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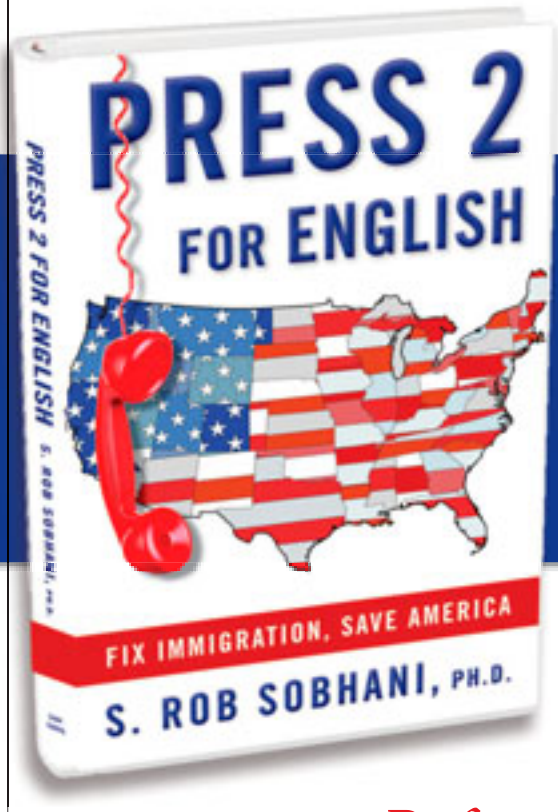

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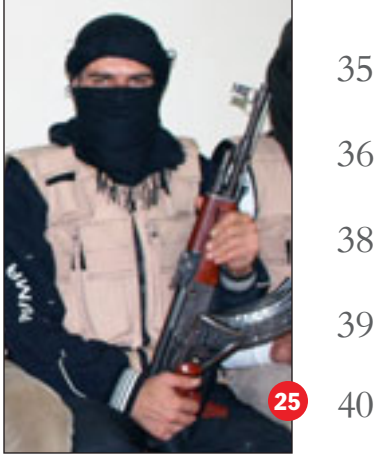

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COVER BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

The Clinton Renaissance®

Reading Andrew Ferguson's splendid essay this week on Bill Clinton (see page 20), The Scrapbook was especially beguiled by his detailed description of the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI), that world-class gathering of seminal minds and can-do spirits, dedicated to generating bold ideas and innovative solutions. Between the gory details of the CGI gabfests, however, and the blasts from the past (Susan McDougal, Sidney Blumenthal, Webster Hubbell) of the Clinton era, The Scrapbook was reminded of the baby boom gabfest that started it all: Renaissance Weekend.

Whatever happened to Renaissance Weekend? Well, The Scrapbook is pleased to report that, even in the absence of Bill and Hillary Clinton, it still thrives—although it is no longer held just in Charleston, South Carolina, but has become a kind of moveable feast, convening over holiday weekends in places like Santa Monica, Aspen, and Monterey. And its mission is just as amorphous as ever: "To build bridges among innovative leaders with exceptionally diverse perspectives."

The phrase "Renaissance Weekend" by the way, is now copyrighted, and self-defined as "inter-generational, invitation-only retreats for preeminent authorities, emerging leaders, and their families"—which, we assume, is just a lot of fancy talk to ensure that The Scrapbook continues to be excluded.

Which is not only unfair, but unjust—perhaps even shortsighted. For while The Scrapbook may be neither a preeminent authority nor an emerging leader, it is just as concerned as anyone about the crisis of confidence, the breakdown of civility, the absence of consensus, the rise of global challenges, the puncturing of myths, the hunger for solutions, the building of networks, and the vital necessity to think outside the box.

The Clintons at the 1993 Renaissance Weekend®

For years The Scrapbook has successfully challenged conventional wisdom, dared to speak truth to power, walked the walk, grappled with ideas, reached out to adversaries, hit the reset button, promoted diversity, encouraged innovation, personified the entrepreneurial spirit, asked the tough questions, and identified leaders who can raise The Scrapbook to the next level.

Which makes our exclusion from Renaissance Weekend all the more poignant. For if you visit the website you find an endless scroll of portraits of past and present participants: David Gergen, Arianna Huffington, Brian Williams, Valerie Plame Wilson, Gail Sheehy, Nicholas Kristof, Diane Sawyer, even the late Art Buchwald. It's as if Renaissance Weekend were a scrap of flypaper, attracting leaders from all walks of Georgetown and Manhattan—the whole gamut from politics to journalism, and back—all with global perspectives and bold strategies.

Is there no place in all these fruitful exchanges for The Scrapbook, no challenge that The Scrapbook hasn't undertaken, no mindset that The Scrapbook hasn't engaged, no global perspective that The Scrapbook hasn't recognized? Apparently not—which is why The Scrapbook now shifts its attention to the Aspen Ideas Festival, the joint venture of the *Atlantic* and the Aspen Institute—a sort of Renaissance Weekend for the 21st century, where they "feel strongly that knowledge in and of itself has tremendous value [and] armed with understanding and perspectives, the next step just might be to engage where passions intersect with opportunity [and] the value of ideas is realized when society acts." It's as if The Scrapbook were looking in the mirror! ♦

Deep Throat Revisited

Some decades ago it became an article of faith among opinion makers that Watergate was the Platonic ideal of American political scandal. Nowadays, Obama's attorney general can oversee the handoff of a few thousand guns to Mexican criminal gangs and spend the next year stonewalling congressional investigators and the family of a dead border patrol agent, and the media collectively yawns into the abyss. But if you so much as question the narrative according to which the republic was saved from oblivion by the unimpeachable courage of a brave anonymous source who vouchsafed to heroic news reporters details of the conspiracy behind an inept office burglary—well, prepare to catch hell.

While it's hard to feel sorry for Tricky Dick or lament his fate, it's also hard not to be appalled by the propagation of a mythos that needlessly venerates anti-Nixon crusaders and has

AP / MARK LENNIHAN

turned the American media into an assemblage of grandstanders.

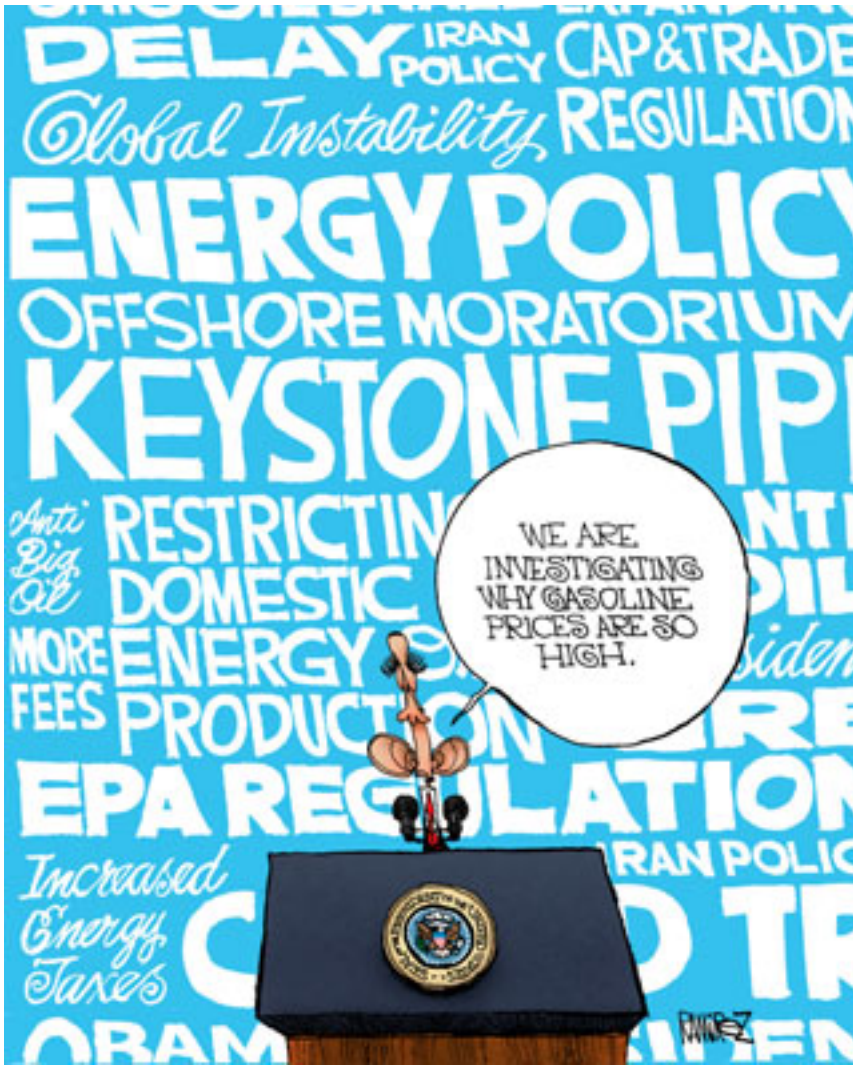
One of the linchpins of this absurd narrative was Deep Throat. For decades it was assumed that this shadowy figure who handed the story to the *Washington Post*'s Robert Redford and Dustin Hoffman—sorry, to Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein—was essentially a public-spirited do-gooder. Of course, things are different now that we finally know Deep Throat was Mark Felt, a high-ranking FBI official.

Nearly 40 years later, historical investigations are just starting to shed more light on Felt. To that end, the *Miami Herald*'s Glenn Garvin surveys the new book *Leak: Why Mark Felt Became Deep Throat* by veteran historian and author Max Holland. It turns out that the answer to the titular question is that Felt was a disgruntled bureaucrat. According to Garvin:

> The real story is "considerably messier and less than a fairy tale," Holland writes in *Leak*. Through interviews, declassified documents and Nixon's White House tapes, he demonstrates convincingly that Felt's objectives were covetous rather than civic: He desperately wanted to be director of the FBI.
>
> Less than a month before the Watergate break-in, the top FBI job had come open for the first time in 37 years with the death of J. Edgar Hoover. Enraged that he hadn't gotten the job, Felt saw Watergate as an opportunity to shatter the career of the man who did, Nixon's friend L. Patrick Gray.

The book also reveals that in his position at the FBI, Felt was something of a dirty trickster himself, having personally overseen burglaries and "black-bag jobs" against antiwar groups. And considering all the other questionable things Hoover's FBI was up to, Garvin notes that it's telling how selective Felt was in his leaking. He didn't feel the need to go public, for instance, with the fact that the FBI had run wiretaps on Martin Luther King Jr. and shared the tapes with President Kennedy.

None of this excuses what Nixon and his crew were doing. But the revelations about Felt also highlight a neglected truism of political scandals: While some in Washington, D.C., are less corrupt than others, almost no one is innocent. ♦



Tea Party Update

Good news for the Tea Party! Sam Tanenhaus surveys the movement in the latest issue of the *New York Review of Books*, under the headline "Will the Tea Get Cold?" Tanenhaus's opus *The Death of Conservatism* was published on September 1, 2009. And 14 months later, on Election Day 2010, we saw how that turned out.

So we think we know why the *NYRB* editors hedged their bets with that question mark in the headline. Given Tanenhaus's record as a contrarian indicator, we can confidently predict that, come fall, the kettle will be once again on the boil. ♦

Schiavo Revisionism

Our occasional contributor Wesley J. Smith wrote a column last week for the *Daily Caller*, calling attention to the "politically pernicious" revisionism about the Terri Schiavo case that is likely to increase if Rick Santorum remains atop the GOP field:

> Now that Rick Santorum has emerged as a credible candidate for the Republican nomination for president, some in the media and the Democratic Party are weaving a blatantly false narrative about the passage of the 2005 federal law intervening in the Terri

Schiavo case. Supposedly, the alleged religious fanatic Rick Santorum—*he wants to outlaw contraception, don't you know!*—along with Republican theocratic coconspirators, overcame courageous Democrats' objections to pass a law interfering with a husband's loving quest to give his wife the merciful release. But that isn't even close to what happened seven years ago. In actuality, the Schiavo law *was one of the most bipartisan laws passed during the entire Bush presidency*.

How bipartisan? As Smith documents, it needed two-thirds support in the House, and got it, with the Democratic caucus splitting evenly. Any one Democrat could have stopped it in the Senate, where it passed without objection in an unrecorded vote. But none said no: "Not newly seated Senator Barack Obama. Not Senator Hillary Clinton. [Not] any other Democrat, including such liberal icons as Tom Harkin, Harry Reid, Patrick Leahy and Barbara Boxer." After polls showed that Congress's intervention in the right-to-die case was deeply unpopular, Obama said his having gone along with it "was a mistake." Smith concludes: "Somehow, I think that if the polls had gone the other way, Obama would have been taking bows, pointing proudly to how he had heeded the urging of the 29 national disability rights organizations that had filed amicus briefs or lobbied Congress on behalf of saving Schiavo's life." ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'When you look at the numbers, it's stunning how little this Republican primary electorate resembles the rest of the United States. They are much closer to the population of 1890 than of 2012. Given the level of media attention, we know an election of great significance is happening on the Republican side. But it's occurring in a different place, guided by talk-radio extremists and religious zealots . . . " (Timothy Egan, *New York Times*, February 16). ♦

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

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Good Samaritans

Last winter, I was in Paris for a few days and stayed at the epicenter of the old city, right next to Notre Dame, in a place called the Hôtel-Dieu, a large working hospital. Some years back a decision was made to provide rooms on the top floor for patients' visitors to stay overnight. Then, finding that the rooms were seldom filled to capacity, the hospital opened them to paying guests. It makes for a novel lodging arrangement, and I loved stepping out in the morning into the square in front of the cathedral, nearly empty of tourists in bitter February.

The Hôtel-Dieu was founded in 651 by a bishop of Paris remembered as Saint Landry. The present grand building is of 19th-century vintage, but in the courtyard you will still find on the central wall a stone face in high relief, with on either side a Greek letter. Fewer and fewer, I suppose, in secular/multicultural Europe will recognize him as the man who, appearing in a vision, said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End"—Jesus of Nazareth, to Christians the messiah, the anointed one, the Christ.

A great many hospitals around the world are named, directly or indirectly, for him. Think of St. Jude's or Providence or Mercy or St. Elizabeth's. And even those without Christian names often turn out to have Christian (or other religious) origins. Georgetown University Hospital, where my daughter is a nurse, when it opened in 1898 with 33 beds, was staffed by Sisters of St. Francis; the university is run by Jesuits. The place where I go for tests once a year states on its web page, "Sibley Memorial Hospital's proud heritage can be traced to the year 1890, when the Lucy Webb Hayes National Training School for Deaconesses and Missionaries was founded by The Woman's Home Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C."

The first hospital in America, where my husband was an intern—Pennsylvania Hospital in Philadelphia, chartered in 1751 and paid for with public funds and private donations—has as its seal the Good Samaritan, along with the device, "Take care of him and I will repay thee." That's a shortened version of a verse from the Book of Luke in the King James translation. The passage goes like this (with quotations from a modern translation).

Detail from 'The Good Samaritan' by Théodule-Augustin Ribot

Jesus, an unconventional Jewish preacher, is asked by a teacher of the Jewish law what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus replies with a question—What does the law tell you to do?—and the teacher, quoting the Torah, answers that he must love God and love his neighbor as himself.

"You have answered correctly," Jesus replies. "Do this and you will live."

But the teacher persists. "Who is my neighbor?" In reply, Jesus tells the parable:

A traveler, attacked by robbers, was stripped and left for dead by the side of the road. A priest came along and, seeing the injured man, passed by on the other side. So too a Levite, a member of the priestly class. Then a Samaritan, from a group despised by Jews, came upon the victim and "took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'"

This Samaritan, Jesus shows, was a neighbor to the man beaten by robbers. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise."

