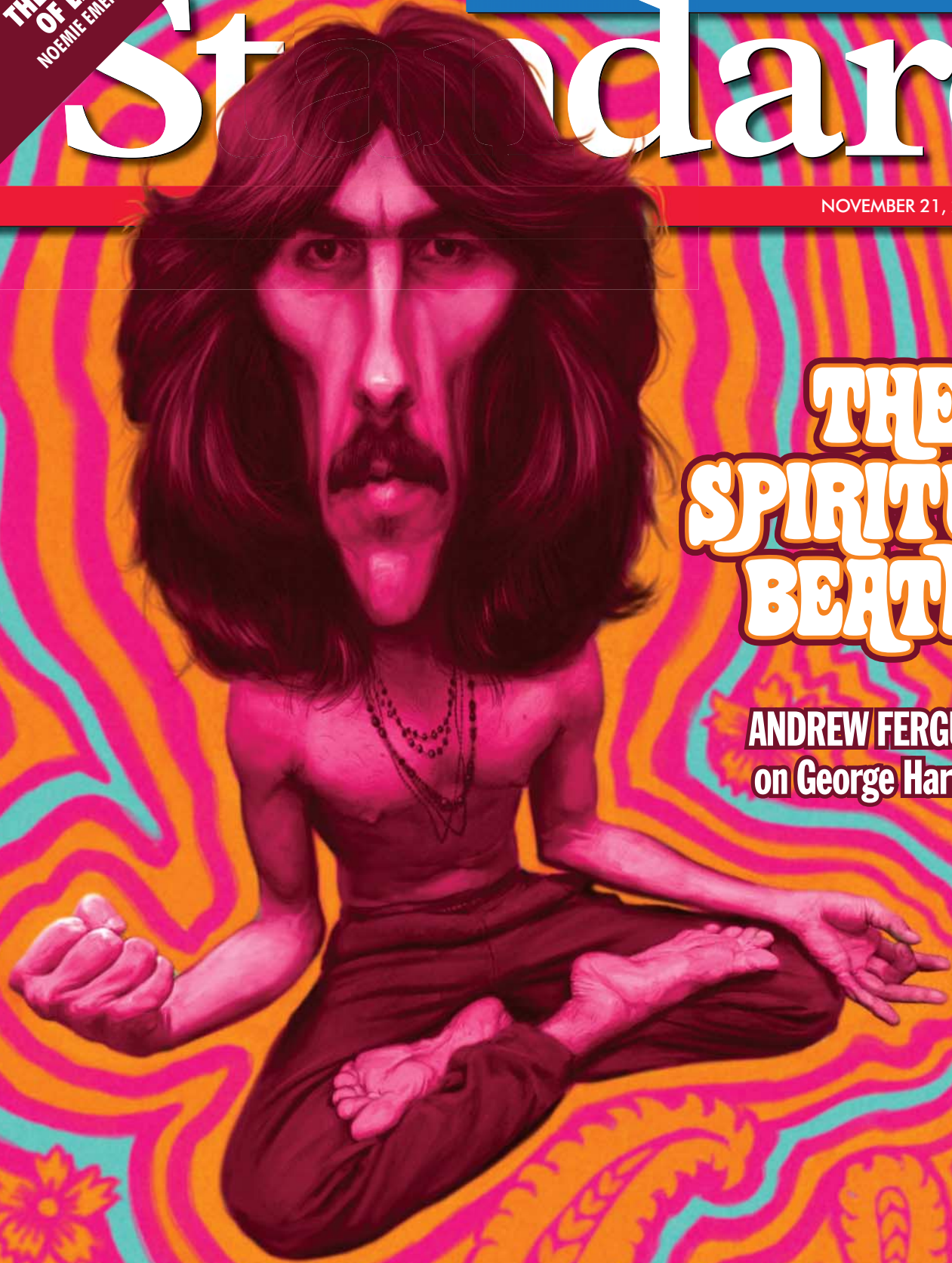


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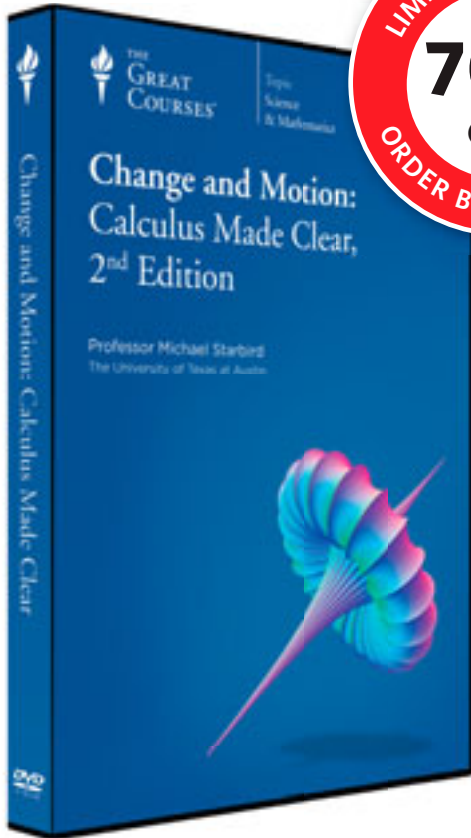


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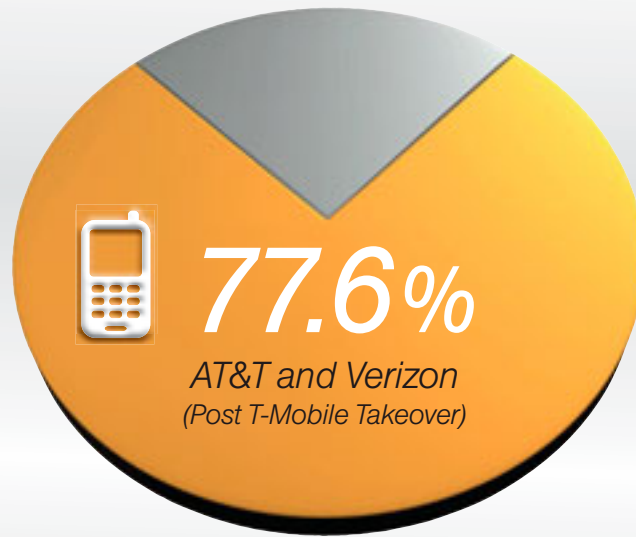
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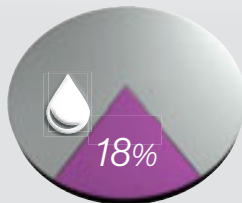
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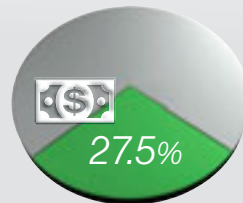
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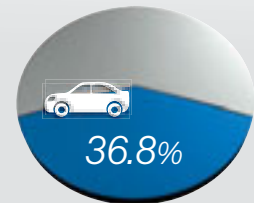
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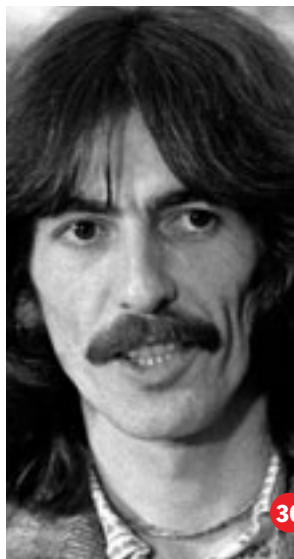
*This is a bad idea for consumers, competition and our country.*

Wireless industry source: Individual company annual financial reports for 2010.  
Oil source: [www.alacra.com/acm/2042\\_sample.pdf](http://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](http://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.



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COVER BY JASON SEILER

# Occupy the *Washington Post*

For those who wonder why American newspapers find themselves in such perilous condition, THE SCRAPBOOK recommends a look at the November 10, 2011, Style section of the *Washington Post*.

The front page is almost entirely consumed with a bird's-eye view of McPherson Square in Washington, site of one of the "Occupy D.C." encampments, complete with careful identification of renamed sidewalks—Che Guevara Avenue, Angela Davis Avenue, etc.—and minute annotations of its various components: "The chess tent [where] after dark the 'de-escalation team' deploys from here to settle conflicts," "Camp Malcolm [X], formerly Camp Awesome," the Drum Circle, People's Kitchen, Chair Massage, Safe Space, and solar panels.

Two inside pages are given over to detailed descriptions of the camp's various features: A library tent with "a collection as broad as its movement" features titles like *The Progressive's Guide to Raising Hell*. The "camp medic keeps his eye on public health"—although Pietro, devoid of surname as well as medical training, tells the *Post*, "I personally am opposed to vaccines." There is even an encampment newspaper, titled (to the *Post's* delight) the *Occupied Washington Times*, after one of the *Post's* competitors.

THE SCRAPBOOK should explain, at this point, that the Occupy D.C. encampment on McPherson Square, a few blocks north of the White House, is pretty much as readers might imag-

ine it to be: a motley assortment of homeless, aging hippies, college anarchists, suburban radicals, schizophrenics, and guys who line up for free food. Campers have descended on political gatherings around town, assaulting little old ladies and blocking traffic at will, and even driving McPherson Square's resident family of mallard ducks to distraction. Not to put too fine a point on it, the smell is discernible a block away, and small children are living in tents as the weather descends to the freezing point. And yet, as with Occupy Wall Street in Manhattan, the civic fathers in the nation's capital seem inclined to



permit this unlawful encampment on public property—an appropriation of a much-appreciated urban refuge in downtown Washington—to continue indefinitely.

If readers of THE SCRAPBOOK guessed that the *Post* had chronicled Occupy D.C. in order to lampoon it, or to draw attention to its more disturbing aspects, guess again. The Style package featured a long essay by Philip Kennicott, cultural critic for the paper, who has nothing but admiration to report: The commune is a hopeful symptom of the new urbanism, he explains, and has accomplished "what so many planners, designers and architects strive for but fail to achieve: They have 'activated' the urban core."

Its anti-consumerist ethos, its impatience with the media and its love of theatrical intervention in city life

make it a direct heir of the Situationists, a radical European avant-garde collective begun in the late 1950s with ideas that remain influential today.

And so on.

THE SCRAPBOOK begs to differ. The urban core around McPherson Square has been exceedingly "activated" for decades, situated as it is in the middle of the city (not far from the *Post* headquarters, as it happens), and full of office workers, merchants, churches, restaurants, and structures of various sizes, styles, and dimensions. It may be unfortunate to some that the neighborhood has not been activated in accordance with the principles of the Situationists; but the blunt fact is that its longtime residents and denizens are not especially keen on the "theatrical intervention" of these hostile strangers in their midst.

Indeed, THE SCRAPBOOK is half-tempted to assemble a few fellow ex-subscribers to the paper and stage a "theatrical intervention" in the *Post* newsroom, or perhaps at Philip Kennicott's residence, in accordance with Occupy D.C. practice.

Which leads to a final inquiry: Who, in the editorial/managerial hierarchy of the *Washington Post*, could possibly have imagined that this celebration of the odious, malodorous, and deliberately obnoxious Occupy movement would appeal to the taxpaying citizens of Metropolitan Washington, who must contend with its unwelcome presence, and might actually be tempted to purchase their newspaper? The *Post* and its parent company recently suffered an unprecedented decline in circulation and income. Is there any mystery why? ♦

## Tomcat of the Senate

The late Ted Kennedy was often referred to as the "lion of the Senate"—perhaps because this sounded better than (the far more apt) "tomcat of the Senate." *Star Wars* actress Carrie

Fisher tells of her encounter with Kennedy in her new memoir, *Shockaholic*. Straight out of rehab in 1985, Fisher found herself on a date with former senator Chris Dodd, D-Countrywide, who was then single.

Luckily for Fisher, Kennedy

joined the couple for dinner. That may sound like an ominous scenario, but 1985 happens to be the same year, as reported by the late, great Michael Kelly, that Kennedy threw a waitress, Carla Gaviglio, onto a table, breaking several glasses in the process, before

depositing her on Dodd's lap and sexually assaulting her.

On this particular evening Fisher got to witness the Camelot charm firsthand:

Suddenly, Senator Kennedy, seated directly across from me, looked at me with his alert, aristocratic eyes and asked me a most surprising question. "So," he said, clearly amused, "do you think you'll be having sex with Chris at the end of your date?"

The comment left Dodd with "an unusual grin hanging on his very flushed face." Fisher found herself unpersuaded by Kennedy's attempt to play wingman, and rather explicitly declined to engage in relations with Dodd that evening.

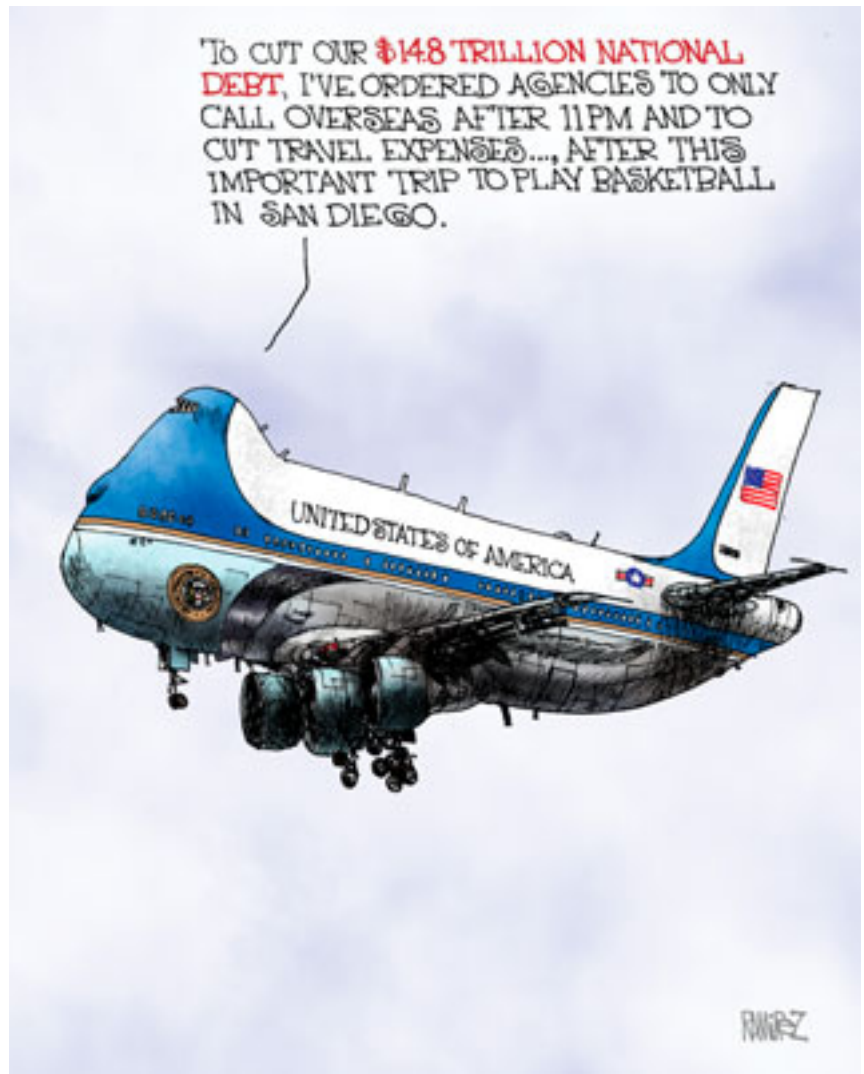
Still, it took more than that to deflate Kennedy's sense of entitlement. Kennedy pressed on: "Would you have sex with Chris in a hot tub?" Senator Kennedy asked me, perhaps as a way to say good night?" Fisher writes. "I'm not good in water," I told him.

We'd laugh at Fisher's deserved reputation as an acid wit, if it weren't a pungent reminder of how Kennedy's conduct toward women was excused and covered up his entire life. ♦

## Always Look on the Bright Side

“Are you optimistic or pessimistic about America's future?” asks our friend and colleague John Podhoretz in the November issue of *Commentary*, the august journal he edits. He solicited answers from 41 symposiasts, who replied with a diversity of approach and richness of reflection about the nation and its prospects. Among the contributors who should be familiar to our readers are Charlotte Allen, Paul Cantor, James W. Ceaser, Yuval Levin, Harvey Mansfield, Rich Lowry, and James Q. Wilson. And—we hasten to add, with an eye to our job security!—we particularly liked the effort from the guy down the hall, our editor William Kristol. Here's a taste of his contribution:

Post-9/11, and post-financial crisis, and post-postmodernism, the range



of possible outcomes seems amazingly wide and the odds on any of them strikingly indeterminate. I suspect our thinking about the future isn't yet radical enough, either analytically or prescriptively. . . . So should one be optimistic or pessimistic? God knows. But I do know that conservatives—indeed all friends of political liberty and American greatness—should, in the short term, be agonistic. They need to fight. Fight to defeat President Obama in 2012. Then fight in 2013 to repeal Obamacare, to rebuild our defenses, to restore U.S. credibility abroad, and to establish fiscal, regulatory, and monetary sanity at home. . . . Then the agenda gets more ambitious and less determinate. But more interesting.

If you want to be pushed to think more about that interesting agenda,

read the symposium—and subscribe to *Commentary* (or download its new iPad app). ♦

## Joe Frazier, 1944-2011

The death of ex-heavyweight champion Joe Frazier last week reminded THE SCRAPBOOK less of Smokin' Joe's tenure in the ring—which was impressive by any standard—than of the conundrum posed by his famous rival, Muhammad Ali. Any recounting of Frazier's career, which involved three storied bouts with Ali, must include descriptions of Ali's habit of taunting his opponents with racial epithets. Joe Frazier, he would say, was "ignorant," "ugly," "dumb," "a gorilla," and worst of all, an "Uncle Tom."

In the words of Matt Schudel's excellent obituary in the *Washington Post*, "Frazier, who had admired Ali, was baffled and insulted by what he considered a betrayal of the brotherhood of boxers." But of course, that was Ali's intent: The dancing and the doggerel and the racist invective were a psychological ploy to undermine his opponents. He didn't necessarily mean it personally; it was just business.

That was not the way Joe Frazier saw it, and to the end of his life, he was mystified by his fate in the popular culture. Frazier, a poor boy from rural South Carolina whose first job was holding nails for his one-armed father to hammer, was regarded with disdain by sportswriters and wannabe pugilists—Norman Mailer, Pete Hamill, Jack Newfield—who swooned at the sight of Muhammad Ali. If you visited the Frazier training camp you would find it was populated almost exclusively by working-class African Americans; drop by Ali's and you might bump into Woody Allen.

To be sure, it's a puzzlement. If

any other modern boxer had counted among his weapons the habit of hurling racial taunts at opponents—complicated, in this instance, by Frazier's dark complexion and Ali's light one—he would rightly have been cast into oblivion. But Ali's behavior, ranging from draft-dodging to membership in the Nation of Islam, seems to have earned him a permanent niche in the national pantheon. In 1998 the editor of the *New Yorker*, David Remnick, published a biography—*King of the World: Muhammad Ali and the Rise of an American Hero*—which remains the last word in sycophancy.

