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the weekly

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MAY 9, 2011

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LEADING FROM BEHIND

Barack Obama and the Great Arab Revolt

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Why Can't a Woman Be More Like a Man?

THE SCRAPBOOK believes that everybody's little girl should have an opportunity to play soccer and strongly favors women's athletics, in all its myriad forms, in America's colleges and universities. As supporters of Title IX like to point out, fewer than 30,000 women participated in college sports when Title IX was enacted nearly 40 years ago, and that number has since increased sixfold. THE SCRAPBOOK thinks this is great—but that is not what Title IX is really about. And a news story and editorial in last week's *New York Times* illustrate a problem that seems to be a political third rail.

Here's the money quote from the *Times* editorial: "As women have become a majority on many campuses, some schools are trying to evade Title IX and undermine *the goal of gender equality* [SCRAPBOOK's emphasis] by cooking the books when they report statistics to Washington." The example is given of the University of South Florida, which established a 100-man football team in 1997 and, in the words of the *Times*, "in an effort to comply with Title IX," increased "the number of women on its cross country running team . . . from 21 to 75. . . . In 2009, when the school reported 71 members, records showed that only 28 women had ever competed." Such practices,

concludes the *Times*, "are cynical and might be illegal. Congress clearly needs to tighten the reporting standards, so that schools are required [to] tell the whole truth about their athletic teams and their efforts to ensure gender equality."

Once again, THE SCRAPBOOK emphasizes that the operative word here is "equality," not "opportunity." For there is no evidence, offered in the *Times* or elsewhere, that any woman anywhere in American higher education is being denied the right to participate in sports because of sex discrimination. What Title IX and Congress and the *New York Times* are demanding is not equality of opportunity but equality of numbers—an artificial numerical parity between men and women. This is required by the federal government even though men participate in college sports at significantly higher rates than women, and even as women now outnumber men on American campuses.

And the consequence, of course, is sex discrimination—against men. Because schools have to report statistics that reflect "equality," hundreds of colleges have abolished various men's sports—wrestling, diving, crew, swimming, and innumerable others—in order to reduce the number of male athletes to "equal-

ity" with their female classmates. At some institutions, for example, there may be women's diving teams but not men's diving teams—thanks to Title IX's ban on sex discrimination.

If this strikes readers as bordering on lunacy, fear not: It is as crazy as it sounds and has resulted in taxpayer-subsidized federal lawsuits against such consciously progressive institutions as Brown University, where they have desperately sought to comply with Title IX's bizarre requirements. And to avoid public excoiation by the likes of the *New York Times* when they seek (as the University of South Florida seems to have done in good faith) to expand athletic opportunities for all students.

The problem, of course, is twofold: Women resolutely refuse to be as interested in sports as men—despite every effort, including legal coercion, to alter human nature—and even the mildest criticism of Title IX results in loud accusations that the critic would gleefully deny little girls the chance to play soccer or tee ball. Well, enough of that. THE SCRAPBOOK believes that every woman should be able to play whatever sport she wants to play—and that Title IX, in its present incarnation, is precisely the sort of federally mandated craziness that undermines public confidence in government. ♦

Motorcade Mania

Charlie Sheen doesn't often prompt THE SCRAPBOOK to quote Latin aphorisms, but his recent appearance in Washington, D.C.—a stop on his nationwide Violent Torpedo of Truth tour—reminded us of the ancient question, *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes* (Who will guard the guardians)? Charlie, you see, was late arriving at Dulles airport in Virginia for his show at DAR Constitution Hall in Washington, and so Washington's

Metropolitan Police Department provided him and his entourage with a multivehicle/flashing-lights/80-mile-an-hour escort for the 26-mile journey into town.

The cost to the taxpayers of the District of Columbia was comparatively modest—Sheen's promoter reportedly paid \$445.68 for the escort—but we're intrigued by the principle of the thing. In the past, THE SCRAPBOOK has complained

about the bumptious practices of the Secret Service and Metropolitan Police and U.S. Park Service when ferrying President Obama, Vice President Biden, and other bigwigs around town: large sections of the city closed to traffic, screaming sirens, cops bullying people going about their business, a general tone of arrogant indifference to the lives of citizens. But in such cases, at least, there is an underlying justification for ensuring the

safety, in a dangerous world, of our senior government officials.

Charlie Sheen, in *THE SCRAPBOOK*'s considered opinion, is not included in that category. Yes, our hearts go out to fans who bought tickets for the Violent Torpedo of Truth tour and might have been obliged to wait an extra 15 or 20 minutes—perhaps a half-hour!—for the main attraction to arrive. But is that a matter of official concern requiring police resources in the one-time Murder Capital of the World? The question answers itself.

And the madness is spreading. Around the same time Charlie Sheen was getting the presidential treatment, District police shoved all and sundry aside to escort the New York Rangers to and from a playoff game at Washington's Verizon Center. In New York City, the NYPD recently furnished a similar service for rapper/producer Sean (P. Diddy) Combs on the journey from a Manhattan concert venue to a New Jersey club appearance.

THE SCRAPBOOK wasn't born yesterday, of course, and understands that some people, especially celebrities, are more equal than others. But in a world of tight budgets, violent crime, and a war on terrorism, it must be more than a little discouraging to be caught in traffic for an hour, or forced off the sidewalk, while Charlie Sheen and his police escort zoom by. ♦

Birth of a Conspiracy

THE *SCRAPBOOK* has never been especially agitated by the circumstances of Barack Obama's birth, and so shrugged its shoulders when the White House released the president's "long form" birth certificate last week. We weren't interested when the Hillary Clinton presidential campaign first raised the "birther" issue back in 2008, and we've paid no attention since to the various articles, websites, books, and symposia that have suggested—in the absence of an original "long form" certificate—that



Obama wasn't born in the United States, or was illegitimate, or born with two heads, or whatever.

Now, of course, the long-awaited birth certificate confirms what *THE SCRAPBOOK* has always assumed: that Barack Hussein Obama was born on American soil, to his parents of record, and on the universally accepted birth date of August 4, 1961. Hawaii, we should note, was already a state by the time Obama arrived, and his mother (Ann Dunham Obama) was a native-born American citizen. So Barack Obama is fully, and constitutionally, qualified to be president of the United States. Case closed.

Well, not quite. As students of the Kennedy assassination, moon landing, and 9/11 attacks are well aware, the existence of incontrovert-

ible evidence is no barrier to a good conspiracy theory. *THE SCRAPBOOK* has no doubt that Obama's birth certificate will be rejected as a hoax in certain quarters, and is equally confident that birthers are already closely studying the two Xs handwritten above the squares marked "Twin" and "Triplet," or pondering the inarguable fact (stated clearly on the birth certificate!) that Obama's father was an alien. No, not that kind of alien—those diaphanous creatures in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*—but do birthers acknowledge that there is any other kind?

The irony of this nonevent is that the long-awaited release of President Obama's birth certificate, far from settling the issue in these quarters, has awakened troubling doubts in

THE SCRAPBOOK'S mind. We refer to one feature which, so far as we are aware, nobody else has noticed: Namely, that the newborn is identified as "Barack Hussein Obama II."

As everybody knows, in identifying descendants, children named for fathers are "Junior"—"Frank Sinatra Jr.," "John F. Kennedy Jr.," "John Gotti Jr."—while "II" is reserved for children named for uncles, or grandfathers, or any relation other than parents. So the clear implication of the birth certificate is that President Obama was not necessarily named for his father Barack Obama (1936-1982) but for some cousin or uncle we know nothing about, whose location is unknown—and whose possible influence on American foreign and domestic policy cannot be casually dismissed.

If Donald Trump does nothing else for the next few months, he would do all Americans an enormous favor if, deploying the worldwide resources of the Trump Organization, he located and identified this anonymous "Barack Hussein Obama I" who secretly controls the United States government and (some have said) THE SCRAPBOOK. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

“The ground floor bathroom [of designer Reed Krakoff's town house] is covered entirely in golden snakeskin and contains a spheroid toilet more stunning than anything the vast majority of the public . . .” (*New Yorker*, April 25). ♦

A Spectacular Tenth Anniversary Issue

THE SCRAPBOOK is pleased to doff its homburg to the estimable *Claremont Review of Books*. The Tenth Anniversary issue just landed on our cluttered desk—with a bit of a thud, actually, since it's a hefty double issue, running 118 pages. But a very high quality thud—it's an astonishingly compelling assortment.

THE SCRAPBOOK, out of TWS solidarity, first perused William Kristol's (rave) review of James Ceaser's *Designing a Polity*. (As always, it's well worth reading the boss, we hasten to add.) Then we moved on to meaty essays by Harvey Mansfield (on Tocqueville's views of religion and liberty), Diana Schaub (on Facebook), Paul Cantor (on Chinua Achebe), Wilfred McClay (on American exceptionalism)—and there's a lot more, and a lot more very, very good stuff.

With the *Claremont Review* (ten years old), the *New Atlantis* (eight years old), and now *National Affairs* and the *Jewish Review of Books* (each barely toddlers at less than two), we seem to be witnessing a revival of impressive intellectual quarterlies. We welcome these partners in crime to the conversation and the good fight, and urge our readers to take a look at all of them. ♦

House GOP Hurts Obama's Popularity

On a recent airing of "Last Word with Lawrence O'Donnell" on MSNBC, the host asked Howard Fineman of the *Huffington Post* to make sense of Congress's and the president's low poll numbers. Explained Fineman,

I think it's also true that people are a little disappointed in the president because he hasn't been able to change the way Washington works at all. Indeed, Congress is even more poorly regarded. Everybody wanted a bigger deal than was done the last budget go around. And so, in an odd way, the fact the Republicans and Congress are so poorly regarded, that the whole system is so poorly regarded, drags everybody down, including the president.

As blogger Noel Sheppard aptly commented, "Can you imagine a liberal media member like Howard Fineman . . . giving any of the blame [for President George W. Bush's sagging numbers] to former House speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.), Sen. Harry Reid (D-Nev.), or the Democrat party? Neither can I." ♦

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The Red and the Black

On the first Saturday in May, when I hear the opening strains of “My Old Kentucky Home,” my thoughts turn not to the Bluegrass State, but to the island my mother came from. The one time I went to the Kentucky Derby, in 1976, it was because my grandfather had entered a horse from his stable in Puerto Rico, and our family went to Louisville to watch him run.

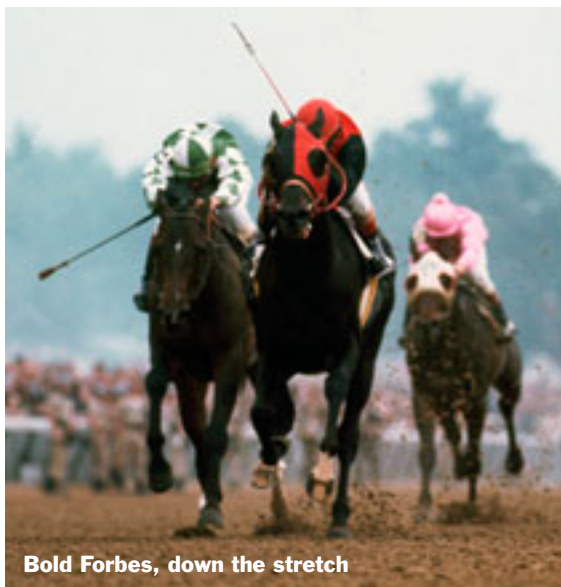
My grandfather’s father had been a taxi driver, and in the early 1900s a cab was a horse-drawn carriage. His son pitied the ragged beasts and resolved that if he ever got rich he’d fill whole fields with horses. Fittingly, it was the horse’s replacement, the automobile, that was the engine of my grandfather’s success. He owned the island’s first Dodge dealership, and the money it made him funded his childhood passion. Before long, he was making a twice yearly pilgrimage to Kentucky for the yearling sales in Lexington.

His horses were competitive, and his stable—named after his hometown, Ponce—several times won top honors on the island. He named a foal after each of his six grandchildren and wrote us regularly to keep us up to date on our horse and on his champions, especially Caribbean Lad. A large dark colt with a white star on his head, Caribbean Lad was a hero at the local track, El Comandante, and the picture of equine glamour.

It was Caribbean Lad who first taught me that talent and generosity of spirit are not always paired. Hot-tempered and at the same time cool and detached, he regarded the rest of the animals around him, horse and man alike, as little more than lackeys to attend to his physical and emotional needs. Of course, that’s what most

three-year-old thoroughbreds are like: awkward, self-dramatizing teenagers just becoming aware of the powerful machines at their disposal, themselves.

Bold Forbes was much less physically striking. A small dark bay colt out of Irish Castle (his grandsire was the great Bold Ruler), Bold Forbes was a relative bargain at Keeneland for \$15,200, and he surprised everyone



Bold Forbes, down the stretch

by handily dispatching his competition in Puerto Rico. Even so, no one could be sure how far he’d go. Horsemen know full well the role that luck plays in the enterprise. It can’t be otherwise when fame and money—thousands, sometimes millions of dollars—rest on four thin legs trained to drive a half-ton animal to dangerous extremes. You never know what you have until the horse proves himself under pressure. You allow yourself some hope, and then you see what happens. My grandfather sent Bold Forbes north to the States to find out what he had.

Bold Forbes finished the year with two stakes wins in New York, where he rested for the winter, grew, and trained for the spring season, the grueling

three-year-old campaign. He won his first two races of the year, including the Wood Memorial, a testing ground of sorts for Derby candidates. Bold Forbes was going to Louisville.

At my mother’s urging, my grandfather and the horse’s trainer, a Cuban émigré named Laz Barrera, selected a new jockey, Angel Cordero, Junior, as he was known, was already one of the top riders in the world, a future hall of famer who, as a teenager in Puerto Rico, had been given his first rides by my grandfather. The gathering at Churchill Downs that Derby afternoon would have been a family reunion—with Junior wearing the Ponce colors, red and black, after the town’s famous Parque de Bombas, a 19th-century Moorish-style firehouse painted in red and black stripes—except that my grandfather had suffered a heart attack and never made it to Kentucky. His doctor advised him to avoid excitement. He had to settle for watching the race on TV.

There’s a sound you can make by flapping your hand and letting the thumb hit the index finger, and Puerto Ricans do this, while shouting the cheer “Wepa!” at sporting events. I was thankful for the general din that afternoon in Louisville so

the fine ladies of Kentucky and their handsome beaux weren’t put off by a boxful of teenagers and their parents shaking their hands frantically and screaming “Wepa!” for exactly two minutes, one second, and a fraction, which is how long it took Bold Forbes to go wire to wire for the victory.

Looking up from the winner’s circle, I saw what seemed like all of Kentucky regarding us, stunned and awkward with happiness—all of us, that is, but the horse. The blanket of roses was superfluous, for Bold Forbes knew exactly what he’d done, what thoroughbreds are bred for—to outrun them all.

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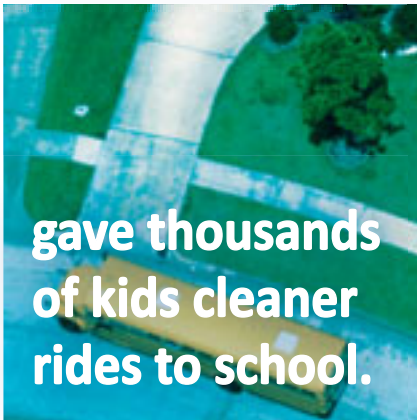
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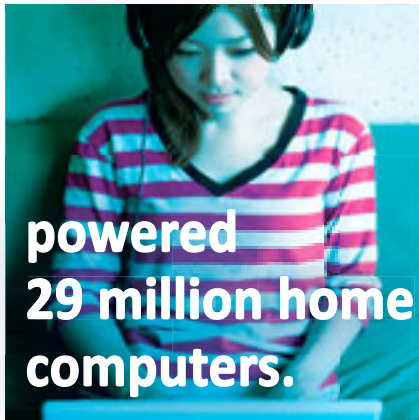
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A Leader from Behind

Nonetheless, Obama may be moving toward something resembling a doctrine. One of his advisers described the president's actions in Libya as "leading from behind." That's not a slogan designed for signs at the 2012 Democratic convention, but it does accurately describe the balance that Obama now seems to be finding. It's a different definition of leadership than America is known for, and it comes from two unspoken beliefs: that the relative power of the U.S. is declining, as rivals like China rise, and that the U.S. is reviled in many parts of the world. Pursuing our interests and spreading our ideals thus requires stealth and modesty as well as military strength. "It's so at odds with the John Wayne expectation for what America is in the world," the adviser said. "But it's necessary for shepherding us through this phase."

—Ryan Lizza, *The New Yorker*, May 2

Thank you, Mr. or Ms. Anonymous Obama Adviser Speaking on Background to Ryan Lizza. Thank you for so boldly and visibly injecting into our politics the phrase "leading from behind." Thank you for associating it with your boss. Thanks for confirming that our current president believes his task is to accommodate American decline. Thanks for reminding us how high a priority he places on appeasing those who revile us. And thanks for explaining



that our Leader from Behind sees his role as "shepherding us through this phase" of appeasement and decline.

After all, we, like sheep, had gone astray. Under the spell of John Wayne, Rambo, and Ronald Reagan, we'd come to believe in American exceptionalism, in a special American global role and responsibility. Or perhaps we've been astray from the very beginning, with all the talk from the Founding on about our distinctive task and national destiny. But now a new shepherd has come to guide us, stealthily and modestly (though, one must add, with a fair amount of personal self-promotion) away from foolish thoughts of national assertion and exertion. And toward a future of . . . what?

Whatever this future world will look like, it will not be pretty, nor will it be friendly to America. Lizza's piece is titled "The Consequentialist." The claim is that Barack Obama is a hard-headed pragmatist who judges policy choices by their real-world consequences. But who now wants to defend the consequences of Barack Obama's foreign policy?

As Americans, we will have to hope and work for the best for the next year and a half. But, as Charles Krauthammer has pointed out, "from President Obama's shocking passivity during Iran's 2009 Green Revolution to his dithering on Libya, acting at the very last moment, then handing off to a bickering coalition, yielding the current bloody stalemate," Obama's has been "a foreign policy of hesitation, delay, and indecision, marked by plaintive appeals to the (fictional) 'international community' to do what only America can." The consequences of leading from behind have been grave. Another four years could be disastrous.

Of course, the talk of leading from behind is mostly rationalization. When Barack Obama was only a teenager, Harvey Mansfield noted that, "From having been the aggressive doctrine of vigorous, spirited men, liberalism has become hardly more than a trembling in the presence of illiberalism." Mansfield asked, "Who today is called a liberal for strength and confidence in defense of liberty?" Not President Obama. His administration's lack of strength and confidence in defense of liberty, its trembling before illiberalism, its failure to lead, is now dressed up and sent out into the world as "leading from behind."

The world isn't much fooled. Dictators aren't fooled. The American people aren't fooled. Even liberals

are getting hard to fool. Lizza's article gave the Obama adviser the last word. But did even the typical *New Yorker* reader nod in approbation as he put down his May 2 issue and picked up his glass of Chablis?

We doubt it. It's getting pretty difficult to avoid noticing the grand mugging by reality that we are experiencing, both abroad and at home. And the notion that the Obama administration is effectively dealing with the muggers—from Qaddafi to the budget deficit—is becoming increasingly laughable.

How do you defeat a leader from behind? With a leader from the front. All the Republicans have to do is nominate a real leader: a workhorse not a show horse; a steady hand not a flip-flopper; a profile in courage not in cleverness; a competent man or woman with strength and confidence in defense of liberty at home and abroad.

Surely this isn't too much to ask?

—William Kristol

The Syrian Crisis

Now more than a month and a half after peaceful demonstrations kicked off in the small city of Deraa, the Syrian uprising gives the Obama administration another shot at getting history right. The first time was June 2009, when the people of Iran took to the streets to protest the fixed presidential elections that returned Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to office. But in time the protests expanded to critique every aspect of Iran's closed society: from the lack of freedom of speech to Iran's abysmal women's rights to support of foreign terrorist organizations like Hezbollah. The Green Movement was a rebuke to the essential nature of Tehran's obscurantist government. The Iranian people sought nothing less than freedom.

And the Obama administration blinked. Caught unawares by the rift between a despotism and a population that wanted to rejoin the fraternity of nations, the White House deliberated over tactics. Would American support hurt the Green Movement? Did we even know who led the Green Movement or what it wanted? Its policies, said the president, didn't seem to be much different from the clique already ruling the country.

