit and as they can. Real liberal democracy in the Arab world lies down this difficult path. There is reason to hope that President Obama, whose sympathies in the past inclined him toward "authentic" third-world potentates, may understand now that George W. Bush was right to castigate the foreign policy that Bush senior adored. In any case, President Obama and Egypt are now tied together. If Egyptian democracy gets off the ground, the odds are decent that the president will be able to reinvent himself overseas. That may not be enough to save him in 2012 from his domestic policies. But it might. ♦

THE GREAT COURSES®

Explore the History of Colonial America

Colonial American history is a story of extraordinary scope—a drama of settlement and conflict that lasted nearly 300 years. And in the midst of it, no one would have predicted that 13 profoundly different colonies would eventually form the United States of America.

Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies tells this epic tale in 36 spellbinding lectures delivered by award-winning Professor Robert J. Allison. Drawing on a wealth of scholarship and illustrative material, he reveals how the colonies became a crucible of innovation, testing new ideas about society, religion, agriculture, economics, and more. By the final lecture, you'll better understand how today's world emerged from this often overlooked chapter in our nation's past.

Offer expires 03/03/11

1-800-832-2412

WWW.THEGREATCOURSES.COM/3WKS

Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies

Taught by Professor Robert J. Allison
SUFFOLK UNIVERSITY

LECTURE TITLES

1. The World before Colonial America
2. Spain's New World Empire
3. John Smith, Pocahontas, and Jamestown
4. Virginia and the Chesapeake after Smith
5. The Pilgrims and Plymouth
6. The Iroquois, the French, and the Dutch
7. The Puritans and Massachusetts
8. New England Heretics—Religious and Economic
9. The Connecticut Valley and the Pequot War
10. Sugar and Slaves—The Caribbean
11. Mercantilism and the Growth of Piracy
12. South Carolina—Rice, Cattle, and Artisans
13. New Netherland Becomes New York
14. King Philip's War in New England
15. Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia
16. Santa Fe and the Pueblo Revolt of 1680
17. William Penn's New World Vision
18. The New England Uprising of 1689
19. Witchcraft in New England
20. Captives and Stories of Captivity
21. The Indians' New World
22. Family Life and Labor in Colonial America
23. Smallpox, 1721—The Inoculation Controversy
24. France, Senegal, and Louisiana
25. Georgia—Dreams and Realities
26. The Atlantic Slave Trade and South Carolina
27. The New York Conspiracy of 1741
28. The Great Awakening
29. The Albany Conference of 1754
30. The Great War for Empire
31. Pontiac's Revolt against the British
32. Imperial Reform—The Sugar and Stamp Acts
33. North Carolina Regulators Seek Local Rule
34. Virginia—Patrick Henry and the West
35. Destruction of Tea and Colonial Rebellion
36. Independence and Beyond

Before 1776: Life in the American Colonies
Course no. 8510 | 36 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

SAVE UP TO $275

DVD ~~$374.95~~ **NOW $99.95**
+$15 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

CD ~~$269.95~~ **NOW $69.95**
+$10 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

Priority Code: 50713

Designed to meet the demand for lifelong learning, The Great Courses is a highly popular series of audio and video lectures led by top professors and experts. Each of our more than 300 courses is an intellectually engaging experience that will change how you think about the world. Since 1990, over 9 million courses have been sold.

The Pakistan Parallel

Alliances with military strongmen eventually backfire. BY DANIEL TWINING

Why has the Obama administration been so tepid in its support for the biggest popular revolution in the modern Arab world? The short answer is Washington's fear that a vacuum left by President Mubarak's departure will be filled by the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood. "Revolutions have overthrown dictators in the name of democracy, only to see the process hijacked by new autocrats who use violence, deception and rigged elections to stay in power," warns Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. Islamic radicals hostile to America and Israel might take power through the ballot box, upending the stability of the Middle East and shifting the regional balance of power decisively against the West.

As American leaders struggle to balance stability and reform in Egypt, history offers useful lessons. Many deem the closest historical parallel to be the Iranian revolution—with the clear implication that people power in the Middle East doesn't produce liberal democracy but dangerous theocracy.

But a more accurate precedent may be Pakistan—where Washington has stood firmly behind four military strongmen whose undemocratic rule has spanned half the nation's history. The result? The rise of the world's most virulent Islamic radicalism, dangerous nuclear proliferation, the hollowing out of civil society, chronic failures of governance, and the unrivalled dominance of the army over political life. President Obama's continued support for an Egyptian transition that reinforces the army's role as the central political actor risks a Pakistan-style outcome that thwarts the popular will, incentivizes violent extremism, fans the flames of hostility to the West, and further weakens America's position in the broader Middle East.

Don't sell them out: Egyptians celebrate, February 11

In both Egypt and Pakistan, unaccountable leaders backed by their military establishments justified repression as vital to broader geopolitical goals that aligned with American interests. But did they? President Mubarak always did just enough to sustain massive American aid while enjoying little more than a cold peace with Israel—and in the process delegitimized relations with Israel in the eyes of many Egyptians by virtue of his association with it. From 2001 to 2008, General Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan did just enough to sustain the heavy flow of U.S. arms and dollars by helping America in Afghanistan—while at the same time hedging his bets by supporting the Taliban, too.

In both countries, the partnership that autocrats offered America destabilized their countries and the wider international system. Authoritarian rulers in Pakistan, as in Egypt, choked off the moderate, democratic, and liberal elements of their society, radicalizing the opposition and channeling its dissent into violence. The heavy hand of these regimes helped spawn successive generations of global terrorists, from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. At the same time, the risk of homegrown terrorism reinforced the army's importance as a countervailing institution, generating floods of American arms and equipment that only further tilted society's civil-military balance toward the men in uniforms.

Look at the results in Pakistan today. Democratic elections following the end of military rule in 2008 produced a civilian administration friendly to the West and India. But foreign and defense policy are controlled by the armed forces. Elements of the military establishment continue to sponsor Afghan Taliban, Haqqani, and Lashkar-e-Taiba fighters with the blood of American soldiers and civilians on their hands.

So the parallels between Pakistan and Egypt are telling. Nonetheless, no two strongmen are alike. President Mubarak crushed Islamic extremism in its internal (Muslim Brotherhood, Egyptian Islamic Jihad) and external

NEWSCOM

Daniel Twining is senior fellow for Asia at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. He previously served as a member of the State Department's policy planning staff and as foreign policy adviser to Senator John McCain. These are his personal views.

(Hamas, Hezbollah, al Qaeda) manifestations. Pakistan's last military ruler, confronted with an American ultimatum on September 12, 2001, proceeded to crack down hard on al Qaeda inside Pakistan—as attested by its multiple attempts to assassinate him. But Musharraf gave a free hand to other Islamic militants who did not target the Pakistani state but rather its American and Indian "adversaries." His powerful ISI intelligence service covertly supported Islamist political parties during Pakistan's unfree elections in 2002 to divert support from Musharraf's liberal rivals—with the result that Islamists earned their highest electoral tally in Pakistani history.

Pakistan has sometimes held free elections and has a robust civil society. This is in striking contrast to Egypt, where Mubarak made the free operation of civil society impossible. Emergency rule has been in place since 1981, prominent opposition parties are banned, the press was until days ago captive to the regime, and any gathering of more than five people without government permission was deemed to "threaten public order."

Even so, the uprising in Egypt unites a broad spectrum of the population, from conservative Islamists to middle-class doctors and lawyers to Google executives to students of the Facebook generation. Fears of an Islamist "one man, one vote, one time" takeover seem overblown. What of the Muslim Brotherhood, whose strength derives in part from its opposition to Mubarak's rule and from the state's persecution of its mainstream political opponents? "Let them have a political party just like everyone else—they will not win more than 10 percent," one Coptic Christian told the *New York Times*.

The long-term lessons are clear. America's enduring strategic interests would be better served by siding with the Egyptian masses who seek freedom and dignity than with an unaccountable establishment.

The United States should use its considerable leverage in Egypt, the second-largest recipient of American assistance, to push for rapid elections under a caretaker government. America should also rebalance its massive military assistance towards civilian aid on the understanding that strengthening civic institutions and economic opportunity are national security imperatives. The strategic objective must be to form a true alliance with the Egyptian public rather than with a small coterie of their rulers. The same is true in Pakistan.

As a result of our pursuing a top-down approach for far too long, America's approval rating in Pakistan stands at roughly 18 percent. A majority of Pakistanis views the United States as the country's leading adversary—notwithstanding billions upon billions of dollars in U.S. assistance and a 57-year-old strategic alliance. Pakistan is an example of how not to pursue a policy that mistakes a false "stability" for a genuine partnership truer to our interests and values. ♦

Professional Islamists

The Muslim Brotherhood's long march through the institutions. BY STEPHEN SCHWARTZ

Demonstrators from the Muslim Brotherhood in Tahrir Square, February 7

The Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, or *al-Ikhwan al-Muslimun*, is more than a radical network, comparable to al Qaeda; more than an ideological phenomenon, like the followers of Khomeini in the 1979 Iranian Revolution; and more than a political insurgency, similar to Pakistani jihadism. It is an Egyptian Islamist subculture of great depth and influence.

It is therefore also much more than a product of political decisions made by Hosni Mubarak. The Brotherhood was powerful before Mubarak, before his predecessor Anwar Sadat, and before their elder comrade, Gamal Abdel Nasser.

But the Brotherhood today is not identical with the paramilitary Arabist-Islamist *Ikhwan* that functioned in the 1930s through the 1960s. After those decades, the Brotherhood underwent a social and political transformation that was both impressive in its novelty and disturbing in its effect.

Beginning under Nasser, the Brotherhood came out of the shadows and began organizing to take over the Egyptian professional guilds of doctors and engineers. A researcher sympathetic to the Brotherhood, Amani Kandil, publishing in Arabic but cited in Western sources, has said the decision to focus on medicine and engineering was motivated by the recognition that these were the fields of aspiration where social change had become concentrated in Egypt as the 20th century ended. Universities ballooned in size and ambition, establishing new curricula in technological studies, backed by Nasser's government. Along with them, the professional guilds expanded their membership.

But the succeeding regimes of Sadat and Mubarak could not bring about the economic growth necessary to employ university graduates in medicine (including pharmacy) and engineering. The medical and engineering guilds came under Brotherhood control, and for a time, the Brotherhood was nicknamed "the engineers' union." But the Brotherhood also made significant inroads in the guilds representing two other professions: law and journalism.

Radical religion's appeal to the upwardly mobile Muslim has been observed in many countries. The fundamentalist version of Islam embodied in the faith of the Brotherhood, the Saudi Wahhabis, and the South Asian radicals is simple and does not take much from the busy life of a doctor or engineer. It does not require engagement with theological or spiritual concepts that may appear in conflict with modern, professional education. In addition, for Egyptians, local traditional Islam, with its heavy dose of spiritual Sufism, is considered a backward, rural style of observance from which the urban professional wishes to escape at any cost. A similar yearning for a basic and stripped-down religious commitment is visible among both Pakistani radicals and the Turkish middle class voters who cast their ballots for Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development party, or AKP.

But the intervention of the Brotherhood in the Egyptian medical profession also had an effect on the ordinary populace. The government could not accommodate the demand for medical services, and once the Brotherhood had taken control of the Egyptian medical syndicate, the movement began opening free clinics in poor communities. Local Islamist medical aid centers became favorite sites for activist indoctrination by the Brotherhood's more radical splinters like al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya and Egyptian Islamic Jihad.