Frazier was embittered by the curious standards that made him the villain against the celebrity favorite, Ali. But he was also somebody who had risen from the humblest origins to considerable wealth and prominence, and kept a workmanlike attitude toward boxing and life in his Philadelphia retirement. He may have fallen short in the estimation of the Woody-Allen types, but was well aware of how little that counted for. ♦

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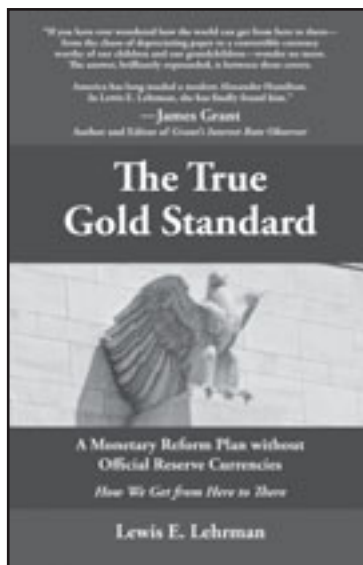
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## Occupied

C hug-a-lugging malt liquor and smashing things may be the Oakland way of expressing support for the Occupy Wall Street movement. But there are other ways. The movement's English sympathizers seemed to be asking what Jesus would do. In London last week I decided to visit them.

I have a soft spot for the English counterculture, maybe because I know it mostly through books. George Orwell once wrote that “the mere words ‘Socialism’ and ‘Communism’ draw towards them with magnetic force every fruit-juice drinker, nudist, sandal-wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, ‘Nature Cure’ quack, pacifist, and feminist in England.” Say what you will, Nature Cure quacks are not known for following Pol Pot. English protesters don't smash up Mercedes showrooms with lead pipes. They lean more towards hallucinogenic mushrooms, hard-to-name stringed instruments, infrequent bathing, and all-encompassing theories about sex. They are more hippies than vandals.

Rather than holler in front of some sooty stock exchange or central bank, the London Occupiers camped in front of St. Paul's Cathedral. In so doing, they occasioned a crisis of conscience in the Church of England. The tabloids urged clearing out the lowlifes. The church showed every inclination to oblige. But then Canon Giles Fraser resigned rather than participate in their dispersal. “I could imagine Jesus being born in the camp,” he said. To kick the protesters out would constitute “violence in the name of the Church.” Fraser won backers, inside the church and out. Conservative columnists soon began to remark that Jesus did have a pretty negative opinion of wealth.

The priests might have been lachrymose and out of their economic depth, but they were not wrong. Robert Frost said that home is where, when you go there, they have to take you in. A church, similarly, is where, when you complain about injustice, they have to listen to you. It seemed a small miracle that, through all the cant and fashion-obsession that gets



knocked into young people's heads nowadays, they had found their way to that place.

Hearing me enthuse this way, an English friend asked: “Are you quite sure they chose the spot in front of the church because it was a church?” He was right to be skeptical. The protesters, I discovered when I went to visit, had wanted to go to Paternoster Square, a pedestrian shopping area. But it turned out to be owned by Mitsubishi. Unencumbered by Anglo-Saxon hippie anguish, the company asserted its property rights and told the campers to beat it. So they wandered next-door—to St. Paul's.

The tent city they set up was not the kind that the Joads or the Bonus Marchers lived in. It was more like the Phillips Exeter Nature Club summer reunion on Mount Washington, with high-end camping tents kept clean as a whistle. As striking as the

lack of dirt was the paucity of genuine economic protest. The campers were fighting for the same causes you would have seen at a European Social Forum 10 years ago. There were the Kurdistan Workers' party people with their quotations from Abdullah Öcalan. There were Palestine people. There were people demanding something on behalf of sex workers. (Not the 40-hour week, as I recall.) The finance crisis was a pretext for taking to the streets.

I had been given the name of a press contact, but she was off at Julian Assange's trial. So a well-mannered 17-year-old from North London walked me around. We went to various tents and sheds—to the GA, or General Assembly, which met at 1 and 7 P.M. daily; to the kitchen tent, which served 500-700 meals a day; to the T-shirt-making tent that two Chinese guys had set up days before. (The camp was so advanced, it already had its own sweatshop.) My friend was going to regret going back to his fancy school in a couple weeks, he said, but his parents would be upset if he didn't.

When I asked him about the church, he introduced me to a skinny, bespectacled, bearded fellow, the kind of ringleader who crops up at all these “nonhierarchical” gatherings.

“So how do you get along with the church?” I asked.

“The what?” replied Ringleader.

“The church.”

“Why's everyone going on about the church?”

“Well, I mean, in making your case to a body that—”

“This is bigger than the church, mate.”

“Well,” I continued, “the gospel—”

At that point Ringleader remembered he had a meeting. I saw him a few minutes later checking his email in Starbucks.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

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# Liberals Playing to Type

In April 2008, days after saying that voters in western Pennsylvania were inclined to cling to religion and guns out of bitterness, Senator Barack Obama sat down for an interview with the editorial board of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* to try to fix some of the damage his remark had done to his presidential campaign. With exceptional frankness, he told the paper's editors that what troubled him most about his off-handed comment was that it risked confirming some damaging stereotypes about liberals—stereotypes rooted in Democratic excesses of the past that the party had been trying mightily to overcome for decades. Former President Bill Clinton “deserves some credit for having corrected some of those excesses,” Obama said, and he would hate to see that work undone, and liberals once again caricatured.

Three and a half years later, it is safe to say those old stereotypes have made a comeback, because the old excesses have too. In fact, at least on the domestic front, the age of Obama has been a kind of procession of the postwar era's major liberal clichés, as one familiar leftist type after another has come out of retirement to remind American voters why liberals have always made them nervous.

First and foremost has been the liberal big spender. Obama began his tenure with a massive \$800 billion “stimulus” bill consisting largely of payoffs to traditional Democratic constituencies and investments in assorted pet projects of the left. It was a model of pork and inefficiency, and a sign of things to come. In the subsequent three years, the large national debt Obama inherited has roughly doubled in size, domestic discretionary spending has increased by 25 percent (even without counting the stimulus), and we have experienced the three largest annual deficits in American history. Even this year, as the president has been dragged kicking and screaming into deficit-reduction negotiations with congressional Republicans, he proposed a budget that would further increase the deficit and debt.

Much of this spending has been advertised as intended to spur the flagging economy, and on this front we have seen the reappearance of a second liberal type: the incompetent economist. Courtesy of Jimmy Carter in particular, liberals came to be identified with an economics of stagnation and decline. Bill Clinton did a lot to eradicate that impres-

sion, but Barack Obama has revived it. Since Obama took office, unemployment has averaged 9.3 percent, and economic growth has been anemic despite enormous measures intended to improve both. Repeated promises of a strong recovery around the corner have contributed to an impression of hapless incompetence, and the public's expectations regarding the economy are now more pessimistic than they have been since the late 1970s, while (in large part as a result) overall faith in government is at record lows.

Yet even amid such dismal public trust in the state, we have seen the reemergence of the liberal technocratic micromanager—a third old liberal type. An explosion of regulatory discretion and the birth of several large new public programs have revealed an extraordinary faith in bureaucratic administration among today's Democrats. It is of course most powerfully evident in Obamacare, with its vast array of interlocking rules and programs overseen by an army of waiver-granting clerks, and its board of 15 philosopher-accountants setting prices. The best and brightest of the Kennedy and Johnson eras could not have dreamed of being trusted with such powers, let alone with a trillion dollars to spend.

But that spending should not worry us, we are told, because yet another liberal type is on the scene to see that it's covered: the big taxpayer, who is never far behind the big spender. The tax burden imposed by Obamacare alone comes to roughly \$770 billion over ten years, but that is just the beginning. There was a time when Democrats ran away from the mantle of the party of tax increases, but by this past summer the administration and congressional Democrats had put higher taxes at the top of their list of fiscal priorities. They now insist quite openly that no further budget deals will be possible if taxes are not raised.

Of course, they also insist that those higher taxes will be drawn exclusively from wealthier Americans, and so have called up still another old friend: the class warrior. These days, President Obama travels the country arguing that the rich have done too well at the expense of all other Americans and should be made to give more to the government—though, to blunt the attack (and to get around the inconvenient fact that his own net worth is estimated at



more than \$10 million), he has added the unusual twist of including himself among the moneyed interests. “How can we slash funding for education and clean energy before we ask people like me to give up tax breaks we don’t need and didn’t ask for?” he asked in a speech in July.

This populist posture, however, is easily undermined by perhaps the most prominent liberal type of our own time—the cultural elitist, whom Obama did not really have to recall from retirement at all. This was the type so thoroughly embodied by John Kerry in 2004. It was the type that Obama exhibited when he shared his opinion of the religious and cultural attachments of western Pennsylvanians in 2008. And it has shown itself again and again in the president’s unguarded moments since—perhaps most notably when he asserted from the White House podium that a police officer in Cambridge, Massachusetts, acted “stupidly” when he arrested Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates for disorderly conduct in 2009. In that moment of profound irresponsibility, Obama reminded Americans of what has so often unnerved them about modern liberals, from the riotous counterculture of the 1960s through today’s NPR snobs.

Indeed, the cultural stereotypes of the left have long been more powerful, and more harmful to liberals, than even the political and economic stereotypes. And now, as the fourth year of the Obama administration approaches, we find ourselves confronted with the reincarnation of

perhaps the most damaging liberal type of all: the snarky, pseudo-alienated, disheveled young protester. There is much to complain about regarding Wall Street and its cozy relationship with the government, but the Occupy Wall Street protesters do not seem to have a clear idea of what that complaint might be, or what should be done about it. They seem increasingly to give vent, instead, to a vague unfocused ennui, unaware that their bizarre reenactment of their professors’ wistful exaggerations of the 1960s threatens to offend a great many Americans whose cultural memories extend further back than the invention of the iPod.

As the Occupy Wall Street movement has gradually turned ugly in recent weeks, the Democrats who had earlier associated themselves with the protests have no doubt begun to recognize the peril in which they have put themselves and their party by even tacitly encouraging the resurrection of this most disagreeable liberal type. They have yet to fully grasp, however, just how much damage the simultaneous reemergence of so many harmful and unpleasant aspects of the modern left may yet do to the Democrats in 2012.

A Gallup poll published this month showed that only 21 percent of Americans consider themselves liberals. The rest of the country might well put up with liberals in power now and then, but not if the left insists on constantly reminding us why, to coin a phrase, we are the 79 percent.

—Yuval Levin

## Hiring Our Heroes Is the Right Thing—and the Smart Thing—to Do

**By Thomas J. Donohue**

President and CEO  
U.S. Chamber of Commerce

This Veterans Day, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and businesses across America highlighted one of the most tangible ways to honor our veterans: meaningful employment opportunities.

Nationwide, 1 million veterans are out of work. A staggering 27% of young veterans aged 18 to 24 are unemployed. And as forces are drawn down in Iraq and Afghanistan, tens of thousands of servicemembers will separate from the military and enter the civilian workforce. We must welcome these heroes home to an open, robust job market and work to stem the rising tide of veterans’ unemployment.

The case for hiring our heroes is an easy one. They have sacrificed for our nation, and our nation should honor their sacrifices with opportunities. But it isn’t just the right thing to do—it’s also the smart thing.

Veterans are disciplined and have proven their work ethic through military service. They’ve received world-class technical training and are able to lead and work on a team. They are flexible, adaptive, and quick problem solvers. In short, they are very attractive job candidates.

What’s more, there is a widening skills gap in America that veterans are uniquely positioned to fill. In fact, 90% of military occupations are directly transferable to the private sector. But one of the biggest challenges facing veterans is demonstrating *how* the skills they’ve honed in the military are transferable to civilian work. For example, a chief petty officer who serves as a cook on a Naval ship must be an adept inventory manager and logistician to do his job well. That’s a skill set highly sought after in the private sector—and one that isn’t always easy to come by in applicants.

In an effort to link these qualified job seekers with top-level employment, the U.S. Chamber is partnering with state and

local chambers and veterans groups to hold 100 Hiring Our Heroes job fairs across the nation. The Hiring Our Heroes program has already connected more than 55,000 veterans and military spouses with more than 2,500 employers in 37 states. More than 3,400 have gotten jobs so far. And we’re just getting started.

We’ve established a private sector Veterans Employment Advisory Council to bring together America’s largest employers from across all industries and sectors to generate job-creation ideas for veterans. We’re also launching a nationwide grassroots campaign to get small businesses in on the action.

From top to bottom, the business community stands ready to honor those who have served us with what they rightly deserve—good jobs and a bright future.



**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**  
Comment at  
[www.chamberpost.com](http://www.chamberpost.com).

# Obama ♥ the Big Guys

Big government, big labor, and big business in bed together

BY FRED BARNES



By his own account, President Obama is the champion and protector of the little guy. He said last week he wants no one left “in a second-class status in this United States of America.” He’s “determined” to “make sure that nobody out there is going bankrupt just because somebody in their family is getting sick.” He’s committed to making Washington “responsive to the needs of people, not the needs of special interests [and] not just people who are hurting now, but also responsive to future generations.” Obama identifies himself with the 99 percent.

Yet the winners in the nearly three years of Obama’s presidency are the big guys—big business, big labor, and big government. Corporate profits have reached record levels. The influence of the biggest labor unions

has surged in Washington, where it matters most. The federal government has grown in size and reach.

Meanwhile, the weak economy has hurt small business, the country’s number one job creator. Temporary tax breaks haven’t helped, and the threat of new taxes and a fresh barrage of regulations have put a crimp in expansion and hiring. Big business isn’t expanding or hiring much either. A headline in *Slate* reflected this: “More Profits, Fewer Jobs.”

Labor leaders have entrée at the White House and federal departments and agencies as never before. The most frequent visitor to the White House in Obama’s first year was Andy Stern of the Service Employees International Union. The president delayed trade treaties with South Korea, Panama, and Colombia until they were altered to satisfy labor officials. If Obama understands that higher levels of unionization are

associated with greater joblessness, he’s never let on.

Big government is a cliché that’s all the more true in the Obama era. Federal employment grew by 140,800 in Obama’s first two years, and the clout of federal officialdom has increased substantially. The Environmental Protection Agency has mounted a regulatory offensive the business community and Republicans have challenged but failed to halt. Obamacare, scheduled to go fully into effect in 2014, would give Washington control over the way health care is dispensed, financed, and regulated—not a takeover, but close to it.

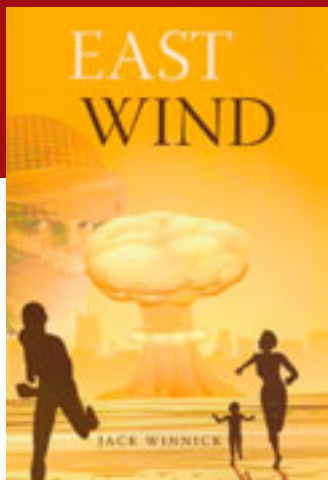
“If you are big in today’s Washington, you lead a charmed life,” Washington consultant David Smick says.

In Obama’s case, there’s more to the gap between what he professes and what his administration has produced than meets the eye. Yes, his hypocrisy is breathtaking. But it

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

GARY LOCKE

# When terrorists threaten to blow up American cities...



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represents the way he prefers to govern. Dealing with a few big institutions, even if they are dinosaurs, is easier than consulting more widely. So is relying on government to remedy every national ill, rather than letting markets, private groups, and individuals play pivotal roles.

"What an irony for an administration that claims populist roots," Smick says. "Policy prescriptions for the most part use the top-down approach. Bring out the GE guy and various big labor bosses to deal with the jobless nightmare when the bulk of the solution involves fostering small business start-ups."

Jeffrey Immelt, General Electric's CEO, happens to be chairman of Obama's Council on Jobs and Competitiveness. GE is famous for having paid no corporate income taxes in 2009 and 2010 and shipping thousands of jobs overseas. The council's membership consists of 23 corporate chiefs, two labor leaders, one economist, one biologist, and zero representatives of small business.

For contributions to his reelection campaign, Obama has tapped the segment of big business he's referred to as "fat cat bankers": Wall Street. According to the *Washington Post*, he has raised more from financiers and bankers than all of the Republican presidential candidates combined. He's raised more at Bain Capital than Mitt Romney, who cofounded the firm.

Wall Street has reason to be grateful. "During Obama's tenure, Wall Street has roared back, even as the broader economy has struggled," Zachary Goldfarb of the *Washington Post* wrote last week. "Wall Street firms . . . earned more in the first two and a half years of the Obama administration than they did during the eight years of the George W. Bush administration."

Smaller community banks haven't fared as well. Wall Street banks have the manpower to comply with new restrictions endorsed by Obama and passed by Congress. Small banks don't. Big banks are thriving while interest rates are near zero. The

loan business of small banks suffers because of these rates.

At the same time, corporations are sitting on nearly \$2 trillion amassed during the Obama era. If invested, the money would surely stir economic growth and job creation. But Obama has refused to remove impediments to investment, chiefly future tax hikes and regulations.

Organized labor is also a big-time funder of Obama's campaign, as you might expect given the president's sensitivity to every need of big unions. He's turned the National Labor Relations Board into a knee-jerk advocate of the most extreme pro-union positions. And his Labor Department no longer requires labor leaders to disclose many specifics of their expenditure of union money. This hamstringing government oversight and leaves union members in the dark.

In Obama's strengthening of big government, the biggest beneficiaries are unelected bureaucrats. They're unleashed. The new health care law would create 159 new boards, commissions, or programs, including the Independent Payment Advisory Board with power to decide what Medicare pays for and, by extension, what private insurance companies cover. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was created with sweeping authority over how money is loaned to consumers. The bureau is empowered to write its own rules and decide its budget without depending on Congress for funding. The Federal Reserve delivers the money.

Last week, Obama veered from his top priority with unemployment at 9 percent: more jobs. A Canadian company plans to hire as many as 20,000 workers to build an oil pipeline from the province of Alberta to Texas. Its application, pending since 2008, has sparked growing protests by environmental activists. Obama promises to decide personally whether to approve the pipeline. And last week, he took a preliminary step, delaying the decision until after the 2012 election. So for now, the little guy lost. The winner: big green. ♦

# Losing the Working Class

As Ohio goes . . . ?

BY HENRY OLSEN

Last week's election indicates that the GOP marriage with the white working class is on the rocks. That's bad news, since the epic Republican landslide in 2010 was fueled by record-high margins among these voters. It's doubly bad for the GOP frontrunner, multimillionaire Mitt Romney, who is already struggling to connect with non-college grads in the primaries. If white working-class independents need to be wooed to win in 2012—and they do—Republicans need to ask themselves: Is Romney the right man to do the wooing?

As in any troubled relationship, the cause of the GOP's difficulties is simple: failure to listen to the other's needs. On issue after issue, the opinions of the GOP's conservative base are out of step with those of white working-class independents. Rather than grasp this fact, however, many Republican political leaders have listened solely to the base and ignored the other partner in the marriage.