What we know today is that the political aspirations of the Iranian people frustrated the administration's plans to reach out to their rulers. According to an administration official quoted last week in the same *New Yorker* article that described the president's strategy as "leading from behind," "We were still trying to engage the Iranian government and we did not want to do anything that made us side with the protesters."

President Obama came to office with high hopes for engaging Syria, too. He'd promised as much on the campaign trail. If George W. Bush had isolated the Assad regime after its suspected involvement in the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri, an Obama White House would bring the Syrians in from the cold and show them that it was in their own best interest to change their behavior.

The problem is that, after several decades of U.S. envoys and policymakers making the pilgrimage to Damascus with the same evangelical purpose, the Assads (first the father Hafez and now the son Bashar) know how the game is played. The Americans want concrete results—like abandoning support for Hezbollah and Hamas, splitting from Iran, closing down the jihadist pipeline into Iraq—that would cost the Syrians too much. So instead the Assads promise much, give nothing, and profit handsomely from the prestige that comes to them merely from sitting at the same table as the Americans.

It is perhaps strange that a country whose most notable export is terrorism should figure so prominently in the calculations of Washington policymakers. But for the Obama White House, Syria was central. The president intended to show his bona fides to the Arab and Muslim masses by advancing the Arab-Israeli peace process, thereby dampening anti-American sentiment. As the Palestinian track faltered, Obama needed the Syrian track even more—not least because the Syrians could crash the entire peace process at any time with one spectacular act of violence against Israelis or Arabs or both. Moreover, the administration believed, progress on the peace process was a way to sideline the Iranians.

In other words, the Obama administration's counterterrorism strategy and regional security strategy both depended on flipping Assad. The White House is essentially protecting a man who sent tanks to fire on his own people because Syria is the cornerstone of its Middle East policy.

Events have overrun the administration's understanding of the Middle East. As it turns out, Arabs are more concerned with the governance of their own polities than with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. That is why they have risen around the region to reject their autocratic leaders. It is why Syrians have braved the regime's sniper fire and tanks to protest, "*silmīyyeh, silmīyyeh*," as one of the uprising's mottoes has it: Peaceful, peaceful.

This is Obama's second chance to get the Middle East right, by speaking out loudly and clearly against Iran's chief ally. Unfortunately, according to administration officials, the White House doesn't believe it has much leverage with the Syrians. Such resignation is the natural consequence of not recognizing how the United States is truly perceived in the world: as a leader, albeit an imperfect one, and a symbol of moral clarity. If the president wants to win the respect and admiration of Arab and Muslim peoples, the opportunity has presented itself, again.

As a first step, the White House should recall our ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, and expel Damascus's envoy to Washington, Imad Mustafa. We owe no prestige to a state whose snipers are firing on its own children. Sanctions leveled against the regime should not stop at the president's brother Maher or his cousin Rami Makhlouf. Sanctions must include Assad himself. After six weeks of bloodshed, it should be obvious that Bashar al-Assad is not a reformer in the making but an accomplished serial murderer.

As one Lebanese friend says, "Syria never had anything more to offer Washington than blood—the blood of Lebanese, Palestinians, Israelis, Iraqis, and Americans. Now that the regime is letting its own blood, the blood of Syrians, will the leader of the free world finally stop negotiating in blood?" A nation that has reckoned honestly with its own failings throughout its history has not only the prerogative but the duty to lead with the truth. The danger of leading from behind is that history will pass you by.

—Lee Smith

Birther of a Campaign

The Donald takes New Hampshire.

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI



Portsmouth, N.H.

For months now, real estate mogul and television personality Donald Trump has terrified the country by threatening to run for president. Trump says he won't make any final decisions until May 22, when NBC plans to air the season finale of his game show, *Celebrity Apprentice*. But he's certainly been acting like a candidate. He's consulted with pollsters and campaign strategists. He's cobbled together a platform: trade war with China and—this is not a joke—pillaging the countries America invades. He made a surprise

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appearance at February's Conservative Political Action Conference. A couple of weeks ago he tried to sweet-talk Charles Krauthammer (no luck).

Above all, Trump has been attacking—bashing, pummeling, verbally assaulting—Barack Obama. He treats the president like the mutant offspring of Omarosa and Rosie O'Donnell. Obama's birth certificate, college grades, leadership abilities, economic and foreign policies, basic motor skills—there's nothing about this president that Donald Trump won't question, mock, or subject to scathing criticism. As the other likely GOP candidates play Hamlet, brooding over their campaigns and debating the precise legal

definition of "exploratory committee," Trump has taken a hole-punch to the president's reputation. And Republicans love it. Trump is neck-and-neck with Mike Huckabee, at the front of the pack of Republican 2012 hopefuls, in the Real Clear Politics poll of polls.

Still, Trump is not one to ignore his true constituency: the media. The klieg lights, camera crews, and print and television correspondents were out in force last week when Trump spent a day campaigning here. In the morning everyone assembled inside a windowless hangar at a Portsmouth air terminal. The vast room was crowded with small aircraft. A microphone bank had been placed in front of the closed hangar door. More than a dozen cameras were arrayed in a semi-circle before it.

There are nine months until the Granite State primary, but Trump had attracted a presidential-sized gaggle. The only ones not there were the foreign press, but they probably just missed their connection. Space was so tight that print journalists, sandwiched between the television crews and mikes, sat Indian-style on the concrete flooring like kindergartners at story time. Every now and then a reporter would walk to the lobby, where he'd gaze out the window and search for Trump's helicopter in the cloudy sky.

A few minutes before Trump arrived, word spread that President Obama had decided to release his long-form birth certificate. The timing couldn't have been accidental: Trump was the most famous "birther" in the land, searching for Obama's true identity on the *Today* show, *The View*, and (among other places) *Hannity*. Two days earlier he'd told CNN's Anderson Cooper that the document was "missing." Guess not.

The huge hangar door began to rise. As it opened, inch by inch, one could see the tarmac, then the helicopter—the name "Trump" emblazoned on its side, in case he forgot where he parked—and finally the Donald himself, surrounded by aides and security guards. Trump knows how to make an entrance. He strode purposefully to the microphones and surveyed the scene.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

“Wow,” he said. His reddish blond hair was tossed across his scalp. He wore an ill-fitting black suit with a red power tie. He gazed into the cameras. “Whenever you’re ready,” he said. The cameramen jiggered with the machinery. Trump waited patiently for his cue. A few seconds later he got it.

“Good morning,” he said in his New York monotone. “Today I’m very proud of myself, because I’ve been able to accomplish something that no one else has been able to accomplish.” The release of Obama’s birth certificate, Trump said, was nothing less than a capitulation. “I want to look at it,” he said, “but I hope it’s true. He should’ve done it a long time ago. I feel like I’ve accomplished something really, really important. And I’m honored by it.” Trump 1, Obama 0.

Trump grew wistful at the mention of New Hampshire. “It’s a place that I’ve always liked and have been to many times,” he said. In 1988, a friend here had asked him to deliver a speech on success. Trump obliged.

“The buzz was unbelievable,” he said. “It was great.” A political career was born—23 years later.

Trump has as much respect for the press as your average American, which is to say, none. “Why don’t you announce?” someone asked.

“Are you an intelligent person?” Trump replied. “I hate saying it because it sounds trivial, but I have a very, very successful show on television.” Later, the same reporter asked why Trump opposed the stimulus. “Look, I know you like Obama,” Trump said, and moved on.

One reporter asked Trump about statements he’s made in support of universal health care, progressive taxation, and other liberal shibboleths. Trump deployed the time-honored political tactic of pretending the reporter had never been born. “I’m a very strong conservative,” he said. “I think that I’m quite conservative as a Republican.” They say life is a voyage of discovery. Recently Trump has discovered he is pro-life, for limited

government, and against Obamacare.

Another reporter asked Trump about an article in that morning’s *Washington Post*. Most of Trump’s political giving, the *Post* reported, has been to Democrats, including Rep. Charles Rangel and Sen. Harry Reid. Trump shrugged. “I’ve had a lot of friends who are Democrats, and a lot of friends who are Republicans,” he said. New York is a blue state, he added. His ideological and partisan elasticity may even be a strength. “When I watch Washington and see the way they fight like cats and dogs,” Trump said, he’s disgusted. “Now we’re at a stalemate. I think it’s time for people to sit down, get together, and fix this mess.”

The press conference was wide-ranging. Trump discussed Obama: “The word is, according to what I’ve read, that he was a terrible student at Occidental.” He took on the issues: “Education has always meant a lot to me. I think education is good.” He dabbled in foreign policy: Libya is a “total disaster”; China’s leaders are “much

Reorganizing Government

By **Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Lean, productive, and efficient aren’t words that leap to mind when most Americans think about the federal government—and with good reason! Our government has grown too large, redundant, and wasteful. A wit once said, “For every action there is an equal and opposite government program.”

While we can debate what responsibilities government should undertake, we can all agree that government should be more streamlined, efficient, cost effective, and rational. Businesses large and small reinvent themselves constantly—waste, duplication, poor budgeting, and lousy service are a death sentence. Shouldn’t government be as vigilant? What’s needed is some good old-fashioned business know-how.

That’s why the U.S. Chamber supports the Obama administration’s efforts to reorganize and streamline the federal bureaucracy, eliminate wasteful spending, and consolidate and merge

agencies, departments, and programs. In his State of the Union address, President Obama promised to conduct a top-to-bottom review of government operations to save money, improve customer service, and enhance competitiveness. We were encouraged that he appointed the nation’s first-ever chief performance officer, Jeffrey Zients, one of the country’s foremost experts on business management.

The Chamber has helped facilitate Zients’ outreach to the business community. He is an organization and efficiency expert, has the president’s backing, and wants to hear from businesses of all sizes about their experiences with the federal government and their ideas to improve it. Two years on the job, Zients has avoided billions of dollars in improper government payments—including payments made to dead people or those in jail. He has begun to sell off unused federal buildings and property (where the lights and utilities were left on) and deployed new technologies to boost efficiency.

In addition to implementing cost-saving efficiencies, the administration has promised to

“think big” about government reorganization. As long as reorganization streamlines governmental functions, trims overhead, and modernizes information and services, it is a worthy and long overdue objective.

As Zients develops ideas for the president, the Chamber will urge him to craft a plan that actually reduces the size and cost of government. While we have argued strenuously that a number of the administration’s actions have, indeed, unnecessarily expanded federal powers, we stand ready to support any serious effort to streamline government and continue to work with Zients and others to help make it happen.

Some 86% of Americans believe the federal government is broken and trust in it is at an all-time low. Reorganization will not fully restore Americans’ lost faith in government any more than it will balance the federal budget. But it would represent a significant step forward.



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smarter” than ours. He mused on the nature of celebrity: “It’s very cool being a television star.” And he addressed the deficit: “The United States is broke.”

As he was talking, a black Chevy Suburban, a black stretch limo, and another black Suburban pulled up on the tarmac behind him.

“Mr. Trump, are you playing with us, or are we playing with you?” asked a reporter.

Trump pursed his lips, squinted, and pondered the question.

“I actually think you’re playing with me,” he said. Then he and his entourage piled into the waiting cars and drove away.

The caravan sped to the nearby Roundabout Diner and Lounge, a ’50s-style greasy spoon with checkered tablecloths and Golden Oldies playing in the background. The roadside grill was packed with breakfast regulars, as well as folks who’d shown up to see Donald Trump. That was easier said than done, because Trump toured the restaurant’s narrow aisles enveloped in an impenetrable bubble of cameras.

The flash photography was blinding. One second a dozen people would take pictures with their cell phones, the next second the photojournalists would do the same, and when your eyes recovered the first thing you saw was the back of a television camera about to decapitate you. Duck to avoid the camera, and the crowd would shove you against a table or the counter or a customer or one of Trump’s dirigible-sized guards. Amazingly, no one was harmed.

“Misteh Trump, we got a twenty-first birthday over hea’h!” someone shouted. Trump wished them well.

Someone else brought up Detroit. “You watch what’s going to happen with Detroit,” Trump said.

As the parade of cameras, reporters, and onlookers wound around the restaurant, I found myself trapped between Trump and a booth containing the members of an all-male coffee klatsch.

“Why aren’t you guys working?” Trump asked in mock outrage.

“We’re retired!” the men replied.

For the briefest of moments Trump seemed to be at a loss for words. I could

almost see the wheels spinning in his head as he tried to come up with the politic thing to say: *retired . . . coffee . . . old people . . . money . . . aha!*

“Don’t touch Medicare, right?” Trump asked.

The men nodded their assent.

Trump met privately with a few voters in a back room. On the walls were two flat-screen televisions tuned to MSNBC, where David Gregory was analyzing Obama’s birth certificate. When Trump emerged from his meeting, he paused beneath one of the televisions to savor his victory. At last, after years of prodding and fantastic, paranoid conspiracism, Trump and the birthers had bent Obama to their will. “He should have done it a long time ago,” Trump said, to no

one in particular. And then, just as quickly as they had arrived, Trump and his coterie were gone. The limo sped off to the next event.

The parking lot of the Roundabout Diner was strangely calm. A few stragglers milled about. Questions filled the air: Had the onlookers just witnessed a campaign stop, a celebrity-sighting, a publicity stunt, or all of the above? And who *was* playing with whom? And was it appropriate?

A blonde woman looked glum. She’d come to the diner to catch a glimpse of Trump but hadn’t anticipated the media would block her view. “I couldn’t see him,” she said. Then she thought about it some more. The morning hadn’t been a total loss, she realized. “I did see his hair.” ♦

The Real Mediscare

Obama’s rationing is the thing to worry about.

BY MARK HEMINGWAY

Since the introduction of Rep. Paul Ryan’s budget, backed by the House GOP, Democrats have been heavily engaged in “Mediscare” tactics. “Put simply, it ends Medicare as we know it,” said President Obama, attacking Ryan’s plan.

Any honest assessment of our fiscal health, however, would conclude that “Medicare as we know it” is unsustainable. The program faces a whopping \$30.8 trillion long-term shortfall. Ryan’s plan does indeed amount to a serious overhaul, introducing premium supports—similar to vouchers—that would help seniors purchase private health insurance, harnessing market forces to bring down costs.

Ryan’s Medicare proposal shares

some of the market-based aspects of Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage and the popular Medicare Advantage program, which allows Americans to get Medicare coverage through private insurance. That might be one reason why, according to the latest Gallup poll, Ryan’s budget is polling better than the president’s among seniors.

But for all the Democrats’ fear mongering about Ryan’s proposals, they’ve said little about their own plan for reining in Medicare spending. That’s likely because the Democratic proposal, as outlined in their much-disliked health care law, is far more radical than what Ryan is proposing. In fact, a new lawsuit contends that it’s unconstitutional.

Unlike Ryan, who made public a detailed budget plan, the president outlined only a budget “framework.” Here is the sum total of his comments

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on Medicare cost containment in his speech of April 13:

Now, we believe the reforms we've proposed to strengthen Medicare and Medicaid will enable us to keep these commitments to our citizens while saving us \$500 billion by 2023, and an additional one trillion dollars in the decade after that. And if we're wrong, and Medicare costs rise faster than we expect, then this approach will give the independent commission the authority to make additional savings by further improving Medicare.

The "independent commission" the president refers to here is the Independent Payment Advisory Board (IPAB) created by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, the health reform bill signed into law last year.

Here's how IPAB works: It's a panel of 15 presidential appointees who are tasked with reducing Medicare spending. The panel is given certain spending targets, beginning in 2014. At first those targets are on a sliding scale, but by 2018 spending growth is limited to the rate of growth of GDP with an additional percentage point tacked on.

Any decisions IPAB makes about Medicare spending automatically become law. To override IPAB requires a three-fifths majority vote in the Senate, a high legislative hurdle. Alternatively, Congress can pass its own Medicare plan that meets the same spending target. There's no administrative process allowing doctors or citizens to challenge the board's decisions. Since Medicare comprises about 13 percent of the federal budget, that's an awesome amount of power to be placing

in the hands of unelected bureaucrats.

In order to assuage fears that the board would go on a rationing tear, the commission was supposedly given a narrow mandate. IPAB can't adjust premiums or Medicare's cost-sharing mechanisms, such as copayments and deductibles.

It can, however, adjust the rates at which doctors are reimbursed. But Medicare reimbursement rates are already well below market rates, and consequently doctors are treating fewer and fewer Medicare patients as they lose money on them. Doctor access is already a huge problem for Medicaid for this same reason: Over half of all specialists in many major metropolitan areas are refusing to take on new Medicaid patients, according to a 2009 survey by Merritt Hawkins and Associates on physician wait times. As it is, Medicare reimbursement rates are set to drop below Medicaid's in the coming decade—and that's without IPAB.

To date, almost all of the constitutional challenges to the new health care law have centered on its requirement that every American purchase health insurance. But in *Coons v. Geithner*, the Goldwater Institute, a right-of-center think tank in Arizona, is challenging the bill's constitutionality on the basis of IPAB.

Whether Congress can simply offload its legislative responsibility for Medicare to a commission in the executive branch is a serious question regarding the separation of powers.

"The bottom line is what this board is going to be doing is not making

recommendations to Congress. They're really going to be passing law. The statute actually calls it 'law' throughout the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act," says Diane Cohen, the Goldwater Institute's lead attorney. "Congress doesn't have to pass them, the president doesn't have to sign them. So it's taking over a historically congressional responsibility and duty—and here comes the legal mumbo-jumbo—without any 'intelligible principles' to guide this board."

Unlike other federal agencies with regulatory powers, IPAB is subject to no external review process—no public notification in advance of proposed rules, no opportunity for public comment, no administrative guidelines, and no judicial review. Cohen sees Congress as "just abdicating" its responsibility "because they can't withstand political pressure."

What's being proposed in IPAB is so basic a violation of the traditional separation of powers, Cohen says, that we are in virtually uncharted legal territory. To the extent that legislative powers can be exercised outside of Congress, such authority is granted through the "delegation of powers"—a well-defined legal principle. "People will say, 'We haven't had a case striking down delegation for years'—but this is really above and beyond what we have seen," observes Cohen.

One clue as to where the case might be headed comes from a blistering dissent in the 1989 Supreme Court case *Mistretta v. United States* involving a dispute over the authority of the U.S. Sentencing Commission to enact guidelines that have the force of law. In an impressive feat of soothsaying from over two decades ago, Justice Antonin Scalia wrote:

By reason of today's decision, I anticipate that Congress will find delegation of its lawmaking powers much more attractive in the future. If rule-making can be entirely unrelated to the exercise of judicial or executive powers, I foresee all manner of "expert" bodies, insulated from the political process, to which Congress will delegate various portions of its lawmaking responsibility. How tempting to create an expert Medical Commission



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(mostly M.D.'s, with perhaps a few Ph.D.'s in moral philosophy) to dispose of such thorny, "no-win" political issues as the withholding of life-support systems in federally funded hospitals, or the use of fetal tissue for research. This is an undemocratic precedent that we set—not because of the scope of the delegated power, but because its recipient is not one of the three Branches of Government. The only governmental power the Commission possesses is the power to make law; and it is not the Congress.

While Scalia's opinion did not sway the court, the majority supported the sentencing commission only because they felt that it passed the "intelligible principle test"—meaning that the delegation of legislative authority is, in the words of the majority, "constitutionally sufficient if Congress clearly delineates the general policy, the public agency which is to apply it, and the boundaries of this delegated authority."

Given the fact that IPAB is quite intentionally isolated from democratic oversight or administrative guidelines, it's easy to imagine the law running afoul of the Court's definition of constitutionally acceptable delegation of legislative authority. Or at least that's what the Goldwater Institute is counting on.

In the meantime, the serious constitutional questions surrounding yet another key provision of the Democrats' unpopular health care bill are unlikely to help them win the public debate over Medicare. Unlike Ryan, who has defended his plan many times, the president is unwilling to explain IPAB in any detail. A high-profile lawsuit might force Democrats finally to do just that.

In fact, Obama hasn't even sold his own party on his Medicare plan: Three House Democrats are sponsoring legislation to repeal IPAB, and one of those sponsors, Rep. Allyson Y. Schwartz of Pennsylvania, signed on to oppose the board two days after the speech in which the president doubled down on IPAB. If the president's Medicare plan is put under a microscope, the result could be politically devastating both in the courts and in the court of public opinion. ♦

Our Kind of Class Warfare

Let's have a tax on political power.