It was the sometimes irreverent Benjamin Franklin who chose the Good Samaritan for the seal of Pennsylvania Hospital, and it was he who composed the inscription on the cornerstone of the hospital's first building. It reads: "In the year of Christ MDCCLV, George the Second happily reigning (for he sought the happiness of his people), Philadelphia flourishing (for its inhabitants were publick spirited), this building, by the bounty of the government and of many private persons, was piously founded for the relief of the sick and miserable. May the God of mercies bless this undertaking."

When people are moved by their faith to serve those in need, it benefits all, whether in Roman Judaea or 7th-century Paris or the Philadelphia of Franklin's day. No wonder our Founders placed in the First Amendment to the Constitution special protection for the "free exercise" of religion. How passing strange that our government now would so casually interfere with that freedom and coerce the very consciences whose fruit is our prosperity.

Claudia Anderson

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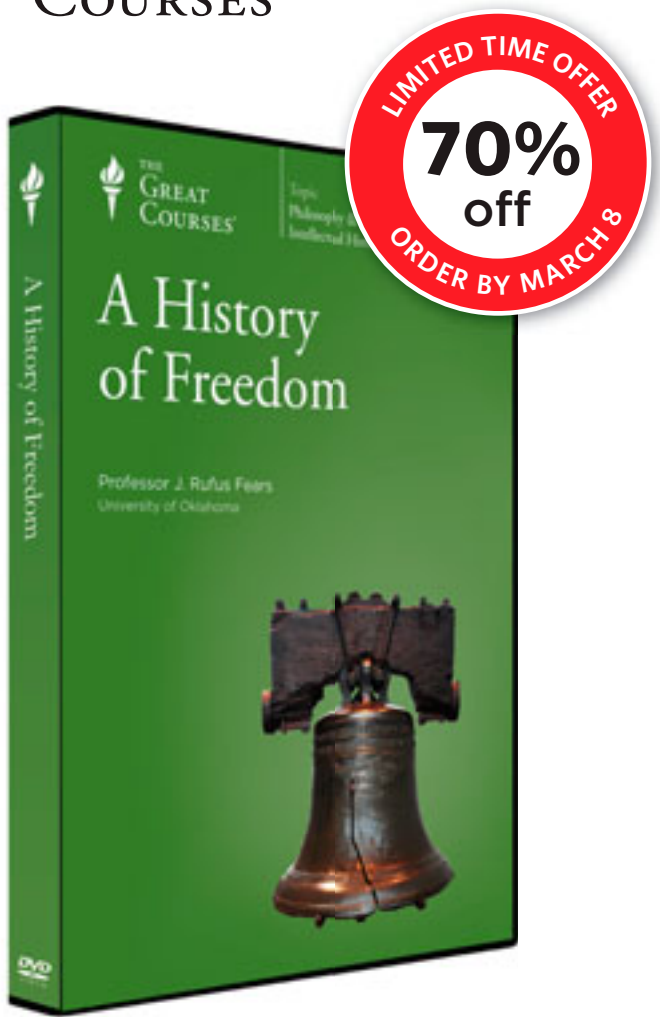

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the weekly Standard

'People, they like the poetry'

Barack Obama is a careful politician and a disciplined man. But when he's on the West Coast, perhaps a little tired because of the jet lag, at a fancy fundraiser with his most glamorous and credulous supporters, he tends to let his guard down. The mask slips.

Four years ago, speaking to rich San Franciscans, Obama infamously explained why working-class Americans were so mysteriously resistant to his charms: "It's not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy toward people who aren't like them, or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment, as a way to explain their frustrations." Last week, speaking to the glamorati of Los Angeles, he explained that "Mario Cuomo once said that campaigning is poetry and governance is prose. . . . We've been slogging through 'prose' for the last three years, and sometimes that gets people discouraged. Because people, they like the poetry."

Robert Frost at the Kennedy Inauguration

In Obama's imagining, the poetry is presumably a tonic for bitterness, an opiate of the masses, you might say. Not even real poetry, mind you, but the campaign sloganeering of Barack Obama. That's what *he* considers poetry. And that's what he will deploy again this year to pacify the embittered clingers in flyover country as they get ready to vote.

Will he succeed? Conservatives worry that he will. His poll numbers have ticked up as the economy has been improving, Republicans on the Hill have been floundering, and the GOP presidential candidates have been squabbling.

But this year, unlike in 2008, Obama has a record. It's harder to fool the people when you're an incumbent. The American people don't approve of President Obama's policies. A competent Republican candidate—who is of the people, who speaks with people not to them, and who wants to govern for the people, not condescend to them—such a nominee has a good chance to prevail.

Still, a little poetry wouldn't hurt the Republican cause. The English poet Thomas Gray described poetry as "thoughts that breathe, and words that burn." The Republicans could use some thoughts that breathe. Soundbites and factoids only go so far. Speeches that paint a colorful but credible picture of our present situation, how things would continue to get worse under Obama, and how things might get better under a Republican, would be welcome.

They could also use some "words that burn." Republicans tend to ask, "Where's the outrage?" instead of actually expressing justified outrage. Religious liberty under assault, the military being wantonly gutted, debt accumulating, free markets distorted to reward cronies, citizens being treated as wards of the nanny state—there's plenty happening that calls for words that burn.

Obama is the master of words that cool. We hate to break it to their youthful supporters, but neither Rick Santorum nor Mitt Romney is going to be cooler than Barack Obama. Indeed, as Jennifer Epstein of *Politico* reported last week, the Obama campaign is working hard "to revive the cool appeal" he had in 2008. Scarlett Johansson cohosted a fundraiser recently at Theory, "a trendy clothing store in Manhattan's Meatpacking District." She was hoping, she said, to "reintroduce that kind of cool factor to the reelection."

Let Obama have the cool factor. Republicans can counter with some real poetry. In addition to defending American exceptionalism, for example, why not quote from Robert Frost's poem "Dedication," written for John F. Kennedy's 1961 inauguration—a time when liberals, too, believed in America?

So much those heroes knew and understood,
I mean the great four, Washington,
John Adams, Jefferson, and Madison
So much they saw as consecrated seers
They must have seen ahead what not appears,
They would bring empires down about our ears
And by the example of our Declaration
Make everybody want to be a nation.
And this is no aristocratic joke
At the expense of negligible folk. . . .

Our venture in revolution and outlawry
Has justified itself in freedom's story
Right down to now in glory upon glory. . . .

Read the whole thing. It isn't Frost's best poem by a long shot—it tries too hard to be edifying—but it is (for some of us) moving poetry. It may not be cool. But it is better to be earnest than to be cool, and it is better to be a free citizen than a client of the Obama state.

—William Kristol

The Sacred Dogma of the Left

In the conflict between the Obama administration and the Catholic church over mandated contraceptive coverage in health insurance policies, it's easy to understand the motivations of the church. Catholics object to artificial contraception—and to abortifacients and sterilization, reimbursement for which is also mandated—as a matter of doctrine, owing to their beliefs about the dignity of the human person.

The church's allies—evangelical Christians, Tea Partiers, and other non-Catholic conservatives—are motivated by a conviction that, theology aside, the Obamacare edict forcing the church to pay for procedures it finds morally objectionable is an unconstitutional trespass on the free exercise of religion.

But what is it that motivates those on the left? Why do they care so deeply about the kind of insurance coverage Catholic employers provide? It's not as if NARAL and Planned Parenthood devotees are heavily represented in the workforce of Catholic institutions. And you don't see petitions from leftwing pressure groups calling on the church to provide better dental and vision coverage, or mental health benefits. Which would, as a pragmatic matter, be much more helpful for more of the workforce than the contraceptive mandate. No, for the left, the fight isn't about social justice or the proper scope of the state. It's *about* the contraceptives. It's about sex.

But what is it that motivates those on the left? Why do they care so deeply about the kind of insurance coverage Catholic employers provide? You don't see petitions from leftwing pressure groups calling on the church to provide better dental and vision coverage, or mental health benefits.

The upheaval of the 1960s was a many-splendored thing, but it produced one permanent orthodoxy for liberalism: an absolute commitment to sexual liberation. As it aged, the left compromised on every other countercultural idea from that period—from pacifism to socialism to anti-materialism. The hippies stopped dropping acid and got high-paying jobs in the tech sector. They got married and stopped questioning authority and sent their kids to good schools. They enjoyed lower tax rates and spent their money at the Apple Store and Le Pain Quotidien. But to this day "the central dogma of the baby boomers," as David Frum once wrote in these pages, is "the belief that sex, so long as it's consensual, ought never to be subject to moral scrutiny at all."

Sexual liberation began with the pill. Enovid was approved by the FDA in 1960 and was originally conceived of as a way to stem world overpopulation. The world, as longtime promoter Margaret Sanger put it in the 1950s, "is going to depend on a simple, cheap safe contraceptive to be used in poverty stricken slums, jungles, and among the most ignorant people." Only it didn't quite work out that way. By 1965, 6.5 million American women were taking the pill, most of them white and middle-class. Today, there are about 10.5 million American women on the pill. That might not sound like much, but it's 28 percent of the universe of women who are "at risk" of pregnancy. Overall, 82 percent of American women who have ever had sex have, at some point, been on the pill.

The pill created the possibility of a world where sex would have no dire consequences. In 1973, *Roe* v. *Wade* guaranteed it with a universal abortion right that acted as insurance against contraceptive failure. Sex was now free from repercussions even if it did result in pregnancy.

With the logistical consequences of sex conquered, liberals moved on to dismantling the moral consequences. As Frum noted in the early days of the Monica Lewinsky scandal, the left had to rally round President Clinton because "you start with an apparently sensible restriction—married presidents shouldn't have sex with government employees in the Oval Office—and the next thing you know, it's back to Nathaniel Hawthorne [and] . . . Puritan New England." And that can't be allowed. It was the same absolutist belief which led Clinton to the only unpopular policy stance he ever took on principle—vetoing the partial-birth abortion ban, which an overwhelming majority of Americans backed.

It's been half a century since the writer Peter Viereck remarked that anti-Catholicism has become the anti-Semitism of intellectuals. Today, anti-Catholicism is the anti-Semitism not just of intellectuals but of the church of liberalism. It is no surprise that the Obama administration's contraceptive "compromise" was no

compromise at all but the same edict dressed up in new rhetoric. Compared with religious freedom and the First Amendment, the out-of-pocket expense of contraceptives might seem like a minor issue. But for the left, it's a matter of dogma. And that dogma is sexual liberation.

—Jonathan V. Last

Xi Whiz!

Obama administration officials touted the visit to the United States last week by Communist first secretary Xi Jinping as "relationship building." Xi is widely expected to succeed Hu Jintao as general secretary next fall and to run China for the next ten years. So he arrived to an agenda that included an Oval Office meeting, an elaborate Valentine's Day lunch at the State Department, no pesky press conferences, and a 19-gun salute at the Pentagon, an unusual reception for a civilian foreign leader who is not defense minister.

"Relationship building" is just another way of saying "engagement." Under that theory, which has guided China policy under both Republican and Democratic administrations, process is the point. When things go badly, you can assure yourself that you still have, well, meetings. The administration emphasized President Obama's frequent meetings with China's current leader Hu Jintao ("more than ten") and number two Wen Jiabao ("more than four"). At the same time, to avoid raising expectations—including for the release of political prisoners—the administration underscored that Xi is not the "decision-maker."

Let's be clear. The relationship being built with the Chinese government excludes the Chinese people, and glosses over the real economic and strategic challenges that will characterize the U.S.-China relationship in the decades to come.

After China vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Syria's brutality earlier this month, weibos, China's Twitter-like microblogs, lit up with messages like, "This government doesn't represent me" and "Dictator supported dictator." It is a mistake to think that the Chinese people do not care about democracy, or that they do not notice—and respect—American officials who speak and act in support of Chinese human rights. Beijing's escalating repression, including the drastic lowering of the threshold for tolerated dissent and the harsh clampdown on Tibetans and Uighurs, oppresses its citizens and prevents political reform. The president and vice president let the Chinese people down last week when they confined themselves to a few bland words on human rights.

Congress did better. Speaker of the House John Boehner and Majority Leader Eric Cantor hosted a meeting with Xi in which members expressed their concerns about China's human rights record and denial of religious freedom. A letter regarding the plight of Gao Zhisheng, a human rights lawyer missing or jailed since 2010, was delivered to Xi. Beijing's obstruction of international diplomacy on Syria and Iran and China's violation of intellectual property rights were also discussed.

This approach is probably more in line with the views of the American public. Americans are concerned about China's holding of our debt and about the jobs lost to Chinese factories, but a recent ABC News report suggests Americans care about more than the economy: "Favorable views of China soared to 80 percent in 1989, then plummeted to half that a year after its crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square" and have not changed much since.

NEWSCOM

President Obama with Chinese vice president Xi Jinping in the Oval Office, February 14, 2012

A China policy that does not reflect American values from a president who is not willing to assert those values cannot be sustained. The Obama administration has, with much fanfare, announced an "Asia pivot" to shore up security in the Far East. Some in Asia are skeptical that Washington is serious about remaining a Pacific power. Cuts in the defense budget have created a credibility gap. But even with adequate defense spending and a strategic commitment to the Pacific, if the "pivot" is to be taken seriously, the president will have to articulate an approach to China that is honest about the values gap between the current Chinese leadership and the United States and our democratic allies in Asia.

The Obama administration missed an opportunity to do this during Xi's visit. But at least it chalked up another meeting with a Chinese leader.

—Ellen Bork and Jamie M. Fly

The Real Obama

The budget of a left-wing progressive.

BY FRED BARNES

President Obama's budget for 2013 is pure Obama. How do we know? Paul Ryan, the House Budget Committee chairman, was once asked how to become a budget expert. "You have to read the budget," he said. To know Obama, it's similar. You have to read the speeches and look over the budgets.

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

For the past year, they've told the same story. No, the real Obama is not a pragmatist or a frustrated moderate or a well-intentioned but weak politician forced by political circumstances to take positions he'd rather not. Only sympathizers, notably media types, believe any of those notions.

The truth is not hidden. One merely has to digest the new budget Obama unveiled last week, his budget last year, and his four major speeches since last April, and the real Obama comes into focus. He turns out to be a left-wing progressive who rejects many of the mainstream political and economic ideas of post-World War II America.

This is not an entirely new take on Obama. Others have identified him as such, Stanley Kurtz in particular. What's new is that Obama has been so revealing in his own words. Only occasionally do you have to read between the lines to discover what he truly thinks.

I've gleaned his views from the two budgets and from the "reducing the budget" speech in April 2011, the address to a special session of Congress on jobs in September 2011, the speech at Osawatomie, Kansas, last December, and the State of the Union address last month. Here's what the president not only believes but is committed to:

(1) America is an unjust and deeply unfair country. "The basic bargain that made this country great has eroded," Obama said at Osawatomie. "Hard work [has] stopped paying off for too many people. Fewer and fewer of the folks who contributed to the success of our economy actually benefited from that success."

If he'd said that only once, it would be unremarkable and hardly central to his thinking. But he's emphasized it in speech after speech. Americans "have seen the decks too often stacked against them," he said in the jobs speech to Congress. The recession "left innocent, hard-working Americans holding the bag," Obama declared in the State of the Union.

(2) A looming debt crisis? Forget it. Obama hardly mentioned the deficit or the national debt in the State of the Union, though his budget has a $1.3 trillion deficit, and the debt is rising past $16 trillion into a fiscal danger zone. If he's worried, he hasn't let on in any serious way.

(3) Government spending is better at spurring the economy than private investment. "Yes, business and not government will always be the prime

GARY LOCKE

generator of good jobs," he said at Osawatomie. That was lip service. He took it away in the next sentence. "As a nation, we've always come together, through our government, to help create the conditions where both workers and businesses can succeed." The key phrase was "through our government," which for Obama means Washington-directed programs, not incentives for private investment.

(4) Tax reform should flush loopholes and special breaks out of the tax code, broaden the base, and raise tax rates for the well-to-do. This isn't bipartisan tax reform in which cutting income tax rates for everyone is one of the most important aspects—far from it.

