the weekly
Standard

DEFEAT IN IRAQ
FREDERICK W. KAGAN,
KIMBERLY KAGAN,
& MARISA COCHRANE SULLIVAN

NOVEMBER 7, 2011 $4.95

THE UNHERALDED GAINS OF THE PRO-LIFE MOVEMENT

FRED BARNES

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

CONGRESS, STEP UP AND GIVE WIRELESS CONSUMERS A BREAK

American wireless consumers pay, on average, more than 16% in taxes and fees on their monthly service. That's more than **double** the average general sales tax.

Congress can give consumers some much-needed pocketbook relief. The Lofgren-Franks 'Wireless Tax Fairness Act,' H.R. 1002, and the Wyden-Snowe companion bill, S. 543, would place a five-year moratorium on all new, discriminatory state and local wireless taxes and fees. Both enjoy strong bipartisan support, and the House bill has 236 co-sponsors and has been approved by the House Judiciary Committee.

The C.B.O. has scored the legislation at zero additional cost to local, state and federal governments. The only ones being hurt by these unfair and exorbitant taxes and fees are wireless consumers. Let's give them a break. The time for House Floor consideration is now!

CONGRESS, STEP UP FOR CONSUMERS.

KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM.
PASS THE 'WIRELESS TAX FAIRNESS ACT' TODAY.

Paid for by MyWireless.org

mywireless.org®
america's wireless voice

gravity defyer™

VERSOSHOCK REVERSE TRAMPOLINE SOLE

Scientifically Engineered to Defy Gravity

Defy Pain, Defy Aging, Defy Fatigue

This is my story

I used to be more active. I used to run, play basketball, tennis, football… I was more than a weekend warrior. I woke up every day filled with life! But now, in my late 30's, I spend most of my day in the office or sacked out in front of the TV. I rarely get to the gym – not that I don't like working out, it's the nagging pain in my knees and ankles. Low energy and laziness has got me down. My energy has fizzled and I'm embarrassed to admit that I've grown a spare tire (I'm sure it's hurting my love life). Nowadays I rarely walk. For some reason it's just harder now. Gravity has done a job on me.

Customer Satisfaction Speaks for Itself!
4 out of 5 customers purchase a 2nd pair within 3 months.

Wear them and you'll know

That's what my doctor recommended. He said, "Gravity Defyer shoes are pain-relieving shoes." He promised they would change my life–like they were a fountain of youth. "They ease the force of gravity, relieving stress on your heels, ankles, knees and back. They boost your energy by propelling you forward." The longer he talked, the more sense it made. He was even wearing a pair himself!

Excitement swept through my body like a drug

I received my package from GravityDefyer.com and rushed to tear it open like a kid at Christmas. Inside I found the most amazing shoes I had ever seen – different than most running shoes. Sturdy construction. Cool colors. Nice lines… I was holding a miracle of technology. This was the real thing.

GDefy Benefits

- Relieve pain
- Ease joint & spinal pressure
- Reduce fatigue & tiredness
- Be more active
- Have more energy
- Appear taller
- Jump higher, walk and run faster
- Have instant comfort
- Cool your feet & reduce foot odor
- Elevate your performance

I put them on and all I could say was, "WOW!" In minutes I was out the door. I was invincible; tireless in my new Gravity Defyer shoes. It was as if my legs had been replaced with super-powered bionics. What the doctor promised was all correct. No more knee pain. I started to lose weight. At last, I was pain free and filled with energy! I was back in the game. Gravity had no power over me!

Nothing to lose: Start your 30 Day Trial Today!

So, my friend, get back on your feet like I did. Try Gravity Defyer for yourself. You have nothing to lose but your pain.

Tell us your story!
Login at Gravitydefyer.com and share your experience.

ABSORB SHOCK
Eliminate pain from every step.

REBOUND PROPELS YOU FORWARD
Reduce fatigue. Be more active

Gravity Defyer Customer Survey Results

$129.95

MEN (Shown above)
TB902MWBS
sizes 7 - 13
Med/Wide and ExtraWide/XXWide Widths

WOMEN (Silver with Navy)
TB902FWBS
sizes 5 - 11
Med/Wide and ExtraWide/XXWide Widths

30 DAY RISK-FREE TRIAL

EXCLUSIVE ONLINE OFFER

TRY THEM FREE* – PAY IN 30 DAYS

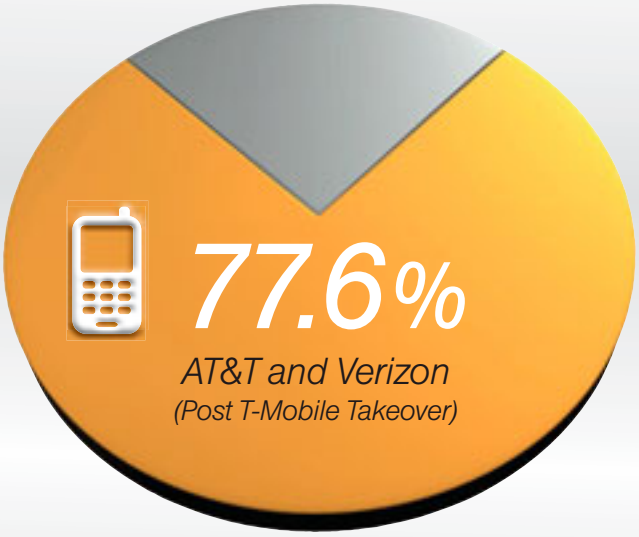
Take advantage of this exclusive offer at **www.GravityDefyer.com/MT2KCB5** or by phone, dial **(800) 429-0039** and mention the promotional code below.

Promotional Code: MT2KCB5

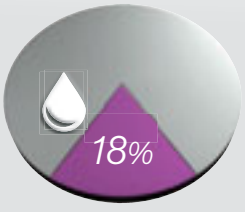
*Offer not available in stores. Shipping & Handling not included.

BBB A+

Two companies controlling this much wireless industry revenue creates a one-sided conversation.

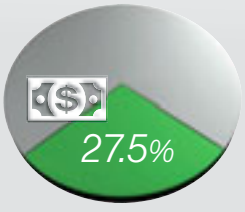


Wireless

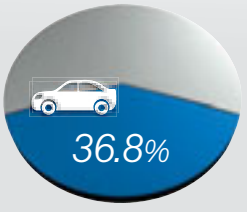


Oil

Airline



Banking



Auto

AT&T's proposed takeover of T-Mobile would result in two companies controlling more than 77% of wireless industry revenues. In other major industries, the two top firms control much less.

Two wireless industry giants would marginalize the ability of other providers to keep prices competitive for consumers and influence the pace of wireless industry innovation.

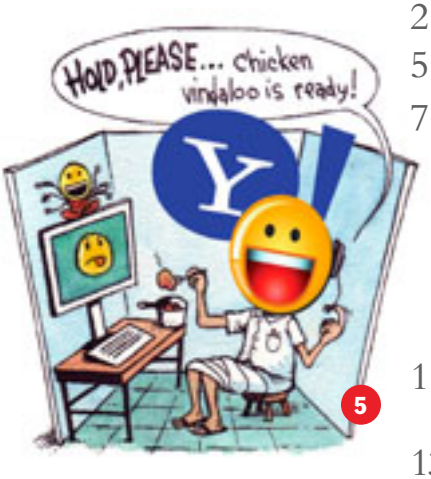
This is a bad idea for consumers, competition and our country.

Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.
Oil source: www.alacra.com/acm/2042_sample.pdf, page 22. Note: data includes oil refining and gas.
Airline source: DOT, form 41, Schedule P-1.2.
Banking source: DATAMONITOR'S "Banks in the United States" and www2.fdic.gov/sdi/main.asp.
Auto source: SEC 10-K filings, (includes cars and trucks and may include other revenue streams).
Foreign currencies converted to dollars using prevailing exchange rates.

Sprint

Contents

November 7, 2011 • Volume 17, Number 8



COVER: PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY GARY LOCKE; ORIGINAL IMAGE, NEWSCOM

Sic Semper . . .

Tyrants come and go, sometimes dying in their beds, but more often than not dying at the hands of long-suffering subjects or conspirators. Hitler (1945) shot himself while the Red Army closed in on his bunker. Nero (68 A.D.) cut his throat before he could be beaten to death. Stalin (1953), after suffering a stroke, probably died because his underlings were too frightened to summon a physician. Samuel Doe of Liberia (1990) was tortured before he was executed; Doe, in turn, had tortured his predecessor William Tolbert (1980) before murdering him.

The Scrapbook was reminded of these melancholy facts by the grisly last moments of Libya's Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, who seems to have been shot in a minor skirmish, dragged wounded from a drainpipe, beaten by rebel fighters, and dispatched with bullets to the head and chest. Few mourn the loss of Qaddafi, but more than a few seem to have been shaken by its manner. "You never like to see anybody come to the kind of end that he did," President Obama told Jay Leno on the *Tonight Show*. Not since the swift trial and execution of Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and his wife (1989) has summary justice so captured the attention of the world.

In The Scrapbook's view, this is probably the consequence of modern technology. When Robespierre was overthrown and executed during the Terror (1794), there were no cameras to record the event, or telegraph wires to disseminate the news. But the sight of the dead Mussolini (1945) hanging upside down beside his mistress—duly chronicled

on film—gave the civilized world a moment's pause. The fact that Qaddafi's last moments were recorded on video for posterity has contributed to a certain official unease, and the inevitable calls (from U.N. headquarters and Amnesty International) for an investigation and possible prosecution for war crimes.

The problem, of course, is that dictators seldom retire from their jobs, and certainly disdain surrendering their powers. This is partly because of the pathological nature of such people, and partly because the loss of power renders tyrants vulnerable to public vengeance.

As Winston Churchill once said, "Dictators ride to and fro upon tigers which they dare not dismount." Occasionally a tyrant will be subject to some judicial process and sent to prison or into exile—Napoleon (1815), Madame Mao (1981)—but they are the lucky ones. The tendency of oppressed people, when confronted with their oppressors suddenly shorn of power, is to kill them—and to assure their countrymen that they will oppress them no more. The sight of Libyans standing in line to see Qaddafi's corpse in a freezer tells us all we need to know about his 42 years in power.

So The Scrapbook agrees that, all things considered, it would have probably been better not to have shot Qaddafi out of hand, but to have turned him over to Libya's new ruling body or, perhaps, the International Criminal Court in the Hague. Yet The Scrapbook is not shocked that he perished as he did. And lest we forget, he was repeatedly exhorted (by our government, among many) to surrender to some instrument of international law, which would have enabled him to die peacefully in old age. But just as he had since 1969, Colonel Qaddafi made his own choice, and now he has paid the consequences. ♦

Pillar of the Intelligence Community

Mother Jones has published a long article about one of the foreign policy advisers with the Romney campaign, Walid Phares. The Beirut-born Phares has written a number of books in Arabic as well as English-language efforts like the provocatively titled *The Confrontation: Winning the War Against Future Jihad*. He launched his career as a commentator on counterterrorism and Middle Eastern affairs after emigrating to this country in 1990. As *Mother Jones* reports, Phares seems to have served before then as a member of the Lebanese Forces, a Christian militia that fought in the Lebanese civil wars, in a psychological warfare unit.

While the article acknowledges that atrocities were committed on all sides during Lebanon's 15-year-long conflict (1975-1990), it's hardly surprising that the Christians—with Phares serving as the part standing for the whole—should come under special scrutiny. The crimes that the Christians committed during the war, like the massacres at Tel al-Zaatar, Karantina, and Sabra and Shatila, are deservedly infamous, known by even

AP / SERGEYPONOMAREV

the most casual student of the modern Middle East. However, the fact is that other parties and confessional sects have had their records scrubbed by local publicists and their Western associates, who for a variety of reasons do not want to challenge the account that, for instance, Hezbollah and the Palestine Liberation Organization have dictated for posterity.

Perhaps that's why former CIA employee Paul Pillar, a source for the article, has a blank spot. "I can't think of any earlier instance of a [possible presidential] adviser having held a comparable formal position with a foreign organization," Pillar told *Mother Jones*. "It should raise eyebrows any time someone in a position to exert behind-the-scenes influence on a U.S. leader has ties to a foreign entity that are strong enough for foreign interests, and not just U.S. interests, to determine the advice being given."

Pillar most recently distinguished himself by questioning the integrity and intelligence of his former colleagues in the U.S. law enforcement and intelligence communities when he openly doubted the government's account of the Iranian plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States. But perhaps he's best known for using his perch at the CIA to campaign against the Bush administration. It's hardly surprising, then, that he's now using his intelligence community credentials to attack the Romney campaign since, as Thomas Joscelyn has written in these pages, Pillar "is a master of the art of politicizing intelligence."

Unlike Pillar, The Scrapbook has a very clear memory of someone who had "held a comparable formal position with a foreign organization" and yet wound up quite close to a presidential candidate—indeed, the one who came out on top in the 2008 election.

Barack Obama and Columbia University professor Rashid Khalidi both taught at the University of Chicago in the '90s, and at a farewell dinner for Khalidi in 2003, Obama warmly praised Khalidi's advice, which took the form of "consistent reminders to me of my own blind spots and my own biases." Since the *Los Angeles Times* never released its videotape of the event, we may never know Obama's blind spots or the enlightenment on offer from his friend and colleague Khalidi—a PLO spokesman in Beirut during the Lebanese civil wars.

Khalidi has denied his role with the PLO, but Martin Kramer, the Wexler-Fromer fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, has him dead to rights. On his website, www.martinkramer.org, Kramer explains that between 1976 and 1982 Khalidi was consistently identified—by, among others, the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*—as a PLO spokesman, without once demanding a correction. Still, all Khalidi will admit today is that he was "deeply involved in politics in Beirut."

Perhaps it's understandable that Khalidi won't come clean about his role in the civil wars, for everyone came out of the conflict dripping with blood, not just the Christians and Israelis, but the Palestinians, too. Why the Christians are typically censured for their brutality while the PLO seems to get a pass from so many U.S. analysts, journalists, and even former government employees like Pillar is strange, especially since PLO chairman Yasser Arafat showed that, unlike the Lebanese Forces, he was willing to kill Americans as well. ♦

He's a Large Part of the One Percent

Liberal filmmaker and world-class hypocrite Michael Moore is generally best ignored. While his "documentaries" may do boffo box office, all they offer are dumbed-down sermons to the liberal choir. So you probably won't be surprised to learn Moore is a big fan of the carnival of inanity otherwise known as the Occupy Wall Street movement.

Michael Moore

Standing in solidarity with the 99 percent is a bit tricky, however, when your net worth ($50,000,000 in Moore's case) places you solidly in the 1 percent. And so Michael Moore took to the *Daily Kos* to write this screed defending his personal wealth. The results are, however unintentional, illuminating:

> I do very well—and for a documentary filmmaker, I do extremely well. That, too, drives conservatives bonkers. "You're rich because of capitalism!" they scream at me. Um, no. Didn't you take Econ 101? Capitalism is a system, a pyramid scheme of sorts, that exploits the vast majority so that the few at the top can enrich themselves more. I make my money the old school, honest way by making things.

The dust is gathering on our textbooks, but The Scrapbook took Econ 101 back in the day. We seem to recall "making things" as a rather prominent feature of the capitalist system, as is keeping the fruits of one's honest labor.

In this case, the things that Michael Moore happens to produce are films that assuage the guilt of rich liberals, and he is very good at it. Whether he likes capitalism or not, Moore amply demonstrates just how robust and efficient free markets really are. After all, Moore knows absolutely nothing about economics and has still managed to become a remarkably successful capitalist. ♦

DAVID SHANKBONE

the weekly Standard

www.weeklystandard.com

William Kristol, *Editor*

Fred Barnes, *Executive Editor*

Richard Starr, *Deputy Editor*

Claudia Anderson, *Managing Editor*

Christopher Caldwell, Andrew Ferguson, Victorino Matus, Lee Smith, *Senior Editors*

Philip Terzian, *Literary Editor*

Stephen F. Hayes, Matt Labash, Jonathan V. Last, *Senior Writers*

Matthew Continetti, *Opinion Editor*

Jay Cost, John McCormack, *Staff Writers*

Mark Hemingway, *Online Editor*

Daniel Halper, Emily Schultheis, *Deputy Online Editors*

Kelly Jane Torrance, *Assistant Editor*

Michael Warren, *Reporter*

Theresa Civantos, Zack Munson, *Editorial Assistants*

Philip Chalk, *Design Director*

Barbara Kyttle, *Design Assistant*

Carolyn Wimmer, *Executive Assistant*

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

Terry Eastland, *Publisher*

Nicholas H.B. Swezey, *Advertising Director*

Catherine Lowe, *Digital Business Director*

Richard Trocchia, *Fulfillment Manager*

T. Barry Davis, Todd A. Miller, *Senior Advertising Managers*

Kathy Schaffhauser, *Finance Director*

Taybor Morris, *Office Manager*

Andrew Kaumeier, *Advertising Operations Manager*

Advertising inquiries: 202-293-4900

The Weekly Standard (ISSN 1083-3013), a division of Clarity Media Group, is published weekly (except the first week in January, third week in April, second week in July, and fourth week in August) at 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington D.C. 20036. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. For subscription customer service in the United States, call 1-800-274-7293. For new subscription orders, please call 1-800-283-2014. Subscribers: Please send new subscription orders and changes of address to The Weekly Standard, P.O. Box 421203, Palm Coast, FL 32142-1203. Please include your latest magazine mailing label. Allow 3 to 5 weeks for arrival of first copy and address changes. Canadian/foreign orders require additional postage and must be paid in full prior to commencement of service. Canadian/foreign subscribers may call 1-850-682-7644 for subscription inquiries. American Express, Visa/MasterCard payments accepted. Cover price, $4.95. Back issues, $4.95 (includes postage and handling). Send letters to the editor to The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th Street, N.W., Suite 505, Washington, DC 20036-4617. For a copy of The Weekly Standard Privacy Policy, visit www.weeklystandard.com or write to Customer Service, The Weekly Standard, 1150 17th St., NW, Suite 505, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Words, R.I.P.

For 13 years now, I have been a Yahoo! Mail customer. Notice I didn't say a "proud" Yahoo! Mail customer. For if you use Yahoo! for emailing, there is nothing to be proud of. As Gmail or even AOL users will eagerly explain, Yahoo! has always had a down-market feel. It's like buying your suits at Montgomery Ward, or tending your social networking needs at Myspace—a haven for birthday magicians, child predators, and unlistenable garage bands.

Who knows why I chose it in the first place. It was the go-go '90s—a mad swirl of budget surpluses, impeachment hearings, and tech bubbles. There was no time to think. We were too busy living. Maybe I was seduced by the wild-westness of the word "yahoo" or the ever-present exclamation point, my portal to excitement. But I signed up without deliberation and have regretted it ever since.

After tens of thousands of emails sent and received, I've always been afraid to switch. I worry that my valuable correspondence archive will be lost in the transfer, leaving historians bereft of trenchant material such as, "Are you watching the debate? Why does Newt Gingrich's head look like it's going through a growth spurt?" Though, good luck, historians, getting Yahoo!'s ironically named "customer care" on the line to jack my password after I shuffle off this mortal coil. Whenever my email goes buggy, which is to say weekly, and my online queries are outsourced to a customer care rep in Bangalore or wherever, so much time elapses between my questions and their nonanswers that I suspect they're making chicken vindaloo or watching *Slumdog Millionaire* on the other end, hoping I'll quit in frustration and switch to Gmail.

Now, to add insult to indignity, Yahoo! has forcibly upgraded me from Yahoo! Mail Classic to the new Yahoo! Mail, which best I can tell is as buggy as the old Yahoo! Mail. Though they now provide more choices of pacifying screen borders, such as "whimsy clouds," which are supposed to calm you while you're waiting for your customer care rep, Amrit, to finish

his tikka masala. But that's not the big draw. The main attraction is that Yahoo! Mail now features its very own emoticon library. Yahoo!!!

I've never been big on emoticons, or even small on them, preferring to do most of my emoting in private. Or better still, to channel my emotion into the songs I write for my Contemporary Christian rock band, Rahab and the Harlots (check us out on Myspace). As someone who writes for a living, I've always resented anyone who relies on these oppressive graphics, as I prefer the increasingly archaic system of thought-conveyance that relies on what the old timers call "words."

Emoticons are coerced emotion, unearned communication. They are a prefab cheat-sheet for those too lazy or sub-verbal to say what they mean. And they are as propagandistic as anything out of Mao's smiley-faced Great Leap Forward, which featured posters of agricultural workers laboring with forced cheer under headers such as, "We sell dry, clean, neat selected cotton to the state."