BY P.J. O'ROURKE

Wipe that smirk off your face, Mister President. "We cannot afford \$1 trillion worth of tax cuts for every millionaire and billionaire in our society." Is there some Sidwell Friends night school class liberal politicians take to perfect an expression of smug disdain? When Teddy Roosevelt was demagogue-in-chief he at least had the nerve to come right out and call the successful people he despised "malefactors of great wealth." He didn't simper and moue at his audience. Go ahead and say it, President Obama: Let's steal from the rich and give to the poor. Never mind that we're doing a pretty good job of it already. The top 5 percent of the nation's earners are being soaked for almost 60 percent of America's tax revenue.

But we can take more money from the rich because . . . because they have it. We don't. Our country is \$1,645,000,000,000 in the hole this year. We Americans are virtuous people and we're broke. Therefore, logically, people who aren't broke aren't virtuous. How did wicked people get all the money? President Obama thinks he knows. He has a lot of money himself. The Obama family income was \$1.7 million in 2010. The president spent last year trying to wreck the American economy, so

it only follows that other millionaires and billionaires made their money the same way.

There are, of course, millionaires and billionaires who are leeches on society, who bleed our GDP and contribute nothing to the commonweal. There was, for instance, a bright young man who worked all the scholarship angles so that wealthy donors

(with their tax-dodging charitable contributions) paid his way through fancy schools. He embarked on an urban scam called "community organizing." Then he obtained a large sum for writing a book about his life and accomplishments at age 34 when he didn't have any accomplishments and hadn't led much life. He

wormed his way into politics with all its perks and benefits. And now his big house, his stretch limousine, and his luxury jet are paid for out of the public treasury.

But a fellow like that is an exception. Most rich people provide some value to mankind—goods, services, or, at worst, fishy investments to make us temporarily feel like we're rich too. And when even the richest of the rich loses \$1,645,000,000,000 he has to give the big house, limo, and jet back to the bank. That's real money.

President Obama has contempt for real money. And why not, since his government has the power to print all the fiat money he wants? Power is



Fork it over. Heh, heh.

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the politician's paycheck. Power gets politicians all the good things money can buy and plenty of other things as well. Businessmen work for money because money gives them mastery over their own lives. Politicians work for power because power gives them mastery over the lives of others.

Obama, in pursuit of power, has been as greedy and irresponsible as any Wall Street tycoon in pursuit of money. After short-selling Hillary Clinton, he used the insufficient capital of one term in the U.S. Senate to engineer a highly leveraged buyout of the Democratic presidential nomination followed by a hostile takeover of the Oval Office. His political thinking is full of shady derivatives. His economic policy is a risky collateralized debt obligation. His campaign promises are junk bonds.

The wildly ambitious career of President Obama shows that power is more valuable than money. Taxes, by their nature, are levied on things of value. If we want to close the budget gap, we should let the millionaires and billionaires have their tax breaks. Their private property fortunes are comparatively worthless. It's that treasure beyond the dreams of avarice, public political power, which needs an excise.

It's easy to do. Like everything, power has a price. And the price is right there in the federal budget—\$3.8 trillion in government spending for 2011. Tax it. The old "Bush tax cut" rate will suffice, 35 percent on high earners, or, in this case, 35 percent on high powers. What President Obama said about millionaires and billionaires will certainly hold true for congressmen, senators, and himself. "They want to give back to the country that's done so much for them." Thirty-five percent of \$3.8 trillion is \$1.3 trillion. That's most of the deficit eliminated through one small alteration in the tax code. And there's a further benefit to our nation. Now that all three branches of government and every federal agency, department, and bureau owe back taxes, the IRS can go audit itself. ♦

The Coming Euro Crack-Up

A currency divided against itself cannot stand.

BY IRWIN M. STELZER

A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of the disintegration of the eurozone. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcize this spectre: German chancellor and French president, the Brussels eurocracy and the bonus-laden bankers. Let the ruling classes tremble. The debtors have nothing to lose but their burdens.

So Karl Marx might have written were he watching unfolding events in the eurozone. In a sense, it is like watching a slow-motion train wreck.

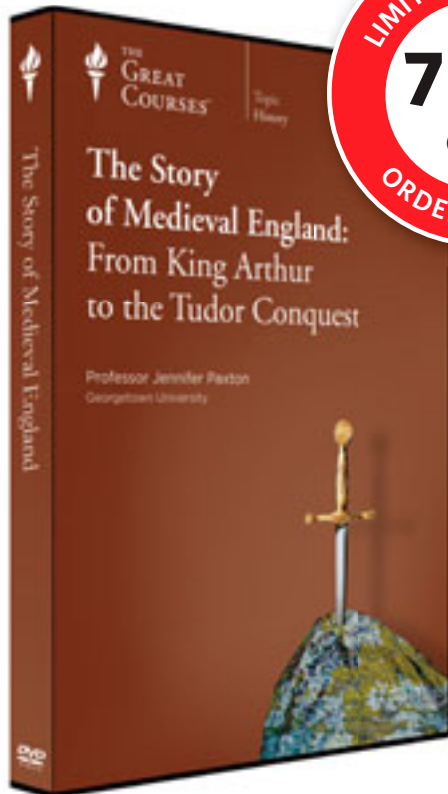
A quick review: Some 17 of the 27 nations that constitute the European Union have abandoned their own currencies in favor of the euro. This means they have given up control of their exchange rates and their interest rates, the latter set by the European Central Bank on a one-size-fits-all basis. In fact, it is the state of the German economy, the area's largest, that dictates interest rate policy for the entire 17-country group. When Germany was suffering under the weight of the costs of reunification, its sluggish economy needed, and got, a low-interest rate policy from the European Central Bank. That eventually proved too stimulative for, say, Ireland, which was in the midst of an inflating property bubble.

The creation of the eurozone also led lenders to assume that the credit of every member was just about as good as the credit of Germany and France. So Greece, Portugal, Spain,

and Italy could sell sovereign debt at very low interest rates and use the borrowed money to finance an expansion of their welfare states—Greeks, for instance, could retire at 50 if they were in a hazardous occupation such as hairdressing (all those chemicals). More important, countries like Portugal, with a poorly educated workforce, and Spain, with politically run regional banks making imprudent loans to local property developers, became noncompetitive with their eurozone colleagues and international rivals. No problem: Fiscal policy was not controlled from the center, and investors hadn't yet realized that lending to the so-called PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece, and Spain) was a hazardous occupation. So the latter could tap the credit markets to fill the gap between tax receipts and spending, and benefit from German-level interest rates.

Then the rating agencies rose from their torpor and downgraded the sovereign debt of Greece, helping to drive interest rates on its government bonds to unsustainable levels. Enter Brussels with a bailout for Greece. And when Ireland's deficit soared to 32 percent after the government decided to guarantee the debts of its insolvent banks, enter Brussels with a bailout for Ireland. Now Portugal, burdened with an economy that has not grown for a decade, also is rattling its begging bowl, and another bailout is being negotiated with a conclusion along the lines of earlier bailouts imminent, never mind that the previous two have done more harm than an honest confession of insolvency would. If at first you don't succeed, repeat the mistake.

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the Sunday Times (London).



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The main bailer, of course, is Germany, its economy growing smartly on the back of an export boom—it does not make what China makes, but makes what China buys. Chancellor Angela Merkel has two reasons to play Lady Bountiful. The first is her belief, shared by the German elite, that if a euro country declares bankruptcy, the currency will lose credibility and the entire European project will come unhinged. That would leave Germany alone at the top of the European heap, Europe's most powerful country with its most powerful economy. History makes many Germans less comfortable with a German Europe than with a European Germany.

Second, there is the small matter of the German banking system. The German banks, especially the state-run Landesbanken, are so woefully undercapitalized that some are planning to opt out of the new stress tests because they know they will fail. These banks are sitting on 220 billion euros of sovereign and bank debt of Greece, Portugal, and Spain, and if those IOUs become worthless, the German financial system might come tumbling down or at minimum require a taxpayer bailout. To make matters worse, France sits on another 150 billion euros of this dicey paper.

To the intrinsic flaws in the euro system—a one-size-fits-all interest rate and the inability of the eurozone bureaucracy to control the fiscal policies of members—add the news from tiny, previously europhile Finland. In last month's election, the anti-euro, anti-bailout True Finn party's share of votes jumped from 4 percent to 19 percent, and its parliamentary seats from 5 to 39 in a 200-seat parliament, enough to insist on inclusion in a coalition government. Just as the Tea Party sent a message politicians can't ignore, so the True Finns sent a message to the incoming government that it should think hard before casting

a vote—unanimity is required—for the impending Portuguese bailout. As Tony Barber put it in the *Financial Times*, “Finns are angry because, like the Austrians, Dutch, and Germans, they dislike rushing to the aid of countries that in their eyes have cheated, idled, lied, lived beyond their means, and let reckless bankers run amok.” Finland's “no” vote is all that is needed to leave Portugal drowning in debt.

All of these bailouts, and those to come, are premised on the notion that the troubled countries are having a liquidity problem, and a bit of cash will enable



them to get back on their feet and repay their debts in full and on time. It is now clear that these countries are not merely illiquid but are insolvent, and that they will one way or another have to renege on their debts, at least in part. Unless, of course, Germany agrees to convert the eurozone into what is called a transfer union, in which funds from the rich countries are regularly shipped to the poorer ones. That route seems to be blocked by the unwillingness of German taxpayers to agree to such an arrangement and the German constitution which prohibits it.

The cold facts are these:

- Greece, Ireland, and Portugal are now frozen out of credit markets. The

yield on Greek two-year bonds is 24 percent and on both Irish and Portuguese bonds of similar maturity around 12 percent. No country can afford to borrow at those rates. Of interest to the White House and Congress might be the speed with which the markets move: Interest rates charged on Greek debt increased by 10 percentage points in the past month.

- The debt burden on these countries is in excess of the 90 percent of GDP that scholars now agree stifles growth. Portugal's debt is at 90 percent of its GDP and rising, Greece's is approaching 150 percent, and “Ireland's debt now appears to be bigger, in relation to its economy, than the reparations imposed on Germany after the First World War,” according to economist Anatole Kaletsky.

- These economies cannot grow their way out of the problem. The Greek economy shrank at an annual rate of 4.5 percent last year and is forecast to decline this year at 3.2 percent. Portugal's will shrink at an annual rate of 1.5 percent, guesses the International Monetary Fund. And Ireland, despite a robust export industry and a corporate tax rate of 12.5 percent that, at half the EU average, remains attractive to foreign investment, might eke out growth of 1 percent. No way these growth rates produce enough tax revenues to meet debt obligations.

There's more, but you get the idea: These countries are bankrupt and will have to default on their debts—“restructure” them, to use the term spoken in polite European circles. Germany's finance minister Wolfgang Schäuble was among the first to mention the possibility of default, and more recently Clemens Fuest, chair of the German finance ministry's advisory committee, said a Greek restructuring is not merely possible, it is inevitable. “Most intelligent people know there has to be a significant

GARY LOGKE

restructuring to ease the burden on Greece, and we're not talking about a painless extension of maturities, but wiping away a large portion of the debt," said Charles Grant, the highly respected director of the Centre for European Reform in London.

Such a default would be no trivial event for creditors: Estimates are that it would take a "haircut"—a write-down—of 40 percent to 70 percent to get debt into repayable territory. José Manuel González-Páramo, a member of the executive board of the European Central Bank, warns, "A restructuring would have legal and systemic consequences that are difficult to calculate right now, but would in all probability be bigger than after the collapse of Lehman Brothers." And a "messy euro debt implosion . . . not only would . . . hurt the euro, it also has the potential to derail the global recovery," conclude economists at Fathom Consulting. The more time that passes without a long-term solution, the more likely the consequences of the current mess will go from merely serious to dire.

So much for the least important stuff. The more important question is whether Spain, its economy twice as large as those of Greece, Portugal, and Ireland combined, will be next when the bond vigilantes again saddle up. So far, the contagion has not spread. But Spain has an unemployment rate of over 20 percent (40 percent for young workers) and rising, its regional banks (*cajas*) have so many IOUs from property developers gone bust that some failed the rather lax first round of stress tests, and Moody's says the nation's banks will have to raise as much as 120 billion euros in fresh capital (the government puts the figure at 15 billion euros, despite the fact that Spain's banks and companies have 70 billion euros invested in Portuguese assets, 7 percent of Spain's GDP). Throw in forecast growth of "close to zero" according to Citigroup Global Markets and the inability of the central government to persuade the regions to rein in their huge deficits, and it is not inconceivable that Spain will soon need a handout of

such size that even the euro-enthusiasts will not be able to come up with the needed cash. "Spain's room for maneuver is limited," say the economists at Fathom Consulting.

Spain is only one of the important problems facing Europe. Voters are beginning to ask why they should suffer through painful austerity programs to spare imprudent bankers from the consequences of their foolishness. The Greeks have taken to the streets and are refusing to pay tolls on bridges; the Portuguese parliament refused to agree to an austerity program and the government fell, as did Ireland's after putting an enormous burden on taxpayers to prevent the

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failure of its banks; and the Spanish prime minister had to agree to fall on his sword after pushing an austerity program through parliament. More important, Angela Merkel has had to postpone putting up more bailout money because the Bundestag is dragging its feet. Meanwhile France's Nicolas Sarkozy, a proponent of bailouts accompanied by a Brussels seizure of control of a nation's finances as part of a centralized European "economic government," has a popularity rating in the low 20s.

This seems to be just one part of the increasing pressure on the entire concept of a united Europe. When Germany refused to go along with Britain and France in attempting to stop the slaughter in Libya, it called into question the concept of a European Common Foreign and Security Policy, notwithstanding the enormous resources being poured into

the newly established European External Action Service, a euphemism for a full-fledged foreign service. And when France resurrected border controls and check points to prevent a flood of Tunisian immigrants from Italy, and Italy retaliated by issuing travel documents to some of the 25,000 immigrants who were passing through Italy en route to the EU country thought to have the most generous benefits, it put a serious dent in the concept of the free movement of peoples throughout the EU. Finally, a chasm has opened between the prosperous north and the less-hard-working south; between the 17 EU members that comprise the eurozone on one side and the 10 other EU members who have their own currencies and want no part of the bailouts; within the gang of 17, between Germany and Finland; and between the exporting machine that is Germany and protectionist France.

The vision of a united Europe still has a powerful hold on the elites of Europe, who see the transfer of power from nation-states to an unelected bureaucracy as insurance against future wars and, if truth be told, a relief from democratic pressures. In addition, the prospect of a euro that would replace the dollar as the world's reserve currency, or at least weaken its role in world trade, has a powerful hold on the French, who make no secret of their antipathy to Anglo-Saxon capitalism.

The "European project" won't go quietly into the night. But it just might go noisily into the ashcan of history if the Germans decide they cannot convert the Greeks into hard-working, tax-paying euro-citizens worthy of continuing handouts. Or, at minimum, we might end up with a euro-nord and euro-sud, as Martin Feldstein once suggested. Such a distinction, rooted in differences between the stronger and weaker economies and banking sectors, would allow Greece and others to do what the team of Obama and Bernanke seem to be planning: get rid of all those annoying debts by paying them off in a depreciated currency. ♦

Sandstorms

Barack Obama and the Great Arab Revolt

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

We may never know whether the conjecture of the historian Fouad Ajami is correct: that President Barack Obama sought the approval of the Arab League for the air war against Muammar Qaddafi because he thought the league—an organization that has always shown greater sympathy for the region’s rulers than for its citizenry—would turn down the French-led request to unleash Western airpower to save Benghazi. President Obama has certainly seemed sincere, if not Kennedyesque, in his intent to save the rebels in the eastern half of the country from the depredations of the most Orwellian strongman in the Middle East. But his sincerity rests in constant tension with the core tenet of a developing Obama Doctrine: American hegemony is not a good thing, either for the United States or for the world.

President Obama and administration officials give the impression that success in the Middle East is defined more by the firmness with which the United States adheres to that principle than by what actually happens on the ground. As Vice President Joe Biden’s national security adviser, Antony Blinken, put it in speaking of the Libyan mission: “We did lead—we cleared the way for the allies.” Thus, what is critical is whether the Europeans in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are front and center in the Libyan war and not whether that division of labor compromises the opposition’s chances of a timely military success—or even the integrity of NATO itself. A protracted stalemate in Libya is thus preferable to a war where the United States would be the decisive military agent of regime change.

It’s a good bet that the president, let alone the politicians and think-tankers who staff his administration and cut their teeth describing the failings of George W. Bush in Iraq, has wondered what would be the moral difference

between President Obama who, without U.N. authorization, unleashes the CIA and Special Forces in support of a Libyan opposition incapable of overthrowing Qaddafi, and President Bush, who downed Saddam Hussein with more conventional U.S. boots on the ground. By Obama’s calculations, American standing in the Muslim world is somehow enhanced if special forces from Britain, France, and Italy—the three former colonial powers of North Africa—train and militarily guide the natives while the United States kills selectively with predator drones.

The Middle East is now more in play than it has been since the British and French empires started cracking after World War II. The common grievances of the oppressed denizens—the lawlessness of the ruling class, the individual and collective shame that comes with unrequited hopes and ambitions, the unrelenting boredom of young men without enough money or women—have melded with universal ideals. Democracy, individualism, and the (very Islamic) right of rebellion against unjust rulers have combined to give courage to young men and women whose forefathers were often pilloried and praised for their obsequiousness. Hegel’s famous line about Islamic civilization—“Islam has long vanished from the stage of history at large, and has retreated into oriental ease and repose”—obviously needs to be revised. A dynamic spirit is again loose in Arab lands—it’s been galloping in Iran since 1979—altering our and, much more important, their conception of what citizenship means in the Middle East.

This spirit caught President Obama completely off-guard. The president’s odd foreign-policy mix of the “realism” of George H.W. Bush with the anti-imperialism of Frantz Fanon, which has been spiced since Egypt’s revolt with touches of George W. Bush’s freedom agenda, is a welter of contradictions that the president and his staff have yet to glue into a coherent strategy. (Pity the Egyptian, Libyan, and Bahraini prodemocracy demonstrators, or the conservative Saudi or Bahraini ruling families, who are trying to assess the president’s words and actions.) George H.W. Bush is reputed to have remarked when Hosni Mubarak was sent packing that he was a “good man” who did not live ostentatiously and a “true friend of the United States” who has been shabbily treated. His son, on hearing the same news, reportedly called the former Egyptian president a “bastard” who deserved his fall.

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President Obama seems incapable of either sentiment. He obviously knows this is a momentous time for the region—he has said so often. But the abstractness of his attachment to foreign affairs has seeped into the National Security Council and the State Department, making his team often sound like professors testing a new game theory. It leaves him vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the Great Arab Revolt, which have likely only just begun to shake the region. Depending on what happens in Bahrain, Syria, and Libya, the region may get extraordinarily bloody. If Bahrain were to descend into a savage Sunni-versus-Shiite insurrection, inflaming Sunni-Shiite relations in Saudi Arabia's neighboring oil-rich Eastern Province, the United States could easily be looking at \$7-a-gallon gasoline. If Qaddafi goes down, a rebellion could start in neighboring Algeria, which has probably been slow to ignite because of the memories of its ferocious civil war in the 1990s. Turmoil in oil- and natural gas-rich Algeria could also send energy prices spiraling.

LIBYA

Regardless of whether one thinks the president's intervention in Libya was right or wrong, the way he intervened has likely guaranteed that the eventual fall of Qaddafi will cost many more lives and leave Libya in worse shape than if Obama had chosen more aggressive American action—including lots of Special Forces on the ground—earlier. The president had to know—despite whatever Secretary of Defense Robert Gates has said publicly—that the decision to intervene meant regime change. The stiff retorts of Gates to questions about American objectives in Libya show his concern about “mission creep.” It will be brutally ironic if Gates, the administration's preeminent “realist,” who surely would have opposed the Iraq “surge” if he'd stayed in the Iraq Study Group, ends up making in Libya exactly the same mistake as his predecessor, Donald Rumsfeld, in Iraq: dogged opposition to sending sufficient force to accomplish the mission.

The French and the British always knew this wasn't just a humanitarian operation. They also know, better than anyone, that NATO is effective only with American leadership. It is astonishing that Clinton administration officials did not more vigorously warn Obama about the reality of NATO's command structure and culture. It is astonishing that the president, who has watched the European commitment dwindle in Afghanistan, would want to attach the credibility of his presidency to a European-led gambit where, to borrow from Antony Blinken, “patience” is the decisive virtue. (Imagine for a moment that the Algerian military junta, viewing Qaddafi now as a bulwark against internal rebellion, clandestinely supplies the Libyan regime with

munitions and other aid. Our patience then would work to strengthen Qaddafi.) Although this was not Obama's initial intent, he is now trying to turn NATO into an EU defense force, something France and Britain once contemplated and abandoned precisely because both parties realized that the United States really was the “indispensable nation.”