The Brotherhood's turn to recruitment among the elites as well as the downtrodden had been anticipated by the best known of the Brotherhood's theoreticians, Sayyid Qutb (1906-66), who was executed at Nasser's order and whose writings have permeated Islamic fundamentalist groups all over the world. Qutb considered himself and

NEWSCOM

Stephen Schwartz is the author of The Two Faces of Islam *and* The Other Islam, *both published by Doubleday.*

the Brotherhood reformers of Islam and believed that a return to the "true" Islam he and his colleagues preached required a revival of Muslim achievement in science.

In his most famous work, *Milestones*, Qutb wrote,

> A Muslim can go to a Muslim or to a non-Muslim to learn abstract sciences such as chemistry, physics, biology, astronomy, medicine, industry, agriculture, administration, technology, military arts and similar sciences and arts; although the fundamental principle is that when the Muslim community comes into existence it should provide experts in all these fields in abundance, as all these sciences and arts are a sufficient obligation for Muslims (that is to say, there ought to be a sufficient number of people who specialize in these various sciences and arts to satisfy the needs of the community).

At the same time, Qutb reflected the contradictions of Islamist ideology, which seeks to implement religious purism through social and political action combined with "principles of economics and political affairs and interpretation of historical processes."

The Brotherhood's takeover of these professional institutions and its resulting influence over doctors, pharmacists, engineers, lawyers, and media personnel provided the movement with a solid constituency within Egyptian society. Qutb's vision of Islamic regeneration in the sciences produced a political power bloc resting on the professional interests and yearning for the stability of Egypt's educated elite. Within the Brotherhood, the move toward penetration and recruitment in the professions has produced differing opinions. Tariq Ramadan, grandson of Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna, argues that the content of the Koran is specific to its historical context. Kamal al-Helbawy, a Brotherhood representative in Britain since the mid-1990s, has argued that the Koran contains all of human knowledge and that there is nothing new to be added to it. In the latter view, if the Brotherhood comes to power in any Muslim country, education and science must be brought under rigid religious authority.

Strength in civil society is the necessary foundation for a successful transition away from authoritarianism or totalitarianism to popular sovereignty.

In all countries, professional and other voluntary associations are a key element of civil society. In Egypt today, the Muslim Brotherhood is not merely one among many competing religious groups; nor does it command omnipotent influence in the opposition to Mubarak. But its prestige in the professions provides it with a major platform for its future ambitions. In the history of the Brotherhood, the Mubarak era is but one chapter, and little about the Brotherhood or its power today may be said to have been caused or even aggravated by Mubarak's errors. The Brotherhood had prepared the foundation for its present involvement in Egyptian politics long before the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981 and Mubarak's accession to power. ♦

The Stockman Temptation

Defense is different.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

For four years, from 1981 to 1985, David Stockman worked for Ronald Reagan as his budget director. Stockman hated his job. A few years after he quit, he got even. He wrote a memoir called *The Triumph of Politics*. The theme of the book was the horror Stockman felt at the process by which the federal budget is written. He was alarmed to discover that professional politicians (senators, congressmen, and cabinet officers) will often treat a political document (the federal budget) in such a way that it works to their political advantage (spend, spend, spend).

Even more horrifying, in Stockman's telling, was his boss, who refused to kick the snuffling porkers away from the trough. President Reagan was a dope. He was given to saying silly things to his budget director. One of the silly things that Reagan liked to say—over and over again—was "Defense is not a budget issue. You spend what you need."

Let this be a warning: Never try to tell a budget director that something isn't a budget issue. He will write a book about you and reveal to the world that you are a dope.

Stockman believed that increases in defense spending of the magnitude Reagan favored were unwise, "compared with the severity of the deficit we faced." So he wanted to cut the increases proposed by Reagan's defense secretary, Caspar Weinberger. This disagreement over defense spending was only one of many disagreements between boss and aide. But in light of present circumstances it is perhaps the most instructive, as more and more Republicans succumb to the Stockman temptation and insist on cutting defense spending to help balance the budget.

For most of the first year of the Reagan administration Stockman and Weinberger engaged in bureaucratic warfare, each lobbing line-item rescissions and out-year projections at the other and then ducking for cover. Weinberger thought he was fulfilling one of Reagan's campaign pledges, to rebuild the American military after a decade of parsimony that had emboldened our enemies. Stockman thought he was fulfilling one of Reagan's campaign pledges too, to restore fiscal responsibility to the federal government after a generation of profligacy. At first Reagan failed to see that the two pledges had become irreconcilable. With his customary cheerful detachment he assumed the two fellas would work out their differences on their own.

When they realized that compromise was beyond them, Weinberger and Stockman brought their contest to the Oval Office for a series of presidential briefings. One of these presentations is the stuff of legend. In those golden, innocent days, PowerPoint did not exist, so Weinberger brought a poster-sized cartoon to make his case vividly to the president. The cartoon showed three soldiers. The smallest of them, Stockman recalled, was an unarmed pygmy—representing Jimmy Carter's defense budget. The second was a bespectacled doofus—Stockman's proposed defense budget. (The unsubtle joke was that Stockman himself was a bespectacled doofus. Pentagon humor.) The third was GI Joe himself, muscle-bound and well armed and ready to kick some Soviet tail—Weinberger's proposed budget.

As the controversy wore on, Reagan's own allies in Congress pleaded with him to side with Stockman and cut defense, demonstrating to the world the administration's iron commitment to a balanced budget.

"Republican leaders came down to the W.H.," Reagan wrote in his diary, "h—l bent on new taxes and cutting defense budget." (Yes, Reagan censored the word "hell" in his own diary.)

The failure of his aides to settle on a defense allocation bothered Reagan because it looked bad—not politically, but strategically. Indecision and bickering about the country's defense undercut the message that the defense increases were meant to send: letting the enemy know that the United States would spend whatever amount of money was required to remain invincibly armed. And the mere contemplation of cuts, especially in public, unsettled our allies.

"A really tough problem not yet resolved has to do with defense budget," Reagan wrote again in his diary. "Cutting defense sends a message I don't like to allies and enemies alike."

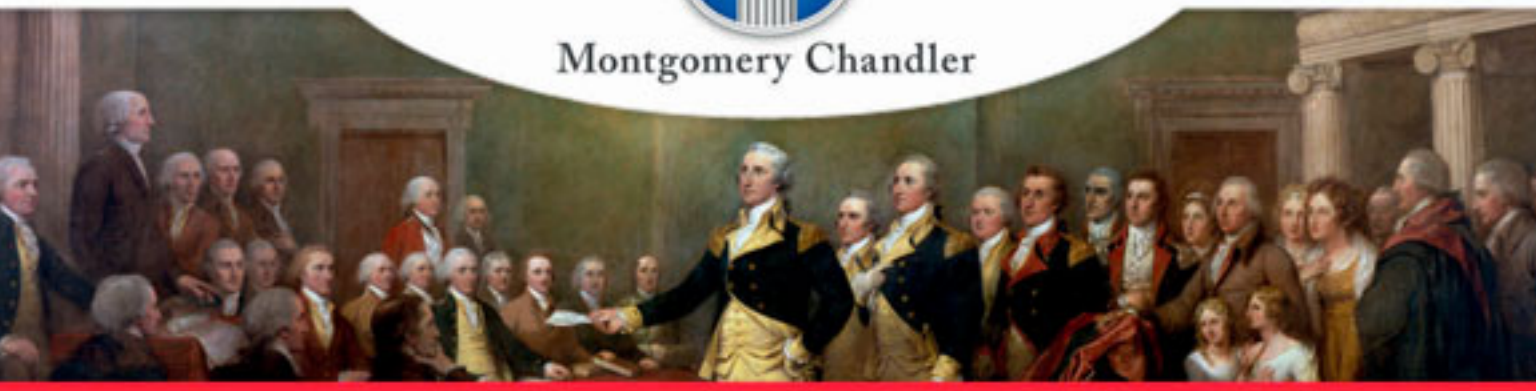
"Fellas," Reagan said (according to Stockman) when he called his budgeteers in for one last try at compromise, "we've got to get this defense thing settled. It's starting to look bad to everyone out there. The other side might get the wrong idea."

Stockman argued that the refusal to cut defense endangered the president's project of shrinking the federal government. Defense cuts, Stockman said, "provide political lubricant for the other cuts." Without them, Congress would never agree to reduce the government's size in other ways.

But Stockman's overriding concern was the yawning deficit—so vast that no department of government should be exempt from doing its part to close it. The deficit "had profound implications for defense, foreign aid, and national security policy," Stockman said he told Reagan. "DOD [the

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard *and the author of* Crazy U: One Dad's Crash Course in Getting His Kid Into College.

Montgomery Chandler



Behind every good man... is a great lady.

These ladies helped their husbands get to the White House, and now they can help you stay out of the Poor House! Each of these finely struck $10 Gold Coins contains a full one-half ounce of .9999 pure 24k gold. With gold currently over $1300 per ounce, these coins are a marvelous investment for the gold only. But, the U.S. Mint has struck no more than 40,000 of each of these beautiful ladies (with some totals less than 6,000!), and the prudent investor knows the value of limited supply coupled with high gold content. They may not get you into the White House, but these First Ladies can help you balance your portfolio and hedge against inflation!

- **Struck By The United States Mint**
- **Extremely Low Mintages**
- **A Solid Half-Ounce Of Gold**
- **24 Karat Gold**
- **Bullion Prices**

only $698.75 each

* due to market fluctuations, call for current pricing

Limit 10 per household. Also available in MS-69 and MS-70. Order today!

Speak to a Customer Service Representative:
800-385-3303

Mail Orders to:
765 N. 5th Street
Silsbee, TX 77656

Order Online:
montgomerychandler.com

MasterCard AMERICAN EXPRESS DISCOVER VISA

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Prices are subject to change due to volatility in the market. Coins enlarged to show detail.

Return Policy: Montgomery Chandler, Inc. offers a 100% satisfaction guarantee on all numismatic and rare coins offered. Montgomery Chandler, Inc. has a 10-day customer satisfaction policy after receipt of coins. Carefully inspect and evaluate your coins during this period. If you are displeased with your purchase for any reason whatsoever, you may return your coins to Montgomery Chandler, Inc. within 10 days of receipt, in the same condition in which you received them, for a full refund, including shipping costs.

TOUR EUROPE WIT
JOHN BOLTON &

Don't Miss It!

This spring, onboard guests of *The Weekly Standard* will be joined not only by popular faces from the magazine but also by two special guests: American Enterprise Institute Senior Fellow and former Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton and best-selling author (and contributing editor) P.J. O'Rourke. We sail May 12 from Barcelona with stops in Lisbon, Bruges, Cherbourg, London, & more.

To reserve your cabin today or learn more,
call **1-800-707-1634**
or visit us online at ***twscruise.com***

TH US—*AND* WITH
& P.J. O'ROURKE

FEATURED SPEAKERS:

- **William Kristol,** *Editor*
- **Terry Eastland,** *Publisher*
- **Andrew Ferguson,** *Senior Editor*
- **Fred Barnes,** *Executive Editor*
- **Richard Starr,** *Deputy Editor*
- **Stephen Hayes,** *Senior Writer*

the weekly Standard

THE CRUISE AUTHORITY

Holland America Line

Department of Defense] couldn't be granted the luxury of declaring they were immune from such considerations. They were in the fiscal sweat box along with everyone else."