Unlike Mao, Yahoo! has not murdered millions. It is, however, helping millions of its customers murder the English language. For its emoticons are not the primitive colon-dash-parenthesis :-) type that requires you to look sideways to decipher it, as though staring at an optometrist's eye chart designed by M.C. Escher. No, this is the hard stuff—fully formed, animated glyphs—the heroin of emoticons. There are 12,000 in all, and they cover just about every emotion you've had, and probably several you haven't. A small sampling:

It's enough to make you sick, i.e.:

In his recent book *The Shallows: What the Internet Is Doing to Our Brains*, Nicholas Carr bemoans the danger of becoming overdependent on our technology. As we "come to experience more of our lives through the disembodied symbols flickering across our screens . . . we'll begin to lose our humanness," he says, "to sacrifice the very qualities that separate us from our machines." Marshall McLuhan referred to this as "autoamputation"—our technologies numb the very faculties they strive to amplify.

Am I overreacting, inflating small, plump-faced portents of illiteracy into harbingers of cultural apocalypse? Of course I am. I'm a professional journalist. That's what they pay me to do. Still, it genuinely saddens me. Not that I'm any longer in need of language to convey the nuance or subtlety or texture of my sorrow. For I now have an emoticon that pretends to do that for me:

Matt Labash

DAVID CLARK

TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING, KY
25 YEARS

BODINE ALUMINUM, MO
20 YEARS

TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING, IN
15 YEARS

TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING, WV
15 YEARS

TOYOTA MOTOR MANUFACTURING, AL
10 YEARS

BODINE ALUMINUM, TN
5 YEARS

Celebrating six big milestones and the people who helped us get there.

25 years ago we set up shop in Georgetown, KY, and we haven't stopped since. This year marks major milestones at six of our now ten U.S. plants. And with a new plant about to open in Mississippi bringing 2,000 new jobs to the local economy, we'll continue to have plenty of reasons to celebrate. None of this would be possible without our loyal customers, dedicated team members, dealers and suppliers, and the communities we call home. Thanks for all you've done on our journey so far and we look forward to many more miles to come.

www.ToyotaInAction.com

TOYOTA
moving forward

the weekly Standard

The Reactionary Left

That slight dizziness you're feeling is a contact high from the clouds of left-wing nostalgia in New York City and Washington. The anarchists, antiglobalization activists, student radicals, and sympathetic journalists gathered at Occupy Wall Street desperately are trying to recapture the protest spirit of the 1960s. Meanwhile, Democrats from Paul Krugman to Barack Obama pine for the economy of the 1950s, when the distribution of incomes was much more equal than today. At the same time, high unemployment, lackluster growth, and austerity have led these Democrats to attempt to restore the politics of the 1930s, pitting "economic royalists" against the downtrodden masses. We knew liberals believed in recycling, but this is getting ridiculous.

The very notion of a backward-looking left is laughable. Since its inception during the French Revolution, the left has been the party of progress, riding the wave of history to that distant shore where man will cast off the chains of society and live a truly authentic, free, and "natural" life. It's been the conservatives who have looked in the other direction, tapping the lefties on the shoulder and reminding them that faith and tradition are important guides to human action and shouldn't be cast off lightly. In contemporary America the equation has been reversed: Tea Party populists support drastic measures to revitalize the American government and economy, while left-wing class warriors want nothing more than to maintain the broken structures of the welfare state.

Ah, the good old days: Hoffman, Leary, and Rubin (top); Ozzie and Harriet and sons; and Huey 'The Kingfish' Long

TOP: ASSOCIATED PRESS

What happened to the American left's utopianism, its sense of adventure, its fearless dering-do? Today's liberals say conservatives are radicals who want to overturn the American political tradition (as liberals understand it). What remains of the liberal confidence in progress seems to be restricted to the culture, where Americans continue to perform occasional experiments of living. But even the cultural left seems withered, exhausted, ready to go to that big Oneida community in the sky. So what's a Rousseau to do? Ruminate on his glory days, and pretend that Occupy Wall Street is something more than it is.

Our most notable egalitarians locate their ideal economy not in some unrealized future but in the postwar United States. "America in the 1950s *was* a middle-class society," Paul Krugman writes in *Conscience of a Liberal*, "to a far greater extent than it had been in the 1920s—or than it is today." President Obama recalls in his economic speeches a lost world in which "millionaires and billionaires" paid "their fair share," a high school graduate spent his life on the factory line, American manufacturing was tops, and there were no nasty ATMs to destroy jobs. The New Frontier of space exploration and technological achievement has closed. Gone too are the visions of a Great Society that achieves "equality as a fact and equality as a result." What remains is a set of actuarial tables that determine with exquisite precision the optimal distribution of income in a fair society.

Even if you grant the premise that government should redistribute wealth to equalize incomes, the 1950s are odd years for the left to champion. "Social injustice remained pervasive," Krugman cautions. Um, yeah. That's the point: There is more to equality than pay schedules and tax rates. There is, for example, the composition of the workforce. Harriet did not take a second mortgage to finance her craft moisturizer boutique while Ozzie went to his UAW office. Harriet stayed at home. So did millions of women in the

1950s, thereby restricting the supply of labor and raising Ozzie's wages.

You cannot have the economy of the 1950s without the society of the 1950s. Ozzie and Harriet were married. They could pool resources in ways today's single parents and twentysomethings cannot. They did not have to worry about an influx of day laborers from Latin America or a flood of cheap goods from China. They lived in a society a portion of which systematically oppressed a minority race. Their government focused almost the sum total of its resources on defense and Social Security. There was no Medicare or Medicaid or war on poverty. It was the age of the "organization man," the "lonely crowd," of alienation and monopoly and "conformity." All of these factors—not just high levels of unionization and a punishing top marginal tax rate—went into making 1950s America a "middle-class society." Is this a tradeoff Americans would be willing to make?

The wistful left reaches back farther when it mimics the class politics of the 1930s. The "99 percent" versus the "1 percent," Warren Buffett's secretary versus Warren Buffett, Obama's attacks on nameless "millionaires and billionaires" are echoes of the rhetoric of Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and Franklin Roosevelt. What is puzzling is that the strategy of division and resentment has not had a good track record. To be sure, it worked for FDR. But Roosevelt had 25 percent unemployment, a minuscule federal government, and a sunny disposition. Since LBJ, the spokesmen for American liberalism have been dour and passive and condescending. Their populism has lacked bite because it is a pose. The public has seen through their attempt to rehash the old formula for what it is: "the shield and slogan of the cunning who will rule in the name of equality," as Martin Diamond once put it.

The longing for the culture of the '60s, the economy of the '50s, and the politics of the '30s is evidence of the left's failure. No longer able to inspire with a utopian vision of the future, the left has been forced to return to its past. The left's failure, then, is the right's victory, because a return to the past is what we've been calling for all along.

But which past? Certainly not the left's. But neither should conservatives indulge in their own nostalgias. What Americans should be trying to recapture is not any particular set of historical social, economic, or cultural conditions but a lost philosophy of government, a missing understanding of politics. In this understanding, the equality that matters is the equal protection of natural rights. The government that levels inequalities of property or condition necessarily intrudes on those rights. Lucky for us, this view of government depends on self-evident truths that are the same in every time and every place.

Nostalgia? Reminiscences? Schmaltz? No thanks. Leave them for the progressives.

—Matthew Continetti

'To Bigotry No Sanction'

One intriguing, even unexpected, aspect of the race for the Republican nomination has been the emergence—perhaps we should say the reemergence—of the religious issue in presidential politics. Anyone who thinks that John F. Kennedy put it definitively to rest in 1960 in his famous address to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association should be aware that the passage of 51 years seems not to have done the trick. As everybody knows, Mitt Romney is a Mormon, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; and while he is hardly the first Mormon to run for president (Morris Udall, Orrin Hatch, his own father George Romney), he is the first member of his denomination to have what appears to be a plausible chance of being elected. This has awakened some disquieting ghosts.

Mitt Romney

MATTHEW REICHBACH

Governor Romney's religion is an unexpected issue, but we should not have been surprised. Two years before Romney first sought the nomination in 2008, Jacob Weisberg, then-editor of the online magazine *Slate*, wrote a column lampooning the history and beliefs of Romney's religion, and concluded, "I wouldn't vote for someone who truly believed in the founding whoppers of Mormonism." Nor is Weisberg's casual bigotry an isolated phenomenon. When, in 1994, Romney sought the Senate seat held by Edward Kennedy, and pulled even with Kennedy in the polls, the Lion of the Senate resorted to sly pejorative references to Romney's faith. The tactic worked. In the current political season, the press has wondered out loud about whether Romney's religion might be an electoral liability, and published more than a few stories about evangelical Christian objections to Mormonism. Analysis, or wishful thinking?

The United States was founded on the principle of religious freedom, and Article VI of the Constitution explicitly states that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust." As far as we are concerned, Mitt Romney's tenure as governor of Massachusetts demonstrated (as if there were any doubt) that he is fully and faithfully capable of carrying out an oath of office, and that his private religious beliefs are incidental

to his public duties. No matter what people may think of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—and all religions have their unique doctrines—the Mormons are an integral, admirable part of the fabric of American life.

But constitutional principles do not prevent citizens from harboring private opinions, and it would be naïve to suggest that voters don't take religion into account. In 1908, for example, William Howard Taft encountered scattered hostility because, as a Unitarian, he did not believe in the divinity of Christ. "Of course," Taft wrote to a friend and supporter, "I am interested in the spread of Christian civilization, but to go into a dogmatic discussion of creed I will not do whether I am defeated or not. . . . If the American electorate is so narrow as not to elect a Unitarian, well and good. I can stand it." In 1928, Alfred E. Smith, the first Roman Catholic nominee of a major party for president, inspired considerable resistance to his candidacy on account of his faith, and was obliged to publish a long response to a letter in the *Atlantic Monthly*: "You imply," he wrote, "that there is conflict between religious loyalty to the Catholic faith and patriotic loyalty to the United States. Everything that has actually happened to me during my long public career leads me to know that no such thing as that is true."

Now, a century after Taft and Smith, and a half-century after Kennedy, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, the Rev. Robert Jeffress, reminds us that, in democratic politics, a thin line can separate faith and intolerance. Speaking to a reporter at the Values Voters Summit in October, he explained his belief that Mormonism is a "cult" and that Mitt Romney, as a Mormon, is not a Christian. Earlier, he had expanded on these views when introducing his favored candidate, Gov. Rick Perry, to the audience: "Do we want a candidate who is a good, moral person," he asked, "or one who is a born-again follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?"

Since then, Jeffress has backtracked a little, acknowledging that his doctrinal opinions about Mormonism would not prevent him from voting for Mitt Romney should Romney become the GOP challenger to President Obama. Which is as it should be: The presidency, after all, is a political, not a spiritual, office.

People are welcome to differ on religious questions, and there is no evidence that theological debate will ever end. But we have a long tradition of religious tolerance in our country that is not only unique in the world but speaks with special relevance to what it means to be American. It has also, in the course of history, served us well: We judge candidates for public office not on their genetic background or taste in music or their religion (or lack of religion) but on their political positions and qualifications and experience. The fact that Mitt Romney is Mormon is of biographical interest, and no doubt has influenced the course of his life. Beyond that, his religious faith—and the religion of any candidate in any political party—has no bearing on the fundamental question: Should he be president?

—Philip Terzian

What Syria Policy?

NEWSCOM

Anti-Assad demonstrators near Homs, October 27

The threat against the life of the American ambassador to Syria comes during a bad streak for the Obama administration. First was the Iranian plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to the United States and bomb the Saudi and Israeli embassies, while incurring perhaps hundreds of American casualties. Next was the White House's failure to secure an agreement to keep U.S. troops in Iraq, which will empower Iran and its Iraqi allies at the expense of American interests.

Middle Easterners who count on American leadership can be forgiven for misreading signs of American weakness. Some in the Syrian opposition believed that, now with Qaddafi out of the way, Syrian president Bashar al-Assad had come into the Obama administration's crosshairs. Senator John McCain suggested the same during a

recent trip to Jordan. However, as the White House made clear last week, this was not the case.

The misunderstanding seems to have started when Robert Ford, the ambassador to Syria, was brought back to Washington. Given the domestic political fight over appointing an ambassador to Syria, administration spokesmen struggled for the right language to explain what had happened: Ford was not withdrawn, they said, but "recalled" for consultations. Because the White House recalled the ambassador to Libya before the onset of the NATO action that eventually led to Qaddafi's death, parts of the Syrian opposition were eager to see the same pattern developing.

That's where the similarity ends, however. The reason Ford came home was that the Syrian regime had made credible threats against his life. Perhaps Assad saw his own fate prefigured in the photos of Qaddafi's last hours, and went on offense against Washington by letting on that he was going to kill the president's personal representative. The administration says it is planning to send Ford back soon, with the understanding that the Syrian regime, rather than kill Ford, will abide by international law and ensure his safety.

Surely even the Obama administration must know that this is ludicrous. In 2005 the Bush administration withdrew its ambassador to Syria after it judged that Damascus was behind the assassination of former Lebanese prime minister Rafik Hariri. We held off returning an envoy while the Syrians and their allies plotted the deaths of U.S. soldiers in Iraq. In Lebanon, Syrian allies made an attempt on the life of former U.S. ambassador Jeffrey Feltman, now head of the State Department's Near East Affairs bureau.

When it came to power, the Obama White House defended its determination to return an ambassador to Syria with the diplomatic cliché that "you don't just speak to your friends." Lost on the president was the fact that it is not possible to speak rationally to those whose policies are predicated on murder. Syria, the administration seems to have forgotten, is a state sponsor of terror. It is accustomed to operating in this particular pit of hell; it thrives here, where Washington can only flounder. Indeed, the White House doesn't even have the luxury of taking the moral high ground by expelling Syria's ambassador to Washington, Imad Moustapha. Damascus recalled him last week, even as he is under federal investigation for threatening Syrian dissidents in the United States.

Without Ford in Damascus, the administration seemingly has no Syria policy, except to trot out the same formulations it mouthed before the president said Assad has to step down. At least we've finally taken "engagement" off the table. Of course, for all practical purposes, the regime in Damascus is already contained. In which case, a cynic might argue, why should the administration commit itself to a more active role in bringing about an end to Assad?

It's true that Assad has yet to play all his cards. One of them is Syria's customary gambit of stirring up trouble in Lebanon. Military incursions across the Lebanese border to chase opposition members may be a foretaste of much worse trouble to come. Many in Beirut believe that the fighting in Syria will spill into Lebanon.

In the meantime, Damascus's ally Hezbollah feels cornered. Last week the Party of God's general secretary Hassan Nasrallah made a televised speech defending the Syrian regime. Assad's war has not only enraged the region's Sunni population, but also alienated much of his and Nasrallah's customary support. As it turns out, slaughtering Syrian civilians who are demonstrating peacefully is a wedge issue. Even fans of the resistance, especially on the left, have identified the discrepancy between advocating on behalf of Palestinian rights and a regime that kills its own people protesting for their rights.

It is not possible to speak rationally to those whose policies are predicated on murder. Syria, the administration seems to have forgotten, is a state sponsor of terror.

Nasrallah and Assad are finding themselves increasingly isolated. Indeed, something is amiss with the Iranian-backed militia when Nasrallah admonishes the Saudis not to believe the American story about the plot against Riyadh's ambassador to Washington, and calls the Saudis "brothers."

So, with Iran's two key allies boxed in, why should the White House intervene? Perhaps the administration has reverted to a brand of realist foreign policy that would see American interests advanced in conflict consuming and containing both sides. What worked for Iran and Iraq in the '80s might now be applicable to Syria's nascent civil war.

The problem with this line of thinking is not just moral. It's not just that both Iraq and Iran came out of their near-decade-long conflict wounded and more dangerous than before. It's that the White House is not playing the regional board at all. It was good to hammer away at al Qaeda by killing Bin Laden, Rahman, and Awlaki and finally get Qaddafi. But these moves have been made in the absence of a larger strategy. Consider how Iran looks at the region: Even as it may be on the verge of losing its only Arab ally in Syria, the American withdrawal from Iraq has given Tehran a fresh horse to ride against the United States.

The rest of the Middle East understands that there are two magnetic poles shaping the region. The Saudi plot and the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq may have compelled the Obama administration to recognize that Tehran is one of those two poles. They are slower to realize that America is the other.

—Lee Smith

Forgive Us Our Debts

Europe runs out of money. BY CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

London

As they do every few weeks, the leaders of the European Union met in Brussels on Wednesday, October 26, to solve their finance problems once and for all. As the sun rose on Thursday they emerged with a document that resembled an Obama budget—crystal-clear about its aims and aspirations, opaque about how it intends to achieve them. There is a reason for that. It is that these aims and aspirations are growing less and less realistic.

Back in 2010, when the crisis seemed confined to the Greek government's inability to repay its lenders, the Europeans thought they could fix things by having its various neighbor countries chip in 45 billion euros ($65 billion) to throw at the problem. Eighteen months later, the crisis is as complicated as a Rube Goldberg machine and more dangerous. The particular corner of it they dealt with last week has three intertwined aspects, and to solve one of them is to exacerbate the other two:

(1) Greece is so totally bust that it required not only a fresh bailout totaling $185 billion but also a 50 percent "haircut" imposed on its creditors. In other words, if you lent the Greeks money by buying their government's bonds, you lost half of it. (But don't feel too bad—a lot of Greeks got to retire at 60 with pensions you paid for.) That "solves" the Greek solvency problem for a time, but it is a dangerous remedy.

(2) It is dangerous because it means that loss of confidence in Europe's institutions moves from the periphery (Greece and Portugal, say) towards the core (France and Italy, say). If Greece can stiff its creditors and stay in the euro, might that not be a tempting option for other countries? Consider Italy, the third-largest economy in the eurozone, with a debt-to-GDP ratio over 100 percent. "Contagion" is the word for the presence of nervous thoughts like these in bondholders' heads, and the only way to protect against its spread is to build a "wall of money" around the least reliable-looking debtors. Unfortunately, Europe is out of money. The only "wall of money" it can erect is a virtual wall of borrowed money.

(3) And that adds to a danger that is already present in the Greek bailouts. European banks hold a lot more sovereign debt (government bonds) than U.S. banks do. If some of that is going to get paid back at 50 centimes on the euro, then these banks are neither as wealthy nor as stable as they appear to be. That means banks are going to have to revise their business models. What European authorities insisted on this week was that they raise their capital ratios to 9 percent. There are two ways banks can do this. They can either hold more money or lend less. Europe's leaders pretend they're going to hold more. But since Europeans have already tapped every domestic source of capital, there is no place to get more. That means banks are going to lend less. Which in turn means the risk of recession has just risen significantly.

A lot about this deal makes it likely that Europe's leaders will be back at the negotiating table before their seats have cooled.

For one, the debt of Greeks and others seems to be, as the Germans grumble, a "barrel without a bottom." A European economist told me in the summer of 2010 that a Greek default was inevitable, and that the European bailout was designed to keep the country afloat until it could get back into "primary balance"—i.e., paying its bills except for its interest payments—in 2013. But this new bailout, haircuts and all, does not envision Greece reaching primary balance for a decade, and then only with the help of the most grinding austerity program enacted in our lifetime. At that point, in the 2020s, the country will be back to a situation where its debts are "only" 120 percent of GDP. Is that politically sustainable in a riot-prone democracy like Greece's? One suspects not.

GARY LOCKE

Christopher Caldwell is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Another problem is that the deal is not having the desired effect in Italy, the primary candidate for contagion. Bond yields in most European countries fell in the immediate aftermath of the agreement, but not in Italy. Italy has the third-largest bond market in the world—almost $3 trillion—and over the summer the European Central Bank bought tens of billions' worth of Italian bonds to keep Italy's borrowing costs down.

Working up an austerity plan for the Italians was a top priority at last week's summit. Silvio Berlusconi's coalition partners have resisted it, and in one sense they are right to see the demand as unfair—at about 4 percent, Italy's budget deficits are low by comparison to the rest of the European Union (and *far* lower than the United States). And there is one boast that Italians can make that few other countries can—its finances are roughly in the same shape they were a decade ago. Under Berlusconi, Finance Minister Giulio Tremonti was a highly capable economic steward. His reputation in Italy has something in common with that of Paul Volcker in the United States. What spooked bond markets over the summer was Berlusconi's quarreling with Tremonti, not the "bunga-bunga" (to use his term) that he indulged in with young women.