The chief example is the Ohio referendum that repealed the GOP's elimination of public-sector unions' collective bargaining rights. Properly recognizing that public-sector unions have driven up compensation to unaffordable levels, union reform was a top priority of the GOP base. Ohio voters, however, disagreed by a 61-39 percent margin.

A close examination of the results shows how widespread the repudiation was. Repeal was narrowly endorsed in only six counties, all strongly Republican. Everywhere else, the margin of repeal was high. Turnout was also high,

about 90 percent of the 2010 total, and slightly skewed to Republican regions of the state. In a state where half the voters are whites without a college degree, the conclusion is inescapable: The white working-class independents who voted en masse for Ohio Republicans 12 months ago nearly unanimously rejected the state GOP's top priority. Since no Republican has ever been elected president without carrying Ohio, that's a bad sign.

Nor is Ohio an isolated example of the GOP and white working class's failure to communicate. The results from April's Wisconsin judicial election, a proxy war on Wisconsin's collective bargaining reform, showed strong GOP falloff in white working-class areas. Republicans also lost a special election in New York's 26th Congressional District because white working-class voters backed a populist third-party candidate. Republicans lost a seat in the New Jersey state legislature last week despite Gov. Chris Christie's popularity. They barely took control of the Virginia state senate.

This is happening because the differences between white working-class independents and the GOP's conservative base are becoming too substantial to ignore. The GOP base voter believes the deficit is as large a problem as the economy; the white working-class independent does not. The GOP base voter believes cutting entitlements is necessary to cut the deficit and that taxes on the rich should not be raised; the white working-class independent disagrees. The GOP base voter wants to stay in Iraq and Afghanistan; the white working-class independent wants to come home. The GOP base voter scorns Occupy Wall Street; the white

working-class independent thinks the Occupiers have something of a point.

In the past, Republican politicians would respond to such differences by avoiding areas of disagreement. But that option is no longer possible. Avoiding the deficit now means America will turn into Italy later. Conservative Republicans need to understand why white working-class independents disagree with them. They need to see if there is a way to bring the white working class on board.

Even if Republicans find the right message, though, a messenger has to be able to deliver it. That's the Democrats' problem right now: President Obama is saying what white working-class independents want to hear—they just don't find him credible.

Which brings us to Mitt Romney. Is he the man to court white working-class independents, or is he the GOP's Obama, a man unable to connect with the voters he needs?

Early indications are not inspiring. While Governor Romney did well among Massachusetts white working-class independents in his 2002 victory, in the 2008 primaries he failed to make much of an impression among Republicans with a similar profile. His support was noticeably skewed to the affluent suburbs populated by college-educated voters. The polls in the 2012 race continue to show he runs well behind more conservative competitors among the non-college educated.

One could dismiss this and argue that these Republican voters will ultimately back whomever the party nominates. But a recent *Wall Street Journal* poll confirms that Romney's problem extends to white working-class independents as well. The poll, released last week, found that an unnamed generic Republican beats President Obama among the white working class by 12 points, 48 percent to 36 percent. Paired with Romney, however, Obama runs even at 44 percent.

Despite all their advantages, Republicans won only 52 percent of the popular vote in the House last year. They achieved this total because of their record-high 63 percent to 33 percent margin of victory among the white

*Henry Olsen is a vice president at the American Enterprise Institute.*

working class. In other words, if the Republican nominee's share of the white working-class vote slips below 60 percent, there is virtually no chance he will get a majority of the national popular vote in 2012. If the share slips closer to McCain's 58 percent in 2008, Obama's reelection is assured.

There is still time for the GOP leadership and Romney to recognize the problem and act. Failure to do so, however, will mean Republicans are placing all their 2012 eggs in the anti-Obama basket. That's a highly leveraged bet for a traditionally risk-averse party to make. ♦

# A Test Drive for Obamacare

## Michigan's auto insurance nightmare.

BY ELI LEHRER

When Sam Howell woke up a year after a car accident left him in a coma, doctors believed the St. Charles, Michigan, man would never walk, talk, or eat solid food again. They were wrong, the *Saginaw News* reports. With care from his mother, a nurse, and a team of specialists, the 25-year-old can now walk, throw a shot put (he holds a record for disabled athletes), and even dance a bit.

The medical bills for his complex rehabilitative care totaled more than \$700,000 for the first three months, and thanks to Michigan's unique automobile insurance system, his ordinary auto insurance policy covered all of them. If his mother had wanted to be paid for her time caring for her son, the state insurance fund would even have sprung for that.

It's a story with a happy ending. As Republicans in the Michigan legislature consider bills to change the state's auto insurance system, its defenders haven't been shy about trotting out Howell and others like him. But such stories don't speak to the system's serious problems.

For all the genuine good it does for people like Howell, Michigan's auto insurance system has collapsed entirely

in parts of the state. Major causes of the system's ills—exploding costs, the failure of an “individual mandate” to provide universal coverage, and the high prevalence of fraud—serve as portents for the direction of the nation's health care system and rejoinders to favorite shibboleths of both left and right.

Some background on Michigan's system first. Like 11 other states, Michigan requires all auto insurance to be offered on a “no fault” basis, and, like all states, it imposes an individual mandate to buy coverage or otherwise show financial responsibility for the consequences of one's driving. When individuals or their cars sustain damages in auto accidents, Michigan residents file claims with their own auto insurance companies rather than trying to bill the at-fault party's insurer or filing a tort claim. (This is the way health insurance works too.)

Unlike auto policies sold in other states, which rarely cover more than \$100,000 in medical bills before asking private health insurance, families, and government programs to pick up the tab, Michigan requires all auto insurance policies to include *unlimited* medical coverage, just as all U.S. health care policies will have to do starting in 2014. Insurers aren't directly on the hook for unlimited benefits since a special tax on each policy, currently \$145 per

year, goes into a fund that covers claims above \$480,000.

Michigan statutes and case law force the system on everyone. Paying into an uninsured motorists' fund or posting a bond can't substitute for auto insurance in Michigan, as it can in some other states. The state's very high bar for tort cases, raised even further by a 2004 state supreme court decision, means that almost no one injured in an auto accident can even have a day in court. (People who have serious or costly injuries in other “no fault” states can almost always sue in practice.)

Not surprisingly, this system costs a lot even though it operates largely without the trial lawyers who are the *bête noire* of insurers everywhere else. The website *Insure.com* finds that in 2011 Michigan auto insurance quotes averaged \$2,541 a year. This was the highest, by far, among the country's big states and more than individual health insurance policies cost in some areas.

With that said, not everyone ends up worse off under the system. In a lightly populated part of Berrien County—a southwest Michigan locale that's home to the appliance maker Whirlpool, apple orchards, and many Chicagoans' summer cottages—a benefits-loaded, unlimited-medical-expenses two-car policy runs about a hundred dollars less than one with much scantier coverage in Northern Virginia.

But where crime, accidents, and fraud are bigger problems, the costs soar. The Insurance Information Institute reports that a typical single-car policy in Detroit costs more than \$5,100, more than a third of the city's per capita income of \$15,000. Rates in Flint and other similarly distressed cities are almost as high. As a result, the insurance market has collapsed in some parts of the state. The state's biggest auto insurer has 10 agents in Detroit (population 713,000) and 50 in more prosperous Grand Rapids (population 188,000).

Despite fines and mandates designed to encourage people to buy insurance, Michigan has one of the highest uninsured motorist rates in the country—almost 17 percent according to the Insurance Research Council.

*Eli Lehrer is vice president of the Heartland Institute.*

(States with larger uninsured motorist populations have large numbers of illegal immigrants and/or lax mandates.) And the Michigan numbers would look even worse if auto theft hadn't dropped, the state's shrinking, aging population hadn't brought down the accident rate, and severely cut-back police departments in the fiscally troubled state hadn't stopped generating records for many nonserious accidents.

Although state laws and enforcement procedures relating to insurance fraud differ so much as to make precise state-to-state comparisons difficult, it's clear that fraud is threatening to swamp the state's system. The National Insurance Crime Bureau reports that Michigan has seen its number of potentially fraudulent claims almost double since 2008. Michigan had almost as many suspect claims as vastly larger Texas.

Even relatively inexpensive claim types where fraud was virtually unknown a few years ago—broken auto glass, most prominently—have seen suspicious claims skyrocket more than 1,000 percent. (The state, which has cut its workforce deeply, just doesn't investigate most claims that insurers suspect.) There's no single cause for this, but one factor stands out. The existence of unlimited benefits from auto insurers makes it a lot more attractive and lucrative for the criminally inclined to bilk auto insurers, particularly since the government almost never pursues criminal charges against the individuals who work with the professional fraudsters.

But fraud isn't the only problem. The costs of legitimate automobile-related doctors' bills also have soared out of control. In Detroit, a single neck MRI that costs \$484 for Medicare and \$768 on the state's workers' comp fee schedule will run \$3,260 if an auto insurer picks up the bill. And reimbursement rate differentials for everything from emergency room visits to shoulder surgery are just as large. In 2010, auto-insurance-related medical costs were easily the highest in the country. The typical no-fault claim in Michigan ran a little over \$35,000, more than twice as high as in any other state. As a result, auto insurers

have advocated applying the workers' comp fee schedule to their claims. But they have faced vociferous opposition from nearly every medical lobby in the state—physicians' assistants to brain doctors to everyone in between—who form the core of the well-funded Coalition Protecting Auto No Fault.

Given that medical industries have actually grown and created jobs in Michigan even as every other sector in the state has shrunk, the hospitals and doctors have the upper hand in many cases. Indeed, the Coalition Protecting Auto No Fault, which forthrightly defends these sky-high payments as necessary to preserving the state's medical system and the jobs it creates, has even fought modest efforts that would let auto insurers audit bills.

There's at least some chance the forces opposing change have the majority of the population on their side. An effort to reform the system in the early 1990s—when the problems were far less serious—got overturned in a referendum. The legislation now pending includes provisions that would stop it from going directly before voters, and, despite near-universal Republican distaste for the current system at the highest levels, opponents seem to have the votes to stop even the Republican legislature from advancing aggressive reforms that would end unlimited benefits and impose a workers' comp fee schedule on medical providers.

Michigan's auto insurance system, of course, is far from a carbon copy of President Obama's health care reform plan. But its current ills could well presage the future of the health care system in ways that don't cater to any side's cherished myths. Conservatives should take heed that vastly reducing the involvement of lawyers in the system, as nearly all doctors have long wanted to do in health care, has proven utterly ineffective as a cost control measure. The same goes for faith that simple competition between providers will control costs: Michigan residents (like people almost everywhere else in the country) have many companies willing to sell them auto insurance in the individual market, but this competition has not produced affordable options.

There's even more for liberals to worry about: Michigan is also a place where an "individual mandate" to purchase a comprehensive benefits package has proven unsuccessful and where insurance mechanisms of any kind have collapsed in poor areas. And one major issue, the enormous recent increase in fraud, offers a caution for people of all political persuasions.

Not everything about Michigan's automobile insurance system is broken. Like the American health care system, it serves some clients exceptionally well. But the system is nonetheless a mess that will prove very hard to fix—and a warning to health care reformers of all ideologies. ♦

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# Brave Newt World

## Gingrich rising in Iowa.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

**I**'ve kind of liked Gingrich all along," says Jeff Walker as he waits for a candidate to appear at the warehouse headquarters of Giese Manufacturing here. "I liked him when he was speaker."

Walker, a self-employed, self-described social conservative from Dubuque, says he's undecided for the caucuses in January, but he has nothing but praise for Newt Gingrich.

Walker and the rest of the crowd haven't come to see Gingrich, though. This event is for Mitt Romney, who's visited the state only four times all year. While Romney has hovered at around 20 percent in Iowa polls since May (a consistent second place, with Herman Cain currently leading), Gingrich has been stuck in single digits for most of his campaign.

But Gingrich's persistence—he's made four trips to the state since October 1 alone—may be paying off. Republicans at this Romney event bring up Gingrich unprompted, almost always mentioning his reputation as an intelligent, conservative problem-solver.

"He's a really smart guy," says Walker. "I think he's the smartest guy in the group. I think he's well versed."

"I like Newt because he is full of facts," says Jim Sullivan, a small business owner from nearby Durango. "He knows what he's talking about."

At another Romney event at a water company in Davenport, retiree Allan Bruhn says he was impressed with Gingrich's 10-point plan for the

economy. "I like Gingrich," Bruhn says. "I heard him here in town. He sounds real good."

Bruhn suggests Romney and Gingrich would make a good ticket. Lyn Byard of Eldridge chimes in, "I'm going to go tell him"—motioning toward Romney—"to choose Newt."

How quickly things have turned around for Gingrich. It was just last May here in Dubuque that a Republican voter publicly berated him after his

appearance on *Meet the Press*, where the former House speaker criticized the Medicare reforms authored by Representative Paul Ryan and passed by the GOP House. "Get out now before you make a bigger fool of yourself," the voter said.

The *Meet the Press* fiasco, compounded by stories of lavish spending at Tiffany's and a

high-profile falling out with many of his longtime aides, nearly sank the Gingrich campaign by early summer. Since then, several quiet months of small events and a string of solid debate performances have kept Gingrich afloat.

Lately, a boost in the national polls—he's averaging 14 percent for a respectable third place—and a less pronounced rise in Iowa have increased Beltway chatter to the effect that Gingrich may take his turn, after Michele Bachmann, Rick Perry, and Herman Cain, as Romney's chief conservative challenger. A pair of national polls released Friday show Gingrich gaining: CBS News has Gingrich tied with Romney for second place, just behind Cain; McClatchy-Marist has Gingrich a close second, trailing Romney, while Cain fades to third.



Newt Gingrich

The buzz is apparent even out here, in Real America.

"He's coming up in the polls, they say," says Bruhn, who supported Huckabee in 2008 and thinks Gingrich could be the next surprise winner of the Iowa caucuses.

And of course, everyone loves Gingrich's performances in the televised debates. "I think he's the best debater," says Bill Vondran of Dubuque. Jeff Walker predicts "he'd be the best in a one-on-one debate with Obama."

"I'd love to see him debate Obama," Jim Sullivan says, his eyes brightening. "I would just *love* to see that."

But debating Obama means first winning the Republican nomination, an achievement that still looks out of reach for Gingrich unless he wins an early primary state like Iowa. "We're starting off behind the ball" in Iowa, campaign spokesman R.C. Hammond admits. "It's going to be a game of catch-up."

One problem is money. Hammond won't say if fundraising is improving, but last month the campaign reported over \$1 million in debt.

Hammond says Gingrich will have offices in Des Moines, Iowa City, and probably Sioux City in the runup to the caucuses, but the staff may be limited to "a half dozen" or so. Does Gingrich have plans to buy television and radio advertisements in the state's several media markets? The campaign has no comment, probably because the dearth of funds speaks for itself.

Other roadblocks abound. Gingrich may consider his years of experience in Washington and public policy an asset, but they produced a mixed record. His reign as speaker ended with a whimper after a near-coup within his Republican caucus forced him to resign. The Iowans who praise Gingrich now will no doubt soon be reminded that he supported liberal Republican Dede Scozzafava in a 2009 special election in upstate New York and appeared in a television commercial with Nancy Pelosi supporting mandatory carbon caps to fight global warming in 2008. And Iowa's socially conservative Republicans may have lingering doubts about the twice-divorced Gingrich.

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GAGE SKIDMORE

Yet Hawkeye Republicans seem to be giving Gingrich a second look at just the right moment. With the January 3 caucuses fast approaching, he may be gaining momentum in time to mount a respectable challenge to Romney. Gingrich and his wife will

be barnstorming the state for three days, starting on November 14. Still, the Gingrich campaign is dampening expectations.

“We want to have a strong showing in Iowa,” Hammond says. “But Iowa is the beginning.” ♦

# Powering Down

Federal regulation is killing energy development.

BY ADAM J. WHITE

American energy policy is increasingly defined in terms of what is prohibited, not what is promoted. Coal, nuclear, and natural “shale” gas all have been hampered by the current administration. And the last three weeks have offered two more examples of how America’s byzantine energy laws and policy deter innovation.

Last Thursday, President Obama and the State Department announced that they would delay indefinitely the president’s final decision on the proposed Keystone XL pipeline to transport Canadian oil to American markets, despite the State Department’s thorough report and conclusion that the project would cause no improper environmental impacts. And on October 28, a federal court of appeals dealt a surprising setback to Cape Wind, the long-awaited Cape Cod offshore wind farm, which will further delay a project that has been pending before federal regulators for over a decade.

At first glance, these two examples might seem an odd couple. Keystone XL is oil infrastructure denounced by climate-change activists; Cape Wind is clean power championed by the Sierra Club and others as an alternative to fossil fuels. But in fact the two projects are manifestations of the same worrisome trend. The nation’s ability to foster large-scale energy

innovation is severely undermined by a regulatory process that is too convoluted and rife with opportunity for partisan manipulation.

Of the two embattled projects, Keystone XL has dominated headlines in recent months, especially after opponents drew thousands of protesters to the White House in early November. The pipeline project could bring up to 830,000 barrels of Canadian crude oil daily—i.e., more than 4 percent of U.S. daily oil consumption—across the Saskatchewan-Montana border, through several other states en route to Oklahoma and Texas.

The pipeline’s economic benefit to the United States is impressive: The Canadian Energy Research Institute estimates that construction and operation of the Keystone XL pipeline would increase our gross domestic product by more than \$200 billion between 2010 and 2035, and support close to 85,000 U.S. jobs in 2020.

What has aroused protests is not the pipeline’s immediate effect on the states it crosses; rather, the controversy is due to what lies at the Canadian end of the pipe: “oil sands,” a combination of clay, sand, water, and bitumen, from which crude oil is extracted. Oil sands—or “tar sands,” the detractors’ preferred name despite the actual lack of tar—face two main criticisms: First, there are the surface effects of the mining, including the removal of landscape and the creation of “tailing ponds” where sludge is deposited.

Second, oil sands result in more greenhouse gas emissions than conventional oil drilling—perhaps 5 to 15 percent more carbon dioxide, according to Daniel Yergin’s new book, *The Quest*.

The responsibility for approving or rejecting this pipeline project ultimately falls to the president, under the peculiar legal framework governing international oil pipelines. No statute assigns a federal agency jurisdiction to approve or disapprove international oil pipelines, and since 1968 presidents have filled Congress’s silence by asserting their own authority over this form of international commerce.

The president (or, by delegation of his power, the secretary of state) ultimately determines whether an international oil pipeline will receive a “presidential permit.” The State Department, in turn, reviews the pipeline’s environmental impacts, preparing a detailed “environmental impact statement.” For Keystone XL, the State Department prepared an eight-volume report after consulting with 11 federal “cooperating agencies” (ranging from the EPA and the National Park Service to units of the Agriculture and Energy departments), various state agencies, Indian tribes, and Canadian officials, and after opportunity for public comment.