Here of course was the nub of their disagreement over defense cuts, and here the disagreement lies, with appropriate modifications, among Republicans today. In the end, as history records, Stockman lost. Reagan agreed to a cut so small that Stockman called it "too ludicrous to denounce." If providing sufficiently for defense endangered his other efforts to cut the budget, Reagan said later, he could live with that. If defense expenditures deepened the deficit, he could live with that too.

The 1980s fight over the defense budget, a fight fought first among Republicans, furnished Stockman's interesting book with its great unacknowledged irony. Stockman hated his job because politicians insisted on subjecting the budget to political considerations. He hated Reagan because, when it came to the defense budget, Reagan refused to do the same.

And it's not as though he didn't try to tell Stockman over and over again: Defense was not a budget issue. We would spend what we had to spend.

Otherwise the other side might get the wrong idea. ♦

Not Too Big to Fáil

The death of Ireland's crony capitalist party.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

In the grand old days before the Irish real estate boom collapsed, the ruling Fianna Fáil party used to campaign the fun way. Infamously, the party held blowout fundraisers every year in a tent at the Galway races. Bankers and property magnates would show up, caked in bling, surrounded by attractive young women and occasionally even their wives, and get drunk with their elected representatives and regulators.

Fianna Fáil held the enviable position which, in the United States, the Republican party has occupied for most of the last few decades. It was the party of the working *and* the middle classes, and even of about half of Ireland's rich people—a natural ruling party of the godly, the nationalistic, and the "normal." Its main opposition, Fine Gael, guarded the habits of the snobby "Ascendancy" that had ruled Ireland before its independence. Fine Gael was more like the Brahmin wing of the Democratic party: sissified, intellectual, irreligious, relativistic, technocratic, and called in only when the populist juggernaut of Fianna Fáil got out of control and did something spectacularly idiotic or corrupt, as it did with some regularity.

And, alas, does. Ireland will have elections on February 25, and Fianna Fáil will lose them. The bursting of the party's real estate bubble has left Ireland with a 13.4 percent unemployment rate and a budget deficit of 32 percent of GDP. The government collapsed last month in the wake of an unpopular bailout negotiated with the IMF and the European Central Bank. Fine Gael and a resurgent Labour party are together running 20 points ahead of where they were the last time out, in 2007. Fine Gael in particular is making hay because for the first time in ages it understands how the average Irishman feels: bankrupt.

Both opposition parties are appealing to the newly poor with a civil rights agenda for the "negative equity generation." Fine Gael's election manifesto promises legislation "reducing the time to discharge from bankruptcy from six years to one," creating a new category of "honest bankruptcy" and new civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination against discharged bankrupts. If that were all the party wanted to change, these elections would be strictly a domestic matter. But the opposition is now promising to rip up the rescue plan the country has signed with international bankers, and that has got the world's attention.

The plan, settled by the Fianna Fáil-led government in November, calls for using 85 billion euros to shore up Ireland's zombie banks. A more bracing way to put it is to say that, in an already shattered economy, the government has piled about $30,000 in fresh debt on top of every man, woman, and child in the country. Ireland will provide 17.5 billion euros of that bailout money itself, by draining its National Pensions Reserve Fund. It will pay 5.8 percent interest on the money coming from Europe and the IMF. That rate, although it is better than Ireland could get on the open market, looks punitive at a time when the U.S. government, for instance, is borrowing almost interest-free.

Eamon Gilmore of the Labour party claims a "mandate to renegotiate" these agreements, and Enda Kenny of Fine Gael agrees. Most of the bondholders who lent to Ireland's banks have been paid off, but Gilmore wants to give "haircuts"—only partial repayment—to those who remain. "If other European countries continue to set their face against default on reckless loans made by banks in their own jurisdictions to Irish banks, then they should follow through with direct contributions to their recapitalisation," Fine Gael's manifesto runs. "It is a basic rule of capitalism that if you lend recklessly, you must take the consequences."

In theory, there are two grounds on which to claim a "mandate to renegotiate." One is logistical: The debt is so big that it is unpayable. The second is moral: The debt does not belong to those who have been saddled with it. Both grounds are almost true, but not quite *fully* true enough to offer the Irish any relief. Michael Lewis's

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

magnificent report in this month's *Vanity Fair* makes an almost airtight case that Ireland's present problems stem from the decision of its Dáil, or house of representatives, to insure the country's banks in the dizzy days after the Lehman bankruptcy in September 2008. It was only common sense to insure the banks' depositors. But Ireland went a step further and insured its banks' *creditors*—that is, it promised to cover the losses of other banks and funds that were investing in various Irish bank projects.

There was no economic reason to do this. The threat from a collapsed Anglo-Irish Bank, for instance, which had few depositors but a lot of ill-advised building projects financed by foreign speculators, "was not, by nature, systemic," Lewis writes. "It became so only when its losses were made everyone's." Lewis contrasts Ireland's predicament to that of Greece. In Greece, where legitimately elected government officials contracted the debt, the taxpayers have sought to wash their hands of it. In Ireland, where unaccountable private-sector moguls contracted the debt, the taxpayers have been saddled with it.

An even better contrast, though, is to Iceland, where speculative bankers poured money into crazy investments in much the same way that those in Ireland did. Iceland put its banks into receivership and promised to protect their depositors. But it threw the banks' creditors to the wolves. In fact, it distinguished between domestic and foreign depositors and tried to throw the latter to the wolves, too. Britain and the Netherlands, where a good number of the Icelandic banks' foreign depositors lived, paid off the depositors themselves, then used main force to back Iceland into a repayment agreement that will run—rather like war reparations—for at least three decades. The Icelandic banks' bondholders, according to a recent Bloomberg report, wound up settling for 30 cents on the dollar.

The tens of billions that the next generation of Irishmen will pay for Fianna Fáil's stupidity ought to destroy that party's natural-majority status for a long time. Whether there is anything the opposition parties can do, once in power, to mitigate the damage is unclear, particularly since Ireland's citizens (which is to say, its tax base) have begun to reacquire the age-old Irish habit of labor emigration. Right now, Ireland's prospects for renegotiating its debt do not look any more promising than its prospects of paying it off. This does not mean that we will soon stop hearing calls for haircuts and interest-rate adjustments. They are useful to Irish budget discussions in the same way that invocations of "waste, fraud and abuse" are to our own—as a way to forestall, even for a few weeks, any talk about the descent into rage-inducing austerity that surely lies ahead. ♦

Follow the Money

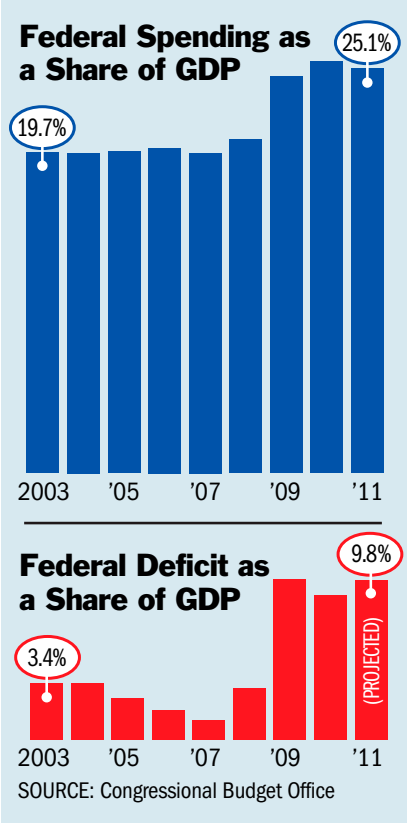
The GOP risks misdiagnosing the weak economy.

BY JEFFREY BELL

Freshman Wisconsin senator Ron Johnson, one of the most promising of the new wave of Tea Party-allied Republican legislators, was chosen to give the Republican radio address, delivered just after President Obama's weekly radio offering, on Saturday, January 29. This was a notable assignment for a freshman because, for a party not occupying the White House, the weekly radio address (often billed as a "response") is customarily seen as representing the views of the national opposition party as a whole.

Here is the core of Johnson's message: "For the last 31 years, I have been running a plastics manufacturing plant in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. As a manufacturer, I have learned to identify and attack the root cause of a problem, not spend my time addressing mere symptoms. Huge deficits, slow economic activity, high unemployment, and woefully inadequate job creation are severe symptoms of the problem. They are not the root cause. The ever-expanding size, scope, and cost of government is. This is what we must address. This is what I hope the president has come to realize."

Johnson is to be commended for his focus on the need to separate symptoms from causes. Unfortunately, his analysis of the chain of causation is at best incomplete, and of a kind that (if widely replicated) is capable of setting Republicans on the path to a political train wreck as massive as the one engineered by President Obama and the late, unlamented Pelosi-Reid Congress.



Jeffrey Bell is policy director of the American Principles Project and heads APP's GoldStandard2012 initiative.

Few conservatives would deny the role of bloated government as a drag on economic growth in the long term. But when it comes to the recent "severe symptoms"—"huge deficits, . . . high unemployment, and woefully inadequate job creation"—there is zero correlation between growth in government and the nosedive our economy entered in the fall of 2007.

Taking the five fiscal years *prior* to the 2007-09 recession—fiscal 2003 through 2007—federal spending as a percentage share of Gross Domestic Product was as follows: 19.7, 19.6, 19.9, 20.1, and 19.6. It's not simply that the stability of these numbers belies the notion of a pre-recession trend. They all round to 20 percent, which is precisely the *goal* of several of the GOP's statutory spending-limit proposals.

A goal of 20 percent may look ambitious when contrasted with Obama-era (fiscal 2009 through 2011) GDP shares of 24.7, 25.4, and 25.1 percent. But offering a return to Bush-era GDP shares as a cure for the economic meltdown—a meltdown that began at precisely those spending levels during the Bush administration—doesn't pass the laugh test.

Johnson is correct in seeing federal deficits more as a symptom than a cause of hard times. But many other Republicans speak of the size of the deficit as if this were a central part of what had halted the U.S. economy in its tracks. But in the four fiscal years prior to the recession, the federal deficit declined *every* year, shrinking from 3.5 percent to 1.2 percent as a share of GDP, a Bush-era decline of nearly two-thirds. These deficit declines would no doubt seem plausible to a liberal like Paul Krugman as a harbinger of economic collapse. They make a poor talking point for Republicans seeking a reduction in government.

Indeed, the true outrage of the Democratic ascendancy of 2009-10 is precisely Krugmania—the hyper-Keynesian belief that ever more federal spending is an answer to high unemployment or a collapse in private liquidity. The failure of Krugmania helped swell the Tea Party, as well as enhancing the Tea Party goal of a return to the more limited government envisioned by the Founders. In this sense it was a (rather costly) learning experience for American politics.

So should be the other half of Krugmania: the policy of zero interest rates and quantitative easing (QE2) by Ben Bernanke and his open market committee at the Federal Reserve. The former Princeton professor, obsessively campaigning to avoid the deflation of 80 years ago, is looking increasingly absurd at a time of sharp spikes in commodity prices. On February 1, Larry Kudlow of CNBC humorously (but defensibly) attributed the riots in Egypt to Bernanke-created inflation in the price of food.

The widespread willingness to exempt monetary policy from any blame even for inflation also retards serious debate about the proximate cause of the economic crisis that began in 2007: the popping of the worldwide financial bubble in U.S. residential real estate. This was the most recent of a long, disastrous series of bubbles, which are investment binges founded on debt-driven bull markets. And with zero interest rates topped off by Bernanke's QE2, new bubbles are in the making even as we speak. Meanwhile the debt-driven, paper-money, fully gold-free system inaugurated by Richard Nixon in 1971, applauded by Keynesians like Krugman, is being given new opportunities for mischief every day it staggers forward without serious opposition.