At last week's meetings, Europe invited a new player into its finance crisis: China. Europeans have talked about "levering up" their $625 billion European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), established last year to prevent a Greek contagion. It has been topped up and tapped into since and now has only about half its original lending power. In order to obtain the funds necessary to shore up Italy's bond market, the Europeans reckon they need to more than double the size of the EFSF. Levering up means using the money they have in the EFSF as security to raise even more on the capital markets. In the present depressed state of the world economy, "the capital markets" means China. With an astonishing lack of sangfroid, Klaus Regeling, the head of the EFSF, landed in Beijing on Thursday afternoon to press his case. He must have headed straight for the airport the moment the agreement was signed.

Years ago, China might have fallen for the trick that Europe intends to pull, basically trying to get money for Greece and Italy by waving around the triple-A credit rating of Germany and other countries that have stocked the EFSF. But today it is likely that China will insist on guarantees that it be paid before European taxpayers in any default scenario. In an interview with the *Financial Times* the day after the agreement, Li Daokui, a member of the central bank monetary policy committee, gave evidence of a real canniness. "The last thing China wants," he said, "is to throw away the country's wealth and be seen as just a source of dumb money." Li indicated that the Chinese might ask European leaders to refrain from criticizing Chinese economic policy as part of the deal.

Perhaps Europe has reached the point where its only route out of bankruptcy is this kind of vassalage. To escape a debt crisis, an economy needs to be capable of growing. It is far from clear that Europe can do that. It has two problems. One is technological. Much of Europe lacks the technological wherewithal to claim an ever-increasing share of the world economy. Spain, for instance, during its long, construction-based boom, developed a good deal of national expertise in . . . what? Pouring concrete?

A second problem is demographic. Italians have one of the lowest birthrates known in any society since the dawn of time; what it will look like in 40 years is anybody's guess, but one fairly conservative demographic projection shows its population decreasing by 10 percent, to 54 million, at mid-century. Debt, alas, is contracted on a per-country, not a per capita basis, and this kind of population loss (especially when accompanied by rapid aging) can render debt impossible to pay down.

Europe's leaders are welcome to congratulate each other on finally resolving their debt crisis. They will likely have many more opportunities to come up with such "final resolutions" in the months and years ahead. ♦

Where Keynes Went Wrong

What if government spending depresses instead of stimulates? BY CHARLES WOLF JR.

It is generally recognized that the conceptual underpinnings for so-called stimulus programs lie in the theory developed by John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s. That the practical results of these programs in recent years have been negligible, if not negative, while their costs have been high, may be sufficient grounds for avoiding them in the future.

But what if the theory itself is flawed? For many economists, flawed theory would be a greater concern—surely more hurtful to professional pride—than ineffectual results from programs based on a valid theory. Moreover, it would mean no amount of effort to improve the design of stimulus programs is likely to help.

Before addressing questions about the theory, let's briefly recap the costs and results of the stimulus so far.

Total stimulus costs have been high, but reckoning them accurately isn't easy. They include $787 billion in federal spending that was legislated and appropriated in 2009 with the "stimulus" label attached to it. In addition, a proper accounting of the cost should include several other programs and outlays that, while not carrying the "stimulus" label, were designed to boost domestic spending or preclude reductions in spending that were otherwise expected to occur. These other programs include the following: TARP funding to relieve the impaired asset values and weakened balance sheets of financial institutions ($700 billion); bailout funds provided to support the auto industry ($17 billion); extension of unemployment benefits to support income and spending by unemployed workers ($34 billion); and temporary subsidies for the "cash for clunkers" program ($3 billion).

Professor Stimulus: Keynes in 1935

These other measures should be included in a full reckoning of stimulus costs because of their shared common purpose: to boost aggregate demand, or avoid its further decline as a consequence of the Great Recession.

All of these outlays, amounting to more than $1.5 trillion, are properly encompassed in Keynes's central policy prescription: namely, to use public policy aggressively to stimulate "aggregate demand." Those who have criticized the government's stimulus efforts for being too small may not realize how large they have actually been.

What about the results of the stimulus package? Between the end of the second quarter of 2009 (when, incidentally, the Great Recession's two-year negative GDP trend ended) and the end of the second quarter of 2011, nearly all the stimulus funding was disbursed. The result was that GDP increased from $12.6 trillion (in 2005 prices) to $13.3 trillion—an increase less than half the dollar-for-dollar injection of stimulus money! In the same period, gross private consumption rose by $400 billion, and gross private (nonresidential) fixed investment rose by $155 billion. In the same period, employment *decreased* by 581,000.

A simple accounting of costs and benefits—costs are high, benefits much lower—warrants skepticism about further recourse to stimulus spending. Still, it could be contended that, if the programs were better designed and better targeted in the future, results might justify the effort notwithstanding the recent record. This possibility warrants another look at the underlying Keynesian theory.

The core of the theory is "aggregate demand" defined in terms of two components: consumption demand and investment demand. In defining and measuring these components, Keynes acknowledged, with unusual and becoming modesty, his debt to a then-contemporary Russian-American academic, Simon Kuznets, who pioneered the development of a national accounting framework, which Keynes used in formulating his general theory. (Kuznets received the Nobel Prize for economics in 1971; Keynes died before the prize,

NEWSCOM

Charles Wolf Jr. holds the corporate chair in international economics at the RAND Corporation and is a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

which is not awarded posthumously, was initiated.)

Insufficient aggregate demand was Keynes's diagnosis of the Depression-era conditions of continued unemployment and stagnant economic growth. Consumption demand had sharply contracted owing to the Great Depression's effect on employment and income, and investment demand was depressed because profitable investment opportunities depended heavily on consumption, which had been decimated by the Depression.

Keynes's prescription for escaping this vicious circle was to stimulate aggregate demand by aggressively increasing government spending and/or lowering taxes. Unlike many of his current disciples, Keynes acknowledged the potential of lower taxes to stimulate demand. However, the room for remedial action through tax reductions was limited in the 1930s because prevailing taxes were already low. Consequently, in Keynes's view, increased government spending was necessary to boost aggregate demand—what was referred to in that day as "pump-priming" and these days as "stimulus."

Moreover, whether the stimulus was to be provided by public works ("infrastructure"), by employing workers to dig holes and then fill them, or by other means didn't matter to the theory. With ample idle resources—specifically, unemployed labor and idle plant and equipment—it was assumed that the only missing ingredient was sufficient demand to jump-start the economy. One dollar of additional government spending would wend its way through the economy as first-round recipients spent most of what they received, second-round recipients, in turn, spent most of what they received, thereby raising the income and ensuing spending of the next recipients, and so on. The total effect would thus be a multiple of the initial increase in spending. If, for example, the proportion of government's increased spending that was spent by recipients was, say, 50 percent, the multiplier effect through the full economic circuit would be $2 for each dollar of increased spending; if the proportion were 60 percent, the multiplier would be 2.5.

The similarities between the Depression era and the current circumstances of our post-Great Recession are obvious. So, where's the flaw?

All economic theories involve assumptions. The critical question is whether the assumptions are realistic. If there is uncertainty about the answer, the follow-on question is: How much will it matter if the assumptions are wrong?

Keynes assumed that the initial deficient level of aggregate demand would remain unchanged until the stimulative ("pump-priming") effect of additional government spending kicked in. In other words, increased government spending, or its anticipation, would not further diminish preexisting levels of consumer demand and investment demand. However, Keynes's failure to consider the possibility of an adverse effect from government spending—that it might lead to still further decay in the prior levels of consumption and investment—was a fundamental flaw in the theory.

The full cost of stimulus outlays amounts to more than $1.5 trillion. All are properly encompassed in Keynes's central policy prescription: namely, to use public policy to stimulate 'aggregate demand.'

So how might government spending actually undermine its explicit purpose of boosting aggregate demand?

It is quite plausible that the behavior of consumers and investors might change as an unintended consequence of the increased government spending, and might do so in ways that would partly, fully, or even more than fully offset the attempted effort to raise aggregate demand.

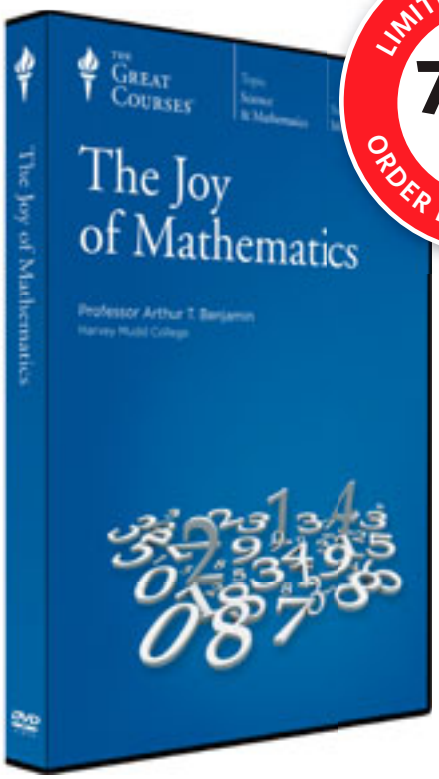
Consider "Ricardian equivalence"—a conjecture advanced by David Ricardo a century before Keynes's general theory and thus something Keynes was aware of, or should have been aware of. Ricardian equivalence suggested that consumers might reduce their spending to prepare for the tax increases they'd face in the future to pay for government spending financed by borrowing in the present. In recent years, Ricardo's conjecture has been applied and tested in a formal model developed by Robert Barro.

That prior consumption demand might actually have been reduced as a result of recent government stimulus spending is suggested by two indicators: Since mid-2009, household savings *increased* by 2-3 percent of GDP, and household debt *decreased* by 8.6 percent ($1.1 trillion).

It is also plausible that investment demand might shrink as a result of increased government spending or its anticipation. This diminution might occur if investors have recourse to other investment opportunities that seem more profitable or less risky than those that would accompany or follow the attempted government stimulus. For example, such opportunities might lie in investing abroad where tax liabilities are less onerous, rather than investing at home; or investors might choose to invest in long-term instruments (30-year U.S. government bonds) while reducing investment in fixed capital or equities. These opportunities might seem rosier because of anticipated increases in future taxes, or because of increased regulatory restrictions that might (and did) accompany the increased government spending. In fact, such alternative investment opportunities are much more numerous and accessible now than in Keynes's era.

Failure to consider the potentially adverse effect of government spending on the preexisting level of aggregate demand was and remains a disabling flaw in Keynesian theory—then and now. If the theory's underlying logic is flawed, it can be expected that policies and programs based on it will fail. They have in the past. They should be avoided in the future. ♦

THE GREAT COURSES®



Understand the Fun and Beauty in Mathematical Concepts

Humans have been having fun and games with mathematics for thousands of years. Along the way, they've discovered the amazing utility of this field—in science, engineering, finance, games of chance, and many other aspects of life. The 24 half-hour lectures of **The Joy of Mathematics** celebrate the sheer joy of mathematics, taught by a mathematician who is literally a magician with numbers.

Professor Arthur T. Benjamin of Harvey Mudd College is renowned for his feats of mental calculation performed before audiences at schools, museums, conferences, and other venues. His teaching has been repeatedly honored by the Mathematical Association of America, the nation's largest professional mathematical society. Throughout these lectures, Professor Benjamin shows how everything in mathematics is magically connected—how the beautiful and often imposing edifice that has given us algebra, geometry, trigonometry, calculus, probability, and so much else is based on nothing more than fooling around with numbers.

Offer expires 11/17/12

1-800-832-2412

WWW.THEGREATCOURSES.COM/5WKS

The Joy of Mathematics

Taught by Professor Arthur T. Benjamin
HARVEY MUDD COLLEGE

LECTURE TITLES

1. The Joy of Math—The Big Picture
2. The Joy of Numbers
3. The Joy of Primes
4. The Joy of Counting
5. The Joy of Fibonacci Numbers
6. The Joy of Algebra
7. The Joy of Higher Algebra
8. The Joy of Algebra Made Visual
9. The Joy of 9
10. The Joy of Proofs
11. The Joy of Geometry
12. The Joy of Pi
13. The Joy of Trigonometry
14. The Joy of the Imaginary Number *i*
15. The Joy of the Number *e*
16. The Joy of Infinity
17. The Joy of Infinite Series
18. The Joy of Differential Calculus
19. The Joy of Approximating with Calculus
20. The Joy of Integral Calculus
21. The Joy of Pascal's Triangle
22. The Joy of Probability
23. The Joy of Mathematical Games
24. The Joy of Mathematical Magic

The Joy of Mathematics
Course no. 1411 | 24 lectures (30 minutes/lecture)

SAVE $185

DVD ~~$254.95~~ NOW $69.95
+$10 Shipping, Processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee
Priority Code: 51883

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

A Cure for the Housing Blues

The cramdown solution.

BY IKE BRANNON

Nearly 25 percent of homeowners hold mortgages for more than their houses are worth.

The biggest impediment to economic growth is the housing overhang, a fact that's beginning to be acknowledged by both parties. In the last three weeks Glenn Hubbard and Martin Feldstein—two former Council of Economic Advisers chairmen for Republican presidents—published op-eds with plans for writing off some portion of the mortgage debt for homeowners whose mortgage exceeds the value of the house, a status typically referred to as being "under water." Meanwhile, the Obama administration last week chimed in with its latest plan to spur refinancing by homeowners whose underwater loans are held by Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, hoping that lower interest rates will keep these borrowers from defaulting.

Ike Brannon is director of economic policy at the American Action Forum.

The weight of the collapsed housing sector on the economy means that no amount of stimulus, whether a short-term Keynesian fix or a conventional pro-growth package, will fix this problem. Not only are nearly 25 percent of homeowners holding mortgages for more than their houses are worth, there are also nearly four million households that have stopped making mortgage payments at all. In the time it takes—usually one to two years, sometimes longer—for the legal system to put them into foreclosure and make them move out, these families (and the mortgage holders) find themselves in an uneasy limbo: The mortgage holders aren't getting any money and the families aren't spending all that much either, with the result being that consumption, lending, and the overall economy stagnate.

We don't need another stimulus to fix what ails the economy. We need to fix the housing market. And the way to do that is to allow a mortgage cramdown in the context of a personal bankruptcy. Put simply, someone who owes $450,000 on a house worth $300,000 isn't going to be helped that much by a lower interest rate. He would be helped—as would the housing market and the larger economy—if the lender could be compelled in a bankruptcy proceeding to write down the loan amount to $300,000, which is all the lender would recover in any case were it to foreclose on and then auction off the property.

BANKRUPTCY MADE SIMPLE

A person who files for bankruptcy can choose to do either a standard or so-called Chapter 7 bankruptcy (named for that portion of the bankruptcy code), or he can file for bankruptcy reorganization, also known as a Chapter 13 bankruptcy. Under the latter plan the debtor and his lawyer present a list of his assets and debts to the judge and bankruptcy trustee, acting on behalf of the creditors, and they negotiate a repayment plan. Such plans usually cover three to five years, with the trustee receiving periodic payments from the debtor and doling them out to his various creditors.

Completing a Chapter 13 bankruptcy plan discharges most debts even if they are not paid in full, save for taxes, student loan debt, and a few other exceptions. Among the most important exceptions are home mortgages. A bankruptcy judge is not allowed to reduce the value of a home mortgage.

In this, a primary mortgage is unique among debt that is secured by some sort of collateral. If the debtor has a car, a boat, or a second home for which he owes more than the current market value of the asset, the judge can reduce the amount of the debt to the market value. It is in both sides' interest for the judge to have this power: Otherwise, debtors who file for bankruptcy would simply relinquish title to the property, and the creditor would then have to go and find a

MARK AVERY / REUTERS / LANDOV

Four essential reference books worth $204.90

Yours for only $19.95

from The Folio Society

REFERENCE BOOKS are the cornerstone of every library. With this very special introductory offer from The Folio Society, you can enjoy the luxury of a personal collection of essential books for only $19.95 (including shipping & handling).

Packed with fascinating facts and information, these four indispensable books will enable you to look up almost anything you might wish to know and can be yours at a saving of $184.95 on the publishers' prices. Plus, you'll receive a deluxe set of *The Compact Oxford Dictionary and Thesaurus* in bonded leather, worth $104, which is yours FREE whatever you decide about joining.

The Folio Society does not send you unsolicited books or 'choices of the month.' You simply choose four books from our catalogue to fulfill your membership.

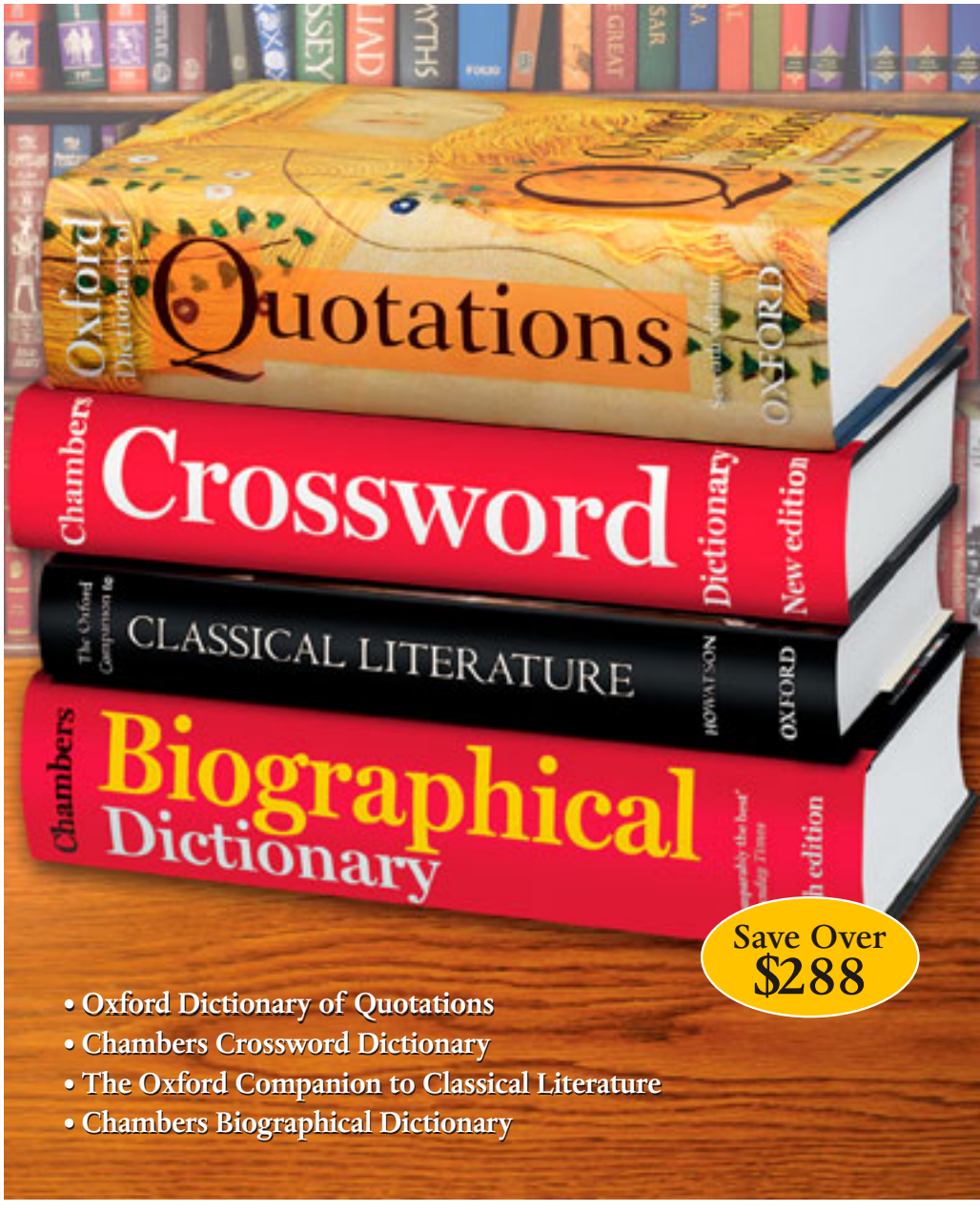
Our current publications include modern and classic fiction, poetry, history and eye-witness accounts, notable biographies, humour, legend, and authoritative books on the classical world. Prices start at $37.95, and many of our books are less than $50. Our books are not available in bookstores.

The Folio Society, established in England in 1947, publishes books for readers who wish to experience the pleasure of owning a collection of fine editions to enjoy now and in the future.

Why not start your collection now? Simply fill out and return the coupon today or call Toll Free (24 hours) 1-800-353-0700.