(5) When the rich get richer, the middle class and poor get worse off. Obama often mentions the middle class and the poor one after the other. He doesn't claim a cause and effect. But the implication is there's at least a correlation. You don't get prosperity for the few without declining prospects for the many. Obama doesn't believe in a growing economic pie.

(6) Conservative, free market economics is a plague. Obama describes it as an economic system that tells Americans, "You're on your own." In his view, it consists of cutting taxes for the rich and gutting regulations of every kind.

Even worse, Obama said at Osawatomie, "it doesn't work. It has never worked. It didn't work when it was tried in the decade before the Great Depression. It's not what led to the incredible postwar booms of the 50s and 60s." Nor did it work in the 2000s, he said. "Understand, it's not as if we haven't tried this theory." But he didn't mention the Reagan years, when the economy recovered from a recession and boomed.

(7) Medicare and Medicaid are not big problems. The huge deficits they are projected to generate can be handled by "modest adjustments," he said in the jobs speech. The president's fiscal commission headed by Erskine Bowles and Alan Simpson thought otherwise. Ryan calls the two programs the chief "debt drivers." Without Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and unemployment benefits, Obama said in April, "We would not be a great country."

(8) The investor class is not tax sensitive. Raise the rates on income, capital gains, and dividends, impose a minimum income tax rate on millionaires of 30 percent, and it won't change their financial behavior. After all, they're rich.

That's a small sampling of what Obama thinks. And there's one more thing. At the National Prayer Breakfast on February 2, the president gave his policies a special WWJD blessing. He's only trying to do, he said, what Jesus would do if He were here. ♦

The Fight the Left Wants

Religious liberty versus 'women's health.'

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

On February 10, President Obama tried to extinguish a growing firestorm sparked by his decision to force religious institutions to provide their employees health insurance that covers the full cost of contraception and abortion-inducing drugs.

He announced his solution: The religious institutions' insurance companies, not the institutions themselves, will be required to provide the pills "free of charge." In other words, according to the president, there is such a thing as a free lunch—or free birth control, anyway. The mainstream press credulously reported Obama's announcement as an "accommodation" or "compromise." The *New York Times* called it "President Obama's compromise plan to require free insurance coverage of contraceptives for women."

Obama's announcement satisfied Planned Parenthood and a number of Catholic liberals who had been among the biggest backers of Obamacare. But it didn't diminish at all the moral imposition on religious employers who want no part of giving contraceptives and abortifacients to anyone. Under threat of large fines, these institutions will still be forced by the federal government to provide their employees insurance that covers these benefits free. "Not only is this an outrageous violation of one denomination's religious freedom, but it's quite frightening to those of us of other religious denominations," said Rabbi Meir Soloveichik of Yeshiva University during testimony to Congress last week.

Many Democrats think Obama's accounting gimmick has turned the issue into a wedge they can use against Republicans, whom they portray as opponents of "women's health." Some may well have seen the issue that way all along. White House adviser David Plouffe, Obama's 2008 campaign manager, backed the original rule requiring religious institutions unequivocally to pay for contraceptives and abortifacients. The mandate takes effect three months before the election (though religious institutions were to be given an extra year to comply in order to tamp down the negative news stories). Of course, the original plan backfired. Could the new plan backfire, too?

It just might. The coalition now opposed to the mandate mirrors the coalition that opposed Obamacare, and it may be even bigger. Scott Brown, the moderate Massachusetts Republican

John McCormack is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

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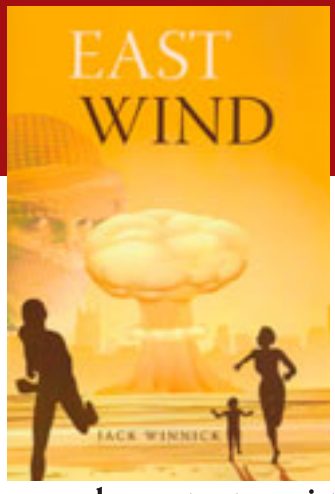

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senator who is up for reelection this fall, went on the offensive against the mandate in a series of interviews last week. He framed the issue as an assault on religious freedom that was a result of the national takeover of the health care system.

"This latest mandate under government-controlled health care is one reason why I campaigned and voted against Obamacare in the first place," Brown wrote in an op-ed for the *Boston Herald*. "It operates by broad dictation from Washington, showing no respect for the judgment, needs, or rights of individual Americans and the states. And it opens the door to endless abuses of power such as this latest mandate."

Kelly Ayotte of New Hampshire, Brown's fellow freshman Republican senator from the Northeast, is also an outspoken opponent. "This is not a women's rights issue," she said at a press conference in the Capitol. "This is a religious liberty issue, and it can apply to all faiths. And I've heard from my constituents, who are deeply, deeply concerned about this. We need to respect the rights of conscience for all religions." The entire Republican party appears to be united behind some legislative proposal to reverse Obama's mandate.

The Democrats who opposed Obamacare—and even some who supported it—still find the mandate unacceptable. "Despite news reports . . . nothing has really changed," Rep. Dan Lipinski, a Democrat from Chicago's suburbs, said during another press conference in the Capitol. "We have a vague statement about who's going to pay for what, but it's nothing but a shell game." Lipinski voted in favor of Obama's health care reform bill when it banned taxpayer funding of elective abortion but against it when the final bill included taxpayer funding of abortion.

Democratic senators Ben Nelson of Nebraska and Joe Manchin of West Virginia have cosponsored bills to curb the administration's mandate. Senator Joe Lieberman is "still reviewing" the issue, according to a spokesman. Even Dick Durbin, the second-ranking Democrat in the Senate, said he was unsure if the administration had protected the religious liberty of self-insured hospitals, schools, and churches. The administration really can't hide behind its claim that the insurer will pay for morally objectionable services when the insurer and the employer are the same entity.

Supporters of the mandate are fighting back, arguing that legislation to restore the conscience protections that existed before Obamacare will leave Americans vulnerable. "You know, a Christian Science owner of a running shoe store could decide no health insurance," Durbin said on Tuesday. Of course, for all of American history prior to the passage of Obamacare, shoe salesmen—whatever their religion—were free to pay their employees with money rather than health care benefits without facing fines from the federal government, yet the republic managed to survive.

At the grassroots level, Catholics are rallying opposition at parishes throughout the country. The National Association of Evangelicals, a group known for its liberal-leaning positions on global warming and defense, has vowed to fight the mandate. Meanwhile, NARAL, the group formerly known as the National Abortion Rights Action League, has cut an ad thanking Obama, and other pro-abortion groups are mobilizing their forces as well.

It's not at all clear who will win this fight. A CNN poll showed Americans oppose the administration's policy 50 percent to 44 percent, but a CBS/*New York Times* poll found that 61 percent of Americans supported it.

A lot depends on whether opponents can press the argument against Obama's mandate from all angles. Can they get the word out that it's not merely a "contraception mandate" but an "abortion mandate," too? Can they make the case that the issue is religious liberty—or liberty more broadly—and not access to contraception? That all remains to be seen. But there's no reason to think the issue will go away before November. For opponents, the election is the only opportunity to reverse the mandate. ♦

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Smoking, No, Nicotine, Maybe

The diminishing returns of the anti-tobacco campaign. BY ELI LEHRER

If there's one perfectly safe conclusion to draw from nearly a century of public health research, it's this: Cigarette smoking is really, really bad for your health. An unusually complete, if rather obvious, 2010 Surgeon General's Report on the topic shows that inhaling tobacco smoke not only causes lung disease but also leads to increased risks of stroke, heart attack, and dozens of other maladies. As a result, it's not surprising that 38 states (sin-happy Nevada among them) and countless localities have enacted various smoking bans while advertisements, public health campaigns, and tax policies send a simple message: Smokers must quit all tobacco use or die early, painful deaths.

But public health crusaders haven't stopped at fighting smoking: Bans on smokeless tobacco use, e-cigarettes, and outdoor smoking have gone into force in locations ranging from the University of Texas's Arlington Campus (all tobacco), to Boston (e-cigarettes). A growing body of research, however, reveals that the shun-tobacco-or-die dichotomy is an oversimplification. In fact, there's significant evidence that the act of inhaling burning plant matter does much of the harm while the addictive substance in question (nicotine) and the plant itself (tobacco) are a mixed bag. Public health policy may be better served by a harm reduction strategy that continues efforts to discourage smoking while trying to steer tobacco and nicotine users towards *safer* forms of the substances.

A review of the evidence should start with nicotine. Like other stimulants, it potentially causes long-term cardiovascular harm by increasing one's heart rate and, without a doubt, is addictive for at least a portion of the population. However, peer-reviewed research also shows that nicotine improves focus and alertness, and decreases appetite (hence the weight gain associated with quitting smoking). And the relationship between nicotine and cancer is complicated: It doesn't necessarily *cause* cancer in humans but some animal studies indicate it could potentially promote tumor growth.

Listen, girls, we should switch to the gum.

In some cases, nonetheless, the benefits of nicotine use may outweigh the harms. Schizophrenics, for example, smoke at up to four times the rate of the population as a whole, and a significant, well-regarded body of research suggests that smoking is a form of self-medication to control their condition. (States including Connecticut, Maryland, and Pennsylvania specifically exempt mental hospitals from smoking bans.) And nicotine gum seems as effective as anything else in helping smokers avoid weight gain after they quit.

Despite the manifest harm of cigarette smoking, it's surprisingly hard to find strong evidence linking nicotine or tobacco per se to serious negative health outcomes. Certain formulations of smokeless tobacco, particularly Swedish-style snuff, *snus*, that's held under the lip rather than chewed, appear to produce cancer rates only a bit higher than those in the population as a whole. (Other forms of smokeless tobacco—mostly forms consumed outside of the United States—can be nearly as bad as cigarettes.) To be sure, tobacco isn't a health food and its repeated use in any common form will probably increase cancer prevalence somewhat. But it's pretty clear that the way one consumes tobacco matters a lot.

Indeed, the real harm appears to stem from the inhalation of thousands of compounds—several hundred of them identified as toxic—contained in burning plant matter. Brad Rodu, an oral cancer specialist at the University of Louisville who holds an endowed chair in tobacco harm reduction research, puts it well: "I love coffee and I'm sure I could get my caffeine if I smoked my coffee beans," he says. "But I would be paying a much different price in overall health if I were consuming caffeine that way instead of in a water soluble mix."

This leads to a strong case for a different way of looking at nicotine. The burgeoning official hostility to devices like the e-cigarette, which delivers aerosolized nicotine to users who would otherwise be smoking, is unwarranted. While broadly discouraging cigarette smoking will promote better public health, trying to end all use of tobacco and nicotine is a fool's errand. A sizable majority of the U.S. population—median age 37—has grown up in a world where public health officials have *always* offered stern warnings about the consequences of tobacco use, where "good guys" in current movies have never smoked, and where most indoor public places outright ban smoking. But over a fifth of the population nonetheless smokes. And quitting is hard. No

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Eli Lehrer is vice president of the Heartland Institute.

given method of smoking cessation works reliably for more than about 8 percent of smokers.

Unless the United States seriously wants to legislate an all-out tobacco prohibition, the easy public health victories achieved by reducing smoking (prevalence has fallen by almost half since the surgeon general issued the first stern warnings about it in the early 1960s) may have mostly been won, as the "hard core" smokers find themselves unable to quit and thus go to their graves sucking on cancer sticks.

Thus, for at least some people, some of the time, less harmful ways to get nicotine deserve attention from public health authorities. Anecdotal evidence shows that it might work. The country with the lowest smoking-related cancer and cigarette smoking rates for men in the Western world, Sweden, also has the highest rates of smokeless tobacco use. People who use *snus*, nicotine gum, or lozenges as a replacement for cigarettes, likewise, see many of the same short-term positive health benefits as those who quit tobacco use altogether. (Longer-term trends look promising, too, but, as with any public health issue, the data are incomplete.)

Public health strategies that continue to discourage *smoking* while accepting and, in certain cases, even promoting the use of other tobacco or nicotine products deserve a try. In fact, Rodu and some others are trying just this in Owensboro, Kentucky. (Results won't be available for a few years.) Absent significant evidence to the contrary, efforts that ban the use of all tobacco/nicotine products—particularly those that appear less harmful than cigarettes—may well do more harm than good.

Public health should never *promote* tobacco use for those who don't already use it, but it should be welcoming to the idea that some forms of tobacco are less harmful than others. Americans will never stop smoking altogether, and truly safe tobacco use is impossible. But strategies that try to direct smokers towards less harmful alternatives could save lives. ♦

Get Ready for Candidate No. 3

The Americans Elect gambit.

BY MICHAEL WARREN

A frame from an Americans Elect website video

Imagine a presidential debate this October with three lecterns on the stage. Standing between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney is a third national candidate, maybe polling neck and neck with his two opponents. He's a respectably moderate member of one of the major parties, like Evan Bayh or Jon Huntsman.

Now imagine moderator Jim Lehrer asking each of the three how he plans to rein in the massive federal budget deficit. Obama argues that the rich need to pay their fair share and defense spending must shrink. Romney responds that it's domestic spending that needs cutting, and taxes should stay low to spur the sluggish economy. Then, Lehrer turns to the man in the middle.

"There they go again," our mystery candidate quips. "The same politics as usual. Is it any wonder Washington can't get things done?" Thomas Friedman and Joe Scarborough revel in the moment.

The solution to the deficit crisis, the candidate says, is—well, it's one that gets beyond the tired stereotypes of the two parties. It's one that requires shared sacrifice and common commitment. And so on and so forth. Are you excited that such a fashionably bipartisan argument could be represented on the stage? If so, you'll like Americans Elect, a nonpartisan, nonprofit corporation whose purpose is to nominate online an alternative presidential candidate who will break through partisan boundaries in addressing the tough questions of the day.

At a time of widespread dissatisfaction with Congress and the White House, the folks at Americans Elect see an opening for a popularly nominated presidential candidate. As Kahlil Byrd, the organization's chief executive officer, recently told Chris

Michael Warren is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Voluntary Immigration Reform—The Free Market Answer to our Economic Woes

In *Free to Choose*, Milton and Rose Friedman rely on Adam Smith's key insight in *The Wealth of Nations*: "If an exchange between two parties is voluntary, it will not take place unless both believe they will benefit from it."

So that is it: Mankind is mired in poverty for countless millennia, and then we embrace that misleadingly simple idea and create unimaginable affluence and opportunity. The central economic idea of the Reagan era was captured on Arthur Laffer's dinner napkin: Marginal tax rates were too high. Reducing tax rates allowed people to keep more of their money, expanded free choice, resulting in billions of voluntary exchanges, each exchange enriching and enhancing the participants. If we return to that core principle—freedom of voluntary exchange—we can "fix" our economy.

Nationwide, we have a housing surplus—an oversupply, a glut. Home prices have fallen significantly, and home foreclosures are soaring. People are hurting, millions of home owners are underwater, owing more on their mortgages than their homes are worth, and home construction is near a historic low. Unprecedented fiscal and monetary actions have penalized savers and added trillions to the unsustainable government debt and unfunded entitlement liabilities.

Is there a free-market answer for this economic challenge? Our housing bet turned out to be a losing proposition—but what if that bet could be made good? Homeowners, borrowers, lenders, and the government were terribly wrong, but a change of government policy could help right that bad bet and restore housing as an appreciating asset.

We can solve the housing crisis, mitigate the entitlement-funding shortfall, and expand our economy with a change in our population policy. Call it "Voluntary Immigration Reform" (VIR). Simple in concept, it is compelling in the context of our current economic situation. It is a way to turn the crisis into an opportunity.