The French and British welfare states have eaten their countries' armed forces (the once formidable Royal Navy will soon not even have a jump-jet aircraft carrier). With the exception of the French, the rest of NATO—“the mightiest military alliance in the world”—is still more pathetic in its capacity to project force, even across the Mediterranean. Given that Obama's own budget would slash American defense spending to help save the American welfare state, he might have had a bit more sympathy for the European predicament. Obama may think, as Ryan Lizza suggests in the *New Yorker*, that his leadership will ultimately be tested further east, with the rise of India and China, and through the management of America's (presumed) relative global decline. But presidential leadership is always tested—often defined—by war. Afghanistan, Iraq, and now Libya, not China (unless Beijing makes a military play for Taiwan), seem on track to write the most telling part of Barack Obama's “profile in courage.”

We are now caught in the peculiar position of having as commander in chief of a new war in the Middle East, a region that mercilessly embraces power politics, a man who sees hesitancy as deliberation and retreat as strength. The crisis of the American welfare state may in part explain the president's reluctance to will the means to complete his own mission; as the columnist E.J. Dionne remarked, war is hell on the spending priorities of progressives. Yet the president's deliberations surely proceed from a mindset that sees American power as prone to cause more harm than good, the belief that American intervention, especially in the Middle East, ineluctably creates virulent antibodies.

In the Kenyan chapters of his autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*, Obama is unsettled by British colonialism in his father's native land. The graduate of Harvard Law was searching for his own authenticity and found the cultural mixing bowl of postcolonial Kenya. Through relatives' voices and his own, Obama expresses regret over the “inorganic” growth of Kenyan culture brought on by the European intrusion. Obama is aware that the British brought more than just the servitude of his grandparents. He, like every American president since Woodrow Wilson, pays tribute to “universal” (that is, Western) rights. Nevertheless, he remains uneasy about our intellectual exports. Like many men of the left, like most “realists,” he gives his attention first to the natives' search for authenticity, not to their pro-found, often bulldozer-like, love affair with Westernization. That Libyans could be inspired by the ideas of freedom and

democracy, and at the same time actually want the United States to blast the hell out of Qaddafi's army, must be disturbing to one who has accepted some of the third-world critique of American imperialism.

EGYPT

Administration officials in any discussion of Libya are quick to underscore the greater importance of Egypt. It is the most populous Arab state, historically the most modern, blessed and cursed with the most consequential lay and religious Arab intellectuals of the 20th century, home to the most influential fundamentalist organization in the Islamic world, and has probably the most embittered population in the region. The distance between Egyptian dreams and Egyptian reality is extreme—in the Middle East, only Iranians might be more angered and propelled by the disconnect between their idealized self-conceptions and their history.

The March 19 referendum effectively ended the Facebook stage of the Egyptian revolt. Until the referendum, it was possible to entertain the idea that the Tahrir Square demonstrations offered a good composite of the country's political preferences. The breathless reporting in both Western and Arabic media about young men and women striving for freedom made it appear that Islam was no longer the political faith of the young and the Muslim Brotherhood was insufficiently modern to command the political high ground after Mubarak's fall.

It's still difficult to grasp the meaning of the vote. In voting "yes," a landslide majority—77.2 percent—endorsed the amending of Egypt's constitution to allow for parliamentary elections by September. But the "liberal" element in the country pushed hard for a "no" vote, in the hope of allowing the unelected provisional government to hold power longer while political parties readied themselves for elections. The liberals lost the argument. The military, for its part, doesn't want to become a focal point of popular anger by ruling directly. It's a near miracle that there haven't been more protests against the military, given how intimately the senior officer corps was intertwined with Mubarak's dictatorship. And it's by no means clear that the military would want more progressive types to do well in elections. Egyptian liberals might take a dimmer view of military spending than the Muslim Brotherhood, which has always had an Islamic Egypt-*über-alles* spirit. Also, the Egyptian hard left may soon get a new birth, seizing the fraternal idealism of the pan-Arabist Gamal Abdel Nasser. Nasserism was rough on the military. Against Israel and in Yemen it didn't do so well (the "pan-Arabist" Yemen fiasco in the 1960s cost over 25,000 Egyptian lives and nearly wrecked the army in what Egyptians have called their Vietnam). The military, whose

upper reaches have become quite cosseted, may not care at all for left-wing secular types' reviving the dear-departed Nasser (no risk of that from the Muslim Brotherhood, which Nasser first embraced and then tortured).

Much has been made of how the Brotherhood and allied preachers rallied the religious countryside and urban areas to vote for Islam by voting "yes" in the referendum. The Western media, whose sympathies understandably are with the Facebook-generation protesters, have taken little note of that portion of "no" voters who saw their vote as a call for transition *and* stability. It's unclear how many of this group are a natural constituency for the Brotherhood, but it's worth remembering that Egyptian society by and large is religious. Faith-based parties have a natural edge over any secular party so far formed because of cultural preferences and class. No matter how much time the liberal secular parties have to organize and hone their message, they will have difficulty winning over these Egyptians, at least until the Muslim Brotherhood is actually tested in office. Patience, here, is a virtue.

A Turkish parallel may be helpful. The center-left standard-bearer of Atatürkism, the Republican People's party, has for years done poorly in elections. There are many reasons for the party's political decline, but a not insignificant one is its culture, which is perhaps best described as "wine-drinking." The CHP, as the party is abbreviated in Turkish, doesn't bother to compete anymore in religious neighborhoods because its senior members generally would rather be whipped than spend much time talking to faithful Turks. In the 1980s, the Motherland party, an eclectic collection of secularists and religious Turks, rose to power because its leaders, especially the unstoppable dynamo Turgut Ozal, were as comfortable with the devout as with the Europeanized Istanbul elite. Until Ozal's personal eccentricities got the better of him, he had a huge following among faithful Turks.

The Motherland party made it okay to be religious (Ozal famously went on the *hajj* to Mecca and decorated his office with *surahs* from the Koran). An Egyptian Motherland party—part secular, part religious—might do very well in elections. No such party has yet emerged, but the reasons for its creation in Turkey could have parallels in Egypt: the failure of mainstream secular parties, especially in handling the economy, and the political and ideological ineptitude of fundamentalists.

So far, however, the Brotherhood hasn't displayed ineptitude. The group's massive social welfare network is already transitioning to a nationwide political party. And the common Western assertion that the Brotherhood no longer appeals to the young should be greeted skeptically. Since its founding in 1928, the Brotherhood has repeatedly experienced quarrels between its younger and older members, and between radicals and conservatives. Each time, the

organization has survived and grown. Its appeal and evolution are, of course, likely to be radically different in a democratic, Internet age. As Iran has shown with increasing clarity since the presidential election of the reformist Mohammad Khatami in 1997, wrapping oneself in Islamic dogma and social values works only so long before the electorate becomes critical, cantankerous, and rebellious.

The Brothers obviously smell victory, as senior members regularly hint that the group will contest an ever-increasing number of parliamentary seats. The Brotherhood has said that it will not put forth a candidate for the presidency for fear of spooking secular Egyptians and the military. But the organization could easily change its mind if it senses a real possibility of triumph. Western and Egyptian analysts have suggested that the group doesn't want to rush to power, given the magnitude of Egypt's economic and social problems. Better to lie back and allow others to flame out trying to bring greater prosperity and social justice to the country's vast underclass.

But that analysis is probably too clever. The politically motivated usually see themselves as essential to addressing the nation's woes. This is especially true for the Brotherhood, who have always diagnosed Egypt's problems first and foremost ethically. Bad *akhlaq*, religious mores, produced bad leaders and bad policies. Better *akhlaq*, which the Brotherhood promises, can't help but be an improvement. And the Brotherhood, if it wins at least 25 percent of the seats in parliament (let alone if it wins the presidency, the power center), could quickly bring more "Muslim virtue" to Egypt. Expect a Muslim Brotherhood-led government to rein in the "Europeanization" of tourism in Egypt—the casinos will go bye-bye, access to alcohol will shrink, and public dress codes may become much more conservative for women.

It's difficult to assess how much appeal the Muslim Brotherhood has within the officer corps (the Egyptian military, unlike the Turkish armed forces, has always been comfortable with devout men within its ranks); probably little in the upper ranks. Egyptian counterintelligence is pretty good, and it's made surveillance of the Brotherhood an art. The Egyptian military has been allowing (maybe encouraging) the partial dismantlement of Mubarak's police state. It's likely, however, that the army will keep in place those units that have specialized in monitoring and placing moles in the Brotherhood. Whatever the inner circles of the Brotherhood are thinking, and we can expect these ruminations to become increasingly public as political campaigns become serious, Egyptian intelligence probably knows it.

Obviously, the armed forces have been willing to allow the Brotherhood running room in Egyptian society. This reflects an official understanding since President Anwar Sadat (who loved to highlight his fastidiousness about daily prayer) that Mother Egypt is devout. The Mubarak regime achieved a certain peace of mind by both pacifying and coopting the Brotherhood. It used police-state coercion, but also left considerable freedom for Brothers to proselytize among the poorly educated and university graduates. More or less unrestricted in their ability to try to convert "bad" Muslims into "good" Muslims, the faithful could pursue their *mission civilisatrice* and refrain from rebellion against the ruling elite.

The regime, meanwhile, didn't have to fear a liberal/Brotherhood alliance. This allowed Mubarak a freer hand to squash any potential liberal opposition, which (unlike tortured Brothers) could gain sympathy in the West and possibly compromise Cairo's billions from Washington and the lucrative tourist trade. The Brothers' "neo-fundamentalism"—which stressed social work and ethics, not politics—became the model for fundamentalists everywhere confronted by powerful Westernized police states. That model is now coming apart.

What is the Egyptian military's tolerance for fundamentalist politics? Probably pretty high. The officer corps lives in its own physically isolated world where its ethics rule supreme. The Brotherhood has been extraordinarily careful in its commentary on the army since the tumult started. The Egyptian military hasn't cracked apart like the shah's. Defense Minister Mohamed Hussein Tantawi, a medal-festooned pillar of the ancien régime and now chairman of the governing council, has proved surprisingly nimble, keeping the revolt's anger directed away from him and towards the more-despised police-state institutions. He seems now to have a working relationship with the Brotherhood. And precisely because the military isn't a bastion of secularism, it could well be comfortable with much more Islam in the public square.

The divisive issue will probably be women. The daughters of senior officers are generally secular and well-educated. And the Brotherhood, like all Muslim fundamentalists, is all about female virtue—protecting it from the depredations of men and the libidinous urges of women. The hinge of modern Egyptian history, the future of the Muslim Brotherhood, may well hang on how socially conservative the army is about women. (If the Brotherhood is undone in parliamentary elections, the odds are good the driving force

President Obama still has some capital in Cairo, given his eventual stand against Mubarak. He should use it to try to preserve the peace treaty with Israel.

behind a more progressive turnout will be faithful Muslim women who nevertheless don't trust the Brotherhood on the issue of women's rights.) The military and the Brotherhood may well do a dance on this issue, which should provoke a healthy national debate about women, especially the personal-status laws mandated by *sharia* (covering marriage, inheritance, child custody, and apostasy). Egyptian law is currently a medley of Holy Law-inspired family statutes circumscribed by French civil law, which became the juridical standard for most issues after World War II. The Brotherhood must try to make Egyptian society more virtuous—more *sharia* and less Code Napoléon. A big, convulsive battle is likely coming to Cairo soon.

But what is most urgent for the administration to understand is that a new Egyptian parliament will probably see a sizable bloc of leftists and Islamists unite for a vote against the peace treaty with Israel. Any Arab democracy will be more “Islamic” as it gives vent to an identity long suppressed by Westernized autocrats. In the beginning, both the left and the religious right will rebel against the preferences of their dethroned “pro-American” autocrats. Administration officials like to talk about the urgent need for economic aid to Egypt, and the possibility of a joint U.S.-EU effort to see Cairo through the difficult next year. But no American aid will arrive—and probably no EU aid either—if an Egyptian parliament votes down the peace accord.

Apart from jeopardizing Western aid, such a vote might have little practical effect. Relations on the ground and in the air between the Egyptian and Israeli militaries are unlikely to change. Muslim Arab democracies will presumably be less likely to go to war with the Jewish state than dictatorships have been, since democracies consume most of their passion internally unless attacked. The Brotherhood's greater focus so far on internal problems suggests that its antipathy towards Israel might be a vote-getter but won't fuel a call for war. And needless to say, the Egyptian Army, which orders weaponry from Washington primarily with the Jewish state in mind, is acutely aware that its “great victory” in 1973 left the Israelis on the western side of the Suez Canal and the Egyptian Army stranded in the Sinai.

But the psychological effect of a no-treaty vote would be enormous—especially in Congress. In Washington there is currently a nonchalance about this issue, a belief that pragmatic economic considerations and the Egyptian military's obvious desire to maintain the treaty will override ideology and emotion. That's a mistake. In a tug of war between pragmatism and passionate principle, the odds are with the latter.

Beyond providing economic aid and generously funding American civil-society and prodemocracy NGOs, which have a big role before them, Washington can do little in Egypt except use the bully pulpit thoughtfully. The first, imperative task is to remind the Egyptian military and the country's burgeoning political parties, as politely as possible, what overturning the treaty would mean. We want to see a lively debate in Egypt about Israel and the United States. We should expect it to be ugly. But we should also work for what would be a hugely important event for the Middle East and the Muslim world: an Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty affirmed by an honestly elected Egyptian parliament, with the Muslim Brothers screaming and shouting in opposition. A vote, of course, could easily go the other way. President Obama still has some capital in Cairo, given his eventual stand against Mubarak. He should use it on this problem before we are confronted with a train wreck.

The Saudis have become the Hapsburgs of the Middle East, discouraging the spread of representative government.

YEMEN

The revolt in Yemen has already complicated the Obama administration's counterterrorist policy. It's conceivable we could get lucky and see a democracy develop that allows sufficient federalism to keep the country's regions happy but enough central control to ensure al Qaeda can't successfully ally itself with a local warlord. Apart from that outside possibility, whatever happens in Yemen, the transition from Ali Abdullah Saleh's dictatorship will take time to settle. Yemen is the least modernized Arab state. Since the 1960s, internal wars have laid the country low. If the memory of these conflicts is sufficiently alive and forbidding, if the Yemeni identity has become sufficiently solid, then another war is unlikely. Without civil war, Saudi Arabia and Iran cannot really use Yemen as an arena for going at each other.

But no matter what happens, the United States is unlikely to have a better counterterrorist relationship with a new government of Yemen than we had with Saleh. Arabs are rebelling against the police states that were our partners in the war against al Qaeda. Saleh's police state was often an ineffectual, Janus-faced ally against Islamic terrorists who've found a sympathetic home in Yemen, so the current turbulence in our intelligence liaison relationship may not be catastrophic. The Obama administration is unlikely to have any great crisis of conscience in dealing with Yemen: Saleh is finished, and even the Saudis know it. Being for greater freedom and democracy in Yemen actually makes good counterterrorist sense since the only way the fractious

country is going to make it peacefully through the current upheavals is if a central government forms that is sufficiently consensual—democratic—to please most people. It is by that route, not through the rise of another strongman, that we are most likely to find counterterrorist partners who don't want their country used as a base for al Qaeda.

JORDAN

In Jordan, Washington is hoping that the demonstrations we've seen for democracy and more lawful governance don't get out of hand. Jordan is now relatively quiet, but it could easily spark again, especially if the Syrian dictator falls and the democratic momentum in the region builds. The Jordanian-Palestinian split in Jordanian society is substantial, though perhaps not intractable. Among Palestinians, who may make up 60 percent of the population, democratic aspirations are real. The same is true, it appears, among many Jordanian tribes, but their democratic aspirations run into the countervailing fear of Palestinian rule. Jordanian-Palestinian integration is greater today than when the Hashemites had their war with the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1970. This closer association probably doesn't yet constitute a real shared national identity, but it constitutes something that works to the advantage of the monarchy.

The Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood has a real power base among the Palestinian poor and in the educated professions. It has no great love for the Hashemites, but neither does it seem to have a burning enmity. It's pretty clear, however, that King Abdullah will become increasingly dependent upon Saudi largesse to fund the more generous, demonstration-suppressing benefits that the crown has promised, especially to his Jordanian tribal base, which is largely dependent upon the public sector and the dole. The Saudis have become the Hapsburgs of the Middle East, discouraging the growth of representative government. King Abdullah—unlike King Mohammed of Morocco, who needs no Saudi cash—will have a very hard time moving in a more democratic direction, especially if the Jordanian elite agrees with the Saudis that any real reform is a slippery slope. Hashemite monarchs have always had a certain Western appeal because of their customs and decent English educations, which have checked royal power. Still, under Saudi pressure, Jordan could become a typical Arab police state.

If Jordan starts to boil again, large street demonstrations may paralyze the Obama administration. A bloodbath in Jordan or a democratic system dominated by Palestinians would certainly make the peace process on the

West Bank a less compelling issue, at least until everyone concerned could figure out the repercussions of a Jordanian upheaval.

BAHRAIN

Problems in Bahrain could also paralyze the administration. It appears now the decision by King Hamad bin Isa al-Khalifa to use the iron fist has squashed the democratic protests. Most in Washington hope that the king's tactics will work—and won't lead to an Iranian-fed guerrilla movement on the island.

Crown Prince Salman continues to give the impression, as does much of the Sunni Bahraini business elite, that the Khalifa family must negotiate some compromise with the Shia, who make up around 60 percent of the island's population. But it is difficult to see how this could happen. The Saudis, who financially saved the Bahraini banking community when the democratic protests started and have again sent troops to help keep the Khalifas in power, would take a dim view of any compromise that gave the Shia real democratic power.

Much of the Bahraini Shiite elite has been arrested. They have most likely been beaten, if not worse. Pakistani mercenaries deployed shotguns against the Shiite crowds. The independent Bahraini press, which was both Sunni and Shiite-staffed, has been shut down. So unless the crown prince can somehow perform a miracle and reopen intercommunal talks, we will have to wait and see whether the crackdown breaks the back of the Shiite opposition. Given that the Bahraini Shiite community has been fairly well organized for years, which is in part a reflection of the Bahraini Sunni elite's un-Saudi-like tolerance, the arrests could prove devastating.

The State Department has emphasized, no doubt correctly, that the upheaval in Bahrain has not been Iranian-inspired. Nonetheless, Washington fears growing Iranian influence on the island, which has effectively made Washington an ally of King Hamad, who provides anchorage for the U.S. Fifth Fleet. If the demonstrations start again, we should expect the Shia to have a much more anti-American edge.

SYRIA

Syria is the one place where the Saudis are probably deeply torn, given their distaste of the ruling Alawites, Shiite schismatics, and the likelihood of Sunni rule if the Assad family falls. A Sunni Syria could, however, be democratic.

For now, dictator Bashar al-Assad is trying to use tanks and snipers to quiet the citizenry. The internal dynamics of

the rebellion remain unclear. Has the revolt become sectarian, pitting the majority Sunni population against the Alawite-dominated government? Or has Bashar been able to maintain the loyalty of most Sunni military officers? Early in the tumult, Lebanese journalists reported the quick execution of Sunni military officers who refused to shoot at the mostly Sunni youths on the streets. It increasingly appears that Sunni Syria is in rebellion, that the children of the civilian Sunni middle class—the children of Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs—have joined the demonstrations. If the revolt has spread throughout Sunni Syria, then the odds of Assad and his Alawite clan surviving are small.

If the Alawites fall, the principal question will be whether the Sunni community feels indulgent towards the Alawites, who represent a little over 10 percent of the population. If not, then we can expect the Sunnis to take an awful vengeance. The odds of a Syrian democracy arising out of such carnage would be poor. More likely, a Sunni military man, or military council, will eventually seize power. (The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, badly battered by the Assad regime, by all appearances has limited appeal in mosques countrywide.) Popular pressure could rise against this rule, too—the democratic spirit is real in Syria. But the Sunni center might not back such an upheaval after a bloodletting against the Alawites. The desire for calm could be overwhelming.