The Folio Society Promise
*You will **never** be sent a book you have not ordered.*

THE FOLIO SOCIETY
P.O. Box 8018, Aston, PA 19014
www.joinfolio.com

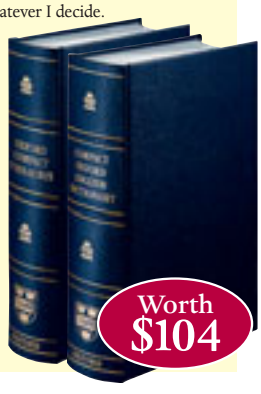


Plus your FREE gift

☐ **YES,** I am replying within 14 days and claim my free deluxe Oxford reference books which are mine to keep whatever I decide.
(please tick box)

The Compact Oxford English Dictionary and ***The Oxford Compact Thesaurus***

Two essential reference books in blue bonded leather with gold blocking



Reply Today and Save Over $288

To: The Membership Secretary, The Folio Society,
P.O. Box 8018, Aston, PA 19014. Fax:1-610-532-9001.

ORDER TOLL FREE 1-800-353-0700

Please accept my application for FREE trial membership of The Folio Society and send me the *Four-Volume Reference Set*, together with the Folio catalogue and my FREE deluxe set of Oxford reference books. If I agree to purchase at least 4 books from your catalogue I will be billed only $19.95 for the *Four-Volume Reference Set* (including shipping and handling). If I am not satisfied – for any reason – I will return the introductory set within 21 days. My membership will be cancelled and I will owe nothing. I understand that as a member of The Folio Society, I have the right to return any book if I am not completely satisfied. *The Oxford Compact Dictionary and Thesaurus* are mine to keep whatever I decide.

Title Name Date
BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Address

City State Zipcode

Please allow 21 days for delivery. Applications subject to approval. Send no money now.

Promo=P0CX80

buyer, at some cost to him. Writing down the value of the debt gets the creditor the same amount of money as if he had taken possession himself and sold it, but without the hassle.

Allowing such a cramdown for a mortgage on a primary residence would require us to acknowledge a simple fact: The person who owes $450,000 on a house that is currently worth $300,000 is almost assuredly never going to pay the full amount he owes; eventually, he will either be granted a loan modification to reduce the principal or else he will walk away—no matter how much we try to shame him into "doing the right thing." The cost of walking away in most states amounts to little more than the inability to buy another house in the next five years, since most mortgages are in practice nonrecourse loans, meaning that the debtor does not have to make up any deficiency if he returns the house to the mortgage holder and it sells for less than the mortgage.

At the moment, mortgage loan modifications are entirely at the discretion of the lender. But thanks to the disintermediation of the mortgage market in recent decades, negotiations between the mortgage holder and the debtor can be nearly impossible to initiate, despite a plethora of administration programs designed to ameliorate this problem. (The mortgage holder is typically an investment bank or some other investor who holds it along with a host of other mortgages in a mortgage-backed security.)

Ironically, one of the arguments offered for exempting home mortgage loans from being crammed down in the 1978 bankruptcy reform was that the community banks and savings and loans that issued most home loans were well-positioned—and had an incentive—to negotiate with a financially troubled homeowner to avoid foreclosure. As that is no longer the case, bankruptcy judges should be given the power to impose cramdowns.

FAIRNESS

Republicans typically react to suggestions of mortgage cramdowns with indignation, arguing that it sets a bad precedent and rewards speculators and people who didn't play by the rules. There is some truth to this: For instance, economists Michael LaCour-Little, Vincent Yao, and Eric Rosenblatt find that a good portion of foreclosed homeowners in Southern California bought their homes well before the peak of the price bubble and managed to extract a considerable amount of equity from the home before the crash. They estimate that the typical return on equity for those with foreclosed houses approaches 40 percent—not a bad haul.

However, should meting out fiscal justice trump economic expediency? It's a question that policymakers have asked themselves previously. In his book *The Banking Panics of the Great Depression*, Elmus Wicker notes that the Federal Reserve maintained a tight monetary policy well into the 1930s that they knew would lead to the collapse of banks throughout the country, which in turn would crater the economy. Nevertheless, they held fast to this path not just because of a Darwinian economic perspective but also because of a widely held notion (at least within the Fed) that helping these troubled banks would be rewarding failure.

Do we continue to insist that the people who made bad bets in the housing market get punished for their wagers, or tackle our economic malaise?

Phillip Swagel, assistant secretary for policy at Treasury in the latter years of the Bush administration, wrote in a paper for the Brookings Institution that his old bosses rejected any cramdown because they feared its subsequent impact on the lending markets for middle-income households. Resorting to a cramdown, they reasoned, would lead mortgage issuers to tighten credit standards as well as demand higher down-payments. It's safe to say that this ship has sailed. Cramdown or no cramdown, credit standards are tightening and higher down-payments will be the rule.

WHO GETS A BREAK?

Ultimately, America has a choice: Do we continue to insist that the people who made bad bets in the housing market get punished for their wagers, or do we focus on creating policies that have the best chance of ending our economic malaise? Once we decide that the latter should take precedence, the next step is easy: We allow mortgage cramdowns to occur in the context of a Chapter 13 bankruptcy reorganization.

By doing it in the context of bankruptcy, we set a high bar on who takes advantage of a cramdown: Someone who is marginally under water is not going to want to go through the proctology exam that comes with a Chapter 13 bankruptcy or to pay the thousands of dollars of lawyers' fees to file. But someone $100,000 in the hole is likely to explore the possibility—exactly the incentive we want to create.

The worry that mortgage-holders are going to take a hit is valid: While granting mortgage relief through bankruptcy minimizes the costs of fixing the housing market, the government may still find it necessary to provide some sort of relief to various holders of mortgage-backed securities, which would be politically unpalatable but much less expensive than the president's proposed $447 billion stimulus plan, while having the advantage of actually providing real stimulus.

But the true cost of a cramdown will not be that significant: At the end of the day the investors holding mortgages aren't likely to get more for their mortgages than what the houses are currently worth. So the real question is who should live in those houses? The people now in them, or the people who would buy them for pennies on the dollar after the wrenching and complicated ordeal of a foreclosure and auction?

When I was a newly minted Ph.D. economist I was asked to meet with my hometown bank on behalf

of a lawyer who had some clients who needed auto loans and had recently filed for bankruptcy. The terms we proposed seemed sensible: a loan for half the value of the automobile, secured by the car itself, at an interest rate 50 percent higher than what the bank charged its normal customers.

The bank refused, saying they worried that these clients would file for bankruptcy again and stiff them. Impossible, I pointed out—someone can file only once every six years, and besides that, the car would deed to the bank—insured for its full amount—should the client cease payment. And these people were now debt-free, making them good bets for at least the three-year term of the loan. All had steady jobs.

The bank president responded by asking me to leave his office, explaining tersely that it was not a matter of profits or losses—it was a moral matter, and that the bank didn't feel comfortable having clients who had previously reneged on their debts, even if such a stance cost the bank profits.

I left the premises and sold my stock in the bank shortly thereafter. The bank no longer exists, a casualty of a previous downturn, exacerbated by what I imagine were a host of poor decisions made for reasons other than maximizing returns to the shareholders.

Appeals to morality are a poor excuse for inaction. After four years of declining home prices and concomitantly negligible economic growth, it is time to abandon talk of stimulus plans and focus on fixing the housing market. Once we make that transition, the relevant question is how to most quickly and at the least cost reduce the number of homes either being foreclosed on or likely to be foreclosed on because they are so far under water. Allowing mortgage cramdowns in bankruptcy reorganization offers a way out for homeowners who are hopelessly under water and for lenders who are putting off the day of reckoning. Everyone who wants an economic recovery would benefit from this change in our bankruptcy code. ♦

Mitt Romney, Telemarketer

The frontrunner takes a turn on the GOP phone bank. BY MICHAEL WARREN

Candidate Romney at the Fairfax County Republican headquarters

NEWSCOM

Fairfax, Va.

Mitt Romney's campaign stop here looks like that of a frontrunner—maybe even a future president. City police are blocking off part of the highway as cars of rubberneckers creep along past the spectacle. A band of highly energetic volunteers brandish signs on the sidewalk in front of the Fairfax County Republican party headquarters, while more police in sunglasses, doing their best Secret Service impressions, peer out at the road stone-faced.

Around the back of the building, organizers have placed a small platform and a microphone from which the candidate will speak. The media have responded in kind by setting up 17 camera tripods in a semicircle opposite the stage. There's even a journalist from Sweden here. As the moment approaches, the crowd of supporters and reporters swells. Mitt Romney appears to be, to bowdlerize Joe Biden, a big freaking deal.

At 10:15 A.M., the Detroit-born Romney arrives, appropriately enough, in a silver Chevrolet Suburban. He's in blue slacks and a white shirt, sleeves rolled up, with a light blue tie. His hair is somewhere between casually ruffled and exquisitely coiffed. He shakes hands with supporters as he walks the makeshift rope line.

"How are you?" Romney says. "Good to see you. Thank you for being here this morning."

I've blended into the crowd a bit, and when he reaches me, I try to ask him a question.

Michael Warren is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

"Governor, do you support the—"

He notices the pen and pad, pivoting away before I can finish. Back to the handshakes.

There may be no reason for Romney to answer many questions from the press at this point. It's becoming increasingly clear, we're told, that Romney is going to be the GOP nominee. In an October 23 column titled "The Inevitable Nominee," Ross Douthat of the *New York Times* writes that "Romney's path to the nomination is more wide open than for any nonincumbent in decades." Recent articles at ABCNews.com and in the *Washington Post* ask the experts, "Is Mitt Romney inevitable?" The experts (inevitably) answer "yes."

Indeed, the former governor of Massachusetts has been polling steadily well in the GOP primary, even as rivals like Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry have risen and fallen. According to the RealClearPolitics average of the national polls, Romney is statistically tied with Herman Cain, the latest pretender to the top spot. A recent collection of polls by CNN and *Time* show Romney either in the lead or tied for it in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Florida—the 2012 primary season's first four contests.

But Iowa and the rest are still two months away, and while Romney hasn't dropped in the polls, he hasn't risen in them, either. Roughly 24 percent of Republicans nationwide want Romney as their nominee, which means 76 percent are open to someone else. Romney has a popularity deficit.

That could explain why he's appearing here with Virginia governor Bob McDonnell, the nation's most popular sitting governor, with approval ratings nearing 70 percent. He's also a conservative running an important swing state, one that Barack Obama won by 7 points in 2008 after Virginia had voted for Republicans in 10 straight presidential elections. For Romney, whom conservatives in the party just don't seem to trust, Bob McDonnell is a good friend to have.

McDonnell and Romney are visiting the Fairfax County GOP to rally volunteers ahead of Virginia's elections on November 8. Republicans are hoping to build on their statewide victories in 2009 by capturing the state senate this year.

After a closed-door meeting in the office upstairs, the two men join Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling in the basement to see the volunteers working the phones. The anxious press crams into the room to watch Romney himself make a call to a Fairfax County voter named Salvatore, who isn't home. Romney leaves a message.

"Salvatore, this is Mitt Romney calling," Romney says. "It really is." The volunteers laugh and cameras flash.

"I wanted to see if I could get you to vote for every Republican on the ballot this year," he continues. "We need your help to get the senate back in Republican hands. Thanks, my friend, all the best."

Romney has made appearances for McDonnell and the Virginia GOP before. He campaigned for the Republican ticket here in 2009, something McDonnell remembers.

"Governor Romney was incredibly helpful to the lieutenant governor and I back in 2009," McDonnell says. "He came here several times and campaigned for us, got us a lot of press. He worked for us. He helped us raise money."

It's no secret that Romney would love McDonnell's support. Bolling is already on board as the chairman of Romney's campaign in Virginia. An endorsement isn't expected here and now, but McDonnell gets awfully, painfully close.

"As a governor, [Romney] knows how to make the tough decisions, how to balance budgets, how to create jobs," McDonnell says. "I think a governor or a former governor ought to be the next president of the United States."

It's everything but an endorsement, and the sting only sharpens when a reporter later asks Romney if he's asked McDonnell for his endorsement. "I've asked every governor for their endorsement!" Romney answers cheerily, while behind him McDonnell shifts his feet.

Perhaps it's Romney's ambiguity on policy that makes the Virginia governor reluctant. Asked by one reporter about his thoughts on Rick Perry's tax plan, Romney remains cautiously vague, touting his capital gains tax cuts for the middle class and not much else.

"I indicate in my proposal for the nation that I think if I'm fortunate enough to get to Washington, I'll lay out some additional ways to bring the tax code, make it more flat, simpler, fairer," Romney says. "I think any proposal has to simplify the tax code."

Or consider his response to the question du jour. The previous day, Romney had been campaigning in Ohio with Republican governor John Kasich. When asked if he supported a ballot measure to maintain a ban on collective bargaining for public employees, an issue Kasich has championed, Romney said that he would not comment. His GOP rivals seized on his refusal, claiming Romney was soft on public sector unions. But when a reporter in Virginia asks him to clarify, he says it was just a misunderstanding.

"I'm sorry if I created any confusion in that regard," Romney says. "I fully support Governor Kasich's —I think it's called Question 2 in Ohio. I fully support that. Actually, I think, on my website, I think back as early as April, I laid out that I support Question 2 and Governor Kasich's effort to restrict collective bargaining in Ohio in the ways it's described." So that's settled.

There is a moment near the end of the press availability session that shows that, despite the polls and the pundits, Romney himself may recognize the race for the Republican nomination is not his quite yet. Asked if he has considered McDonnell as a running mate, Romney shakes his head to dismiss the idea.

"It would be presumptuous for anyone in my position, so far from the nomination, to start thinking about who might be a vice president," he says. ♦

Hidden Persuaders

The unheralded gains of the pro-life movement

By Fred Barnes

Opponents of abortion are rarely interviewed on television these days. "It's much harder to get on TV than it used to be," says Charmaine Yoest, who heads Americans United for Life. Bookers of guests for news shows tell her, "We don't want to talk about abortion. We're tired of it."

Perhaps the mainstream media are simply incapable of covering more than one social issue at a time. For the moment, the conflict over gay marriage and gays in the military is monopolizing media coverage, TV and print alike. Abortion is barely an afterthought.

Charmaine Yoest

Marjorie Dannenfelser

There's an upside to this for the pro-life movement, a benefit of benign neglect. Foes of gay rights are now seen by the press as fighting the bad war, roughly analogous to Vietnam. Pro-lifers are waging the good war, like World War II. "You get much less grief fighting against abortion than you do fighting to preserve traditional marriage," says Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the Susan B. Anthony List.

If only the media knew. They have missed the most important breakthrough in the struggle over abortion in years: the resurgence of the pro-life crusade. The press elite was beaten on the story by publications such as *Christianity Today* ("The New Pro-Life Surge") and *Baptist Press* ("5 Reasons the Pro-Life Movement is Winning").

That the pro-life movement is bigger is a given. It's also younger, increasingly entrepreneurial, more strategic in its thinking, better organized, tougher in dealing with allies and enemies alike, almost wildly ambitious, and more relentless than ever.

All that is dwarfed by an even bigger change. Pro-lifers have captured the high moral ground, chiefly thanks to advances in the quality of sonograms. Once fuzzy, sonograms now provide a high-resolution picture of the unborn child in the womb. Fetuses have become babies.

Abortion advocates were among the first to understand how this would alter the debate. Two pro-choice leaders, Kate Michelman and Frances Kissling, acknowledged three years ago that "antiabortionists" had gained a significant advantage. Supporters of abortion, they wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, "have had a hard time dealing with the increased visibility of the fetus." To "regain the moral high ground," they must deal with "a world that is radically changed from 1973," when the *Roe* v. *Wade* decision legalized abortion nationwide.

Pro-life groups, unlike advocates of easy access to abortion, have proved adept in accommodating to this new world. They've begun piling up successes. In 2011 alone, 24 states have enacted 52 new restrictions on abortion. Five now require an ultrasound before an abortion, two insisting that the screen be viewable by the mother. Four bar abortions after the baby is able to feel pain (at approximately 20 weeks). Eight have opted out of Obamacare. Five ban abortions by webcam (in which a doctor, not in person but videoconferencing with the mother, prescribes pills to induce abortion). Six trimmed or eliminated funds for Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider. Texas led with a $64 million cut.

The wave of state action shouldn't be all that surprising. Republicans gained control of 26 legislatures in the 2010 election. Once advised to drop the abortion issue or suffer a certain decline, the GOP is now the nation's pro-life party—and isn't declining. In Congress, the House has passed two pro-life bills this year, one outlawing abortion subsidies in Obamacare, the other imposing a blanket ban on taxpayer-funded abortions. Both measures were deep-sixed in the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Three pro-life trends have spiked in 2011. The first is

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

YOEST, AP / PABLOMARTINEZMONSIVAIS; DANNENFELSER, NEWSCOM

the rise in opposition to abortion among young people. The under-30 cohort was the most pro-choice in the 1970s, second most in the 1980s and 1990s. Now they're "markedly less pro-choice" than any other age group, scholars Clyde Wilcox and Patrick Carr have written. "Clearly, something is distinctive about the abortion attitudes of the Millennial Generation of Americans."

Indeed there is. Millennials haven't grown more religious, politically conservative, or queasy about gay rights. Nor do they go out of their way to vote for pro-life candidates. But they tend to see abortion as a human rights violation. Thus their resistance to abortion is gradually increasing.

You can see a manifestation of this generational shift at the March on Washington each January 22, the anniversary of the *Roe* v. *Wade* ruling. For years, the marchers were geezers, initially Catholics, then aging Protestants too. In the past few years, the march has been dominated by teenagers and people in their 20s, often carrying infants.

The second trend is the explosive growth of refuges for pregnant but unmarried women. These safe houses go by a multitude of names: Crisis Pregnancy Center, Pregnancy Resource Center, Pregnancy Health Center, Pregnancy Care Center, or simply Pregnancy Center. In Northern Virginia, Jim Wright, formerly in the commercial real estate business, calls the center he started Birthmothers.

Millennials haven't grown more religious, politically conservative, or queasy about gay rights. But they tend to see abortion as a human rights violation. Thus their resistance to abortion is increasing.

They all do the same thing, nurturing single women during their pregnancy and recommending against abortion. The results are one-sided: 80 to 90 percent of the women who have sonograms at pregnancy centers choose to have their baby.

Today there are nearly three times as many of these centers (2,300) as abortion facilities (800 to 850). One reason for the disparity is that women stay for months in pro-life centers, but only briefly in abortion clinics. The Care Net network reflects the growth: 550 centers in 1999, 1,130 today.

Trend number three: the rejuvenation of old pro-life groups and the sprouting of new ones. Kristan Hawkins was a political appointee at the Department of Health and Human Services in 2006 when she responded to an ad for the newly created job of executive director of Students for Life. The group had been around for two decades, operating with a minimal staff and fewer than 300 chapters. Now Students for Life has 637 chapters, a full-time staff of 10, and a dozen regional coordinators. "We're almost everywhere," assistant director Tina Whittington says.

Students for Life has branched out. There are Black Students for Life, Medical Students for Life, Business Students for Life, and so on. The goal for its field coordinators is to start 10 new pro-life groups per semester and 20 a year. Students for Life has been revitalized.

David Bereit was a pharmaceutical sales rep when Planned Parenthood built a clinic in his hometown of Bryan/College Station, Texas. He organized a protest. That was just the beginning. In 2004, he created 40 Days for Life, which promotes prayer vigils outside abortion clinics. He began with a single vigil in downtown College Station. Bereit says the number of abortions in his county fell 28 percent that year. By his count, his group has recruited 400,000 people who participate in hundreds of vigils in nearly 400 cities.

When he started 40 Days, "a lot of wind had left the sails of the pro-life groups," he told me. "Now I see enthusiasm and hope I haven't seen in years. The tide is turning against Planned Parenthood and abortion providers."

In the case of Planned Parenthood (PP), that's true. Killing the federal government's subsidy of PP has long been a top priority for pro-life groups. In 2009, there were 1.2 million abortions in the United States. PP was responsible for 332,278 of them. About one-third of PP's $1 billion budget comes from government grants and contracts.

But until Lila Rose came along, PP had proved to be an elusive target. The group said that none of the federal money subsidized abortions, an implausible claim. No one in the pro-life movement believes it. Money, after all, is fungible.

Rose, 23, is the newest pro-life star, the exception to the rule that the abortion issue attracts no media attention. (Since Faye Wattleton left PP in 1992, the abortion side has had no stars.) One of eight children of a Catholic family in San Jose, California, Rose became an antiabortion activist at age 14 and continued as a student at UCLA. At 15, she formed Live Action, which produces hidden camera videos exposing PP's willingness to offer abortions to underage girls while avoiding their obligation to report cases where the pregnancies came from statutory rape.

"Lila created the moment," Dannenfelser says. Rose did so by posing as a teenage prostitute impregnated by her much older pimp at a PP clinic in New Jersey. The clinic's manager explained how she could get an abortion by lying about her age. The video became a sensation on the Internet. More important, it was viewed by Republican representative Cliff Stearns of Florida, chairman of a House subcommittee on oversight and investigations.