The glut in housing is mirrored by a surplus in nearly all sectors of our economy, while worldwide we have a misallocation of resources that begs to be righted. We need more Americans who will both create real demand and provide a renewed engine of supply-side growth. America, more than any other nation, is based upon the ideas of freedom and opportunity, and it is an open society: If you believe in the ideas embodied in the Declaration of Independence, then you are, in spirit, an American. There are, in that sense, patriotic Americans who have never been to America, but are in love with the idea of America. Many naturalized American citizens, exhibiting the passion of converts, are the most enthusiastic, most patriotic Americans.

Operationally, VIR has two components. First, we should secure our borders with a mostly low-tech wall, as Charles Krauthammer argues, and undertake other necessary measures to stop illegal immigration. Second, we should dramatically increase legal immigration. When immigrants arrive, they might have money, but inherently they have needs; they are the epitome of "demand." The size of the increase must be dramatic, enough to reawaken the "animal spirits" and create significant real demand. The greater the number of VIR immigrants we allow, in the greater the economic boom.

The positive impact on the housing and stock market would be almost immediate, because markets are forward-looking. An annual increase of millions of potential home buyers, workers, customers, employers, investors, engineers, and entrepreneurs would dramatically invigorate the economy.

The following assumptions underlie this growth paradigm.

1. Free to choose, many people would choose to live in America. As Milton Friedman wrote, "America has been a magnet for people seeking adventure, fleeing from tyranny, or simply trying to make a better life for themselves and their children. . . When they arrived, they did not find streets paved with gold; they did not find an easy life. They did find freedom and the opportunity to make the most of their talents. Through hard work, ingenuity, thrift, and luck, most of them succeeded in realizing enough of their hopes and dreams to encourage friends and relatives to join them." Coming to America is still the dream of hundreds

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of millions of people around the world, and we stand to benefit from making that dream a reality for many of them. Their hope is our strategic opportunity.

2. People are a nation's most precious resource and its ultimate source of wealth, progress, and creativity. To no small extent, demography is destiny. People are a nation's primary asset, and the right people—in terms of age, education, talent, work ethic, and creativity—can turbocharge a nation's economy and future.

A very public, transparent political process could and should determine the entry criteria. Security issues, age, health, education, language proficiency, wealth, skills, credit history, etc., would be part of the selection process. A system based on economic critera would probably be resemble a world-class university's admissions policy or a top-ranked sports team's recruiting strategy.

3. The housing we have in this country is breathtaking in its variety, affordability, options, and amenities. We win, hands-down, when objectively compared with the other largest economies of the world; China, Japan, and Germany. America has a huge competitive advantage not just in our existing housing but also in our capacity to build housing. Housing historically has been an appreciating asset, a real store of value that serves a myriad of economic functions. It can and should be an appreciating asset again.

4. When people choose to immigrate and become Americans, that is an "all-in" vote, the ultimate free-trade victory. We need the human capital Michael Novak identifies, native or foreign-born. For the last 60 years, we've been the beneficiaries of expanding free trade. We're already competing with these immigrants in their native countries. Give the VIR immigrants access to the freedom and opportunities our country provides, and you will unleash renewed prosperity and reduce the unemployment level. Consider how many jobs immigrants Sergey Brin, Andrew Grove, and Rupert Murdoch created for our economy.

5. Illegal immigration is involuntary. Illegals are inherently disadvantaged, unable to fully participate in the economy and in national life. The ability to immigrate is a privilege, not a right, and by carefully selecting our immigrants we maximize our national security and economic interests, validating the rule of law. The short-term justification—mitigating the housing problem—would be overshadowed by the long-term benefits of millions of VIR immigrants. We currently allow 1 million legal immigrants annually under family-based, skills-based, and humanitarian criteria. We should add at least another 1 million under VIR criteria. There is nothing magical about the number 1 million, but it is understandable, significant, and dramatic. The United States currently comprises 4 percent of the world's population; as we move closer to 5 percent, we could ameliorate our daunting national-debt and entitlement-funding predicament.

In Thomas Sowell's profoundly insightful book, *Conflict of Visions*, Sowell writes, "A vision, as the term is used here, is not a dream, a hope, a prophecy, or a moral imperative, though any of these things may ultimately derive from some particular vision. Here a vision is a sense of *causation*. It is more like a hunch or a 'gut feeling' than an exercise in logic or factual verification. These things come later, and feed on the raw material provided by the vision." Voluntary Immigration Reform is not a "solution," radical or otherwise, but a workable approach with tradeoffs, consistent with what Sowell calls the "constrained" view of man understood and articulated by Adam Smith, Edmund Burke, Alexander Hamilton, Friedrich Hayek, and Milton Friedman.

Sowell continues, "Visions are the foundations on which theories are built. The final structure depends not only on the foundation, but also on how carefully and consistently the framework of theory is constructed and how well buttressed it is with hard facts. Visions are subjective, but well-constructed theories have clear implications, and facts can test and measure their objective validity. The world learned at Hiroshima that Einstein's vision of physics was not just Einstein's vision."

Across the political spectrum there is consensus that we need to restore organic growth to the American economy. The economic histories of Hong Kong, Israel, and the United States all support the validity of this growth paradigm. Millions of new residents annually would stimulate the entire economy: autos, retail, agriculture, entertainment. While VIR would result in humanitarian benefits, too, Americans should support the change because it is in our individual and collective interest. This market-orientated, historically validated program would restore the housing market and invigorate the economy, all the while remaining consistent with our historic, opportunity-enhancing, American vision—part of our freedom agenda.

Rand Williams is a former journalist, entrepreneur, and an active real estate/stock market investor who recently created Freedom of Voluntary Exchange, to champion this idea. You may read more about it at www.fove.org.

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Wallace on *Fox News Sunday*, "The issues and the ideas that will take the country to a better place are pretty obvious to the American people. They don't seem to be obvious in the governing that we have in Washington."

Founder Peter Ackerman, a wealthy investor who also started the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict and is on the board of the Council on Foreign Relations, heads up Americans Elect and has helped fund it. Ackerman's son Elliot is the group's chief operating officer. The younger Ackerman, who served as a Marine in Iraq and Afghanistan, tells me Americans Elect presents a major opportunity to break the "anticompetitive duopoly" of American politics.

Here's how the nominating process works: Any registered voter can sign up on the Americans Elect website to become an official delegate. From there, delegates can express policy preferences, learn more about "the issues," and help draft and garner support for candidates. (The candidate with the most online support so far? Ron Paul.)

In June, the delegates will vote in an online nominating convention to choose the candidate from a winnowed field of six, all of whom will have agreed to run if nominated. The winner will be expected to select a running mate from the opposite side of the ideological spectrum and will have his name placed on the Americans Elect ballot line in November.

Americans Elect is not a political party, they insist, and after the nomination, the candidate will be on his own to raise money and campaign. All that's promised is ballot access, which is as valuable as cash to a non-major-party candidate. As a result of the group's impressive national petition drive, which has gathered more than 2.5 million signatures, the candidate will almost certainly be on the ballot in all 50 states.

So what will the people's candidate be like? Elliot Ackerman says they have no "ideal" person in mind but hope to see a candidate who can resist being forced "into the two narrow boxes that the two major parties have regarding policy positions." That sounds like a job for one of the aforementioned moderates, but Ackerman seems laissez-faire when it comes to ideology. I ask him if there is fear that Ron Paul's massive online organization could hijack the Americans Elect process.

"It's just not something we're that concerned about," Ackerman replies. "First of all, we've existed in a system that's already been hijacked. Additionally, whoever the candidate is, they're going to have to reach across the political space and run with somebody outside of their party." So … Paul-Kucinich 2012?

Many others attached to the project, like Democrat Les Francis and Republican Mark McKinnon, represent centrist factions that are no longer strong in the major parties. The increasing polarization of our politics may or may not be bad for the country, but it's done a number on plenty of careers.

What's important, Ackerman insists, is defining the process, not the ideology.

"Fundamental to everything we're doing at Americans Elect is the simple idea that if we can change the way that we nominate our leaders, we can change the way we govern ourselves," he says. "The American people aren't clamoring for a bunch of centrist solutions. What they're clamoring for are stable solutions." The politicians themselves, intriguingly, don't come in for much criticism—it's "the system" that gets the blame.

"I don't think our political leaders have gotten any better or worse along the way," said Dennis Blair, an Americans Elect board member and the former director of national intelligence in the Obama White House, on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*. "I think the system, as it's developed, has made them do things which are unworthy of them and certainly unworthy of the country."

But what, or who, changed the system? An introductory video on the Americans Elect website shows two groups of protesters in silhouette, one red and one blue, yelling nonsensically at each other, having been "fired up" by their respective parties' nominees. These, presumably, are the extremists who hold our politicians hostage.

To illustrate what they deplore, Ackerman points to the 2010 Republican Senate primary in Delaware, where conservatives elevated Christine O'Donnell to snatch the GOP nomination from the more moderate congressman Mike Castle. O'Donnell went on to lose to the Democrat, Chris Coons, in a race most observers believed Castle would have won handily. If a process like Americans Elect had existed at the state level—as Ackerman says is the plan for 2014 and beyond—Castle might have run and won as an independent.

This aversion to upstart conservative or liberal challengers makes sense when you consider that Christine Todd Whitman, moderate Republican par excellence, is on the board of Americans Elect. And many others attached to the project, like Democrat Les Francis and Republican Mark McKinnon, represent centrist factions that are no longer strong in the major parties. The increasing polarization of our politics may or may not be bad for the country, but it's done a number on plenty of careers.

With its sophisticated operation and tech savvy, Americans Elect may have more staying power than third parties past. In the best of circumstances for Ackerman and company, this grand experiment with online, open-source political organizing could reorient American politics toward the stable, moderate center.

Or "the people" could nominate Evan Bayh or Jon Huntsman and give him enough votes to tip the election to the Republican or the Democrat. Or "the people" could nominate a Ron Paul or a Dennis Kucinich or a Sarah Palin.

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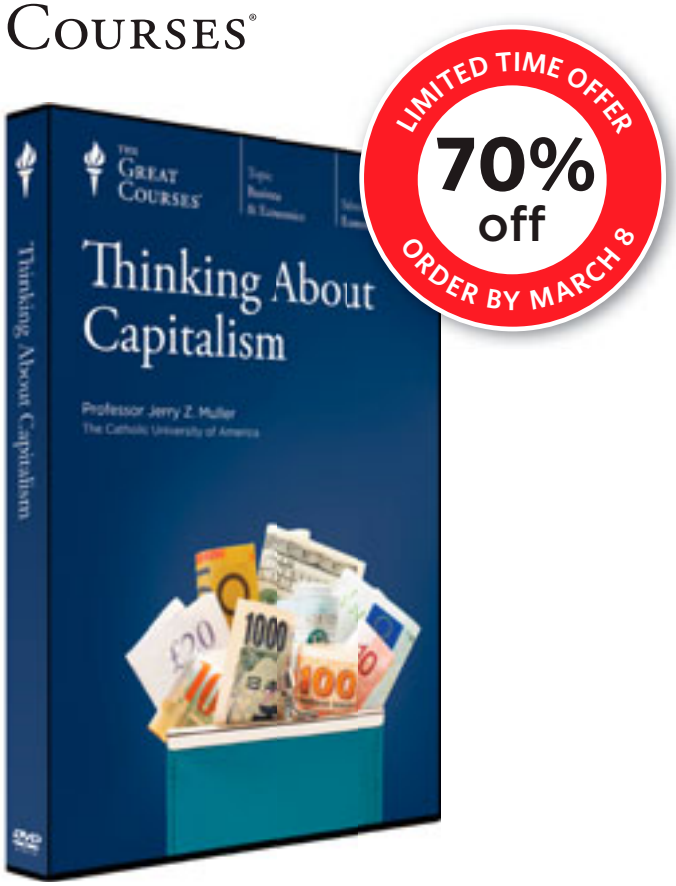

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The Big Creep

An attempt to rehabilitate Bill Clinton is in full bloom. Unsurprisingly, the would-be hagiographers leave a lot out.

By Andrew Ferguson

The aging fops and dandies who edit *Esquire* magazine—yes, it still comes out, check a newsstand if you don't believe me—devoted a chunk of their issue this month to Bill Clinton. It was an unusual move. Typically, under the motto "Man at His Best," the editors concentrate their attention on those fabulous new chukkas Donna Karan just introduced, or the optimal thread count for Ralph Lauren Egyptian cotton sheets, or the yummy new clover-accented absinthe imported from Azerbaijan at $33 an oz.—or even, when *el machismo* oversweeps them, a superhot new starlet in slingback spike heels with off-color stitching and a simple but elegant choker. What I mean is, when these gentlemen put a politician, even an ex-president, on the cover and a long interview with him inside, you know something's up.

We beg to differ.

So there he was on the cover, spookily lifelike, legs akimbo, head cocked, eyes moist, his large, experienced hands fairly gleaming from the exquisite manicure. "Bill Clinton and 78 other things we can all agree on," read the headline. We may seem like a divided country, the editors were telling us, but at least we can all come together around the Man from Hope: "He has become the rare consensus figure in a country that has lost all sense of consensus."

The consensus is so solid that the editors don't feel obliged to explain what it is. But pretty soon you get the idea. In a patty-cake interview many thousands of words long, Clinton and his interviewers explore "why he's now the subject of such public and surprisingly bipartisan affection." We as a people have come to agree that Bill Clinton is a vaguely flawed but always well-meaning fellow, a great president whose greatness was stunted by a lunatic opposition, and who now, having emerged from the fires of Republican defamation, is universally recognized as a visionary of unalloyed beneficence, a statesman, a sage.

Well, this much is true anyway: We are in the midst of a Clinton revival. After a brief dip during his wife's presidential campaign, the line of his ascent only steepens, carrying him through showers of rose petals towards halos of light. A couple of months ago the sage published a book on public policy, *Back to Work*, and though it was thick with platitudes about uninteresting subjects, the sales were brisk and the reviews were better than good. *Back to Work* showed the former president to be a thinker in the 21st-century Manhattan mold—think of Thomas Friedman with rewrite men. The book was full of "ideas," many reviewers said, and Clinton himself is a "man of ideas." And ideas of a certain sort do occupy much of his public life. He's chairman of his own charity, the modestly named Clinton Global Initiative, whose annual meeting is a smokestack discharging great plumes of ideas. It never fails to attract lots of good publicity.

If you want to pin down what it is that CGI does, good luck to you. The Initiative's literature describes its mission with loosey-goosey Friedmanian words like "challenges" and "facilitate" and "solutions" and "innovative" and "sustainable" and "leadership" and the verb form of "partner." (If you're a thinker in the Manhattan mode, you can mix and match words, it doesn't matter: "We've partnered with other leaders to facilitate innovative and sustainable solutions to our unique challenges.") On the other hand, "directly implementing projects"—a euphemism for "actually doing things"—is not one of CGI's priorities. Instead, CGI "is determined to change things now, by discussing some of the world's most pressing problems."

Change by discussion: It's an innovative idea indeed. CGI's extremely efficacious discussions bring "together a carefully selected group of the world's best minds."

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.

They talk about such topics as "sustainable consumption" and "values-based leadership." But that's not all. "Most importantly, [CGI] requires each member to make a specific Commitment to Action." There have been 2,100 commitments to date!

CGI is the kind of charity that students of Clinton's career would expect him to lead: It hires a legion of overschooled high-achievers and collects mountains of money and, instead of giving the money to poor people, hospitals, doctors, nurses, food banks, or stuff like that, spends it on an annual conference in which high-achievers talk for long periods of time about what it would be like if they were going to do stuff like that. It is an organization devoted to talk.

There has never been a man who manifestly loves to talk more than Bill Clinton. His fluency, like his ideas, is of a particular kind. It's unimpeded by any need to be concrete or precise; words in the Clintonian sense are less a means of conveying information than a perfume spritzed around whatever image he hopes to project at a given moment: rumination, wonder, amusement, deep concern, or a rueful acknowledgment of the stubborn lack of conscience shown by his political opposites. This Clintonian gift of gab is on display, and how, in another landmark of the Clinton revival: a nearly four-hour documentary called *Clinton* that airs this week on PBS.

