the weekly Standard

MAY 30, 2011

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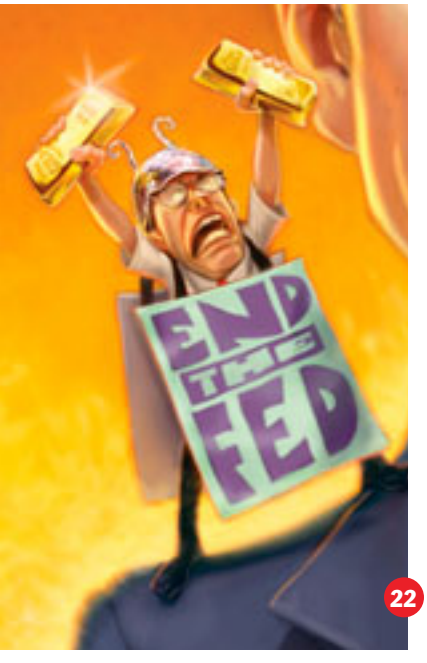

Features

Books & Arts

COVER BY GARY LOCKE

The Speaker's Mass Appeal

The Scrapbook had been looking forward to the commencement exercises at Catholic University on May 14, mostly because of the donnybrook that was expected to erupt over the choice of commencement speaker: GOP House speaker John Boehner.

A few days before the ceremonies at the Washington campus, over 80 academics (about 30 of them from Catholic) had distributed an open letter to Boehner declaring that his "voting record"—that is, his support for drastic budget cuts and a revamping of Medicare and Medicaid—was "among the worst in Congress" in terms of abiding by the Catholic church's "most ancient moral teachings" that require the powerful to "preference the needs of the poor." A major protest was expected, a sort of opposite number to the anti-abortion protests at Notre Dame when President Obama, a stalwart supporter of unrestricted abortion, spoke at the commencement exercises there in 2009.

Alas, the excitement was not to be. Although the *National Catholic Reporter*, the liberal Catholic daily, the *Washington Post*, and other media outlets had hyped the faculty letter for days, there were few signs of dissension. Indeed, Boehner's speech was pointedly apolitical: mostly sentimental reminiscences of growing up as one of the 12 children

of an Ohio tavern owner and playing high school football under Gerry Faust, who later coached for Notre Dame and the University of Akron, all punctuated by expected Boehner tears and unexpected quotations from Ernest Hemingway, Frank McCourt, and Genesis.

"When it's all said and done, we are but mere mortals doing God's work here on Earth," Boehner concluded. "Put a better way—no, put the best way—remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return." The newly minted bachelor's degree recipients gave him a standing ovation.

To be sure, The Scrapbook spotted one neon orange "Where's the compassion?" sign, and the *Washington Post* interviewed a graduate with a neon green sign pinned to her chest that read, "Where's the compassion, Mr. Boehner?" Like many of the professor-signatories of the letter to Boehner, she was in social work, a field whose graduates might have the most to lose if the House succeeds in cutting the number of federally subsidized "social work professionals" administering innumerable programs of public assistance.

The refreshing thing was that so few Catholic University undergraduates were buying the effort either to politicize their graduation or to turn Catholic social teaching into an arm of liberal-progressive policy. As for having the speaker of the House, third in line to the presidency, deliver their commencement address, they were clearly thrilled. ♦

BOEHNER: NEWSCOM

For Your Consideration

The killing of Osama bin Laden was such a fine achievement that there is probably enough credit to be spread far and wide. But Nikki Finke of the website *Deadline Hollywood* recently noted that America's screenwriters deserve some recognition for doing their part in the war on terror. Finke cited a post-Abbottabad NPR interview with Lawrence Wright—author of works ranging from the serious-minded book *The Looming Tower* to the Bruce Willis popcorn flop *The Siege*.

In the sit-down with Terry Gross, Wright said,

> [I]n 2006, the CIA came to me to write a scenario, in their words, about what would we do if we got bin Laden because this has been a subject of concern within the intelligence community. What if we did get him? How would we treat him? Where would we take him? Would it be better to take him alive or dead? And because I had written this movie, *The Siege*, and Hollywood had done a somewhat better job of connecting the dots about terrorism and the threat to America than the intelligence community. The CIA was reaching out to screenwriters, such as I had done, and I said, "Well, you know, I'm a reporter. I can't go writing screenplays for the CIA. But I'll tell you in the form of an op-ed for the *New York Times* what I think if we were able to catch bin Laden."

Finke then added her own two cents:

> Wright's remarks also recall that October 2001 meeting between a group of two dozen Hollywood writers and directors asked to brainstorm with Pentagon advisers and officials over a three-day period about what could happen next following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Clearly that dialogue between the U.S. government and Hollywood continued long after.

Yup. Thanks to CIA interrogators, Navy SEALs, and Hollywood for a job well done. ♦

FOIA For Me, But Not For Thee

We've been reading a particularly fatuous article in the May issue of *Perspectives on History*, the journal of the American Historical Association, titled "The Imperative of Public Participation." The AHA's president (Princeton professor Anthony Grafton) and executive director (Jim Grossman of the University of Chicago) self-indulgently write that "we historians ought to take seriously our role as mediators between the past and the present." How seriously? By denying perfectly legal and reasonable requests for public information, for starters.

Last March the AHA's incoming president, Wisconsin professor William Cronon, mediated between past and present by starting a blog attacking the conservative American Legislative Exchange Council and criticizing Wisconsin governor Scott Walker's positions on public employees' unions. Shortly afterward, the Wisconsin GOP issued an open records request for emails Cronon may have written from his university account pertaining to anti-Walker rallies organized by state labor groups. There was the possibility that Cronon was violating the university's policy by using public resources "to support the nomination of any person for political office or to influence a vote in any election or referendum."

That ringing in your ears is from all the cries of "McCarthyism!" that predictably ensued. Cronon became the lefty *cause célèbre* of the day. The usual suspects—James Fallows, Joshua Micah Marshall, Paul Krugman, John Judis—rallied to his defense. Never mind that, as long as university email accounts are covered under public records law, anyone has the right to file a request for Cronon's emails at any time for any reason. For the academic and journalistic establishment, the Republican stunt was a classic example of political "intimidation." No emails have been released. But Cronon does seem to have taken a hiatus from blogging—his last update was April 1.

The worst part of this dreary affair has been the flood of self-righteous, soppy op-eds like the *Perspectives on History* essay. "Saving the world is hard," Grafton and Grossman write. "Even saving your own corner of the world is hard." Gag us now. And while you're at it, try explaining how denying open records requests furthers the cause of "open" debate. ♦

The Enemies List Expands

Last week the White House made waves by excluding the *Boston Herald* from the press pool when the president made a fundraising trip to Beantown, supposedly because the administration was angered by the paper's allegedly insufficient coverage of the president's trip.

Has any other recent president had so little respect for the press and the First Amendment as Barack Obama? During the 2008 campaign, amidst the Tony Rezko trial, Obama held a press conference to explain why a man eventually convicted of several counts of politically connected fraud and bribery gave him generous help buying a million-dollar home. The press erupted when he tried to walk off the stage prematurely. Obama's response: "Come on now, I just answered, like, eight questions."

Later in the campaign, the future president's team set up a "truth squad" in Missouri made up of high-profile prosecutors and, incredibly, a sheriff

supposedly to squelch any unfair rumors about Obama.

As president, he tried unsuccessfully to exclude Fox News from a press pool; he went a nearly unprecedented 308 days without a press conference; and he drastically limited the media at the signing of the Freedom of the Press Act.

But last year's oil spill might have been the coup de grâce. The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* was prohibited from flying a plane over the spill to take photos. Florida senator Bill Nelson was denied permission to take a boat out to the spill with reporters and examine the catastrophe affecting his state. A CBS crew was also threatened with arrest on a public beach.

It's obvious that the president has no respect for the Fourth Estate. So why do so many media outlets continue to fawn over him? ♦

Music to Our Ears

The Second Spring: Words into Music, Music into Words is so original and sophisticated a project that it would strike us as entirely overambitious had it been undertaken by anyone but our own Joseph Bottum, the boundlessly creative editor of our Books & Arts pages from 1997 to 2005. A South Dakotan with a Ph.D. in philosophy, he is a writer of prose and verse of exceptional range. No wonder it occurred to him to enliven several original tunes and nearly two dozen recycled ones spanning seven centuries with lyrics of his own.

Some ballads, a lullaby, a pop song, patriotic songs, a country-western tune, a bouncy jig about all the sounds his house makes when he can't sleep, a nostalgic air recalling being read to by his father—these are works whose variety is perhaps best captured in the contrast between two of the Christmas carols.

The first, partly inspired by an unusual 16th-century Christmas poem called "The Burning Babe" and set to the tune of an 1835 Southern hymn, emphasizes the human depravity that is the backdrop to Bethlehem: *The heart of hatred has singed the child: / the scorching sneer at a stranger. / But he replies with a love gone wild: / the Torch of God in a manger.*

Then there is "Joy Will Keep Us," a carol set to an original melody by Michael Linton. This is classic, ecstatic Christmas made fresh: *Dreamers seek the source of dreaming. / Wise men search for wisdom's throne. / Christ has shown the cause of meaning: / truth itself at last made known. / Nature's wounds and weakness healed— / the grace of light in dark revealed.*

And for anyone not hopelessly drunk on rhyme and music by page 131 of this volume, an appendix reprints Bottum's controversial essay in the *Atlantic*, "The Soundtracking of America," out of which this project grew. The Scrapbook is nothing short of dazzled. ♦

Headline Heaven

It was quite a week for the pun and double-entendre crowd. Between Dominique Strauss-Kahn's arrest on sexual assault charges and Arnold Schwarzenegger's admission that he fathered a love child, the headlines have been coming at us hard and fast.

But The Scrapbook is especially enamored of the *New York Post*. With regard to the Schwarzenegger affair, the paper proclaimed: "'Conan' the destroyer of his wife and kids' lives," "Hasta la vista baby!" and "'Sperminator' Won't Be Back."

Meanwhile, the *Post* has nicknamed Strauss-Kahn "Dirty Dom" and thrown up headlines like "French Diss," "What Gaul! IMF Big's Hissy Fit," and "Frog Legs It!"

We salute the paper for its valiant effort—perhaps its finest work since it ran the Ike Turner obituary that read, "Ike, 76, beats Tina to death." ♦

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The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036. Copyright 2009, Clarity Media Group. All rights reserved. No material in The Weekly Standard may be reprinted without permission of the copyright owner. The Weekly Standard is a registered trademark of Clarity Media Group.

Katie in Kabul

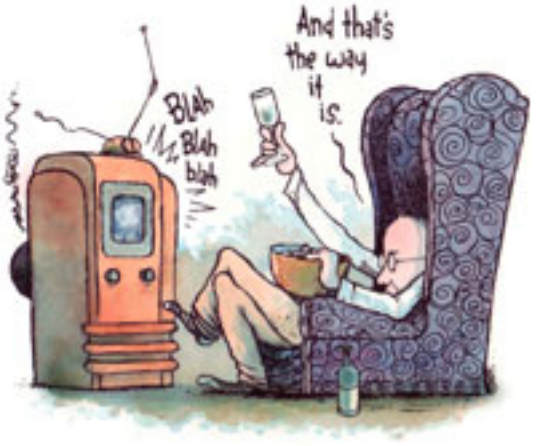
By the time you read this, Katie Couric will no longer be the anchorwoman on the CBS Evening News. She could not do what she was paid $15 million a year to do: bring up the ratings for CBS prime-time news and with them its advertising revenues. Both fell further during her tenure. While advertising revenues are down 9.1 percent for prime-time news shows generally, CBS's revenues fell, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, a full 23 percent.

I have been among Katie Couric's dwindling audience, and, in perhaps a slightly perverse way, I shall miss her. Prime-time news in Chicago goes on at 5:30 P.M., which is drink time chez Epstein: specifically, time for a glass of cold Riesling and a handful of Paul Newman pretzels, which, as the spoonful of sugar did to the medicine, helps the news go down. My demographic cohort, to use the charming advertising phrase, is the chief audience for prime-time news, or so I judge from all the Viagra, Plavix, Boniva, and other older players' medicines, palliatives, and panaceas hawked on all three news shows.

I have a dim memory of a stern gent named John Cameron Swayze (great portentous name) doing prime-time news. I recall Edward R. Murrow, broadcast journalism's Mother Teresa, demeaning himself on a show called *Person to Person*, in which one night I heard him ask, "Fidel, is that a baseball bat in the corner there?" "That's right," the genial dictator replied, "love de game of baseball, Ed." I remember Huntley and Brinkley, and enjoyed Brinkley's subtle hints that politicians were not to be taken entirely seriously.

By the time Walter Cronkite came along I was old enough to realize that behind his avuncular omniscience was a man with a face only a nation could love and who knew even less than I about the way the world works. The blandness of Tom Brokaw made me doubt even the greatness of his Greatest Generation. Peter Jennings I thought a nice enough looking *shaygetz*, but unduly soft on Araby.

In the era A.C. (after Cronkite), I began watching Brian Williams, who



DAVE CLARK

easily had the best tailoring. But Williams ended his show with a segment called "Making A Difference," which usually entailed some retired steel magnate teaching ghetto children how to make lanyards, and, frankly, I could never see the difference it might make. I tried a guy named Charlie something or other on ABC, who was substituting for the deceased Peter Jennings, though it was evident that he had neither the requisite hairdo nor smile for the job. When ABC brought in as its new anchor Diane Sawyer, with her heavy-breathing empathy, I was out of there.

That left me as part of Katie's diminishing audience on CBS. In the meanwhile, progress being our most important product, I had acquired a television set with a DVR, which allowed me to record shows and movies to watch when I wished. Best of all, a pre-recorded show could be fast-forwarded. This meant that, by recording beforehand, I could eliminate all the commercials on the evening news and all those weepy stories that they all go in for: stories about veterans missing limbs, young children with cancer, old people whose homes have been wiped out in floods. (Television news likes people crying on camera; if it weeps, it keeps.) The happy effect has been to get the formerly 30-minute evening news down to roughly 12 minutes.

For a while I thought myself rather grand in overlooking all the standard prejudice against Katie Couric: that she was a light (make that a bantam) weight, syrupy, a dope generally. I would sometimes tell people that whoever was editing her show was selecting more interesting stories than were available on ABC and NBC, and for a while I think that may have been so.

But soon Katie, like all television anchors people watch with any regularity, began to get on my nerves. Given her widely known salary, it was hard to credit her sympathy for people suffering mortgage foreclosures or other economic hardships. She had acquired two physicians as medical reporters, always ready with news about the latest false cures for hideous diseases, who resembled no one so much as aging Barbie and Ken dolls. One night when she wasn't on set, a man named Harry Smith announced, "Katie's in Kabul." Katie in Kabul, Katie in Kabul—I couldn't get the phrase out of my mind; it reminded me of Eloise at the Plaza.

Katie's replacement on CBS News is a man named Scott Pelley, who has the mien of a ticked-off Niles Crane, from the *Frasier* sitcom. Pelley threatens more hard news under his—is there such a word?—anchorship. He, I suspect, will drive me back to Brian Williams; to Diane Sawyer I cannot return. But, then, what does the news matter if the Riesling is good.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN

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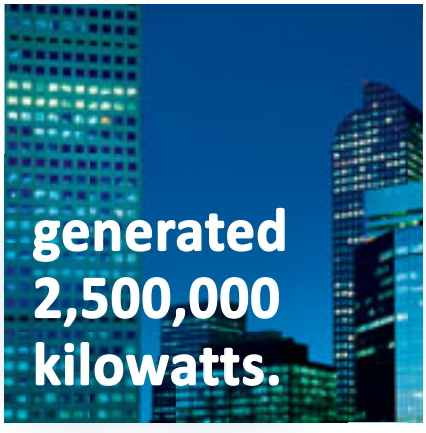

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Beyond Mediscare

Do House Republicans want to kill the elderly? If you listen to the left these days, you'd certainly think so. Last week, a liberal advocacy group called "The Agenda Project"—which claims to advance "rational, effective ideas in the public debate"—released an ad showing a look-alike of House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan pushing an old woman in a wheelchair off a cliff. "Is America beautiful without Medicare?" the ad inquires of viewers. "Ask Paul Ryan and his friends in Congress."

Nor is it only rabid interest groups that have succumbed to such appeals. Kathleen Sebelius, secretary of health and human services, said more or less the same thing earlier this month. When asked about the House Republican budget's approach to Medicare, Sebelius said that, under the plan, "If you run out of the government voucher and then you run out of your own money, you're left to scrape together charity care, go without care, die sooner. There really aren't a lot of options."

NEWSCOM

The president himself has come pretty close to this view. The Republican budget, Obama said in a speech at George Washington University last month, "says instead of guaranteed health care, you will get a voucher. And if that voucher isn't worth enough to buy the insurance that's available in the open marketplace, well, tough luck—you're on your own. Put simply, it ends Medicare as we know it."