Stearns was appalled at PP's "manipulating this young 15-year-old girl to get an abortion." He was also impressed by a report on PP by Americans United for Life (AUL). It cited eight areas of "scandal and abuse," including misuse of federal funds, "failure to report criminal child sexual abuse," and aiding people involved in prostitution and sexual trafficking.

On September 15, Stearns launched the first-ever congressional probe of Planned Parenthood. In a letter to Cecile Richards, the embattled PP president, he said his panel has "questions about the policies in place and actions undertaken" by PP and its affiliates, the handling of federal funds, and compliance with "restrictions on the funding of abortion." He asked for an extensive collection of audits and documents.

Though Democrats were furious at Stearns, he's treated the PP issue cautiously. He sought the approval of Fred Upton of Michigan, the energy and commerce committee chairman, before sending the letter. And public hearings will be held only if House speaker John Boehner agrees, Stearns told me.

Carol Tobias

Lila Rose

As you might expect, Rose is excited by the impact of her incriminating videos at PP clinics. "You cannot argue with the videos," she says. "They speak the truth, and they are indisputable." Young people "are getting the truth about abortion in ways they couldn't before. This is a movement that is just beginning and can't be stopped."

Look across the alley from the fifth floor office of the Susan B. Anthony List (SBA) in downtown Washington and you'll see two placards. They've been posted on the window of the office of a labor union in the adjacent building—for the SBA crowd to see. One says "Stop the War on Women," the other, "Don't Take Away My Cancer Screenings."

These are the response of Planned Parenthood and its allies to attacks on what PP and the abortion industry actually do. Abortion? Forget it. (PP says it mostly does medical tests, and abortions are a sideline.) The "A" word is almost never uttered now by anyone connected to the abortion industry, which claims merely to support "a woman's right to choose." Choose what? They don't say. Their opponents aren't "pro-lifers," but anyone who is "anti-choice."

The language gymnastics and euphemisms reflect the forlorn condition of the pro-choice flock. They're worn out. Many are in despair. Nancy Keenan, president of NARAL Pro-Choice America, told *Newsweek* of her anguish as she watched last year's March on Washington. "I just thought, my gosh, they are so young," she said. "There are so many of them, and they are so young." Today, zeal and confidence and perseverance in the abortion battle are all on the antiabortion side. "There are more pro-lifers now, and they're more determined," says Carol Tobias, president of National Right to Life.

The abortion lobby has found its own target, the pregnancy centers. The aim is to compel centers to post large signs disclosing they don't offer abortions or make referrals to places like PP that do. The assumption behind the effort is that many women go to the centers for an abortion, then get talked out of it.

This offensive has gotten off to a rocky start, partly because lawyers for the centers have mostly succeeded in blocking the posting requirement. Austin, Texas, is one of the few jurisdictions with a mandate in effect. In the state of Washington, abortion supporters sought an extreme version of a posting law. It would require the no-abortions-here message to be posted in at least five languages. "It didn't pass, but it was a battle," says Jeanneane Maxon of Care Net.

The pro-choicers also have pursued a quibble with the Susan B. Anthony List. They argue that Anthony, the leading 19th-century suffragette, was not opposed to abortion and that the SBA "cherry picked" a few quotes as evidence she was. True, Anthony concentrated on winning the right to vote for women. But SBA cites this forthright statement in an Anthony editorial:

> Guilty? Yes. No matter what the motive, love of ease, or a desire to save from suffering the unborn innocent, the woman is awfully guilty who commits the deed. It will burden her conscience in life, it will burden her soul in death; but oh, thrice guilty is he who . . . drove her to the desperation which impelled her to the crime.

Challenging SBA and pregnancy centers shows a bit of resourcefulness by pro-choicers, but those are essentially rear guard actions. They can't match the

PHOTOS: NEWSCOM

right-to-life movement's imagination and entrepreneurship. Michael New, a soft-spoken political science professor at the University of Michigan-Dearborn, is a leading pro-life thinker. He has studied the effect of state-enacted restrictions on abortion over the past decade and found they reduce the number of abortions. New (Dartmouth B.A., Stanford Ph.D.) hasn't promoted his evidence through normal pro-life channels. Instead, he followed academic practice and submitted them for peer review.

That took three years, plus another year before his conclusions were published. He tested the impact of three restrictions: no public funding, parental involvement, and informed consent. He determined that all three reduced the abortion rate, particularly parental participation in the case of a minor. His article, "Analyzing the Effect of Anti-Abortion U.S. State Legislation in the Post-*Casey* Era," was published in the March issue of *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*.

New's article is hardly a page-turner. But his findings have been known to state legislators for several years, encouraging them to pursue limitations on abortion. He's now studying whether involvement of two parents is more effective than one and which pro-life restrictions are the most effective. As unlikely as it sounds, New has become a star of the movement. The abortion side lacks a Michael New.

Fetal pain is another issue that has invigorated the pro-life movement in recent years. Improved ultrasound revealed to doctors that at around 20 weeks an unborn child reacts visibly to pain. "All the neurological equipment is present at 20 weeks," according to Teresa Collett, a professor at the University of St. Thomas Law School in Minnesota and an expert on fetal pain. Fetal pain was recognized, Collett says, as an "independent basis for a state to protect the life of a child." In Nebraska last year, the first law was passed barring abortions after an unborn baby begins to sense pain. Mary Balch of National Right to Life (NRL) played a key role in drafting the Nebraska statute. Fetal pain laws won't have a dramatic lifesaving effect. Still, they're significant. The incremental strategy pursued by most pro-life groups is based on the idea that antiabortion laws, even if narrow, build on one another. Fetal pain laws focus on the suffering of the baby, an asset in opposing a woman's right to choose. And who in the pro-choice lobby is eager to gainsay the pain experienced by an unborn child? Dispute it and you'll come across as cruel.

The abortion lobby has found its own target, pregnancy centers. The aim is to compel centers to post large signs disclosing they don't offer abortions or make referrals to places that do.

The ultimate goal of pro-lifers remains what it's always been: overturning *Roe* v. *Wade*. They're reconciled to jumping through as many hoops as necessary to get there. Americans United for Life specializes in creating model antiabortion laws for states. It also has a strategic plan for "reversing *Roe*" or "rendering it obsolete." It starts with "saving babies now" and preparing states for the "day after *Roe*."

AUL isn't kidding about vitiating *Roe* without overturning it. The key is to burden the abortion industry with intrusive regulations. This amounts to using liberal means to produce a conservative result. "When you regulate something, you get less of it," a pro-life leader reminds me. So precise conditions at abortion clinics would be imposed, as Virginia did this year. New requirements for safety, bookkeeping, record-keeping, and reporting would be applied. That's not all. More laws limiting abortions would be needed, as would cultural efforts to shrink the demand for abortions.

The informal division of labor among pro-life groups leaves SBA with the conventional mission of electing candidates who are pro-life to Congress and defeating those who aren't. The group had a sterling record in 2010, unseating 15 of the 20 Democrats who claimed to oppose abortion but voted for Obamacare. Dannenfelser intends to raise the bar on what's expected from candidates SBA supports: no more toleration of candidates who are "rhetorically pro-life but not operationally pro-life."

In the tradition of its namesake, SBA promises in its campaign for next year to "defend the wave of pro-life women elected in 2010, add to their ranks, and defeat pro-abortion women running for office." By the way, four of the most enterprising and energetic pro-life groups—SBA, AUL, NRL, Live Action—are headed by women.

The big question today among pro-lifers is whether the movement has reached a turning point, with victory over abortion now inevitable. I'm dubious. AUL's Yoest isn't so sure either. She says pro-lifers have yet to win the argument that abortion, rather than empowering women, is harmful to them. New says America's permissive culture is a huge impediment to closing off any right to an abortion. And *Roe* v. *Wade* stands erect nearly 39 years after it was decided. Who can be sure of its fate?

But real gains have been achieved by the pro-life movement and many, many lives have been saved—in 2011 alone. And bigger gains are bound to come as more babies are spared the abortionist's knife. ♦

Defeat in Iraq

President Obama's decision to withdraw U.S. troops is the mother of all disasters

By Frederick W. Kagan, Kimberly Kagan, & Marisa Cochrane Sullivan

Iraq is not Vietnam. There are certainly analogies: the length and unpopularity of the wars; the late escalation and increase in forces; the counterinsurgency success that came after public support for the effort seemed already exhausted; the decision to abandon the effort and thus snatch failure from the jaws of possible victory; and the arguments about the irrelevance of the conflicts to the core interests of an America riven with internal strife and economic troubles.

But for all that, Iraq is not Vietnam. Because, unlike Vietnam, Iraq is at the center of two of the most pressing national security challenges facing America today—the growth of Iranian power and the fight against al Qaeda and its affiliates. The United States left Vietnam, and some but not all of the dominoes in the region did fall, but Southeast Asia per se became ancillary to American national security after 1975 and has remained so to this day. The symbolism of U.S. defeat and retreat from South Vietnam was extremely important, to be sure, and continues to shape both American and international narratives of U.S. power and self-definition. But the facts on the ground there ceased to matter much to the United States after Saigon finally fell. In contrast, the Iranian offensive to overrun what the American counterinsurgency accomplished will look very different from the 1975 conventional offensive in Vietnam, and it has begun instantly, without even a decent interval. As a symbol, America's withdrawal from Iraq will likely be similarly significant, but the facts on the ground in Iraq will continue to be centrally important to American national security for the foreseeable future. The United States can leave Iraq alone, but Iraq will not leave us alone.

Frederick W. Kagan is director of the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute. Kimberly Kagan is president of the Institute for the Study of War, where Marisa Cochrane Sullivan is deputy director.

THE COLLAPSE OF U.S. MIDDLE EAST STRATEGY

Two dramatic challenges to the security of the American homeland spring from the area around Mesopotamia—the threat of attack by terrorist groups, and the prospect of Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons. The recently revealed Quds Force plot to use Mexican drug cartels to conduct bombings on American soil demonstrates that the danger of terrorism emanating from the Middle East is cross-sectarian: Al Qaeda, primarily Sunni, is still in business, despite the administration's premature claims of success, while Iranian agencies (like the Quds Force) and proxies, primarily Shiite, are becoming more potent and immediate threats to the American homeland.

The U.S. abandonment of Iraq will almost certainly increase the sectarian violence that drove Iraq's Sunni Arabs to welcome the support of Al Qaeda in Iraq fighters. The seeds of renewed sectarian conflict are already being sown, both by the efforts of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki to build his Dawa party into something like a Shiite Baath party, and by indications that Sunni Arab leaders are rapidly losing faith that their participation in Iraq's government can benefit or even protect their communities. The renewal of sectarian conflict will push both sides back toward the extremes, opening the way for Al Qaeda in Iraq to reestablish itself and for Iranian proxy groups to dig themselves even deeper into Iraq. This time there will be no American forces to resist these developments.

U.S. strategy for preventing Iran's acquisition of nuclear weapons, moreover, has relied almost entirely on economic sanctions. The Iran-Iraq border runs for more than 900 miles. Saddam Hussein was more than content to participate, informally and indirectly, in sanctions against Iran, a neighbor he had invaded in 1980 and fought until 1988. In 1990 he invaded Kuwait, embroiling himself in a 13-year conflict with the United States and its allies that imposed even harsher sanctions on Iraq than had been imposed on Iran. But since 2003, the presence in Iraq of more than 100,000 American troops—not to mention some of the most ruthless and vicious urban fighting and road-mining the world has seen in decades—prevented Iraq from being used as a major portal through which Iran could circumvent sanctions. Now, all of those conditions have vanished, and Iraqis have already made it clear that they do not feel bound by our sanctions against Iran. Any strategy that relies on the economic isolation of Iran, then, has just been thoroughly vitiated for the first time since Ayatollah Khomeini seized power (and American hostages) in 1979. Our defeat in Iraq will require a fundamental reevaluation of America's strategy toward Iran.

American national security strategy on a central front in two conflicts is now a smoking ruin. It may be some time before the full weight of this defeat is apparent in newspapers or on television. Its effects will be felt increasingly, however, as America's leaders grapple with a rising and nuclearizing Iran and the reemergence of al Qaeda franchises in the Arab world.

Many, most prominently the White House, now argue that this denouement was made inevitable by the misbehavior or unreasonableness of the Iraqis. That argument is not merely false, but also fundamentally obscures serious errors in the Obama administration's policy toward Iraq. Those mistakes encouraged the failure of the negotiations to extend the U.S. troop presence, the failure of the Iraqi state, and the collapse of the fragile intersectarian accord that a great deal of blood had been shed to achieve. It is important to review the administration's errors for the historical record and for an understanding of both the state-of-play within Iraq today and the trends that threaten to unravel American strategy throughout the Middle East.

FORMING AN IRAQI GOVERNMENT

Iraq's 2010 parliamentary election was critical for securing and furthering political changes already underway after the security gains of the American surge in 2007-08. The emphatic anti-incumbent results of Iraq's provincial elections in January 2009 had raised a serious challenge to the popularity Prime Minister Maliki had earned by defeating the Shiite militias in Baghdad and Basra in 2008. Since then, he and numerous provincial governors and councils had failed to improve the quality of government for ordinary Iraqis. The defeat of incumbents had left room for new political parties, including those representing Sunni populations in vital provinces such as Nineveh. Nationalist, secular rhetoric characterized the provincial elections and continued to predominate in the summer and early fall of 2009. The Shiite parties had been unable to form an alliance—either with one another or with the Kurdish or Sunni parties—prior to the spring 2010 election, so there was no unified Shiite bloc, as there had been in the 2006 parliamentary election. This made it possible to imagine cross-sectarian political coalitions for the first time.

Cross-sectarian parties, government inclusive of minorities, a peaceful transfer of power, and secular political principles were thus all very much within Iraq's reach in the summer of 2009. But those possibilities were threatening to incumbents, many of whom sought to prevent change. Rather than protecting these delicate political trends, however, the United States adopted a hands-off posture during the lead-up to the March 2010 parliamentary election and the protracted period of government-formation that followed. The United States greatly diminished its own leverage and permitted political developments that both undermined its previous achievements and complicated efforts to negotiate the troop extension that was essential to U.S. national security interests.

The United States adopted a meek position, for example, on early, sectarian attempts to eliminate popular Sunni candidates in late 2009 and early 2010. The Iraqi political environment became highly charged when, on January 7, 2010, the Accountability and Justice Commission (AJC, informally known as the de-Baathification commission) announced a ban on roughly 500 candidates. The decision was highly controversial and shrouded in secrecy. The names of the banned candidates were not initially made public, nor were the methods of determining who was disqualified. Nor was it clear that the AJC was a legally constituted body that could make binding decisions on who ran for office. The move was especially controversial as the committee was led by two individuals, Ahmad Chalabi and Ali Faisal al-Lami, who were themselves candidates. Al-Lami had spent a year in U.S. custody for his links to Iranian-backed militia groups, and he'd been released only months before the announcement.

Vice President Biden visited Iraq at the height of the de-Baathification controversy in what many hoped was an effort to resolve the crisis. Yet, during his visit he said, "I want to make clear I am not here to resolve that issue [of the banned candidates]. This is for Iraqis, not for me. I am confident that Iraq's leaders are seized with this issue and are working for a final, just solution. . . . The United States

condemns the crimes of the previous regime, and we fully support Iraq's constitutional ban on the return to power of Saddam's Baath party." This unwillingness to push back against an overtly sectarian maneuver not only diminished U.S. standing, but also meant that the issue would continue to plague the electoral process.

The election—Iraq's second under the current constitution—took place on March 7. The voting was largely peaceful, with only sporadic violence meant to deter voters from heading to the polls. Turnout was high among Shiites, Sunnis, and Kurds. Many observers believed the race would be tight and come down to a contest between the two leading electoral coalitions—the State of Law list, a predominantly Shiite bloc led by Prime Minister Maliki and his Dawa party, and the Iraqiya list, a largely Sunni bloc led by former prime minister Ayad Allawi, a secular Shiite. Ultimately, Iraqiya came in first, with 91 seats, just 2 seats more than State of Law. The Iraqi National Alliance, a Shiite coalition comprising primarily the Sadrist Trend and other religious parties, came in third with 70 seats. The Kurdistani List, comprising the two main Kurdish parties, came in fourth with 57 seats. No bloc came close to winning the 163 seats needed to form a majority in the 325-member parliament. It seemed that a secular, cross-sectarian party with a significant Sunni contingent had won the privilege of trying to form a government.

The result surprised Prime Minister Maliki, who believed the election had been rigged in favor of Iraqiya. Maliki's State of Law coalition and other Shiite parties undertook a concerted campaign to alter the election results. While many groups made claims of electoral fraud, the Iraqi Appeals Court special judicial panel ordered a manual recount of votes only in Baghdad on April 19 in response to an appeal by State of Law. This move was made even though Iraq's electoral commission and international election monitors found little evidence to support Maliki's claims of fraud. Again, the United States proceeded as though the recount were strictly an Iraqi issue and the courts were operating in their proper, independent role rather than as servants of a political master, which was the reality.

One week after ordering a recount, the same special judicial panel upheld the AJC's ruling to disqualify several winning candidates on account of their alleged ties to the Baath party. This included several winners from Iraqiya. When asked about the politicization of the judiciary in the de-Baathification process, U.S. ambassador Christopher Hill said, "I would see this as a close election that has caused great strain and great challenges to all of Iraq's nascent

democratic institutions, and I would say the court system has not been immune to this challenge." But Hill did not repudiate the decision to ban the candidates.

In addition to the Baghdad recount and de-Baathification efforts, the Shiite blocs sought other means to alter the outcome of the vote, including a move to redefine Article 76 of the Iraqi constitution, which stipulates that the "largest bloc" has the first chance to select a prime minister and form a governing coalition. On March 25, the day before the final results were announced, Iraq's Federal Supreme Court issued the opinion that Article 76 could mean a coalition formed either before or after the election, giving a second chance to the Shiite blocs. In early May, the two main Shiite groups—Maliki's State of Law and the Iraqi National Alliance—announced the formation of a bloc later named the National Alliance. This move was widely seen as politically influenced, but allowed the National Alliance, with its 159 seats (just 4 shy of a majority), to be the largest bloc. Maliki had been laying the groundwork for such a ruling since the summer of 2009, as it became evident that he would not succeed in forming an alliance before the election. U.S. officials maintained a posture of noninterference and insisted they favored no bloc, but their unwillingness to resist Maliki and other Shiite parties' blatant manipulation of the political process through the courts was, in effect, an endorsement of Maliki—and was seen as such by many Iraqis, including some with whom we spoke at the time.

What did concern the Obama administration was the speedy formation of a government so that the drawdown to 50,000 troops and the cessation of combat operations could be achieved on schedule, by August 31, 2010. But as the process dragged on into the early summer, and as the number of U.S. troops fell by a combat brigade a month, administration officials decided that Maliki was the only candidate who could form a government. They also believed that the fastest way to achieve this was by facilitating an alliance between Maliki and Allawi in a "national partnership government." In an effort to appease Allawi and ensure Iraqiya's participation, U.S. officials pressed for the creation of a National Council for Higher Policies, which Allawi would head. This council, however, had no grounding in the constitution, and any effort to invest it with executive authority would have required a constitutional amendment, a virtually impossible move. Furthermore, the notion of a Maliki-Allawi alliance was at odds with political reality, as the two men were bitter rivals. U.S. support for Maliki also undercut attempts to find creative and viable alternatives to his remaining prime minister.

If U.S. efforts to broker a Maliki-Allawi partnership that summer were ineffective, the Iranians, by contrast, intervened decisively. In late September, Iran convinced Syrian president Bashar al-Assad to drop his support for Allawi in favor of Maliki. At the same time, the Iranians convinced Shiite populist Moktada al-Sadr to back Maliki, in exchange for concessions including extra ministerial positions for the Sadrist Trend. Sadr's support was instrumental in shifting momentum in Maliki's favor. Other parties, sensing that Maliki would emerge the victor and wanting to share in the spoils of government, soon lined up behind the prime minister.

Yet the question remained how to incorporate Allawi and Iraqiya into the government. U.S. officials, including Vice President Biden and even President Obama, tried several times to ask the Kurds to cede the presidency and make way for Allawi. The Kurds, offended, rebuffed them. Ultimately, Kurdistan Regional Government president Massoud Barzani gathered representatives from the main blocs together in Erbil and Baghdad and brokered a compromise that became known as the Erbil Agreement, whereby Maliki would retain the premiership, Allawi would chair the NCHP, and the Kurds would retain the presidency. This paved the way for the seating of the government in December 2010.