Four hours can be a very long time, viewers will discover. Those of a certain age may find themselves growing sleepy, sleepy as the old Clintonian phrases float from the TV. "I will be a repairer of the breach" and "We will build that bridge to the 21st century" and "I feel your pain." And the names, too, waft aimlessly, half-remembered: Betsey Wright, Bruce Lindsey, Susan McDougal, Webb Hubbell, Sidney Blumenthal . . .

The documentary draws to a close with testimonies from admiring staffers and journalists, who agree that Bill Clinton is an especially complicated man. But then, at that moment, for a few viewers something will snap: They will be roused by the rustling memory of words and names they *haven't* heard during their four-hour slog. Bill Clinton is even more complicated than the producers have let on. They have dutifully included Monica Lewinsky and Paula Jones, but where's Marc Rich? John Huang and Roger Tamraz and James Riady? And Juanita Broaddrick—how about her? And if it's memorable phrases you want, what about "You better get some ice for that" and "You make my knees knock" and "I was never alone with Monica, right?"

If it's memorable phrases you want, what about 'You better get some ice for that' and 'You make my knees knock' and 'I was never alone with Monica, right?'

Many people swept up in the Clinton revival are simply forgetful of the Clinton reality, or too young to remember it, and to them these other signature phrases and names will be foggy or unfamiliar. The ignorance is easy to correct. Excellent narratives like Michael Isikoff's *Uncovering Clinton* and *Truth at Any Cost*, by Susan Schmidt and Michael Weisskopf, collected the crucial facts at the time. The true nature of the Clinton administration was as closely documented as any in history. Tireless congressional committees released exhaustive reports on matters ranging from the Clintons' business dealings in Arkansas, to the president's fundraising once in office, and then finally, in a kind of climax, to the series of felonies touched off by his dealings with Paula Jones and Monica Lewinsky.

Republicans controlled the investigations, of course, and the partisan impulse that sent them sleuthing was undeniable—and often used as an excuse to ignore the unseemly facts they turned up. And a few of the probes, such as Rep. Dan Burton's study of the suicide of the president's deputy counsel, Vincent Foster, seemed less partisan than paranoid. The hatred that Clinton stirred among his political opponents was staggering in its ferocity. Nothing of its kind would be seen again in American politics until the next president came along.

But it's also undeniable that something fishy was always going on around the Clintons—a constant furtiveness, the ineradicable stink of prevarication and subterfuge: crucial evidence suddenly gone missing, fastidiously kept records with improbably convenient omissions, and above all an Ozark omerta that bound the Clintons' toadies and attendants from Little Rock to Washington. Even under the heaviest prosecutorial pressure, very few of them flipped. Investigations into the Clintons' dealings with a sleazy owner of a failed savings and loan stopped halfway when the owner's wife, a former Clinton mistress named Susan McDougal, went to jail rather than testify. Webb Hubbell, a law partner of Mrs. Clinton's, did the same—and secured more than $600,000 in consulting fees from people close to the Clintons.

One of them was a longtime financial supporter and Indonesian businessman named James Riady. The story, as explained in Isikoff's indispensable book, was typical of the Clinton method. Having donated heavily, Riady was invited to several White House meetings. After one of these, Riady took Webb Hubbell to breakfast. Then Riady went to the White House again, meeting privately in the Oval Office

with the president. He brought with him a man named John Huang, who ran the U.S. subsidiary of Riady's Indonesian financing company. Riady then met with Hubbell again, over lunch this time. Within four days, Riady's company had paid Hubbell $100,000 in consulting fees. Despite a plea agreement, Hubbell never cooperated with prosecutors in their investigation of the Clintons.

As one charwoman said to another watching a hooker strut by: "'At's nice work if you can get it."

There are dozens of stories about the Clintons that are equally rank, most of them involving similarly large sums of money. Even at the very end, on his last day in office, Clinton was granting pardons to men who had donated money to his cause—including a financier then on the lam, Marc Rich, whose pardon, like many others at the 11th hour, was never cleared through the normal Department of Justice process. Rich's glamorous ex-wife asked Clinton privately for the pardon, after giving large sums to the Clinton presidential library.

Felonies happen: 'I did not have . . .'

No president has been as ravenous for campaign cash as Bill Clinton. He knew, for example, that Riady's friend Huang had raised illegal foreign money for political campaigns, but insisted the Democratic National Committee hire him as a fundraiser anyway, over internal objections from the DNC's finance department. (Imagine a *professional fundraiser* objecting to anything on ethical grounds.) President Clinton attended fundraisers as often as five and six days a week. He turned perks of the presidency into instruments for raising cash; the White House itself was merchandised. Nearly 80 campaign contributors and bundlers, few of them personally friendly with the Clintons, were invited to spend the night in the Lincoln Bedroom and the Queen's Bedroom as a token of the president's gratitude.

The president and senior aides brought in an estimated $26 million in so-called soft money over 20 months by holding "coffees" for major donors in the White House Map Room and even the Oval Office. The National Security Council identified one big donor of "soft money," Roger Tamraz, as an agent working against U.S. interests in Central Asia, where he hoped to build a gas pipeline. The president overrode the NSC's objections to meet with him several times anyway, until Tamraz's contributions dried up. Several other identified security risks enjoyed the same privileged access. Foreign businessmen from second- and third-world countries felt right at home with Clinton's way of doing business.

"I see the White House is like a subway," a donor named Johnny Chung said. "You have to put in coins to open the gates."

In 1997, House and Senate committees spent months pawing through Clinton's sordid fundraising. More than 40 witnesses either left the country or pled the Fifth.

America was soon to learn that more than "soft money" was being raised in the Oval Office. (This is the kind of joke we had to endure in the 1990s—one more thing to thank Clinton for.) The report of Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, which served as the basis for the president's impeachment in 1998 and 1999, offers the keenest insight into the culture of blame-shifting and lying that emanated from Clinton and accreted around his presidency. Starr's report is famously revolting in its explicit detail about Clinton's sexual encounters with the 22-year-old intern Monica Lewinsky, and I'll spare you. But the non-explicit details are telling too.

For instance, Lewinsky said the president didn't learn her name till after they had finished their third encounter in the Oval Office. After the sixth encounter, they settled down to their "first substantive conversation." (So he doesn't talk *all* the time.) Once when she begged him to let her service him and he pleaded a lack of time, he caressed her cheek sympathetically. "Every day can't be sunshine," he told her. On at least 17 occasions, the president called Lewinsky for phone sex, often first thing in the morning. "Good morning," he would crow when he was done. "What a way to start the day!" For the longest time, Monica said, he wouldn't let her bring him "to completion," in her delicate phrase, until one day he told her he was going to give her a special gift: "I don't want to disappoint you." As it happened, he got some of the special gift on her blue dress—physical evidence that doomed him.

One after another, these incidents and details pile up in Starr's report, and not one of them constitutes an impeachable offense. But then and now—for 13 years—the common view has been that Clinton was impeached because he had sex with an intern. The PBS filmmakers don't try very hard to dispel this confusion. In truth, President Clinton was impeached for obstructing justice in a criminal investigation and lying under oath before a federal judge and grand jury. Some of the lies he told were indeed about sex, but that's because they arose from a sexual harassment suit. As president, Clinton challenged the suit, arguing that a sitting president shouldn't be subject to civil lawsuits until he was out of office. The argument reached the Supreme Court, which ruled, unanimously, that the harassment suit could proceed. The president, the Court said, "is subject to the same laws that apply to all citizens."

Clinton didn't agree.

The suit was brought by a former Arkansas state employee named Paula Jones. To most observers, Jones's complaint was shaky, and in the end it was thrown out of court because the behavior she described didn't count as harassment. She alleged that Clinton, governor of Arkansas at the time and her boss's direct boss, approached her at a state-sponsored jobs fair in a Little Rock hotel. In a deathless come-on, he told her: "You make my knees knock." Clinton's gift for such lines, by the way, never fails him. Twelve years before Jones started knocking his knees, Clinton had been accused of sexually assaulting a political supporter named Juanita Broaddrick in another Little Rock hotel room. She ended up with a split lip. According to an account Broaddrick gave to several friends and family members at the time and repeated later, Clinton showed his customary empathy. "You better get some ice for that," he said, feeling her pain as he slipped out the door.

Jones alleged nothing so gross, but what she did allege, and what others corroborated, was that Clinton instructed a state trooper to bring her to an upstairs conference room to "talk about a new job." There, Jones said, he propositioned her in a particularly graphic manner. "Kiss it," the future president said, in still another imperishable *mot*. She filed suit three years later, after he'd been president for 18 months. Her lawyers were conservative activists with a transparent desire to destroy Clinton's presidency.

After the Supreme Court ruled that the case could go forward, Clinton was deposed. He was asked questions about his sex life that "no American citizen would ever want to answer," as he later put it. Any American who reads through this and his subsequent depositions would agree. The questions were unbearably intrusive. They only grew more so once Starr entered the case in a federal investigation.

But with Clinton, the repellent questions had a kind of rough justice. As president, he had signed the Violence Against Women Act with a maximum display of self-congratulation, citing it as a courageous blow for women and against injustice. The statute vastly expanded discovery rules available to plaintiffs in sexual harassment cases. Thanks to Clinton's law, defendants in harassment suits everywhere could be required, under oath, to expose the most intimate details of their sex lives, even in consensual relationships (like the one Clinton had with Lewinsky). If they lied, the questions could get more intrusive still. The rules were—are—just as Bill Clinton suggested they were, after they were used against him: un-American. But they were his doing.

And he didn't think they should apply to him. Through a sequence of legal switchbacks, Clinton ended up before

We Can't Tax and Spend Our Way to Prosperity

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

What's the administration's budget strategy? Spend like there's no tomorrow, drive deficits to record levels, heap huge tax increases on America's most productive citizens, and ignore the most urgent challenges facing the economy, including tax reform and entitlement programs. The much-ballyhooed goal of cutting the deficit in half over the course of four years has been wildly missed.

At a time when Americans desperately need stronger economic growth in order to create new jobs, this budget blueprint is sadly anti-growth and anti-jobs. It would dig deep into the pockets of many successful small businesses—making nowhere near $1 million—to help bear the brunt of a $1.5 trillion tax hike. Business owners who file their taxes as individuals would get swept up in the across-the-board rate hike that targets those with incomes of $200,000 or more. Punishing success is exactly the wrong way to foster economic growth and job creation.

The budget also proposes raising taxes on investment, which would pile on the disincentives for businesses to expand and hire. Facing steeper taxes on capital gains and dividends, businesses will think twice about investing in enterprises that could spur growth and productivity.

To make matters worse, the budget levies anti-competitive taxes on American companies operating worldwide. It proposes punitive tax hikes on energy producers and financial institutions, which would only drive up energy costs and restrict capital access.

The Chamber has long called for comprehensive tax reform, including lower rates for individuals and corporations and a broader tax base, because our current code is complex, punitive, and holds back American competitiveness. This budget makes no attempt to restructure our tax system and only makes bad policies worse.

Comprehensive tax reform isn't all that's missing in the budget. Also glaringly absent is an acknowledgment that runaway entitlement spending will soon drive our nation over an economic cliff. We need to reform our entitlement programs so that they won't bankrupt our country and so that we can maintain a social safety net for future generations.

The bottom line is that we can't tax and spend our way to prosperity. The current administration did not cause all our economic problems. Nor did it invent fiscal irresponsibility. There is plenty of blame to go around. But it did have a unique opportunity with this budget to demonstrate courageous leadership by embracing bold economic reforms and fiscal restraint to generate growth and boost prosperity for all. It's disappointing that the administration chose not to do it.

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a federal judge and grand jury. They were investigating whether anyone was tampering with potential witnesses in the Jones suit. Monica Lewinsky, who in her dawning disillusionment had taken to calling him "The Big Creep," was among them. In his federal deposition, as he had in Jones's civil suit, Clinton lied in multiple instances. Indeed, it was Clinton himself who was behind the witness tampering. He had pressured Monica to sign a false affidavit in the Jones case when he learned she was on a witness list. He enlisted his secretary, Betty Currie, to retrieve gifts that he'd given Monica and which were by then under subpoena. Currie hid them under her bed at home.

Clinton also encouraged Currie to lie in her own deposition. "I was never alone with Monica, right?" he asked her twice privately, shortly before she was to testify under oath, though she knew as well as he that Lewinsky had been alone with him at least a dozen times. Currie also knew it was a lie when the president said to her, "Monica came on to me and I never touched her, right?" Worried that Lewinsky might flip, as others never had, he leaned on a friend to find her a new, higher-paying job. When it became clear that Lewinsky would, under questioning, testify truthfully, he instructed aides to slander her to reporters, on background. Clinton told one aide, an energetic leaker named Sidney Blumenthal, that she was a "stalker," a mentally unbalanced young woman with a Clinton fixation. And as night follows day, descriptions of Lewinsky as a stalker duly appeared in the papers.

There was much, much more to Clinton's behavior that was just as reprehensible, and all of it long ago disappeared down the country's memory hole. One more instance: After he publicly denied his affair with Lewinsky, he recruited his cabinet officers, among them Bill Daley and Madeleine Albright, to go before the press and reaffirm their trust in him—trust that he knew to be laughable. That's not an impeachable offense. Taking advantage, as the most powerful man in the world, of a dizzy 22-year-old woman is not an impeachable offense; neither, probably, is using your power as president to libel her after she proved a danger to your political viability. Even the famous incident with the cigar isn't an impeachable offense. On the other hand, witness tampering and lying under oath to a federal grand jury are felonies, whatever the merits of the underlying case that occasioned the tampering and the perjury. Those are impeachable offenses. And so the president was impeached.

It was impossible at the time, and still is, to disentangle the partisan motives of the congressional Republicans who impeached Bill Clinton from whatever genuine sense of duty they felt to insist that his crimes be formally proved, recorded, and censured. Yet the question is beside the point, for the motives, whatever they were, don't violate the soundness of the case made against him. An ethics committee of the Arkansas state supreme court, comprising mostly Democrats, came to the same conclusion that congressional Republicans did, and insisted that Clinton be disbarred. The federal judge to whom he lied under oath fined him $90,000, saying "no reasonable person would seriously dispute" that Clinton had given "false, misleading, and evasive answers that were designed to obstruct the judicial process." These affirmations of the Republican case do undermine the "consensus" that the impeachment was, as the *Esquire* editors put it, "so political as to be illegitimate."

The common view of Clinton's impeachment, like the common view of his presidency in general, is exquisitely wrong. The distance of time and the stilling of passions haven't made the case assembled by Starr look more trivial and absurd; if anything the case today looks even more compelling to someone who, at this remove, can go through it with a disinterested eye. And the defense mounted by the president's lawyers and publicists, a tissue of misdirection and question-begging, looks flimsier than ever. The public's middling attention span, its impatience with legal nicety, its lack of familiarity with routine prosecutorial methods, its horror at the sexual detail unleashed by Clinton's law—these were bottomless resources that Clinton's team exploited brilliantly and shamelessly.

When the Lewinsky scandal erupted in the press, the president and his major-domo, Dick Morris, did what they always did when they were caught politically off-balance: They quietly took a poll.

The next day Morris explained the public's mood. The president might be forgiven a sexual affair, even with an intern half his age. But if he lied under oath and continued to lie—in that case, Morris said, the public would run him out of office.

"Well," Clinton told Morris, "we'll just have to win then." And he did.

Before the last bell is rung, however, a final detail from the Starr investigation deserves a place in the image Americans hold of their 42nd president.

Late one night in 1995, the president was seeking congressional support for his plan to send American troops to Bosnia. As he took to the phone to lobby Rep. Sonny Callahan of Alabama, he saw that Monica had nothing to do. So he beckoned her over to do the thing he liked best about her.