None of this should be interpreted as disagreement with the desire of the Tea Party and such allies as Ron Johnson to attempt to undo the federal spending surge engineered by Obama and his subservient 111th Congress. A return to limited government is a worthy, long-overdue project on its own terms, which deeply relates to who we are as a people.

But advocating a purely fiscal solution to a monetary and financial meltdown will get Republicans no further, in either economics or politics, than the mystified abdication of the later Bush years, not to mention the more recent fiscal and monetary flailing of chronic Krugmaniacs. ♦

The Middle East's New Energy Giant

The significance of Israel's natural gas deposits.

BY MICHAEL MAKOVSKY

Israelis have always lamented that Moses led the ancient Israelites to the one patch of land in the Middle East bereft of energy resources. It turns out the sea offered more promise. At the end of December, a huge natural gas discovery was confirmed in the Eastern Mediterranean inside Israel's territorial waters. Once referred to as an "energy island" that not only lacked energy reserves itself but was also cut off from the huge energy resources of the nearby Arab nations, Israel may well become over the next decade an energy exporter. The discovery of the Leviathan gas deposit in the Levant Basin marks a major development for Israel, with the potential for significant economic and strategic advantages, as well as implications for Europe,

Michael Makovsky, a former energy market analyst at investment firms, is foreign policy director of the Bipartisan Policy Center and author of Churchill's Promised Land: Zionism and Statecraft *(Yale University Press).*

Russia, and the natural gas market.

Natural gas was first discovered off Israel's coast in 1999, but the quantity was so small that until recently Israel was still contemplating importing natural gas from Russia by pipeline and liquid natural gas by tanker. Now Jerusalem's plans are beginning to change. The Leviathan field, discovered by a consortium led by Houston-based Noble Energy, is the world's largest offshore gas find in the past decade and vaults Israel into the ranks of the largest gas reserve holders in the world. (There are some indications that Leviathan might contain a world-scale oil deposit as well.)

Analysts believe that Leviathan could provide Israel with anywhere from 50-200 years of gas, at current levels of consumption, and more than meet growing demand for decades. In a few years Israel will no longer need gas from Egypt, which since 2008 has fueled 16 percent of Israel's electricity and provided 40 percent of its natural gas. Israel plans to continue to buy Egyptian gas for the purpose of diversification and political ties, but the recent cutoff following sabotage of the gas pipeline in the Sinai highlights the dangers of dependence on Cairo.

There is a green payoff, too, since Leviathan will eliminate Israel's demand for imported coal, which when burned emits more than twice as much carbon as natural gas. It will encourage further development of gas- and electricity-powered vehicles, and usher in tens of billions of dollars in infrastructure spending, much of which will need to come from foreign investment.

Leviathan's abundance means Israel could export natural gas later this decade, most likely to Europe, which will face a widening gap between supply and demand. The most economical way to export to Europe would be by converting the gas to liquified natural gas (LNG) and shipping it by tanker. An LNG terminal could be built on Israel's Mediterranean coast, float at sea, or be built in Cyprus.

Leviathan will enhance Israel's strategic position in at least two important ways. First, it should lead to improved ties with other nations beyond the region. LNG exports could encourage improved political ties with potential buyers, such as Greece and other European countries. Israeli relations with Cyprus have already become closer; the two nations are negotiating a maritime border demarcation and a joint agreement to develop an LNG facility.

Second, its greater wealth and energy independence will make Israel less vulnerable to outside pressure. This is important as its neighborhood becomes less hospitable. In the last few weeks, Lebanon has replaced its pro-Western prime minister with one supported by Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran and Syria. Egypt is the more serious issue. Following the current turmoil, Egypt is likely to become less friendly to Israel and could use energy exports as political leverage. Indeed, many of the opposition forces in Egypt oppose selling any gas to Israel. Gas independence will mean any such attempted Egyptian ploy would be fruitless. Israel could also become relatively less concerned about the policies of Turkey, which was once a close ally but has recently become closer to Iran and other radical forces in the region. Turkey was hoping to reap revenue from transshipping natural gas from Russia and Central Asia to Israel, but that's now off the table. And given Ankara's support for the Turkish Republic of Cyprus, Turkey was also undercut with the recent Israeli-Cypriot agreements.

Even so, it won't be entirely smooth sailing for Israel. According to the U.S. Geological Survey, Israel has a portion of the Levant Basin, but it is shared by Gaza, Lebanon, Cyprus, and the Turkey-dominated Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Lebanon and Israel have exchanged tough rhetoric over border demarcation, and Beirut has already taken its case to the U.N.—and that's not the worst of it. If there is another round of hostilities between Israel and Lebanon, a Hezbollah armed with tens of thousands of rockets might well target Israeli gas facilities.

Leviathan will also influence international relations through its impact on the global natural gas market. Israeli gas exports to Europe would compete with, and lead to reduced demand for, Russian gas, and thereby reduce Russia's political influence in European capitals. And since Israeli gas exports would be priced by the gas market, they would further erode Russia's beneficial gas export pricing, which has been uniquely pegged to oil prices, which are higher than gas prices. Reflecting Moscow's interest in protecting its pricing and markets, its gas giant, Gazprom, which once wanted to sell Israel gas through Turkey, now wants to buy part of Israel's gas fields. Reduced Russian influence in Europe is good for Israel's chief ally, the United States. Washington has sought to undercut Russia's dominant supply of natural gas to Europe, which is why it has supported construction of pipelines from Central Asia and the Middle East, like the proposed Nabucco line, that skirt Russia and Iran.

Not surprisingly, Leviathan has raised some domestic issues in Israel as well, most notably regarding taxation. Since the 1950s, Israel has held down tax rates on natural resource extraction, an added incentive to companies that dared to explore there. Now that huge natural energy resources have been discovered, the Israeli cabinet recently decided to raise the profit tax—prospectively and partially retroactively. If the Knesset votes in favor of this new tax regime, it could well lead to less gas being extracted and would pose a roadblock to further investment.

Despite some drawbacks and more details to be worked out, there's no mistaking the fact that the Leviathan find represents a landmark event in the history of the state of Israel. Perhaps after all, on the matter of energy, Moses deserves greater navigational credit. ♦

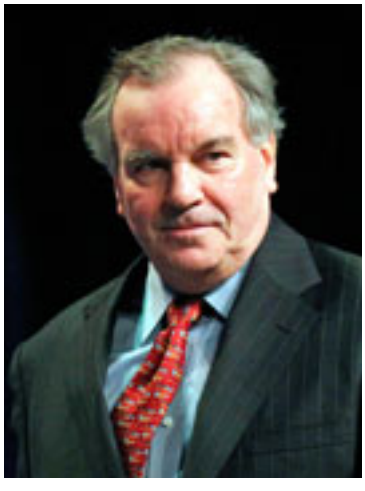
The Rahmbomb

And other Chicago players

By Joseph Epstein

In Chicago elections one's antipathies are always nicely divided. The division is usually between idealistic incompetence and corrupt quasi-competence. Corrupt quasi-competence, the way of the Daley dynasty, *père et fils*, for better and worse generally wins the day. The result has been that the city kept humming along, with all its messiness pushed under an ample carpet: horrible public schools, heavy debt, lots of street-gang murder in slum neighborhoods to go around. But beautiful trees were planted everywhere, and the snow got shoveled off the main thoroughfares. Chicago, the city that works—that is, if you don't look too closely.

For a brief patch, 1983-87, Chicago voters went for idealistic incompetence, and elected a black mayor, Harold Washington, who died in office. It wasn't, I think it fair to say, quite worth it. This was the period in Chicago known as the Council Wars, in which the 50 aldermen of the City Council, a group that makes Ali Baba's 40 thieves look like *l'Académie française*, was divided down the line between black and white, with ugly racial feeling right out in the open. Like an unsuccessful movie, the Council Wars left no one to root for, with scoundrels on both sides of the divide. Black or white, when a Chicago alderman speaks on television, one mentally crayons in the eye-patch, the hooped earring, the parrot on his shoulder.



Get me outta here: Mayor Daley

Mayor Richard M. Daley—Richie as opposed to his father Dick—came into office in 1989 and put an end to the Council Wars. He did so, one assumes, by assuring the aldermen that the spoils of big-city local government, in patronage and other emoluments, were plentiful enough to go around for everybody, and that war only got in the way of plundering. Richie has served six terms and been, on balance, a good mayor; not as good as Rudy Giuliani, who truly saved a city, but by Chicago lights, which is to say—yo, Benito!—he made the trains run on time.

Richie Daley is 68, he has a wife with cancer, his crest of popularity is now on the slide—enough, he must have concluded, is enough. He was a man of limited ambition, never wishing to rise to governor or U.S. senator, but content, like his father, with controlling his rich satrapy of Chicago. But the Chicago sky just now is darkening with chickens coming home to roost, with a billion-dollar budget deficit and an impressive $15 billion pension shortfall.

To help pay off some of the city's debt, Richie entered into a billion-dollar parking-meter contract with a private firm that has substantially raised the cost of street parking in Chicago and has everyone grumbling. Parking on Chicago streets now feels less like a convenience and more like a punishment. Cars in Chicago are towed at the drop of a snowflake. Cameras have been installed at traffic lights on busy intersections allowing the city to collect $100 fines for people crossing on yellow lights. With more and more major industry leaving Chicago, it now sometimes seems that the city's main source of revenue is traffic and parking fines.

So Daley will not leave office covered with glory but rather, one suspects, with the feeling that he is escaping just in time. Looking upon his exhausted face, one has a sense of a man awaiting a strong organic substance to hit a rudimentary air-conditioning device. Feets, one senses a voice within him crying, get me out of here!

Players ready to take Richie Daley's place have long been on the field. And a grim lot they are, giving diversity its usual good name for fairness and bad name for mediocrity: a black woman, two men of Hispanic ancestry, and a fellow, as my black basic-training sergeant Andrew Atherton used to say, of the Hebrew persuasion of well-publicized disputed residency riding in from the nation's capital.

Ladies first. Carol Moseley Braun, the lady in question, is the politician who, perhaps more than any other in

Joseph Epstein is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

The reinvented Rahm Emanuel, cool and serene, walks the streets of Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood last October.

recent years, blew it on a field of the greatest magnitude. She is the first black woman elected to the U.S. Senate. That fact alone ought to have made her statue-worthy, the subject of a rich PBS profile cranked up every year during Black History Month, along with those on Rosa Parks and Althea Gibson.

Instead, it's hard to find a mistake Moseley Braun didn't make when a senator. She paid a gentleman friend campaign manager $15,000 monthly out of campaign funds; she several times visited and supported a Nigerian dictator (Sani Abacha) who was executing dissidents; and she lost a reelection campaign to a weak Republican candidate named Peter Fitzgerald after being accused of various improprieties, among them abusing Medicaid for her ill mother, misappropriating campaign funds, comparing George Will to a Ku Klux Klansman, and other fine deeds. "Most imprudent," said a friend of mine, who was one of Moseley Braun's teachers at the University of Chicago Law School, "especially for a hack."