Keystone XL filed its permit application in September 2008. Three years later, the State Department issued its final environmental impact statement, recommending that the project be approved—or, in the parlance of environmental impact statements, declaring that State “does not regard the No Action Alternative to be preferable to the proposed Project.” And on the greenhouse gas question specifically, State conducted “a thorough review of recent scientific literature on greenhouse gas life-cycle emissions for Canadian oil sands crude” and concluded that the project would result in an additional 3 to 21 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually—i.e., no more than one third of one percent of the annual U.S. carbon emissions.

Under ordinary circumstances, this should have marked the effective end of the discussion. But protests outside

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the White House promptly ensued, with participants responding to the State Department's thorough environmental impact statement with a banner announcing, "Obama: This Is Our Environmental Impact Statement." Critics also claim that the State Department's environmental review was corrupted by a third-party contractor with an alleged conflict of interest.

Reacting to the protests, President Obama intervened. Rather than allowing the State Department to make the final decision, pursuant to the governing executive order delegating power to Foggy Bottom, the president announced in early November that he would make the final decision, and perhaps not for "several months."

While couching his concerns in terms of environmental protection, the president's political motivations were obvious. The *Los Angeles Times*, in reporting that a final decision could be delayed until after the 2012 presidential election, observed that delay would allow the president "to at least temporarily avoid antagonizing either the unions that support the pipeline or the environmental activists who oppose it as President Obama gears up for his campaign."

Finally, on November 10, the president and State Department announced that they would delay a decision until at least 2013, in order to undertake a study of "potential alternative routes in Nebraska." Ostensibly, the delay would allow the State Department to consider the pipeline's potential effect on aquifers. But the State Department already reviewed that issue, in detail, in the environmental impact statement.

The president further stressed the need for "an open, transparent process that is informed by the best available science and the voices of the American people." But his remarks obscured the fact that the State Department's three-year review had been open and transparent: The final environmental impact statement included a 100-page appendix responding to public comments. And the process's scientific bona fides were not seriously in dispute. He may have wrapped his decision in the rhetoric

of science and good government, but President Obama was simply bowing to environmental activists' blunt demands for indefinite delay.

That outcome may be politically convenient for the Obama administration, but in the real world it imposes real costs. According to the corporate official overseeing the Keystone XL project, delays could cost the company \$1 million per day. And if the State Department presses for rerouting the pipeline, one analyst warned *Bloomberg*, Keystone XL's parent company would "abandon the project"—jeopardizing billions of dollars in economic growth and tens of thousands of new jobs.

In New England, some might joke that Keystone XL is getting off easy. For while Keystone's project has been mired in regulatory chaos for three years, the Cape Wind offshore wind power project is now in its tenth year of trial-by-bureaucrat. Since first applying for federal approval in 2001, Cape Wind endured three years of review by the Army Corps of Engineers, before Congress transferred jurisdiction over offshore wind to the Interior Department, which then began its own review. Five years later, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar finally approved the project, but only after eleventh-hour waffling comparable to President Obama's Keystone politicking. Along the way, Cape Wind fended off efforts at obstruction by state officials, federal legislators, and environmental activists.

Unfortunately for Cape Wind, even the Interior secretary's approval did not end the process. On October 28, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ruled that the Federal Aviation Administration, acting at Interior's request, had failed to study sufficiently the wind farm's possible effects on air traffic. The court vacated the FAA's study and remanded the matter to the FAA for another try.

Depending on how you count, the next round will be the FAA's fifth bite at the apple. FAA signed off on the project in early 2003. When that approval expired in late 2004, the FAA approved it again. Another review occurred in 2007, when Cape Wind heightened its planned 426-foot

wind turbines by a mere 14 feet. Two years later, the FAA terminated that review and began anew, to ensure that "all potential adverse effects are disclosed . . . and to ensure that there is no confusion to those desiring to provide comments."

Cape Wind commenters may not be "confused," but the rest of us should be. Looking at the regulatory obstacles confronting Cape Wind and Keystone XL—to say nothing of the regulatory mess that currently plagues the nascent shale gas industry—the public is left to wonder: How can any major infrastructure project be built today?

Peter Thiel, cofounder of PayPal, is among the worriers. Speaking recently on America's declining ability to innovate, Thiel argued that a primary obstacle to innovation has been environmentalism, which "has played a much bigger role than people like":

You are allowed to manipulate things in the world of bits but not in the world of stuff, because the world of stuff has environmental impacts. And so we've had tremendous progress in computers, as well as financial innovation, in the last forty years, but these were really the only things that one was permitted to do.

Similarly, author Neal Stephenson laments that "we have lost our ability to get important things done." Writing at *Wired.com*, he argues that the public's extreme aversion to risk-taking, coupled with bureaucratic inertia and over-lawyering, is "the true innovation-killer of our age." Looking at the state of energy regulation, it is hard not to agree.

The difference between yesteryear and today is startling. The Hoover Dam was built in just over five years, beginning with the government opening the bidding process in 1931, and ending with Interior Secretary Harold Ickes approving the finished dam in 1936. Cape Wind, by contrast, will celebrate its tenth year of federal review on November 22 with not a single completed wind turbine to show for its efforts, but a pile of regulatory paperwork almost as high as the Hoover Dam. ♦

# Obama's Iran Failure

Israel turns up the heat.

BY LEE SMITH

The Obama administration's Iran policy rested on three pillars—the peace process, engagement, and containment. The first would win the newly elected president credit with the Arab people of the Middle East and empower the Arab states to gather in a robust coalition against Tehran. As for the second, even if engagement failed to bring Iran back into the community of nations, it would prove to Washington's European allies and, more important, to Russia and China, that the Obama White House had gone the extra mile, which would, in turn, make containment possible.

All three efforts have now failed, which may explain why recent Israeli news reports suggest Jerusalem is moving toward a decision

about a military strike of some sort against Iran's nuclear program.

After more than half a year of relative quiet as the Arab Spring rolled through the Middle East, the Israeli government has helped shift the regional conversation back to Iran. It's hardly surprising that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak are reportedly in favor of a strike since their historical legacies might rest on how the Iranian issue is resolved. However, the fact that Israel's president Shimon Peres now calls military action "more and more likely" suggests that,

regardless of the eventual decision, Israel has embarked on a public diplomacy campaign intended to seize international attention.

Jerusalem has been aided in this by the release of the latest International Atomic Energy Agency report, which not only details the military intent of Tehran's nuclear program, but also exposes the U.S. intelligence community's 2007 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) as a politicized effort to downplay the threat. If the Obama administration could write off that NIE as someone else's embarrassment, it was forced to admit its own failure to engage Tehran when it announced indictments on October 11 in the Iranian plot to blow up the Saudi ambassador in Washington.



*Mansour Arbabsiar, the anti-Saudi plotter*

The Israelis saw that Washington was shaken by the plot, and while it is difficult to know how much their contribution to the debate over Iran was planned or just timed fortuitously, the administration has been galvanized. The State Department sent off a flurry of *démarches* to U.S. allies, which according to Pentagon sources contained the strongest statements they'd ever seen coming from State on the issue of Iran. To shore up its policy of containing Iran with regional clients, Washington now intends to provide the United Arab Emirates with 4,900 additional bunker-buster bombs, presumably

intended for Iran's nuclear facilities.

Don't expect any of this to quiet the talk from Jerusalem, though, for the simple reason that deterrence and containment aren't going to work with Iran. To date, the question of whether it is possible to deter Iran has centered on the rationality of the revolutionary regime. For instance, can a leadership that wishes to usher in the rule of the occulted, twelfth imam be convinced that a nuclear exchange is a bad idea? Iranian nuclear weapons, however, would be aimed not only at Israel, but also at the oil-producing Gulf Arab states, which is to say that while the regime in Tehran is ideological, it seems also to have a long-term strategic vision. Iran's economy is in shambles. The country exports nothing but energy resources, pistachios, and terror. The population is failing to reproduce, its birth rate having fallen in 20 years to the lowest ever recorded. But the hegemon of the Middle East, the United States, is weak. Therefore, Tehran can save its revolution by extending its imperial sway over the entire Middle East.

A more useful question, then, is whether Washington has the will to deter a nuclear Iran. As it happens, U.S. officials have already admitted, inadvertently, that the model used to deter and contain the Soviet Union is unworkable with Iran. During the Cold War, the several hundred thousand American troops stationed in Germany were conceived of as a trip-wire. But this is not how U.S. policymakers understand the standoff with Iran. Even as the Obama administration is exiting from Iraq, it contends that the withdrawal will be offset by a beefed up troop presence in Gulf states like Kuwait. But when Defense Secretary Leon Panetta warns, like many before him, that a strike on Iran "could have a serious impact on U.S. forces in the region," he reveals that Washington sees U.S. troops in the region not as a forward position against Tehran, but effectively as Iranian hostages. The U.S. forces there deter attacks on Tehran, not the other way round.

The notion that the Gulf Cooperation Council forces can be strengthened

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to balance the Iranians is at odds with the historical rationale for arms sales to Gulf Arab states. The Israelis get American weapons for use against American adversaries; the Arabs are sold U.S. munitions because it pleases them to have expensive new toys and it keeps U.S. production lines rolling. The Saudis may have convinced themselves that they rolled back the Iranians when they dispatched Gulf Cooperation Council forces to Bahrain in March, but all they managed to prove was that Arab armies and their weapons are typically turned against their own populations—which is why there was so much resistance recently to a \$53 million arms sale to Bahrain. Indeed, with the recent parade of Bahraini dignitaries through Washington, American policymakers cannot help but be dismayed by the fact that a vital U.S. strategic interest—the home port of the Fifth Fleet—has been entrusted to a gang of incompetents.

Administration officials may well believe they can deter a nuclear Iran—without figuring nonstate actors (and possible delivery mechanisms) like Hezbollah into the equation. But the fact that the Obama White House decided not to pursue further sanctions against the Iranians for the plot to kill the Saudi ambassador to Washington—an operation that might have killed hundreds of Americans—signals that the administration has no credible threat of force, not even against a non-nuclear Iran.

Accordingly, Israel may well escalate its public diplomacy campaign—and may move beyond diplomacy if it thinks a mortal threat is being ignored. There are options short of a full-scale bombing campaign that Jerusalem might take: an aerial strike on one facility, or even a ground operation designed by a defense minister obsessed with commando raids—anything that might make the international community, and especially the United States, take the Iranian threat seriously. Israel may not be able to destroy the Iranian nuclear program in its entirety by itself, but it might settle for less than that in the hopes of inspiring others to finish the job. ♦

# Reading IAEA in Tehran

The Iranian regime is proud of its nuclear program. **BY REUEL MARC GERECHT**

**R**eading the Iranian press last week after the International Atomic Energy Agency released its report on the Islamic Republic's nuclear program elicited a sense of déjà vu: It could have been the year 2002, when the Iranian opposition group Mujahedin-e Khalq (Holy Warriors for the Masses) revealed to the world the Natanz uranium enrichment facility. Back then, the clerical regime did not try to censor coverage of the Mujahedin's discovery in the domestic press. Last week, the Iranian press similarly regurgitated in detail Western reporting on the IAEA's revelations about nuclear weaponization.

The regime can, and usually does, set stringent guidelines on what the media can report. In 2001, when Mohammad Khatami's reformist government still influenced what could be printed, a sensitive censorship guide for book publishers got released as a book and became a minor bestseller. Its title gives a good idea of how the clerical regime likes to control what Iranians read: *Censorship: A review of 1,400 documents from the Office of Book Censorship*. This guide brilliantly reveals the regime's eccentricities. When it comes to internal politics, sex, and the machinations of foreigners, the Iranian censors have demanding standards. So when the ruling mullahs and their praetorians, the

Revolutionary Guards, decide to give the Iranian people full access to a Western discussion through officially approved media outlets, they do so for a reason.

In 2002 the regime allowed the Natanz revelations to be fully aired because doing so made the government, in particular Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, look good. Average Iranians, let alone the civilian elite, thought then, as they think now, that the Islamic Republic is far from a first-world country. In a land where quality control is almost nonexistent, where people who have any money always buy foreign-made goods, people expect little from their government. For a regime that had collapsed the country's living standards in just a few years to be capable, nevertheless, of building a gleaming, stainless-steel facility that could enrich uranium verged on the miraculous.

Before the 2009 presidential election made foreign journalists more aware that many Iranians do not love their government and can, quite easily, separate their deep patriotism from the aspirations of the ruling elite, the Western media—especially the BBC—loved to conflate Iranians' pride in technical nuclear achievement with a popular endorsement of the government's nuclear policy, if not the government itself.

Although Tehran had tried to conceal its nuclear ambitions (violating in so doing the Non-Proliferation Treaty, to which it is a party), it reversed gears after the Mujahedin-e Khalq's revelations. The regime adopted a new openness—IAEA inspectors were allowed to visit regularly and install cameras at Natanz

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—undoubtedly in part out of fear of George W. Bush, who'd taken down the Taliban and was preparing to invade Iraq. But Khamenei and the ruling elite also liked the attention.

Above all else, the supreme leader sees himself as the protector of the Islamic revolution. He is the Muslim paladin turning back the Westernization of his homeland and defying the West's great power, the United States. Uranium enrichment was and is an expression of Khamenei's and the Islamic Republic's religious virility.

It is impossible not to see the same emotions at play in the Iranian media's extensive coverage of the IAEA's latest revelations. The regime wants the Iranian people to know about its progress with nuclear triggers, explosive computer modeling, and ballistic-missile warheads. The regime is proud of these achievements.

Iran's foreign minister, Ali Akbar Salehi, conveyed this pride pithily just before the IAEA report was released. Formerly a senior nuclear official and undoubtedly a man familiar with the gap between what Iran says it's doing and what it's actually done, Salehi remarked: "Let them publish and see what happens." Tehran may well think that its public defiance of the IAEA is a crowd pleaser at home, and it probably is with the government's revolutionary base (perhaps 20 percent of the population). But Khamenei—whose personality and preferences increasingly dominate the regime—doesn't play primarily to the people; he plays to himself, to his Manichean division of the world.

Periodically, when the temperature rises in the West about Iran's nuclear program, some scholars and commentators focus on the supreme leader's supposed fatwa against nuclear weapons (it's bad for anyone to have them, especially bad for Muslims, absolutely *haram* to use one). Although Islamic scholars in Iran have debated the propriety of nukes, among political clerics

the question was settled in the early 1990s after a vigorous debate about whether Iran should proceed with a nuclear-weapons program. Led by Khamenei and Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani—then the major-domo of the mullah establishment and the man who in 1989 arranged Khamenei's succession as supreme leader—the ruling clergy decided to back the clandestine program. All of the revelations in the new IAEA report about nuclear triggers and warhead designs—rather strong proof that Khamenei hasn't had a religious problem with at least building and possessing a nuclear bomb—ought to tell Western observers that Khamenei's august political-religious office doesn't denote the veracity one might expect from saintly pope or worldly rabbi.

Reflexively, Westerners assume a certain probity in men of the cloth (despite a superabundance of evidence that churchmen too are sinners). For Iranian mullahs the assumption is woefully misplaced, at least when it comes to honesty (and sex). Iranians have never regarded clerics—except perhaps the most accomplished scholars—as ever being above sin. They are lawyers who, as the great poet Hafez famously remarked, "don't practice in private what they preach in public." Even so, public esteem for the clergy has probably fallen in 30 years of theocracy. It's a good guess that the assessment of the Emperor Charles V's ambassador to London of English sentiment towards their clergy is close to the truth in Iran: "Nearly all the people hate the priests."

The enormous disconnect between public attitudes and official rhetoric has introduced a pervasive surreality into the world of Iran's political clerics, who rule but no longer reign. To say that the Iranian governing elite are mendacious just doesn't capture the distance between words and deeds.

Khamenei's nuclear fatwa was not to be taken seriously. It was meant partly for Western consumption. More important, it reflected

the surreal Islam-vs.-the-West theater that is a never-ending spectacle in the Islamic Republic. America unleashed the atom bomb in war; the Islamic Republic wouldn't do such a thing. The West is overflowing with homosexuals; in Iran, as President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad informed the students of Columbia University in 2007, "We don't have that." Ahmadinejad, a man of considerable earthy Persian wit, probably has told innumerable homosexual jokes about the towns of Qazvin and Shiraz—a mainstay of Persian working-class humor. But at Columbia, at that moment, homosexuality in his homeland didn't exist. Ahmadinejad probably could have passed a polygraph test on the question.

The same for Khamenei on the nuclear issue. Khamenei lives in two worlds: In one, his minions work arduously to build nuclear weapons; in the other they do research on medical isotopes. In one, he sends his minions abroad to slaughter Jews in Argentina, blow up Americans at Khobar Towers, liaise with al Qaeda, and in all probability assassinate the Saudi ambassador in Washington, D.C.; in the other, he's defending the Palestinian people and all Muslims against aggressive Zionists, peacefully deploring the presence of American troops in Arabia, condemning the bigotry of Sunni extremists in Iraq and Afghanistan, and revealing to all the long track record of American terrorism inside Iran. Khamenei moves between these two worlds effortlessly, without friction, without awareness that he's crossed the border between fiction and fact.

The Iranian media's coverage of the IAEA report reflects Khamenei's most cherished conception of himself and his country. That conception is dangerous because it is insular, disconnected from and at odds with reality as understood in the West. When the supreme leader gets his hands on a nuclear weapon, this self-centeredness may get much worse. If the United States and the Islamic Republic ever go to war, this will surely be why. ♦

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# The Suicidal Passion

*Who is damaged more by anti-Semitism—Jews  
or those who organize politics against them?*

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BY RUTH R. WISSE

It now seems that one Jew is worth more than 1,000 Arabs—the rate of exchange established not by Israel, but by Hamas, and celebrated on the Arab street. The “prisoner swap” of more than a thousand Arab prisoners for the single Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, kidnapped five years ago and held in captivity for just this purpose, represents a gap between two civilizations that has been widening for over six decades with no signs of contraction in sight.

Arab leaders do not yet acknowledge that they sealed the doom of their societies in 1948 when they organized their politics against the Jewish state rather than toward the improvement of their countries. Like a great many autocrats, dictators, tyrants, and antiliberal rulers before them, the founders of the Arab League in 1945 found it convenient to mobilize against the Jews and against the competitive way of life they represent. Whereas Europeans were jolted by revelations of what came to be known as the Holocaust into awareness of the ruin anti-Semitism had wrought, Arab leaders saw in the Jews the same political opportunities that had enticed Germany. Anti-Semitism was the European ideology most eagerly imported and adapted to the Middle East.

Victims of this process have been slow to realize its debilitating effects. “What if Arabs had recognized the State of Israel in 1948?” asks Abdulateef Al-Mulhim in a recent column in *Arab News*: “Would the Arab world have been more stable, more democratic, and more advanced?” His affirmative answer emphasizes how much better off the Palestinians and their fellow Arabs, as well as non-Arab Muslims, would have been had some Arab leaders not used the Palestinians “for their own agenda to suppress their own people and to stay in power.” The Palestinian journalist Khaled Abu Toameh censures Fatah and Hamas for depriving thousands of Palestinians “in the two Palestinian states in the West Bank and Gaza Strip” of the individual liberties that flourish across the border

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in Israel. The Israel News channel YNet quotes a Syrian publicist as saying, “Our government shoots at us; Israel works to return even rotted bones. Maybe the problem is with us.” (He is referring to earlier prisoner exchanges where hundreds of Arab prisoners were traded for the corpses of Israeli soldiers.) Not until these sentiments prevail will Arab citizens begin to enjoy the opportunities Israelis take for granted.