Being sexually serviced by an intern while discussing the deployment of American soldiers to a war zone isn't an impeachable offense. But it certainly is an interesting piece of information, isn't it? A useful clue in trying to figure out what kind of president Bill Clinton was? I hope we can reach a consensus on that. ♦

Inside Free Syria

Poorly armed, lacking in allies, and against all odds, an insurgency seeks to topple the Assad dictatorship.

By Jonathan Spyer

Idleb Province, Syria

The mountains outside Antakya were wrapped in black clouds the day we crossed the border from Turkey into Syria. The smugglers said this was a good sign as the Syrian Army patrols don't care for rain and mud, and would tend to stay in their huts, making our crossing safer. That was how it turned out. We pushed up the border fence and crawled through at around 9 P.M. There were horses heavily laden with contraband waiting for us just inside. We rode them across the mountains in the rain and arrived in Syria without being seen.

I had made contact with the smugglers in Antakya through Syrian opposition friends, some days previously. This is the only way into northern Syria for journalists at the present time. I wanted to head to Idleb Province, one of the centers of the insurgency against the Assad family dictatorship, and now one of the regime's main targets. My purpose was to gain an impression of the Free Syrian Army, the increasingly important armed element in the revolt against Assad, from inside one of its heartland areas.

Lieutenant Bilal Khaibar, defector from Assad's airborne forces

Antakya itself is buzzing with the semi-visible activities of both the Syrian regime and the opposition. The Free Syrian Army in Antakya is immensely security-conscious, particularly since the kidnapping and forced return to Syria of its founding member, Colonel Hussein Harmoush, last year. But the activities of the FSA are also severely restricted by the Turkish authorities, which watch it carefully, and whose gaze it seeks to avoid.

Antakya combines this sense of intrigue with the questionable charms of a mountain resort town in winter. Prior to crossing, I met with an FSA officer, Captain Ayham al-Kurdi, for an initial briefing.

I spoke with Kurdi in a rundown office in an apartment. A native of Hama, the 30-year-old former signals officer in a Syrian antiaircraft unit described to me how he came to the insurgency.

He was stationed near Daraa, a town close to the Jordanian border and the birthplace of the uprising, in mid-2011. He recalled his shock at witnessing the use of anti-aircraft munitions against civilian demonstrators in the area, as the Assad regime sought to murder the revolt in its cradle.

The use of these munitions was intended as a tool of terror. Their bullets kill people no more or less than regular ordnance. But from the regime's point of view, they had the additional attraction of setting the bodies of those they hit on fire, turning the corpse into a symbol of deterrence to all who would challenge Assad's rule. What they also did was to make Ayham al-Kurdi and others reassess their view of the government. Kurdi made his decision to desert, and help set up the beginnings of armed resistance to Assad.

Kurdi's assessment of the strategic reality facing the Syrian revolution was grim: "If there is no international or Arab intervention," he made clear, "this situation could continue for years." The revolution has powerful enemies. The captain counted them on his hands, and the reasons for their enmity to the insurgency against Assad. First, Iran: "The Syrian revolution," said Kurdi, "was a shock for the Iranian project. The Iranians want to control the region—Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, the Gulf. The Syrian revolution came to break this dream. So it is natural for the Iranians to help Assad."

PHOTOGRAPHS: JONATHAN SPYER

Jonathan Spyer is the author of Transforming Fire: The Rise of the Israel-Islamist Conflict.

But together with the Iranians, there were their Lebanese clients, Hezbollah, and beyond this Russia and China, looming and impervious. "A great Arabic and international movement" is what Captain Kurdi wants to counteract this. He is not confident that it will come.

Before I left his office for the border and the smugglers, as a way of farewell, Kurdi shared with me a curious rumor—if it is a rumor—that I would hear repeated a number of times in the days ahead. It concerned the possible use of chemical warfare by Assad against protesters. The claim was made regarding the Homs area, which even more so than Idleb, is currently the main focus of the regime's violence. Homs city is being subjected to a merciless pounding by government artillery.

In Talbisa, next to Homs city, Kurdi told me, they sprayed pesticides on demonstrators from the air. The soldiers were equipped with a new type of gas mask. "Assad said before that we were germs," he concluded, "now we're insects. I guess that's progress." He wished me luck inside.

Ayham al-Kurdi recalled his shock at witnessing the use of anti-aircraft munitions against civilian demonstrators, as the Assad regime sought to murder the revolt in its cradle. The use of these munitions was intended as a tool of terror.

On the highway, once in Syria, we were vulnerable to any sudden spot-checks the army cared to place. But once we entered Idleb Province, the extent of the precarious gains made by rebel fighters in recent weeks became apparent. In towns like Binnish and Sarmin, the regime of Bashar al-Assad no longer exists, at least in visible form.

The roadblock that meets you at the entry to Binnish is manned by Free Syrian Army fighters. Armed opposition activists are everywhere. A makeshift clubhouse established by Abu Steif, the big man in the opposition in this backwater town, is buzzing with armed young men going in and out until the early hours of the morning. The flag of the Syrian revolution, which is the flag of the Syrian republic before the Baath party took control in 1963, flies above the main square.

The limitations of the revolt are also immediately apparent from a perusal of the armory assembled by the Free Army fighters in their Binnish headquarters. The characterization often heard in the media of the FSA as armed only with Kalashnikovs is not quite accurate, but it's not far from the truth. The AK-47 is indeed the main weapon of FSA fighters. In addition, I saw RPG-7s, heavy machine guns, and a mortar. Newly arrived body armor, smuggled over the mountains, was stacked up in boxes. There seemed to be no sign of first-aid kits, though, and little indication of any sophisticated communications equipment.

The weapons were the subject of much discussion, and discussion is what the Free Army members in Binnish do a lot of, in their clubhouse, drinking endless quantities of sweet tea and smoking.

The RPG-7, in particular, was an object of enthusiasm. I heard Abdo, a fighter of the FSA and a former Syrian tank corpsman, extolling its virtues to the heavily built, black-bearded Abu Steif on that first evening. "At 300 yards, Abu Steif, at 300 yards, and it can stop a tank. It can take a house down, too. You'll see it when the time comes." Abu Steif, a ruminative figure, a prominent local businessman before the revolt, reflected on this information before nodding and concluding, "Praise God." Assad's army last entered the town in force in October. No one thinks they won't be back.

The fighters in Binnish are a mixed bunch. Many are army deserters, with harrowing tales similar to Ayham al-Kurdi's. The names of the places differ. The details are largely the same: orders to shoot at civilians, a growing realization of having been lied to, and then the decision to escape. The defections are recalled in graphic detail. Sometimes they involve the deaths of friends who sought also to desert, sometimes the turning of guns on fellow Syrian soldiers or officers.

But there is another type of fighter in the ranks of the armed opposition in the town. On the first evening, away from the main opposition center, I met a group of FSA members returning from an attack on an army checkpoint outside Idleb city. Among them were representatives of a type of man immediately familiar to all observers of early 21st-century Middle East politics. A type of man very calm, often smiling, with a sort of serenity about him. Bearded, invoking the authority of holy text, though rarely in a histrionic way. Salafi Islamist fighters are prominent among the FSA men in Binnish. They tended to keep away from Abu Steif's clubhouse and to have their own gatherings elsewhere. They were local men, though, not foreigners.

I interviewed one of the Salafis shortly after they had returned from the attack on the checkpoint. He was in his mid-30s, black-bearded, and with the attitude typical of FSA fighters, a gloomy assessment of the balance of forces combined with a kind of generalized optimism. "We have no support from any country, and we receive no weapons

from anyone," he told me. "The regime, meanwhile, has Iran, Hezbollah, Russia, and China." How long until Assad is destroyed? I asked. "I give it," he said, in the manner of a physician revealing a prognosis, "roughly a month."

The activists in Idleb Province are keen to reassure you that the regime really has gone, without a trace, from the liberated zones. The reality is more complex. The creation of the free zones in Idleb, Homs Province, and elsewhere is the most significant achievement to date of the Syrian revolution. The Assad regime, it should be remembered, was until recently a synonym for the airless, locked-down Arab nationalist police state. In Idleb Province now, there is some room to breathe.

And yet, of course, the regime is still there. Its tanks and armored vehicles are deployed some distance away, in the surrounding fields. But the unseen mechanisms of the dictatorship are present far beyond the FSA roadblock meant to keep out intruders.

Each Friday, large demonstrations take place across Syria, under a single slogan chosen by the opposition. On the Friday I was in Binnish, the designated slogan was "Russia is killing us." A British Sky TV crew had entered the town, and was doing a live broadcast from a rooftop next to the rally. All had been peaceful. But as the cameras began to roll, in the area behind them, a large brawl unaccountably erupted. Within seconds, the Sky reporter's jaunty copy about the revolution in Idleb Province was being recited, absurdly, with a mass fistfight going on behind it.

Opposition activists stepped in, and to the fury of the crew, stopped the live broadcast. To the practiced eye, what had taken place was very apparent. This was a provocation straight out of the dog-eared East German playbook of the Baath regime. Primitive and lowtech, it may have been. But it succeeded in disrupting the only piece of live coverage coming out of Idleb Province that day and served notice that whatever flag flew above the town square, the Assad regime had not entirely left. It turned out that some members of an unruly local clan had been paid to start the fight.

That evening, Abu Steif and his activists began preparing a list of 200 families in the town who would send representatives to a new "security committee" to be formed in Binnish. It is a beginning.

Opposition leader Abu Steif (top); anti-Assad activists burn a Hezbollah flag in Binnish.

Getting from Binnish to neighboring Sarmin requires venturing back onto the main highway to Damascus. We managed this without incident. In Sarmin, the armed element looks better organized, more professional than in Binnish. There is talk of around a thousand armed men in the town.

I met with one of the commanders, 25-year-old Lieutenant Bilal Khaibar, at a position prepared by the FSA at the entrance to the town. Khaibar, a seven-year veteran of Assad's airborne forces, is impressive in the classic manner of an elite infantry officer—earnest, clipped, and precise. The outlines of his own story, and the reasons he joined the FSA, were by now familiar.

He and his unit were deployed in the south in the early months of the uprising. They were told that armed Israelis had crossed the border and that they were to engage them. On closing with the "enemy," they discovered that it consisted of unarmed Syrian civilians. The troops were accompanied into the engagement by non-Arabic-speaking men, who Bilal later discovered were Iranians. These men were responsible for the execution of one of Bilal Khaibar's brother officers, who refused to fire on civilians in the Daraa area. Khaibar made his way in June 2011 to the Free Syrian Army days after the killing of his friend.

Bilal Khaibar still wears his Syrian Army paratroopers' wings on his FSA uniform, and was careful to explain

to me that he does this because he regards himself as part of the legal army of Syria. "I am with the law, not against the law. The regime is fascist and criminal." Nor does he have any illusions about what is to come. "We expect what happened in Homs to happen here. But even with our simple weapons, we are ready to fight. Either Bashar stays, or we stay."

As for what can bring victory, again, the demands are familiar—above all, a buffer zone. A place to which refugees can flee, and from which fighters can organize. Without this, Khaibar sees no end to the situation.

And again, the curious rumor: Three times, he says, three times, in his clipped, officer's way, the regime has used chemical weapons and pesticides against protesters in the Homs area.

"Freedom is the promise of God on earth," Khaibar tells me. So if international help doesn't come, he and his men will hold the Sarmin free zone for as long as they can, and afterwards fight, he says, "like peshmerga." The regime, says Khaibar, "has the heavy weapons, but the people are with us."

Free Syrian Army fighters, Idleb Province, February 2010

Lieutenant Bilal Khaibar of the Sarmin FSA was the most credible of the military men I met in Idleb Province. The presence of individuals of his type in the insurgency is an indication that it is real, it means business, and it will not easily be destroyed. However, without the buffer zone and the assistance that he and others repeatedly demanded, it is difficult to see how victory can come.

In October, when the army of Assad swept through Idleb Province, they began their attack on Binnish from the graveyard outside of the town. On my last day in Idleb, two young fighters of the FSA proudly recounted their own role in the bloody battle in the alleyways of the first neighborhood facing the graveyard, as the fighters sought to stop Assad's army and irregulars from forcing their way in. "Assad wants to turn the whole of Syria into a graveyard," one of them told me as we stood by the grave of Ahmed Abd el-Hakim, an FSA fighter killed by a sniper in the October clashes.

The Assad regime's choice to launch the attack in a graveyard seemed particularly apt. Death and its political uses is the only currency in which this most brutal of dictatorships has ever learned to deal. It has traded in this coin, however, with vigor and skill, and it continues to do so.

Umm Maher, the mother of Ahmed Abd el-Hakim, later summed up for me what this has meant in human terms for the people of Syria.

Sitting in her front room, with her daughter seated next to her holding a picture of Ahmed, she told me that, "for 40 years we've lived like this—no law, no rights. We live with terror. We are made to live differently from all other people in the world by this regime. So we're proud of our son, who was trying to end this. He was brave."

Umm Maher's words express a simple and obvious truth regarding the desire of human beings for dignity. As for the instruments in place in Syria for achieving this, the Free Syrian Army in Idleb Province includes many courageous and capable men. Some of them are committed to Salafi Islamist ideologies. They are nearly all Sunni Arabs. There is a clear sectarian logic at work—alongside a desire to see the end of a regime that denies them the most basic and minimal of rights.

In terms of their capabilities, the Free Syrian Army remains something of a fiction. What exists on the ground is a conglomeration of locally organized militias, lacking any coherent central direction or chain of command, and with no real strategy for victory beyond the "buffer zone" constantly referred to.

For the people and the fighters of Idleb, the fight goes on. They know that once Assad is finished with Homs and Hama, and once he thinks he can get away with it, he will turn his attention back to the north. Then it will be their turn, and the dictator will exact a bloody and terrible revenge for their effrontery.

What could prevent this is an effective coalition to counter the anti-Western one (Iran, Hezbollah, Russia) that currently underwrites the dictator. This Western coalition can only happen outside the auspices of the U.N., where Russia and China have already vetoed Security Council resolutions demanding Assad step down. Part of that Western response would involve turning the FSA from a collection of ragtag militias into a more formidable force. And it would commit to the creation of a free zone in Syria more solid and guaranteed than those zones currently held, with hope and courage, by fighters armed only with AK-47s and RPG-7s. ♦

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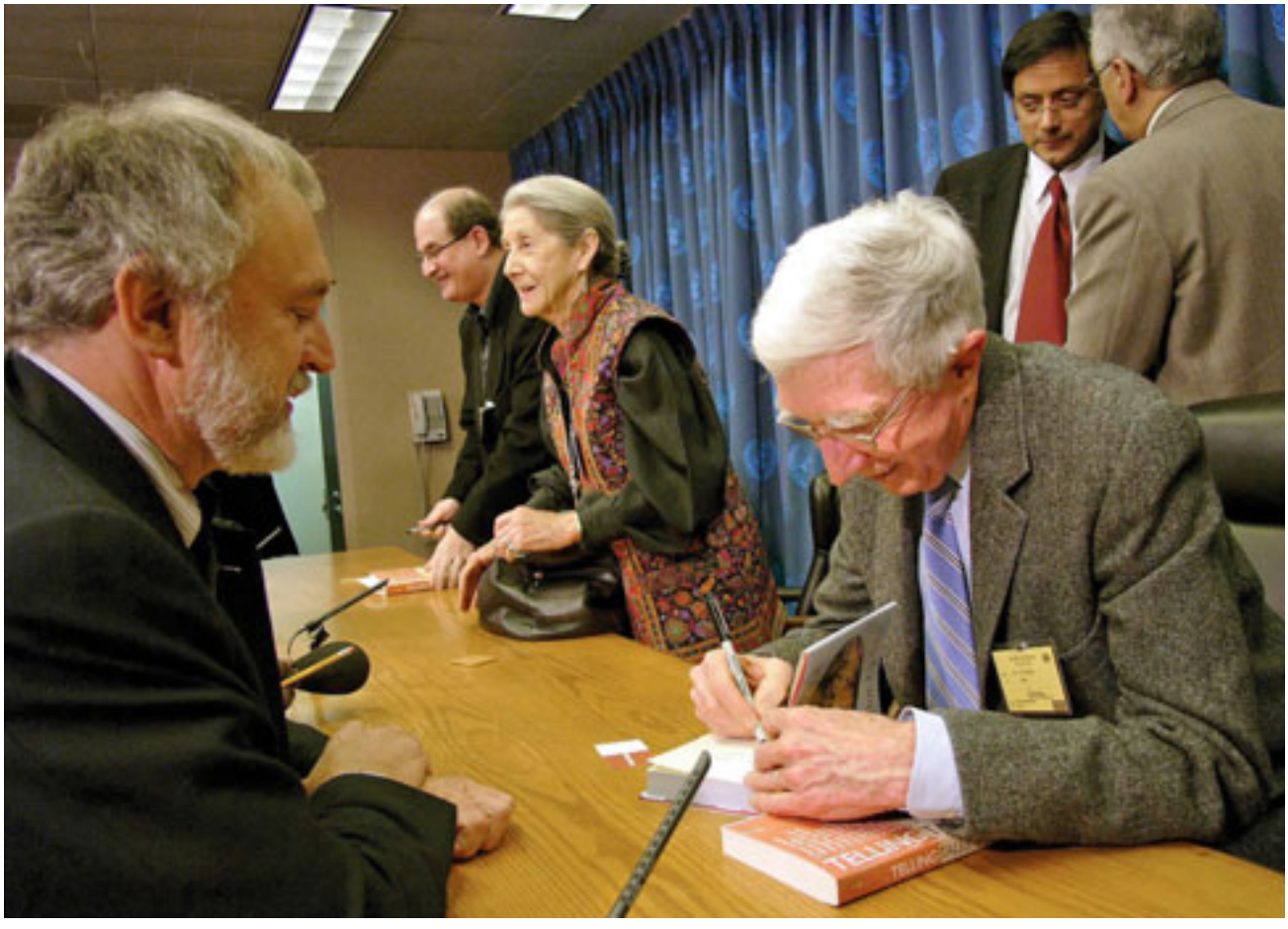

Salman Rushdie, Nadine Gordimer, John Updike meet the public, 2004.