If Carol Moseley Braun was wretched in office, she's an even worse campaigner. She claims that she's the one to break the city's horrendous parking contract, which everyone else agrees is ironclad, with no word about where the billion dollars to repay the private vendor is to come from; she claimed to have advanced degrees from Harvard (oops—she doesn't); she blamed Rahm Emanuel, the front-runner in the mayoral campaign, for cutting and running after helping Barack Obama engineer the greatest midterm election debacle in history.

After being defeated for reelection to the Senate, Moseley Braun, when asked if she would seek political office again, told the press, "Read my lips. Not. Never. Nein. Nyet." Of her 1990 campaign, she said: "If I lose I'm going to retire from politics, practice law, and wear bright leather pants." A case, apparently, of growing too big for those britches. With a mournful looking Jesse Jackson hovering behind her as she makes her sometimes inchoate announcements to the press, Moseley Braun is running a campaign purely about race. Still, it is always amusing to see Jesse Jackson on yet another losing horse, crying, no doubt, wildfire.

Miguel del Valle, currently the city clerk, was the first candidate to announce for mayor when Richie Daley decided not to run. His early start has not helped him in any obvious way; so far as I know, no poll has shown him with more than 8 percent of the vote, and many with less.

PHOTOS: UPI / NEWSCOM

A professional politician—he was in the Illinois state senate for two decades—del Valle is a less than inspiring candidate: You have to imagine a Puerto Rican Mr. Peepers. He is for all the standard things: better schools, less crime, more transparency. (Will we ever again have a candidate who is happy with the current opacity?) And yet one feels that he speaks from the heart when he talks about the poor in Chicago feeling oppressed by their government. And it is true that a Chicagoan without clout or money is increasingly caught between the greed of the politicians and the rigid stupidity of the bureaucrats.

Gery Chico, son of a Mexican-American father and a Greek-Lithuanian mother and the candidate closest on the trail of Rahm Emanuel, has been politician and bureaucrat both. He has been president of Chicago Public Schools, president of the Chicago Park District, chairman of Chicago City Colleges, and from 1992 to 1995 was Richie Daley's chief of staff. His campaign has been chiefly about attacking Rahm Emanuel's ideas on tax cuts, but without great success. Chico is a political insider, with a law firm in which several members are registered as city hall lobbyists. The aldermen, one feels confident, could live very comfortably with him. And why not? Gery Chico is a company man in a company town.

Here, perhaps, we come to the crux of the matter. Rahm Emanuel, though scarcely an outsider to politics, may be too large a figure for the Chicago aldermen. For a good while there has been whispering that the aldermen, chief among them a Southwest side figure named Edward Burke, have been behind the move to disqualify Emanuel from the mayoral race owing to his not meeting the residency requirement. Ed Burke, Irish, from a political family, wearing bespoke suits and fancying hundred-dollar haircuts and designer glasses, has been on the Chicago City Council since shortly after the reign of Julian the Apostate. Burke's candidate in the mayoral election—no surprise here—is Gery Chico.

One of the delights of this mayoral campaign is watching the performance of what one assumes is the currently highly self-suppressed Rahm Emanuel. The volatile pol, famous for his temper and foul mouth—"feisty," I believe, is the favored euphemism—has been coming across cool and serene, positively rabbinical. (At a roast of Emanuel, Barack Obama recounted that, working at a delicatessen as a boy, Rahm had lost a good part of the middle finger of his right hand, which "rendered him practically mute.") In commercials he speaks of his sadness at viewing poor children going off to Chicago public schools with "no hope in their eyes," and how he is intent upon changing that. During what must have been the infuriating legal battle over his residency status, he appeared, with impressive *sangfroid*, before the Chicago election board committee and the screeching questions of the local press as if he were auditioning for the part of Father Flanagan.

When Emanuel appears in his often-shown television commercials, I think of him as the Rahmbomb, after the great 12th-century Jewish philosopher Maimonides, who, in an anagram of the initials of his name in Hebrew, was known as the Rambam. Rahmbomb because one is waiting for one of those famous f-bombs of Emanuel's to explode on a tape or a microphone he might mistakenly have thought was turned off.

On the other hand, the one with the middle finger intact, there is no reason for Emanuel to explode. Once the residency business was out of the way, his campaign became smooth sailing, and on a luxurious yacht. With a campaign chest of $12 million, at last reporting, the Rahmbomb had three times more money to spend than all his opponents combined.

(Emanuel, taking a brief break from politics between 1999 and 2002, quickly accumulated a fortune of his own—estimated at $16 or $17 million—while working for an investment banking firm called Wasserstein Perella. Bill Daley, Richie's younger brother, who has taken over Emanuel's post as Obama's chief of staff, before starting his new job had to divest himself of more than $7 million worth of stock from his days working for JPMorgan Chase. Amid all their high public service and good works, these boys always manage to connect for a little jackpot of $8 or $15 million of their own.)

With his vast campaign funds, with his pathetic field of competitors, does the Rahmbomb have anything special in mind for the city he desires to govern? If so, he has thus far pretty much kept it to himself. Like everyone else, he lisps in clichés: He is going to improve the schools, get crime off the streets, relieve the municipal debt. He claims to be able to accomplish that last by streamlining the city's tax system and increasing efficiency among city workers. (Old joke: Why does it takes 14 Chicago Streets and Sanitation Workers to change a light bulb? Answer: Because 13 of them, after having someone sign in for them, are at work doing business with the city at their privately owned asphalt companies.)

Why does the Rahmbomb want to be mayor of Chicago? Naturally no mention is made of his enjoying power of the kind that being mayor of a Democratic stronghold like Chicago confers. Might sheer egotism backed by effrontery have anything to do with it? Not in his version. In his version he loves the city. (He actually grew up outside it, on the North Shore, and went to New Trier High School, one of the most academically competitive

The mayoral candidates, from left to right: Rahm Emanuel, Gery Chico, Carol Moseley Braun, and Miguel del Valle

AP

secondary schools in the country, where the students speak of their days as Preparation H: preparing, that is, for Harvard. Emanuel made it only to Sarah Lawrence.) He suffers from acute idealism, he tells us, learned from his pediatrician father and psychiatric social worker mother. The man wants to do good. His religion, he tells us, has reinforced this idealism.

Emanuel's being Jewish is a question of genuine interest. Chicago isn't a very Jewish city. With roughly a quarter million Jews, the city is only 3 percent or so Jewish. Apart from Jewish aldermen elected from the city's two or three heavily Jewish wards, Jews have never taken an outfront position in local politics. Powerful Jewish pols such as Jacob Arvey, the man behind Adlai Stevenson's career in Illinois politics, functioned as *éminences grises*. A Jewish mayor is something else again.

Chicago is a city of peasants, or, more precisely, people of peasant background: Poles, Italians, Irish, Greeks, blacks. Peasants, I think it fair to say, don't *get* Jews. And the Rahmbomb is an anti-Semite's dream. He is wealthy, aggressive, he even took ballet lessons, for God's sake; all the anti-Semitic stereotypes are in place, except for his not being highly cerebral.

Jews, a character in the movie *Barney's Version* says, are not more intelligent than anyone else; they are just more wary. Whether Chicago does or doesn't elect Rahm Emanuel its mayor will, either way, constitute another little chapter in the history of anti-Semitism in America. American universities that once strictly enforced quotas against Jewish students have now all had Jewish presidents, almost all of whom, let it be said, have shown themselves quite as mediocre as their predecessors. Has the time come when the country is also able to support Jewish politicians quite as mediocre as their predecessors? Let us hope so.

To win the office, the Rahmbomb must get above 50 percent, or be forced into a runoff with the second leading vote-getter. As things stand at the moment, it appears that he will win in a canter, without having to break a sweat, and the chances are good, too, that he will be able to avoid a runoff. The sweati ng—the real *schvitzing*, to use the Yiddish word, which conveys so much more—will come only after he is elected and has to deal with plug-ugly backroom pols, recalcitrant union workers, and enormous budget deficits, at which point, expect many a bomb from the Rahm. ♦

'Shelley in the Baths of Caracalla' (1845) by Joseph Severn

Free to Write

Understanding the marketplace of ideas.

BY JAMES SEATON

The last few decades have taught the rulers of the People's Republic of China that their most effective poverty-reducing tool is the market, while Arab countries now fear a nuclear Iran far more than they ever did Israel. But capitalism remains the source of the world's ills, according to the leading theorists in the new superdiscipline of cultural studies, which on many campuses has supplanted the study of literary works.

Literature and the Economics of Liberty
Spontaneous Order in Culture
edited by Paul A. Cantor and Stephen Cox
Von Mises Institute, 509 pp., $25

Once books like René Wellek and Austin Warren's *Theory of Literature* had chapter titles like "The Mode of Existence of a Literary Work of Art." Today the most recent additions to the prestigious *Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* include titles like "Sex in Public" and "Empire." ("Sex in Public" has nothing to say about literature but does opinionate about economics as well as sexuality: Its coauthors reject what they call "free-market ideology" while buttressing their condemnation of bourgeois

GUSTAVO TOMSICH / CORBIS

James Seaton, professor of English at Michigan State, is the editor of George Santayana's The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy *and* Character and Opinion in the United States.

"heteronormative forms" by claiming that such "forms" are somehow "central to the accumulation of capital.") Meanwhile, in "Empire," Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri oppose "the current ideology of corporate capital and the world market" and call for a new perspective on the regime in Iran, asserting that "insofar as the Iranian revolution was a powerful rejection of the world market, we might think of it as the first postmodernist revolution."

If there are any current theoretical perspectives that are both relevant to the study of works of literature and not hostile to either bourgeois (or middle-class) values and attitudes or the free market, you would not know it from the *Norton Anthology*. Fortunately, there is another anthology, *Literature and the Economics of Liberty*, edited by Paul Cantor and Stephen Cox, and it demonstrates convincingly that it is not only possible to write perceptively about literary texts without condemning the bourgeoisie, but also that the ideas of free-market economists can provide a better stimulus to literary criticism than Marxism ever has.

Literature and the Economics of Liberty bears the significant subtitle *Spontaneous Order in Culture*. Friedrich Hayek famously argued that the free market is an example of an institution that, like language or the common law, develops its own rules and structure as a result of the interaction of countless individuals over time, achieving results far beyond what could be accomplished through any plan, no matter how wise or well-intentioned. Free markets, like languages, thus exemplify not anarchy but "spontaneous order." Well-written poems, plays, and novels, on the other hand, are typically the result of a single individual who sees to it that each part of the work contributes to the overall design. It is not surprising, then, that those who derive their notion of excellence from works of literature would find it hard to appreciate the workings of the market, where everybody tries to satisfy his own needs, and nobody seems to be concerned about the whole. A socialist economy, where planners organize all economic activity in the interests of the whole, seems much more intellectually and aesthetically satisfying than the market, even if the latter generates wealth and the former poverty.

On the evidence of Cantor/Cox's anthology, however, it seems that authors have been much less likely than critics to confuse aesthetics and economics. Paul Cantor's careful analysis of Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair* uses the kind of close textual analysis associated with the New Critics to persuasively demonstrate that Jonson's dramatic presentation of the "fair" or

Walt Whitman and butterfly

BETTMANN / CORBIS

market indeed "exposes all the faults of an unregulated marketplace," but also "more profoundly subjects its would-be regulators to a withering critique." In another essay, Cantor demonstrates conclusively that Percy Bysshe Shelley, usually considered the archetype of the radical poet, was an economic radical mainly in his objections to "deficit financing," which Shelley held "largely responsible for the economic woes of the English people." As Cantor puts it, "Shelley's radicalism takes the form of advocating free market rather than socialist policies." Shelley was also, Cantor observes, a champion of the gold standard, defending it "as a way of protecting common people against the currency manipulations of a financial elite."