Anti-Semitism, or the organization of politics against the Jews, is at once the most protean and the most misunderstood force in modern politics. Because it works through misdirection, most people associate it with Jews who are its target, rather than with anti-Semites who are its perpetrators. But whether aimed at the Jews in their dispersion or in their homeland, anti-Semitism and its offshoot anti-Zionism are about the Jews only in the way that fox hunting is about foxes. Those who organize their hunt around the fox consider it the best animal to hunt. Important as it may be to identify those features in the swift little animal that make it the chosen target of those giving chase, any analysis of fox hunting must concentrate on the hunters—their motivations, strategies, implements, goals, and perceived gains. Fox hunting stops when there is a change in hunters, not in foxes. So, too, with anti-Semitism. Only changes in the implicated countries can arrest the political process their leadership promotes.

## WHAT IS ANTI-SEMITISM?

There are many versions of the joke that originated in the First World War about the police chief who tells his deputy to round up all Jews and bicyclists. His deputy asks, “Why the bicyclists?” How quickly you get the joke depends on how comfortable you are with the idea of rounding up Jews. Aggression against Jews has become so commonplace it seems to require no explanation. This is how Anthony Julius sums it up in *Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England*:

[Perhaps] a repertoire of attitudes, myths, and defamations in circulation at any given time. It is a kind of discursive swamp, a resource on which religious and political movements, writers and artists, demagogues, and the variously

disaffected, all draw, without ever draining. It is not a political philosophy, or anything close to one. It is not a conception of the world; it is merely an *idée fixe*—a hatred, dressed up as a conviction . . . a protean, unstable combination of received ideas, compounded by malice.

Because he is tracking a historical process from 12th-century blood libels to today's anti-Zionist rallies, Julius tries to account for all the varieties of prejudice and discrimination in what historian Robert Wistrich calls the "lethal obsession." The great historian Salo Baron called it "the dislike of the unlike."

But I prefer to distinguish anti-Semitism from mere intolerance. Many other groups are subject to prejudice and discrimination. American clubs and schools that formerly excluded Jews also excluded blacks and Asians. Other "middleman minorities," like Koreans or overseas Chinese, have been attacked as intruders once their welcome ran out. Other peoples have been singled out for "bullying"—a current preoccupation of the Anti-Defamation League. The function of the Jews in international politics is quite different in scale and kind. Anti-Semitism is a political instrument—a strategy, an ideology, sometimes a movement that organizes *politics* against the Jews.

The ideology of anti-Semitism arose in Germany in the last third of the 19th century among competing schemes for organizing modern societies. It grew in tandem with democracy—that is, with the need to win rather than assume the allegiance of subjects or citizens. Wilhelm Marr, who founded the League of Anti-Semites in 1879, distinguished his political movement from the religiously based anti-Jewish animosities that had preceded it. We should take him at his word, since his explanation defied Christian and Muslim teachings, which touted their *superiority* to Judaism. Marr preached the opposite. "The Jews are unstoppable!" They had fought against the Western world for almost two millennia and were now poised to conquer the continent. France was already Judaized. Germany was about to be skinned alive. As Marr wrote,

We have among us a flexible, tenacious, intelligent, foreign tribe that knows how to bring abstract reality into play in many ways. Not individual Jews, but the Jewish spirit and Jewish consciousness have overpowered the world.

Marr's ingenious idea was to cast liberal democracy as an imperialist Jewish plot. While others welcomed liberal democracy's promise of liberty, equality, and fraternity, he opposed it by attributing its attendant evils to "Jewry," which "corrupted all society with its views." He accused the Jews of driving out any kind of idealism, of gaining the upper hand in commerce, infiltrating government, ruling the theater, etc., and leaving other Germans only the hard manual labor that Jews had always despised. These same arguments were soon advanced in Russia in more paranoid

style through the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a fabrication that pretended to record the machinations of Jews plotting to take over the world. Europeans had the *Protocols* only in printed form, which confined it to a literate citizenry. Arab television democratized it for a viewing public. In 2002 Egyptian television produced the series *Horseman Without a Horse*, which not only recapitulates the thesis of the *Protocols*, but adds a subplot about malevolent Jews trying to suppress its spread.

The kernel of truth that allowed for Marr's paranoid analysis was that Jews were highly competitive in all areas—*except* national politics. Their civilization was founded on a contractual agreement with God that required their

obedience to divinely inspired law in return for divine protection. The Jewish way of life that was based on this premise encouraged individual and collective responsibility and promised eventual return to their promised land. Meanwhile Jews turned the disadvantages of "exile" into strategies of adaptation. Wherever they were offered enough freedom to compete on more or less equal terms, Jews did well enough to lend credibility to inflated images of their "power." But since collective Jewry lacked and never sought precisely the kind of political reach with which they were credited, the disparity between image and reality made them an ideal target for those who really did want to flex their power.

Thus, at a pivotal stage in the process we call modernization, anti-Semitism became the catchall for a politics of grievance and blame. Democracy, which was just then spreading eastward from England and France toward Romania and Russia, put politics in the hands of



the people, and people needed explanations for things that were going wrong and assurances of how they could be improved. Autocratic rulers no less than politicians seeking election now felt obliged to account for hardships, offer remedies for crises, discourage rebellion, and encourage the confidence of populations facing all the anxieties of modernity. Anti-Semitism had such advantages over other political movements that some of those movements, like fascism, nationalism, and communism, incorporated elements of anti-Jewish politics as part of their programs.

### WHAT ANTI-SEMITISM OFFERS

**A**nti-Semitism releases aggression against a familiar target and offers a simple explanation for complex and occasionally intractable problems (Unemployed? Jews have your jobs. Destitute? Rothschilds have your money. Losing confidence in your country? Jews control your press, the arts, the courts, education, medicine . . . ). It uses negative campaigning that provokes no response in kind. Since Jews seek acceptance from those who agitate against them, they have no incentive to wage the kind of countercampaign that we see between rival political parties.

Anti-Semitism drew its demonic images from religious sources, further magnifying suspicion of an already suspect people. And it united otherwise antagonistic or even warring constituencies. Marx singled out the Jews as the evil embodiment of capitalism. Internationalists identified Jewish separatism as the chief impediment to their universal ideals. Nationalists targeted Jews as corrupting aliens. Conservative Christians and, later, Muslims continued to see them as challengers of their faith. Atheists and secularists condemned their retrograde religion. Racial theorists called them agents of impurity. An equal-opportunity instrument of blame, anti-Semitism had as one of its chief advantages the ability to unite political forces that had nothing else in common.

Last but hardly least, folks could anticipate the acquisition of Jewish property, goods, or positions as a tangible by-product of Jewish expulsion or annihilation. The prospect of acquiring Jewish property and possessions was something Nazism offered to all the countries it conquered. Similarly, when Arabs draw their map of “Palestine” to include all of Israel, they especially have their eye on the bounty that Israelis have created as a result of their open, democratic ways. Rather than compete with the Jews, anti-Semitism tries to have it both ways—organizing political resistance to the liberal democracy that profits the Jews, and doing so confident that it can exploit the weakness of those who value individual life too highly

to squander it on defensive war. The Jews of Europe, who had never developed independent means of self-defense, never had a chance against their destroyers. Modern Israel is the current test case.

The term “scapegoat” does not begin to do justice to the uses of anti-Semitism in domestic, regional, and international affairs. We do well to note its short-term advantages before identifying the liabilities alluded to above.

### HOW ANTI-SEMITISM SUCCEEDS

‘**H**ow did we get to pick up the tab for a bunch of tyrants and terrorists to come to our city to curse us out?’ asked the New York taxi driver dropping me off at the United Nations plaza on the opening day of the 66th annual U.N. General Assembly. The police were treating the plaza as the war zone it had become.

According to its charter, the United Nations was created in the wake of the Second World War

to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind; to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small; to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained; to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

In commitment to these ideals, in 1947 the U.N. General Assembly passed a resolution for the partition of Palestine into Jewish and Arab zones that midwived the birth of Israel half a year later. The Jews were already poised to reclaim their sovereignty after two millennia, but this vote granted them the international sanction to do so within the same decade that had witnessed their greatest national defeat.

Many Arab countries were just then similarly emerging from the loosening grip of European powers. The Arab League was founded in 1945, the same year as the United Nations, its six original members—Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Transjordan, Syria—soon joined by Yemen, and then by 15 others. The league’s stated goal was to create pan-Arab unity by promoting closer relations between member states. But rather than emulate Israel by settling Palestinian Arabs in their allotted land (possibly in federation with Jordan, which was already largely Palestinian Arab), the Arab League dedicated itself to preventing the existence of a Jewish state. Its first major action was the war against Israel in 1948, and opposition to Israel has remained its indispensable unifier ever since.

It was Arab, not Jewish, leadership that urged all

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Arabs to flee from Haifa and Jaffa, warning that those who remained in a Jewish state would be treated as renegades. The exploitation of the Palestinians by their fellow Arabs has been noted repeatedly, including in 1976 by Mahmoud Abbas, currently head of the Palestinian Authority: “The Arab armies entered Palestine to protect the Palestinians from Zionist tyranny, but instead they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade, and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe.” In sum, Arab leaders did not oppose Israel because it displaced the Palestinians; they displaced Palestinian Arabs in order to sustain opposition to Israel.

Despite their vast expanses of land, natural resources, financial capacities, and so forth, Arab League members created a refugee time bomb to justify their “resistance” to what the U.N. had wrought.

Had the U.N. lived up to its charter, it would have expelled the belligerents from membership or placed them on probation for contravening its terms. But here is the logic of aggression against Jews: The secretariat and supporting nations would not risk the U.N.’s coherence to protect one of its smallest members against antagonists with huge demographic, market, resource, and political advantages on their side. Ignored as a parochial issue, the Arab war against Israel safely violated the liberal ideals of the United Nations by appearing to oppose *only* Jews. Arab leaders gained traction domestically by flexing their power against an enemy they knew had no incentive for war and every incentive for accommodation. And opposition to Israel shored up pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism by flaunting contempt for the liberal democratic culture of the West that Israel embodied.

The perpetual Arab war against Israel worked like a charm. In 1949, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was established as a temporary measure to help resettle a relatively small group of displaced persons in a century notorious for its many millions of refugees. Only in this single case was a refugee agency made permanent. At Arab insistence, the U.N. cultivated, not an infrastructure for self-government, but a network of refugee institutions and an industry of welfare workers with a stake in maintaining refugee dependency, feeding the grievance of generations by insisting on their “right” of return—as if the Displaced Persons at the end of World War II had been continually maintained as such in the heart of Europe. Scholars Asaf Romirowsky and Nicole Brackman have rightly called UNRWA an “anomaly within the world of refugee relief” for the way it prolonged suffering and anger to become “a weapon to

encourage [generations] toward terrorism and intransigence.” The Arab League used the U.N. agency to evade its responsibilities for fellow Arabs, and to foster an Arab protostate that would replace the Jewish one in time.

Arab leaders scored another substantial victory on November 10, 1975, when they won passage of U.N. General Assembly Resolution 3379, which called Zionism a “form of racism and racial discrimination.” The Arab bloc that championed the resolution with Soviet bloc support had waged two unsuccessful wars against Israel in 1967 and 1973. Now the same countries laid the political groundwork for a much larger antidemocratic coalition that would use the U.N. for its own ends.

The anti-Zionist umbrella included countries that functioned in opposition to the human rights principles of the United Nations. Arab rulers who denied the Jews their land accused Jews of denying Arabs theirs. Shifting political language from right to left, they no longer threatened to drive the Jews of Israel into the sea but accused them of the imperialism and racism *they* actually practiced. Resolution 3379 adopted the anti-Zionist terminology that had been developed by the Soviets in the 1930s (and not incidentally had informed the education of many Arab leaders, like Mahmoud Abbas, who received his Ph.D. in Moscow for a dissertation on connections between Zionism and the Nazis). Since anti-Zionism was the last ideological component of communism left standing when the Soviet Union collapsed, it provided a common terminology for self-defined “progressives” in rallies from Berkeley to Cairo. Anti-Zionism became a permanent feature of the left, including, currently, Occupy Wall Street.

The infamy of the anti-Israel resolution hardly went unnoticed. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was then U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said, “A great evil has been loosed upon the world.” But nothing was done to stop this evil. Countries that incorporated forms of racism and discrimination in their political and legal systems enjoyed their symbolic political victory over the only liberal democracy in the Middle East. Racism, once known as the *denial* to Jews of their right to exist, was turned against the Jews for claiming the right. Around this banner there formed the coalition against liberal democracies that began taking over one after another of the U.N. committees and programs, culminating in Durban, South Africa, at the 2001 World Conference Against Racism. Those who commandeered the Durban conference focused exclusively on Israel, to deflect attention from their own practices of slavery, abuse of women, suppression of minorities, torture of prisoners, autocratic rule, systemic corruption, and various forms of state criminality.

## COALITION AGAINST LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

The organization of politics against Israel had moved from the Middle East into the world arena. Outrages became bolder year by year: Cuba, which jails people for circulating the Human Rights Declaration, became vice chair of the U.N. Human Rights Council. Saudi Arabia, which forbids women to drive, was elected to the board of the agency charged with ending discrimination against women. Iran, which sentences adulteresses to death, was elected to the U.N. Commission on the Status of Women. Nuclear-armed North Korea was appointed head of the U.N. Council on Disarmament. Meanwhile, no resolutions were taken against the ongoing Arab slave trade in Sudan or for the rights of women and minorities in places where these were denied.

Could there have been any political means other than the organization of politics against the Jewish state for thus hijacking the United Nations and inverting its mandate while ensuring that Western nations continued to foot the bill? I can think of none. In 1991, after 16 years, the United States won repeal of U.N. Resolution 3379—the only General Assembly resolution ever to be revoked. But unlike the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which inspired massive cleanup efforts to contain the damage it had done, the repeal inspired no attempt to alleviate or even moderate the effects of this systematic diffusion of political poison. Demonization of the Jewish state had spread to areas that had never known or known of a Jew. The Arab boycott against the Jews, which began even before the establishment of Israel, was fanned into the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign that lately garnered supporters as diverse as Archbishop Desmond Tutu and 218 members of the faculty and students of Sweden's Royal Institute of Technology, under the preposterous excuse of gaining rights for the abused Palestinians. Using the U.N. for their podium, Arab and Muslim leaders and their political allies make the Jews internationally suspect.

In this political climate, it hardly matters whether one is among the prosecutors or defenders of Israel, as long as Israel is in the dock. Many well-meaning people, Jews included, fail to appreciate that the prosecution prevails once it makes Israel the defendant. Some ask naïvely, "But aren't we allowed to criticize Israel?" or even boast that Israel is being held to a "higher standard," ignoring that the war against the Jews is won by charging them with the crimes being committed against them. The point of the "trial" is to keep Jews at its center. The United Nations provides an unprecedented stage for accusing Jews in full view of the world, thereby obscuring or reducing scrutiny of the worst actors on the planet. This year, hundreds of delegates and

guests enjoyed U.N. hospitality and displayed their hatred of liberal democracy—aka Israel—with the assurance that they would suffer no political cost.

The cabby's question—why should he be paying for the vilification of his way of life—has now been raised in Congress by the chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, who is urging the United States to spearhead significant reform of what she calls "an anti-Semitic organization." "What are we paying for?" she asks, citing the bid by Palestinian leadership to gain U.N. recognition for a Palestinian state, in violation of all previous agreements. "So how could we allow even one cent of our dollars to go to this organization that will have in its midst terrorists who want to destroy Israel, and in turn destroy the United States?" More important than this belated attempt to limit the damage is realizing that Ros-Lehtinen is not "standing up for Israel" but making the logical connection between the organization of politics against Israel and the much larger intended targets that "Zionism" represents—the United States foremost among them. Anti-Semitism penetrated the United Nations as it did several democracies of Europe, enjoying the access to the platform that democracy provides, in order to subvert the democratic commitment to human rights. Its perpetrators work by prosecuting "only" the Jews, and when they get away with it, they corrupt the charter beyond repair.

But the point should also be made that shutting down UNWRA is the only way to begin repairing the lives of Palestinian Arabs, and that shutting down the U.N. as it presently functions is America's best hope for helping to repair the world.

### HOW ANTI-SEMITISM FAILS

The ability of Arab and Muslim leaders to dominate the United Nations while celebrating their contempt for everything it stands for seems to confirm anti-Semitism's success. Yet *caveat emptor*—early benefits of organizing politics against the Jews are inevitably outweighed by the ruin that overtakes its practitioners. Why inevitably? Because anti-Semitism attributes real problems to a phony cause. Putting off problems tends to compound them, and aggression fomented against a convenient target cannot be permanently controlled or contained. Strategies of blame may temporarily help justify repression, quell rebellion, camouflage corruption, channel dissatisfaction, and redirect aggression, but societies that resort to them collapse under the weight of their negativity. Palestinians—once considered the ablest Arabs, and perhaps sacrificed by their fellow Arabs for that reason—are now in strong competition with Germans of the last century in the sweepstakes of self-destruction. Jonathan Tobin makes the obvious point:

“Rather than ask why Israel is willing to trade so many terrorists for one soldier, the world should be asking why the Palestinians are cheering the release of sociopaths.” What does the trade of one for a thousand say about the relative value Jews and Arabs place on human life, and the effect of those values on building or destroying?

Anti-Semitism’s strategy of inversion—holding Jews responsible for the aggression against them—obscures the domestic repression that is always practiced in its name. Jews are the ostensible but not ultimate casualties of the organization of politics against them. Yasser Arafat used opposition to Israel as the vehicle for a corrupt and vicious dictatorship that could otherwise not have garnered billions of dollars of support. Saudi Arabia expended billions of dollars in mobilizing war against Israel to shore up its image of protecting Islam while sustaining a bigoted and sexist sheikhdom. Recent uprisings against dictatorships in Arab countries demonstrate their woeful unpreparedness for creative self-government, the direct consequence of diverting political energies to keep those dictatorships in power.

Paradoxically, commemoration of the Holocaust, which was presumably intended to help prevent another genocide of the Jews, exacerbated the problem it was meant to alleviate. Holocaust studies equate anti-Semitism with Nazism

and see in the defeat of one the demise of the other. The actuality is otherwise. The political features that made anti-Semitism attractive in the past remain replicable and applicable in the present and future. It is they, the replicable features of anti-Semitism, not the Holocaust, that should be at the center of investigation into that mass murder. Without an attempt to identify the critical variables, there is no redemptive lesson in the destruction of European Jewry or in the collapse of Germany or in the failure of the League of Nations to arrest the process. Only by isolating its copycat features, as science does in researching disease, can Holocaust study prevent the same descent into depravity.