If Assad falls, the Sunnis might recognize the Alawites as fellow victims of tyranny (essentially the view the Iraqi Shiite clergy took towards the Iraqi Sunni community immediately after the fall of Saddam). In that case, Syria might have a democratic chance. The Syrian national identity—an utterly fabricated sentiment dating from the 19th century—has taken on substance. It's still an evolving concept, but it unmistakably pulls at the heart of Sunni, Christian, and Alawite Syrians. Nationalism is easily the most successful Western export to Islamic lands—it has stuck just about everywhere. Syria is a very Westernized Arab state. It shouldn't be too surprising that the democratic ethos has infected the population.

If, however, Assad can keep the loyalty of the Sunni military class, he can probably kill his way to “stability.” The interests of the United States should be clear: We should want the Assad regime to go down. It has encouraged terrorism for over 40 years, waged war against us in Iraq through jihadist proxies, tried to develop a clandestine nuclear program imported from North Korea, been Tehran's best ally among Arab states, and provided the Islamic Republic with a lifeline to the Lebanese

Hezbollah, revolutionary Iran's only foreign offshoot.

The fall of the Alawites would immediately isolate Hezbollah, who need the Syrians to watch their back and allow Iranian weaponry to reach them. Hezbollah would have to guard their weapon stocks and be extraordinarily sensitive to provoking the Israelis. They would likely hunker down in Lebanon and hope the final judgment of the U.N. investigation into the 2005 murder of former prime minister Rafik Hariri—expected to confirm a Hezbollah role in the killing—doesn't produce an international backlash, especially among faithful but not radical Lebanese Shiites, at home and abroad, who give money to Hezbollah because that's what good Shiites do.

Without Syrian support, the group would have to become far better at economics. Shiite Lebanese journalists have reported that Iranian-funded construction projects in southern Lebanon have already slowed or stopped

because of Tehran's financial difficulties, largely stemming from international sanctions, exploding state subsidies, and declining oil production. Iranian and Syrian aid has been critical to Hezbollah's budget, which must maintain an extensive social-services network as well as the military machine. The fall of Assad would likely allow other Shiite parties in Lebanon to grow in influence. His downfall would also have an effect in Iran. Each Arab dictatorship that falls

sends another shock wave through the Islamic Republic, threatening to reignite the Green Movement. The fall of the Islamic Republic's closest ally, which Tehran is reportedly now aiding with high-tech surveillance equipment, would be one powerful jolt.

Unfortunately, the Obama administration is again conflicted, this time by its commitment to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. The administration put a lot into its engagement policy with Syria, hoping like Republican administrations before it to convince Damascus to support the peace process and stop supporting Hezbollah and Hamas. From Henry Kissinger to John Kerry, the Assad family has played Americans and their never-ending belief that a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace is the beginning and end of Middle Eastern policy. Despite what's happened in the region since the tumult in Tunisia, this American reflex hasn't stopped. The fall of Assad would convulse the peace-processing mind: Who knows what would follow him? Washington certainly fears a triumphant Syrian Muslim Brotherhood. That the odds of such a triumph are poor matters little, given Washington's growing unease with all the unknowns of the Great Arab Revolt.

The fall of the Alawites would immediately isolate Hezbollah, who need the Syrians to watch their back while Iranian weaponry reaches them.

A winning American policy in Syria would already have Washington sending a powerful message to the Syrian military establishment: As long as they refuse to relinquish power, they will all be held accountable for their crimes. No expiration date. But if Assad and the Alawite regime fall, we will do business with their successors, especially if they transition to democracy. Expanded trade and natural gas exploration and development deals in an Assad-free Syria would be a priority.

If President Obama continues his present course, anti-American sentiment in Syria will likely skyrocket, which is a strategic shame since the United States has a chance of improving its standing in a democratic Syria, given how much anti-American vitriol the Assads have pumped out. My enemy's enemy might, just possibly, become a friend. In most of the Arab Middle East, where the United States has allied itself with dictatorships, the democratic wave is likely to produce the opposite result. The one thing we can be certain of: If Assad hangs on, he'll be even closer to the Iranians than before, and the Syrian police state, which is already sinister, will become even worse.

SAUDI ARABIA

President Obama could make a difference in Syria. He unquestionably could save the United States from a protracted struggle in Libya by putting something more lethal than CIA intelligence-collection sneakers on the ground. Washington could do more good in Libya than anywhere else because we are now engaged there militarily, and we and the Europeans can influence what comes after Muammar Qaddafi. Boots on the ground can make friends as well as enemies. They always make people listen more attentively. Although President Obama, like most of the American left, recoils from the idea that military power is indispensable to the conduct of foreign affairs, the Middle East may give him a painful primer if Qaddafi ends up making the United States look pathetically weak.

Libya should be the most urgent issue at the White House. Then Syria. Then Egypt. Then Yemen, Bahrain, and Jordan. But before the president goes to bed at night, understandably worn out thinking about these countries, he can think about Saudi Arabia and how to deal with an oil giant that uses its immense wealth to reinforce the authoritarian status quo throughout the region.

The Arab Spring hasn't really touched Saudi Arabia and probably won't until devout citizens in the streets of Mecca and Medina start demanding greater representation. That could happen, faster than Westerners might think, if the annual pilgrimage, the *hajj*, starts carrying to Arabia faithful Muslims who believe that God has no objection to voting. The Najd—the heartland of the country's intolerant

Wahhabi faith—has traditionally used the sword and piles of cash to ensure intellectual conformity within the Saudi realm. These tactics may prove less successful if the democratic wave brings lasting representative government to the Middle East, especially to the intellectual heavyweights—Egypt, Iraq, and Syria.

The Saudis will continue to cause considerable mischief funding the forces of reaction. Since 1979 and the Islamic revolution in Iran, they've enthusiastically funded Islamists worldwide. They will surely increase their funding to Islamists uncertain about the democratic promise. They will probably turn their own country into a much more rigorous police state, increasingly intolerant of reformist sentiment.

Needless to say, Saudi King Abdullah will not likely forgive President Obama for giving up on Mubarak. But once the democratic spirit got loose in the region, the United States and the Saudi Kingdom were on a collision course. Our relationship had been largely defined by hypocrisy: We didn't talk about liberal democracy, and we pretended not to notice that the richly endowed Wahhabi religious establishment was spreading a virulent anti-Western orthodoxy far and wide. It's worthwhile to return to President Obama's first trip to Saudi Arabia, when Obama obviously thought he was visiting a land—a royal family—that defined in great part the Muslim identity. The president spoke about the many "mutual interests" between Saudi Arabia and the United States. (Beyond oil and preventing a nuclear Iran, it's pretty hard now to see any shared interests.) Obama's outreach to the Muslim world was in part an outreach to King Abdullah and the Saudi establishment, which the president saw as a legitimate expression of the Islamic faith.

But we are witnessing in the Middle East the collapse of an order where the Saudis gained heft because they'd aligned themselves with the only identity that the Middle East's Westernized dictators couldn't stamp out. Islam under the Saudis was fundamentalist and aggressive but intellectually static. The Great Arab Revolt will bring competition—more so than Islam has seen since pan-Arabism thundered across the region after World War II. The great Russian writer on the Middle East Alexei Vassiliev once wrote: "It is difficult to say whether [Saudi Arabia's] combination of modern and traditional elements, of Western and Arab (Islamic) civilizations, will prove to be an organic synthesis. . . . Any serious change or social unrest in the country may have far-reaching international consequences." The synthesis isn't going to work if democracy gains ground among Muslims. The Saudis have a lot of cash. But money doesn't always buy you loyalty and love.

The "special" Saudi-American relationship survived 9/11. The spread of democracy throughout the Middle East will be much more challenging, for them and us. ♦

Miami Vice

*Mayoral candidate Luther Campbell,
not as nasty as he used to be*

BY MATT LABASH

Miami

For over two decades, Luther Campbell has been having a conversation with America. Unfortunately, most of it can't be repeated here. As the leader of the sexually explicit, obscenity-spewing rap group 2 Live Crew in the early nineties, he was targeted by everyone from Florida prosecutors to Tipper Gore for his lyrical content. Campbell, an accidental First Amendment hero (he's fond of quoting his constitutional lawyer, and Bruce Springsteen lent him "Born in the U.S.A." so he could remake it as "Banned in the U.S.A."), prevailed in his anti-obscenity case in the Eleventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Likewise, he prevailed in a copyright case in the Supreme Court, where 2 Live Crew's parody of Roy Orbison's "Oh, Pretty Woman" (*Two timin' woman that takes a load off my mind / Two timin' woman now I know that baby ain't mine*) was ruled fair use. The High Court did not weigh in on the deleterious effects of self-parody.

As one of the first acts to earn a parental advisory sticker with 2 Live Crew's double platinum-selling "As Nasty As They Wanna Be" album, and as the architect of the still-enduring Miami bass sound (or "booty music" as it's called in the trade, with all the bumping, pumping, heaving-glutei-as-jiggling-Jell-O-mold videos it inspires), Campbell has done his part to make the F-word, the B-word, the P-word, and pretty much any other word you can imagine commonplace in our national discourse, such as it is.

Since his success with 2 Live Crew (now disbanded), Uncle Luke, as he is known, has been busy: making and losing millions, filing for bankruptcy in 1995, discovering new bestselling acts like H-Town and Pitbull, starring in a VH1 reality show (*Luke's Parental Advisory*), and peddling his "urban adult entertainment" *Freak Show* videos on the Internet, in which Campbell, aspiring to be the "black Hugh Hefner," narrates hair-raising groupie exploits.

But Campbell is now 50 years old. In hip-hop years, that makes him something akin to Methuselah. He has a new

wife (his first) and a new baby (nowhere near his first). A half a century on, the hip-hop artist once responsible for our unofficial national anthem ("Me So Horny") is looking to better himself, and in turn, to better the city in which he lives. As he told his hometown paper in a flare-up of civic consciousness, "I'm not degrading women any more, I'm leaving that up to the other guys."

Sure, you can still buy the *Freak Show* DVDs on his website, along with his CDs and music downloads—a man has to eat and pay child support. But having recently disassociated from Uncle Luke's VIP Gentleman's Club—a strip club he licensed his name to in West Palm Beach—Campbell is going legit. That is, if you consider entering politics more noble work than twirling naked around a pole for strangers. For Uncle Luke has a plan: to become the next mayor of Miami-Dade County, the eighth-most populous county in the United States.

He is not alone. As of this writing, 10 other candidates have the same plan for a May 24 special election after two-term mayor Carlos Alvarez was driven from office in a March recall election by a whopping 88-12 percent margin—the most lopsided recall of a local politician in U.S. history. Alvarez blames his ouster on everything from a bad roll of the recession dice (unemployment in the area is now 12 percent) to the efforts of the hard-charging billionaire agitator Norman Braman, the former owner of the Philadelphia Eagles, a renowned art collector, and a car dealership magnate.

After Alvarez addressed budget shortfalls by hiking property taxes on 40 percent of local homeowners, Braman, who has ranked as high as 281 on the *Forbes 400*, went to the mattresses, spending \$1 million to engineer Alvarez's demise. In the process, he has become the unofficial spokesperson for irate Miami-Dade residents, which these days seems to encompass pretty much everyone.

Braman has laid out a long list of grievances. For starters: Miami-Dade Transit got half its budget stripped by the feds for shoddy accounting; the city built an extravagant baseball park for the Florida Marlins, which will cost the average family of four \$4,000 apiece when many can't even afford tickets to a game; Alvarez hiked real estate taxes by \$178 million, then gave \$132 million in pay

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ADRIAN LUBBERS

increases to county staffers, many of whom were already making six figures. And then there was the aneurysm-inducing matter of Alvarez tooling around in a taxpayer-funded BMW 500i Gran Turismo when he already had access to two chauffeured SUVs.

As the *Miami Herald's* Fred Grimm recently detailed, South Florida is no stranger to exotic political scandals, from mayoral arrests, to a whore-mongering county commissioner absconding to Australia, to truly curious instances of public-servant plundering—such as the 4,200 trees that went missing from a county right of way. Even one of the purported frontrunners in the special election, Hialeah mayor Julio Robaina, has snagged headlines after being investigated in a loansharking/Ponzi scheme.

By contrast, Alvarez, who was pilloried for bad judgment, not corruption, was a choirboy. Still, voter sentiment against entrenched political arrogance has turned surly enough that an outsider like Uncle Luke, the man responsible for such timeless classics as “I Ain’t Bullshittin’, Pt. 4,” might be considered a viable alternative.

Or at least he’s not being openly laughed at. As one *Herald* columnist wrote upon Campbell’s announced candidacy: “In a country that has largely merged corporate celebrity and politics, Luke is as credible a candidate as any.”

I first drop in on Campbell’s world by making a left out of my hotel in South Beach, where if you’re not a gay underwear model with 5 percent body fat it’s easy to feel like a giant pair of rumpled khakis, then taking a right to the wrong side of the tracks. Miami has lots of those sides. I’m meeting Campbell at a youth summit at a church in West Perrine, the kind of church where Jesus and John the Baptist are depicted as black men on the stained-glass windows, in the kind of neighborhood where the gas-station cashier scans the barcode of your soda through a bulletproof window. But I have difficulty locating the candidate when I arrive. Church ladies fussing over buffet trays are stumped when I ask if they’ve seen him.

In the men’s room, I ask a few 15-year-olds if they’ve seen Campbell, thinking surely they’d be aware of a star on their premises. “I don’t know no Luther Campbell,” says a kid who goes by Baby Razz, also a rapper. “Only Luther I know is Luther Vandross, and he *deeeaaaad*.” The march of time is cruel, even, and perhaps especially, for hip-hop legends.

I find Campbell already seated in the sanctuary, and we

whisper introductions. He looks rather anonymous in dark jeans, topsider boots, and a short-sleeved flannel shirt. When he stands, he’s an imposing 6’3”, but for now he’s slumped inconspicuously in a back pew, taking in the youth summit, which is nearly devoid of youth but choked full of the concerned citizens, local do-goodniks, and community activists who all favor the P-word. Not the P-word in Uncle Luke’s songs but, rather, “programs.” They’re not happy with the ones that exist, and they want a lot of new ones.

They want more financial education. They want summer jobs. They want year-round jobs. They want, they want, they want. Then they want to hog the open-mike and talk about how the system is broken. (No fooling—at the rate everyone wants something, Alvarez would’ve had to hike property taxes on the other 60 percent of the electorate.)

This is what Luke calls part of his “listening tour,” shuttling around the community and listening to the concerns of the people, which he often does anyway as a de facto ambassador for those he calls “the have-nots” and as a weekly columnist for the *Miami New Times*. In columns, Campbell often takes up local causes when not playing a wildly unpredictable national troublemaker. He classifies himself as being part of the “Hip Hop Party,” which seems to entail saying whatever the hell he wants with no particular political alle-

giance. So the former First Amendment champion might, for instance, please liberals by suggesting the government shut down the Tea Party, whom he considers a hate group. Then he’ll throw a bone to libertarians, decrying the Transportation Security Administration, the TSA, as “T’n’A” for their invasive frisking, while suggesting rappers be allowed to carry arms in the workplace, since they work in some pretty dangerous places. Then he might side with conservatives against the Ground Zero mosque as an insult to our dead soldiers. (“Muslims don’t need to explain their religion to Americans. We can go online to find out about Islam.”)

Part of the problem with being on a listening tour is that other people want to do all the talking, even when they have nothing to say. One gentleman suggests kids need yoga before stressful tests. Another offers, “I come from a father that beat you for everything. There was no ADHD in my family.” Campbell laughs, leans over, and whispers, “The kids just came in—scared the hell out of ’em.” Another man feels he has the cure for what’s ailing our shiftless youth: “Bring back the draft!”

Campbell, recognized by local functionaries, is himself drafted into taking the microphone. After graciously

Before he started DJ’ing in local parks and eventually founded a hip-hop empire, he swept floors, was a cook in a hospital, washed windows until his shoulders ached, did whatever he had to do to find a little extra.

thanking all the speakers who preceded him, he sets adrift down a bizarre tributary, talking about how important it is to expunge the records of student athletes who are not convicted of crimes, but who have their mug shots shown on television, thus jeopardizing their scholarships. As an electoral fire-starter, it doesn't exactly have the ignition potential of a property-tax revolt. But it seems to really be bugging him.

In the parking lot afterwards, I watch him get accosted by a groupie. At least I thought she was a groupie. She turns out to be a volcanic activist in a zebra-print micro-skirt, erupting about police goon squads and disparities in public housing funding and how "we need our money and resources to educate our black, African-American children RIGHT NOW!" Every elected official in spittle-range seems to roll under his car to find shelter.

But Uncle Luke just smiles in avuncular fashion, absorbing her rage, until she punches herself out, feels better, and departs. When I ask him why the bee in his bonnet about mug shots and scholarships, he cites a few recent cases and talks about how easy it is for kids who live in the roughneck neighborhoods he comes from to have inevitable encounters with trouble, even if they're good kids.

He grew up in Liberty City but came from a solid two-parent family, his dad a custodian, his mom a beautician. They were poor, but he worked hard. Even before he started DJ'ing in local parks, building from one speaker to two, then many, until he eventually founded a hip-hop empire—creating many jobs, he reminds you with his politician's hat firmly affixed—Luther swept floors, was a cook in a hospital, washed windows until his shoulders ached, did whatever he had to do to find a little extra. At one point as a kid, he even rented a Pac Man machine, put it in his mom's utility room for the neighborhood children, and split the profits with the owner.

But trouble still found him, and he it. While he made it out of Liberty City, he didn't leave unmarked. So while he's never done time, his jurisprudence hit list in Miami-Dade alone shows nine entries going back to 1979, everything from loitering to inciting a riot to improperly exhibiting a weapon. All were misdemeanors or dismissed. But now that he's a mentor to kids, both as the cofounder of a Liberty City Optimist Club football program (he started it with 75 grand of his own money as a young rapper, and it's been going strong for over 20 years) and a defensive coordinator for the Miami Northwestern High football team, his past still comes back to bite him.

At this very moment, he's in a battle to get recertified through the state because of his record. If he's unsuccessful, he might not be allowed to continue coaching. His goal as a coach is to get kids through school and find an escape hatch from places like Liberty City. At Miami Central, where he coached linebackers last year, he says they placed 18 kids in college ("We won before we kicked the ball off"). So he's not just talking about the kids he coaches getting the slate wiped clean. In a way, he's talking about someone much closer to home. "I was that kid," he says.

The next afternoon, I arrive to hang out with Campbell at his house. But as is his custom, he's on Uncle Luke time—which seems to run an hour and a half slower than conventional clocks. Campbell now lives a world away from Liberty City, in a golf course community

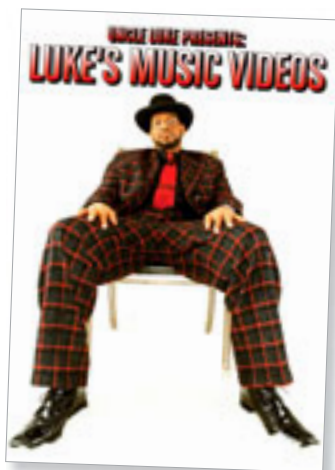
at the Country Club of Miami in Hialeah, a place where Jackie Gleason used to host Bing Crosby on the links, and where Jack Nicklaus played in his first professional tournament. (Campbell is an eight-handicap when playing regularly.)

His six-bedroom house is the only gated one in the development—the better to keep out interlopers trying to drop off demo CDs. Sitting curbside, I call him to complain that I've been waiting in the car for a spell, and he apologizes, cursing about crossed wires. Forgetting that I'd need to jump the fence, he hospitably asks, "Did you at least get in the pool?" His strikingly elegant lawyer wife Kristin, 20 years his junior, is just back from a social networking conference. She drives

up and lets me in.

They've been married since 2008. But the house, which Luke has lived in since the '90s and which they are trying to sell, still has the *Cribs* bachelor-pad touches—from the gold records to the framed football jerseys. The only décor in the cavernous double-spiral-staircased atrium is his Big Bertha golf clubs, propped against a door. His china cabinet contains the funeral program for his mother (whom he adored and called "my old gal") as well as a Miami Dolphins helmet and Miami Hurricanes memorabilia. Campbell is such a Hurricanes fanatic that he was famously accused of paying bounties to players for everything from touchdowns to interceptions. He denied it for years, then admitted it, then denied it to me again, seemingly forgetting that he'd already admitted it.