Clearly, the GOP Medicare reform has struck a nerve. Democrats have focused on that part of the budget above all others. Aware that it would represent the most significant conservative policy innovation since the welfare reform of the mid-1990s, and persuaded that it will prove unpopular with seniors, liberals are intent on making political hay of the Medicare proposal while preventing its enactment. And yet, for all that they believe the Ryan plan is a Republican vulnerability, Democrats seem unwilling to speak about it honestly. Maybe they know that the facts do not support their case.

Let's start with "Medicare as we know it." According to the Congressional Budget Office and Medicare's trustees, the program has a long-term unfunded liability of more than $30 trillion. It's about a decade from insolvency. The trustees' latest annual report, released on May 13, notes that the Medicare trust fund is projected to run out of money five years sooner than was projected last year. Its current trajectory would swallow up the federal budget. Taxes could not be raised high or fast enough to keep up with its growth without crushing the economy. "Medicare as we know it" is not an option. Leaving Medicare alone means it simply won't be there for future seniors. The question is how to reform the program in order to save it.

The Democrats cannot deny the figures, but their solution is to let the crisis come. President Obama's budget offered nothing beyond Obamacare as a solution. Of course, the effects of Obamacare are already accounted for in the latest actuarial projections, since Obamacare is current law. Indeed, in an extraordinary letter affixed to the recent trustees' report, Medicare's chief actuary noted that Obamacare's approach to the program—price controls determined by a board of experts and devoid of market-based reforms that could help health care providers improve their efficiency—would actually exacerbate Medicare's troubles.

The Republican budget offers precisely such market-based reforms. It proposes not just to reduce the growth rate of Medicare spending, but to introduce consumer pressures into the system that would create financial incentives for providers to work more efficiently and reduce the growth of the health care costs that are at the heart of the problem.

Right now, Medicare pays all providers the same price for a given service—regardless of quality, efficiency, outcome, the cost to the provider, or patient satisfaction. Medicare recipients play no part in determining who gets paid and how much, and have no sense of what their health

care costs. Providers have no financial incentive to deliver better care at lower prices. And price controls that would reduce what Medicare pays per service (the Obamacare solution) would only create an incentive for providers to supply a greater volume of services to make up the difference. That is exactly what price controls have done in the past—drive efficiency down and costs up.

The House Republican proposal would change Medicare's counterproductive design. It would leave today's seniors and those now 55 or older in the current system, since they have planned their retirements around it. But everyone younger than that would join a redesigned Medicare when they retire. Rather than pay all providers a set fee directly, seniors would use the money (in the form of a premium support payment that would start at current Medicare rates and grow with inflation) to choose insurance plans from a menu of guaranteed private coverage options. Poor seniors and those in the worst health would get significantly greater support, while the wealthiest would receive less. And seniors would be buying guaranteed insurance with limits on out of pocket costs, not paying directly for care. Sebelius's notion that they would simply "run out" of money if they got sick is nothing more than fear-mongering.

Insurers and providers would compete for seniors' dollars. They would be free to find innovative ways to offer better quality at lower costs. That's how markets produce efficiency: by letting sellers find ways to offer buyers what they want at prices they want to pay.

Everyone agrees that such efficiency improvements are essential. As Ryan has put it, the basic choice offered by the parties' competing approaches to Medicare has to do with how efficiency is achieved. It's a choice between giving a board of experts the power to deny care to seniors based on its magisterial judgment of quality and value, and giving seniors the power to deny business to providers based on their individual opinions and priorities.

In principle, therefore, this is a choice between markets and central planning—a sort of choice that should no longer be hard to make. In practice, it is a choice between letting Medicare collapse under its own weight and modernizing the program to allow it to continue providing seniors with health security in retirement.

For politicians, it is also a choice between reforming a program that seniors are comfortable with and leaving it alone despite its fatal problems. Republicans have chosen to deal with that difficulty by leaving current seniors with all the benefits they are accustomed to in the current program and reforming it for the next generation. Democrats have chosen to deal with it by pretending there is no problem, falsely insisting that any reform will harm today's seniors, and leaving a colossal disaster for the next generation. Republicans, in other words, have chosen a policy solution that carries political risk while the Democrats have opted for political advantage.

The Ryan budget's particular approach, of course, is not the only possible way to address Medicare's woes. There is plenty of room to debate alternative solutions. But any effective solution would have to harness market forces to improve the efficiency of our health care system and give seniors more choices.

Unfortunately, the Democrats have opted for no solution at all. That doesn't mean President Obama wants to kill the elderly. But his cynical complaisance and demagoguery do risk killing Medicare, and doing grave damage to the budget and the economy along the way.

—Yuval Levin

The Egypt Test

In his speech at the State Department on May 19, President Obama called Egypt essential to the future of democratic reform in the Middle East and North Africa. As the largest and most influential Arab country, Egypt could in large part determine the course of the regional uprisings and the prospect of liberal democracy in the Islamic world. Yet violence against Copts, rising crime, and attacks on Israel's Gaza border and its Cairo embassy are causing alarm about where "democracy" in Egypt is leading. And for good reason.

NEWSCOM

Democracy has not yet arrived in Egypt, however. It has been over three months since dictator Hosni Mubarak was forced from office. Egypt remains a military dictatorship. It will take time to build a democratic culture. Even after parliamentary and presidential elections, expected this fall, necessary reform of the police and security forces, changes in interfaith relations, and the abandonment of reflexive anti-Israel sentiment—even among many democrats—will take time and American support.

What is frustrating and disturbing is that, during this crucial transition period, there has been no significant difference in the way Egypt is run, or even in who runs it. Much of the old guard is still in power. The military arrests civilians, including peaceful protesters, and tries them in military courts. The media are pressured not to cover matters the military regards as sensitive. This all must stop if the upcoming election campaign is to be free and fair. A new law on political rights, announced May 19, is progress.

Many people in Egypt and abroad regard the upcoming elections with trepidation. They fear success at the polls by the well organized Muslim Brotherhood and other extremists. In his State Department address, President Obama answered the question that has hung over many of the uprisings in the Arab world: whether America could accept the results of democratic elections even if the victors were starkly different from the putatively secular leaders we have relied on in the past. Democrats are those who win and govern by the rules of a democratic system, the president said, not those who "restrict the rights of others, and to hold on power through coercion." America, he went on, will work with "all who embrace genuine and inclusive democracy."

The president is right. It is important to distinguish between manifestations of Islam in a democratic society and antidemocratic behavior. Turkey, for example, is governed by a party with Islamic roots. A survey there in 2006 showed that, despite the widespread perception that the ranks of women wearing headscarves had grown, the number had actually declined. This might be because more women are leaving the home to work or engage in other activities—itself a sign of more freedom for women. Likewise, the announcement that Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, a member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, will run for president as an independent should not necessarily be cause for alarm. Egyptians consider him progressive. And his candidacy reveals the possibility of ferment and realignment within Egyptian politics and Islamic groups that was impossible under the old regime.

The bottom line is that Egypt's transition from dictatorship to democracy must not be allowed to stagnate. And for America to neglect or abandon Egypt—or Tunisia or Libya or Bahrain or Syria—would be a strategic and moral setback of the first order. That is why Washington needs a new ambassador to recast American relations with Cairo and make sure that democracy assistance is spent well and without interference from the Egyptian military government. In his speech, the president announced economic, trade, and investment initiatives and debt relief for "a democratic Egypt." But in order for a democratic Egypt to emerge at all, there is much more work to be done, by Egyptians and Americans alike. There is no time to lose.

—Ellen Bork

Protect Jobs by Protecting IP

By Thomas J. Donohue
President and CEO
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

It may not be immediately evident, but intellectual property (IP)—embodied in trademarks, patents, and copyrights—is indispensable to America's innovative drive and economic prosperity. IP-intensive industries play a key role in propelling the success of the U.S. marketplace by providing our workforce with quality jobs. Millions of them—19 million to be exact. And these businesses also pay wages nearly 60% higher than comparable work in non-IP industries.

However, rogue websites, which are dedicated to online trademark counterfeiting and digital copyright thievery, have created a clear and present danger to the viability of these industries. Studies show that legitimate businesses of all sizes lose more than $135 billion annually in part to the more than 53 billion visits that rogue sites attract. This lost revenue translates directly into lost jobs and reduced research and development.

Yet the economic impact is just part of the story. Even more frightening is the harm dangerously defective counterfeit products can have on consumers. From counterfeit perfume laced with antifreeze to bogus pharmaceuticals and faulty brake pads, counterfeiters won't hesitate to trade your family's health and safety for a quick buck.

So what can we do about it? Last year, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement launched Operation in Our Sites, which resulted in severing more than 100 rogue sites from the U.S. marketplace. While this program has proven incredibly successful, we are still lacking the tools necessary to combat rogue site operators that lie beyond U.S. borders.

Fortunately, Congress recognizes the growing threat of these cyber criminals and is coming to our aid. On May 12, Sens. Patrick Leahy and Orrin Hatch, along with a bipartisan group of 10 other co-sponsors, introduced S. 968, the Preventing Real Online Threats to Economic Creativity and Theft of Intellectual Property Act—the PROTECT IP Act, legislation to combat websites that are dedicated to online IP infringement.

The PROTECT IP Act would cut off foreign pirates and counterfeiters from the U.S. market and deprive them of what they want most—our money. By disrupting the business models of the pirates and counterfeiters, this act would make it less profitable and more difficult for those who wish to engage in blatant IP theft.

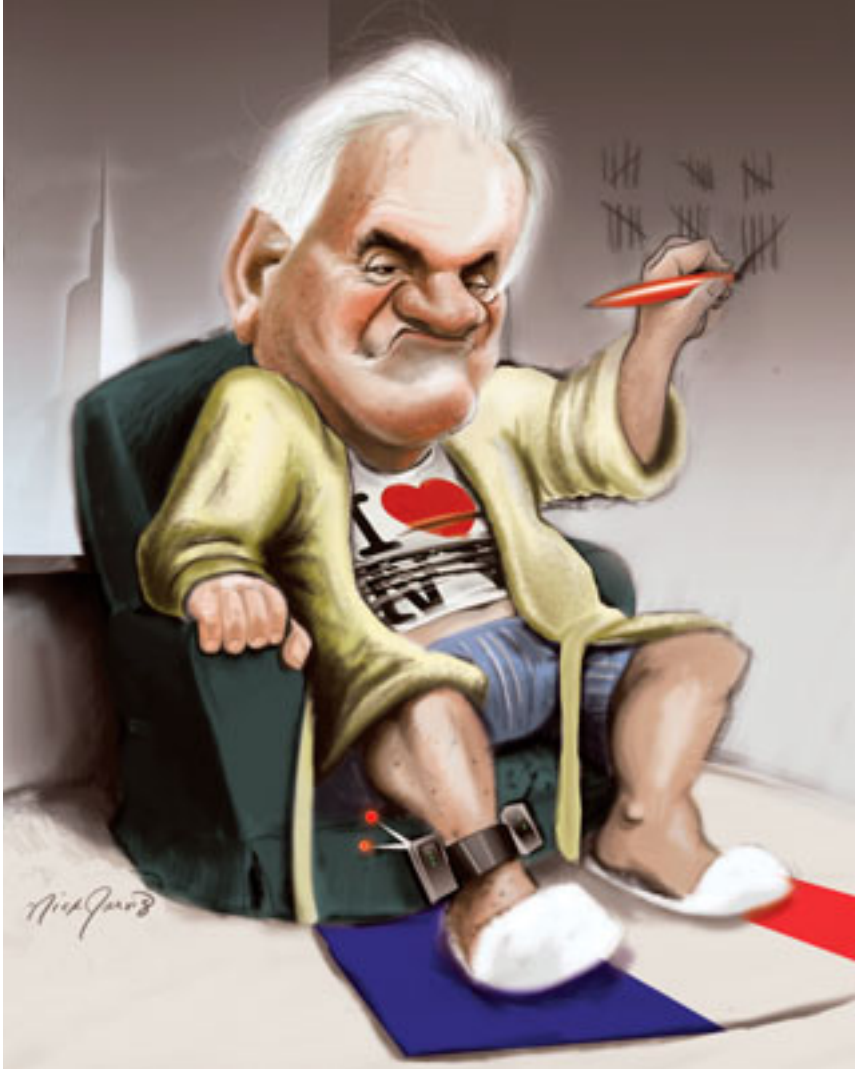
The reasonable enforcement of laws that protect American jobs and consumers is a primary function of government. The PROTECT IP Act can help do that, while creating a safer, more vibrant marketplace. In the interests of American citizens and businesses, it's time for Congress to enact the PROTECT IP Act.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Comment at www.chamberpost.com.

Oui, the People

Dominique Strauss-Kahn and the downfall of France's elites.

BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL



NICKLAUS JARVIS

Dominique Strauss-Kahn, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, was not just rich and powerful. He was also, until last Saturday, the likely next president of France. So commanding was his lead that rumors had been flying since April that Martine Aubry, his chief rival for the Socialist nomination, would soon drop out of the race.

Even if the idea of Strauss-Kahn as their head of state is something the French were only trying on for size, no people can be comfortable seeing their potential leader marched around as an accused rapist, particularly under the customs of an alien legal system. The French are indignant at the "perp walk," the tradition of marching an arrestee before the video cameras that is former U.S. attorney Rudolph Giuliani's contribution to American show business. The French see it as an act of vanity by publicity-seeking prosecutors and a potential harm to the presumption of innocence. On both counts, they are correct.

There are two ways to look at the anger that rose up in the French press after Strauss-Kahn, disheveled and humiliated, was photographed after his arrest. The first is to see an understandable discomfort with an act of lèse-majesté. The other is to see a public grown servile and sycophantic. The French press may have been worried about seeing Strauss-Kahn's name dragged through the mud, but it was quite content to print the name of his alleged victim. Then there's the increasingly notorious defense of Strauss-Kahn by his friend Bernard-Henri Lévy, who writes:

> I do not know—but, on the other hand, it would be nice to know, and without delay—how a chambermaid could have walked in alone, contrary to the habitual practice of most of New York's grand hotels of sending a "cleaning brigade" of two people, into the room of one of the most closely watched figures on the planet.

The letter smacks of the assumption that people of the cleaning lady's class are there for the convenience or delectation of people of Lévy's class—"*les people*," as the glitterati are called in French gossip columns.

But perhaps this is to sell the French short. Perhaps it is only a collection of official intellectuals and court journalists who advance this view of the Strauss-Kahn case. Perhaps the real views of France are those of a reader who wrote in an on-line forum of the French newsweekly *L'Express* that the French "are discovering to their shock that in the United States, 'criminals' are treated the same way no matter what their wealth and social standing." French journalists, the correspondent noted, "seem to find it scandalous and humiliating that a 'somebody' suspected of serious crimes should be treated like a 'nobody.'"

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Perhaps more than any U.S. defendant since O.J. Simpson, Strauss-Kahn represents privilege. But he represents something more, too. Although he belongs to a European Socialist party, it is probably fair to say that, in most people's minds, he represents capitalism. Strauss-Kahn was a superb finance minister the last time the Socialists, under Lionel Jospin, held power (1997-2002). Jospin's government was not particularly socialistic. It privatized more industries than Jacques Chirac did and, year after year, in an unsung way, kept the growth of the French state below that of Britain, where Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were thought to be carrying out an experiment in Thatcherite socialism.

Strauss-Kahn, in short, was like a business-friendly Democrat—sort of the Larry Summers or Robert Rubin of French economic policy. In this day and age, it speaks well of the French Socialists that they were about to nominate, and of the French public that they were ready to elect, a president focused on growth rather than envy. It also speaks well of the IMF that it saw fit to hire a person with such an independent streak.

Most economists on the left have been trapped in the partisan argument that, because stimulus is always good, deficits are always harmless. Not Strauss-Kahn. He believed that time was running out for the United States to bring its deficits under control. Three big black clouds passed over U.S. bond markets this spring. One was the announcement by Bill Gross of Pimco that he was exiting his T-bill positions. Another was the shift of Standard & Poor's to a "negative" outlook on U.S. debt. But as important as either of these was the unprecedented warning by Strauss-Kahn's IMF that the United States had no "credible strategy" for dealing with its debt.

Strauss-Kahn's departure from the IMF comes at the worst possible time for Europe. The director's position has traditionally gone to a European, just as the job of heading the World Bank has gone to an American. In fact, in 39 of the years since the IMF was founded in 1946, its director has been a Frenchman. In recent years, the job has involved imposing "structural adjustment programs" on debtor countries in Latin America and Southeast Asia to ensure that they pay back Western banks. But today the deadbeats are in Europe and North America, and the countries of the old Third World—from Mexico to South Africa to Singapore—are putting forward their own credible candidates for the top IMF job. Europe may soon find itself taking orders from those it used to lecture.