No one can know what is unfolding in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and other countries of the Arab League. There is one critical variable that holds the key to their political future: Will their leaders resort to the political instrument that brought about their decline? Will Egypt abrogate or weaken its treaty with Israel, or develop a culture of human rights? Will Turkey join the competition over who stands strongest against Israel and suffer the fate of its rivals? Arab leaders sealed the doom of their societies when they organized politics against the Jewish state. Only new and would-be leaders have the power to undo the failure they reaped. ♦

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# Keep Fear Alive

*The liberal obsession with playing the race card*

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BY NOEMIE EMERY

**T**he tendency of liberals to define the Republican party, the conservative movement, and most recently the Tea Party movement as the latest iteration of the Old South has been persistent, if not always sane. It survived the failure to convince voters that Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush were political scions of Jefferson Davis, survived the appointment by George W. Bush of two black secretaries of state in succession (and the failure of his base to sulk or burn crosses), survived the Tea Party's electoral embrace of blacks, Latinos, and immigrants' children. But will it survive the sight of the most right-wing branch of the right-wing party (no doubt clinging to God and to guns out of bitterness) not only adopting Col. Allen West as its favorite congressman but cheering itself hoarse for a black man running for president as the "anti-Obama" in 2012?

Since the rise of the conservative movement, it has been believed on the left that the movement's secret *raison d'être* is fear of "the Other"—immigrants, blacks, browns, and the loss of American "whiteness"—for which other concerns were assumed to be cover, a conceit that allowed the left to think itself not only "right on the issues" (all people think they are right on the issues) but "right" on the grand scale of higher morality, as one with the forces of the good and the pure and the true. Whatever the flaws of Herman Cain as a man or as a candidate, he has had the effect of eroding this conceit. And in this context, the merits of Cain in himself are less important than who supports him and the liberals' reaction to what he has done.

The pairing of the conservative movement with bias has a long history that over the years, as it has become less defensible, has only become more intense. Ronald Reagan, who voted four times for Roosevelt and supported Truman against Strom Thurmond and the Dixiecrats, was called a "danger" to blacks, a Ku Klux Klan enabler, and described thus in a hit piece Garry Wills wrote for *Esquire*: "Reagan croons, in love accents, his permission to indulge a functional hatred of poor people and blacks." In 1988, George

H.W. Bush was described as racist for making an issue of the bad judgment of Michael Dukakis in letting a killer run loose on a furlough from prison. Michael Lind, who in his book *Made in Texas* declared both Presidents Bush neo-Confederates because they once lived near places where race crimes took place long before they moved there, found the Tea Party to be more of the same: "It should be called the Fort Sumter movement," he said in *Salon* this past August. "Today's Tea Party movement is merely the latest in a series of attacks on American democracy by the white Southern minority, which for more than two centuries has not hesitated to paralyze, sabotage, or in the case of the Civil War, destroy American democracy to get their way."

Thus, the battle over the debt ceiling was out of the pro-slavery playbook, and Bill Clinton's impeachment was "an attempted coup-d'état by the Southern white minority"—against another white Southerner!—angry, because, as in 1860, it was failing to get its own way. MSNBC's Chris Matthews told Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus in August that the Tea Party has "a bad attitude towards race, towards black people, towards immigrants." He called mention of food stamps a "racist dog whistle." He obsessed over the idea that Rick Perry wants to secede from the Union, and his colleague Howard Fineman called the Tea Party plan to cut back on entitlements a "slow-motion secession" from the rest of the country. On MSNBC and similar venues, Michele Bachmann and Sarah Palin, two belles from the frost-belt, were portrayed as straight out of Tara, singing songs of racial resentment to lure angry white men. What is all this based on? A narrative that totters on three "facts" that upon closer inspection turn out to be not damning at all.

**F**act number one is that, while Republican support for the 1964 Civil Rights Act was proportionally higher than that of Democrats in both the House and the Senate, the law was opposed by leading members of the emerging conservative movement—Barry Goldwater, Ronald Reagan, and William F. Buckley Jr.—for reasons having to do with small-government principles that nonetheless permitted their theories and the interests of the segregationists for that moment in time to converge.

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As he had made clear (but not clear enough), Goldwater, a member of the Arizona chapter of the NAACP who had helped desegregate his local Sierra Club chapter and for many years had practiced fair hiring in his family's business, backed integration, voted for the civil rights acts of 1957 and 1960, and was prepared to vote for this one, except for one thing: Title VII, mandating prosecution of discrimination by private employers, which he considered an unacceptable expansion of federal power. This provision was questioned by well-intentioned critics for two different reasons: Discrimination by private employers would be so hard to prove that it would necessitate a de facto quota system as proof of compliance, and it would involve an expansion of federal control and surveillance over private employers to a point never dreamed of before. To movement conservatives, this last point was key. "If my vote be misconstrued, let it be, and let me suffer the consequences," Goldwater said in explaining his no vote to the Senate. "I am unalterably opposed to discrimination of any sort and I believe that though the problem is fundamentally one of the heart, some law can help—but not law that embodies features like these, provisions which fly in the face of the Constitution and which require for their effective execution the creation of a police state."

Goldwater was misconstrued, and he suffered the consequences, and the five states he won in the Deep South as a result in the 1964 election were not worth the trouble they caused later on. Ironically, John Kennedy seems to have considered Title VII equally troubling, for it was not in the civil rights bill he drafted, but was added by a House subcommittee after his assassination. Had Kennedy lived, Goldwater would have supported the bill, and the issue would never have tainted the movement. As it was, the civil rights movement, which depended on federal power to break the back of entrenched local laws and traditions, emerged just in time to crack heads with the conservative movement, with its belief that unrestrained federal power would in time prove a threat to the sort of individual liberty that the civil rights movement sought. Conservative leaders were not adept enough at the time to finesse the issue, which would have been to vote for the bill with caveats and with reservations, making it clear

that this was a one-off. It was an error of judgment, for which the conservative movement has never stopped paying. It was the wrong vote taken without wrong intentions and not a mistake of the heart.

Fact number two is the undisputed contention that all conservatives and most Republicans opposed and tried to dismantle the elaborate systems of quotas and preference that grew up after the first civil rights laws had been codified, reflecting not a desire to reassert racism, but a disagreement over what "racism" and "civil rights" actually meant. Liberals thought rights applied to groups, conservatives to individuals; conservatives believed in equality of opportunity, liberals thought this was empty unless outcomes were equal; conservatives thought that if doors were held and stayed open, people would tend over time to find their own levels, liberals tried, with an elaborate system of racial quotas and preferences, to create the sort of outcome in which the balance of races and genders fit their ideal.

These were two different concepts of "rights" and of "justice," in which each side thought it held the high ground. As Reagan's biographer Steven F. Hayward quotes Reagan Justice official William Bradford Reynolds, "The idea of equal opportunity got changed in the minds of some to a concept of equal results, and individual rights were translated into group entitlements."

Hayward goes on to explain, "The Reagan administration's aim was not to roll back genuine civil rights protections, but to draw the line against the egregious use of explicit race-conscious quotas, and the legitimization of group rights that racial quotas represent."

By defining racial preferences as "civil rights measures," the left tried to present a unified theory of conservative racism stretching from Goldwater's vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Act into an unending future. But this never convinced the American people, who consistently opposed all unequal treatment and voted against it when given the chance. On the side of the right were also the facts that Frederick Douglass had opposed quotas, members of the NAACP had at one time been doubtful about



*Herman Cain greets supporters in Harriman, Tennessee.*

AP / MICHAEL PATRICK, KNOXVILLE NEWS SENTINEL

them, John Kennedy had voiced doubts about them, and Hubert Humphrey had responded to doubts raised by JFK's friend George Smathers by saying, "If the Senator can find . . . any language which provides that an employer will have to hire on the basis of percentage or quota . . . I will start eating the pages [of the Civil Rights Act] . . . because it is not there."

The explicit language may not have been there, but if results counted, Humphrey would have dined on the bill many times over. "Do you want a society that is nothing but an endless power struggle among organized groups?" Humphrey asked later, which is a perfect description of what his party turned into. Reagan was maligned as a racist for doing no more than trying to return to the vision of Humphrey, which makes sense as they were Democrats in the same era. Reagan was still a Democrat in 1948, when Humphrey made his name with his speech at the convention, urging his party to step from the shadows of segregation into the bright sunshine of civil rights.

Fact number three is that the South moved into the Republican column for the first time in the election of 1964 and has stayed there since, leading to the belief in the minds of some that it stayed there for exactly that reason, and that time has stood still. In real life, though, time has brought wondrous changes to the GOP and to Dixie alike. With desegregation and air conditioning the Old South took off like a rocket, becoming the country's fastest-growing region, drawing immigrants and industries from all over the world. Some of the biggest states are in the South, some of the busiest technical corridors, some of the best schools and hospitals; and some of the best GOP minority leaders, about which much more below.

At the same time, the GOP would make itself over, embracing new issues and new blocs of voters, becoming the party of free market forces, traditional values, and a proactive stance on defense. Reagan brought into his coalition Democratic hawks, neoconservatives who were civil rights backers, and a new generation of activists, mainly enthused by free market ideas. It became more Jack Kemp's party and less that of Strom Thurmond, who himself had undergone changes: Within a few years of crossing the aisle, he would be backing black nominees for federal office, wooing black voters, and hiring black staff. In 1964, there was one main reason white Southerners would prefer the Republican party; by 1968, when riots emerged, there were more of them; by 1972, when the Democrats nominated George McGovern, there were a great many more. As racism started to fade, new issues rose to anchor the South to the party of Reagan, for which the party of "amnesty, abortion, and acid" was a very bad fit. The transition was fixed

when Southern conservatives began electing nonwhites and women who shared their values. The conservative governor of Louisiana is the child of Indian immigrants. Conservatives in Florida elected a black and Hispanic who are favorites of conservatives everywhere. South Carolina—home of John C. Calhoun, interposition, secession, Fort Sumter, Strom Thurmond, and of the flap over the Confederate flag at the grounds of the state capitol that has gone on forever—has a Republican governor who is female and also the child of Indian immigrants, and a black Republican congressman who defeated the son of Strom Thurmond in the election last year.

Liberals may believe geography is destiny and is eternal, but events have proven otherwise. The Dixiecrats like Thurmond are long gone, and in their place are armies of younger conservatives, raised long after the civil rights struggle, whose hackles rise skyward on being told they are and will be racist forever because before they were conscious of anything a senator from Arizona cast a bad vote for good reasons a long time ago.

Those watching returns from the 2010 midterms were not surprised when Tea Party conservatives raised Cain, West, and others, but time-worn mental habits die hard. Roger Simon of *Politico* told Howard Kurtz on *Reliable Sources* that Rick Perry's reference to Obama's birth certificate was meant to stir the bigots up. "Why would Perry use that in the primaries instead of saving it for the general?" he asked. "It's because being extreme perhaps, and a little bit racist, perhaps, gives you good bona fides in a Republican primary. It shows them that you are on the same side." But Herman Cain was already leading in most polls of Republican primary voters, and when Perry was fading, his supporters went to . . . Cain.

"You think about white Republicans who don't like black folks," said Ed Schultz on his MSNBC program. "It's almost as if this guy [Cain] is trying to warm up to them and tell them what they want to hear." His guest, Georgetown professor Michael Eric Dyson, agreed, and directed our eyes to "post-intentional racism," which would be "racism that people don't intend to have or to act upon," as explained in the book *More Beautiful and More Terrible* by Imani Perry, described by its publisher as meaning "a new and distinct form of racism that is 'post intentional,' neither drawing on the intentional discrimination of the past nor drawing on biological concepts of race." That's helpful. Then you have the usual run of Democrats saying it's racist when black conservatives tell white conservatives that blacks don't need Democrats "helping" them. As the *Wall Street Journal's* James Taranto has explained it, "These white Republicans are so racist that they're willing to elect

a black man president just to keep black people down.”

As the ruminations on race and Republicans get more and more silly, the question arises as to why liberals still bother, and the reasons appear to be three. First, it serves their purpose politically to have large blocs of voters think that the opposite party is biased against them. Second, it serves their emotional need to feel more enlightened and virtuous. Third, it appears that they really believe it. As they see it, race is the center of everyone’s universe, and comes in two forms: the malevolent racism practiced by their political enemies and the benevolent race-conscious public policy adopted by themselves. Malevolent racists burn crosses, discriminate, try to make life as hellish as possible for those they see as “the Other.” Benevolent racists, on the other hand, are ridden with guilt, torture the rules to ensure racially just outcomes in hiring, promotions, college admissions, etc., cherish diversity (except of opinion), and regard as unjust any system in which the best professions and places do not reflect or exceed the minority representation of the country in general—except in their neighborhoods, and in the places where they work.

What they do not accept is the possibility that there is any position between these two poles, in which people are neither hostile to nor solicitous of others; bear no ill

will, yet do no favors; take people as they are on a one-by-one basis, or leave them alone. To the benevolent racist, those who aspire to color-blindness are lying, victims of subconscious or post-intentional racism, or blind to nothing more than their evil, malevolent hearts.

This view was expressed best in 1998 in a speech by Al Gore to a group of black ministers, when in a clunky and maladroit metaphor—this is, after all, Al Gore we’re discussing—he said people who claimed to be color blind were in reality hiding in duck blinds, ready to gun down their prey. This view is what for the past 40 years has been keeping them from registering the evidence that since Reagan’s election conservatism has been ideology driven, as it, along with most of the rest of the country, has reached the conclusion that race by and large does not and should not count. The last piece of evidence fell into place with a clunk when Herman Cain was accused of assault and harassment—by an assortment of blondes. The most right of the right wing stood up for the black man. Rush Limbaugh called it a media hit job. Laura Ingraham mocked the white “flooies.” The “third rail” of race has been touched, and is plumb out of voltage. As John Cleese might say, it is an “ex-issue.” It is, and now ought to be, dead. ♦



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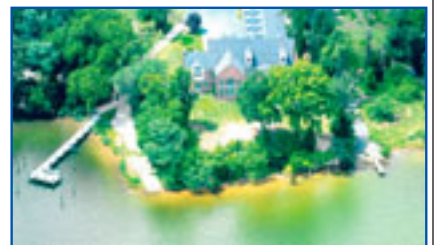
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George Harrison, 1987

# George's God

*The faith of the Quiet Beatle.* BY ANDREW FERGUSON

**A**s a reader who has compulsively consumed the ever-expanding body of Beatles literature for 40 years, I have trouble picking out a favorite anecdote or most memorable quote. Is it John's "If there is such a thing as a genius, I am one"? Or the note Paul sent John one day in the waning days of the group: "You and your Jap tart think you're hot s—"? Or maybe it's the time an airline stewardess offered George a glass of wine, not knowing he was deep in meditation. "F— off," the spiritual Beatle replied.

*Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD and the author, most recently, of Crazy U.*

I don't know. I could go on with stories like this all day. None of them involve Ringo, by the way.

Given the vastness and variety of the literature, it would be incorrect to say that the Beatles story has been whitewashed, not when it includes so many get-even tell-alls and book-sized sumps of sensational gossip. But there is a quasi-official version of events, and when it is reissued periodically from the tireless Beatles public relations machine, the narrative does tend to take on the unblemished pallor of approved history. For 50 years the Beatles have been the rock group you could take home to meet Mom, and nobody close to their stupendous commercial enterprise seems eager to undo the image.

Paul, Ringo, the two widows, and what remains of the original Liverpool crowd keep the history tidy for reasons that are surely as much personal as fiduciary. *Beatles Anthology*, the eight-hour, supposedly definitive documentary the Beatles machine released in 1995, omitted any unpleasantness that might cast a shadow on the sunny version of the Beatles story, aside from a few inescapable anecdotes about illegal drug-taking. There was no mention of the now-legendary sybaritic excesses of Beatles tours, or the friends, wives, lovers, children, and employees betrayed or discarded on the way to the top. The sulfurous rancor that at last pulled the group apart, and which continued in punishing and pointless legal

REDFERNS / GETTY IMAGES

maneuvers for another generation, was mostly ignored. Even today, Paul and Ringo have stalled the rerelease of the 1970 documentary *Let It Be* owing to its glaring display of the group's lassitude, self-loathing, and crisscrossing bitterness. And they're right to keep it locked away, if the point is preserving the image of the mop-tops. It's been a long time since I've seen *Let It Be*, but I don't recall wanting to take any of those Beatles home to meet Mom.

The authorized version has been buffed in recent weeks with commemorations of the tenth anniversary of George Harrison's death, at age 58, from cancer. There he was again, peering out from the cover of *Rolling Stone*, just like old times. *Life* magazine, always a codependent in Beatles mythmaking, disinterred itself long enough to get out a special celebratory issue. HBO aired a four-hour documentary put together by Martin Scorsese, *Living in the Material World*, which is also the title of a companion book of quotes and pictures released by Harrison's widow Olivia.

The book is the size of a paving stone and as sumptuously produced as any coffee-table accessory can be. Scorsese's movie, on the other hand, is a mess. Like too many documentaries nowadays, it lacks a single narrator, leaving the viewer helpless as the movie jumps back and forth through each stage of the Beatles story, from blitzed-out Liverpool to blissed-out Rishikesh. Anyone unfamiliar with the small but necessary roles in the *dramatis personae* will find himself wondering who all these people are. Where'd this Astrid woman come from, and how come Stuart Sutcliffe is dead all of a sudden—and now that you mention it, who was Stuart Sutcliffe anyway? Poor Pete Best, who he? (The answers for the uninitiated: Hamburg, Germany, where she befriended the young Beatles; a brain tumor; the Beatles' first bass player; and . . . it's complicated.)

The theme that emerges from this dog's breakfast involves Harrison's split personality—or as he might prefer to put it, his dual nature, the yin and yang—as a religious seeker on the one side and a decadent, heedless rock star

on the other. If you had even a passing acquaintance with Harrison's career you know about the religion part, but nobody in the movie or book ever gets specific enough to fill us in on the other half.

"He had two personalities," Ringo says. "One was this bag of [prayer] beads, the other was this big bag of anger." Yoko Ono seconds that emotion: "He had two aspects," she says. "Sometimes he was very nice. Sometimes he was [long pause] too honest." Paul McCartney, coy as ever, says, "He was my mate, so I can't say too much. But he was a guy, a red-blooded guy, and he liked what guys like."

Nudge, nudge, wink, wink. Say no more.

**Y**ou have to read the tell-alls, such as the memoir of his first wife Pattie, to get the details about Bad George and his heroic capacity for cocaine, brandy, and adultery. The combination resulted in, among other things, the spectacularly gruesome scene he made in 1973 at a dinner party at Ringo's house. The party went sour when George stood up to announce that he was sleeping with Ringo's wife and planned to run away with her. (In the event, he quickly moved on from Mrs. Starr.) Just another potluck with the Starrs and the Harrisons.

Paul Theroux, the travel writer, has for some reason been enlisted to write an introduction to the picture book, and he beats the theme of two Georges like a Ludwig tom-tom: "It is no wonder he was so passionate: he was himself his own wicked twin," Theroux writes. "He was himself the dark and the light, the flames and the ashes." If you think that's overwritten, wait till you watch him wade into the hallucinatory exaggeration we have learned to expect when Baby Boomers write about rock music:

To say that he was one of the great musicians of his time—one of the most innovative guitarists ever, one of the most imaginative songwriters—is to give only part of the story.