There is also the evident domestic bliss, totally incongruent with the image cultivated over decades that inspired Campbell to record road-warrior tales in his audio "book," *My Life & Freaky Times*, about the groupie scene. Nowadays,



Old, bad-boy Luke

his house is filled with a barking cocker spaniel named Russie, *Dora the Explorer* videos, and parenting magazines. Kristin, who has served as Luke Entertainment's lawyer, says they're phasing out the old business and relaunching the music and a possible sports-bar franchise. But the *Freak Show* video days are over, she says hopefully. She takes to the kitchen, starting that night's chili. "I just rediscovered the crockpot," she chirps.

When Luke finally arrives, he plunks down for a chat at his granite kitchen bar, while the pandemonium starts swirling around him. His phone rarely stops ringing. A crew for *Rolling Out*, a national urban/hip-hop/lifestyle magazine, drops in to set up for a family photo shoot. A group of applicants comes to see him about their plans to raise money to put a water park in Liberty City. When I ask why, since there's still the formality of him getting elected mayor from a crowded field with many established local politicians, he laughs about his role, which often sees him troubleshooting for community types from Liberty City to Overtown: "I'm already the unofficial mayor. You didn't know that?"

Amidst the chaos, we knock out the boring policy stuff. Campbell's platform ranges from reducing the property tax to encouraging economic growth to providing affordable housing and more secure communities. But with Miami facing a budget crisis, his signature issue—the one that's captured national headlines—is his proposed stripper tax, which is not a stunt. He means it.

As a man who has spent a fair amount of time in the presence of strippers ("I can't go to strip clubs anymore—it don't look cool for the mayor to be in a strip club"), it occurred to Luke that here was a major tax loophole. All those bills raining down on girls, none of it being reported as income. "A large amount of revenue is missing," says Luke. He estimates that Atlanta, which licenses exotic dancers, has a good 15,000 of them, and Miami should outpace them, stripper-wise. Just look around. If Luke's stripper estimate is right, there are more dancers working in recession-era Miami than construction workers.

I ask him if he's worried about losing the stripper vote. Not at all, he says. He wants to use the revenue to help fund youth programs like the ones we heard people complaining about being defunded the night before—for constructive things, like girls' softball leagues. "I've talked to many

strippers," Campbell says, "and they say, look, as long as the money is going to kids, they don't have no problem with it. You have a lot of exotic dancers that put their kids in these programs, like youth football programs, because that's where the father figure is at." Plus, he adds, "If you tax the girls, now they have to do their own books. They're legal. They're taking control of their own finances and being much more responsible."

The only voting bloc he sees a problem with "is the strippers who have pimps, because that would be tapping their money." Also known as hookers, I helpfully suggest. "I wouldn't say hookers," he cautions. Then what shall we call them? "I would say dancers with a pimp," he asserts. "Hookers are girls on the street." I stand corrected, offering that as part of the shadow economy, pimps probably don't vote. Luke shakes his head in disagreement. "I'm pretty sure pimps vote," he says. "A pimp is a responsible individual. [If not], a girl won't trust him with her finances."

Just then, one of Luke's affable messaging guru/fundraisers, James Amps, who is sitting in the kitchen listening, clears his throat and asks to see Luke outside. As 10 minutes pass, I watch the chili cook. When they come back, and Luke has to dress out for a photo shoot, I ask Amps if that confab was about Luke's stripper tax answer. In keeping with Campbell's promise to have utmost transparency in his administration—he has vowed to practically make it a "reality show"

—Amps admits indeed it was.

Amps was just being careful. He wants to make sure that taxes collected from strippers can be earmarked for such programs, and if not, how they can find alternative funding, which is what's really important to Luke. Plus, when reporters hear the words "stripper tax"—not an everyday occurrence on any campaign trail—they tend to hear nothing else. "The platform is bigger than that," says Amps.

Luke cleans up nicely in a four-button black suit with a pocket square fanning out like peacock plumage. He's not big on taking directions from photographers, or anyone. When they tell him to tuck in his shirt tightly, he blouses it out, saying that's the way he does it. He holds his untied tie in hand, grousing that that's the hardest part of campaigning, "learning how to tie a tie."

I ask if he knows how. "No," he says, "my dad always tried to teach me." He manages though, making a wan



New, family-man Luke

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looking knot, then trying again. I suggest going with the P. Diddy-style full Windsor, befitting a hip-hop mogul. A fat knot connotes distinction. “If you go with the four-in-hand, you get the small knot,” I instruct him. He waves me off. “I’ll take the forearm,” he says, mishearing me.

Campbell speaks a lot about kids, whom he clearly loves. Not just about the ones he coaches, but about his and Kristin’s adorable 18-month-old Blake. He baby-talks to Blake, asking—in good football coach fashion—if he wants his “mouthpiece” (“girls have pacifiers, boys have mouthpieces”). So I ask Campbell how many kids he has. “Five,” he says. Having just read up on Campbell’s past, I had an unofficial count of six, by four different mothers. “What are you countin’, you addin’ some kids on me?” Luke snaps.

“Hold on,” he says, settling down. He starts ticking them off. There’s Shanitrus, Lutheria, Lucretia, Luther Jr., Brooklyn (he broke the news about Brooklyn to his other kids on-camera during the reality show—they didn’t seem terribly surprised), and Blake. “You were right,” he concedes. “Blake makes six. . . . But he’s like my homeboy, so he doesn’t seem like it.”

While Blake is the only child living in Campbell’s house, his cavalier forgetfulness opens up a can of worms. Two of his then-teenaged children—Lucretia and Luther—were costars on his 2008 VH1 reality show, *Luke’s Parental Advisory*, which largely recast Luke as a hip-hop Cliff Huxtable, albeit one who requests stripper poles on his wedding cake and who clowns on his son for having an ugly girlfriend (though he did, in fairness, severely reprimand him for dating a 13-year-old with a baby). In fact, Campbell says, the show only lasted one season because his family wasn’t dysfunctional enough for reality producers’ taste. If only they’d stuck around.

After the show, Lucretia made headlines by blasting her father in an Internet video that went viral. Seeming a wee bit eager to be on camera, she said, among many things: “He’s not a good father. . . . Luke used to beat my mom, . . . he even, like, shot her in the leg I think. . . . Nobody told him to have sex and have me and five other kids. . . . It’s time for *Lucretia’s Parental Advisory*, biaaaaaatch.” While Luke has spoken elsewhere about gold-digging travails with his kids’ mothers, how they lie to the court about how much child support he’s paid (an outlay he says is “in the millions”), and how Lucretia’s mom in particular poisons the children against him, he shakes his head in befuddlement about that video.

“Right!” he says facetiously about shooting her mom in the leg. “And you as the great reporter would have to find

that report. Where that s— at? I didn’t shoot nobody. . . . I love my kids. And I always love my kids. And kids are kids. If they decide they are upset because Dad did not take them to the Hip Hop Honor Awards, and he took Blake, it’s so easy for a kid to make a mistake these days by going on a website and doing something like that. When I was a kid and got mad, I ran away. We feared the belt when I was growing up. We live in a totally different time. They can go in a back room and tweet about their dad. And if you’re a celebrity dad, you’re all over the place.”

What bothered him most, he says, is how Lucretia was hurt from the episode. Friends related to him how she was getting torn up by commenters on the websites on which it ran. “That’s my daughter. I love her. So I was much more upset, not what she said about me. . . . I was upset her [mom and stepdad] allowed her to do that for her to get tore down like that.”

Does he have a checkered past? Absolutely, he says. And he’s responsible for relating most of it—it’s all out there already. While other candidates have to worry about skeletons in their closet, he has a unique situation: “Ain’t no skeletons. They out. They been out. They gotta go find some s— that nobody knows about. ‘Ohhhh, Luke did some mass

murderin’ and s—.’ All my stuff is out there. Google it.”

“I ain’t afraid of anything,” he says. Not even kingmaker Norman Braman, who has seen most of the Miami front-runners meekly sign on to his multipoint “Covenant With the People,” for fear of getting crosswise of the man who unseated Alvarez. Luke’s met with Braman, and likes him, but “I can’t say whether [his covenant] is good or bad. I gotta do some research.” Everyone else signs on, he says, “because they’re scared of Braman. I’m not scared of nobody! At the end of the day, I’m not just gonna sign onto anything so I can lie to the people again. That’s what politicians do.”

As for Luke’s historical promiscuity, he claims that’s a thing of the past now that he’s married. And that it’s overblown anyway, which is a little hard to swallow, if you’re even casually familiar with his work. He started wild, he admits. He did crazy things. But after a while, sex was a business, one he didn’t take home. He tired of the groupies, especially when realizing that they’d been with the last artist who came through. “I ain’t no piece of meat,” Luke says. “I take pride in going to a club and saying, ‘Have I ever had sex with anybody here?’ And nobody can say ‘yeah.’ I take pride in that.”

Perhaps, I suggest, he has stumbled onto the most memorable of campaign slogans: “Vote for Luther Campbell—he has not had sex with you, surprisingly.”

I suggest that he has stumbled onto the most memorable of campaign slogans: ‘Vote for Luther Campbell—he has not had sex with you, surprisingly.’

Smack in the heart of Liberty City, on a football field with a tilted, rusty goalpost, I'm brought deeper into Uncle Luke's world. He arrives late, as usual. The players are already out on the field, running pad-less spring conditioning drills. He waves me off when I ask him a question—no time to talk, as the newly appointed defensive coordinator for the Miami Northwestern High Bulls has to take command.

Football here is serious business. In the ESPN documentary "The U," about the Miami Hurricanes in their glory years, Luke compared football in Miami to gymnastics in China. They start young, and they finish strong. While Northwestern High is an F-rated school once labeled a "dropout factory" by a Johns Hopkins University study, it has been a breeding ground for blue-chip college football programs and future NFL players. Many of its players were reared in the fiercely competitive local Pop Warner leagues, which mandate keeping grades up (hence the league's formal name: "Pop Warner Little Scholars"). Coach Luke has taken his own Pop Warner team, the Liberty City Warriors, to the national championships twice (winning in 2005).

On the field, it sounds a bit like a 2 Live Crew concert, profanity-wise, as Luke speeds from drill to drill, letting the sword swing to motivate his defensive backs, keeping the kids battle-tested for smashmouth Miami-style football with a long string of smack talk: *Get yo' ass out of there big boy, before I send you over to the big boy's club. . . . Turn the muthaf— quick, you just got yo' ass whupped. . . . I learn no names until you knock the s— out of somebody. If I see you in a grocery store and don't use your name, that means you ain't nobody out here.*

The team is 99 percent African-American, except for one Latino player, whose name Coach Luke uses as a foil. First, he calls him "Julio Robaina" (one of his many Cuban mayoral competitors) but then switches to "Chico," as in: "Hey Chico, I only lost three games in six years—master technician!" Or, "Chico—these black people, you gotta go slow for 'em. You, I only gotta tell one time. I gotta tell them a few times."

The kids, of course, love it. Players he's coached tell me Luke rides them on the field and off, picking them up to come work out, hassling them about their grades, badgering their colleges of choice to give them scholarships. Coaches tell me he is a Talmudic game-film watcher, a details-obsessed X's-and-O's man who leaves no advantage unexplored. While it's an unresolvable contradiction

for a man whose daughter blasts him as a deadbeat dad on the Internet, a Pop Warner coach tells me Luke represents something many of his players don't get in the maelstrom that is often their home lives: order and discipline.

"It's why youth programs are so important in our community," confides Luke. "We have a lot of single parent household situations. If you in Bal Harbour, you've got mom and dad sittin' there with income over a hundred thousand dollars, so they can afford a nanny and a good school. In this community, to a lot of these kids out here—I'm Dad."

After practice, I follow Luke in my rental car, as he gives two players a lift, then a few bucks out of his wallet for train fare as they depart. He says he views his meager \$1,500-a-year coaching salary as a relief fund, helping kids who might be hungry, as many come from broken homes, some floating from house to house, wherever they can find a place to crash.

While he came from a good home, he knows how heavily the odds are stacked against his charges. As a star linebacker in high school, Luke fantasized about growing up to be Bob Lilly, the ferocious Dallas Cowboys' defensive tackle. Thanks to his skills, he was bused to a white school in Miami Beach so he could play football, where he was passed without scrutiny, failing to learn how to read until eleventh grade. "To this day, I despise that," he says. He doesn't want to see that happen to his players. In fact,

he's quit coaching Optimist Club/Pop Warner for the time being, moving up to high school, because he realized he was losing too many of his little guys to prison when they grew up, and he wanted to come closer to seeing them through.

Luke offers a tour of Liberty City and Overtown, inviting me to jump into his Range Rover, where the Baron of Booty Music keeps the dial tuned to Lite FM (he loves Peter Frampton and Cyndi Lauper). He takes me to Hadley Park, where the Pop Warner coaches hang out at the fields as if at a barber shop, reaming each other mercilessly, as Luke announces to his comrades, while pointing to me, "I'm driving with the white man, and he ain't the police."

He takes me by his childhood home and the nearby "Pork'n'Beans Projects." "Right there," Luke points. "Lotta crime, lotta people getting killed. If I dropped you off in there, you might not make it to the corner." Every corner, it seems, elicits a memory: of Uncle Ricky teaching him how to read a newspaper, of the park where his original crew, the Ghetto Style DJs, played and were shooed off by a cop who said, "Y'all niggers get the f— out of here." It's where he was charged for starting a riot, when the cop's admonition didn't go down so smoothly.



The alternative press takes notice.

As we drive, Luke rants—about lost hope and broken promises, about “how if you live in Beirut, you gonna act like you in Beirut.” About missed investment opportunities, and how a community needs pride and beauty. He rants about white “entrepreneurs” who always seem to make millions in empowerment zone funds evaporate in a cloud of scandal without anything decent ever getting built besides chicken shacks and check-cashing places. I tell him he sounds less like a stereotypical bleeding heart than a James Q. Wilson “broken windows theory” conservative. “You tryin’ to make me a Republican,” he says, rolling his eyes. “Though to be honest with you, [African Americans] are naturally conservative people. Since rap music came, we kind of liberalized the situation.”

He rails against the black race hustlers for hire—the Sharptons and Jacksons and local versions of the same, who are bought and paid for by politicians to either sit on the sidelines (he says he had to hire help from Palm Beach since all the black Miami consultants were already rented) or cry racism, scaring needed white capitalists off. Mostly though, he interrupts every anecdote to marvel at the decay, saying “Look here” or “Look there”—at the mattresses on the sidewalk, the downed trees, the squatter abodes, the empty storefronts, the crackhead knocking on our car window—of the scenery that never changes. “Look at what these kids have to ride through,” he says with genuine rage. “They need places to go. . . . This has been like this all my life. I have to clean all this up!” he says, as though he were already mayor. “That’s why I’m runnin’, man. I can’t lose!”

Later that night, we go to a film shoot in a Miami warehouse. Luke is the star of *The Life and Freaky Times of Uncle Luke*, an independent short film being shot for the local Borscht Film Festival by Jillian Mayer, whose work has shown at the Guggenheim. The sets are deliberately crude painted plywood backdrops with face holes out of which Luke pops his mug, and from which he delivers cartoonish lines, such as in a murder scene, in which he cries, “Dammnnn! Mothaf— just got cut—to the white meat!”

Luke turns down music videos all the time, but he decided to do this film because it has “artistic value.” “I got my brain picked last night,” he tells me by way of plot synopsis. I don’t really follow the narrative thread from what I witness, such as the scene where Uncle Luke rubs a prodigious black booty as someone rains dollar bills over his head. But the young, white film student types on the set eat it up, appreciatively shaking his hand and thanking him while laughing and laughing, maybe with him, maybe at him, maybe both. Between shots, one hot, young, scantily clad actress walks by him, coquettishly shaking her tailfeathers. She turns and looks Luke’s way. “I just wiggled my butt for you!” she coos. “No,” he says, pointing to me.

“That was for him. When you get married, you don’t see things like that no more.”

After the shoot ends, around 3 A.M., we adjourn to an IHOP to eat dinner or breakfast or whatever it’s called at that hour. With no pretense or inhibitions, Luke starts to spill, the way people sometimes do in bad lighting over bad food in the middle of the night. He tells me about his belief in God—how he TiVo’s Joel Osteen every Sunday, because he needs spiritual uplift. He details all his baby momma intrigues, the gold-digging, the court-wrangling, the child support wars, the birth control lies that saw him sire a few bonus children along the way. He relates how he’s had to disentangle himself from the destructive women at the expense of his children, who he is often kept from seeing. As with most lives you drill deep enough into, his turns out to be messy.

He blames everyone else for his problems, which in many ways are some of the same problems plaguing the have-not communities that Luke wants to save. When I point that out to him, he blames himself, too. “I hold myself responsible for everything,” he says. “Because I have to make the choice. It takes two people to bring kids into this world.”

He shows me promising text messages from his 18-year-old son Luther. They’ve been estranged for some time, knocking heads over Luther Jr.’s pot use and disrespect of Luke’s new wife, but have started talking again. This makes Luke very happy. He confesses that his reality show was a sham, in that Luther and Lucretia didn’t really live with him. Due to constant acrimony with their mother, the only time the kids would come over was “if there was a problem at their house, or their mother heard that I had a girlfriend.” Until the show, he hadn’t even seen them for a couple years. So when filming began, “They would come over, shoot, and go back home—I tell the truth, I don’t lie,” he says, visibly sagging. “But it was great! I got to spend time with them. And got to let them know how if I’d have been in their life, how I would have been a father to them. I wasn’t playing Dad. It was real. I was being Dad.”

Over dinner one night in South Beach, I have the mayoral race handicapped for me by an old Miami political hand with ties to the Cuban exile community who calls himself Cousin Eduardo. Eduardo is practiced in and completely unapologetic about the racial knife-fighting that often ensues in South Florida elections, where detonations go off under the radar on Spanish-language radio.

Cubans, Eduardo says, “are emotional, easy to whip up, insular, organized, and motivated” and will have a disproportionate influence in this election. “Cubans love the last-minute hit. The robo-call in the middle of the night calling your opponent a faggot, a *pájaro*, as we say in Spanish—a

little bird. They love the negative—it goes with the territory. Luther’s got to motivate blacks to show up.”

His advantage, says Cousin Eduardo, is that there are so many Cuban candidates, mostly local officials of one sort or another, that they can easily cannibalize each other’s support. “Everybody will run to the right,” says Eduardo. “So the race has a big fat vacuum. It could be filled by an Anglo woman with liberal credentials. It could be an as yet unannounced candidate recruited by Braman. Or it could be the former head of 2 Live Crew—if he can figure out how to get in the runoff [since it’s highly unlikely that any candidate will win a plurality on May 24]. Luke’s managed to stay in the news for 20 years, one way or another, and all the things you think are transgressions are merit badges among his voters. They don’t care if his family is dysfunctional. Dysfunctionality in the black family situation is the norm. They want a champion who is sticking it to whitey—that’s all they really care about.”

Luke’s advantage disappears, says Eduardo, if former mayor Alex Penelas—a popular Cuban Democrat who polls way ahead of the field—jumps in. The void is then filled. “But drop back to the mathematics,” Eduardo tells me. “Luther has zero chance of getting 51 percent of the vote in a Miami election. But he doesn’t need 51 to score here. Galvanize the base and get them there for the first round, then see where you are. It’s not inconceivable—it’s all about race. It’s an ethnic election—all Miami elections are.”

Cousin Eduardo sounds what should be Luke’s themes. “Those people [in Liberty City] are used to being promised everything. Promise them a tax reduction. Promise them jobs. Promise them economic opportunity. But he’s gotta communicate it. Right now, the only thing that’s coming through is ‘stripper tax.’ He’s a novelty act. The name ID gets him a seat at the table. Now he has to decide whether he wants to be Pat Paulsen, in which case you get no votes but entertain everybody, or to be a serious candidate.”

Uncle Luke can be forgiven for thinking his base is a bit broader than Cousin Eduardo diagnoses. White voters are his voters too, he says counterintuitively. One Sunday, at Finnegan’s River, a beachy party bar in Little Havana that sits on the waterfront overlooking downtown Miami, Luke is putting in a paid personal appearance—largely his bread and butter these days. The three-day Ultra Music Fest is in town, and every electronic music DJ from here to London seems to be on the ground.

Luke shows up with a small entourage decked in crisp summer whites and peaches, looking as though he should be manning a cabana at a Sandals resort. He is ushered to a small VIP section, where he’s immediately plied with his usual—Bacardi Limon and Sprite, which he protests over, because he just wants a Sprite. “I don’t drink liquor in the day,” he says. There are no Liberty City types here. The club

is lousy with white people—the only blacks being security.