Like Shelley, Walt Whitman is almost always thought of as a thoroughgoing radical, an idealist who could not help but be as opposed to capitalism as any professor. Thomas Peyser concedes that "in cultural matters, Whitman does indeed share many of the views of today's cultural left" but adds that the poet's "political and economic views" were decidedly on the right. For Whitman, business and even a "maniacal appetite for wealth" are finally beneficent:

> I perceive clearly that the extreme business energy, and this almost maniacal appetite for wealth prevalent in the United States, are parts of amelioration and progress, indispensably needed to prepare the very results I demand.

And if Whitman approved of successful businessmen, he seemed to feel what Peyser describes as "a certain disdain for people who fail to prosper once they have been unshackled from feudal restraints." In *Democratic Vistas*, Whitman asserts that democratic society depends on "the safety and endurance of the aggregate of its middling property owners," while in contrast "democracy looks with suspicious, ill-satisfied eye upon the very poor, the ignorant, and on those out of business."

The loose structure of Whitman's free verse masterpiece, *Song of Myself*, is analogous, Peyser suggests, to the kind of order Hayek finds in a market where buyers and sellers pursue their own aims without reference to an overall plan. *Song of Myself*, "a compilation of discrete textual units that, while displaying ample signs of organization within themselves, are juxtaposed in a way that defies the strictures of rhetorical or thematic cohesion," makes no attempt to achieve the formal unity of a sonnet or a novel like *Madame Bovary*. Peyser finds a parallel to the "spontaneous order" of the marketplace in the catalogues or lists so central to Whitman's style: "great lists that aspire to capture the astonishing variety of America without either insisting we see that variety as tending towards a univocal purpose or despairing at the sheer incoherence of phenomena."

Unlike Walt Whitman and *pace* some of her academic interpreters, Willa Cather had no truck with the cultural left, but like Whitman she appreciated the value of free markets

and American capitalism. Alexandra Bergson in *O Pioneers!* (the title is from Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*) climbs from poverty to the ownership of a successful farm, in the process indicating, as Stephen Cox points out, her understanding of "the modern capitalist theory of value" (in technical terms "the principle of subjective value and the closely related principle of marginal utility"). Her father was an intelligent man, but he was hampered by his (in the novel's words) "Old-World belief that land, in itself, is desirable," while her unperceptive brother Oscar cannot see the limitations of what Cox calls "the equally old-world belief that labor is desirable and valuable in itself." Thus *O Pioneers!* is, among other things, "a textbook exposition of capitalist theory and practice, viewed from a perspective that is highly unusual even today . . . the capitalist perspective."

Alexandra Bergson, unlike the radicals in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, had the intelligence and the determination to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the free market. Conrad's would-be revolutionaries, on the other hand, blame capitalism for their poverty and obscurity. Their opposition to capitalism—and not theirs alone, Conrad implies—has little to do with compassion for the poor and much with resentment at their personal failure to achieve the power and fame they feel is their due. As Cox comments, the malcontents of *The Secret Agent* want to replace capitalism with "a social system that is congenial to themselves, a system that will give them the respect and authority they could never obtain in any imaginable free market in such commodities."

Cantor/Cox's case for the relevance of "the economics of liberty" is all the stronger because they wisely refrain from making the sort of grandiose claims to all-encompassing insight that have long been a specialty of Marxists. They point out that "one of the differences between Austrian economics and Marxism is that [Austrian economics] does not present itself as a master science, with an underlying explanation for all phenomena." Cantor/Cox emphasize that the analyses offered "are based on detailed, careful readings of individual texts treated in their integrity." Their collection is "fundamentally a book of literary criticism," and if they call upon "the principles of Austrian economics," it is in large part because those principles when examined "begin to sound a lot like common sense: human beings are free and make their choices as individuals." Thus, Cantor writes, instead of "substituting the critic's understanding for the author's, an Austrian approach would look to understand an author as he understood himself."

Parodoxically, it appears that the perspective offered by free-market, or "Austrian," economics has the effect of allowing literary criticism to regain the disciplinary integrity it loses when it is absorbed by Marxism or by Marxist-influenced "cultural studies." Yes, Ludwig von Mises's "praxeology" does present itself as "a universal explanation of human action," as contributor Darío Fernández-Morera puts it; but on the evidence of this anthology, resorting to "praxeology" results in nothing worse than redefining economic terms to make common sense observations. Thus Cox writes that, according to Mises, "the quest for profit is universal," which at first seems to imply a narrow view of human motivation, but he adds that "enjoyment of any kind can amount to profit."

Hayek's conception of "spontaneous order" is no doubt a conception whose full importance is yet to be appreciated, but perhaps the most important accomplishment of *Literature and the Economics of Liberty* is its demonstration that it is possible for literary critics to discuss works of literature with sensitivity and insight without wholesale condemnation of middle-class mores and capitalism. This sounds like mere common sense, but in the era of postmodernism, moving up to the intellectual level of common sense is a signal achievement. ♦

B&A

Web and Circus

The Internet isn't necessarily freedom's friend.

BY LUKE ALLNUTT

It's easy to fall into the trap of seeing authoritarian regimes as somnolent beasts: sluggish, reactive, and at times ridiculous, with their fetish for uniforms and propaganda. More often than not, however, the opposite is true. One of the themes running through Evgeny Morozov's *The Net Delusion* is that it is dynamism and willingness to change rather than stagnation that allows authoritarian regimes to survive.

The Net Delusion
The Dark Side of Internet Freedom
by Evgeny Morozov
PublicAffairs, 432 pp., $27.95

That ability to adapt is seen clearly in the way repressive regimes have dealt with the Internet. Early Internet theorists, often with their 1960s libertarian ideals, thought the web would eventually make nation-states obsolete and bring people-powered democracy to the world. Their Internet was cosmopolitan and liberal; they were using it for good and they expected the world to do the same. And it wasn't just the left. Many on the right, buoyed by America's role in helping bring down the Berlin Wall, saw the Internet as a tool of democracy promotion. Blogging was the new *samizdat*: Tear down that firewall! In the summer of 2009, the initial breathless coverage in the West about the role of social media in Iran's "Twitter Revolution" was the

Luke Allnutt is editor in chief of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's English website.

apex of that hubris, which cut across political divisions.

But rather than paving the path to freedom, Morozov, a blogger and journalist originally from Belarus, argues that authoritarian regimes haven't just managed to tame the Internet but have used it to bolster their regimes. For every anecdote of how the Internet or digital media have helped activists working in repressive regimes, as we have seen in Tunisia and Egypt, there is a sinister flip side. Hundreds of thousands of Colombians used Facebook to organize protests against FARC rebels in 2008, but governments can also use social-networking sites to infiltrate activists' networks. The Iranian webspace is full of blogs, but they aren't all written by modern-day Václav Havels; some are the work of hard-line clerics or members of the brutal Basij militia. While activists can use cell-phone cameras to film ballot box-stuffing and spread the videos through social-networking sites, their governments can also reap the benefits of digitization. These days surveillance is easier and cheaper, and more people can be spied on than ever before.

Where there is censorship, it is getting more sophisticated. Morozov points out that censorship in the future could work much like behavioral advertising: tracking our paths on the web in order to build up complex personality profiles. Browsing could become highly personalized. An impressionable young Iranian student with a taste for underground hip-hop might be kept away from international news websites, but a commodities trader might be given access, as her work could suffer without it. And rather than shrinking in fear at the power of social media and blogging, repressive governments are embracing it. In China there is a cyber-army of 280,000 pro-government propagandists known as the "50 cent party," who are paid to comment on articles and in web forums. Twitter isn't just the domain of Silicon Valley super-users but also Hugo Chávez, who has more than a million followers.

Sometimes the weapons used by the authorities are subtler still. Morozov writes that "while we thought the Internet might give us a generation of 'digital renegades,' it may have given us a generation of 'digital captives,' who know how to find comfort online, whatever the political realities of the physical world." Thus in Vietnam, web users can't access Amnesty International reports, but they can view as much pornography as they want. In authoritarian Belarus, Internet service providers "run their own servers full of illegal movies and music" available for free. The government looks the other way. If the kids have ripped versions of the latest Hollywood releases they are less likely to take to the streets, or so the logic goes. With the exception of basket cases such as North Korea, authoritarian regimes can end up looking more like Huxley's *Brave New World* than Orwell's *1984*, where instead of sustaining themselves through sadism and lies they rely on cheap entertainment for the masses.

ATTA KENARE / AFP / GETTY IMAGES / NEWSCOM

Internet café, Tehran

For all *The Net Delusion*'s sound logic, the problem (as the author admits) is, "The Internet does matter, but we simply don't know how it matters." Given the age of the Internet, we are still in the land of conjecture. A recent report by the U.S. Institute of Peace, "Blogs and Bullets: New Media in Contentious Politics," had the same conclusion: "The sobering answer is that, fundamentally, no one knows. To this point, little research has sought to estimate the causal effects of new media in a methodologically rigorous fashion, or to gather the rich data needed to establish causal influence." We simply don't know yet if a grass-roots democracy movement will grow out of an illegal file-sharing forum, or whether "liking" a cause on Facebook could actually detract from offline campaigning.

For policymakers, this is a worthy and nuanced take on the value of the United States promoting an Internet freedom agenda. Morozov takes the wind out of the sails of the alliance of geeks and wonks who "endow the Internet with nearly magical qualities; for them, it's the ultimate cheat sheet that could help the West finally defeat its authoritarian adversaries." And while the author admits he used to be "intoxicated with cyber-utopianism," he does not write with the phony fervor and fundamentalism of the reborn. Nor does he argue that, because the Internet can be used by both aid workers and al Qaeda, the United States should retreat into isolationism or abandon promoting Internet freedom. Rather, he advocates a policy of "cyber-realism" where, instead of fetishizing the Internet, we see it as "an ally in achieving specific policy objectives."

As the Internet is treated less like a dark art by those in power, and as our understanding of its benefits and limitations grows, that "cyber-realist" perspective is likely to prevail. ♦

B&A

War of the Moms

This battle is waged in the absence of morality.

BY ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER

If Amy Chua didn't get exactly the daughters she wanted, she certainly got her wish as a writer: to have a bestselling book and her name on everyone's lips. The cause of her cause célèbre is her parenting memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (Penguin, 256 pp., $25.95), which

Amy Chua

chronicles her success and failures at child-rearing by Chinese rules.

The laws she enumerates have caused all the hubbub because essentially Chua pits her parenting against a particular type of upper-middle-class-to-wealthy American brand of child-rearing. As opposed to the overindulgent, squishy, undisciplined, and too-focused-on-self-esteem model, Chua puts forth her "Chinese Mother" model, which is highly disciplined and highly demanding. Chua's daughters were forbidden from play dates and sleepovers, there was no television and no video games, they had to get straight As, and they were expected to play an instrument (one that their mother selected), which they were forced to practice hours upon hours a day.

Chua's idea of pushing her girls to be their best selves included rejecting self-made birthday cards that she deemed unworthy and forcing her preteen daughter to rewrite a eulogy for her grandmother because it lacked "insight." This parenting regimen worked perfectly with elder daughter Sophia, Chua tells us—so well, in fact, that the obedient daughter made it to Carnegie Hall. The same discipline and demands for excellence worked less well with younger daughter Louisa, and are what caused Chua to be "humbled by a thirteen-year-old," as the dust jacket asserts.