Yes, and not even the true part!  
One of George Harrison's most

appealing traits was self-awareness. He would have seen (and said) how absurd such talk was. "I was never a real guitarist," he once told his friend Klaus Voormann. And he wasn't; he couldn't launch the fireworks like Eric Clapton or Jeff Beck, and the disciplined technique of Andrés Segovia or Julian Bream never interested him. About his songwriting, he told an interviewer: "There's no comparison between me and someone who sits and writes music. What I do is really simple." Right again. He compared himself to a pastry chef, able to combine musical ingredients nicked from others to make a pleasing presentation of songcraft. He made many marvelous records, but as a source of fresh musical ideas, he said, "I'm not really that good."

You could say the same for pretty much anyone who ever wrote a rock song, which is an extremely forgiving art form, but you can't imagine anyone else who ever wrote a rock song admitting it.

Whether his religion led him to his clear-eyed modesty, or it worked the other way around, the two were connected. Along with the humility, his unapologetic religious faith made him the most unlikely rock star in history. It wasn't the faith of his fathers, of course. His mother dragged him to Mass as a boy. "They tried to raise me a Catholic," he says in *Living in the Material World*, but he stopped going to church before he was a teenager. Whatever chance he had to become an orthodox believer was snuffed out by the drab and airless Catholicism on offer in the decades leading up to Vatican II. He preferred to lose himself in the teeming pantheism and exotic mysticism of India. He first traveled there with the other Beatles, to sit at the feet of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the old fox who had the spiritual insight to trademark the phrase "transcendental meditation."

The West itself came to represent the decadence that the Bad George fell into and the Good George struggled to escape.

I was in the West, and I was into rock 'n' roll, getting crazy, staying up all night and doing whatever was supposed to be the wrong things. That's

in conflict with all the right things, which is what I learned through India—like getting up early, going to bed early, taking care of yourself and having some sort of spiritual quality to your life.

It helps that Hinduism lets a believer off the hook more easily than Christianity. Harrison became a particular devotee of the god Krishna, a blue-skinned, flute-toting playboy who, unlike Jesus Christ, rotates his way through a harem of thousands of nubile maidens. Compared with them, Ringo's wife must have seemed like a trifle.



G.H., the Maharishi, John Lennon, 1967

Still, his mother may have succeeded more than he knew. When he went off with Maharishi, he wrote her a letter of reassurance. His Hindu practice, he told her, wasn't taking him "off from any devotion to the Sacred Heart in any way. It only strengthens it!" Religious devotion of the most intimate sort preoccupied him, and his oscillation between guilt and redemption had a Catholic look to it—though his insistence on the split between spirit and body could have landed him squarely with the Manicheans. Not long after his discovery of India he went on David Frost's chat show to announce the Beatles' new religious phase. He could have been quoting a homily from any priest at St.

Sylvester's back in Liverpool—banal by the standards of sociology, simply bizarre by the standards of rock 'n' roll:

By having money, we found that money wasn't the answer. We had lots of material things that people can spend their whole lives to get. And it was good, but we still lacked something. And that something is what religion is trying to give to people.

To David Frost he couldn't bring himself to say "God" with a capital G, preferring the less dangerous word "religion," but it was only a matter of

time—and when it came he wouldn't shut up about it, or Him. Critics called Harrison "preachy," and with some cause. I remember attending a concert in the only American solo tour he ever did, in 1974, in Long Beach, California. His voice was shot from infection and over-rehearsal, but none of us in the audience of 40,000 seemed to mind. A croaking Beatle was still a Beatle. Every song was greeted warmly, especially when he played the opening figure of the Beatles standard "In My Life," grandly arranged and slowed to the pace of a dirge, in an effort to draw meaning out of each phrase: *In my life, I love you more.*

It was an odd song to do. "In My

Life" was written by John Lennon, but Harrison put his own stamp on it, and how. He worked his way to the last line of the last verse: "In my life"—then came a rest of four beats, anticipatory cheers welling up from the crowd, the band prepared to come in like an avalanche—"I've loved God more." And 40,000 people were caught *in screamus interruptus*. In my section of the cheap seats, there was a half-gulp while we all looked at each other: "Did he just say what I think he said?"

I still marvel at the nerve it must have taken, singing about God, of all things, in front of kids thumping for rock 'n' roll, not to mention the wisecracking musicians and the cynics and pedants of the concert-reviewing press. But you got used to it if you were a George fan, and in time came to expect it, as when, for example, in an acoustic blues called "Deep Blue," he suddenly popped off with *When I think of the life I'm living / I pray God help me; give me your light / So I can love you and understand . . .* (You were expecting maybe the Hoochie Coochie Man?) And because George insisted, some of us felt obliged, for the first time in our lives, to take the idea (at least) of God seriously.

That Krishna, he works in mysterious ways.

Well into his forties he kept swinging between the poles of his double life as only a true Manichean can, a rock star buried in a pile of cocaine one minute and a sadhu renunciant fingering his beads the next. But by his fifties he had abandoned the pretensions of stardom altogether. He had married a formidable but endlessly forgiving woman. ("People sometimes say to me, 'What's the secret of a long marriage?'" Olivia says in the movie. "And I'm like, 'You don't get divorced!'") He became a devoted father and accomplished gardener.

"I don't listen to much of today's music," he said. "Most of it leaves me shell-shocked." He immersed himself in the standards of the American songbook. "I would rather listen to 'Lady Be Good' by Grappelli [and Django Reinhardt] right now than almost anything," he wrote in a brief autobiography. Hoagy Carmichael became a hero. His last albums each contained at least

POPPERFOTO / GETTY IMAGES

one old pop standard: Cole Porter's "True Love," Harold Arlen's "Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea," Carmichael's "Hong Kong Blues."

When the cancer finally carried him off, his family's formal statement insisted that he had never feared his own death, and even welcomed it, so sure was his faith in an afterlife and in God. The claim is repeated emphatically in the documentary. But this has the feel of a white lie—another bit of Beatle mythmaking. His last months were, in truth, a frantic scramble around Europe and North America in search of experimental cures that might keep his spirit housed in his body a few months longer. None of them worked.

I don't suppose any Beatles fan will begrudge this last little bit of public relations touch-up. Even after reading the tell-alls, most of us think the authorized story of the Fab Four is fine the way it is, and anything else is finally irrelevant—a point which George Harrison himself sweetly made:

I think people who truly can live a life in music are telling the world, "You can have my love, you can have my smiles. Forget the bad parts, you don't need them. Just take the music, the goodness, because it's the very best, and it's the part I give most willingly."

And don't bug him when he's meditating. ♦

on the page. It popped and glistened, in prose that was some impossible mash of sophisticated and naïve, smart and silly, straightforward and bizarre.

"Call me Jonah," it opens. "My parents did, or nearly did. They called me John."

After his service in the Second World War Vonnegut enrolled as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Chicago, although by all accounts he was a terrible student. In his 1999 story collection *Bagombo Snuff Box* he insists on the comic but not entirely believable story that he withdrew after the rejection of his proposed thesis on the parallels between Cubist painting and the American Indian uprisings of the 19th century—an account, apparently, of why Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque were just like Red Cloud and Crazy Horse, which the university had the gall to tell him was "unprofessional."

Perhaps it's worth noticing, however, that in 1971 Chicago went ahead and gave Vonnegut a master's degree in anthropology, proposing (and accepting) *Cat's Cradle* as an ersatz thesis. What the school was after, of course, was a little of the glory surrounding the man and his public fame. Still, the anthropology department wasn't exactly wrong: *Cat's Cradle* contains a surprising amount of anthropological imagination as it tells the story of a made-up religion called Bokononism and its effect on the final days of the world.

Add in a bit of pop theology, a lot of agitation about the atom bomb, a beach-bum ethic, a smart amateur's knowledge of science, and a wry sense of the world's absurdity, and Vonnegut had all the intellectual pieces to make a rich stew of a book. And yet, the funny thing is that *Cat's Cradle*, in the central structure of its plot, is essentially a genre novel: no more or less than an Agatha Christie mystery, a Georgette Heyer romance, or a Louis L'Amour western.

Or, of course, a science-fiction story by anyone from Jules Verne and H.G. Wells to Robert Heinlein and Theodore Sturgeon. Vonnegut was hardly the first to sprawl out in the futuristic genre: From its beginning, science fiction has always been a capacious kind of literature, with plenty of room inside

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# Kurt's Cradle

*Chronicling the rise and fall of the novelist-celebrity.*

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

Catch a wave, and you're sitting on top of the world.

And catch that wave Kurt Vonnegut did, sitting on top of the world from the early 1960s until his death in 2007. Well, maybe not all the way to 2007. Even as early as the publication of his novel *Galápagos*, in 1985, the wave was clearly ebbing. But it had been a hell of a ride: over 20 years, during which Kurt Vonnegut drove his quicksilver board through the curl of American literature—our one great novelistic surfer, the dude who made it all look easy. The guy who made it all look cool.

It was 1963 when the Beach Boys recorded "Catch a Wave"—and 1963,

as well, when a nearly failed proto-New Wave science-fiction writer named Kurt Vonnegut Jr. made a sudden leap up into mainstream public fame with the publication of a novel called *Cat's*

*Cradle*. It's hard to say quite how the 41-year-old author managed the unpredictable jump. Among science-fiction writers his contemporary Philip K. Dick was (in his own peculiar way) a deeper thinker. The younger Roger Zelazny was slicker. The even-younger Tom Disch was cleverer.

Yes, Vonnegut had managed to produce *Player Piano* (1952), *The Sirens of Titan* (1959), and *Mother Night* (1961), but to read the Library of America's new collection is to realize that, with *Cat's Cradle*, he broke through the limitations of his previous work to find the pounding heart of the American moment—the central beat, the bam-bam pulse of it all. The book sparked

## Novels & Stories 1963-1973

by Kurt Vonnegut Jr.  
Library of America, 848 pp., \$35

Joseph Bottum, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, is the author, most recently, of *The Second Spring: Words into Music, Music into Words*.

its accounts of what-if technology for a little low-rent philosophy, a bit of recreational theology, and a touch of down-market anthropology. In 1961 Vonnegut himself wrote a sci-fi short story called “Harrison Bergeron,” which has become a libertarian classic—a cacotopian fantasy about an America in which the government creates absolute equality by forcing strong people to carry heavy weights all the time, beautiful people to use masks, and smart people to wear thought-destroying noisemakers in their ears.

Kerouac is buried somewhere in the book’s voice, along with the run-on sentences that Dylan Thomas taught a generation of writers in the 1950s with prose pieces like “A Child’s Christmas in Wales.” Rolled all together, *Cat’s Cradle* seemed to emerge as something unique in American literature: fast, wise, cynical, sincere, light, learned, and altogether new.

Funny, too, which is what Vonnegut tried to bring to the forefront in his 1965 followup, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, a book about—well, it’s

the mad Vonnegut touch: *Slaughterhouse-Five, or The Children’s Crusade: A Duty-Dance with Death*, by “Kurt Vonnegut Jr., a Fourth-Generation German-American Now Living in Easy Circumstances on Cape Cod and Smoking Too Much, Who, as an American Infantry Scout Hors de Combat, as a Prisoner of War, Witnessed the Fire Bombing of Dresden, Germany, ‘The Florence of the Elbe,’ a Long Time Ago, and Survived to Tell the Tale.”

The science-fiction elements were still present in this tale of Billy Pilgrim, an eye doctor from upstate New York who comes unstuck in time, bouncing randomly back and forth through his life—from the moment he survived the firebombing of Dresden as a young Allied prisoner of war, hiding with his guards in a German slaughterhouse, to the moment he was kidnapped by fourth-dimensional aliens from the planet Tralfamadore. The mythopoeic boom in the rat-a-tat prose, as well, with the sad irony of “so it goes,” the antiwar novel’s repeated catchphrase:

My father died many years ago now—of natural causes. So it goes. He was a sweet man. He was a gun nut, too. He left me his guns. They rust.

But yet another element had stumbled into Vonnegut’s writing with *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*: an observational intensity and social comedy that Saul Bellow’s *Adventures of Augie March* and *Henderson the Rain King* gave that generation of writers. It came to fruition, for Vonnegut, with *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The book is astonishingly depressing for something so funny. Or maybe, astonishingly comic for something so gloomy. Billy Pilgrim is the most passive character in American fiction, and whether Vonnegut himself is selling America that kind of fatal quietism remains an unanswered question.

He’s certainly selling something in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The unnamed narrator intrudes himself into the novel enough to be Vonnegut’s stand-in, the figure who speaks for the author. Of course, Kilgore Trout rambles through the book as well, making strange, wry, and generally pacifist comments, and the science-fiction

NEWS.COM



Kurt Vonnegut Jr., 1979

In *Cat’s Cradle*, however, the streams of his imagination coalesced into something that seemed to leave genre fiction far behind. Mostly, that involved the writing, especially Vonnegut’s newfound ability to coin memorable names for his inventions: the seed crystals of ice-nine, which will freeze the world at room temperature, for example, or wampeter, the fundamental purpose of a karass in the religion of Bokononism. Karass, for that matter, by which Vonnegut named a group of people who are, somehow, often unknown to themselves, working to bring about God’s purposes.

The stylistic tics that Vonnegut developed for the book helped as well: the mismatched chapter sizes, the paragraphs of dialogue longer than expository paragraphs from the narrator. Jack

hard to say just what the book is about. Kilgore Trout makes his first appearance, an atheist science-fiction writer (possibly based on Theodore Sturgeon) who wanders through several of Vonnegut’s books. In *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* he meets Eliot Rosewater, trustee of a philanthropy called the Rosewater Foundation and a man whom the family lawyers are trying to have declared insane. Which he is, of course, but that doesn’t make the family right for having him declared so, and besides, the insane have a kind of wisdom all their own, and . . .

The book is a mess. It would have fallen by the wayside—Vonnegut is much wittier when he isn’t trying to be funny—if he hadn’t followed it with his most famous book four years later. Even the rolling title page conveyed

writer clearly works, in later novels and stories, as Vonnegut's surrogate.

By any measure, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is a deeply personal book. The scenes of the prisoners in the firebombed slaughterhouse, for example, are based on Vonnegut's own harrowing experience as a G.I. in Dresden after his capture. And yet, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is so personal it becomes impersonal—a book with so many Vonnegut figures walking through it that what's left is only the book's simultaneously sad and amusing message that the passage of time is incomprehensible, and free will a story we tell ourselves to stay sane. More or less.

More or less. That's a Vonnegutian kind of slogan, and as the years went by he increasingly indulged the tics and catches that were, when he was at his best, only the ornaments of his prose. By the end, with *Bluebeard* in 1987 and *Hocus Pocus* in 1990, he had become little more than a parody of himself. The simple truth is that he would never again reach the mad bravura of *Cat's Cradle* or the passive power of *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Lots of readers continued to follow him, because he was Kurt Vonnegut Jr. and he had seemed to speak for the moment; but there would be no Yeatsian late reblossoming for him, no Dickensian rolling into new territory with each new book.

*Breakfast of Champions* (1973), with the weakness of its repeated catchphrase "and so on," was such a disastrous sequel to *Slaughterhouse-Five* that many reviewers refused to believe that Vonnegut didn't have some wry, secret purpose in mind. The plot, more or less, involves Kilgore Trout, who comes to give a talk at an arts festival in a small Midwestern city. Along the way, he meets Dwayne Hoover, an insane businessman looking for a message from God.

As it happens, Trout is holding a copy of a science-fiction novel he's written, which claims that the world is populated by robots and only the reader is a free human being. So he gives it to Dwayne, who naturally takes the book as the message for which he's been waiting and begins trying to smash open everyone he can get his hands on, to reveal their robotic machinery, until the police catch

up with him and haul him away. After which, the narrator of the book appears to Trout and (in a parallel scene) tells him that, as the creator of this fictional world, he's decided to give Trout, and Trout alone, the gift of free will.

The metafictional elements may have seemed daring at the time, but they've aged poorly—and as for the rest of the book, it's gone as moldy as a bad case of gorgonzola. Vonnegut writes, in the preface to *Breakfast of Champions*, that he had reached age 50 and needed to "clear his head of all the junk in there." Which included bad felt-tip drawings, stray characters from past and future novels, and ideas for science-fiction stories he never got around to writing, all dumped into the supposed oeuvre of Kilgore Trout.

It all seemed kind of funny, but it was the comic filigree of Vonnegut without much of the base metal that actually made him an important writer. And from there—through *Slapstick* (1976), *Jailbird* (1979), *Dead-eye Dick* (1982), *Galápagos* (1985), *Bluebeard* (1987), and so on—each novel seemed less important. Less substantial, less real, less pointed.

Each was still an event, though. The reputation he built in the 1960s remained with him, and he stayed the grizzled, silver-maned man of the moment, our mustachioed icon of hip writing, till his death in 2007 at age 84. He'd caught the wave with *Cat's Cradle* back in 1963, and there he stayed, as, in many ways, he deserved to.

Sittin' on top of the world. ♦

BCA

## Pale Fire

*The lost world of Jews in the Russian empire.*

BY DAVID WOLPE

**I**n the early 20th century the Pale of Settlement was home to more Jews than anywhere else in the world.

Some five million Jews lived in this vast area that encompassed Western Russia and parts of what is now Poland, Lithuania, Moldavia, Belarus, and the Ukraine. Memory homogenizes, but in fact this was a population with vast differences: The political agitators, including the socialists, Communists, Zionists, and others, and the steadfastly traditional, both Hasidic and Mitnagdim, all jostled against one another in town and marketplaces, villages and small shtetls. This was the world known to modern Jews through the etiolated lens of Shalom Aleichem put

*David Wolpe, rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, is the author, most recently, of Why Faith Matters.*

### The Jewish Dark Continent

*Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*  
by Nathaniel Deutsch  
Harvard, 384 pp., \$35

to Broadway music. In fact, it was a world of superstition and enlightenment, traditional practices, and the sound of old bonds daily bursting.

Into this colorful world went Shloyme Zanvil Rapoport, best known to the Jewish world by his pen name An-sky. He was a writer, a revolutionary, and became an ethnographer. Although he is remembered by the general public, if at all, primarily through his play *The Dybbuk* (1914), An-sky devoted years to a remarkably ambitious mission: He decided to travel through the Pale and chronicle daily life there before it disappeared.

Striking as this story is in itself,

the coda is perhaps even more astonishing. In 1914 An-sky distributed a questionnaire containing over 2,000 questions about the details of Jewish life. The questions were never answered. The Great War and then the Revolution put an end to the ambitious project. The questions themselves, along with the documents and wax-seal recordings of folk songs—the material An-sky accumulated in his journey—it was all lost.

In the mid-1990s, with the opening of the Soviet archives, the material was resurrected. *The Jewish Dark Continent* translates the questionnaire and allows the reader to follow An-sky's remarkable journey.