The Strauss-Kahn episode is spectacular, but it fits a pattern. France missed the Arab democracy movement last winter because it was mired in scandal. At the height of the demonstrations, it emerged that Foreign Minister Michèle Alliot-Marie had accepted improper favors from Tunisia's ousted government and Prime Minister François Fillon had taken hospitality from the Egypt of Mubarak. France's leading candidate to succeed Strauss-Kahn at the IMF, Finance Minister Christine Lagarde, must first face an inquiry over a court-ordered settlement paid to former crooner, businessman, and Socialist minister Bernard Tapie. Strauss-Kahn's alleged crime points to a personal failure, but it is also an episode in the collapse of a political elite. Faced with a record of hubris among the governing classes, the people are losing patience with "les people." ♦

Chercher la Femme

French women are starting to speak up.

BY ANNE-ELISABETH MOUTET

Paris

Ever since the news broke, a week ago Saturday, of the IMF head's surprise arrest, for alleged attempted rape, in the first-class cabin of an Air France jet minutes from takeoff on the JFK tarmac, the Dominique Strauss-Kahn meltdown has caused France to experience a kind of cosmic O.J. moment. Specials take up every slot between news bulletins on all cable channels as well as on network prime time. Talking heads and supposed experts are called in to wall-to-wall illustrate, commentate, and pontificate. Every front page and magazine cover features a tieless, unshaven, haggard DSK—as he is known here—snapped during his infamous New York perp walk. Nobody talks about anything else.

Did he do it? How could he have been so stupid as to do it? Who entrapped him into doing it? Who benefits from his doing it? Did he jump? Was he pushed? Is this a dastardly *Sarkozyste* plot against the front-runner in next year's presidential election? (Nobody suspects DSK's main rivals within the Socialist party, François Hollande and Martine Aubry, of being practical-minded and organized enough to sort out a foreign honeytrap for him. This may not bode well for their chances in 2012.) Is this an evil international plot against France/the euro/the IMF/the EU, masterminded by Obama/Wall Street/Boeing/the Germans/China?

Really. Not joking here. A nice and smart friend of mine, a longtime lobbyist for one of France's major corporations, which manufactures both civilian and military hardware, ticked off all the reasons why "stealing France's [presidential] election simply can't have happened by chance." France was weakened by this, she explained. This worked against the euro. It threatened Europe's economic recovery. Even if DSK hadn't become president of France, he would have been a perfect

Anne-Elisabeth Moutet is a regular columnist for the London Telegraph *and a commentator for the BBC.*

contender for Herman Van Rompuy's job as president of the European Union.

"But that's a non-job," I weakly objected, "given to a committee-hand-picked bland candidate chosen especially for his unsurpassed tedium."

"Precisely! Both Van Rompuy and [Baroness] Ashton [the EU's gaffe-prone foreign minister] have demonstrated that Europe needs stronger and more competent personalities at its head." Say what you will, we in France have a better class of conspiracy theorists.

As the week passed, with the unpleasant realization by the French public that the TV law and cop shows they love so much are an actual reflection of what happens to alleged criminals when they're caught, opinions started to polarize in Paris. A bevy of DSK's Left Bank *intello* and political friends, well-connected newspaper editors and pundits, insisted on the cruelty of the "public shaming" inflicted on DSK by "publicity-seeking attorneys and judges." Every day brought more tin-eared pleas.

"It's a new Dreyfus Affair," Jean-Pierre Chevènement, the former Socialist defense minister, thundered. "Overblown! Really, nobody died in that hotel room," dismissed Jack Lang, the charismatic former culture minister from Mitterrand times (and a law professor with a refreshingly easy-going view of rape). Robert Badinter, the former justice minister and president of the *Conseil Constitutionnel* (the French supreme court), declared the treatment inflicted on DSK, from the perp walk to allowing cameras in the Manhattan courtroom where he was arraigned, a "shameful public execution." (Badinter is married to Elisabeth Badinter, perhaps France's most famous feminist. Breakfast conversation *chez les Badinter* may be strained in the next couple of weeks.)

All this insensitive babble—as well as the startling lack of empathy from these platinum-credentialed liberals for the actual alleged victim, a working-class African single mother—was soon picked up by British and American reporters in a less than charitable mood. Next thing you knew, French papers were running the predictable headlines about "Anglo-Saxons criticizing France." Less predictable was the growing reaction, especially among women of all classes, that enough was enough. The French have always known that their Revolution changed comparatively little to a system sharply divided between the rulers and the ruled. Whenever they complain of this state of affairs, they are branded "populists," and if the complaints grow louder, someone will eventually warn of the "temptation of the Extreme Right."

Now, as more women came out of the woodwork with DSK stories, and his defenders and spin doctors tried to brush these new accusers off as opportunists, it emerged that they had, in fact, mentioned Strauss-Kahn's unpleasant, sometimes downright violent, advances, as early as the mid-2000s, to no interest whatsoever. The writer Tristane Banon, who told of going to interview DSK and having her bra torn off and jeans pushed down while she kicked back; the respected Socialist MP Aurélie Filipetti, who famously said she would always take care never to find herself alone in a room with DSK, had both been dismissed, not as liars but as unsophisticated pests.

This was the last straw for many. Thursday night, Hélène Jouan, newsmagazines editor in chief at France Inter, the country's answer to NPR, broke into the cozy apologies of a panel of male editors on a prime time special on France 2, the national TV network, to accuse the entire male-dominated French political class of a quasi-harassment culture in which politicians view women journalists as "available"—making it possible to turn a blind eye to early warning signs of the DSK disaster.

She told of incessant text messages; of politicians on the campaign trail knocking insistently on her hotel door at night. "It never happened with DSK," she said, "and of course it wasn't assault or anything like it; but at the beginning of my career it was so heavy that I almost gave up journalism."

This sounded horribly familiar. I, too, have clear memories from a couple of decades ago of this Gaullist mayor calling me "my little honeyrabbit" one minute into our interview; and of that Socialist Paris councilman offering to drive me home since I lived in his constituency and "mistaking" my knee for the stick shift at every red light. I never felt really threatened—and I would argue that learning how to fend off advances like these without getting hysterical is a valuable skill—but I was glad to be saved from the domestic politics beat by the Italian Red Brigades, which I started being sent to cover in Rome.

You could tell from the stony faces of the other France 2 panel members that Jouan's account didn't come as a complete surprise. Not much, in fact, about the DSK news has come as a surprise to the French media and political classes, except that he got caught; and that's what the public is beginning to cotton on to. "They" knew, but "they" decided to hide behind the convenient pieties of French vaunted sophistication and tolerance, of respect for privacy—so much better, my dear, than the Anglo-Saxons' tabloid culture. "Reporting stops at the bedroom door," the editor in chief of *Le Canard enchaîné*, the satirical and investigative weekly, famously intoned in the 1970s. As it happens, that particular editor himself led at the time what we'll euphemistically call a complicated private life. More than one correspondent felt that *Le Canard*'s "ethical" rule, become bylaw for the whole of the French press, amounted to little more than a drawing of lines between the hunters and their prey.

The DSK thunderbolt may well change all this. It will become increasingly difficult in the future for the media not to report on politicians' and top bosses' excesses the way they do on Hollywood—and for judges not to permit the defense, if privacy laws are invoked, that it was in the public interest. No wonder the pundits look gloomy these days: They and their politician friends can hear the tumbrils rolling across the cobblestones. Their cozy lives may never be the same again. ♦

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Another Way To Curb Deficits

Rein in the spending hidden in the tax rules.

BY MARTIN FELDSTEIN

President Obama is increasing government spending even faster than the budget numbers imply. That's because some of his increased spending is disguised as cuts in taxes.

When the government gives a tax credit to homeowners who buy solar energy panels, it's just like giving them a cash subsidy to buy those panels. But it's recorded as a reduction in taxes rather than as an increase in outlays.

Similarly, when the president calls for an increase in the child care credit, that's also treated as a tax cut rather than the rise in spending that it actually is.

According to calculations of the Treasury Department that are hidden deep in the government's annual budget, there are hundreds of billions of dollars of spending every year that are recorded as tax reductions. The biggest of these "tax expenditures," as they are called, is the exclusion of employer health insurance premiums from the taxable income of employees. That exclusion resulted in a tax reduction of $160 billion in 2010 and is projected to be $1.4 trillion between 2010 and 2016. That's a $1.4 trillion subsidy to health insurance that is disguised as a tax reduction.

Limiting total tax expenditures could produce enough revenue to achieve very substantial cuts in future budget deficits while also lowering personal tax rates. Indeed, if tax expenditures are not reduced, Congress will eventually be forced to raise tax rates or to introduce new taxes. That's because there is no way to achieve the needed reductions in future deficits just by cutting traditional government outlays, even if there are further cuts in defense spending. And slowing the growth of Social Security and Medicare is needed just to avoid an explosion of future spending on those programs.

THOMAS FLUHARTY

Limiting tax expenditures should have bipartisan appeal. Republicans should welcome limits on tax expenditures as a way to cut hidden government spending. Democrats should accept it as a way to raise the revenue that they insist must be part of any deficit reduction plan. And as I will explain below, it is also a natural way to achieve an automatic "failsafe" mechanism to make sure that deficits decline as promised.

Although limiting the use of tax expenditures would produce additional tax revenue, it is very different from other possible revenue increases. It doesn't raise marginal tax rates, doesn't discourage work or entrepreneurship, and doesn't tax saving and risk taking. It is really a reduction in government spending, not a tax increase. And deep enough cuts in tax expenditures would actually allow reductions in personal tax rates as well as in budget deficits.

I am surprised that some conservatives who favor cutting government nondefense spending oppose limiting tax expenditures because they regard the resulting increase in tax revenue as a tax increase. That fails to distinguish between the accounting effect of cutting tax expenditures and the economic effect. Although government accounting rules treat the end of a tax credit or the limit of a tax deduction as a revenue increase, the economic effect is the same as a cut in spending. Anyone who favors less government spending should also favor cutting tax expenditures.

At a personal level, reductions in tax expenditures would be unpopular with those who see their own benefits reduced. That's true of any form of spending cut, whether through the tax code or the outlay side of the budget. But voters who recognize the seriousness of the deficit situation may nevertheless support a limit to tax expenditures if they believe that all taxpayers are being asked to accept a sacrifice.

That's why I think that putting a cap on the total value of tax reductions that each individual can achieve through tax expenditures is better than those plans that would limit only a few of the tax deductions. More specifically, I favor limiting the tax reduction that individuals can achieve through itemized deductions and the exclusion of employer health insurance payments to 2 percent of each taxpayer's adjusted gross income. Such a cap would allow each taxpayer to benefit from all of the current tax rules but would limit the total resulting tax reduction to no more than 2 percent of that taxpayer's total income.

Note that the limit applies to the resulting tax reductions and not to the deductions themselves. A taxpayer with a 15 percent marginal tax rate who pays mortgage interest of

Martin Feldstein is a professor of economics at Harvard. He was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers from 1982–84.

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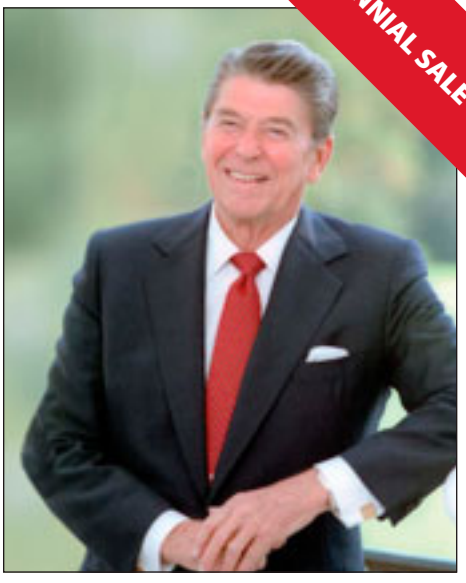

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$3,000 a year would have to count 15 percent of that $3,000, or $450, toward his allowable cap.

I have analyzed the revenue effects of such a plan in a study with Daniel Feenberg of the National Bureau of Economic Research and Maya MacGuineas of the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget (our paper, "Capping Individual Tax Expenditure Benefits," is available online). We found that if a 2 percent cap were in effect in 2011 it would result in additional tax revenue of $278 billion. That's the extra revenue for just a single year. In a decade it could produce more than $3 trillion of additional revenue, enough to achieve a substantial reduction in the national debt while also permitting cuts in personal tax rates.

The tax expenditure cap could also play a key role in a failsafe plan. The tax expenditure cap could initially be set at a larger percentage of adjusted gross income, thus producing less revenue, but could be scheduled to become a tighter cap if additional revenue is needed. An initial cap of 5 percent of adjusted gross income would produce revenue of $110 billion in 2011. If the other outlay cuts and the rise in revenue resulting from economic growth brought the deficit down along an agreed path over the coming decade, the 5 percent cap could remain. But if deficits remained unacceptably high, the cap could be reduced to 3 percent or 2 percent.

President Obama has said that he would include reductions in tax expenditures as part of a failsafe plan to achieve reductions in future deficits. That is a welcome sign, but it is important how those reductions are achieved. To be seen as fair and to be capable of raising substantial revenue, they should apply to all deductions and to the health insurance exclusion. The limit should apply to all taxpayers and not just to high-income taxpayers, as the president suggested when he proposed limiting the tax rate used for tax deductions to 28 percent. But a broad cap applied to all taxpayers should be a central part of the deficit reduction plan and could be used as an automatically triggered failsafe option. ♦

Obama Adopts the Freedom Agenda

But he hasn't undergone a full conversion.

BY LEE SMITH

Palestinian protesters the day after Obama's speech, at the Qalandia checkpoint

President Obama's speech on May 19 outlining the administration's Middle East policy vindicates his predecessor's freedom agenda, though the two men reached the same place by different paths. It was the 9/11 attacks that forced George W. Bush to conclude that promoting democracy and human rights in the Muslim Middle East was a core American interest. Insofar as the source of 9/11 was the poisonous political culture of the Middle East, in Bush's view, American policy had to focus on the people of the region and the societies they have made.

It's worth recalling that this is not the lesson Obama drew from 9/11. His June 2009 Cairo speech was premised on another understanding of the attacks—that anti-Americanism had its roots in Muslims' legitimate grievances with Washington's policies, perhaps above all the U.S. relationship with Israel. Obama's ambiguous words last week on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, as well as his opposition to introducing democracy by force in Iraq, show that he still hasn't entirely embraced his inner Bush. Nor is he likely to credit the last president much, since his own road to the freedom agenda comes by way of the Arab Spring, that series of uprisings that Obama may have helped inspire, albeit unwittingly.

Obama is still wary of Bush's language, preferring, for instance, *self-determination* to *democracy*. But there is little in Obama's speech that Bush did not say in promoting his freedom agenda. Bush's rehabilitation then comes not, as Bush's defenders had hoped, at the hands of historians decades after his death, but rather from the successor administration, though it won office on an anything-but-Bush platform. More important, Obama's speech signals that we're approaching a consensus on

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Lee Smith is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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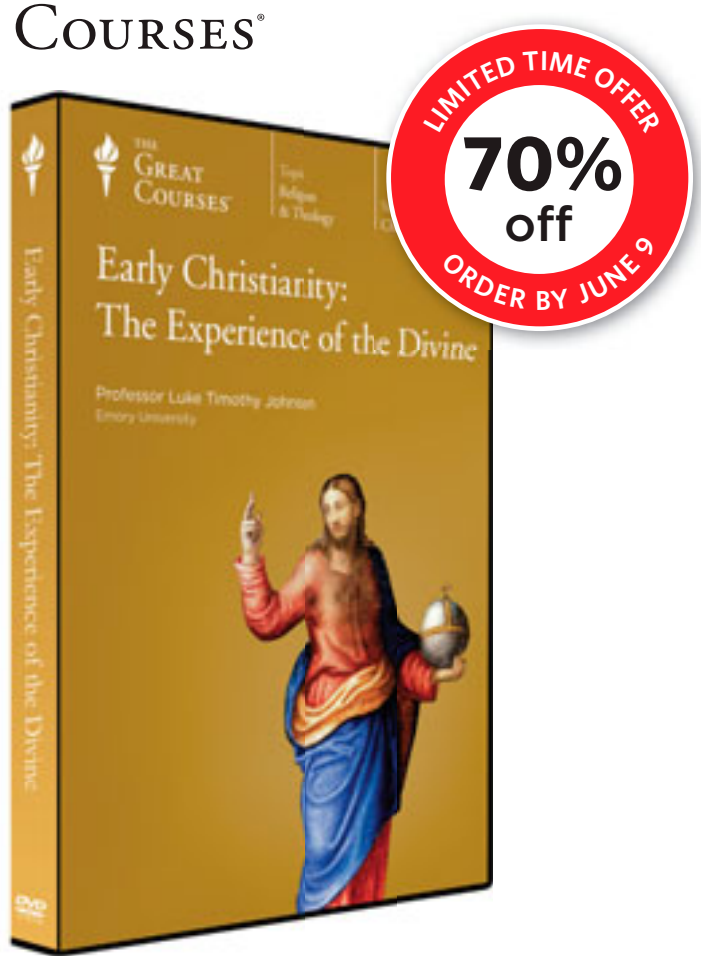

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U.S. policy toward the Middle East.