Chua says that her model is based on the upbringing she got from her immigrant Chinese parents, according to which her job as mother is not to be loved or liked by her children but to get them to be as accomplished as possible, according to Chua's own specific definition.

When the *Wall Street Journal* last month published an excerpt from the book entitled "Why Chinese Mothers Are Superior," a firestorm erupted as thousands of responses—both pro and con, but mostly con—were posted on the *Journal* website, along with pieces in every major newspaper and blog you can think of. Criticism of Amy Chua has covered a wide spectrum, but the piece by Ayelet Waldman ("In Defense of the Guilty, Ambivalent Preoccupied Western Mom"), also in the *Journal*, is worth highlighting.

Waldman's retort to Chua essentially consisted of pointing out that she is a much more selfish parent than Chua (something she illustrated nearly constantly in her 2009 *Bad Mother*), that Asian girls have a higher rate of suicide than other young women, and (most important) that kids will inevitably evolve into who they are with or without a parent's help. Waldman's proof is that she has a daughter with dyslexia who decided on her own to work hard and overcome her disability and did so without any of the prodding, insulting, cajoling, etc., that characterizes Chua's parenting. Or any happy encouragement from Waldman or her husband, novelist Michael Chabon. In the end, Waldman suggests that every form of parenting has its place.

"Amy Chua and I both understand that our job as mothers is to be the type

Ayelet Waldman

of tigress that each of our different cubs needs," she concludes.

But Chua and Waldman aren't actually on two different sides of an argument about how best to raise children. Though these women may disagree about methods, they are otherwise completely in sync, since both make no place for the most basic role of any mother or father: moral guide. Whether you are strict or permissive, a parent's role is to teach children the definition of virtue and how to be a good person, a moral citizen. Children have to learn the value of good behavior, honesty, generosity, patience, tolerance, respect for elders and authority, love of country, and, yes, hard work. Some of these concepts will

GEORGE RUHE / THE NEW YORK TIMES; MICHAEL A. JONES / ZUMA PRESS / NEWSCOM

Abby Wisse Schachter is editor of the New York Post*'s politics blog, Capitol Punishment.*

come from their formal education (one hopes), but many of these ideals have to be transmitted from parent to child.

Parents are supposed to provide shelter, food, and clothing for their kids. It is also in the unwritten handbook that teaching children morality and goodness is required in order to generate a healthy, productive society. Amy Chua wants her kids to be accomplished musicians and high-performing students. But what about their moral character? She's got nothing to say about that. Ayelet Waldman says she wants her kids to follow their bliss and be the best they can be. But if they become their best nihilistic, lawbreaking selves, will she be grateful? Since Waldman writes so often about her progressive politics and anti-Zionism, it's worth wondering whether her most horrific nightmare might involve one of her four children moving to Israel or becoming a Republican. The same question can be asked of Amy Chua, a liberal Yale law professor married to a Jewish liberal Yale law professor.

According to recent research, how you behave as a parent does not guarantee a specific outcome. But Chua and Waldman might reject that notion, believing instead that their approaches will produce particular results. In Chua's case, she's probably correct, since dedication to a musical instrument like the piano or violin will more often than not result in proficiency. But leaving out greater moral life lessons might just result in a less soulful musician. ♦

B&A

The Duchampian Myth

The shock of the new or the old confidence game?

BY STEVEN OZMENT

Wayne Andersen's new biography of Marcel Duchamp is a journey into darkness, and a successful effort to expose and pop the bubbles that were Duchamp and the postmodern art world he created. Already on the title page, he warns the reader of what lies ahead:

> This book was written for mature readers at an adult age and contains words and expressions that are suppressed as obscene wherever English or French is spoken and also includes quotations … that are pornographic.

On the first page of his introduction he lets us know what he thinks of the artist and his legacy: "Duchamp's gift to artists was comparable to the Marquis de Sade's gift to sadists—relief from formal restraints, accountability, guilt, and shame." And on the first page of the prologue, Andersen introduces the reader to the powerful gatekeepers of the postmodern art world, the men and women who collectively unleashed Duchamp on the 20th century. Citing a December 2004 editorial from the *Guardian Weekly* that proclaimed "Urinal Comes Out on Top," he reports a survey of 500 international artists, critics, curators, and art dealers, who confirmed that Duchamp's urinal, named "Fountain," still remained at the end of the 20th century what it had been at its beginning: "The world's most influential piece of modern art." Having fully warned, but not completely armored, his readers for what lies ahead, Andersen promises to give them the book-ride of their collective lives:

> Before bringing you into the body of the book, let me toss a few tacks on the footpath so your going will be with caution. The approach I take to Marcel Duchamp is radical, too radical for the run-of the-mill art historian, or timid critic of modern art. Reading this book will be a test of [your] tolerance, or forbearance, as the case may be.

Marcel Duchamp (1887-1968) first caught the imagination of the art world in 1912 with a cubist artwork entitled "Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2." Although a mesmerizing scene of rotating, metallic plates, no nude was anywhere to be seen, suggesting art that promised more than it delivered. By 1917, "Fountain" had put Duchamp's art in flight from the mainstream of the entire history of art. It would remain the most famous of his so-called "readymades," by which he meant preexisting, everyday items that caught his fancy and were deemed by him to be every bit as art-worthy as creations made directly by the hands of professional artists.

When the urinal was first exhibited under the name of "Fountain," Duchamp did not put his own name on it; rather, he attributed it to an anonymous R. Mutt, who was ultimately traced to the popular cartoon strip, *Mutt and Jeff*. In an etching that humanized and elaborated on "Fountain," Duchamp turned the urinal into a live, nude woman's torso: a hot "ready maid" (pun intended) with widely spread legs! Such crude, sex-obsessed art would henceforth be the chosen one's way of "unsettling the conventions of [modern] art," and although many contemporaries were slow to notice, as soon as the initial shock effect of such free-ranging art receded, Duchamp's readymades quickly reverted to what they had always been: "Urinal" was first and last just a pragmatic, sanitary place to pee, with zero artistic value.

Among other fond readymades were a coat rack Duchamp nailed to the floor of his flat, a hat rack readied for the wall, a free-standing bicycle wheel, and a bottle rack. And in a completely different kind of readymade, Duchamp put forth

Marcel Duchamp
The Failed Messiah
by Wayne Andersen
Editions Fabriart, 400 pp., $45

Steven Ozment, McLean Professor of Ancient and Modern History at Harvard, is the author of A Mighty Fortress: A New History of the German People *and a forthcoming biography of Lucas Cranach.*

Paintings by Duchamp on exhibition in Paris, 2008

STEPHANE DE SAKUTIN / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

an intimate piece of himself: a splotch of ejaculate, bronzed over and framed. The Philadelphia Museum displayed it as a token of the new art world, soon to be joined by other prestigious museums and galleries eager to embrace and leverage the new, lucrative Duchampian art world. Although hard to believe, here was the man and the entrepreneurs who "brought modern art to its death and keyed in such ill-begotten, post-modern new art."

Wayne Andersen writes both to expose and hold accountable the artists and curators who ushered in the post-Abstract Expressionist art world that still flourishes today under the Duchamp brand. It was not the critics, he tells us, but the curators and academic experts who made Marcel Duchamp "a messianic anti-master, whose nihilism was eagerly adopted as artistic freedom." A total media-made man, Duchamp never met an art curator he could not seduce. When he exhibited the urinal as "Fountain," and the experts fell to their knees before it, the most powerful art work of the 20th century was born by the artist's fiat! Here was a dark messenger with well-positioned enablers, none of whom had any sense of history, each and all "seeking originality for its own sake" in an undefined era whose creed was anything goes.

Andersen's Duchamp is cursed with "stunted maturity." He grew up on the facile, raw side of life, his dearest friends and companions being illustrators and cartoonists, pranksters and playboys. He read little and was a "vulgar man with a dirty mind—sexual, not sensuous." At a time when art criticism also became "vulnerable to the deconstruction of traditional values across the humanities," writes Andersen, Duchamp appeared as "a destroyer of the formal and aesthetic aspects of art history."

> Rolling in like a ground fog through critical theories defining and explicating post-modern art, Duchampian waves of mediocrity engulfed Academia from the University of Paris, to Columbia and Berkeley in the 1960s. The spreading, common belief in his having come into the world as a "Messiah" to liberate artists from oppressive traditions of art history became a "messianic trap of salvation in an era that had thrown away critical thinking and peer review."

Despite his lack of artistic production between the 1930s and '60s, impressionable curators, academics, and media mavens raised Duchamp to legendary status. Art magazines and university art galleries "figured importantly" in his ascent. Even mighty Yale, whose experts should have known better, exhibited one of his store-bought readymades: the one and only Duchamp snow shovel! In an undefined era where today is always the first day of one's life, Duchamp studies compared the new Messiah favorably to Michelangelo. How mind-boggling it must have been for youthful students to imagine Duchamp's "Fountain" side by side with the *Pietà*!

Duchamp had little formal training as an artist, and painting was never a great fire in his belly. A healthy child, he survived boarding school and did well in mathematics. He excelled in drawing (mostly landscapes and town settings) but did not graduate with honors from his lycée. After his schooling, he joined his brothers in Paris, where he worked as a commercial artist, married briefly, but sired no children. Easily bored, he spent the greater part of his time in billiard parlors and at chess matches which, together with cartooning, were his passions. Gifted at drawing, he made cartoons the staple of his repertoire: He loved visual and verbal puns, silly word games, and light adolescent play. Typical of his cartoons and revealing of the man, he never addressed social or political life, nor showed any interest in the distant past. Under the strong influence of the Dadaists, Duchamp's artwork dwelt on "salacious, humorous sex that deprecated women, children, and old men."

An art historian who has been criticized for letting Freud overhaul his subjects, Andersen treats Duchamp's struggle with gender identity in a manner that turns out to be persuasive and fair. He presents remarkable photographs of Duchamp's long blond wigs and cross-dressing as he assumed the fictitious figure of "Rose Sélevy." Nor does Andersen cross any forbidden lines in his analysis of Duchamp's attraction to *un*attractive women "in an effort to ward off an [unwanted] aspect of himself." As Andersen puts it: "He could not tolerate the aesthetic of the feminine. . . . By fantasizing himself to be a seductive woman, he could master the threat of feminine beauty by incorporating the sensual into himself."

Out and about in the real world, Andersen's Duchamp spent the greater part of his time loafing around and goofing off with his Dadaesque buddies. Diversions progressively displaced art in his life; but chess and cartoons did not make him rich. Throughout much of his adult life he was supported by women. In 1927 he married Lydie Sarazin-Lavassor, strictly for support and domination: She was 24, upper-crust, large boned—and considerably overweight by the standards of the 1920s. Duchamp saw in her "a hapless 'ready-maid' of convenience and financially well endowed." Before and after the marriage, he was preoccupied with his soulmate, the photographer Man Ray, and also had a lover in the background.

Andersen traces Duchamp's degenerating behavior to the influence of Dadaism and describes him as "its supreme avatar." Originally a progressive, international movement against war, the Dadaists became increasingly cynical and rejected everything definitive in the reigning culture. Andersen describes them as "reactionary minimalists, fanciers of absurd words and talk that reduces quickly to babbling." In selecting weapons to degrade society's standards of civil behavior, the Dadaists chose "idiotic buffoonery and obscene performances that disrupted the complacency of traditional values and exposed the camouflage of bourgeois traits of corruption." Dada poetry readings were meant to "bewilder, provoke, insult, and confuse," and Dadaists believed that the destruction of society was the only way to regenerate it. Duchamp praised Dadaism as "a sort of nihilism to which I am still very sympathetic. It was a way to get out of a state of mind—to avoid being influenced by one's immediate environment, or by the past: to get away from clichés—to get free. . . . Dada was . . . a purgative."