The Great American Novel

Will there ever be another? BY ROGER KIMBALL

A couple of years ago, I was asked to give a talk about "The American Novel Today." It wasn't my first choice of topic, frankly, partly because I read as few contemporary novels as possible, partly (here we get into cause and effect) because most of the novels that get noticed today (like most of the visual art that gets the Establishment's nod) should be filed under the rubric "ephemera," and often pretty nasty ephemera at that. I do not, you may be pleased to read, propose to parade before you a list of those exercises in evanescence, self-parody, and general ickiness that constitute so much that congregates under the label of American fiction these days. Instead, I'd like to step back and make some observations on the place of fiction in our culture today, A.D. 2012. It is very different from the place it occupied in the 19th century, or even the place it occupied up through the middle of the last century.

We get a lot of new novels at my office. I often pick up a couple and thumb through them just to keep up with what is on offer in the literary bourse. The delicate feeling of nausea that ensues as my eye wanders over these *bijoux* is as difficult to describe as it is predictable. The amazing thing is that it takes only a sentence or two before the feeling burgeons in the pit of the stomach and the upper lip grows moist with sweat. I am not generally a fan of the Green party, but at those moments I feel a deep kinship with their cause: All those lovely trees, acres and acres of wood pulp darkened, and for what? No one, I submit, should pay good money for a college education and then be expected to ruminate over the fine points of what is proffered to us by the fiction industry today.

I know that I am not alone in this feeling. Indeed, whenever I mention the contemporary novel to friends, the

Roger Kimball, editor and publisher of the New Criterion*, is publisher of Encounter Books and author of the forthcoming* The Fortunes of Permanence: Culture and Anarchy in an Age of Amnesia.

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

reaction tends to alternate between bemusement and distaste. The bemusement comes from those who are at a loss to think of any current American novels I might wish to talk about. "I'll check my bookshelves when I get home," one well-read wag with a large private library wrote me, "to see if I *have* any contemporary American novels." Those expressing distaste, on the other hand, do have the novels on their shelves, but they have made the mistake of having read them, or at least read *in* them.

This might be the appropriate moment to issue a disclaimer. I do not deny that there are good novels written today. I think, for example, of the spare, deeply felt novels of Marilynne Robinson, especially *Gilead*, her quiet masterpiece from a few years back. It might even be argued (I merely raise this as a possibility) that there are as many good novels being written today as in the past. It is sobering to reflect that between 1837—when Victoria ascended the throne and Dickens's first novel, *The Pickwick Papers*, was published—and 1901—the year of Victoria's death—some 7,000 authors published more than 60,000 novels in England. How much of that vast literary cataract has stood the test of time? How can we hope that our perfervid literary output will escape the exigent discriminations visited upon all prior periods? Jonathan Franzen. Bret Easton Ellis. Jay McInerney. Dave Eggers. Toni Morrison. Feel free to extend the list: Criticism is not prophecy, nevertheless I predict those and many other glittering darlings of the moment will be forgotten as surely as those 59,967 novels from the Victorian period whose names, for us, are writ in water.

There is, however, another question, or rather set of questions, that I want to broach. And let me underscore the interrogative nature of what I am suggesting: When I say that there are a set of questions I would like to discuss, I do not mean that I have a satchel full of answers to which I have surreptitiously affixed question marks for rhetorical effect. I mean, rather, that I have sensed a change in the relation of literature to life and that this change, however we might best describe it, has had and will likely continue to have a profound effect on how we understand the significance of fiction. In any event, I'd like to bracket, as the phenomenologists say, the issue of how good American fiction now is and concentrate instead on what I have been calling in my own mind the "traction of fiction." Whatever we think about the literary accomplishments of a Toni Morrison or a Jay McInerney, I think that most of us would agree that, today, fiction exercises a different, and less vital, claim on our attention than it once did. Such, anyway, has been my observation.

And I would go further. It's not just contemporary fiction that is suffering from this form of existential depreciation: The same thing, I believe, is happening, perhaps to a lesser extent, with the fiction of the past. The novel plays a different and a diminished role in our cultural life as compared with even the quite recent past.

Matthew Arnold once described literature as "a criticism of life." He looked to literature, to culture generally, to provide the civilizing and spiritually invigorating function that religion had provided for earlier ages. And to a large extent, culture proved itself up to the task. Horace once said that the aim of poetry was to delight and instruct. For much of its history, literature has been content to stress the element of delight: to provide what Henry James, in an essay on the future of the novel, described as "the great anodyne." If a tale could beguile an idle hour, that was enough.

But there was a moment, an extended moment that lasted many decades, in which some fiction consciously performed a patently moral role quite apart from its value as entertainment. I should stress that by "moral" I do not necessarily mean moralistic or even didactic. Some fiction was indeed patently didactic, but much of the best fiction was moral in a broader, more insinuating sense. Its designs upon the reader—and the reader's designs upon it—were often laced with equivocation and ambiguity, but were no less imperative for that. It was in this context, perhaps, that we should understand James's observation (in that same essay) that the novel was "the most immediate and . . . admirably *treacherous* picture of actual manners." I feel sure that, could we but fully unpack the union of those words "admirably" and "treacherous" in James's understanding, we would understand a great deal. If we understood also what he meant by "manners" we would be in very good shape indeed.

My point here is to suggest that changes in our culture have precipitated changes in the novel or, more to the point, changes in the reception and spiritual significance of the novel. It was before my time, but not I think *much* before my time, that a cultivated person would await the publication of an important new novel with an anticipation whose motivation was as much existential as diversionary. This, I believe, is mostly not the case now, and the reasons have only partly to do with the character and quality of the novels on offer. At least as important is the character and quality of our culture.

In a great passage of "Burnt Norton," the first of his *Four Quartets*, T.S. Eliot speaks of being *Distracted from distraction by distraction / Filled with fancies and empty of meaning / Tumid apathy with no concentration / Men and bits of paper* . . . I would not be so rash as to venture a *definition* of "the novel." Those monsters, loose and baggy or otherwise, are by now too various to be susceptible of definition in a way that is at once accurate and not vacuous. (Samuel Johnson's pleasing definition of the novel—"a small tale, generally of love"—belongs to an earlier, more innocent age.) Still, one may observe that novels require, at a minimum, a certain quota of attention and a certain quality of concentration.

We live in an age when there is tremendous competition for—I was going to say "the reader's attention," but reading is part, a large part, of what has suddenly become negotiable. The Yale literary critic Geoffrey Hartman once wrote a book called *The Fate of Reading*: It is not, in my judgment, a very good book, but it would have been had Professor Hartman got around to addressing the subject announced in his provocative title. It is of course a subject that goes far beyond the issue of the American or

any other sort of novel: The advent of television, the ubiquity of mass media, the eruption of the Internet and ebooks with their glorification of instantaneity—all this has done an extraordinary amount to alter the relationship between life and literature. Television lulled us into acquiescence, the Internet with its vaunted search engines and promise of the world at your fingertips made further inroads in seducing us to reduce wisdom to information: to believe that ready access to information was somehow tantamount to knowledge. I pause here to quote David Guaspari's wise and amusing observation on this subject: "Comparing information and knowledge," he writes, "is like asking whether the fatness of a pig is more or less green than the designated hitter rule."

I am not, to be candid, quite sure what the "designated hitter rule" portends, but I am confident that it has nothing to do with being green or porcine plumpness. When I was in graduate school, I knew some students who believed that by making a Xerox copy of an article, they had somehow absorbed, or at least partly absorbed, its content. I suppose the contemporary version of that *déformation professionelle* is the person who wanders around with a computer perpetually linked to Google and who therefore believes he knows everything. It reminds one of the old complaint about students at the elite French universities: They know everything, it was said; unfortunately that is all they know.

At the end of the *Phaedrus*, Plato has Socrates tell the story of the god Theuth, who, legend has it, invented the art of writing. When Theuth presented his new invention to the king of Egypt, he promised the king that it would make his people "wiser and improve their memories." But the king disagreed, claiming that the habit of writing, far from improving memories, would "implant forgetfulness" by encouraging people to rely on external marks rather than "the living speech graven in the soul." I think of Schopenhauer's observation about the perils of excessive reading: Just as he who always rides gradually forgets how to walk, so he who reads constantly without pausing to reflect "gradually loses the capacity for thinking."

"Such is the case," said Schopenhauer, "with many scholars; they have read themselves stupid."

Well, reading ourselves stupid is perhaps not our largest educational problem today. And in any case, none of us would wish to do without writing—or computers, come to that. Nor, I think, would Plato have wanted us to. (Though he would probably have been severe about television: That bane of intelligence could have been ordered up specially to illustrate Plato's idea that most people inhabit a kind of existential "cave" in which they mistake flickering images for realities.) Plato's indirect comments—through the mouth of Socrates recounting an old story he picked up somewhere—have less to do with writing (an art, after all, in which Plato excelled) than with the priority of immediate experience: the "living speech graven in the soul." Plato may have been an idealist. But here as elsewhere he appears as an apostle of vital, firsthand experience: a realist in the deepest sense of the term.

The problem with computers is not the worlds they give us instant access to but the world they encourage us to neglect. Everyone knows about the studies showing the bad effects on children and teenagers of too much time in cyberspace (or in front of the television set). It cuts them off from their family and friends, fosters asocial behavior, disrupts their ability to concentrate, and makes it harder for them to distinguish between fantasy and reality. I suspect, however, that the real problem is not so much the sorry cases that make headlines but a more generally disseminated attitude toward the world.

I have said that in the contemporary world literature suffered because so many things competed for our attention. That competition proceeds on two fronts. On the one hand, it offers a panoply of superficially attractive objects for our consumption and delectation: It is a world of apparently instant gratification except that the gratification is so ephemeral that it is conspicuously unsatisfying, more nominal than real. On the other hand, the competition for our attention also proceeds by attacking the very capacity for attention. Often, it seems to operate not by offering new objects for our attention, but by offering us a substitute for attention itself: a sort of passive receptivity that registers sensations without rising to meet them with the alertness of critical attention. We had the experience, wrote Eliot in *The Four Quartets*, but we missed the meaning. In this situation, the novel—which requires time, not instantaneousness, which requires careful attention, not its passive substitute—is going to have a hard time making itself heard.

Everyone knows Andy Warhol's quip that someday everyone would be famous for 15 minutes. Behind the humor—or perhaps I should say "behind the cynicism"—of that remark is the dark prospect of significant cultural diminishment. A quarter-hour's fame is not fame. On the contrary, it is the demotic parody of fame; it is mere celebrity. It is worth pausing to consider how much of our cultural life—even in its most august precincts—is caught up in the voracious logic of celebrity. It is a logic that builds obsolescence into the banner of achievement and requires that seriousness abdicate before the palace of notoriety and its sound-bite culture.

It has often been observed that the novel is the bourgeois art form par excellence: that in its primary focus on domestic manners and morals, its anatomy of private vices and exercise of private virtues, it answered the spiritual needs of a specific historical epoch.

With the passing or maturation of that epoch, perhaps the novel, too, has matured or even graduated to the second infancy of senility. That theory would account for a good deal of what gets published and praised today, but I don't think it tells the real story. It does seem as if there have been important alterations in the relation between life and literature—between life and the world of culture generally—and this is as much due to changes in the character of life as to changes in the character of culture.

My point is that even if a new Melville or Twain, Faulkner or Fitzgerald were to appear in our midst, his work would fail to achieve the

critical traction and existential weight of those earlier masters. We lack the requisite community of readers, and the ambient shared cultural assumptions, to provide what we might call the responsorial friction that underwrites the traction of publicly acknowledged significance. The novel in its highest forms requires a certain level of cultural definiteness and identity against which it can perform its magic. The diffusion or dispersion of culture brings with it a diffusion of manners and erosion of shared moral assumptions. Whatever we think of that process—love it as a sign of social liberation or loathe it as a token of cultural breakdown—it has robbed the novel, and the novel's audience, of a primary resource: an authoritative tradition to react against. Affirm it; subvert it; praise it; criticize it: The chief virtue of a well-defined cultural tradition for a novelist (for any artist) is not that it be beneficent but that it be widely acknowledged and authoritative.

There are many aspects to the cultural situation I have tried to adumbrate. At stake is not only the fate of the novel but also the fate of artistic life more generally. Perhaps Hegel was right when he said that "art in its highest expression is and remains for us a thing of the past." Hegel's thought was that if, traditionally, art had been tied to the truth, our culture's commitment to scientific rationality had in an important sense led to the replacement of art by reason. Art would not disappear, Hegel thought; it would simply degenerate to a form of entertainment, a vacation from rather than a revelation of reality.

Of course, Hegel was wrong about a great many things. And perhaps he is wrong about this, too. If our tendency to tie truth to reason—to look, when we are really in earnest, to the scientist rather than the artist for truth—describes an important aspect of our culture, there is another aspect summed up (for example) by Wallace Stevens when he suggested that in the modern age, "an age of disbelief," art takes the place of religion as "life's redemption." In such an age, Stevens wrote, "it is for the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief."

Hegel would have us embrace reason and relegate art to the status of recreation; Stevens would have us look to art and literature as substitutes for religion and compensation for the diminishments of modernity, which means in part the diminishments of scientific rationality. The arguments put forth by Hegel and Stevens are not incompatible, though they address the spiritual requirements of the modern world from different perspectives.

It counts for Hegel's position that much of the most beguiling fiction written today is genre fiction: mysteries, for example, or certain species of light comedy—frosting on the serious cake of life. (There are exceptions, of course, but they remain just that: exceptions.)