No wonder: 9/11 altered the way American policymakers interact with the region. The attacks brought a sea change in U.S. strategy. The Middle East became the one region in the world that Washington could no longer relate to solely in terms of nation-states. It turned out that some of our allies were untrustworthy, some even inciting their own people against us and supporting anti-American terror through nonstate actors. Further, because Arab and Muslim publics justified and celebrated the slaughter of American civilians, U.S. policymakers were forced to conclude that something was deeply wrong in these cultures.

In overthrowing Saddam, Bush went over the heads of the region's rulers to make America's case directly to Middle Easterners. Obama, too, spoke past Middle Eastern presidents and princes, though he didn't mean to. He came to office promising to engage rogue regimes like Syria and Iran that his predecessor had isolated—another of Bush's excesses and errors for which the new president would make amends. Obama saw the Middle East as united by Islam, instead of divided against itself in every possible way, into sects, ethnicities, tribes, and nations. Another dividing line was between the powerless people and their governments. With his Cairo speech, which Obama intended as the centerpiece of a reset with the entire region, the president unintentionally undermined Hosni Mubarak in his own capital. When 18 months later Egyptians took to the streets to demand Mubarak's ouster, Obama asked aides how he could possibly go against the people whose aspirations he had encouraged.

But if the Cairo speech is part of the Arab Spring, so is the invasion of Iraq, for toppling the strongman Saddam Hussein made previously unimaginable changes not only thinkable but possible. Last week, Obama said Iraq is "poised to play a key role in the region." It should also play a role in the White House's promotion of self-determination. Without rooting the freedom agenda in deep soil, Obama is likely to miss some of what the Bush administration learned in Iraq.

Take state sponsorship of terror. The fact that Osama bin Laden was found hiding in Pakistan, a U.S. ally, confronts the White House with the same problem the Bush administration faced: collusion between Middle Eastern regimes and terrorist organizations. Bush put regional rulers on notice by making an example of Saddam, and the message got across. Qaddafi gave up his nuclear program and stopped sponsoring terrorism, then Syria was forced out of Lebanon. Obama has undone some of that good work by going easy on Syria and taking weak, half-hearted action against the Libyan leader. Obama has shown these nasty regimes that the Americans will not really befriend you if you comply with the request to disarm—but neither are the Americans serious enough to kill you.

The other thing the Obama administration might learn from American experience in Iraq is how Middle Eastern societies are actually transformed. That Obama has promised Egypt $1 billion in debt relief and another $1 billion in aid suggests Washington is not going to foot the bill for these transitions, as it did in Iraq. But Washington has learned a thing or two about Arab political cultures—about sectarianism and Islamism, both its Sunni and Shia variants; about cultivating a new generation of political leaders and sidelining less savory actors. Indeed, Washington has become the locus of expertise on Middle East democracy. Now that Obama has vindicated Bush's freedom agenda, he can best advance U.S. interests, and promote the self-determination of Middle Easterners, by learning not just from his predecessor's failures but his successes as well. ♦

Catholic Power, Catholic Morals

Notre Dame drops trespassing charges against pro-lifers.

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

Early this month came the news that Notre Dame has agreed, at last, to drop the trespassing charges it had been pressing against the protesters who marched on its campus two years ago. The pro-life protesters. At a Catholic school.

Of course, what those protesters were objecting to back in 2009 was the awarding of an honorary law degree to President Obama, which may not have been the best occasion to complain about the way Catholic colleges have been willing to ignore the pro-life sentiment that motivates much of the Catholic population (to say nothing of the teachings of their church). That same spring saw events of equal contradiction, as when Sacred Heart University hosted a dinner for Kerry Kennedy and Xavier University honored Donna Brazile.

But, in the event, it was the visit of the pro-abortion Barack Obama to Notre Dame that kindled the fight—simply because the combination was so conspicuous: the president of the United States and the nation's most famous Catholic school. And so several hundred pro-life activists showed up to denounce the school's betrayal of the pro-life cause. And Notre Dame, profoundly embarrassed by that march, had the protesters arrested and hauled off to jail.

Sources at Notre Dame report that

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the university has agreed to drop the charges mostly in the hope that no one will notice. The president, Fr. John Jenkins, still believes the pro-life figures should be prosecuted, but a trial would have brought the protests back into the news—and produced another round of bad publicity for the school. Better, Notre Dame reluctantly decided, to let the whole thing slip away into obscurity.

It's tempting to interpret all this as part of the relentless fawning on left-leaning power by Catholic colleges. Many commentators back in 2009 proclaimed Notre Dame the poster child for an entire culture of academic Catholicism, in which the old schools were running as fast as they could from their Catholic heritage, in a desperate attempt to make themselves indistinguishable from Berkeley, Bennington, and Bowdoin.

That's not exactly wrong. Lord knows, the advantages of the Catholic educational system have been squandered in any number of ways. But there is another theme in the story that needs to be noticed, another thread that needs to be traced.

What was missing from most accounts of the 2009 protests was a clear memory of the assurance that almost all Catholics had, once upon a time, about Catholicism in America—their confidence that the Catholic Church was going to call the nation to a higher morality even while it was providing intellectual support for the continuance of our great Enlightenment experiment. America and Catholicism. Catholicism and America. It was supposed to be an easy fit, a smooth collaboration.

Oh, back in the eighteenth century, when Charles Carroll signed the Declaration of Independence and his cousin John Carroll became the first Catholic bishop in America, nobody imagined that it would be easy. And through the nineteenth century, when the states were passing Blaine Amendments to their constitutions and anti-immigration agitation was indistinguishable from anti-Catholicism, an American Catholicism appeared impossible. But in the long run from the Second World War through the 1980s—as Americans elected their only Catholic president and Catholic colleges grew in national importance—the acceptance of Catholicism in America came to seem a natural, almost inevitable thing.

Something more than acceptance, for that matter. Call it the Murray Project, after John Courtney Murray, the Jesuit priest whose 1960 book *We Hold These Truths: Catholic Reflections on the American Proposition* became the central text of public-intellectual life for Catholics in America. The far left would eventually drift off into the thin air of a Marxist-influenced Liberation Theology, while the far right retreated to the dying fires of a Spanish-influenced notion of throne and altar. But for most American Catholics, whether middle left or middle right, Murray was the great explicator and prophet of the new Catholic role.

Commencement Day 2009, Notre Dame

And what Murray seemed to explain was a way in which Catholicism would save America. By the early 1970s, it was apparent that the mainline Protestant churches were in headlong decline, no longer capable of playing their traditional part in the American Experiment. The Evangelicals were rising, but they lacked the intellectual and institutional resources to replace the dying mainline. And so it fell to Catholicism to provide the missing support for the national proposition. Like every political arrangement, the American experiment had always relied on an implicit theo-politics, a generally agreed-upon understanding of the relation of God and man, and Catholicism appeared ready to be slotted in as the new theo-political pillar of the nation.

Then came abortion—or, at least, the clear political divisions over abortion—and suddenly, from the early 1980s on, the Murrayans of the left and the Murrayans of the right were at each other's throats. People like the Harvard law professor Mary Ann Glendon, who refused to participate in the controversial 2009 Notre Dame graduation when it became clear that she was being used to defang the pro-life complaints, were no longer perceived as liberal Catholics. People like Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, the longtime president of Notre Dame and liberal stalwart, were no longer perceived as traditional Catholics. The old Catholic confidence—the idea that the faith was going to provide *both* support and moral guidance for the nation—broke apart.

The curious part, however, was the way that it broke. The liberals, the left wing of the Murrayans, chose the political side, electing to join and support the American political establishment. And the conservatives, the right wing of the Murrayans, chose the moral side, electing to use Catholicism to call the nation to a higher morality that sees abortion as an outrage against human dignity.

The result is things like the clash on Notre Dame's campus in 2009. No doubt the protesters believed themselves good Americans. And no doubt Fr. Jenkins, president of a Catholic school, believed himself to be pro-life. But the sides they've chosen in the Murray Project compel them all to certain behaviors—on the one hand, to march against the simple appearance of a pro-choice American president at a Catholic college, and, on the other hand, to have Catholics arrested for protesting abortion.

Notre Dame's decision to allow the 2009 trespassing charges to be dropped is not a solution to this divide. It's not even a papering over of the split. The Catholicism that pursues power and acceptance in America and the Catholicism that pursues a moral agenda will not be reconciled—not, at least, until the abortion fight in this country is either abandoned or won. ♦

NEWSCOM

Fat City

Thank you, Illinois taxpayers, for my cushy life.

BY DAVID RUBINSTEIN

After 34 years of teaching sociology at the University of Illinois at Chicago, I recently retired at age 64 at 80 percent of my pay for life. This calculation was based on a salary spiked by summer teaching, and since I no longer pay into the retirement fund, I now receive significantly more than when I "worked." But that's not all: There's a generous health insurance plan, a guaranteed 3 percent annual cost of living increase, and a few other perquisites. Having overinvested in my retirement annuity, I received a fat refund and—when it rains, it pours—another for unused sick leave. I was also offered the opportunity to teach as an emeritus for three years, receiving $8,000 per course, double the pay for adjuncts, which works out to over $200 an hour. Another going-away present was summer pay, one ninth of my salary, with no teaching obligation.

I haven't done the math but I suspect that, given a normal life span, these benefits nearly doubled my salary. And in Illinois these benefits are constitutionally guaranteed, up there with freedom of religion and speech.

Why do I put "worked" in quotation marks? Because my main task as a university professor was self-cultivation: reading and writing about topics that interested me. Maybe this counts as work. But here I am today—like many of my retired colleagues—doing pretty much what I have done since the day I began graduate school, albeit with less intensity.

Before retiring, I carried a teaching load of two courses per semester: six hours of lecture a week. I usually scheduled classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays: The rest of the week was mine. Colleagues who pursued grants taught less, some rarely seeing a classroom. The gaps this left in the department's course offerings were filled by adjuncts, hired with little scrutiny and subject to little supervision, and paid little.

Sometimes my teaching began at 9:30 A.M., but this was hardship duty. A night owl, I preferred to start my courses at 11 or 12. With an hour or so in my office to see an occasional student, I was at the (free) gym by 4 P.M. Department heads sometimes pleaded with faculty to alter their schedules to suit departmental needs, but rarely. Because most professors insist on selected hours, to avoid rush hour and to retain days at home, universities must build extra classroom space that stands empty much of the day.

The occasional seminars were opportunities for professors to kick back and let graduate students do the talking. Committee meetings were tedious but, except for the few good departmental citizens, most of us were able to avoid undue burdens.

Another perquisite of the job was a remarkable degree of personal freedom. Some professors came to class unshaven, wearing T-shirts and jeans. One of the deans scolded the faculty for looking like urban guerrillas. He was ridiculed as an authoritarian prig.

This schedule held for 30 weeks of the year, leaving free three months in summer, a month in December, and a week in spring, plus all the usual holidays. Every six years, there was sabbatical leave: a semester off at full pay to do research, which sometimes actually got done.

Most faculty attended academic conferences at taxpayer expense. Some of these were serious events, but always allowed ample time for schmoozing and sightseeing. A group of professors who shared my interests applied for a grant to fund a conference at Lake Como. It was denied because we had failed to include any women and so we settled for an all-expenses-paid week at Cambridge, England.

The grandest prize of all is, of course, tenure. The tenured live in a different world than ordinary mortals, a world in which fears of unemployment are banished, futures can be confidently planned, and retirement is secure.

All of this at a university without union representation!

To be fair, the first years of a newly hired assistant professor can be harrowing. Writing lecture notes to cover a semester takes effort. But soon I had abundant material which could be reused indefinitely and took maybe 20 minutes of review before class. Adding new material required hardly more effort than the time to read what I would have read anyway.

The only really arduous part of teaching was grading exams and papers. But for most of my classes I had teaching assistants to do this, graduate students who usually knew little more about the topic than the undergraduates.

My colleagues, to their credit, promoted me to full professor knowing my ideological heterodoxy. I fear that a young Ph.D. looking for work today who challenged the increasingly rigid political orthodoxies would have a hard time. But the discipline of sociology is so ideologically homogenous—a herd, as Harold Rosenberg put it, of independent minds—that this problem is rare. Universities cherish diversity in everything except where it counts most: ideas.

According to data from the Center for Responsive Politics, Harvard, donating 4 to 1 in favor of Democrats in 2008, was one of the more politically diverse major American universities. Ninety-two percent of employees at the University of Chicago donated to Democrats. The University of California favored Democrats over Republicans, 90 percent to 10 percent. And William and Mary employees preferred Democrats to the GOP by a margin of 99 percent to 1 percent. Neil Gross of Harvard found that 87.6 percent of

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social scientists voted for Kerry, 6.2 percent for Bush. Gross also found that 25 percent of sociologists characterize themselves as Marxists, likely a higher percentage than members of the Chinese Communist party. I would guess that if Lenin were around today he would be teaching sociology and seeking grants to fund the revolution.

The research requirements to achieve tenure and promotion are rigorous. The top journals reject as much as 90 percent of the work submitted, so accumulating the half-dozen or so articles usually required to be tenured took sustained effort.

But it is not clear what value this work has to those who pay the salaries. As Thomas Sowell has argued, building a scholarly reputation requires finding a niche that no one else has explored—often for good reason. I am hard pressed to explain why sometimes exquisitely esoteric interests should be supported by taxpayers: This expertise certainly does not match the educational needs of students. (Full disclosure: The book that established my scholarly reputation is titled *Marx and Wittgenstein: Social Science and Social Praxis*.)

The work done by most of my colleagues did bear on issues of wider relevance and not all of it was so ideologically compromised as to be useless. But the readership of academic journals is tiny, and most of this work had no impact beyond a small circle of interested academics—for understandable reasons. Philip Tetlock, a research psychologist at Berkeley, tested the accuracy of 82,361 predictions made by 284 experts including psychologists, economists, political scientists, and area and foreign policy specialists, 96 percent with post-graduate training. He found that their prognostications did not beat chance. The increasingly ideological nature of social science will not improve this record.

To be sure, some of my colleagues were prodigious researchers, devoted teachers, and outstanding departmental, university, and professional citizens. But sociologists like to talk about what they call the "structural" constraints on behavior. While character and professional ethics can withstand the incentives to coast, the privileged position of a tenured professor guarantees that there will be slackers.

An argument can be made that, compared with professionals in the private sector, college professors are underpaid, though according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "by rank, the average [salary] was $108,749 for full professors." It is difficult to compare the overall goodness of different lives, but there is a back of the envelope shortcut. In my 34 years, just one professor in the sociology department resigned to take a nonacademic job. For open positions, there were always over 100 applicants, several of them outstanding. The rarity of quits and the abundance of applications is good evidence that the life of the college professor is indeed enviable.

The life of a professor is far more attractive than that of most government employees, but elements of professorial privilege can be found in the lives of other public sector workers. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the quit rate for government workers is less than one-third that of the private sector. Applications for federal jobs exceed those for the private sector by at least 25 percent, and when workers move from private to federal employment their earnings, according to Princeton's Alan Krueger, increase by 12 percent.

And then there are the public schools. Because K-12 education is local, generalizations are difficult. But there are many egregious cases. Less than 2 percent of teachers in Los Angeles are denied tenure. In the last decade, according to *LA Weekly*, the city "spent $3.5 million trying to fire just seven of the district's 33,000 teachers for poor classroom performance." Los Angeles mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, a Democrat, liberal, and former union organizer, described union leadership as an "unwavering roadblock to reform." Teachers in Florida gain tenure after three years of "satisfactory" evaluations and, in 2009, 99.7 percent received this evaluation. Michelle Rhee said that when she took over the D.C. school system in 2007, 95 percent of the teachers were rated excellent and none was terminated. Just 0.1 percent of Chicago teachers were fired for poor performance between 2005 and 2008.

This circumstance has attracted the attention of public officials. Illinois, with the support of some prominent Democrats, is desperate to cut back a public employee pension system that, even with recent reforms, will go broke within 10 years. John Kasich, Republican governor of Ohio, has proposed that the teaching load of college professors be increased by one course every two years.

Such efforts at restraint are routinely met with Wisconsin-like howls of outrage. One of my colleagues, whose retirement benefits exceed the $77,900 household income average for retired government employees in Illinois, was indignant that the state had managed to require an additional $17 a month for his dental insurance. How dare they!

Protests against efforts to reform pay scales, teaching loads, and retirement benefits employ a "solidarity forever, the union makes us strong" rhetoric. What these professors and other government workers do not understand is that they are not demanding a share of the profits from the fat-cat bourgeoisie. They are squeezing taxpayers—for whom the professors purport to advocate—whose lives are in most cases far harsher than their own. ♦

WEEKLY STANDARD PHOTO ILLUSTRATION; SIGNS, ISTOCK PHOTO

Rand Paul's Balancing Act

The new senator from Kentucky is not his father's clone—or is he?