Over ear-numbing music, they form a line to pay their respects to Uncle Luke. An inebriated college-age steakhead in a golf shirt and swim trunks yells, “Tax them strippers! Do you know how much money I spend on them?” A gaggle of DJs, many of British descent, thank Luke for his influence, relating how his Miami bass sound is to their music what Howlin’ Wolf was to the Rolling Stones. A promoter named Eric Johnson hands him a “Dat Azz” hat and T-shirt—the insignia of which is a girl on all fours, her posterior angled up like a ski jump. “My shirt is a representation of the influence Luke had in my life,” Johnson says. “He is an innovator, a pioneer, and the godfather of all free speech in music.”

Watching all this fealty, I remark to Luke how much the world has caught up to him since record store owners were arrested for selling his music. He could hardly be considered dangerous now. If he still wanted to be dangerous, he’d have to become a pro-abstinence rapper. “That would be dangerous,” Luke agrees. “And you wouldn’t sell a record.”

“I need to do a bikini contest to get everybody revved up to vote for me,” Luke decides. As I wait for him to arrive onstage, I survey the crowd in front of it: an undulating sea of white men’s overbites and sunburnt cleavage. There are neck tats, shoulder tats, back tats, face tats. Some of the guys have tattoos as well.

Luke takes the stage, and before announcing that he needs their vote for mayor, he asks, “Where the booty shakers at? I need y’all to come down.” Three women come to the stage, some more reluctant than others, such as a heavy-set girl in mom jeans. “C’mon, baby,” encourages Luke. “Big girls need love too.”

Once the bassline booms, inhibitions melt. Skirts are hiked, muscle and cellulite compress and expand like waves of flesh pounding a beach. As Luke chants over the music, “Go to the floor! Go to the floor!” contestant booties hit the deck as though they’re trying to crush walnuts. The crowd favorite, the winner of a bottle of champagne and Luke’s admiration, is a middle-aged lass in good yoga-shape who flipped off the crowd, hiked her denim mini, and had “Techno Slut” inscribed on her panties. She clearly planned ahead.

After she is crowned Queen of the Booty Pageant, Luke says she needs a male volunteer to help her out in a victory dance. “Not me,” he quickly adds. He has a political career to think about. “But if you ain’t got no batteries, you can’t work with her.” There are no takers. She seems to have scared everyone. So she retakes the stage solo, advertising her Techno-Sluttery anew to whoops and howls and Miami bass reverberations as Uncle Luke, on the mike, chants over the beat, “Luke for Mayor! Luke for Mayor! Luke for Mayor!” ♦



'Xenophon and the Ten Thousand After the Battle of Cunaxa'

Xenophilia

No longer blind to the greatness of this versatile Greek.

BY JOSEPH EPSTEIN

Xenophon (ca. 430-354 B.C.), son of Gryllos, Athenian of the deme Erchia, had the bad luck to write history directly after Thucydides and to chronicle the thought of Socrates at the same time as Plato, his almost exact contemporary. Compared with such unsurpassed intellectual figures one can scarcely avoid appearing dullish, without penetration, more than a touch second-rate.

And so Xenophon, as historian and as philosopher, has often been considered. Macaulay thought Xeno-

phon's two main works—the *Anabasis*, his account of the retreat of the Greek mercenaries following Cyrus after their defeat in Persia, and the *Hellenika*, his history of Greece from

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where Thucydides left off in 411 B.C. to the defeat of the Spartans by Thebes at the battle of Mantinea (362 B.C.)—“pleasant reading,” though “they indicate no great power of mind. In truth, Xenophon, though his taste was elegant, his disposition amiable, and his

intercourse with the world extensive, had, we suspect, rather a weak head.” J.B. Bury wrote that Xenophon’s “mind was essentially mediocre,” and that “he was as far from understanding the methods of Thucydides as he was from apprehending the ideas of Socrates.” A dilettante, Bury calls him, with “a happy literary talent,” a man who, in our day, would have been “a high-class journalist,” nothing more.

On the other side of the ledger, Cicero, in his dialogue “On Old Age,” has his mouthpiece Cato remark that “the writings of Xenophon are in many ways extremely informative, and I recommend that you read them carefully.” Machiavelli cites

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Xenophon more than any other classical writer (with the exception of Livy), and quotes him more than he does Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero combined. Leo Strauss, in *Xenophon's Socratic Discourse: An Interpretation of the "Oeconomicus,"* reminds us that the great classical scholar Johann Winckelmann praised "the noble simplicity and quiet grandeur . . . of the unadorned great Xenophon," comparing him to Raphael (and Thucydides to Michelangelo). Strauss himself held that our age is "surely blind to the greatness of Xenophon," and that "one might make some discoveries about our age by reading and rereading Xenophon."

Born of the class of knights in Athens, which meant his family was wealthy enough to keep horses and thus qualify as aristocrats, Xenophon as a young man is said to have been less than enamored with Athenian democracy. After all, it was Athenian democracy that was responsible for the death of his teacher Socrates in 399 B.C.; that called back Alcibiades from Sicily, ensuring the defeat of the Athenian fleet there; and under Athenian democracy, too, that the generals who led the successful naval campaign of Arginousai in 406 were executed for failing to return to save those Athenians left on their wrecked triremes. After the defeat of the Athenians by Sparta in 404 at the Battle of Aigospotamoi, marking the end of the Peloponnesian War, Xenophon is said at first to have been sympathetic to the oligarchs, known as the Thirty Tyrants, put in control of Athens by the victorious Spartans.

In 401 B.C. Xenophon took up the invitation of his Boeotian friend Proxenus to join the Greek mercenary band fighting on behalf of Cyrus, who was mounting a campaign to unseat his brother Artaxerxes from the throne of Persia. Whether he did this out of a sense of adventure, or to replenish his family's depleted fortunes, or a combination of the two, is not known. But this action, along with his less than full sympathy for Athenian democracy, and his later fighting at the Battle of Coronea (394 B.C.) with the Spartan mercenaries who had earlier joined Cyrus,

was responsible for Xenophon's being exiled from Athens.

Xenophon spent much the better part of his life among Spartans. He sent his two sons off for a Spartan education; physically brutal and mentally severe though it was, he thought it the best available in Greece. For his services to Sparta, he was given an estate at Scillus, a few miles from Olympia. He lived for 30 years at Scillus where, it is believed, he wrote most of the works by which he is remembered today. In the end, Xenophon was more of a Peloponnesian than an Athenian, though his Athenian exile was repealed in 368 B.C. Accounts differ about whether he died in Athens or in Corinth. A prolific writer, Xenophon was especially fortunate in having the greater body of his work survive into the modern age.

The most important relationship of Xenophon's early life was with Socrates. The anecdote is told that the handsome young Xenophon one day came upon Socrates in a narrow street in Athens; the philosopher barred his way by putting up his staff and inquiring of him the whereabouts of various goods in the city. He then asked Xenophon where he might acquire virtue, and when he didn't know, Socrates replied, "Then follow me, and learn."

How much time Xenophon spent with Socrates, what Socrates' opinion of him was, how accurate his portrait of Socrates is, none of these things is, or can be, known with exactitude. Xenophon wrote four longish Socratic treatises—"Socrates Defence," "Memoirs of Socrates," "The Dinner Party," and "Estate Manager," also often called "Oeconomicus"—which, along with Plato's more extensive Socratic writings and Aristophanes' satirical play *The Clouds*, furnish the most complete knowledge we have of the great philosopher.

Although recognizably the same man, the two Socrates, Xenophon's and Plato's, differ in intellectual character and temper. Scholars claim that the later dialogues in Plato, which are more concerned with matters metaphysical and the exhaustive definition of moral terms, are in fact more Pla-

tonic than Socratic—that in these dialogues it is Plato rather than Socrates who is speaking. Xenophon's Socrates is less subtle, not so aporetic—that is, he doesn't raise questions without answering them, or undermine confidence by incessant questioning—but instead supplies his knowledge to his pupils straightaway. Nor does Xenophon's Socrates proclaim his own ignorance, which is of course at the heart of Socrates' investigations in the dialogues of Plato, used as a device to deflate the other fellow's assumption of knowledge. The English scholar J.K. Anderson puts it nicely when he writes that "it may well be that Socrates did in fact prefer, in Xenophon's case, to confirm his beliefs rather than [as in Plato's] to dissect them."

The Socrates of Xenophon is also much more pious than the Socrates of Plato, not only regularly acknowledging the hand of the gods in the fate of men and their various endeavors but emphasizing the importance of good order in one's life so that the unpredictability of the gods does not undo all one's plans, though it is understood that even the utmost prudence will not always fend off the occasional arbitrariness of the gods. Plato's Socrates, then, turns out to be more like Plato, and Xenophon's more like Xenophon. Yet in the end, if one partially agrees with the Russian classicist Michael Rostovtzeff, that "Xenophon was a man of moderate ability and slight philosophic training, [and] Plato one of the greatest thinkers in the world's history," it would nonetheless be a mistake to take Xenophon's own Socratic contributions as negligible or without interest. Unless one has a strong taste for metaphysics, which is not everyone's cup of mead, Xenophon's Socrates, with his stress on the first principles of order, prudence, and good sense, provides many compensations.

Xenophon was perhaps less subtle than Plato and not so penetrating as Thucydides, but he was by no means unintelligent. His interest in historical causes may have been minimal, for he concentrated instead on great men and major events. He was pious in his belief that the gods needed to be consulted

regularly through divination—which meant animal sacrifices and the investigation of entrails that followed—and tended to hold that, while the gods do not always reward virtue, they do punish wickedness. What one comes to realize in reading Xenophon is that his real subject, not only in his Socratic dialogues but throughout his work, is leadership. In Xenophon’s dialogue “Oeconomicus,” Socrates, professing to be discussing how best to run a household and thereby increase its wealth, is really (as Leo Strauss underscores) getting at how best to run an army and a state, and how, finally, to lead the good life.

Xenophon’s own experience as a leader of men was acquired during the *Anabasis* (called *The Persian Expedition* in the Penguin edition), an account of the roughly 900-mile trek from Persia after the defeat of Cyrus at the Battle of Cunaxa (401 B.C.) through the territory of hostile barbarian tribes, making his way with 10,000 Greek soldiers back to the Hellespont. After the Persians had killed first Cyrus and then the Greek generals who led the mercenary force, Xenophon, in his own version of events, stepped up and, with the Spartan Chirisophus, led the Greeks back to their homeland. The

extent of his role as leader is sometimes disputed, as is much else in Xenophon: how close he was to Socrates, which parts of his various books he wrote at what age, where and when he died.

What isn’t in dispute is Xenophon’s close relationship with Agesilaus, who ruled Sparta as one of its two kings for the unusually long span of 40 years. Plutarch writes of Agesilaus’ “early life having added to his natural kindly and commanding qualities the gentle and humane feelings of a citizen.” Despite being small and having had a limp owing to one of his legs being shorter

than the other, “the goodness of his humor, and his constant cheerfulness and playfulness of temper, always free from anything of moroseness or haughtiness, made him more attractive, even to his old age, than the most beautiful and youthful men of the nation.” As late as his seventies, Agesilaus was still leading the Spartans into battle.

Xenophon first encountered Agesilaus at the Battle of Coronea. He some-

arranged for Xenophon’s retirement estate at Scillus. One of the chief criticisms of Xenophon’s *Hellenika* is its author’s too kind—which is to say largely uncritical—treatment of the Spartan king, and his partiality toward the Spartans generally throughout his history. So strong is this partiality that, for long spells in the *Hellenika*, one almost forgets that Athens exists. One of Xenophon’s modern critics suggests

that the title of the work would more accurately have been *Peloponnesiaca*. The great Theban general Epaminondas, the man responsible for defeating the Spartans at Leuctra (371 B.C.) and Mantinea (362 B.C.), has scarcely more than a bit part in Xenophon’s history. Lysander, the rival of Agesilaus for Spartan leadership, also gets short shrift in the pages of the *Hellenika*.

A new edition of this history is now published under the general editorship of Robert B. Strassler, who earlier brought out Landmark editions of Herodotus and Thucydides. Strassler is what is today known as an independent, which really means amateur, scholar, taking the word amateur in its root meaning of lover. After a successful career in business—oil drilling—he retired, and

soon thereafter devoted himself to ancient history, the love of which he acquired as an undergraduate at Harvard and never lost.

The result of this devotion has been Strassler’s Landmark editions. These books print the central texts in solid new translations, with marginal notes and useful footnotes, introduced by scholars, with still other scholars writing upon specialized topics pertinent to the central texts. Perhaps best of all in the Landmark editions are the maps, which are clear, plentiful, and immensely useful. One can read



Xenophon outside the Austrian parliament, Vienna

how managed to insinuate himself with the Spartan king. This connection, which placed him in the inner circles of Sparta, gave him, in effect, a chair in the royal box for viewing the history of post-Peloponnesian War Greece—a history that ended with the ultimate subduing of once-mighty Greece, through endless internecine battles and disputes, by the Macedonian Philip II, father of Alexander the Great.

Agesilaus and Xenophon shared a belief in the need to destroy the Persian Empire and a hatred of Thebes. Always loyal to friends, Agesilaus

Herodotus and Thucydides over and over without having such basic knowledge as how large Attica and the Peloponnese are, how far is the distance between Athens and Sparta, or Corinth from either. Robert Strassler is himself, one learns, without Greek, and he has devised books of immense aid for the Greekless Hellenophile, of whom your reviewer is one.

A Landmark edition is especially useful for Xenophon's *Hellenika*, for it is a work over which much controversy hangs. Until early in the 20th century, Xenophon's history was taken to be definitive. Then, in 1906, the papyrus of an incomplete manuscript since known as the *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* was found in Egypt that contradicted Xenophon in many particulars. A later, Roman chronicle by Diodorus Siculus, who tends to agree with the Oxyrhynchia historian, has further reduced the reputation for accuracy of Xenophon's *Hellenika*. Yet another controversy has to do with when Xenophon wrote his history. Some scholars have him writing different parts of it at different stages of his life. One of Xenophon's strongest critics, the Oxford classicist G.L. Cawkwell, holds that the *Hellenika* isn't history at all but essentially memoirs, the memoirs written by an old man, and as Cawkwell notes, "old men forget." Yet, whatever his faults, however much he falls short of the precision required by modern historical scholarship, Xenophon remains immensely readable and instructive. Without Xenophon's *Hellenika*, as Robert Strassler notes, "we would know nothing or very little of many events and developments of that dynamic period" from the end of the Peloponnesian War through 362 B.C.

History, in its less technical but most attractive form is, as Macaulay had it, "philosophy teaching by example," which is history of the kind about which Xenophon cared most. Throughout the *Hellenika*, but also in the *Anabasis*, the virtuous actions of leaders are what Xenophon highlights and extols. Noble deeds please him most. Leaders (and they are chiefly Spartans) who consult the wishes of the gods show good sense. Bad con-

duct finds its recompense. To violate an oath is to court disaster: "Agesilaus, beaming with joy, told the envoys to announce to [the powerful Persian satrap] Tissaphernes that he was quite grateful, because Tissaphernes, by violating his oaths, now had the gods as his enemies and he had also, by this same action, made the gods the allies of the Greeks."

The gods may not always reward virtue in Xenophon, but they "are not indifferent to the impious and those who do wicked things." Courage, honor, sensible leadership, the orderly life—these are the virtues Xenophon most admires. *Contra* Gerald and Sara Murphy, not living but dying well is, in Xenophon, often the best revenge. At the Battle of Mantinea between the Thebans, led by Epaminondas, and the Spartans, led by Agesilaus, and which wrote *fini* to Spartan hegemony, he writes of the Athenians who, out of hatred for the Thebans, came to the aid of the Spartans, joining in the fighting:

Brave were the men among them who died, and it is clear that the men they killed were equally brave. For no one had a weapon so short that he did not reach his enemy with it. And the Athenians did not abandon the corpses of their own men but, rather, gave back some of the enemy dead under truce.

With remarkable restraint, Xenophon chose not to mention that both his sons took part in this battle, and that one of them, Gryllos, died bravely in this battle, being, one of the Landmark *Hellenika*'s footnotes reports, "depicted in the picture of the battle commissioned by the Athenians for one of their public buildings." For all that it wants in intellectual rigor, the *Hellenika* contains many fine novelistic touches. After the Athenian disaster of the naval battle at Aigospotamoi, Xenophon recounts the reaction when the news of the disaster reached Athens:

The *Paralos* arrived at Athens during the night, bringing news of the disaster at Aigospotamoi, and a cry arose in the Peiraieus and ran up through the Long Walls and into the city itself as one man imparted the calamitous news to the next. As a result, no one

slept that night as they mourned not only for the men destroyed but even more for themselves, thinking they would suffer the same catastrophes they had inflicted on others. . . . On the next day they held an assembly in which they resolved to block up all the harbors except for one, to repair the walls and place guards on all of them, and to prepare the city in every other way for a siege.

Who was it said that history begins in the novel and ends in the essay? Xenophon, perhaps more the novelist and essayist than pure historian, would have agreed.

Some of the most important historical events in Western history have wanted great writers to witness and record them. The French Revolution came inconveniently after the death of the Duc de Saint-Simon and before Benjamin Constant had come into literary maturity. No great writer was on the scene for the American Revolution, or for our Civil War. The history of Greece and Rome was more fortunate: Herodotus was there to record battles between the Greeks and the Persians, and Thucydides to record events, many of which he personally witnessed, in the Peloponnesian War. In Rome, Livy and Tacitus and Suetonius were in the same fortunate position. The existence of such writers makes history more vivid and ancient history, itself, perhaps of deeper interest than any other.

The endless making and breaking of treaties and busting up of alliances and dishonoring of pledges among Sparta and Athens and Persia, ending in the eclipse of all three, is the greater story of the *Hellenika*. The prolific Xenophon was, as we should say today, on the case, embedded, capturing a goodly portion of the life of his time, "the only historian from antiquity," as Arnaldo Momigliano wrote, "to rival Tacitus in the range of writing that came from his pen."

Denigrate him though many historical scholars have tried to do, they have succeeded in little more than putting a few dents in his shield. In the end, Xenophon stands, half a historian, half a philosopher, and wholly a marvelous writer. ♦

The Two Mrs. Wilsons

The 28th president and the women who sustained him.

BY KEVIN R. KOSAR



The president and Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, 1915

For some time I have been struggling to find a near-synonym for “uxorious.” It is an ugly old word that rebukes a man for being “overly fond” (Webster’s) or “submissively fond” (OED) of his wife. Its earliest written usage (1598), by Joseph Hall, bishop of Norwich and poet, growled of “mannish housewives [who] make a drudge of their uxorious mates.” Clearly, “whipped” will not do: That is a crude, more recent pejorative that has the same essential meaning as uxorious. What I want is a word that describes a man who passionately loves a woman but remains his own person with his own self-chosen sphere of work.

I suppose I will have to make do with the word “needy,” but in the sense of Genesis 2: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.’” Bone of his bone, flesh of his flesh, a man becomes a whole man only with woman. And defined thus, we can now

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say that Woodrow Wilson, president of the United States during 1913-21, was a very needy man.

I would not have believed it were it not for Kristie Miller’s eye-opening *Ellen and Edith*. I had always thought of Wilson as a bit of a cold fish, an aloof figure and devout Presbyterian who had a Ph.D. in history and political science, and read books like Abel Henty Jones Greenidge’s *Handbook of Greek Constitutional History* (1896). All of which is true, but he was also intensely romantic.

Wilson was no Casanova, for sure. That he managed to find a woman at all is a little surprising. Born in Virginia in 1856, Wilson grew up a frail boy in Augusta, Georgia, who did not learn to read until he was 12 years old. There were two sisters in the household, and he was reared largely by his mother, a woman he admired for her “sweet womanliness, her purity, her intelligence, [and] her strength.” Once out of his parents’ nest, he floundered. Wilson quit Davidson after one year, got through Princeton, and then dropped out of law

school. At age 26, he was without prospects. He had the mien of a dour apothecary’s clerk, and was often sick.

Then, by luck, he met Ellen Axson, a smart young fellow Georgian. She found Wilson interesting, but she wasn’t husband-hunting; she wanted to become a painter. Wilson wrote to her frequently and soon asked Ellen to affirm that she was “interested in my work and fortunes. . . . To be believed in by the woman who has his highest esteem is, you know, [everything] to a man.” Against her wishes, Ellen began to love Wilson. They were engaged in September 1883, just five months after they had met, and were married less than two years later.