There has been little political progress in the 10 months since. The deep division within the large ruling coalition has made it all but impossible to reach consensus on key issues, such as selecting ministers of defense or the interior. Prime Minister Maliki took advantage of the deadlock to make himself acting head of both ministries and thus exercise de facto control over the entire security apparatus, without ministerial accountability or parliamentary oversight. The government is bloated and ineffective, as dozens of new ministries and positions were created in an effort to include all the major parties in the governing coalition. Maliki has used this period to consolidate control over the security and intelligence ministries. He has also successfully kept Iraqiya (especially Allawi's faction) from assuming the power it earned at the polls or even from serving as a check on his own power.

AMBIVALENT—OR INCOMPETENT—NEGOTIATIONS

The character of the Iraqi government complicated the negotiations to extend the U.S. military presence in Iraq. Most blocs privately favored keeping U.S. forces in Iraq for training. Yet it was difficult for any politician or party to champion an agreement publicly for fear of attacks from rival groups. Maliki made clear that he would not move on the issue without the support of a large majority of other political groups. Iraqiya, meanwhile, sought to use the issue to extract concessions from Maliki on the NCHP and the naming of the minister of defense.

The U.S. position on the troop extension was also

problematic. U.S. officials insisted that negotiations could not begin until the Iraqis formally asked the United States to stay. But this is not how most such negotiations unfold. Normally, private discussions precede any formal request. The insistence that the Iraqis ask first and talk later remained the common refrain of senior U.S. officials such as Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, who during his July 2011 visit told the Iraqis, "Dammit, make a decision." This hurt more than it helped.

During his visit, Panetta also pressed Maliki to name a minister of defense. The administration feared that without a minister, the negotiations over U.S. troops could not begin. But in reality, the decision on U.S. troops was always going to be taken up by Iraq's political leaders. By focusing on the side issue of naming a defense minister, U.S. policymakers lost precious time that could have been spent building confidence and consensus amongst Iraq's various political actors in favor of an extended U.S. presence.

The Obama administration made the negotiations even more difficult by choosing the most difficult path to securing immunities for U.S. troops. No one doubted the need to secure immunities, but according to a recent McClatchy article citing diplomats in Baghdad, when State Department lawyers presented the president with options for doing so, "Obama chose the most stringent, approval by Iraq's legislature of a new agreement, citing as precedent that the Iraqi parliament had approved the 2008 agreement." Requiring parliamentary approval set the bar far higher than Iraqis saw as realistic or achievable. It also may have been unnecessary, given the variety of status of forces agreements the United States has negotiated with other countries without parliamentary approval. Senior Iraqis, including Maliki himself, countered that a memorandum of understanding granting immunity was all that was required for a continued training mission.

The result of these complications was that serious negotiations to extend the security agreement did not begin in earnest until August 2011, a year after the drawdown to 50,000 troops and just months before the December 31 withdrawal deadline. By this time, many Iraqis had grown skeptical of the U.S. commitment to a partnership with Iraq. The fact that President Obama was not involved in the process gave politicians further reason to doubt U.S. intentions, as did leaks that the United States would keep only 3,000-5,000 troops in Iraq, far short of the 15,000-20,000 that the U.S. command in Iraq had requested. Iraqi politicians who might otherwise have resisted Iranian entreaties and threats no longer felt confident that the

United States had the willingness or capability to balance Iran. For those seeking to scuttle the agreement, the immunities issue proved the easiest means of doing so. When Iraqi politicians said in mid-October that U.S. forces would be granted no immunities at all, the talks ceased.

THE SHIITE REACTION—PURGES AND MILITANCY

Iraqi leaders have been remarkably quick to adjust to the reality of American abandonment, and their reactions show that they really had considered the American presence a meaningful check on sectarianism and the consolidation of a vengeful, authoritarian Shiite government.

Maliki has been working seriously to transform his Dawa party into a Shiite version of the Baath party since late 2009. He has been steadily replacing key officials with loyalists throughout the government, but particularly in security-related ministries like the intelligence services and the army. We have long had reports that Maliki was establishing a de facto requirement of Dawa party membership for those who would hold certain key positions. He supported the efforts of the AJC to remove from office even individuals explicitly protected by the Iraqi constitution because their past membership in the Baath party was either coerced or at low rank. The failure to complete the government, with the defense and interior ministries effectively in Maliki's hands, greatly facilitated these efforts.

Within days of President Obama's announcement of the U.S. withdrawal on October 21, political firings and arrests picked up, now amounting to a full-scale purge. Iraqi police sources report that roughly 200 people from provinces including Kirkuk, Diyala, Babel, Salahadin, and Basra have been arrested since October 24, all on charges of affiliation with the Baath party under Saddam and vague accusations of plotting to conduct terrorism within Iraq. It is clear from this reporting that many of those arrested had not held rank in the Baath party high enough to permit their legal arrest for that reason alone.

Even before Obama's announcement, the purge had reached the higher echelons of the Iraqi Army, with the forcing out of 14th Infantry Division commander General Abdul Aziz Noor Swady al Dalmy and Vice Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Joint Command Nasir Abadi. The removal of these two generals is particularly worrisome, not merely because it expresses Shiite vengefulness, but also because the two epitomized the Iraqi uniformed leadership that sought close relations with the United States and resisted Shiite militias. General Aziz has held Basra tenaciously against Iranian proxy militias since the city was cleared in early 2008. General Nasir has been a pro-American, secular, nonsectarian, and highly competent leader. These professionals posed little or no military or political threat to Maliki himself, but they did strongly oppose any turn by Baghdad toward Tehran.

The most recent purge in Saddam's home province of Salahadin has already sparked local resistance. On October 26 the Salahadin Provincial Council refused to hand over a number of detained former army officers and former Baath party members and subsequently voted to declare the province an autonomous administrative and economic region. These events are the culmination of a two-year contest between the Salahadin Provincial Council and Baghdad over changes to local security and government offices.

The purge, moreover, has not been confined to the security ministries. More than 100 faculty members and employees at Tikrit and Mosul universities have been fired. This comes after reports since June that Maliki's right-hand man, Ali al Adeeb, was conducting a mandatory survey as part of the "de-Baathification" process. Al Adeeb recently accused the former minister of higher education, Abd Dhiyab al Ajeely (a Sunni), of taking orders from Baathists.

Maliki is now arresting Iraqis simply for having been Baath party members under Saddam. This is exactly the kind of bid for exclusive Shiite control over the government that Iraq's Sunni Arabs have long feared would come when the United States left. Both Maliki's actions and the nascent resistance to them in Salahadin and elsewhere dramatically increase the likelihood of a return to sectarian civil war in Iraq.

IRAN TRIUMPHANT

Iranians and their allies have hastened to take credit for their victory over the United States. Much of the official Iranian reaction thus far has been somewhat cautious and focused on warning that the United States no doubt sought continued involvement in Iraq to Iran's detriment. Some Iranian senior military leaders have been more direct. The chairman of Iran's Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hassan Firouzabadi, for example, said that "American soldiers had no other choice than to leave Iraq, and this is the beginning of all American forces withdrawing from the region." A statement by the Basij militia, which played a central role in suppressing the protests in Iran following the 2009 presidential election, said that "the United States has no way out but to retreat from the region as the Middle East has become an exhibition of its failures." It spoke of a "Great Islamic Middle East" in which all "Muslim and freedom-seeking nations" would cooperate with Iran "to distance themselves from bankrupt powers." An Iranian foreign ministry spokesman attributed the pullout of U.S. military forces to the "resistance put up by the Iraqi people, government, and clerics. . . . If the

United States had been capable of maintaining its military presence in several parts of the world, U.S. officials would not have made such a decision."

The Iranians' repeated references to "resistance" are direct evocations of the Lebanese Hezbollah, which is always defined as a resistance force against Israeli aggression. Hezbollah was the model on which Sadr's organizations were based, with help from Lebanese Hezbollah leaders and fighters who had traveled to Iraq. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah told Iran's Press TV that the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq is a "historic defeat for the United States." He told the interviewer that "Iraqis owe this remarkable achievement to the resistance groups," adding that "U.S. troops would have stayed in the country if they had felt secure." And he likened the U.S. withdrawal to the withdrawal of Israeli forces from southern Lebanon.

Further evidence of the Iranian victory over the United States is the fact that Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani went to Tehran a week after Obama's announcement for only the second time in his presidency of the Kurdish Region. Barzani has historically been the Kurdish leader most staunchly opposed to Iran and inclined toward maintaining a strong partnership with the United States.

Sadr's reaction, on the other hand, indicates that he (and his Iranian handlers, no doubt) see this withdrawal as an opportunity to push even harder against any American presence in the region. As late as October 20, Sadr declared that a continued U.S. presence in Iraq of some sort might be acceptable under certain conditions. Three days later, and two days after Obama's speech, he said that even a significant American diplomatic presence would be an occupation. He called on his followers to continue their armed fight against American civilians in Iraq after the end of this year.

And there is another reason Sadr is now able to act with renewed confidence in his own position within the Iraqi political and religious order. Seventy-two hours after Obama's speech, the Iraqi Supreme Judicial Court issued a remarkable announcement. The court not only dismissed charges against Sadr for his involvement in the 2003 murder of Ayatollah Khoei, an act for which Sadr was directly

responsible. It actually asserted that there had never been any such charges, which is not true.

Ayatollah Khoei had been one of the most obvious candidates to succeed the aged Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, who heads the Shiite religious establishment in Najaf. Like Sistani and the other Najafi Shiite clerics, Ayatollah Khoei preached a vision of Shiite Islam at odds with the theocratic doctrine developed by Ayatollah Khomeini that serves as the religious basis for the Islamic Republic of Iran today. The Iraqi clerics' vision is characterized by the belief that, although the state must be run in accord with Islamic law, clerics themselves should play no direct role in government or politics—a view that is flatly at odds with the clerical dictatorship in Iran and that Iranian leaders have long seen as a threat to the principles on which their regime was founded.

The charges against Sadr, combined with his poor religious credentials, had hitherto made the prospect of inserting him into the Najafi clerical establishment, let alone having him succeed Sistani in some way, almost laughable to Iraqis. The official evaporation of the charges, combined with the clear ascendancy of Iran, make such a prospect very likely. If and when that happens, the last bastion of Shiism in the Middle East that rejects the Khomeini model of theocracy and champions a degree of separation between church and state will have fallen.

THE PRICE OF FAILURE

America will pay a high price for defeat in Iraq. Our global credibility is seriously damaged—it is surely no accident that the weekend after President Obama announced that we were abandoning Iraq, President Hamid Karzai said that Afghanistan would stand with Pakistan against a U.S. attack. Why not? The Iranian and Pakistani narratives all along have been that the Americans will ultimately abandon their allies to their fate, while the neighbors will be around to exact revenge. President Obama has just reinforced that narrative before all the world.

The United States will also pay a high moral price for this retreat. Tens of thousands of Iraqis sacrificed and put themselves and their families in enormous danger relying on the backing of the United States against our mutual enemies—al Qaeda and Iranian militias. The Maliki government, perhaps partially at the behest of the Quds Force, is now beginning to eliminate some of those people, and the trickle of blood and refugees will likely become a river. Yet another group of brave people who share America's core values and risked their lives to fight with us will conclude bitterly that Americans can never be trusted.

Iran will be strengthened in the region, and Iraq's traditional tensions with its Arab neighbors will suit Tehran's policies. The United States has worked tirelessly to maintain decent relations between Iraq and Kuwait, and to mediate between Baghdad and Riyadh. Iran has no similar interests, and will likely encourage Baghdad to pursue its territorial and financial disputes with Kuwait (not through direct armed conflict, of course) and to distance Iraq from Saudi Arabia. In place of a coalition of Arab states resisting Iranian expansion, we can expect the emergence of an Iran-Iraq-Syria axis as a counterweight and deterrent to any such coalition. If the Syrian regime should fall, Iraq could be a valuable replacement, but also a point of leverage for continued Iranian involvement in Syria and the Levant.

Above all, the war is not over even when that last American soldier leaves Iraq. Sadr's troops with Iranian support will continue to attack and probably kill our embassy personnel. Iran and its allies—now bolstered by militias and political groups that can function without hindrance in Iraq—will continue their explicit efforts to expel the United States from the Middle East entirely. Iran will gain free access to the world's trade through Iraq's cities, highways, ports, and banks, circumventing any sanctions the United States might painfully push through the U.N. Security Council. And the Shiite world will lose its leading advocate for a vision of Islam that is more compatible with Western ideals—and with the views of the overwhelming majority of Iraqi Shiites.

The return of an al Qaeda franchise to Iraq, finally, is all but certain. Al Qaeda in Iraq—which even today the Obama administration is loath to recognize as part of the al Qaeda movement despite irrefutable evidence to the contrary—has been trying to reestablish itself in the wake of the U.S. drawdown of surge troops since 2009, with limited success. The American retreat and the reemergence of sectarian conflict in Iraq will create fruitful ground for such a reestablishment. U.S. Special Forces and drones, now denied formal bases in Iraq, will be hard-pressed to develop the intelligence necessary to continue to degrade that organization, nor is it clear that they will be allowed to act as they see fit. Tehran is working to establish a U.S.-free Iraq, and will pressure Iraqis to resist American violations of their sovereignty, fearing Iraqi-American military partnership at any level. The likelihood is that al Qaeda will regain some sort of safe haven in Iraq, and the main pressure it will face will be renewed Shiite sectarian cleansing operations that will exacerbate internal conflict and regional tensions but will not eliminate al Qaeda itself.

Now that President Obama has perfected so many of the analogies between Vietnam and Iraq, we may well come to wish that Iraq, like Vietnam, were ultimately a sideshow. But Iraq is much more vital to our national security than Vietnam ever was. The United States will have to bear the burden of this defeat and its disastrous consequences for a long time to come. ♦

ALWAYS REMEMBER

Official United States Mint Release

The United States Mint has struck this beautiful medal to memorialize the tenth anniversary of the September 11th tragedies and to honor the dedicated military personnel who have served and sacrificed in the challenging times that followed.

The beautiful hardbound America's Heroes offers an illustrated account of American military service during this time, and comes with a special case to display and protect the medal.

The book and coin capsule are exclusive limited editions not available anywhere else. The U.S. Mint shall donate a portion of proceeds to the 9-11 Memorial Fund. Dealer to contribute 100% of net profits to the Wounded Warriors Alliance *(www.WoundedWarriorsAlliance.org)*

This stunning medal is struck by the United States Mint in .999 fine silver and certified perfect PF-70 condition by PCGS - the top name in independent coin grading. It is attractively displayed in a case also containing a copy of the book, America's Heroes.

$159.00

VISA MasterCard DISCOVER AMERICAN EXPRESS

portion of U.S. Mint proceeds to benefit 9-11 Memorial Fund

100% Net Dealer Profit to benefit Dave Roever's

WOUNDED WARRIORS ALLIANCE

www.WoundedWarriorsAlliance.org

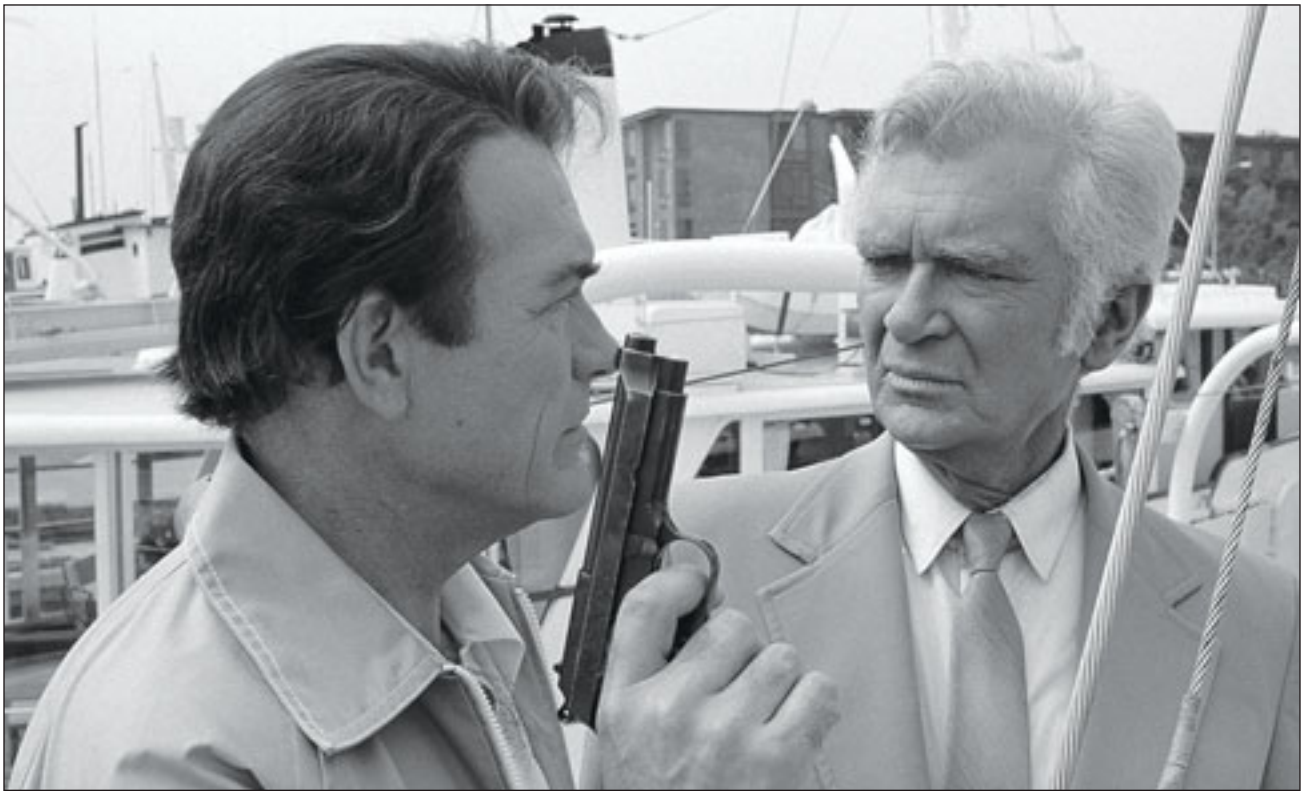
Perfect holiday gift for everyone

Operators available 24 hours a day 10-day satisfaction guarantee

800-781-2090

INTERNATIONAL PRECIOUS METALS
www.preciousmetals.com/wtc

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS



Carl Betz (left), Buddy Ebsen in 'Barnaby Jones' (1973)

Unchanging Channels

A look at television's insular universe.

BY TEVI TROY

There is a venerable tradition of conservative books on Hollywood's pervasive liberalism.

Ben Stein got the ball rolling in 1979 with his groundbreaking *The View from Sunset Boulevard: America as Brought to You by the People Who Make Television*. Stein argued, based on interviews with top executives, that there is a certain worldview that Hollywood writers and producers share that is reflected on the screen. This view was not necessarily liberal so much as skeptical of large organizations—think the military, corporations, and organized religion—as well as rural America. The origins of the perspective stemmed from the shared demographic characteristics of the mostly urban, Jewish executives, and could be distilled in your average episode of *Barnaby Jones*, where the aged, milk-drinking detective would come to a corrupt small town where the outwardly religious local sheriff was also the bar owner and, ultimately, the bad guy.

Primetime Propaganda
The True Hollywood Story of How the Left Took Over Your TV
by Ben Shapiro
Broadside, 416 pp., $26.99

Another entry in this series was Michael Medved's *Hollywood vs. America* (1992), in which the author argued that Hollywood is a small town that is not economically rational. G-rated movies, Medved found, earn more money, but filmmakers seem to prefer to make R-rated movies because they are more prestigious among their avant-garde peers. Medved argues, convincingly, that if Hollywood truly wanted to maximize profits it would make more G movies and far fewer R movies; but filmmakers are looking for validation from their friends rather than maximizing profits. This validation, he found, comes from pushing the boundaries of decency rather than specializing in inspiring moral tales that appeal to the families that support the most successful artistic ventures.

The common theme in these books is that the people who produce movies are a narrow, insular group, and that the narrowness of their perspective shows up onscreen. To this grouping we may now add *Primetime Propaganda*. Ben Shapiro's method is much like that of Ben Stein: He went on a series of interviews with top Hollywood tele-

GETTY IMAGES

Tevi Troy is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.

vision executives to get a sense of the extent to which their politics affects the programming they help create. It turns out that the answer is: a lot. Shapiro, a young, young-looking, and Jewish Harvard Law School graduate, flattered these executives into meeting with him and giving him a look into their creative processes. He did not claim to share their political views; but if they, based on Shapiro's looks, religion, and educational background, assumed that he was simpatico, he didn't disabuse them of that notion.