BY MATTHEW CONTINETTI

I was interviewing Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky on February 17, in his temporary office in the Russell building on Capitol Hill, when his chief of staff Doug Stafford entered the room.

"Just giving you about a two-minute warning," he said. "Maybe five. They're going to do John McCain's amendment first, and then yours. Once McCain is speaking, I'll come in and get you and we can roll right over."

Paul acknowledged him, then leaned back in his chair. His desk was littered with papers. A portrait of his father, congressman Ron Paul, hung on the wall behind him. A bookshelf was filled with free-market classics. He'd been reflecting on the Tea Party movement in Kentucky. The Tea Party's amorphous nature, Paul had been saying, was not only a strength but also a weakness. The various groups marching under the Gadsden flag were often at odds. "I want them to coalesce and be the Kentucky Tea Party so they can have more influence," he said, "and they sort of resist and do things by city."

The friendly criticism was an illustration of Rand Paul's approach to politics. In 2010, as an ophthalmologist who had never run for office, Paul was propelled to victory thanks to connections to his father and the Tea Party. As founder of the Senate Tea Party Caucus, he is perhaps more associated with the movement than any other freshman Republican. He has led opposition to renewal of the Patriot Act, quoted Ayn Rand from his seat on the energy committee, called for $500 billion in cuts in discretionary spending this year, said that to believe in a "right" to health care "means you believe in slavery," and released a plan to balance the budget in five years. Not exactly a shrinking violet.

Yet Paul has a cool and pragmatic streak. He has a talent for networking, coalition building, and political maneuvering that—maybe you've noticed—many in the Tea Party and Ron Paul troop lack. While the substance of his positions is barely distinguishable from his father's, and his goal of "constitutional government" is entirely in accord with the Tea Party, Paul avoids the fiery jeremiads and utopian demands of his allies. He's willing to talk to and work with people who disagree with him. (Ron Paul's office did not respond to my requests for an interview.) He realizes that tearing the federal government apart is impracticable. "I'm for incremental change," he told me.

Take the amendment that Paul was going to support on the Senate floor. "It's to keep the FAA exempt from OSHA," he explained. "It's just another ridiculous thing the Democrats are doing." The Federal Aviation Administration voluntarily adopts the workplace standards set by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration. But the Democrats want to enshrine the regulations in law and punish the FAA when it fails to comply. "There's *nothing* to do with safety," Paul said. "All it has to do with is adding more paperwork to the airlines." He riffled through some papers. "And I've got a list here that I'm going to use on the floor." He began to read. "Bankruptcies since 2000: TWA, US Air, United Airlines, US Air again, Aloha, Northwest, Delta, MAXjet—I mean, we don't need to be adding paperwork and expense."

Stafford appeared in the doorway: Time to go.

We made our way through the labyrinth of tunnels that connect the Senate office buildings to the Capitol. Paul walked with purpose, as if consciously trying to project a senatorial air. Virginia's junior Democratic senator, Mark Warner, approached from the opposite direction. The two exchanged collegial nods.

Here was another difference between Paul and his father. Whereas Ron Paul is a lone wolf, Rand has quickly developed working relationships with several other senators. Nor is his circle limited to conservative stalwarts like Jim DeMint of South Carolina and Mike Lee of Utah. He's collaborated with Susan Collins of Maine and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina. "Rand is incredibly practical and

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principled," Graham told me. "I have found him to be very engaged in trying to build coalitions. He is much more than just saying 'No.'"

The genius of Rand Paul is that, by picking his battles and finessing his message, he earns mainstream credibility without jettisoning his small-government and noninterventionist bonafides. "I think he's been great," Brian Doherty told me. Doherty's an editor at *Reason* magazine and the author of *Radicals for Capitalism*, a history of American libertarianism. "He's been surprisingly excellent as a rhetorician for the ideas." Doherty's boss at *Reason*, editor in chief Matt Welch, has a cover story in the June issue on Paul. "He has done more to inject libertarian ideas into the Washington debate than any senator I can remember," writes Welch, "all within his first three months in office."

For two years now Rand Paul has walked a tightrope between a particular strain of libertarian ideology and an agenda with broad appeal. So far he's avoided the temptations of both the fringe and the GOP establishment. The rewards will be great if he can keep his balance. Indeed, he could turn out to be one of the most important conservative statesmen in decades.

Rand and Ron Paul, October, 2010

AP / ED REINKE

Despite what you might have heard, the third of Ron and Carol Paul's five children isn't named after the bestselling Objectivist writer Ayn Rand. His parents named him Randal, which his wife shortened to Rand. He was born on January 7, 1963, in Pittsburgh. When he was five the Paul family moved to Lake Jackson, Texas.

His childhood was happy. He swam, mowed lawns, and worked at a miniature golf course. "My parents' love and support has been unconditional," Paul writes in his book *The Tea Party Goes to Washington*, "and I remain very much my father's son." He questioned authority from an early age. "I think some people are naturally more individualistic than others and are probably born that way," he told me.

The liberal history taught in school did not impress him. "If I was taught that the Great Depression was caused by capitalism," he said, "I wanted to know what are the arguments on both sides. I would never take just an answer from a teacher or a professor saying, 'This is why capitalism failed,' or 'This is why the great industrialists were robber barons.'" He learned a different narrative from his father.

Rand was 11 years old when his dad ran for Congress for the first time in 1974. Ron Paul lost that race, but won a special election for the same seat in 1976. That year Rand traveled with his family to the Republican convention in Kansas City. His father was one of four congressmen to endorse Ronald Reagan over Gerald Ford. "I'll always remember that, much like my father today, Reagan in 1976 was considered by many establishment types to be outside the 'mainstream' of the Republican party," he writes. The definition of "mainstream," he learned, changes over time.

When Rand turned 17, his father gave him the Ayn Rand novels: *We the Living*, *Anthem*, *The Fountainhead*, and *Atlas Shrugged*. He read them all. As an undergraduate at Baylor University he minored in English. His favorite novelist was Dostoyevsky. He read a lot of poetry. "My favorite poem, I don't know why, is 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by Eliot," he said. His taste in political theory was similar to his father's: "I read a lot of the other things that influenced libertarian conservatives," he said. "Bastiat, Murray Rothbard, von Mises, Hayek."

Rand zipped through Baylor in two years. "I wasn't a perfect kid," he said. "I went out and drank beer and probably did some other things, too." But he was a good student: He got into Duke Medical School, one of the top programs in the country. He wanted to be an eye surgeon. After Duke he interned at a hospital in Atlanta. One day he went to an oyster roast at a friend's house. He was talking to someone about Dostoyevsky when a young woman joined the conversation. Rand was smitten. He and Kelley Ashby went on their first date the next day and got married a year later, in 1990. They have three sons.

Rand and Kelley settled in Bowling Green, Kentucky, to be near her family. He opened his ophthalmology practice, joined the Lions Club International, and founded Kentucky Taxpayers United, a group devoted to limited government. Mainly, though, he stayed out of the headlines.

The Pauls' version of libertarianism—Austrian economics married to a noninterventionist foreign policy and

a radical critique of centralized government—had few supporters nationwide. In 2005, as Brian Doherty was completing his book on the libertarian movement, he didn't think it necessary to devote more than a few pages to Ron Paul. "At that point Ron Paul just seemed like this curious little weird outlier," Doherty said. Rand didn't rate a mention in *Radicals for Capitalism*.

What changed things was the Iraq war. The bloody insurgency and sectarian strife that followed the overthrow of Saddam Hussein drained President Bush's energy and his support at home. The war opened a fissure—small at first—between Beltway Republicans and parts of the conservative grassroots. Young people in particular turned against the conflict. They found one another on YouTube, MySpace, and Facebook. They wondered when Republicans became the party of No Child Left Behind and Medicare Part D. They wanted no part of compassionate conservatism or George W. Bush's flailing presidency.

The pressure from below built up slowly and steadily. Each new catastrophe—Hurricane Katrina, the nomination of Harriet Miers to the Supreme Court, the Dubai Ports deal, the amnesty immigration bill, congressional spending and corruption—widened the chasm. And by May 15, 2007, at a Fox News Channel presidential debate in Columbia, South Carolina, many of the disaffected had found a spokesman: Ron Paul.

This was Paul's second run for president. He was the only Republican candidate who opposed the war in Iraq, looked skeptically on the war in Afghanistan, and questioned every other U.S. intervention and alliance. His exchange with Rudy Giuliani at the Columbia debate over the roots of 9/11—Paul argued U.S. foreign policy had invited the attack—seemed to doom his (already slim) chances for the nomination. But the reality was more complicated.

Paul was always a long shot as the antiwar candidate in a pro-war party. What the Giuliani fireworks did, though, was elevate Paul over the other vanity candidates. He stood for something larger than self-regard. The video of the Columbia debate went viral. Money rushed in over the Internet. Paul gained a host of followers—and in the end won more delegates to the 2008 Republican convention than Giuliani.

A candidate and movement so at odds with political norms attracted a diverse and eccentric following. The "Ron Paul Revolution" was populated with truly exotic fauna: pacifists, 9/11 Truthers, Buchananites, and Birchers. Many of Ron Paul's fans had never been active in the party. A newcomer to Paulism would show up at a rally because he opposed the Iraq war and would depart a newly minted goldbug. "Forty to 45 percent of Americans aren't voting at all in elections," Brian Doherty said. "And I definitely get the impression that Ron is drawing a lot from that 40-45 percent."

Rand Paul was a surrogate for his father on the campaign trail. He traveled to New Hampshire, Tennessee, Montana, and elsewhere to spread the gospel of sound money, small government, and peace. He was the keynote speaker at a rally in Faneuil Hall in Boston on December 16, 2007, that the Paulists consider the first contemporary "Tea Party." One thousand people showed up. "We raised $6 million in one day," Rand said, "and showed that the grassroots could really wake up and do something for a candidate who no one considered to have a chance."

Nor did he have a chance. Ron Paul ended his campaign in June 2008, having won no caucuses or primaries but come second in several of them. His noninterventionism was too barbed to appeal to a majority of voters. He reminded too many Republicans of a lovable but slightly kooky great-uncle. He was talking about the economy, the Federal Reserve, and how monetary policy fuels unsustainable booms, and no one in the mainstream media paid attention. Paul could never shake off the whiff of the political fringe. He didn't seem to care.

So he returned to Congress. Rand Paul went home to Bowling Green. And on September 15, 2008, came the great crash.

Not only did the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers vindicate Ron Paul's warnings about the housing bubble. The financial upheaval also thrust Barack Obama into the White House—and the government's response to the economic chaos helped create the Tea Party. Ask Rand Paul why he ran for office and he says simply, "The bank bailout."

President Bush's decision to back Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson and Fed chairman Ben Bernanke's TARP program for the banks, and extend bridge loans to GM and Chrysler, unleashed conservative fury at elites in government regardless of party. "We've had contradictions before," Rand said. "But the government owning banks is *such* a contradiction that it really essentially is part of what started the Tea Party movement."

In the eyes of Tea Partiers, Obama was not so much a departure from the Bush administration as a consolidation and deepening of it. Obama maintained the bailouts of banks and auto companies. He signed a $1 trillion stimulus into law that followed the $150 billion package Bush had signed in 2008. He built upon No Child Left Behind and Medicare Part D with ambitious plans to reshape education and health care. His immigration policy was the same. His Treasury Department continued Bush's weak-dollar strategy to promote American exports.

Bernanke maintained negative real interest rates while attempting to reinflate the economy through money

creation. Obama institutionalized many of the tools Bush had used in the war on terror, followed the terms of the 2008 status of forces agreement with Iraq, and surged troops into Afghanistan. On economic and foreign policy, the difference between Bush and Obama was a difference of degree, not kind.

The Tea Parties that blossomed in the spring of 2009 suggested to the Pauls that their ideas were gaining traction. Rand visited a Tax Day Tea Party in Bowling Green where 700 people showed up. "It was the biggest political rally I'd ever seen in Bowling Green," he said. "Our whole downtown was filled." The energy was palpable. "I knew something big was happening, something was going on in our country." The mounting debt, growing government, and conservative reaction suggested an opportunity: a bid for the Senate.

Kentucky's junior senator, baseball legend Jim Bunning, had been flirting with retirement. He'd raised little money for a reelection campaign. His approval rating was dismal. That Kentucky's senior senator, Republican leader Mitch McConnell, wanted him out was no secret. The Republican president of the state senate, David Williams, told associates he'd like to run. Kentucky's Republican secretary of state, Trey Grayson, was also interested. Then there was Rand Paul.

Bunning was in the midst of an unpopular struggle to ensure the Senate obeyed pay-as-you-go rules when funding unemployment benefits. He was using senatorial privilege to hold up legislative activity until the benefits were paid for by cuts elsewhere. Rand Paul was one of the few people to support him. "I stood up and said, 'He's a good conservative, we don't need to be pushing him out of office,'" Paul told me.

Bunning kept Republicans guessing as to his plans until late July. The waffling deterred Williams from entering the race. So Bunning's decision not to run left Grayson and Paul as the two possibilities. Grayson was the early favorite. Paul started at 15 percent in the polls.

Grayson realized the race wouldn't be a cakewalk when he and Paul went to the Fancy Farm picnic, in the far western corner of Kentucky, on the first Saturday in August 2009. The event features old-fashioned stump speeches before a lively audience. The festivities, Grayson told me, are "red-meat oriented. It's a pressure-filled environment." All the state media showed up.

So did a lot of Ron and Rand Paul fans. "Rand had a sense of confidence," Grayson said. At a women's club luncheon the day before, a heckler had accosted Grayson for meeting with donors and officials in Washington. Grayson was taken aback. "Whoa," he remembers thinking, "these are sort of guerrilla terrorists." They weren't going to let him have an easy ride. Paul followed up his star turn at Fancy Farm with an August 20 "money bomb" that raised $258,000.

What Grayson hadn't counted on was that the bailouts and spending had soured conservatives on anyone connected to the Beltway. The backing of party stalwarts like Vice President Cheney, Rick Santorum, Rudy Giuliani, Mitch McConnell, and Kentucky congressman Hal Rogers was less a help than a hindrance. Rand Paul's pedigree gave him entrée to free conservative media on Fox News Channel and talk radio. Donations from the nationwide Ron Paul Revolution freed Rand from time-consuming fundraising.

His GOP primary opponent believed that Paul's stances on national security would scare Republican voters. The campaign built a website, 'Rand Paul's Strange Ideas.' But nothing stuck.

The Grayson campaign believed that Paul's stances on national security would scare Republican voters. The campaign built a website, "Rand Paul's Strange Ideas," and criticized Paul on Iraq, Afghanistan, Guantánamo, and abortion. Late in the campaign Grayson authorized an ad, which he says he regrets, attacking Paul for raising the possibility of increases in Medicare deductibles and age of eligibility. But nothing stuck.

The primary became a microcosm of divisions within the Republican party—between an establishment entrenched in Washington and new faces who entertained radical solutions to the country's looming insolvency. Kentucky Republicans worried Paul would bolt the GOP and run as a Libertarian, handing the election to the Democrats. "We didn't want to engage him too early and drive him out," Grayson said.

Grayson drew national support from Republicans anxious that Paul's election would mean one less vote in the Senate for an assertive foreign policy and support for Israel. Grayson raised hundreds of thousands of dollars, he told me, from pro-Israel donors. But national security and Israel were not the most important issues for Kentucky Republicans. The economy, the debt, and opposition to President Obama mattered more.

Rand Paul, meanwhile, was creating a sort of Tea Party counterestablishment. One of his volunteers sent a letter via registered mail to Sarah Palin's home in Wasilla, Alaska, asking for her endorsement. The Palin team responded a few days later. They were interested. Before endorsing him, though, Palin called Rand to get a sense of his politics. She

asked him about Israel. "I said that Israel was an important ally, the only democracy in the Middle East, and that I would not vote to condemn Israel for defending herself," he writes. He reassured Palin that his libertarianism did not preclude a pro-life stance on abortion. "Oh, we all have a little libertarian in us," Palin said. She made her endorsement public on February 1, 2010.

Others followed. Senator Bunning, who had been friendly to Grayson in the past, backed Paul on April 14. "He told me one time," Paul said, "'If you had told me I was going to do this a year ago I would have said you're crazy.'" In early May, days before the primary, Senator Jim DeMint endorsed Paul as well.

The primary was May 18. The old rules of politics counted for little in a post-crash, post-TARP context. "My last commercial had McConnell looking at the camera saying, 'I need Trey Grayson in Washington,'" Grayson said. "The voters didn't care about that." He lost by 24 points.