Paired together, Duchamp and Man Ray were the Dadaesque playboys of the modern Western World. They lived within and promoted an art world of degraded women, pedophiliac sadism, and crude pornography. In an enormous bibliography over a century, Duchamp scholars have praised his gadgets (among them, rudimentary Precision Optics), touting them as works of genius "comparable to the machines Leonardo da Vinci and the Wright brothers designed." But Andersen declares them "fakery" and grimaces at the very thought of a Leonardo Duchamp. He also points out that Duchamp's last two major works—"The Large Glass" (1915-23), a seeming exercise in abstract doodling, and the "enigmatic assemblage" "Étant donnés" (1946-66), an artwork that lets the viewer see whatever he wishes—were in development for 20 years, longer than it took Michelangelo to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. And yet never quite finished either!

Marcel Duchamp, 1927

BETTMANN / CORBIS

The 1959-60 Surrealist Exhibition in Paris presented "a sensory overload" of artworks dedicated to just such specimens of Eros. Duchamp was one of two designers and directors, and its deluxe catalogue was housed within a green cardboard box displaying items for the viewing public: "The Padlock of Chastity," an intimate photograph of a nude woman, apparently obtained from a mortuary for the poor and indigent deceased; a dismembered and grotesquely recombined adult, female doll; Duchamp's contribution, a playful pair of his and hers potholders featuring male and female genitalia; and a faux "cannibal feast" adapted from a story of the Marquis de Sade, displaying a live, naked female as the sacrificial centerpiece.

Andersen closes with a two-page bibliography of his own, a firm slamming of the door on a Duchampian myth that remains alive and influential in art circles. He describes that myth in these words: "A ground covering vine that puts down roots as it grows always in the same soil, some of the runners seeing the light above their leaves, but hardly any of them turning upward and growing towards it." ♦

B&A

Scared Scareless

The brain can only fear so much. **BY JOE QUEENAN**

A few weeks back I was coming out of a Knicks game at Madison Square Garden when I happened to glance up and see a massive, brightly lit billboard promoting a TV show about pawnbrokers. The pawnbrokers were really scary-looking, so scary-looking that the friend I was with didn't even want to look up at them, because they were just so, so scary—and he is a bit of a wuss. After we said goodbye, I started walking up Eighth Avenue toward Grand Central Station. On the way, I passed a series of posters advertising an upcoming hip-hop concert. The young men depicted on the posters had lots of tattoos and chains and sunglasses and muscles, and they were really scary-looking. A couple of blocks up I eyeballed another billboard advertising

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

an upcoming action movie. The guy in the promo was incredibly scary-looking. So was his costar. I mean, really scary, very gangsta.

Walking along 42nd Street, I passed quite a few scary-looking guys, a couple of whom tried to make eye contact with me—presumably to scare me. The same thing happened when I got on the train that went through Yonkers on my way home to Tarrytown. There are always scary-looking guys going to Yonkers, just as there are always scary-looking guys going to the Bronx. (No, not Derek Jeter.) When I got to the station in Tarrytown, I grabbed a cab and headed home because I didn't want to walk past the bar where the scary guys hang out. As soon as I had my front door safely locked behind me, I turned on SportsCenter where I saw some really scary footage of Ray Lewis and Clay Matthews and Brian Urlacher and James Harrison. Each and every one of them was terrifying enough to scare the bejesus out of the average person. Even if the person in question was kind of scary himself.

But all of a sudden, I noticed something incredibly strange: These guys didn't scare me anymore. They just didn't. I'm not saying that they weren't scary—they were!—but all I'm saying is that, for whatever reason, that part of the brain that tells you to be scared in the presence of genuinely scary guys was no longer functioning properly. As my thoughts drifted back to the images of the dangerous-looking rappers and intimidating pawnbrokers, and then even further back to the TV shows featuring the worrisome ice truckers and the frightening ax men and the daunting bounty hunters and the menacing wrestlers and the sinister boxers and the threatening free safeties and the malevolent drug dealers and Judy Woodruff—all of whom were stone-cold scary—I realized that something bizarre and utterly unforeseen had occurred: I had physically lost my ability to be scared by any of these scaremongers.

Let me reiterate: It wasn't that they weren't scary. Oh, no! But as a friend, a very successful psychologist, explained it to me when I mentioned my situation the next day, I had lived long enough that the circuits in both my neocortex and hypothalamus, the parts of the brain that ought to tell me to be scared by all these scary guys, had literally burned out from overuse. "A hundred years ago," my friend explained,

Cher, 1986

Before television and the movies and the Internet and Cher, the average male might only meet a genuinely scary person a few times a year. It was usually his boss or his landlord, or the thugs employed by these men—though occasionally he might happen upon a wayfaring stranger with a baleful countenance or forbidding demeanor. Even when a man went to war, he would rarely come face to face with a scary-looking guy, because the enemy would be hundreds of yards away, hiding in trenches or behind breastworks. By the time two men came face to face, one of them was usually dead. Anyway, wars aren't won by scary-looking guys. They're won by technology.

Of course, all that changed with the explosion of modern media. Today, a man is exposed to literally hundreds of images of scary-looking men every day of his life. Posters. Billboards. Television. Music videos. Not to mention the real-life scary people he meets in the subways, heartless brutes who have patterned themselves after the scary-looking guys they see on television. As a result, by the time a man reaches his late fifties, the nerve endings telling him to be scared in the presence of really scary guys have literally exhausted themselves. Just as rats will eventually develop an immunity to rat poison, just as even the most powerful antibiotics will eventually lose their ability to combat infection, the part of the brain that tells you to be scared of scary-looking guys will eventually conk out, like a dead battery. And that's what has happened to you.

It's not a good thing to lose your ability to be scared in the presence of the certifiably scary. For one, scary-looking guys who try to scare you may get upset that you're not quaking in your boots when they transfix you with their malevolent gazes, and may take things to the next level. But the sad truth is that there is nothing I can do about it. No matter how scary the movies I watch, no matter how scary the gangstas I see on MTV, no matter how scary the creeps who try to stare me down on the subway, I no longer have the ability to be scared in the presence of the authentically scary. It's not for lack of trying. I've ridden the scariest subway lines in New York and Philadelphia. I've walked the scariest streets of Baltimore. I've talked with some of the scariest bouncers in London. Everywhere I go, I cross paths with scary-looking guys—scary-looking guys who *try to scare me*. But I simply don't scare anymore. I lack the scare gene.

This is no reflection on the men who have done their level best to scare the hell out of me. But there's just no point in trying to scare me anymore. You're wasting your time; you might as well just take the rest of the day off and busy yourself trying to scare somebody else. I've been scared scareless. I'm scared out. ♦

MIRRORPIX / NEWSCOM

Sticks and Stones

A few reasons movies are not better than ever.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

So I had a rare Saturday night to myself and decided at the last minute to go to the movies—and owing to scheduling, found myself with four possibilities. There was *Rabbit Hole*, for which Nicole Kidman has received an Oscar nomination. There was *Blue Valentine*, for which Michelle Williams was nominated in the same category. And there were two movies starring the woman who will deny both Kidman and Williams an Oscar in a few weeks—Natalie Portman, in a drama called *The Other Woman* and a sex comedy called *No Strings Attached*.

Three of these movies had cultural provenance going for them. *Rabbit Hole* is based on a Pulitzer Prize-winning play. *The Other Woman* is based on a highly readable novel by Ayelet Waldman. And *Blue Valentine* has received the kinds of glowing reviews for its young writer-director, Derek Cianfrance, that must be making his grandmother swoon. But I couldn't bring myself to see any of them.

And the reasons for that offer some insight into the common complaint that moviegoers are no longer offered character-driven dramas about the kinds of difficulties and problems people face in the real world. For these three films are exactly those kinds of dramas, and I am exactly the kind of person who bemoans the fact that there aren't enough of them.

Except for this: *Rabbit Hole* and *The Other Woman* have a key plot point in common, and that plot point is the death of a very small child. The baby in *The Other Woman* is three days old when she dies. In *Rabbit Hole*, the child is four years old and is killed by a passing car. It goes without saying that matters of life and death are the elemental subjects of drama, that real people must cope with such trauma every day, and that part of the purpose of art is to examine these issues, to stare them boldly in the face, and help us resolve our complex emotions about them.

I know all this. It's just that the thought of watching a movie with such a central plot point is almost literally sickening to me, and has been ever since my first child was born six and a half years ago. Before her birth, for the first four decades of my moviegoing, I had no difficulty whatsoever watching all manner of fare that offered stark portrayals of life's consequences on innocent life. But now I have three very little kids, and not only can't I tolerate the thought of spending two hours in a movie theater watching someone else mourn the death of a child, I have increasingly found it impossible to watch anything in which someone young and vulnerable is in any kind of jeopardy.

Case in point: I downloaded the Swedish movie version of *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* a few months ago and watched it on my iPad on a long flight. In the middle there is a rape scene. It is brutal, and it is supposed to be brutal. The victim is the title character, a cold and bizarre creature who bears no resemblance whatever to my own extraordinarily winsome daughters. And yet, watching it, I found myself bursting into loud and agonized sobs on Virgin America's Flight 23 to San Francisco.

So I'm not watching any kids dying anytime soon, even if the movie in question is greater than *The Godfather*. As for *Blue Valentine*, it is by all accounts a stark, vivid, and punishing portrait of a mismatched and miserable marriage whose primary victim is a five-year-old girl. The bad marriage portrait would be fine; after all, how many great novels are about good marriages? But the pain it inflicts on the child ruled it out.

That left me with *No Strings Attached*, in which Portman is a young doctor who ends up in a purposefully casual relationship with a would-be writer played by Ashton Kutcher. It is the conceit of *No Strings Attached* that it is revealing a great and hidden truth about twentysomething boys and girls today, which is that they talk casually and without affect in the grossest possible terms about each other's body parts in dialogue so disgusting that I can't even use asterisks to bowdlerize it sufficiently to give you a sense of what it's like. And that this sort of thing is supposed to be *charming*, kind of like Harry and Sally, only more tough-minded and raw.

I didn't buy a word of it—or rather, I bought that the young screenwriter Elizabeth Meriwether figured out that one way to sell a script in Hollywood is to titillate the men who buy the scripts and green-light the movies by having women characters talk about themselves in the way Andrew Dice Clay talked about them 20 years ago on his comedy albums, or the way Howard Stern talks about them.

And of course, all I could think was: My daughters are going to love Natalie Portman when they're older, in part because she's proudly Jewish, and somehow they are going to stumble on this horrendous pile of dung, and they are going to think that they should talk and act this way, and . . .

After 90 minutes watching it, I might have been better off seeing a thousand children getting killed onscreen, because the depiction of the lives of the overaged children in *No Strings Attached* is, in its own way, as nightmarish and appalling as the rape in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*.

I guess I should have just stayed home. As more and more people are. ♦

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

Economist Jonathan Gruber, who helped craft the Obama administration's national health care overhaul, announced that he is authoring a comic book due out this fall intended to explain the sweeping reform. **—News item**