Shapiro has found the insularity that Stein and Medved identified, but with far more purpose behind their actions than either Stein or Medved discovered. According to Shapiro—and he has the tapes to back him up—Hollywood is a small liberal clique in which conservatives are blacklisted and executives use television to promote a liberal worldview. And Shapiro has some personal experience with the blacklisting. He tells the tale of how one of the executives found Shapiro's stories of life at Harvard Law School so engaging that he wanted Shapiro to write a pilot. Shapiro dutifully wrote a spec script and was in the process of acquiring an agent when the agent called: "One of our agents Googled you," he said, "and found your website. I'm not sure we can represent you, because he thinks your political views will make it impossible for you to get a job in this town."

In a town known for backstabbing with a smile, here it was, with no flashing teeth or sugarcoating. As Shapiro puts it, "Just like that. Straight out."

Ben Shapiro's personal experience is by no means the only evidence of the blacklist. *The A-Team*'s Dwight Schultz failed to get a role on *St. Elsewhere* because producer Bruce Paltrow (father of Gwyneth) declared, "There's not going to be a Reagan a—hole on this show!" And TV's Frasier, Kelsey Grammer, "was essentially forced to donate $10,000 to Barbara Boxer and the Democratic party to prevent a director from blackballing him." Making this discrimination even worse is the hypocrisy of its purveyors, as Shapiro notes: "The same Hollywood that excoriated Joseph McCarthy and his allies for blacklisting Communists now does the same to conservatives."

The blacklisting, while reprehensible, only affects a select few: the tiny band of Republicans in Hollywood. Shapiro's bigger problem is with what this insular liberal clique he describes does in programming. He's no prig: Shapiro likes cutting-edge shows with adult situations—*The Wire*, *The Sopranos*, etc.—and even gushes at one point that "television is awesome." But what he does not like are the politics of those who make television shows and their conscious, directed effort to "blow a hole in the dike of American culture."

Shapiro details these dike-blowing efforts in that section of the book in which he engages in a content analysis of various shows to demonstrate how they attempted to project their particular visions into American living rooms. While there are plenty of obvious instances of politics driving a show—*All in the Family*, *M*A*S*H*, *Murphy Brown*—Shapiro believes that even purportedly nonpolitical programs have political messages. *Happy Days* is thought to be "innocent," for example, but its creators injected the subtext of a pre-Vietnam innocence into Richie and Fonzie's adventures.

Shapiro does manage to introduce a few optimistic notes. At times, he finds, the attempt to propagandize backfires. The hyperliberal creators of *The Cosby Show* thought that they were making a subversive left-wing program about racism but found, to their dismay, that viewers liked the show's underlying conservative message of a strong, hard-working American family. In addition, Shapiro has a series of recommendations that he feels can fix TV. Some of them are unrealistic—his admonition that Hollywood liberals stop discriminating, for example—but others are either taking place or distinctly possible, such as his suggestions that consumers get more choices, conservatives engage Hollywood more vigorously, and advertisers wake up to the myth that liberal ideals sell on television.

Shapiro closes with an appendix of the best conservative shows ever—including *Magnum P.I.*, *24*, *The Simpsons*, and *South Park*—that will make conservatives smile. But the pleasure readers take from the list suggests that books on Hollywood are much like the programming they deconstruct: full of supposed political intent, while viewers (and readers) just want entertainment. ♦

B&A

Inside the Whale

Great strength, glaring weakness, in a debut novel.

BY STEFAN BECK

The Art of Fielding
A Novel
by Chad Harbach
Little, Brown, 528 pp., $25.99

Near the end of *Moby-Dick* is an indelible description of two boats lost to the White Whale: "The odorous cedar chips of the wrecks danced round and round, like the grated nutmeg in a swiftly stirred bowl of punch." Reality rears its ugly, barnacle-encrusted head, and the mind retreats to cheerful thoughts of the ladle, the pewter cups, and the fireside.

This tension lies at the heart of Chad Harbach's Melville-obsessed debut novel, which is also a baseball novel, a campus novel, and a Jonathan Franzen-blurbed publishing event. *Fielding*'s epigraph is a snippet from

Stefan Beck writes on fiction for the New Criterion *and elsewhere.*

fictitious Westish College's fight song, the sort of thing belted out by punch-ruddied lads of the Old School. The book emanates from a wish peculiar to happy college students: "All he'd ever wanted was for nothing to ever change."

Fielding's hero is Henry Skrimshander, an uncommonly gifted shortstop plucked from obscurity by Westish's catcher, Mike Schwartz. Mike engineers 17-year-old Henry's enrollment after observing his skills in a summer game. "Skrimshander"—that's a maker of scrimshaw, or carved whalebone—is the reader's first briny taste of Melville mania, but it's representative of a weakness for pointless allusion. The team has a Starblind, which sounds like "Starbuck"—so? Someone exclaims, "Ah, the ambiguities!"—a reference to the subtitle of Melville's *Pierre*. The reader feels smug about scoring an extra-credit point. When, inevitably, the phrase "white whale" surfaces, it's to describe a house that Guert Affenlight, the president of Westish, considers buying, a "big white symbol of bourgeois propriety."

There is plenty of lit-major chum in the water, and some find it impossible to resist. The *New Yorker*'s reviewer devoted a long, rapturous paragraph to sussing out "sly homages" to Franzen and David Foster Wallace, but for "sly," read "contrived and fanboyish." As an investigation of male friendship, homoeroticism, and homosexuality, what *Fielding* recalls is not *Moby-Dick* so much as that high school perennial, *A Separate Peace*.

None of this is to suggest that *Fielding* isn't a striking debut. Harbach thinks well, plots well, and writes well. It's not often a 500-page book feels this short. Yet it helps to approach *Fielding* with a sense of its limitations, because these are its subject, however incidentally, as much as baseball, competition, genius, nostalgia, beauty, love, and English literature.

Chief among these limitations is a rather uneasy relationship with the life of the mind. Harbach, a founding editor of *n+1* and an alumnus of Harvard and the University of Virginia, senses that intellectuals are supposed to be a bit squeamish, if not downright apologetic, about the privileges of higher education. He knows what his old *n+1* colleague Keith Gessen, the author of *All the Sad Young Literary Men*, did not: that self-consciously brainy conceits can get pretty old and brittle without the neat's-foot oil of character and plot. Still, are we ever convinced that Mike, a hulking, hot-tempered catcher from a tiny Wisconsin school, would think of Henry in terms of Robert Lowell's "Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket"? Do we believe he'd rally his team with Schiller ("Man … is only completely a man when at play")?

Harbach is mistaken if he thinks he's earned this sort of display by writing a sports novel. It comes off like outtakes from *Good Will Hunting*, another fantasy about the unlikely marriage of book-learning to conventional ass-kicking masculinity. Sure enough, when Mike embarks upon a romance with Guert Affenlight's married daughter, Pella, the reader is treated to a speech virtually cribbed from that movie:

> "You love to make life difficult, don't you? Mike Schwartz, Nietzsche's camel. The weight of the world on his big ol' shoulders. But guess what? Not everybody wants to maximize their pain. … I'm sorry I went to prep school, okay? I'm sorry I never worked in a factory. Sure, I dropped out of high school. I wash dishes in a dining hall. But that's just slumming, isn't it Mike? That's not *real*, it's not real *suffering*, it's not the f—ing South Side. For which I apologize. I'm sincerely f—ing sorry my father went to grad school instead of drinking himsel—"

A day will come when it is widely acknowledged that cultural literacy, or correctly calibrated taste, not *money*, is the marker of elite status. For the time being, a kid from the wrong side of the tracks who knows that *Finnegans Wake* and *Howards End* have no apostrophes, or (to stay topical) that *Moby-Dick* does have a hyphen, will quietly capture the imagination in a way that an upper-crust kid who's actually read these books will not. If Harbach had any interest in dispelling this absurd and neurotic strain in modern thought, he wouldn't imagine that a college president, of all people, might worry about his large house communicating a shameful concern for bourgeois propriety.

Harbach's soundest Melville connection rests in the fact that Guert Affenlight, a Melville scholar, the author of a study called *The Sperm-Squeezers*, once unearthed an address delivered by Melville to the students of Westish in 1880. Because of this fact, Westish made Melville its mascot, erecting a statue and naming its baseball team the Harpooners. If this is contrived, it is contrived in the best possible way, illustrating a status anxiety the reader can easily attribute to a landlocked, uncelebrated college. It is an allusion that earns its keep, and then some.

Henry's matriculation at Westish College parallels Melville's minor work *Redburn: His First Voyage*, though in strictly economic terms Henry has more in common with Mike Schwartz than with the refined, wet-behind-the-ears "Buttons" Redburn. Still, he has much to learn. He frets about his provincial mother's objection to his "gay mulatto roommate," Owen Dunne, of whom she asks, "Would they put you in a room with a *girl*?"

> If there was a flaw in his mom's logic, Henry couldn't find it. Would his parents make him switch rooms? That would be horrible, worse than embarrassing, to go to the Housing office and request a new room assignment—the Housing people would know instantly why he was asking, because Owen was the best possible roommate, neat and kind and rarely even home. The only roommate who'd want to be rid of Owen was a roommate who hated gay people. This was a real college, an enlightened place—you could get in trouble for hating people here, or so Henry suspected.

Both Owen, who becomes the object of President Guert Affenlight's queasy-making affection, and Henry, the strapping, iron-armed innocent, owe something to Billy Budd—but not much, as neither one of them comes to real harm. (Melville's cousin Guert participated in the court-martial on which *Billy Budd* is based—more showboating allusion.) Owen's role, apart from his torrid and ill-advised affair with Affenlight, is

to get brained by the bad throw that plunges Henry into a "Prufrockian paralysis." (There are minor-league Eliot references on pages 55, 74, and 328, for anyone keeping score.) Once a Billy, Henry becomes a Bartleby, preferring not to play ball, despite the interest of Major League scouts, and refusing even to eat. Harbach makes some comic hay of this, as when Mike says: "I told [the doctors] only cheerleaders get anorexia. You're a ballplayer—you're having a spiritual crisis."

Spiritual crises are the lifeblood, the navy grog, of *Fielding*. Forbidden love, infidelity, overweening ambition, the purpose of a liberal-arts education—these subjects are weighty enough, and treated intelligently enough, to outshine Harbach's serpentine sportscasting and to excuse the odd bit of painfully self-conscious dialogue and grad-student cleverness ("You're only Jung once," quips Pella Affenlight).

Harbach's prose is unpredictable. There are clichés and tics, and a heady odor of polish. A lovesick heart is "a fruit so ripe it threatens to split its skin." "Arcs" are constantly being "described"—"sensual," "tight," "rapt," "long slow," and "parabolic." Sentences like "The silence that filled the Audi seemed profound" (it wasn't) only serve to kill the mood. Names like Craig Suitcase and Sal Phlox, or Skrimshander, for that matter, kill the verisimilitude.

Is this more sly homage to the winking, postmodern nomenclature of a David Foster Wallace? Why not a film major named Myrna L'œil, or a transgendered activist named Lez Majeste? (See? Man is only completely insufferable when at play.) Then there comes some moment of Melvillean phosphorescence—"With each stretch Schwartz's knees snapped and popped at increasing volume, as if trying to outbid each other"—and the reader forgivingly remembers that unevenness goes hand in hand with genius.

Harbach's debut may suffer a little from the double-edged sword of great publicity. Its ending, which deserves not to be spoiled, may be implausible, maddening, over the top in a way it should take a long career to live down. And yes, Harbach may share some tiresome anxieties with his hypereducated peers. Yet he needn't worry overmuch about the taint of these deficiencies. Melville wrote in *Redburn*: "Talk not of the bitterness of middle-age and after life; a boy can feel all that, and much more, when upon his young soul the mildew has fallen; and the fruit, which with others is only blasted after ripeness, with him is nipped in the first blossom and bud."

There are no flies on Harbach. He's sure to brush off the mildew and keep growing. As a scout might say, he's a talent to watch. ♦

B&A

Transcendent Voice

Why Bill Evans was, and remains, an original.

BY IAN MARCUS CORBIN

In the spring of 1958, Miles Davis was in search of a new piano player, and a new sound. He found both in an unlikely figure: Bill Evans, a shy, neatly combed, bespectacled white boy from Plainfield, New Jersey. Evans, who was 28 at the time, had been in New York for a little less than three years, steadily building a reputation as a sensitive and original player. He joined Davis's sextet, and seven months later the ensemble—which included Cannonball Adderley, Paul Chambers, Jimmy Cobb, John Coltrane, Davis, and Evans—entered the studio and recorded, in just two sessions, the beautiful, contemplative, wrenching *Kind of Blue*, one of the great masterpieces of American music, and of American art in general.

Evans's influence on *Kind of Blue* was profound; its deep, languorous palette, realized with such startling maturity so quickly, did not burst into being *ex nihilo*. Evans had patiently ground its pigments through years of serious training and careful attention. Attention is key—and for whatever reasons, Evans had the patience and courage to demand conviction from every note. He said that he always preferred playing a few fully meant notes to going "all over the keyboard on something I wasn't clear about." His playing seems to well up naturally, unrushed, from a deep emotional and intellectual reservoir. Davis had been searching for a cooler, more spacious sound and when he found it in Evans's piano, he absorbed and expanded it, to immediate, wonderful effect.

The short-lived collaboration that produced *Kind of Blue* can seem almost fated—as if Evans and Davis, its principal architects, were brought together at the precise moment when each of them was ready to propel the other in new and spectacular directions. His triumph with the world-renowned sextet gave the ever-insecure Evans confidence to keep thinking and feeling for himself, and in doing so, to craft a rich and singular oeuvre that has repeatedly widened the expressive parameters of jazz.

Evans always strove, above all, for expressive fluidity, and insisted that such striving was accomplished by way of disciplined workmanship. Happily, he had habits of mind to match his scholarly appearance: He was a great student of music theory and connoisseur of the traditions that mattered to him, both jazz and classical. His classical training began at age six, and extended up through his bachelor's degree, earned in 1950 from Southeastern Louisiana College. Much of Evans's musical innovation is, in fact, a feat of syncretism. His jazz playing borrows, and very liberally, from the classical tradition.

When jazz aficionados look for words to describe Bill Evans's sound,

Ian Marcus Corbin is a writer in Boston.

they often resort to dramatic sensual metaphors. In his autobiography, Miles Davis wrote, "Bill had this quiet fire that I loved on piano . . . the sound he got was like crystal notes or sparkling water cascading down from some clear waterfall." The palpable beauty of Evans's playing, its clarity, precision, and nuance, had been gradually forged by the unique demands of playing classical compositions. He explained, for instance, that it was through playing Bach that he had learned to depress the keys, not with his fingers, but by releasing the weight of his hand—a method that opens up a pianist's dynamic range. His pedal work, too, was developed by his classical training far beyond the level of any of his jazz contemporaries.

Bill Evans, 1966

Evans's chordal idiom is similarly dazzling, a combination of limpid transparency and thick, meditative opacity. The piano, as Evans remarked with pleasure, is uniquely able to sing in multiple, beautifully overlapping, voices. No jazz pianist before him had endeavored to make so many different voices sing in such complex, lovely harmony; after him, very many have done so, and to beautiful ends. But while the emotional depths plumbed in Evans's playing are deeply, authentically his own—he is a supremely vulnerable, candid player—this chordal language is unabashedly borrowed. Evans (like Miles Davis) was a longtime devotee of the French Impressionist composers Claude Debussy and Maurice Ravel, and any Evans fan who listens to their piano compositions will recognize the provenance of his profound, glassy chords.

Grateful as he was to play in the Davis sextet, his tenure there was brief. Evans quit, in fact, shortly before the recording of *Kind of Blue* but, happily, agreed to come back for the sessions. His reasons for departure were mostly nonmusical: Evans had been the only white player in Davis's group, at a time when black players (chief among them Davis) were beginning to earn the recognition and remuneration they had long deserved. Davis's mostly black audiences were, by and large, rankled that the most prestigious piano chair in jazz was now occupied by a retiring white man in professor's garb. Always sensitive, Evans found the chilly receptions and outright hostility unbearable.

Soon after leaving, he formed his own piano trio with a pair of players (drummer Paul Motian and the young bassist Scott LaFaro) who were ready and willing to push the classic trio model in exciting new directions. Evans was unsatisfied with the standard jazz combo dynamic, in which one player at a time would solo and the others would confine themselves to comping—essentially holding down the structure of the song, giving the soloist a canvas on which to paint. From its inception, this new trio began to explore a more flexible, fluid form of interaction. Once again, Evans's classical training was a lodestar: "After all," he remarked, "in a classical composition, you don't hear a part remain stagnant until it becomes a solo," and stagnant comping was anathema in the new trio.

Fifty years ago this summer, the group was engaged for a two-week stand at their favorite club, the Village Vanguard in Greenwich Village. Orrin Keepnews, a producer for Riverside Records, quickly convinced the group to set down a live recording, and tape rolled on a Sunday afternoon and evening, June 25, 1961. The result is the stuff of jazz legend. Riverside released the session as two records, *Waltz for Debby* and *Sunday at the Village Vanguard*, and then in 2005 it issued a three-disc box set, *The Complete Village Vanguard Recordings, 1961.*

The *Vanguard* sessions capture a young group at the vertiginous height of innovation. And as with *Kind of Blue*, the music is not just novel; it's wonderful. Evans's playing is as lovely and understated as ever, as reflective and introspective—and even more so, because in Scott LaFaro he has an ideal conversation partner. LaFaro, only 25 at the time, casts himself headlong into the role. His beautifully lyrical lines twist and twirl around Evans's solos, sometimes stepping up to the fore, answering Evans note for note or setting a contrasting foil, sometimes receding into the background, giving a note the air it needs to sing. His solos are imaginative and moving.

The collaborations on these recordings are always accomplished and sometimes sublime. What the trio had essentially achieved, and what many piano trios since have tried to replicate, is an audacious act of synthesis. They managed to take the model of complementarity, perfected in classi-

JAZZSIGN / LEBRECHT MUSIC & ARTS / CORBIS

cal chamber music, and fuse it with the tilting bravura of improvised jazz. Great jazz improvisation is *not* formless and uncomposed: Its unique dare is to compose on the fly, to feel (as it goes) the form and direction that the music should take. But it is one thing to compose a lovely solo by oneself; it is entirely another to undertake, with other musicians, an act of simultaneous composition. To do so takes a phenomenal level of trust in your fellow players, and a mysterious level of spiritual, aesthetic communication.

All, in this case, amidst the chatter and clatter of a tiny New York nightclub.

The achievement of the Evans/LaFaro/Motian trio has inspired generations of jazz players, but the trio itself was not to last long. Ten days after the *Vanguard* session, LaFaro crashed his car on a New York highway and was killed. Evans was devastated, and though he was to produce many more fine recordings before his own death in 1980, he never felt or sounded so at home as he had with Motian and LaFaro at the Village Vanguard.

Fifty years later, their achievement stands as a monument to the expansive possibilities of jazz, that quintessentially American music that dares to make its stand, as Evans often said, "in the moment." Throughout his career, and especially at the Vanguard, Bill Evans demonstrated that if a musician feels them both to the core, the American bravado of jazz and the European refinement of classical music can be authentically, and fruitfully, combined. In the case of the Vanguard sessions, the result is a great and deeply *American* work of art, at home in a society that descends, in innumerable ways, from Europe. Put more directly, jazz and classical music are two legitimate and wonderful parts of our cultural patrimony.

In a 1945 interview, Duke Ellington said that the burgeoning influx of white players to the formerly black-dominated jazz scene was not a bad thing; it just meant "Jazz is American now. *American* is the big word." In the half-century since Evans, LaFaro, and Motian took their classically tempered jazz to the stage of the Village Vanguard, the word has gotten that much bigger. ♦

B&A

Writer's Progress

Behind the scenes of William Makepeace Thackeray's novelistic life. **BY EDWARD SHORT**

In 1853, when William Makepeace Thackeray (1811-1863) made his first lecture tour of America, Boston particularly pleased him because, as he said, its "vast amount of toryism and donnishness" reminded him of Edinburgh. Today, there may be precious little toryism or donnishness left in Boston, but there remains a sturdy affection for Thackeray—and one proof of this was the superb exhibition that Harvard's Houghton Library mounted to commemorate the bicentenary of the great novelist's birth.