What Sean Hannity dubbed the "Randslide" vaulted Paul to the frontlines of American politics. And he almost bombed. On May 19 he woke up at 4 A.M. to give the first of 15 interviews that day to national media. His last, in the evening, was with Rachel Maddow of MSNBC. Paul wasn't prepared for Maddow's line of questioning: whether the candidate believed the U.S. Civil Rights Act of 1964 should be repealed, and under what conditions private businesses might discriminate against customers on the basis of sex, race, or religion. Paul has never said the Civil Rights Act should be overturned. But he did engage Maddow in a theoretical and entirely self-defeating discussion of freedom of contract and association in a libertarian utopia.

The interview was the closest Paul has come to sacrificing his potential on the altar of libertarian dogma. He canceled an appearance on *Meet the Press* and other interviews to rest, regroup, and attend his son's confirmation. The blow was damaging but not fatal. Paul's Democratic opponent, Kentucky attorney general Jack Conway, blasted him on civil rights and entitlements. When those issues failed to gain traction, Conway went after Paul's religious faith, questioning his commitment to Christianity on the basis of a stunt he pulled in college.

Paul was disgusted. "I'm 48 years old," he told me. "I've been married for 20 years. I have three kids. We have a president who wrote a book about doing crack, we've had Supreme Court justices who've said they smoked pot. I thought we were sort of at an age where people weren't going to go back and ask you what you did in college."

Kentucky voters felt the same way. The Conway fusillade did nothing to change the debate over the Obama agenda. In fact, the desperation and ultimate futility of the Conway campaign highlighted Rand Paul's political guile. Try as they might, Paul's opponents in both the Republican and Democratic parties have been unable to exile him to the borderlands where conservatism mingles with conspiracism.

This inability is particularly frustrating because Paul and his father share core beliefs. "We both believe in limited, constitutional government, that government should be much smaller than it is now, that government should balance its budget every year and we should have honest money, and that we should have a sensible, reasonable foreign policy," Rand told a New Hampshire voter in late April. "That means our primary focus is to defend our country, that we don't let anyone attack our country, that we are forthright in trying to prevent terrorist attacks on our country, but that we're not going to war without congressional debate or without congressional authority."

The younger Paul situates that philosophy within the broader traditions of Republican and American politics. His differences with his father lie entirely in approach. He and his dad, he told me, are "different people" with "different ways of presenting things."

This commonsensical strategy is a boon for the Paulists and other advocates of limited government. But it is also a challenge for conservatives who believe that a preponderance of American power and a forward-leaning foreign policy are necessary to secure global public goods and maintain international stability. A Democratic president and a looming fiscal crisis have made the environment friendly to Republicans eager to scale back America's foreign commitments and cut defense spending.

Foreign policy used to be the ceiling that prevented Ron Paul from breaking into the Republican mainstream. But, whereas Ron Paul criticizes U.S. interventionism in tropes familiar to the left—anti-imperial blowback, manipulation by neocons, moral equivalence—Rand Paul merely says America doesn't have the money. "I think we do need to go back to a constitutional foreign policy," he told another New Hampshire voter, "which would include some savings by not being everywhere all the time."

He added that he would shut down "some" overseas military bases. But, he told me, he would never vote against the troops: "Even in Iraq and Afghanistan, where I think we should be diminishing what we're doing and coming home, I'm not going to vote for no funding."

Then there's his position on foreign assistance. Ron Paul has raised the specter of the "Israel Lobby," voted against condemning the United Nations for its scurrilous Goldstone Report on the 2008 Gaza war, and declared America should be neutral between Israel and the Palestinians. Rand Paul simply says sorry, we can't afford the aid. "We can't give away money to *any* country, even to

our allies," he told me. "I think Israel is our friend. I'm not making any political statement about our continued friendship to Israel."

Israel, Paul suggested, actually would be better off without American aid. "There was an article written that quoted a lot of people from Israel who think that it ties Israel's hands, it makes Israel dependent, and that they lose some of their sovereignty because if you're a vassal state that depends on [American] money, then you have trouble because the United States can tell you what to do all the time," he said. "So it really has nothing to do with Israel to my mind."

Paul's adamant refusal to pursue ideological dead-ends—with the glaring exception of the Rachel Maddow slip—is part of the reason he defeated Jack Conway by 12 points on Election Day 2010. It's also why there's no telling where he may end up. One day I asked Paul if he could see himself carrying his father's banner and running for the Republican presidential nomination.

"We'll see," he said softly.

One day I asked Paul if he could see himself carrying his father's banner and running for the Republican presidential nomination. 'We'll see,' he said softly.

On April 28, Paul went to the Merrimack County Republican Committee breakfast at a Holiday Inn in Concord, New Hampshire. For a moment, though, it seemed like the crowd had bought tickets for the Rand Paul Comedy Hour. "I've come to New Hampshire today because I'm very concerned," he said. "I want to see the original, long-form certificate of Donald Trump's Republican registration."

Big laughs.

"You all remember Tip O'Neill," Paul went on, "who was in Washington for many years. And he was famous for saying that all politics is local. One time he walked into a room, and his aide was with him, and he said, 'Who's that?' And the aide said, 'That's John Smith.' And O'Neill walked up to him and said, 'John, how're you doing, how've you been, how's your back?' And the aide was amazed. He said, 'You didn't even remember his name. How'd you remember he had a back problem?' And O'Neill said, 'Well, son, *everybody*'s got a back problem.'"

Rimshot.

"I go to a lot of buffets," Paul said. "And this was at a Rotary buffet in Paducah the other day. There was a guy in front of me with two big plates of food. He was filling up a third plate. The guy next to him said, 'You're not going to live very long eating like that.' And he said, 'Well, my granddad lived to be 103.' The guy looked back at him and said, 'He didn't live to 103 eating like that.' And he said, 'Nope. He lived to 103 by minding his own business.'"

The country would be better off, Paul went on, if the government minded its own business, too. His speech touched on the deficit, the debt, and the necessity for compromise. But it's a specifc type of compromise that Paul is interested in: "The compromise is really in where we cut spending." The budget can't be balanced unless we're willing to cut defense and entitlement programs. The House budget resolution authored by Representative Paul Ryan, he continued, doesn't achieve balance quickly enough. "I like a lot of what Paul Ryan's doing," Paul said, but "his 10-year plan adds about $6 trillion" to the debt.

Paul ended his speech with a not-so-subtle appeal. "What I would ask," he said, "is let's look to Republicans who not only talk the talk but walk the walk. Let's look to Republicans who said 'these are problems' when the housing bubble was rising, who predicted the coming housing decline, the people who have been talking about the Federal Reserve, and talking about our budgetary problems. And I think if we do, if we find the right candidate, I see no reason why we can't win in 2012."

The committeemen applauded enthusiastically.

After the speech and Q&A, Paul mingled with the crowd. A man approached me and introduced himself as New Hampshire Republican state representative Norm Tregenza. "Who do you write for?" he asked.

"The Weekly Standard," I said.

"Ah," he said. He looked slightly taken aback. "I read *The New American*."

"What's that?" I asked.

"It's the magazine of the John Birch Society," Tregenza said. He explained how the Birchers are growing. They'd helped organize the December 2007 Tea Party at Fanueil Hall where Rand Paul gave his famous speech. And there are several other members of the John Birch Society in the New Hampshire legislature. (New Hampshire has 400 state representatives.)

Every now and then, during my conversation with Tregenza, I glanced at Rand Paul as he worked the room. He signed autographs, posed for photos, and talked to reporters. He's a personable, non-imposing figure, of average height, and as he listened to other people talk he would roll back and forth on the balls of his feet, as though he were trying to keep his balance.

The tic was revealing. Holding steady in a turbulent world isn't easy. There are so many choices. And it takes only one false step to plunge off the edge. ♦

Learning on the Last Frontier

The one-room schoolhouse is alive and well in Alaska

By Willy Stern

Thorne Bay, Alaska

The Southeast Island School District in remote Alaska is a tad different from yours and mine. Take the case of Garrick Oberndorfer, who commutes to the Thorne Bay school over a half mile of ocean in a 15-foot skiff, a bit tricky in the pitch dark or in four-foot waves. Garrick is 15. On the opening day of trapping season—think mink, otter, and ermine—scads of students skip school (as do some teachers) to run their trap lines. No worries. It's a perfectly legit excuse to be late to school if you kill a deer en route and stop to dress it. Deer tacos are popular here. In science class, students dissect—what else?—a deer. When a visiting writer goes to a principal's house for supper, he isn't sent home with an extra slice of apple pie; he's given a beaver pelt. Meanwhile, a local fellow will skin your black bear for just $50 ($75 if it's over 6 feet).

The school district has 161 students. Seven of the district's schools have only one or two teachers, handling all comers, K-12; Thorne Bay is the mothership, boasting 73 students and a wood shop where students are putting the finishing touches on a hand-hewn cedar-strip canoe.

Bullying and cliques are unknown here. While the twin scourges of weed and booze have devastated village life in Alaska, "it's just not cool to do drugs or alcohol here," reports Triston Nyquest, a Thorne Bay ninth-grader. Patrick Koonrad, for example, is one of 11 students at the Coffman Cove School. By his own admission, Patrick was flunking out of his massive public school in Washington state two years ago when he ventured north to live with his uncle. "In Washington, nobody at school cared about me. I basically had fallen between the cracks," he explains. "Here the teachers really care about me. We all get individual attention from teachers. So we all try." That attention makes a difference. All but one of these schools do well on standardized tests. "Everyone in this school is like my family," adds 11-year-old Emma Hammond. "We all look after each other." Emma attends Naukati School, with 19 students.

What constitutes fun here? Not video games or hanging out at the mall; for Coffman Cove students, the closest store is 55 miles away. In Thorne Bay, kids don't buy dope; they pick up a can of whipped cream and spray it at each other in the town park, then run down to the town dock for a quick dip in the frigid ocean. Yes, the one-room schoolhouse is alive and well in southeast Alaska. It's *Little House on the Prairie* meets *Deadliest Catch*.

To be sure, this school district—with seven facilities on Prince of Wales Island and one on the wind-swept southern tip of Baranof Island—has its amusing quirks. Three of the schools are so isolated they can only be reached by boat or floatplane. Local pastor Phil Clark doubles as a maintenance worker at Thorne Bay School. He explains, "Teaching evolution is Satan's way of trying to sneak into the classroom." A school yoga class was temporarily shut down when some Christian parents became convinced the course was teaching eastern religions.

Megan Fitzpatrick, the creative Berkeley-educated science teacher, is careful not to use the word "environmentalism" for fear of offending. Around these parts, tree huggers are the bad guys—supposedly standing in the way of economic development. Keep in mind that just two decades ago, this was a bustling school district with

PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOUTHEAST ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT

Willy Stern has written for The Weekly Standard *from Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and Mali, among other places.*

more than 20 schools. The district was so flush with cash that it had a plane and kept a pilot on the payroll. The island's wealth was built on the back of the now dormant logging industry, whose big players pulled out when the last choice trees were felled.

You'd think that folks would be clamoring to get their kids into this idyllic school district. After all, these islands are the last American frontier. They're home to untold numbers of black bear, wolves, bald eagles, and elk. The surrounding ocean holds sea otters, humpback whales, orcas, and sea lions. Some students do a quick check of their crab pots after school, before archery practice starts. Those crabs represent dinner here where subsistence living is oft the norm. This stunningly beautiful land is paradise for kayakers, hunters, and hearty folks who don't mind that the closest hospital could be days away.

Southeast Island superintendent Lauren Burch

Port Protection School, accessible only by boat or floatplane

Thorne Bay High School's volleyball team

Few of the Americans from the Lower 48 who do make it up to Alaska ever catch a glimpse of these islands, unless it's from the second deck of their cruise ship. This is float-by, not even fly-over, country. A wonderful place to attend school? You bet. An exciting place to teach? Check. How about running the school district? The challenges are about as daunting as trying to run down an elk above the tree line in deep snow. Just ask district superintendent Lauren Burch, an enterprising and savvy bear of a man who is equal parts educator, mountain man, and salesman.

The name of the game is keeping up student counts. The stakes are high. Any school with fewer than 10 students loses its funding. Count only 9 students and your funding is $0. Bang, you're closed. That's the law in Alaska. Close the school and the community dies with it. The politics are nasty. The strategies are mean-spirited. The government incentives are perverse.

Below are just some of the issues Burch deals with daily. They may sound bizarre but are just part of the rhythm of educational life among the declining populations of rural Alaska.

• *Poaching—and not of black bears.* A neighboring school district runs a bus into the seaside community of Hollis, where Burch has a small school. They steal his kids. It's legal. Burch doesn't like it, but he's no dummy; he now sends a bus into that district to woo kids for his own school.

• *Cash bribes.* A competing school district bribes parents with cold hard cash. Well, actually, they pay a generous mileage reimbursement to parents who will transport Burch's students to their school. In reality, the parents already have jobs in the other communities. By hauling their kids with them on the way to work, these enterprising parents can pocket as much as $275 a week to cover travel costs that they would incur anyway. Clever, if sleazy.

• *Incentives for students to fail.* In Alaska, state and federal funding is directed at failing, mediocre, or otherwise troubled schools. Burch's district has exceptional academic results. Teachers here joke that the only way to keep their district on the right financial track is to insist that students put down the wrong answers on statewide tests. To get additional resources in Alaska, schools must first fail.

Burch's district—with its modest $5.5 million budget—is testimony to the fact that schools can be quite successful without throwing money at them. Bureaucrats in the nation's capital ought to take note. The Department of Education and the National Education Association might learn a bit about quality schools by looking at the good things that happen when students, parents, teachers, and a whole community get behind every school. The formula is simple. Education matters. No student can fail here; they'd be letting down all 63 people in town.

"Some kids need a teacher also to be their mom," says Julie Vasquez, who's taught in the district for six years. "Whatever it takes, we do it." Indeed, Vasquez has had students move in—for a while, at least—with her husband and six kids when they needed more home support. Some students shower at school because there's no hot water at home. Still, these are tiny communities and a few find it

stifling. "There's lots of gossip in Naukati and I can't wait to get out of here," says 15-year-old Elizabeth Arrington.

• *The telephone bribe.* Keep in mind that many of Burch's parents live off the grid. They are fishermen, loggers, trappers, and the like. Correspondence programs that rely heavily on the Internet abound in Alaska. These quality programs help those in the bush. But they are now being misused to siphon kids away from functioning schools. To wit, these distance-learning programs today offer—for free!—laptop computers, Internet connections, even phones to folks who otherwise could never afford such items.

Burch lost funding for Port Protection School one year when one of his less-than-well-heeled parents got all these high-tech gadgets for his float-house simply by pulling his kids out of school. Oh yeah, many people here live year-round on floating houses or fishing boats. That's how things go in a district where some 60 percent of students live below the poverty line. Burch's district nicely deflates the canard that poverty is the root cause of educational dysfunction.

• *Competition from the state of Alaska.* At a time when rural communities are shrinking and educators are scraping together pennies to keep schools open, the state of Alaska has established a huge boarding school with some 400 students. Why? No one is entirely sure. It certainly cannot help Burch's cause that so-called urban politicians control the Alaska legislature. The attitude seems to be: Small rural schools are just too darn expensive; if these progeny of Alaska's bearded, wacky frontiersmen want an education, they should move to the city like the rest of us sane, sophisticated folks. (What sort of folks prefer the bush? Burch's district is 87 percent white and 9 percent Alaskan native, with some odds and ends thrown in.)

• *Pay teachers not to teach.* Burch must count his students every year in October to try to reach the magic number of 10 per school. If he is short, the state cuts off funding—for that same school year, which still has eight months to go. That makes it hard on the 9 remaining students. Meanwhile, Alaska law requires Burch to pay the teacher anyway, even if the school is shuttered. "If we count 9 students in October," explains Burch, "I have the dysfunctional privilege of forking out a total salary, benefits, and housing package of $100,000 for the teacher, and then have to explain to the bewildered parents of the remaining 9 students that they aren't entitled to this teacher as I'll have to move him to a different school."

Talk about dysfunctional: Burch is forced to spend far more time fretting over student counts than textbooks, curriculum, faculty, and core educational issues.

• *Incentives to hire bad teachers.* To find quality staff, Burch must hire teachers in January for the following academic year. But he often doesn't know in January if he will get funded for the following year. That means he must gamble with the students' futures. Burch can hire a first-rate teacher in January but then run the risk of the school being shut down. Or he can wait until summer and, if the school is a go, at the last minute try to hire one from the teaching dregs nobody else wanted. Neither option is a good one.

The Eight Schools of Southeast Island School District

THE WEEKLY STANDARD / SOURCE: SOUTHEAST ISLAND I.S.D.

Of course, the resourceful folks at the Southeast Island School District have adapted to these perverse incentives. They invest in kayaks and mountain bikes. They have wonderful outdoor leadership programs. They do lengthy educational camping trips. They build trails and cabins. They find independent teachers who love the outdoors. How to compete in sports when they cannot even field a soccer team, much less get to another school? No problem. The district has won numerous state championships in archery. (Until the national level, archery meets can be held without travel.) The volleyball team has been known to hitch a ride with a passing fishing vessel to get to an off-island game.