It has been famously said that there are only two plots: a stranger comes to town or a man goes on a journey. For An-sky, both were simultaneously enacted in his research. First, the young firebrand had to go through his own internal journey, leaving the tradition whose chronicler he would become:

When I first entered literature 25 years ago I wanted to labor on behalf of the oppressed, the working masses, and it appeared to me, mistakenly, that I would not find them among the Jews. . . . Possessing an eternal longing for Jewishness, I [nevertheless] threw myself in all directions and left to work for another people. My life was broken, split, torn. . . . I lived among the Russian folk for a long time, among their lowest classes. Things are different for us now than when I wrote my first story. We have cultural, political and literary movements. . . . I believe in a better future and in the survival of the Jews!

Then An-sky had to become the stranger in town, walking through the villages and gaining the trust of those

(sometimes by mild trickery) who would recount their imprecations and blessings, lullabies and customs.

As Nathaniel Deutsch points out in this perceptive and intriguing work, Jews were “at once civilized and semi-savage, ethnographers and potential objects of ethnography.” An-sky was a member of the tribe he chose to study. Yet as an enlightened Jew he was also different from many among whom he walked. His charm could gain their



*'Le violoniste vert' (1912-13) by Marc Chagall*

trust, but his interest was in preserving a world that his peers had long since scorned and left behind.

Of course, An-sky did not know he was creating a time capsule. Much of Deutsch's short work—the text itself is about 100 pages, the rest devoted to the questionnaire—is an explanation of An-sky's program, his travels, and his frustrations. Knowing the sad coda, that An-sky died, sick and broken, in Warsaw in 1920, the book is a homage as well as an act of reconstruction.

At first, one might imagine that questions could not be nearly as revealing as the never-offered responses. But some open up remarkable vistas of speculation: “What do people do if they dig a grave and then don't need it? Do they bury a live rooster there?” “Does a girl ever lose her virginity because of an accident? Is this recorded in a *pinkas* (communal record book)?”

The very first question asks about beliefs concerning the soul before it enters the body; the very last question asks what life will be like after resurrection of the dead. Here, in 2,087 questions, is the vast range of Jewish life and custom, from before-cradle to after-grave. Even without the answers, they provide considerable insight into the world of the Pale. In some ways, the silence of no response is an act of fidelity to the destruction that followed.

The story is told of the Hasidic master Rabbi Bunim that he was walking with his disciples and they spotted another group of students.

“They are dead,” said Rabbi Bunim.

“What can you possibly mean?” asked his students, as the other group milled and spoke.

“They stopped asking questions, and one who stops asking is dead,” replied Rabbi Bunim.

He and his disciples walked on a bit, but one of them was visibly troubled, and finally spoke: “Rabbi, how do I know that I'm not dead?”

Rabbi Bunim answered, “Because you asked.”

An-sky's questions have been retrieved. From the wreckage of a world wiped away, through questions, he lives—and gives others life. ♦

NEWS.COM

# Dances with Buffalos

*The politicization of American history—again.*

BY BRUCE COLE

If there were a truth-in-advertising regulation for exhibitions, this latest at the Smithsonian's American Art Museum would be in trouble. The exhibition is not in a hall, nor is it about wonders, nor really about art. What it is, sadly, is yet another example of how tone deaf this national museum is to the taxpayers who subsidize it, as well as an emblem of the sorry state of contemporary humanities scholarship.

As with so much of this scholarship, "The Great American Hall of Wonders" advances an activist social agenda. The introductory wall text, amplified by the exhibition's catalogue (\$45 for the paperback), makes some big claims. It tells us, without proof, "that nineteenth-century Americans considered ingenuity to be their most important asset"; that the exhibition aims "to catch Americans making selections about what was possible and what was not in the land of liberty"; and that "their choices parceled out opportunities in varying measures to the nation's multifold communities and reconfigured its ecological systems in profound and irreversible ways"—whatever that may mean.

The wall text ends with this exhortation: "Today's urgent social and environmental challenges call for a great national brainstorm, a collaborative imagining of enduring solutions."

So maybe this exhibition can fire up that "national brainstorm" and "collaborative imagining" thing. But don't count on it. Art is X-rayed throughout, and the viewer, with the urging of the exhibition curator, Claire Perry, must look beyond mere surface images,

*Bruce Cole, who served as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities during 2001-09, is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute.*

## The Great American Hall of Wonders

*Art, Science, and Invention in the Nineteenth Century*  
Smithsonian Institution

beyond the artist's intent, beyond the aesthetic impact, beyond the materiality of the paint, stone, or plaster. And what's beyond the fringe? More sophisticated (or should that be sophistical?), "deeper," and usually ominous implications about America's myriad shortcomings in the 19th century.



*'Rubens Peale with a Geranium' (1801)  
by Rembrandt Peale*

To demonstrate the 19th century's innovation, science, and invention, the exhibition is divided into what the curator breezily calls "six iconic themes that sparked brainstorming." But it's hard to know why since no evidence is offered to prove this assertion. The themes are an odd and disparate assortment, including Democratic Time, The Peacemaker [guns], The Big Tree, Niagara Falls, The Buffalo, and A Locomotive People.

Woven throughout, *sotto voce*, is the

underlying message that much of this is not at all good, and that invention and technology "reconfigured" the ecological and social systems, and not always for the best. The decimation of the buffalo (a particular hobby horse of this exhibition); the deforestation of the West, especially the felling of giant sequoias; the violent nature of American society represented by guns and hunters (the extermination of the buffalo is equated to the carnage of the Civil War); the railroads snaking through the pristine countryside (providing passengers a convenient way to massacre buffalo)—all are overlaid on the past with the sensibilities of a 21st-century environmentalist.

The bewildered visitor meanders through a series of galleries, each devoted to a theme, or "icon." To be sure, there are a few wall texts, but these are confusing and didactic. Essential guidance is missing. Why these themes? How do they relate to each other? What is the overall narrative? This is a real disservice to the overwhelming number of visitors, most of them tourists, who come to learn and appreciate something about the ongoing creation and creativity of the American nation as embodied in the objects on display, and not to hear yet another homily on the evils of capitalism, this time anachronistically stamped onto the past.

What is displayed is an odd and disjointed lot: some major paintings, many of lesser quality, drawings, illustrations, portrait busts, maps, an early Edison light bulb, patent models and applications. One also finds a few pistols and long guns in The Peacemaker section, but curiously enough not the Sharps breech-loading rifle which (it is pointed out) made buffalo-killing a snap. In the curator's zeal to make the Sharps even more deadly, she claims that it could fire a one-pound bullet containing 90 grains of powder—which is like saying a peashooter could fire a cannon ball.

So much for the curator's technological acumen; how is she on art? The section on The Big Tree is particularly instructive, and unintentionally amusing. Rembrandt Peale's portrait of his brother, "Rubens Peale with a Geranium" (a geranium is not a tree), is a fascinating depiction of the

artist, a beautiful still life of the potted plant, and a well-wrought composition rendered in subtle shades of brown and green punctuated by the plant's red blooms.

Yet the wall text and catalogue do not discuss this painting as a work of art but dive into an explication of its imaginary iconography. The springboard is the two pairs of eyeglasses in the painting, one worn by Rubens and the other held in his left hand. The curator explains that

He is not looking at the geranium, however, and his unused pair of spectacles posits the possibility of insights unrelated to seeing. Rubens places two fingers at the plant's base to check the moisture of the soil [there is no reason to believe that he's doing this]. This gesture connects him to older ways of knowing plants, and to practices related to medicine, healing, and magic.

Rubens, moreover, "is engaged in a kind of diagnosis, one that is rooted in an ancient human connection to the earth."

Another painting, Winslow Homer's "The Initials," is a moving image of a woman alone in a forest of tall pines. The bare trees, broken branches on the forest floor, and the sober yellow and brown palette make the woman's bright blue dress, and the tree she touches, the compositional and emotional focus. Carved into the tree are crossed swords and other markings, probably initials, perhaps of this woman and her lost husband or fiancé. Dated 1864, Homer's picture is a restrained meditation suggesting loss and mourning engendered by the Civil War.

Because what I have just described is what any levelheaded viewer would note, the curator is having none of it. Instead, the painting evokes the "ministering angels" of "the long campaign, the female nurses who bandaged, bathed, and fed wounded soldiers." But more than that, "Homer's protagonist, reading what a tree says," stands for "generations of American female plant specialists." Accordingly, she "represents female authors, clubwomen, and educators who were among the most outspoken opponents of indiscriminate logging." Here, and in many other instances, the catalogue quotes no sources for this eccentric

claim, and the overwhelming number of sources she does cite are secondary, and of recent date.

The curator's musings on the ever-expanding American Empire are found in her description of an extraordinary painting by Thomas Hill, "The Last Spike," which is not in the exhibition and depicts Leland Stanford about to drive in the last spike uniting the tracks of the Union Pacific and Central Pacific at Promontory Point, Utah. Stanford comes in for some rough treatment by the curator, who comments on his weight and egotism, and tells us that he missed the spike, hitting the rail instead, much to the delight of the assembled crowd.

The painting deploys "an array of religious and imperial iconography to drive home the splendor of the spike-driving moment." This consists of Chinese and Irish laborers kneeling in obeisance, a woman bowing her head, and a man working on a telegraph pole who "evokes the divine sacrifice at Golgotha that redeemed humankind." And then there's the locomotive above Stanford's head belching "fire and brimstone."

This is a wildly misleading reading of the painting, intended to make it a

depiction of the evils of 19th-century capitalism, the oppression of women (a thread that runs throughout the exhibition), and, of course, American imperialism. And it is inaccurate: The woman does not genuflect, and the locomotive, in the distance and not above Stanford's head, does not belch "fire and brimstone" but smoke and steam. Sometimes a telegraph pole is just a telegraph pole.

In the Obama administration, the endowments for the humanities and arts have lurched leftward. So, too, have the Smithsonian museums under the direction of Wayne Clough, the present secretary, who has asked Congress for \$861.5 million for 2012. Smithsonian museums already have a history of controversial shows, including the Enola Gay exhibition at the Air and Space Museum, the American Art Museum's "The West as America," and this year's "Hide/Seek" at the Portrait Gallery, which landed the secretary in hot water with both the left and the right—no small feat.

But lest we forget, Clough's responsibility is to the American people. To fulfill it, he needs to demand that the national museums under his direction serve all our citizens, rather than the narrow ideologies of their curators. ♦

BCA

## Watch the Birdie

*Golf as sport and theater of human nature.*

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

In *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, Arthur Herman posed a bold but credible claim. But there was a major omission: The game of golf, which, with steam engines and classical economics, also originated in the foggy reaches of the Celtic fringe. The royal and ancient game, moreover, suffers from being more joked about

*Edwin M. Yoder Jr., former editor and columnist, describes himself as a recovering golf addict.*

### The Greatest Game Ever Played

*Harry Vardon, Francis Ouimet, and the Birth of Modern Golf*

by Mark Frost

Hyperion, 496 pp., \$30

### The Match

*The Day the Game of Golf Changed Forever*

by Mark Frost

Hyperion, 272 pp., \$24.99

than any other sport—"a good walk ruined," etc., whoever among many

claimants first said that. “No one guilty of golf,” pronounced H.L. Mencken, “should be eligible to any office of profit or trust.”

If I were prescribing a cure for those who deny themselves the game’s pleasures and miseries, if only as students or spectators, I would recommend a double dose of Mark Frost. In two eloquent chronicles of historic matches, Frost brings a remarkable humanism to the cliché-ridden world of sportswriting. His long suit is a grasp of its personalities, the forces that shaped them, and the tense interaction of human temperament with tricky terrain.

From its earliest arrival on these shores—late 19th/early 20th centuries—golf’s patrons and their governing organization, the United States Golf Association, insisted that it must remain a game for gentlemen amateurs. It is a mark of that snobbery that at the U.S. Open of 1913, the dramatic centerpiece of the first of these two books, amateurs were accorded the honorific “Mr.” on the entry lists while professionals, many of them club-affiliated (in the days before tours) and recent immigrants from Great Britain, were denied it—and even the privilege of changing shoes in clubhouse locker rooms.

*The Greatest Game Ever Played* tells the story of Francis Ouimet, a boy of working-class origins who grew up just across Clyde Street from the Country Club of Brookline, Massachusetts. That club claims to be the first American citadel of the game, though its golf course followed earlier sports venues such as horse racing, polo, and curling. Ouimet made his way into its gilded circles by way of the caddy shack, and it was while humping clubs for one of the Country Club’s gilded members that he was invited one day to hit a ball and his exceptional talent, honed at odd hours when the course was deserted, was noticed.

Frost opens *The Greatest Game* with the boy Ouimet, then 7, adding a Vardon Flyer ball to the collection he retrieved in off-hours from the hazards of the Country Club and kept in a tin box in his bedroom. The ball was

named for Harry Vardon, an English professional from the Isle of Jersey who had already become the most admired and emulated golfer in the world.

The fates evidently took notice. Thirteen years later, Ouimet, then 20, defeated Vardon in an epic U.S. Open playoff. By way of delineating character, Frost takes us through the obstacles these two principals overcame on the way to their celebrated 1913 encounter. For Ouimet, they were economic and social: A world separated his side of Clyde Street from the Country Club of Brookline. Add an unsympathetic father who thought his son would become a ne’er-do-well among the stuffy gentlemen across the street. For Vardon, another poor boy made good, the impediments were not only social but physical: At the height of his celebrity, Vardon was laid low by tuberculosis, for which there was then no known medication. He retired to a sanatorium in Norfolk and gradually overcame the infection. But it impaired tissues in his right hand and left him with a nearly uncontrollable tremor that was hell on his putting. He conquered it by willpower.

**T**he *Match* is the story of a later legendary match-play encounter, at Pebble Beach in 1956 between the two reigning amateurs of the day, Harvie Ward and Ken Venturi, and the two preeminent professionals, Byron Nelson and Ben Hogan. The match was an informally arranged sidebar to that year’s Bing Crosby “clambake” and the principal bet was that the amateurs would prevail, as they nearly did. The link connecting Frost’s two tales, four decades apart, is that Ouimet’s pint-sized caddy in the 1913 Open, Eddie Lowery, had prospered as a West Coast auto dealer and played a role in arranging the match. All four played breathtaking golf, their best balls well below par on one of the world’s most challenging courses, and Hogan’s eagle became the sole margin of difference.

Perhaps one need have been a boyish addict of the game in the 1950s, as I was, to grasp the pre-Arnie, pre-Nicklaus, pre-Tiger preeminence of Ben Hogan. Like Ouimet and Vardon,

Venturi and many others, Hogan surmounted formidable social obstacles to reach the top. It was not known then that Hogan’s stoic self-containment was probably, in part, the psychological remnant of having as a small boy witnessed his father’s suicide by gunshot. But everyone did know that Hogan had recently rallied from a devastating automobile accident that nearly killed him and permanently stiffened both legs.

*The Match* seems to me structurally perfect, its companion book somewhat more discursive and, at times, a bit self-consciously literary. And as usual, the subtitles needlessly exaggerate the already remarkable. Frost is a master of golf history and lore and relates in lavish pointillist detail how the great golf courses evolved and who designed them; how clubs with strange names with whippy wooden shafts became today’s high-tech weapons; how the ball evolved; how pars and birdies and bogeys and such became the game’s scoring measures—an education in the history and lore of the game. Who knew, for instance, that the “Colonel Bogey March” derived its name from golf?

As for the misplaced blindness to the charms of golf, there is this to be said: It is the lone competitive sport in America whose courtesies remain intact, along with a self-regulating honor system of scoring. It is a game which, given equal skills, depends uniquely upon mood and chance, a mental test in which play can veer from elation to catastrophe in minutes or seconds. As is frequently observed, golf matches are often “won and lost between the ears.” And as for its bucolic settings, that attraction has rarely been better summed up than in Bernard Darwin’s farewell to golf after long years as a player, organizer, and writer for the *Times* of London. Wrote Charles Darwin’s grandson:

To have done the only kind of work that one could have liked, in green and pleasant places and amid pleasant, friendly people—that is something to be grateful for, and the wind is still blowing on the heath.

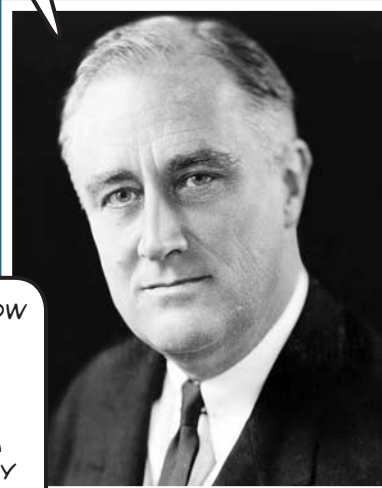
Every word is true. ♦

**"In the middle of an answer on his plans for the tax code, [Texas governor Rick Perry] turned to Ron Paul and proudly proclaimed that he would eliminate three federal agencies: Commerce, Education, and . . . um. He couldn't remember."**

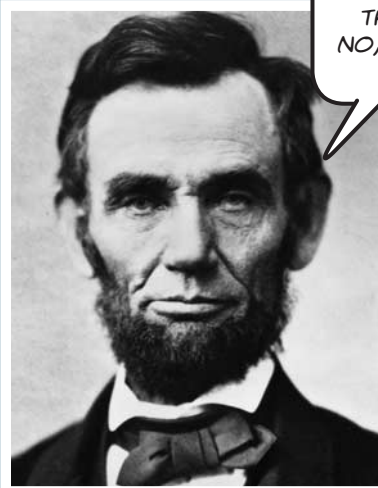
**—New York Times, November 9, 2011**

## PARODY

"SO, FIRST OF ALL, LET ME ASSERT MY FIRM BELIEF THAT THE ONLY THING WE HAVE TO FEAR IS, UM, THE ONLY THING WE HAVE TO FEAR IS . . . IT'LL COME TO ME, I JUST NEED A SECOND OR TWO. IT'S SOMETHING THAT HAS TO DO WITH FEAR, I DO KNOW THAT . . ."



"THAT THIS NATION, UNDER GOD, SHALL HAVE A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM — AND THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE, MAYBE THROUGH THE PEOPLE? ON THE PEOPLE? YES, THAT'S IT! WAIT NOW, NO, THAT'S NOT IT. FOUR SCORE . . ."



"AND SO, MY FELLOW AMERICANS— ASK NOT WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU — ASK . . . ASK FOR A BERLINER. ASK WHY TED SORENSEN'S HANDWRITING IS SO SMALL. MAYBE DON'T ASK WHAT YOUR COUNTRY CAN DO FOR YOU BUT WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO FOR IT INSTEAD. OR SOMETHING TO THAT EFFECT."



"NOW THIS IS NOT THE END. IT IS NOT EVEN THE BEGINNING OF THE END. BUT IT IS, PERHAPS, AHM, PERHAPS THE . . . MOMENT FOLLOWING THE BEGINNING. IT'S JUST NOT THE BEGINNING. IS IT THE END OF THE END? I NEED A DRINK."