The Correspondence and Journals of the Thackeray Family
edited by John Aplin
Pickering and Chatto,
2,000 pp. (five volumes), $795

The Inheritance of Genius
A Thackeray Family Biography 1798-1875
Memory and Legacy
A Thackeray Family Biography 1876-1919
by John Aplin
Lutterworth, 320 pp., £25.50 each

Heather Cole, curator of the exhibition, captured the witty charm and ebullience of her subject by assembling a catalogue full of the abiding appeal of his life and work. She included the famous bust of Thackeray as a boy; the portrait of him with his parents, sitting atop a pile of folios and gazing out at the viewer with preternatural zest; and his wonderfully funny *Punch* drawings. She also included many of his letters to his female confidantes, his exquisite sketches of his daughters, Annie and Minny, pages from his manuscripts, the bright yellow installments of *Vanity Fair* (1848), and a copy of *The Adventures of Philip* (1862), his penultimate novel, printed during the Civil War by a Confederate publisher, complete with advertisements for military merchandise.

That a Confederate publisher should have printed the novel has a special aptness, for *Philip* is a paean to precisely the ideal of gentlemanliness that so many Confederate soldiers prized. (That was, after all, what distinguished them from Yankees.)

Thackeray has been blessed with exceptional biographers and critics. Although Gordon Ray wrote the definitive two-volume biography over 50 years ago, and produced a magnificent edition of the novelist's letters and private papers, D.J. Taylor and Peter Shillingsburg have written lively biographies since, and there is a wealth of good critical work on Thackeray from Geoffrey Tillotson, John Sutherland, and Lord David Cecil to Joan Stevens, Ann Monsarrat, and Edgar Harden. To this illustrious body of work may now be added John Aplin's five-volume edition of the Thackeray family letters and his two-volume family biography, both of which constitute a major contribution to Thackeray scholarship, packed as they are with fresh material and incisive commentary.

No appreciation of Thackeray's genius is possible without some understanding of the flawed, goodhearted, supremely clubbable man. He was born in Calcutta in 1811, the son of Richmond Thackeray, an official in the East India Company, and Anne Becher, the daughter of another Company official. He had an amusing augury of his future profession when his father unwittingly invited a handsome young Bengal Engineer to dinner, who had been in love with his wife before she went out to India. When Anne and the dashing

Edward Short is the author of Newman and his Contemporaries.

Carmichael-Smyth finally met in private on that fatal night, they discovered their mutual misapprehensions: She had been told that he had died of fever, and he that she no longer cared for him. After Richmond obligingly died in 1815, the reunited lovers married and settled in Paris. Thus, it was at home, not from novels, that Thackeray learned the rudiments of romance.

Educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge, which he left in 1830 without a degree, Thackeray entered the Middle Temple in 1831, but soon gave up law for journalism. In 1833, he bought the *National Standard*, where he was proprietor, contributor, and illustrator. After the paper folded, he went to study art in Paris where, at a masked ball, he met the adventuress on whom he would base his most brilliant heroine, Becky Sharp. On a later trip to the city, in a boarding-house in the Faubourg-St-Honoré, he met a 17-year-old Irish girl from Cork named Isabella Shawe, with whom he fell in love at the proverbial first sight. In 1836, they were married at the British embassy. Once settled in London, the couple went on to have three daughters, though the second died at eight months. Included in the Houghton show is a droll drawing by Thackeray showing how he towered over his tiny wife.

After the birth of the third daughter, Isabella began to show signs of schizophrenia. In 1840, while traveling from England to Ireland, she jumped overboard and was only rescued after being 20 minutes in the sea. When no cure could be found, Thackeray arranged for her to live with a nurse in Camberwell, where she would outlive him by 30 years. He later told a friend, "Though my marriage was a wreck, I would do it over again, for behold love is the crown and completion of all earthly good."

Thackeray immersed himself in journalism not only to escape the guilt he felt over his wife's derangement but to pay his abounding debts. (Before marrying, he had lost his fortune to an Indian bank failure.) He was also an extravagant gambler. To keep the bailiffs at bay, he contributed regularly to *Punch*, *Fraser's Magazine*, the *Morning Chronicle*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and the *Times*. And from this honorable scribbling he produced some of the funniest *jeux d'esprit* ever penned, including *The Memoirs of Mr. C.J. Yellowplush* (1837), *A Shabby Genteel Story* (1840), *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* (1841), and *The Book of Snobs* (1842). If Charles Dickens was more inventive, Thackeray had a better sense of humor. When Henry James met him in Paris in 1857, he recalled the great man turning to his eight-year-old sister, Alice, who was dressed in the fashionable flounces of the day, and exclaiming: "Crinoline?—I was suspecting it! So young and so depraved!"

Vanity Fair (1848), the culmination of all that Thackeray had done as a comic journalist, is an unsparing portrait of

Thackeray ca. 1855

the unregenerate world from a man who knew its follies and sorrows inside out. Nowhere else does one get a better sense of the fierce social insecurity that gripped early 19th-century England, or its ruthlessness. "In this vast town one has not the time to go and seek one's friends," the narrator observes; "if they drop out of the rank they disappear, and we march on without them. Who is ever missed in Vanity Fair?" The Victorians liked to imagine that Thackeray exposed their vices too unsparingly. Yet he exhibited toward those culpable of folly an almost paternal indulgence: No other Victorian novelist would have shown the incorrigible Becky Sharp anything like the sympathy that Thackeray showed her.

At the same time, to a journalist who had taken exception to what he thought the satirical severity of *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray explained that the book's object was

> to indicate, in cheerful terms, that we are for the most part an abominably foolish and selfish people "desperately wicked" and all eager for vanities. . . . Good God don't I see (in that may-be cracked and warped looking glass in which I am always looking) my own weaknesses lusts follies shortcomings? . . . We must lift up our voices about these and howl to a congregation of fools. . . . You have all of you taken my misanthropy to task—I wish I could myself: but take the world by a certain standard . . . and who dares talk of having any virtue at all.

Thackeray followed the success of *Vanity Fair* with several other novels, which the English critic John Carey claimed constitute a "history of capitulation" in which the novelist succumbed to the very snobbery that he had written his earlier work to mock: "The novels after *Vanity Fair*," Carey argues, "are full of people not only of a higher class but nicer—noble fellows, angelic ladies. It is a condition of their insipidity."

This is not altogether just. Although *The Newcomes* (1855) and *The Virginians* (1859) may be dull reads, *Pendennis* (1850) and *The History of Henry Esmond* (1852) are undeservedly neglected. Trollope judged the latter "the greatest novel in the language," citing "the excellence of its language," the "clear individuality of its characters," the faithfulness of its Queen Anne setting, and "its great pathos." If *Vanity Fair* is about what happens to people when they lose love, *Henry Esmond* is about what happens to them when they regain it—for as the Thackerayan narrator reminds his readers, "love *vincit omnia*; is immeasurably above all ambition, more precious than wealth, more noble than name. He knows not life who knows not that."

This may not be as entertaining as reading about how Becky and Rawdon contrive to live on nothing a year, but it proves how deeply autobiographical Thackeray's fiction is, even his historical fiction.

Another late book worth reading is *The Roundabout Papers* (published posthumously in 1864), which includes the immortal "Mississippi Bubble," in which Thackeray recalls going down the

NEWSCOM

great river on a steamboat and meeting the Bearded Lady of Kentucky: "You would have fancied that, as after all we were only some half-dozen on board, she might have dispensed with her red handkerchief, and talked, and eaten her dinner in comfort: but in covering her chin there was a kind of modesty."

> That beard was her profession: that beard brought the public to see her: out of her business she wished to put that beard aside . . . as a barrister would wish to put off his wig. I know some who carry theirs into private life, and who mistake you and me for jury-boxes when they address us: but these are not your modest barristers, not your true gentlemen. Well, I own I respected the lady for the modesty with which, her public business over, she retired into private life. She respected her life, and her beard. . . . All public men and women of good sense, I should think, have this modesty.

After Isabella lost her reason, Thackeray became infatuated with the literary hostess Jane Octavia Brookfield, the wife of one of his old Cambridge friends, with whom he entered into a strenuously chaste *ménage à trois*. "However much I may love her & bless her and admire her, I can't forgive her for doing her duty," he confessed, before putting a stop to what he called his "uncouth raptures."

In all events, Thackeray was fortunate not to see the Brookfield–Thackeray triangle reproduced in Mrs. Brookfield's novels, *Only George* (1866) and *Not Too Late* (1868). On December 23, 1863, he returned home from dining, suffered a stroke, and dropped dead.

Throughout his life, Thackeray was an ambivalent clubman, drawn to the confidential comfort of clubs but convinced that men without the civilizing society of women became boors. "The greatest good that comes to a man from woman's society," he once observed, "is that he has to think of somebody besides himself—somebody to whom he is bound to be constantly attentive and respectful." Here was a truth that only his treacherous egotism could teach him, and it made him not only a brilliant satirist but a grateful family man, and on the three women who meant most to him—his wife, his mother, and his daughter Annie—Aplin's volumes are revelatory.

Apropos Isabella's mental illness, Aplin argues that most modern clinicians would probably diagnose it as "puerperal psychosis, affecting about one in a thousand women after childbirth with symptoms which may include depression, delusional behavior, hallucinations, and paranoia." At the same time, he shows that Isabella, towards the end of her life, enjoyed an unexpected serenity. Certainly, her delight in music never waned. Often Annie would visit her simply to hear her play Gluck and Handel: "I was really floored one day

Miriam Hopkins as Becky Sharp (1935)

with worry & nerves when I went to Mama's & lay on the sofa there while she played sweet hymn tunes & I felt like a child again & all unlocked & cried & cried." In these encounters, as Aplin observes, family tradition was renewed, for 50 years before it had been Isabella's deep love of music that first endeared her to Thackeray.

Aplin also gives a more rounded portrait of Thackeray's mother, whom many have misrepresented as a religious zealot. By bringing her letters to light, Aplin reveals what an intelligent, witty, solicitous woman she was. He also shows how keenly perceptive she was about the deep love that Thackeray's daughters had for their father. When Thackeray remonstrated with her for trying (as he saw it) to inculcate in them her own passionate Calvinism, the old woman fired back: "I have one thing to say by which you may free yourself from any apprehension of yr children thinking, or believing otherwise than as you do; they have but one creed & that is 'Papa.'"

The star of Aplin's volumes is Anne Thackeray Ritchie (1837-1919), whom her father once described as "a fat lump of pure gold, the kindest, dearest creature as well as a wag of the first order." After Thackeray's death, she married a handsome cousin 17 years her junior and became the keeper of her father's flame, producing the biographical Centenary Edition of his work, as well as novels of her own. George Eliot once said that her fiction was the only modern fiction she cared to read. Lord Bryce was taken with more than her novels: "Never have I known any one with quite the same charm, inexhaustible kindliness and sympathy with a freshness and genuineness which made everyone feel wiser & better than themselves when they were in her company."

This was an estimate of her character shared by many of those eminent Victorians with whom she was friendly, including Henry James, Leslie Stephen (who married her sister Minny), Robert Browning, Lord Tennyson, Charles Eliot Norton, Henry Cole (who mounted the Great Exhibition), Sir John Millais, G.F. Watts, and the great kitchen-table novelist Mrs. Oliphant, to whom Annie once wrote: "as I read your letter I somehow felt for the moment—blessed feeling—all one's life remains, things don't go, we fade, not they, it is all there." Thanks to this wonderful correspondence, and Aplin's heroic labors, we can now share Annie's delight in this rich recollected past.

When I was leaving the Thackeray exhibition at Harvard, the curator Heather Cole turned to me and said that she had come to love Thackeray because he was so full of love himself—love and endless jokes. John Aplin has done a fine job of showing how that love and wit bound together not only Thackeray's daughters and their families, but a much larger extended family, whose members will only grow with the publication of these marvelous volumes. ♦

B&A

Traveling Fellow

From radio to Reagan, Norman Corwin (1910-2011) fit the pattern. **BY LAUREN WEINER**

The man often called the poet laureate of radio's golden age died a few weeks ago at 101. His name was Norman Corwin, and he was a consequential figure who also happens to be unknown to most people.

Before television displaced radio, he was a household name. Starting in 1938, and charging his scripts with a kind of New Deal lyricism of his own devising, Corwin sent drama, poetry, fantasy, and comedy into American homes in shows such as "The Undecided Molecule," "The Plot to Overthrow Christmas," and a patriotic morale-booster called "We Hold These Truths." Revered by media professionals, he was associated with the Great and the Good—or at least with institutions presumed to have those qualities: CBS; the University of Southern California's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, where he taught for decades; and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (he headed two Oscar-nominating committees).

"On a Note of Triumph," his star-studded 1945 special celebrating the Allies' defeat of the Third Reich, was heard by over 60 million listeners; Robert Altman once said that, as a boy, he recited the script as if it were the Lord's Prayer. Other arts-and-entertainment bigwigs who spent their youths in front of the radio thrilling to Corwin include Philip Roth, Ray Bradbury, Charles Kuralt, Norman Lear, and Larry King. "He has a way of listening to the rhythms of tomorrow," said a Corwin contemporary, and being in tune with the march of history was a high accolade in that time of the Popular Front, the coalition that Communists, socialists, and liberals formed to oppose fascism in the 1930s and '40s. Norman Corwin epitomized the liberals of the Popular Front, whose curious character comes back to us when we review his life and work.

Not that the obituary writers undertook any such review. The *New York Times* and *Los Angeles Times* obits displayed a familiar logic: Because Joseph McCarthy was a demagogue it is impolite to sort through the good, the bad, and the ugly things the left did during the Depression and World War II. The fact is that, by 1941, when the United States and Russia joined to fight the Axis powers, Corwin's antifascism had spilled over into infatuation with our Soviet ally. And like many liberals he harbored a faith in that country as a force for peace—a faith sharply at odds with his paeans to political and religious freedom, the Bill of Rights, and the American way of life.

Corwin-directed programs such as "Concerning the Red Army" (1944) had a strong Pop Front tilt. He often hired Red writers, musicians, and actors for his shows, like Woody Guthrie, Will Geer, Millard Lampell, and Earl Robinson. And he delivered subtle touches of Bolshevism here and there: A radio opera produced for CBS in 1944, "The Lonesome Train," had Abraham Lincoln talking up the solidarity of workers everywhere. Vincent Van Gogh—according to *Lust for Life*, the 1956 Kirk Douglas movie for which Corwin wrote the Oscar-nominated screenplay—took up painting so that he could depict manual labor's nobility. (Those sunflowers and nightscapes were apparently an afterthought.) These socialistic *soupçons* were applied with a light hand. Nor was Corwin, in any case, bound to stay on the Communists' team forever. His most enduring piece, a Lincoln-Douglas play called *The Rivalry* (1959), is a history-based character study with no Pop Frontism at all.

The moment of truth for Corwin and Popular Front liberals had come in 1950 when American Reds, following Moscow's lead, supported Kim Il-Sung's invasion of South Korea. A horrified Henry Wallace dissociated himself from the Communists—breaking with the Progressives, the Pop Front party created expressly for him—as did other liberals, like Corwin. That he chose the side of liberty in 1950 is to Norman Corwin's credit. On the debit side was his future tendency to give the benefit of the doubt to the likes of Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov. And a certain obnoxious habit (now endemic on the left) stayed with him: He would frequently make out that Americans on the political right were a lot like Hitler. This can best be seen in "On a Note of Triumph," where Corwin offers, as one of the lessons of the war, that "those most concerned with saving the world from communism usually turn up making it safe for fascism."

The Red hunters spotted Corwin's philo-Sovietism, but this did not cost him job opportunities, according to his biographer. By the end of his career he was a bleeding-heart liberal with correspondingly sharp talons. Well into the 1980s he was subjecting conservatives to Popular Front-style abuse, denouncing Ronald Reagan as everything from a moron to a racist to a Nazi.

No doubt Corwin could also be the sweet old journalism professor described in the obituaries. His influence on his fellow media elites was such that we can view him as their model, past and present. They're for civil rights and against genocide; less commendable is the way they peg anyone who rejects their solutions to the world's ills as a mental and moral lowlife. Whenever you encounter this liberal two-step—and it happens most days—you should think of the late Norman Corwin. ♦

Lauren Weiner is writing a book about the artistic wing of the Popular Front.

B&A

Into the Abyss

There's no way to disguise a harrowing descent.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Michael Shannon, Jessica Chastain

Movies about people teetering on the verge of madness are among the most haunting ever made. Because the movies are the most effective artistic medium for simulating reality—they make you believe what you are seeing is real even though every nanosecond has been manufactured—cinematic techniques are basically designed to create a believable world that a masterful director and screenwriter can then systematically take apart before your eyes. When they work, going-crazy movies jangle the nerves, leave you feeling unsettled and discomfited, and get under your skin like a burr.

If art is about provoking a response, then these movies are high art indeed. But the sensations induced by an edge-of-madness movie are largely unpleasant ones; they are memorable in the way a dentist's needle penetrating the roof of your mouth is memorable. The best of them—I think of *Rosemary's Baby*—succeed in part by relieving the stress of watching with a sneaky wit that stays with you along with the memory of the needle.

Take Shelter
Directed by Jeff Nichols

Now comes along an extraordinary new edge-of-madness movie, *Take Shelter*, whose leading actor, Michael Shannon, announces himself here as a major screen presence with whom we will be reckoning for decades to come. Shannon's unforgettable work is matched by the writing and directing of a 32-year-old named Jeff Nichols, who has come out of nowhere to make something of a masterpiece—a perfectly controlled, conceived, and paced work with a genuine intelligence built into its structure, its plotting, and its dialogue.

But while I admire *Take Shelter*, I can't say I enjoyed it in any way. As it went along, getting more and more intense and more and more gripping, I could feel my anxiety rising to a point where, if the person a few seats away in the Manhattan movie theater where I saw it had leaned over and quietly offered me a Xanax, I would have loudly demanded two. There is no leavening, no sneaky wit, no moment at which we are released, even temporarily, from our journey into mental and spiritual darkness.

Shannon plays Curtis LaForche, the foreman of a two-man crew that literally pounds sand in a small town in Ohio. It's a good job in a frightening economy, and he has a good marriage to a lovely, loving wife named Samantha (the radiant Jessica Chastain from *The Tree of Life*), with whom he has a beloved five-year-old daughter, deaf since birth. But Curtis is tormented at night by dreams and during the day by visions of the world turning hostile: storms whose raindrops are the color and consistency of motor oil, birds that form ominous patterns in the sky, his own dog and best friend, and then even Samantha, attacking him. He has just turned 35; his mother was diagnosed with schizophrenia at the same age.

The nobility we see in Curtis comes from his deep efforts to push his terrors to one side to be a good father to his daughter and a good husband to his wife. Shannon is a giant of a man, but he gives Curtis an innately gentle quality that adds to the heartbreak of seeing the fear become etched into his face. As he seeks a remedy for what he is sure is a psychiatric disorder, he also pursues a safe harbor from the apocalyptic storm he cannot help but see coming. He has a tornado shelter in the backyard of his modest house and is compelled to expand it. This is a project that will cost this working man $6,000 he doesn't have, especially when he needs every dollar to help defray the cost of his daughter's cochlear implant.

The pitch-perfect details of *Take Shelter* reflect the generally uneasy American mood—co-pays four times more expensive at the drugstore than you expect, dreadful haggling with an insurance company, and, metaphorically, the sense that even with the troubles of the present, there might be a calamity on the horizon which will dwarf them. The simulation of near-madness may not be as agonizing as near-madness itself, but it's certainly as close as I'd like to come. The only real escape from it is the possibility that the world is coming to an end. What kind of choice is that? *Take Shelter* is a real achievement. But it's also a bummer. ♦

SONY PICTURES CLASSICS

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

"A former speechwriter for the real president of the United States, Barack Obama, is now writing for a fictional president central to a sitcom pilot called '1600 Penn.'. . . The show will focus on the comedic pitfalls of a dysfunctional family at the White House."
—Los Angeles Times, *October 26, 2011*

Int. White House Kitchen – Evening

President Carl enters to find First Lady Janet pulling a burnt roast out of the oven. There is black smoke billowing out of the stove.

PRESIDENT CARL
Whaaa?!? Janet! You burned the roast? The president of France is here! You're going to make us look like dumb Americans who can't cook!

FIRST LADY JANET
Well, what did you expect? If you ask me to cook a state dinner, take our transgender son/daughter to your mother's, and make sure your redneck brother doesn't come out of his room, you're gonna get burnt roast!

PRESIDENT CARL
Why, I oughta . . . !

He shakes his fist at Janet.

The president of France, Jacques, enters and sees the burnt roast.

JACQUES
Sacrebleu!

The president's redneck brother, Eddie, enters.

EDDIE
Hey, y'all got any freedom fries? I'm hungrier than a Frenchman at a snail farm!

JACQUES
Mon dieu!

FIRST LADY JANET
(to President Carl)
You just had to run for president!

PRESIDENT CARL
(to First Lady Janet)
Why, I oughta . . . !

He shakes his fist at Janet.

END OF SHOW