Burch is always selling. "We concentrate on what we do well," he says. "We are able to give individualized instruction with astoundingly low ratios of adults to kids of about 1:3. We have a wonderful place to raise children. We don't have gangs, fights, detention rooms, vandalism, intimidation, or kids afraid to use the bathroom during the school day. We don't have fences, metal detectors, or police in the schools. Yes, the sighting of a buck during hunting season has been known to empty a classroom.

"But parents here can have an impact on the education of their children," Burch continues. "I like to think it's because we care, but it's also because we understand that we're a service provider in a competitive market. It's still a hard slog. Basically and perhaps quite reasonably, nobody much knows we're here." Well, at least now, a few more may know. ♦

The Meet of the League of American Wheelmen, Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D.C.

The Cycling Life

The two-wheeled approach to happiness.

BY DAVID SKINNER

In this age, when an Olympic gymnast is unable to make it through a floor routine without a television announcer bringing up their father, who is dead, their aunt, who is crippled, and their brother, who has bad breath, it is refreshing to find an engaging writer who sees in physical exercise not a triumph of the human spirit but simply athletes and their chosen sport. Such a writer is Robert Penn, and such a measured though still enthusiastic view of cycling pervades this lovely book.

It's All About the Bike
The Pursuit of Happiness on Two Wheels
by Robert Penn
Bloomsbury, 208 pp., $20

Penn even pedals one mile further, leaving aside the whole subject of athletic performance, to discover human achievement in the bicycle itself. It is a tale of low technology, of an invention so well-developed that its latest trends—take, for example, the recent swell of interest in fixed-gear cycling—tend to look backward to earlier, more primitive models. Penn's approach is similarly antiquarian, though he doesn't always play the gentle docent. There is even a fighting note in the book's title, a seemingly banal statement which contradicts the title of another, better known book, one "bullish" and "ghost-written account of recovering from cancer to win the Tour de France." That is how Penn describes *It's Not About the Bike: My Journey Back to Life* by Lance Armstrong. Amazon shoppers will not miss this point-counterpoint, as when they search on Penn's title, Armstrong's comes up as the very next result.

It's All About the Bike is not without its own shtick. Penn, who lives in Wales, sets out to build his dream bicycle, perfect part by perfect part. And he has never heard of FedEx. So he travels to Vicenza, Italy, for his drive train components. For his frame, he flies to Portland,

David Skinner is the author of the forthcoming The Story of Ain't, *about the great language controversy that surrounded* Webster's Third Unabridged Dictionary, *to be published by HarperCollins.*

Oregon. For his tires, he goes to Korbach, Germany. And so on.

This dream-bike conceit fades, however, as the author tours factories and shops, meeting some of the bicycle world's most storied builders. Penn is not a little taken by the technological breakthroughs that have led to today's bicycle, from two in-line wheels and a seat—the Draisine, invented in 1817 by a German aristocrat, a vehicle good for little but coasting, though used today to teach little ones the art of balance—to the overloaded 21-gear, knobby-wheeled, hand-braking, shock-absorbing mess that can be purchased for a couple of C notes at Target.

Fortunately, there are wonders to behold in this historic march. After much trial and error, and that funny big-front-wheeled Victorian bike called a penny farthing, a company called Rover in England introduced the safety bike. It combined soft air-filled tires, a rear drive train, and wheels of equal size, giving the rider a low center of gravity. Between 1890 and 1895 the cost of a safety bicycle plummeted from half an average worker's annual salary to a month's wages or so.

"Birth records in Britain from the 1890s," Penn reports, "show how surnames began to appear far away from the rural locality with which they had been strongly associated for centuries."

It is a good time for a book about bicycling, and Penn's book has been well-received in Britain, where it was first published. London, the *New York Times* recently announced, is positively in love with the bicycle these days. It's also a good time in the United States, even on the East Coast, where the mayors of New York and Washington have plunked down millions to establish cute little bike lanes in the metal swarm of urban traffic—and are paying another price.

In New York, news stories of angry cab drivers and other automobile users recall the feuding of Jean Merrill's push-cart wars. In Washington, the young, green-minded, triathletic mayor who drew special bike lanes down the very middle of Pennsylvania Avenue was shortly voted out of office, replaced by a much more traditional party hack, a man who does not seem to have ever shopped for polyurethane booties to keep his pedaling toes warm in winter.

Still, there does seem to be a bicycle—well, *renaissance* seems a bit rich, how about a *rebound*?—underway. In bike-mad Portland the number of cyclists is said to have grown by a factor of 10 in the last decade. All the high-end companies Penn visits in Europe and the United States report a new hum in sales. Brooks, the makers of classic, high-end, hard leather saddles that soften only with great use, has seen its sales triple since 2002. If there is a company that embodies Penn's view of what shopping for a bike should be like, it is Brooks.

Miss Alice Hughes in 'A Professor's Love Story,' 1898

HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

> We live in a dystopian age when almost everything we buy begins to deteriorate the moment it comes out of the box. Obsolescence is ubiquitous. We've come to accept it as the norm. Buy it, use it, bury it in the ground. A Brooks saddle, with its legendary lifespan, could be one of the first products of a utopian economy: the sort of economy dissident intellectuals were dreaming up in the 1970s, wherein goods are expensive, built to last, and repairable.

It is easy to sympathize with such a dissident—elitist, actually—view that emphasizes quality over expense. But it is hardly the secret to large-scale economic growth: A Brooks saddle will cost you as much as one of those awful bikes at Target, and while the number of bike snobs is on the increase, their ultimate totals are limited by the fractional size of the population willing to put up with the exertion, sweatiness, and logistical challenges of using a bicycle for routine transportation.

The most disarming chapter is set in Marin County, California, ground zero of the mountain biking craze that, according to a historian quoted here, "saved the bicycle industry's butt." In 1985, 5 percent of the bicycles sold in the United States were mountain bikes. Ten years later only 5 percent of bicycles sold in the United States were *not* mountain bikes. Penn is in town to have his rims built and while he's at it goes for a ride with Charlie Kelly and Joe Breeze, two of the business heroes who turned the industry around by racing klunkerz down Repack Mountain in a manner that today would earn them a reality television show contract. Like a Bill Bryson in reverse, Penn is terrific among the Americans, especially big-hearted California goofballs.

It's not a little thing to have written an appreciation of the bicycle that is consistently likable and sane. Yet Penn does confess to a certain zealotry, as when he recalls an ex-girlfriend who could not understand his excitement at his having bicycled all the way across town, making it to her house without once setting his foot down. This she did not seem to realize was not only a triumph of skill—a city rider needs to know how to time himself very carefully and do track stands at red lights to pull off such a feat—but a victory of rolling over walking.

Of course, they broke up. ♦

B&A

The Man Within

Why Montaigne is worth knowing.

BY LIAM JULIAN

Saul Frampton opens his delightful book on the life of Michel de Montaigne with a depiction of the French nobleman reaching up to the wooden beams of his library ceiling, scratching out some words he had inscribed there years earlier. Undergoing erasure is a dictum uttered by Lucretius, *Nec nova vivendo procuditur ulla voluptas*—There is no new pleasure to be gained by living longer. Montaigne, in removing this line, was signaling to himself above all a recharged willingness to embrace life, appreciate it, and be attentive to it, and a desire to drink in as much of it as he could.

It is an apposite image, Montaigne stretched skyward revising his beliefs, for he was a man forever revisiting his assumptions and deductions, testing them, adding to them. This was the way in which his famous *Essays*, a book Frampton calls "perhaps, alongside the plays of Shakespeare and *Don Quixote*, one of the most important literary works of the Renaissance," came to be.

Begun in 1572, the *Essays* is Montaigne's 20-year examination of his own life, and not the product of that examination, either, but the examination itself. It contains more than a hundred essays and some half-million words, and discusses idleness, cruelty, experience, philosophy, smells, cannibalism, friendship, education, children, death, sex, happiness, and more through the author's experiences and ruminations on them. Here Montaigne seeks truth: *Que sçais-je*?—What do I know?—was his adage. It is through this autobiographical quest for truth, undertaken in part by placing on trial his own actions and beliefs, that Montaigne begins to know himself—and we, his readers, begin to know him, too.

When I Am Playing with My Cat, How Do I Know That She Is Not Playing with Me?
Montaigne and Being in Touch with Life
by Saul Frampton
Pantheon, 320 pp., $26

Michel Eyquem de Montaigne was born in 1533 in Aquitaine, in southwestern France, on the border between Catholic Bordeaux and Protestant Périgord (confrontation and violence between Catholics and Protestants would be a major part of his life). He was not close to his mother or siblings but did admire his father, Pierre, whom Frampton says Montaigne "clearly adored." His utmost affection, however, was reserved for his best friend, Etienne de La Boétie.

Montaigne met La Boétie in 1558 in Bordeaux, where both were working as parliamentary lawyers. They bonded immediately. La Boétie was a potent influence on Montaigne and also, writes Frampton, on the *Essays*, for La Boétie's death from plague in 1563 "created an absence that Montaigne attempted to fill with writing." Frampton quotes Montaigne saying that he would have rather written letters than essays but had no one to send them to, lacking "a certain relationship to lead me on, to sustain me, and raise me up." La Boétie's death was the start of a difficult several years for Montaigne, in fact: His father died in the summer of 1568 and his younger brother, struck in the head with a tennis ball, died less than a year later. Shortly thereafter, Montaigne was pitched violently from his horse and himself almost perished.

By the summer of 1570, then, a reflective Montaigne was reconsidering his future. His career in Bordeaux had stalled after he was rejected for a position in the court's high chamber, likely for reasons political and not performative. And so, after 13 years on the job, he relinquished his magistracy and retired to his estate, 30 miles east of the city, up the Dordogne River. A year later, on his 38th birthday, Montaigne commemorated retirement from what he called the wearying "servitude of the court and of public employments" by having a Latin inscription painted on the wall of his library—a place "consecrated," the inscription read, "to his freedom, tranquility, and leisure."

It was here, in his library, that Montaigne set about recording his thoughts. The room occupied the third floor, just below the attic, of a tower at the southeastern corner of his chateau. His books, many of which were left to him by La Boétie, sat on a curving set of shelves crafted to fit the circular tower. "My library is round in shape," he wrote, "and in its roundness offering me a view of my books, arranged on five shelves all around." One imagines the *seigneur* at his desk, head hunched downward as he scribbled, glancing up momentarily in search of an elusive word and smiling at the bounty of books encircling him.

Frampton tells us that Montaigne's earliest essays were "characterized by their obsession with battle plans and tactics, arquebuses, lances and the generalissimos of old." In them the author praises Alexander, discourses on armor, and describes the Romans' facility with the javelin. But warfare in Montaigne's day was changing, and the loudest chord he strikes in these pieces is of wariness and despair. Firearms and shifting, diluted codes of honor had made 16th-century battle a strikingly impersonal and unpredictable thing, and the French civil wars between Protestants and Catholics, which raged as Montaigne wrote,

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were especially erratic and capricious.

"Monstrous war," he says of them. "Other wars act outwardly, this one acts against itself, eating away and destroying itself with its own venom." Society, trust, principle—they were crumbling. The lone certainty in such a world was that death, impulsive and unpredictable as it is, would arrive, one way or another, and the essentiality of preparing oneself to die thus became Montaigne's obsession. One readied himself for death, Montaigne wrote, not by shying from it but attacking it head-on. The lessons of the Stoics, men like Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius, were instructive here, and into this traditional stoicism which counseled constancy and impassivity Montaigne also blended Lucretius' teachings. Why "seek to add longer life merely to renew ill-spent time and be tormented?" Lucretius had wondered. Better to use whatever scant existence we have to lay a strong foundation for the death that is sure to come.

Interestingly, it was Montaigne's retelling of his own near-death experience that eventually jostled his Stoic certainty. As he recounts his equine accident and subsequent convalescence in the essay "Of Practice," he begins to perceive that the mind and body are necessarily conjoined and that, as Frampton describes it, "our ability to distance ourselves from our passions and our senses"—the sort of detachment the Stoics advocated—"is necessarily curtailed." Montaigne's fall from his horse, then,

> becomes a momentous event in terms of the redirection of human knowledge that it suggests: away from a Christian humanist yearning for the afterlife, and back to the human, to the body, to the *natural*. And when he returns to "Of Practice" in his final additions to the essays . . . it is this rudderless yet intoxicating freedom that Montaigne emphasizes, seeing the process of self-analysis as something radically new.

And so Montaigne decides that Lucretius is no longer for him, and he reaches up to the ceiling and replaces

KATHERINE EASTLAND

the poet's pessimistic injunction with what Frampton calls "the humbler wisdom" of the book of Ecclesiastes (11:5): "You who do not know how the mind is joined to the body know nothing of the works of God." Montaigne's new skepticism served him, and serves us, well. It gave his writings their characteristic, interrogatory sheen. "When I am playing with my cat, how do I know she is not playing with me?" he asks. It sounds silly—but consider that his cat allows Montaigne, as Frampton explains, to "think about stepping outside himself, to think about what it is to be her, and therefore what it is to be himself." This questioning, of *everything*, is how the essayist made his intellectual discoveries.

In 1580, after the first volume of his *Essays* had been published, Montaigne set off on an adventure, what became a 17-month journey through Switzerland, Germany, Austria, and Italy. He kept a detailed record of the trip, portions of which he used to supplement later versions of the *Essays* and which eventually became a standalone book called the *Travel Journal*, first published in 1774.

"Travel is in my opinion a profitable exercise," he wrote. "The soul is there continually exercised in noticing new and unknown things," which was, for Montaigne, the best way "in which to model life." Traveling, he believed, helps one "rub and polish our brains through contact with others." And rub and polish he does: He learns from a carpenter how the number of a tree's rings corresponds to its age; he learns from Doctor Burro of the University of Rome about sea tides. On a visit to the Vatican library he scrutinizes Aristotle's messy penmanship, and on a visit to Florence he scrutinizes the prostitutes ("nothing special"). He meets people, tastes cuisines, notes the price of horses

and shape of hats. The villagers of Remiremont pay their rents in snow. Montaigne writes this down.

Among the consequences of the travels, according to Frampton, was that Montaigne became more alert to "the ironies and inconsistencies of religious zeal." The Frenchman does note some places where Catholics and Protestants live in peace, but more often what he uncovers are situations in which intolerance and professed orthodoxy are accompanied by hypocrisy, dishonesty, and theological negligence. His depictions of quarrelling priests and friars in Pisa, and exorcisms in Rome, are tinged with disapproval and disbelief. While the Montaigne of the *Essays* is an allegedly conservative Catholic (albeit one mostly tolerant of other faiths), his *Travel Journal* presents a more skeptical, questioning, even dubious character.

In early September 1581, while soaking in the Bagni di Lucca, the mineral baths to which he had retreated in hopes of curing himself of the kidney stones that had bedeviled him for years, Montaigne was notified that he had been elected mayor of Bordeaux. He returned to his estate in November of that year and, reluctantly, to work. He continued to add to the *Essays*, however, contributing new pieces and revising old ones. Amended versions of the book were published in 1582 and 1587, and an enlarged edition came out in 1588.

In one of his final essays, Montaigne returns to his earlier preoccupation with death. Recalling the "thousand different kinds of evil" that befell him in 1586—the year the religious wars finally arrived at his doorstep, bringing with it looting and pillaging and plague—he is nonetheless able to find some solace. "If you do not know how to die, don't worry yourself," he writes. "Nature will inform you what to do on the spot, plainly and adequately . . . don't bother your head about it." Here, Montaigne makes his final break from the Stoics. Even in the bleakest times, death, so prevalent, is not "the goal of life; it is its finish, its limit, but not therefore its object."

Montaigne died at home on September 13, 1592, of complications from kidney stones. In his last essay, he had written, "Life should be an aim unto itself, a purpose unto itself." Virginia Woolf loved that line; she quoted it often. And Sarah Bakewell, in her own book on Montaigne, rightly calls it "as close as Montaigne ever came to a final or best answer to the question of how to live." ♦

B&A

History Defiled

How the story of the Holocaust gets retold.

BY EDWARD ALEXANDER

This book fills the reader with gloom and rage, in nearly equal measure. The heart sinks, the mind reels, in contemplating the variegated assaults on Holocaust memory that Alvin Rosenfeld describes, analyzes, and seeks to throw back. They come from poets likening their divorce proceedings to Auschwitz, from scribblers of the "Holocaust-and-me" school like Anne Roiphe, for whom "God became the God of the Holocaust" in "the year of my puberty." It comes from "progressives" like Phillip Lopate, who thinks the Holocaust is a Jewish conspiracy whereby "one ethnic group tries to compel the rest of the world" to follow its political program and monopolizes all that beautiful Holocaust suffering which other groups would very much like, *ex post facto*, to share.