Ellen became the rock upon which Woodrow Wilson built his fame. She goaded him onward with encouragement, kept his house, and bore his (three) children. Ellen translated books for him and wrote digests of his readings, which helped Wilson finish his doctorate at Johns Hopkins in three years. He became a professor of jurisprudence and political economy at Princeton in 1890 and president in 1902.

Life was not easy for Ellen Axson Wilson. She homeschooled their three daughters, cared for a troubled brother who lived with them, and bore the brunt of the multiplying social and political demands that came with her husband’s successes. Ellen’s sister suffered from depression and another brother died in a freak accident. Woodrow Wilson, meanwhile, did not make things any easier: He often was away from home, first chasing the governorship of New Jersey (1910) and then the presidency (1912). When Wilson was present, he would (as he put it) go to Ellen “as a tired boy would go to his mother, to be loved and petted.” He was so needy that Ellen told a friend, “If I am just a little sky-blue he immediately becomes blue-black!” Wilson also began experiencing physical breakdowns: One of his hands froze up, and one morning he awoke blind in one eye. Medicine’s knowledge of hypertension was slim in those days, so Wilson’s treatment consisted mostly of relaxing in Bermuda while Ellen held down the fort in New Jersey.

Ellen and Edith
Woodrow Wilson’s
First Ladies
by Kristie Miller
Kansas, 348 pp., \$34.95

Ellen's tireless efforts proved insufficient. Wilson began a flirtatious relationship with Mary Allen Hulbert Peck, a widow and remarried woman, in 1907. Ellen was not amused, but she tolerated Wilson's caddish behavior: Peck, she told herself, was good for his health because she made him "feel young and gay."

But when Ellen died of kidney disease in August 1914, the 28th president was a wreck: "I never dreamed such loneliness and desolation of heart possible," he declared. Wilson was inconsolable for months, and his advisers saw the peril: World War I in Europe had begun, and the president was floundering.

Wilson bucked up when he met Edith Bolling Galt. This "outgoing, buxom" Washington widow and jewelry store proprietor was literally what the doctor ordered: Dr. Cary Grayson, the president's physician, arranged their first encounter. Soon Wilson was head over heels. He told Edith she was "the perfect playmate" who could "match and satisfy every part of me . . . the man of letters, the man of affairs, the boy, the poet, the lover." They were married in December 1915.

As it happens, Wilson had no idea just how much he would come to need Edith. She buoyantly handled all the White House entertaining duties and social correspondence, and kept the weakening Wilson steady by compelling him to play golf and take long car rides with her. After the president was disabled by a stroke in October 1919, Edith held the White House together over the remainder of Wilson's term. She beat back both the press and members of Congress and the cabinet who clamored for Wilson's attention (or resignation), continued to dote on the invalid after he left office, and was at his side when he died in Washington in 1924.

"For the next thirty-seven years," Miller writes, Edith devoted "her considerable energies to burnishing her husband's legacy." Her monuments to her husband include a presidential library, a foundation, a collection at the Library of Congress, and a museum. Woodrow Wilson had two wives who spent their lives for him. Woodrow Wilson was a very fortunate man. ♦

BCA

Postcards from Vienna

What Modernism looked like at the dawn of Modern Times. BY EVE TUSHNET

But with the inevitable forward march of progress come new ways of hiding things, and new things to hide.

—Chris Ware, *Jimmy Corrigan: The Smartest Kid on Earth*

The opening photograph of the exhibition book for *Birth of the Modern* shows the artists of the Vienna Secession movement in 1902. Some sprawl, some stand, and off to the left, Gustav Klimt reigns on a makeshift throne. Klimt is a central figure for this exhibit: His wildly varying approaches to depicting women simultaneously exemplify and complicate the narrative the Neue Galerie wants to tell.

The show thinks it's telling a story of release from constraint, in which growing equality allows individual identities to flourish. Individual style, rather than societal custom, reigns in modern, turn-of-the-century Vienna. Perhaps the most striking contrast between old and new—and the contrast which most argues for modern self-understanding—is shown by the two examples of women's fashion. Representing conformity and inequality, there is a wasp-waist corset which must be seen to be believed (photographs don't do it justice). Representing women's liberation and individuality, there is a flowing, bell-like dress, elegant yet forgiving to the figure.

As these dresses indicate, the show attempts to bring together many fields of creative effort to show that the birth of a modern identity crossed

the boundaries of art and craft, even art and science. Modernism wasn't just a painters' movement: It had its own typefaces, its own home furnishings (one room of the exhibit is a sort of parlor divided between more functional and more stylized schools of interior design), its own costumes. Music from the period plays to complete the immersive experience. But the exhibition book also claims that the show will explore the replacement of aristocracy with bourgeoisie; civil equality for Jews, assimilation, and anti-Semitism; and the rise of the industrial proletariat.

This is not really true. No overt signs of said proletariat can be found in the show itself. In fact, explicit politics is notable for

its absence, and political art and propaganda are among the few genres not included in the show's broad embrace. This might actually be one of the show's strengths. Americans are too much accustomed to viewing late 19th- and early 20th-century German and Austrian history as mere preludes to the Great War or Hitler. By scissoring war and politics out of the picture, the exhibit allows us to view the Vienna modernists with fewer preconceptions.

What the exhibit *does* suggest is that moderns, like other humans, do not want to be merely individuals. We long for recognition of our unique interior lives, yes; but we also crave stories, iconic figures. We need a symbolic alphabet for our lives. The show submits that, in modernist Vienna, this alphabet was provided primarily by the new field of psychology, by the logic of dreams.

Birth of the Modern
Style and Identity
in Vienna 1900
Neue Galerie, New York
Through June 27

Eve Tushnet is a writer in Washington.

So there are actually three kinds of portrait in *Birth of the Modern*—and Klimt works in all three genres. The first kind is the one which is most in line with the intended storyline: The (mostly) realist, somewhat stylized and edgy portrait which reveals its subject's interior life. These portraits trace a genealogy which begins with works like Hans Makart's "Hanna Klinkosch" (1875). Coy and charming, the traditionally painted Hanna is just starting to remove her gloves, a gesture which promises further revelation without compromising modesty. A bit further down the path from realism and convention, Klimt offers "The Black Feather Hat" (1910). The wearer of this giant, dominating storm cloud of a hat is looking slightly downward and away from the "camera," like an Edward Hopper lady. She is pensive rather than regal, dissatisfied rather than proud. The painting, including her skin tone, has an unhealthy tinge which makes me think of absinthe, but the overall impression is realistic, neither dream nor nightmare.

Other portraits in this psychological, skewed-realism genre range from more realistic (Max Oppenheimer's Sigmund Freud, with his penetrating and mistrustful gaze) to uglier and more distorted. Sometimes the stylization, reminiscent of the experimental photography and film of the time, lends an eerie beauty: The hands of Oskar Kokoschka's "Rudolf Blümner" (1910) look almost like a solarized photo. His "Portrait of Mrs. Karpeles" shows a commanding, cosmopolitan woman, self-possessed and individuated, her wrists crossed at the waist as if to hold something inside.

Most of the portraits, however, are on the ugly and distorted end of the spectrum. While Egon Schiele's Frankenstein monsters are extreme examples, it's not as if you'd want to

spend too much time alone with the blurry, dissolving figure in Kokoschka's "Doctor Emma Veronika Sanders." Schiele's "Portrait of Dr. Erwin von Graff," with his face and skeletal hands suffused with the brown and red hues of drying blood, would be at home in *Eyes Without a Face*.

Klimt's iconic women could not be more different from these shattered-mirror portraits. These beauties, dis-



'Hanna Klinkosch' by Hans Makart (1875)

played in a room devoted to images of women and womanhood, are iconic in two senses.

First, they represent something beyond themselves. Like the dream-ballet of Jan Toorop's "The Sphinx (The Souls Around the Sphinx)," they are freighted with obscure symbolism. "Hope II (Vision)" has her breasts bared as she lifts one hand with the fingers crooked like the set gestures in religious painting; women with their hands raised to their faces seem to drip from the hem of her

gown. "Adele Bloch-Bauer I" shows the lady in a golden dress of hieroglyphic eyes.

Second, despite the many Orientalist touches, these paintings *look* like some Orthodox Christian icons, with gilt or jewel-like clothing framing flesh-toned faces, high stylization in a riot of color. There's very little religion in *Birth of the Modern*, but there are these lingering hints, like the last breath of perfume that hangs in a room after the woman has left. And these iconic, beautiful women are the last images we see before we pass into a narrow, darkish room. Klimt is in this room, too. And this room is curated in a strange way—a way which is, perhaps, countercultural now. This is a disturbing room. Along one wall, Egon Schiele tortures himself again and again in his self-portraits. The emaciated bodies and racked limbs are horror-movie inescapable. And on the opposite wall? A line of Klimt sketches, warm and highly realistic with little or no stylization beyond the absence of scenery, depicting women splayed nude or masturbating.

If the narrative of the show is about the liberation of the self, the individual, this *eros-and-thanatos* room complicates any assessment of that liberation. In this room an individual consciousness warps and fractures: In one triple self-portrait, Schiele depicts himself as choirboy, sketchy ghost, and rouged, off-balance artist simultaneously assessing and shying away from the viewer. And on the opposite wall two humid selves are alone together—the artist and his model—never meeting one another's eyes, the artist moving pen across paper and the model engrossed in the canvas of her flesh. Neither artist depicts scenery or a broader social or relational context. These selves are released, but solitary. ♦

Dangling Men

'Spider-Man' as spectacle and lesson for Broadway.

BY VICTORINO MATUS

New York

The crowd is riveted. Spider-Man has just leapt off the stage in hot pursuit of the Green Goblin, who is hovering 20 feet above the orchestra seats. Harnessed by ropes, both performers are circling round the theater, occasionally landing on the ledge of the mezzanine, much to the delight of

The audience goes wild.

So what is all the fuss about *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*? Why are the media having a field day mocking it while the reviewers tear it to shreds? Is the *New York Times's* Ben Brantley right when he says it may “rank among the worst” musicals in Broadway history? Not if you ask Glory, the woman who is seated to my left. She’s come all the



those seated far back. Then Spidey and the Green Goblin collide in midair—somehow their ropes remain untangled. Eventually our hero climbs atop the villain and pummels him. But onstage, Mary Jane Watson is dangling from a rope off the Chrysler Building. She falls while screaming in terror. Spider-Man then catapults forward to rescue her. The place goes dark.

Everyone inside the (practically sold-out) Foxwoods Theatre is on the edge of his seat. Does our webbed hero, alias Peter Parker, make it in time to save the love of his life? Suddenly a spotlight appears—and Spider-Man swings to safety with Mary Jane safe in his arms!

Victorino Matus is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

way from Mountain Lakes, New Jersey: “Even though the music wasn’t my thing,” she says, “I loved it.” Lynn, the woman to my right, is especially fond of how Greek mythology was fused into the plot.

And what a plot it is. For you would think the climactic battle I mention above would be the perfect ending to the show. Instead, this death-defying aerial sequence merely concludes Act One. In Act Two, a group of villains known as the Sinister Six is unleashed on New York along with the Green Goblin. They are let loose by Arachne, a character from Greek mythology turned partially into a spider by Athena (who, suspended high above the stage, better resembles the *Magic Flute's* Queen of the Night). She wants nothing more than to

have Spider-Man join her in her realm. But he is madly in love with Mary Jane Watson. So out of frustration and envy, Arachne crosses the “astral plain” into our world, along with her Furies (spider-maidens) who then rob the city of shoes for each of their eight legs.

This utter nonsense is contained in a musical number called “Deeply Furious.” Making matters worse, Arachne reveals that all the villains, including the Green Goblin, were illusions of her making. So was any of this real? (My \$179 ticket was definitely real, although my spider-sense tells me this can be expensed.)

Now before you start sending letters of complaint regarding all the spoilers I’ve just mentioned, it should be noted that, due to pressure from the critics, many of these scenes are being reworked. In fact, the show, which is still in previews, has been placed on hiatus until May 12. Opening night has been pushed back to June 14. (It’s been reported that the role of Arachne will be minimized while “Deeply Furious” will disappear altogether, along with the young comic-book narrators known as the geek chorus.)

But even on hiatus, *Spider-Man's* price tag continues to rise; rent and salaries still need to be paid. Initially budgeted at \$25 million, the show’s costs have ballooned to \$70 million and counting. It is the most expensive production in Broadway history. Opening night has been postponed six times and there have been five injuries: Actors have suffered broken wrists, a broken toe, a concussion, and whiplash. The worst instance occurred last December when Christopher Tierney, a Spider-Man stunt double, fell 30 feet, breaking four ribs, fracturing his skull, and damaging his vertebrae.

Could it be that *Spider-Man* is simply cursed? The theater world is chock-full of superstitions and tales of bad luck, the most famous of which surround *Macbeth*. Actors are advised not to quote from the play or even mention it by name while inside a theater (it can be safely referred to as “the Scottish play”). During a 1937 production at London’s Old Vic, director Michel St. Denis suffered head injuries in a car

accident. The founder and director of the Old Vic, Lilian Baylis, died shortly before opening night. (Her dog was also killed by a car.) And Laurence Olivier, only 30 at the time, first lost his voice and then almost lost his life. As Richard Huggett writes in *Supernatural on Stage: Ghosts and Superstitions of the Theatre*, Olivier “was called and rose to go onto the stage. Shortly after he left his seat, a stage weight weighing twenty-five pounds crashed down on to the seat from the flies, crushing it to fragments.”

Of course, it’s not only the Scottish play. Just before the curtain rose on *42nd Street* on Broadway, director Gower Champion lost his battle with cancer. Likewise, Jonathan Larson suffered from an aortic dissection and died a few months before the Broadway debut of his musical, *Rent*.

Kurt Froman, resident choreographer for the national tour of *Billy Elliot* and associate choreographer for *Black Swan*, remembers well when he joined the cast of Billy Joel’s *Movin’ Out*:

The general manager told me to “be careful” because two tragedies had occurred within a few short weeks of each other and me joining. William Marrié, the lead in the second cast, was killed in a motorcycle accident, and Mark Arvin, a Broadway veteran in the ensemble, went in for heart surgery. Doctors accidentally punctured a valve, which put him into a coma and eventually killed him. . . . During the course of its run, a crew member committed suicide and another was in intensive care for months from sepsis in his lungs.

As for *Spider-Man*, an omen occurred at the very outset. In 2005, the original producer, Tony Adams, suffered a stroke just as he was about to sign the contracts for the show. He died two days later. That said, most of the calamities surrounding *Spider-Man* have less to do with curses and more to do with its director. Notoriously demanding and passionate about her work, Julie Taymor was the genius behind the wildly successful *Lion King* musical, which cost \$25 million to produce and, since 1997, has grossed \$4.2 billion. She was approached for the *Spider-Man* project by U2 frontmen Bono and the Edge, who provide

the music and lyrics. But because they and everyone else on Broadway were so in awe of her, Taymor was given free rein—tearing down and remaking sets, hiring a slew of technical professionals, pushing the limits on never-before-seen aerial stunts, regardless of cost.

As Patrick Healy and Kevin Flynn noted in the *New York Times*, “The costume team alone had 23 people—4 designers, 4 shoppers, and 15 dressers.”

During an interview with *60 Minutes*, Taymor promised Leslie Stahl that “we actually have a battle that will be over the audience’s head and they can leap through each other’s wires”—something that should have worried her accountants and insurance advisers. When *New York’s* Jesse Green asked Taymor if she knew how to pull off such stunts, she replied, “Of course not. What would be the fun of it if you already knew how?” Or how much it would cost. As for the accidents, she told Green, “I take safety very seriously. . . . But everyone has accidents in theater. It’s part of the world you’re in.”

By the end of February, tensions over the direction of the show and the need to rework the second act reached critical mass, with Bono, the Edge, and producers Michael Cohl and Jeremiah Harris pushing for further revisions—and Taymor seemingly resistant. On March 9 it was announced that Taymor would be exiting (the official announcement cited a conflict of schedule), and a new director and writer have since been brought in, although Taymor’s name will remain in the credits.

It remains unclear, however, if any of the inconsistencies with the comic book will be remedied. Onstage, Uncle Ben is a barely formed character who Peter Parker wants off his back. He also doesn’t dispense those famous words of wisdom, “With great power comes great responsibility.” (Parker delivers this line.) There is also something jarring about a Taymor-invented villain known as Swiss Miss, who oddly resembles Grace Jones. And why not eliminate “Pull the Trigger,” a number featuring stomping soldiers? (Before turning into the Green Goblin, scientist Norman Osborn is pressured by the military to work for them so they can engineer

Marine supersoldiers, invoking sinister ideas such as God and Country.)

At this juncture, it is also doubtful that *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* can make a profit, let alone recoup its losses. During previews the show was breaking even, pulling in a little over a million dollars weekly. That said, explains one veteran Broadway actor who asked to remain nameless, “The money they’ve made through previews was a gift. Future sales is what matters and they don’t have that. Basically, as with all art, if it ain’t on the page, it ain’t on the stage.” In addition, he points out:

It’s rare that any big musical can come straight into Broadway without an out-of-town grooming period. And I can’t tell you how often I’ve seen producers hire a show doctor to come in and fix their show once they’re in previews. It never works. You can’t build a hit in a few weeks.

Still, there is no question that the actors (including understudies Matthew James Thomas as Spider-Man and Kristen Martin as Mary Jane Watson) pour their hearts out during performances. There are also a few (but not many) memorable ballads, such as “The Boy Falls From the Sky” and “Rise Above.” Bono and the Edge are also writing two more songs. (It’s a shame they can’t somehow plug in a hit like “With or Without You” the way Green Day has incorporated its repertoire in the rock opera *American Idiot*. Then again, the show wouldn’t be called *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*, but rather *Spider-Man: Rattle and Hum*.)

There is one glimmer of hope: the reaction inside the theater. At the end of the show, the crowd applauded loudly as if in defiance of the critics, and delivered a partial standing ovation. The fact that much of the plot made no sense didn’t seem to bother anyone. Lynn, the woman on my right, wonders if she enjoyed it so much because her expectations were so low. That is not the case, however, with Javian Moronta, from Queens, who says he loved every minute of it and had not a single complaint: “My favorite part was when Spider-Man beat up the Green Goblin,” he tells me.

Granted, Javian is only four years old, but a ticket is a ticket. ♦

“This morning’s White House release of President Barack Obama’s long form birth certificate will, of course, do little to derail the ‘birther’ movement, which will now analyze the document with the kind of verve previously directed toward those Texas Air National Guard memos faxed to CBS from that Kinko’s in Abilene.” —The Smoking Gun, April 27, 2011

PARODY

CERTIFICATION OF LIVE BIRTH

STATE OF HAWAII
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*Celebrating
52 Years of Statehood*



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HAWAII U.S.A.

CERTIFICATE NO. [REDACTED]

1a. Child's First Name (Type or print)		1b. Middle Name	1c. Last Name
PRESIDENT BARACK		H.	OBAMA, II
2. Sex	3a. Birth Date: Month Day Year		3b. Birth Hour
Male	August 4, 1961		7:24 P.M.
4a. Place of Birth: City, Town or Rural Location			4b. Island
Honolulu			Oahu
4c. Name of Hospital or Institution			
Kapiolani Maternity & Neonatal Laser Surgery Center			
4d. Street Address			4e. Is Residence Inside City or Town Limits?
6085 Daniel Inouye Highway			Yes
5. Religious Affiliation			
Definitely not Muslim--not that there's anything wrong with that ;)			
6a. Full Name of Father			
BARACK H. OBAMA			
6b. Birthplace	6c. Usual Occupation		6d. Contact cell/email:
Kenya, Africa	Student		rlove@whitehouse.gov
7a. Full Maiden Name of Mother			
Stanley Ann Dunham			
7b. Birthplace	7c. Usual Occupation		7d. Contact cell/email:
Wichita, Kansas	Soccer Mom		[REDACTED]
8a. Signature of Parent			8b. Date
<i>Ann Dunham Obama</i>			8/7/1961
9a. Signature of Attendant			9b. Date
<i>J. Carney</i>			4/27/11 8/7/61
10. Signature of Local Register			10b. Date
<i>Dr. Jill Biden</i>			August 7, 2011

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This copy serves as prima facie evidence of the fact of birth in any court proceeding. [HRS 338-13(b), 338-19]

ANY ALTERATIONS INVALIDATE THIS CERTIFICATE