The End of the Holocaust
by Alvin H. Rosenfeld
Indiana, 328 pp., $29.95

The "end of the Holocaust" was foretold by survivor-writers like Jean Améry, Elie Wiesel, Imre Kertesz, and Primo Levi. They feared that the inevitable forgetting would be exacerbated by deliberate distortions, flabby sentimentality, the wheedling voice of "common sense" that Hannah Arendt found lurking inside the "liberal" cells of every mind, ruthless politicization, and do-gooderism, i.e., confusing doing good with feeling good about what you are doing. Survivors themselves are now the targets of polemical desperadoes like Norman Finkelstein, Peter Novick, David Stannard, and Avishai Margalit. They castigate Holocaust memory and scholarship as instruments of a vast diabolical plot, and allege that Jews grieve over their dead only for political purposes.

Rosenfeld shows how a large number of the 250 organizations around the world that now conduct Holocaust-related programs are as likely to abet the theft of the Holocaust as to oppose it. Mark Steyn, similarly, has observed, "The people who run liberal Jewish groups are too blinkered to have grasped a basic point, which is that the principal beneficiaries of the Holocaust have been Muslims." The nimbleness of apologists for Palestinian irredentism in latching onto the coattails of Jewish history and exploiting Holocaust guilt with allusions to "the Auschwitz of Arab refugee camps" and "the Palestinian Anne Frank" provoked the philosopher Pierre-André Taguieff to remark, "No one thought it a sign of mental

Edward Alexander is the author, most recently, of Lionel Trilling and Irving Howe: And Other Stories of Literary Friendship.

disorder when Farouk Kaddoumi, a high PLO official, stated that 'Israeli practices against Palestinians exceed the Holocaust in horror.'"

Rosenfeld traces the distortion and degradation of the Holocaust since World War II ended. He shows how popular representations have usually worked to dull rather than sharpen moral sensibility about the Jewish debacle. He documents the baneful influence of the cult of victimization, especially the intense competition for the mantle of victimhood, and how it has diverted attention away from the actual victims of Nazism. The meaning of Raul Hilberg's categories—Perpetrators, Victims, Bystanders—has been radically transformed by (mostly American) sentimentality and mindless optimism, by (mostly leftist) political machinations, and by (broadly ecumenical) religious obsessions.

Specifically American distortions include the need to teach cheerful and positive "lessons," which become lessons in what the Holocaust does *not* teach because they blow out of all proportion the actions of rescuers, or "righteous Gentiles." Forgotten is Aharon Appelfeld's dictum: "The Holocaust is not epitomized by the greatness of these marvelous individuals' hearts . . . because . . . the saviors were few, and those who betrayed Jews to the Nazis were many and evil." Rosenfeld tells in detail the story of how Anne Frank's diary was first travestied by Broadway and Hollywood, then bowdlerized by German translators. In America, the spiritual anemia of Broadway and the dishonesty of people like Garson Kanin created a bogus image of a young woman who was cheerfully optimistic, believed above all that "people are really good at heart," and was "happy" in the concentration camp of Bergen-Belsen. The manipulations of the Anne Frank story also obliterated her Jewish identity and gave Germans, in particular, a convenient "formula for easy forgiveness" of the crimes of their countrymen.

Later chapters deal with survivors who became major literary figures permanently bound to their horrific experience of the camps. Some of them, most notably Améry and Levi, became victims of Auschwitz long after they appeared to have survived it: They took their own lives. Perhaps they had concluded that the full truth of Auschwitz might never be known or, if half-known, would be distorted. They were particularly disappointed by the refusal of Germans to confront their past honestly, and they despaired over the resurgence of Jew-hatred in Europe, especially on the political left, which turned Holocaust images into the tool kit of the new anti-Semitism, the pariah people into the pariah state. They knew there would be virtually no retribution; they feared there would be no memory; but they rarely foresaw the possibility of a second Holocaust.

That possibility is, by now, what Goethe would have called an open secret: visible to all, yet recognized by few, like the German scholar Matthias Küntzel, an astute observer of Holocaust deniers in Europe and Iran: "Every denial of the Holocaust contains an appeal to repeat it." ♦

B&A

Maxxi-mum Exposure

Is Rome's newest museum an ornament, or not?

BY JAMES GARDNER

The Maxxi

ALBERTO PIZZOLI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Even visitors who know Rome well are unlikely to venture north along the Via Flaminia, beyond the Aurelian Walls that encircle most of the city. Compared with what lies inside the walls, and with a few exceptions beyond, there is little to see in this clean and barren part of town. Though the streets are graced with names like Via Sandro Botticelli and Via Guido Reni—this is still Italy, after all—most of the drab building stock evokes the postwar years, and there is little or no street life.

But recently a new kind of creature has been spotted in these parts. Male or female, it is clearly foreign—usually German or French or American—and is arrayed in such varied plumage as you might see in Chelsea, on London's

James Gardner recently translated Vida's Christiad *(I Tatti Renaissance Library).*

The Maxxi, interior

ALBERTO PIZZOLI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Cork Street, or at the sundry art fairs of Basel and Brazil. And each time you encounter such creatures in these parts, you know exactly where they are going or where they have just come from: the new Maxxi museum, which opened last summer. Its full title is Museo nazionale delle arti del XXI secolo, or National Museum of the Arts of the 21st Century.

Though Rome has hardly been without artists in recent years, the remoter past weighs so heavily upon its living citizenry, as well as upon visitors, that few people associate it with any important contemporary developments, as they might Venice or Milan. And even with the much-publicized opening of Maxxi, one has the vivid sense that most tourists, having come to Rome for the Pantheon and Colosseum, will not make it this far north along the Via Flaminia. Let it also be said that, on a recent visit to the museum, I do not believe that I saw a single Roman.

And yet, someone apparently felt that Rome needed a contemporary art museum, and not just any, but one designed by Iraqi-born Zaha Hadid, winner of the Pritzker Prize and, by general consent, the most "advanced" architect of the moment. Before we go any further, however, let us delve a little more deeply into that word, "advanced." In the semiotical context that Hadid favors, it surely qualifies as a "floating signifier." That is, it is essentially, crucially voided of any real meaning beyond its being an honorific term roughly equivalent to "good." As such, the "most advanced" architect is synonymous with the "best"—even if the criteria by which that assumed excellence is ascertained are never spelled out or understood. Certainly the attribution of vanguardism (or whatever you want to call advanced-ness these days) no longer has to do with any formal system or program, as was the case with Modernism. Rather, it has to do with a vague attitude of relevance, of cutting edges, of contemporaneity.

That the Maxxi should be consecrated to contemporary art was probably a bad idea to begin with. For one thing, its collection is not very good or interesting or even representative of the generality of artistic practice at the present time. It consists of the usual, if somewhat arbitrarily selected, stars of the international art scene (Anish Kapoor, William Kentridge, Gilbert and George, etc.) and many more Italians who are apt to be unknown beyond, or even within, the borders of the *Bel Paese*. As for the building itself, both in its huge dimensions and pretentious massing, it seems altogether too established, too solid and permanent, for a movement as decentralized and anarchic as contemporary art is supposed to be. The smaller, humbler scale of the recently completed New Museum on the Bowery in Manhattan seems far more appropriate to that museum's

equally contemporary mission. By comparison, the Maxxi feels about as antiestablishment as the Pentagon, and leaves no doubt as to where the power, muscle, and sheer monetary heft of contemporary culture reside.

Nor does it help that the first two major exhibitions staged at Maxxi are devoted to dead cultural figures, one a fairly mediocre painter and installation artist named Gino De Dominicis, the other Luigi Moretti, an accomplished architect, to be sure, but a Modernist, rather than a contemporary, who died almost 40 years ago. (His most famous project, by the way, was the Watergate complex in Washington.)

As attested in this latest project, as well as in many earlier ones, the dominant aesthetic of Hadid's architecture consists in transposing the aesthetic of mid-20th-century infrastructure—highways, garages, airports, and the like—to postindustrial buildings of all sorts. The Maxxi alludes, perhaps inadvertently, to such antecedents as Pier Luigi Nervi's railway station in Naples, as well as his bus terminal under the George Washington Bridge in Upper Manhattan. There is also a bit of Paul Rudolph thrown in for good measure. But while Nervi and Rudolph were Modernists who generally respected symmetry and the laws of gravity, Hadid is a deconstructivist who seeks, through the metaphors of form, to convey the flux and instability that she and many others find in the modern world.

Properly understood, this doctrine is more an attitude and a taste than a series of articulated ideas, but it is apparently quite enough to qualify Hadid as a profound architectural thinker. In any case, this building is ultimately more about itself than about the art that it contains. Indeed, you begin to suspect that the art that resides within its walls is there more as a pretext for the building's existence than as a justification for the visitor's venturing so far out of the center of the city. Even large works looked bullied and belittled by the walls that contain them. By the very nature of Maxxi's incessant swerves, its vertiginous layout, and the bottlenecks that result from its highly cluttered spaces, you could reasonably question whether any work of art would appear to advantage in such a context.

From the air, the structure looks like a meandering segment of highway. From the ground, where humans are usually to be found, its totality cannot be grasped or understood from any single or dominant perspective. You enter through chicken-wire gates that are presumably suggestive of proletarian candor. From there you pass a deceptively simple barracks from the 19th century. Hadid's new section, however, rises up behind this older building like a cobra inhaling a small bird. Is there a trace of generational arrogance to this revision of a humbly utilitarian structure from former years, the revenge of the living upon those who are no longer around to defend themselves?

Past the gates, the visitor enters a sea of gray, a walkway of concrete paths that alternate with pebbled parterres and dull steel pylons, gray upon gray upon gray. With its irregular ribbon windows, the main structure reads at times like an homage to Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye. Like her mentor Rem Koolhaas, Hadid is capable of coming up with the occasional felicity of form—as when some element of massing succeeds in suggesting the movement and energy that she aspires to—but the improvisational nature of her design process means that she is more apt to miss the mark.

This is evident in the interior, which possesses even less unity and coherence than the exterior. Every space flows, willy-nilly, into the next, affording the frazzled visitor no sense of structure or relief. Jagged black stairways descend from upper floors down into the middle of nowhere. Metal mesh steps clash with wooden floors. Spaces end abruptly or else continue on exasperatingly beyond the point where we might pray for them to end.

Such inadvertence might appear as a catastrophic loss of control. But Hadid and her many admirers would more charitably see it as "deconstructing" the traditional museum. By their lights, the Maxxi would appear to be an unqualified triumph—one that, culturally speaking, has finally put Rome on the map. ♦

B&A

The Rivals

'Bridesmaids' is a triumph for both sexes.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Bridesmaids
Directed by Paul Feig

The journalists and editors and pop-culture polymaths who make careers out of issuing daily pronouncements on the parlous sociological condition of American womanhood—too few op-eds written by females!—have a new cause. The cause is the new comedy *Bridesmaids*, and upon its reception the very future of women in media has, we are told, come to depend.

Bridesmaids is, they say, the first R-rated, foul-mouthed, no-holds-barred female-centered comedy in

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

years. The last one was called *The Sweetest Thing* with Cameron Diaz, and the fact that you've never even heard of this 2002 catastrophe explains why, in its wake, women screenwriters who attempt to write dirty-talk scripts for female performers on the model of the hard-R male-skewing comedies Hollywood loves to make found themselves disenfranchised.

But wait, you say. What about the two *Sex and the City* movies? No, no, we are informed with a touch of condescension, those don't count. They were pre-sold successes because of the hit television show that preceded them! They weren't produced from original screenplays with all-new characters, the way *Wedding Crashers* and *The Hangover* were! Because those two raunchfests earned so much money, boy screenwriters get to make pallid copies of them again and again, but not girls. So, America, champion the depiction of women who curse like sailors! Ensure that female screenwriters who slap the word "comedy" on their scripts get to earn $2-million paydays! See *Bridesmaids*!

The peculiar earnestness of this campaign on behalf of a nakedly capitalistic enterprise funded by a major Hollywood studio and produced by Judd Apatow, the hottest name in comedy, is beyond parody. And yet there it is. *Bridesmaids* cost $32.5 million to make and probably another $15 million to market, so no amount of special affirmative-action pleading of this sort would really have made a difference when it came to the mass American audience. But while this nonsense was ginned up in part by its production team to create buzz, it's actually an insult to *Bridesmaids*, which is gloriously funny, surprisingly touching, and altogether a triumph—and is, moreover, something very, very far from an affirmation of the power and wonder of female solidarity.

The movie's star and cowriter (with Annie Mumolo) is Kristen Wiig of *Saturday Night Live*, whose brilliance as a sketch comedienne gave little indication that she could pull off a variegated character like the miserable mid-30s Milwaukeean she plays here. Annie is a very single pastry chef whose bakery has folded and left her deeply in debt. She has no choice but to share an apartment with a British brother-sister duo with no sense of boundaries who think it's fine to read her diary for fun. She is in thrall to an unabashed cad (Jon Hamm of *Mad Men*, hilarious here) who calls her his "number three." To top it all off, she learns that her oldest friend, Lillian (Maya Rudolph), is getting married.

SUZANNE HANOVER / UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

'Bridemaids' writer-star Kristen Wiig (far right)

Her ambiguous feelings about Lillian's good fortune pale beside the assault on the sanctity of her best-friendship by a fellow bridesmaid married to Lillian's fiancé's boss. The rich and gorgeous Helen (Rose Byrne) is determined to supplant Annie in the only role in her life that she is at all sure of. In a series of escalating set pieces, Annie finds herself having to battle for primacy in Lillian's affections against a rival who will use any and every slip-up on Annie's part—and there are many—to her advantage.

Bridesmaids is a wild comedy that features one gross-out scene to rival anything in a frat-boy farce. But what makes it genuinely memorable is its entirely original depiction of female rivalry, which generates the kinds of laughs that suggest it might come to be seen as a classic—laughter generated by the evocation of a core set of truths. I can't remember a Hollywood movie as honest and unsparing about the complexities of intimate friendships as this one.

The Annie-Helen conflict is established by a series of toasts each gives to her beloved Lillian at the engagement party, with both making increasingly brazen efforts to hold and control the microphone. Later, after yet another episode in which Annie ruins a pre-wedding event, Lillian screams at her, "Why can't you just go home and talk behind my back like a normal person!" The only contented person on display in the movie is Megan (Melissa McCarthy), an obese sex kitten who feels free to say or do just about anything that crosses her mind.

Annie is not a Meg Ryan character, so utterly adorable that she's not even for a minute believable as a sad sack desperate for love. She is a wounded person who has made a mess of her life, and Wiig makes you like her in spite of her misbehavior. That is a very tricky thing to pull off. And so is *Bridesmaids*, which should be seen not to further the interests of women in comedy or women in Hollywood or women in media or women in baking, but solely because when it is good, it is great. ♦

"Tonight [Dominique Strauss-Kahn] will be eating veal patties for dinner, with steamed cabbage and whole wheat bread."

—News Item, *May 17, 2011*

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20, 2011 washingtonpost.com • 75¢

Former IMF chief claims human rights violations

'YOU CALL THIS VEAL?'

Strauss-Kahn gives Rikers cafeteria zero stars

BY HOWARD SCHNEIDER

RALPH KYTTLE

Unlike those at the Sofitel, rooms at Rikers Island have no bidets.

NEW YORK — "What do you mean this water came out of a faucet?" asked an incredulous Dominique Strauss-Kahn before spitting it out. The former managing director of the International Monetary Fund, accused of sexual assault and detained for several days at Rikers Island prison, had never heard of such a thing. "I mean, maybe for farm animals, but for people to drink? *Ne sois pas stupide.*"

To which a female corrections officer replied, "Who you calling stupid, Stupid?" It was at this point that Strauss-Kahn had had enough, ultimately filing a complaint yesterday afternoon with the United Nations Human Rights Council. The banker claims the state of New York and New York City's Department of Correction had violated his personal rights. "It is an affront to humanity," Strauss-Kahn said in a statement. "The world must know I was not provided with a feather and down pillow, not to mention a boudoir pillow, not to mention a boudoir." But what distressed the former IMF chief the most was the food.

"Not even in my worst nightmares could I have come up with such horrors," said Strauss-Kahn in reference to his dinner of veal patties, steamed cabbage, and wheat bread. "Where is the *Poularde Alexandre Dumaine?*" According to the defendant's lawyer, Ben Brafman, Strauss-Kahn was ridiculed for demanding better food. "The verbal abuse has caused Mr. Strauss-Kahn extreme mental anguish," he said. "I cannot even tell you what the inmates uttered to my client when he requested a simple sauteed woodcock."

Besides registering a complaint with the Human Rights Council, Strauss-Kahn also contacted the staff of Le Guide Michelin, informing them that the cafeteria at Rikers Island wasn't worthy of a single star. "It belongs in the same category as Planet Hollywood and California Pizza Kitchen!"

Meanwhile, supporters of the accused have continued their vocal defense of him. "Nobody even bothered to ask my friend Dominique how he wanted his veal patties cooked. The man wasn't given a sip of wine for days," said a weeping Bernard Henri-

TASTELESS CONTINUED ON A6

Schwarzenegger regrets affair

'She looked different back then, I swear'

the weekly Standard

MAY 30, 2011