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Lionel Trilling

On the other hand, it is undeniable that we continue to think of art and literature as something more than mere recreation: We want it, as Hamlet said, to hold the mirror up to nature, at least to *our* nature, and we value it not simply as a source of distraction but also as a source of revelation. Indeed, it might be argued that in the modern world, whose understanding is so deeply shaped by scientific rationality, the novel—and art and literature generally—is more valuable than ever because it reminds us that reality, our reality as moral agents, exceeds the demonstrations of science.

In his essay on "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," Lionel Trilling described the novel as "a perpetual quest for reality," in particular the reality framed and invigorated by the field of manners, the field of social awareness and exchange. To a great extent, Trilling argued, the novel in this sense had "never really established itself in America" because "American writers of genius have not turned their minds to society."

Despite his strictures about manners, Trilling nevertheless looked to the American novel as an accomplice in the great project of what he called "moral realism," that is, to "the perception of the dangers of the moral life itself." In a liberal society, Trilling thought, we have as much to fear from our beneficence as from our selfishness.

> Some paradox of our natures leads us, when once we have made our fellow men the objects of our enlightened interest, to go on and make them the objects of our pity, then of our wisdom, ultimately of our coercion. It is to prevent this corruption, the most ironic and tragic that man knows, that we stand in need of the moral realism which is the product of the free play of the moral imagination.

The signal achievement of the novel, Trilling thought, was "involving the reader himself in the moral life, inviting him to put his own motives under examination. . . . It taught us, as no other genre ever did, the extent of human variety and the value of this variety."

Whether the American novel still plays an important role in this drama is, perhaps, an open question. My own suspicion is that the novel's heyday is past. Different genres speak with greater vitality and pertinence to different times. The novel was probably the preeminent literary genre of the later 19th and most of the 20th century. Whether it continues to enjoy that distinction is unclear. I suspect that, increasingly, our most intense encounters with novels will be with novels of the past.

But who knows? Perhaps Henry James was right when he observed, in his inimitable diction, "Man rejoices in an incomparable faculty for presently mutilating and disfiguring any plaything that has helped create for him the illusion of leisure; nevertheless, so long as life retains its power of projecting itself upon his imagination he will find the novel work off the impression better than anything he knows." ♦

B&A

Westward, Ho

The bloodstained trail to Manifest Destiny.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

A learned friend of rather retro views likes to muse from time to time on the North America that might have been: a balkanized continent without the miniature tribalisms that have plagued the actual Balkans, which, so said a Saki character, "produce more history than they can consume locally." In this thought experiment we might now have a quilt of commonwealths: New England, Midatlantica, the Confederacy, New France in the Mississippi Valley, and perhaps even a New Spain in the Southwest.

It was not to be, and just why it wasn't is obviously a very complicated story. But one factor was a journalistic phrase that electrified American political discourse in 1845 and after: "Manifest Destiny." An ideological notion that drew upon the contours of the map but also upon the idea that the United States owed tutelary responsibility to the world as the citadel of thrusting democratic experimentation. The phrase is usually attributed to a wordy New York editor, John L. O'Sullivan, who wrote of the annexation of Texas that it was "our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." The ascription of this destiny to "Providence" added a pleasing metaphysical spin to raw ambition.

Edwin M. Yoder Jr. is the author, most recently, of Vacancy: A Judicial Misadventure.

Winston Groom's new book, *Kearny's March*, tells a significant part of the story. The year of that march, 1846-47, was not only the year of the Mexican War but also a year of prodigious feats of exploration that engaged two notable adventurers. One was Gen. Stephen Watts Kearny himself; the other was the more famous (or notorious) John C. Frémont, a mere Army captain but also the son-in-law of the powerful Sen. Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri, with ambitions to match. Frémont was already celebrated as the "Pathfinder," though according to Groom this was a misnomer since Frémont had found no new paths in the western wilderness. He did aspire to be the emancipator of California, then a disputed entity, from the lotus-eating Laodiceans who sparsely inhabited it.

Kearny's March
The Epic Creation of the American West, 1846-1847
by Winston Groom
Knopf, 336 pp., $27.95

General Stephen Watts Kearny

A case can be made that the true mastermind of all this was James K. Polk, dark-horse Democratic winner of the 1844 election and 11th president. Groom calls Polk a "political cipher," though the epithet seems misplaced in the light of Groom's own evidence. Polk set himself big goals, including the acquisition of California. Texas, as well, was annexed on his watch, the proximate cause of the Mexican War, itself the proximate occasion of American acquisition of Mexico's properties north of the Rio Grande. When the dust of battle and intrigue settled, the United States possessed vast lands that would embrace New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and parts of Colorado and Utah. At $18 million plus considerable bloodshed, it was a bargain not far inferior to Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase and the approaching "Seward's Folly."

One can argue all day about the justice of Polk's and O'Sullivan's aggressive vision. Polk seems to have favored peaceful purchase over war but did not shrink from arms. Groom stipulates that it is "beyond the scope of this book to conduct a moralizing seminar on nineteenth-century standards of behavior." A good thing, no doubt, since Manifest Destiny entailed measures against weaker Indians, Mexicans, and indigenous Californians that were far from polite and which, incidentally, earned the notable condemnation of Ulysses S. Grant.

Kearny was sent with his Army of the West southwestward from Fort Leavenworth down the primitive Santa Fe Trail and thence, eventually, to California. The obstacles, natural and human, quite apart from armed clashes, were fierce and formidable and but for the guidance of mountain men like Kit Carson, might have proved insurmountable. They included erratic weather, oscillating by day and season between blinding heat and freezing cold, rugged mountain ranges and deserts, monster snowfalls, rattlesnakes that liked to cozy up with camping troopers in their blankets, unfriendly Indians, mosquitos, fleas, grasshoppers, and gnats. And disease and quarreling, too.

Ultimately, the arrival of Kearny's bedraggled army in Los Angeles, diminished by at least one major battle, brought him into collision with Frémont, who had marched earlier from Colorado and waged his own private war for American acquisition. Headstrong as always, Frémont disputed the office of governor with Kearny. His refusal to accept the orders of a superior officer led to a Washington court-martial some months later. Frémont escaped from the charge of mutiny but was dismissed from the Army, reinstated by Polk, and resigned. He would be heard from again, in little more than a decade, as the impromptu and untimely emancipator of Missouri

slaves. Kearny, winner of the argument, served briefly as governor-general of Mexico City but fell victim to yellow fever and died in October 1848.

These two titans are not the only dramatis personae of Groom's vivid account. Other principals include the Mormons, then in quest of the Zion they would find in Utah, beyond the hostile reach of the United States. And the tragic Donner party, who set out on bad advice to cross the Sierra by a shortcut called the "Hastings Cutoff." They were trapped in the passes by early snows and their fate is gruesome and legendary. Groom calls his account of that fate "The Horror," echoing the last words of Conrad's Kurtz: a figure of fiction who exemplifies the pressure of unfriendly nature and isolation on civilized norms. Groom writes:

> On . . . the same day . . . Kearny marched victorious into Los Angeles, Luis and Salvador, the two Miwok Indians accompanying [the Donner travelers] in their attempted escape from the Sierra, were killed and eaten by starving members of the party.

As that stark sentence suggests, Groom's retelling of the Year of Decision is brisk, unblinking, unsentimental, and sometimes grim. And appropriately so. This is not a tale for dainty or euphemistic narration, and Groom knows warfare at first hand. The story is all too human, marking our perennial capacity for good and evil, the heroic and the shameful, the tragic and the triumphant. ♦

B&A

Houses of Learning

One man's vision meets another man's philanthropy.

BY DAVID G. DALIN

In this fascinating book Stephanie Deutsch recounts the story of the extraordinary friendship and philanthropic partnership between Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee Institute, the vocational training school for black teachers that he had established in Alabama in 1881, and Julius Rosenwald, president of Sears, Roebuck and one of the preeminent Jewish philanthropists in America.

Rosenwald had been born in 1862 in Springfield, Illinois, where his parents had settled and opened a clothing store shortly after emigrating from Germany. In 1895, after having worked in the family's wholesale clothing business for more than a decade, Rosenwald purchased a 25 percent stake in the company of one of his local customers, a small mail-order house by the name of Sears, Roebuck, becoming the president in 1908. Under his direction Sears, Roebuck and Co. became the largest mail-order company in the world, and by 1925, Rosenwald's personal holdings had risen from $37,500 to a then-prodigious $150 million. While Rosenwald's accomplishments at Sears showed him to be a pioneer of modern business, he was also a trailblazer in philanthropy, devoting as much energy to giving away his money as he had to acquiring it. Like his contemporary Andrew Carnegie, Rosenwald saw himself as a public servant, the temporary steward of wealth entrusted to him for the purpose of bettering the world. To this end, he gave millions to the University of Chicago and the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry, and to a host of Jewish organizations throughout the country.

You Need a Schoolhouse
Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, and the Building of Schools for the Segregated South
by Stephanie Deutsch
Northwestern, 244 pp., $24.95

A staunch Republican, Rosenwald also contributed generously to the campaigns of every GOP presidential candidate of his time. As a friend of William Howard Taft, and one of his most loyal supporters within the Jewish community, "there had even been rumors that if Taft won reelection in 1912, he would name Julius to his cabinet as secretary of commerce." In February 1912, recounts Deutsch, Rosenwald was summoned by Taft to a meeting in Washington and, after dinner, invited to spend "a night at the White House as the guest of the president of the United States." Rosenwald was the first American Jew to be an overnight guest at the White House.

Booker Taliaferro Washington, born into slavery in 1856, had by the 1880s become a nationally known and respected educator, whose gradualist approach to racial equality had won him wide acceptance and respect. The school he established in 1881 in Tuskegee had rapidly become a national center for agricultural and vocational training, and by 1900 "was one of the largest educational institutions in the South, one of the few to offer coeducation." In 1901, Washington was invited by President Theodore Roosevelt (who would later serve on the Tuskegee board) to join him for dinner at the White House.

After reading Washington's much-admired autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, Rosenwald was anxious to meet Washington, who was anxious to meet Rosenwald as well. As Deutsch notes:

> Washington regularly cultivated wealthy people who might donate money to Tuskegee Institute. . . . Rosenwald was such a man, extraordinarily rich and interested in using his money to promote the well-being of African Americans, though aware that he himself knew little about how best to do so.

The two met on May 18, 1911, when Washington came to Chicago to raise money for Tuskegee. Rosenwald had invited 45 prominent Chicagoans to join him for lunch to meet Washington

David G. Dalin is the coauthor (with Jonathan D. Sarna) of Religion and State in the American Jewish Experience.

"at Chicago's elegant, new, lakefront hotel, the Blackstone." The man the luncheon honored, writes Deutsch, "was the hotel's first black guest." In introducing Washington, Rosenwald called him a "wise, statesmanlike leader. … He is helping his own race to attain the high art of self-help and self-dependence and he is helping the white race to learn that opportunity and obligation go hand in hand. … Happy the nation which … knows and honors a Washington, whether he be George or Booker!"

From this first meeting Rosenwald and Washington became fast friends. Firmly convinced that charity would not ameliorate black poverty, but that vocational training and higher education could, Rosenwald passionately supported Washington's philosophy of self-help for blacks and accepted Washington's invitation to serve as a Tuskegee trustee. But his support for Tuskegee was not confined to mere checkbook philanthropy: Rosenwald became intimately involved in the workings of Tuskegee Institute, making annual pilgrimages to south Alabama in a private railroad car, and bringing along a sizable contingent of relatives, friends, and potential benefactors.

From involvement in the Tuskegee Institute, Rosenwald moved on to finance a far more ambitious enterprise conceived by Washington: the building of public schoolhouses for Southern blacks. In 1912, when this project was launched, educational opportunities for blacks in the rural South were severely limited, and the school facilities that did exist tended to be log cabins, staffed by underpaid teachers working in appalling conditions.

"You need a schoolhouse," Washington had often told his students studying to be teachers. "You cannot teach school in log cabins without doors, windows, lights, floor or apparatus. You need a schoolhouse and, if you are in earnest, the people will help you."

Rosenwald began by launching a fund-raising drive that employed the then-novel mechanism of matching funds (to be supplied in labor, materials, or cash). He insisted on this arrangement so that the recipients themselves would regard the school-building program not as charity but as an enterprise in which they themselves were integral partners. The campaign was a huge success. Poor blacks across the region pledged cows and calves and sold eggs, hens, corn,

Booker T. Washington

cotton, berries, and other produce to generate funds; children donated their pennies. By asking beneficiaries themselves to contribute, Rosenwald stimulated local philanthropy and investment.

The program that Rosenwald began funding in 1912 had its beginnings in one small Alabama county, where the first Rosenwald schools (as they came to be called) were constructed. Rosenwald's generous funding continued and expanded after Washington's death in 1915. In 1916, Rosenwald agreed to pay a third of the cost of all additional schools; between 1917 and his death in 1932, he could claim credit for the construction of 4,977 public schools serving more than 600,000 children throughout the South. By 1932, as Deutsch writes, "there was a Rosenwald school in every county with a significant black population in the South."

In telling the story of the schools that Rosenwald and Washington created, Deutsch includes poignant vignettes about some future black leaders (such as Representative John Lewis) who received their earliest education in them. Deutsch writes that in his memoir, *Walking with the Wind*, Lewis recalls "the fish fries, picnics, and carnivals that neighbors would organize to raise money for supplies for the school." Education, wrote Lewis to his parents, "represented an almost mythical key to the kingdom of America's riches, the kingdom so long denied our race." ♦

B&A

To See Ourselves

The Renaissance portrait as a mirror of society.

BY JAMES GARDNER

Leon Battista Alberti was the James Franco of the Quattrocento. Believing that no province of human achievement was beyond his powers, he tried his hand at everything from painting and architecture to literature, mathematics, cryptography, and even athletics. When his contemporaries spoke of the *uomo universale*, the universal or Renaissance Man, they were speaking of him.

Though the jury is still out on Mr. Franco, we can certainly say of Alberti that, despite his occasionally falling short, he achieved admirable success in at least two disciplines, architecture and literature. But few of those achievements are more emblematic of the man than the bronze self-portrait medallion that he made around 1433. This diminutive object appears with nearly 200 other bronzes, marbles, paintings, and

The Renaissance Portrait from Donatello to Bellini
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through March 18

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

drawings in this show at the Metropolitan Museum, mounted in collaboration with Berlin's Gemäldegalerie, and includes almost every important Italian portraitist of the 15th century.

Alberti's medallion is astounding in many ways: It is almost unparalleled as a work of art created—before modern times—by someone who did not define himself as an artist by profession. It may well be the first portrait medallion, and one of the first sculptural self-portraits, created in Europe since the fall of Rome. And despite the depreciative assessment of some art historians, it exhibits a skill in modeling and detailing that more than compensates for its imperfect mastery of so demanding a medium.

The motive behind this bronze was Alberti's obsession with fame, a word that (in his day) meant the widespread recognition that follows upon the achievement of something nobly important. At the conclusion of his seminal treatise, *De Pictura*, Alberti asked painters "as a reward for my labors to paint my portrait . . . and thereby proclaim to posterity that I was a student of this art."

With those words, *mutatis mutandis*, Alberti expressed the ambition of every owner of every face that appears in this exhibition: the extension of one's renown far beyond the narrow limits of one's physical and temporal existence. Ever since 1860, when the Swiss historian Jacob Burckhardt published his groundbreaking *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* and spoke of "the discovery of the individual," it has been a commonplace that the sort of portraits on view at the Met represented a revolution in human consciousness. As the luminous certainty of a better life beyond the grave (which had sustained the medieval world) began to recede, it was partially replaced with the compensatory hope of achieving some measure of glory in the here and now and of ensuring its perpetuity into a future age. But such aspirations were not the province of the common man or woman of the 15th century. For most of that period, commissioning a portrait, in whatever medium, remained the exclusive domain of popes and princes, their spouses, and those courtiers and poets who flattered them.

That is why the present exhibition is slanted toward the rich and powerful in Pisanello's portrait of Leonello d'Este, Marquis of Ferrara, Bonifacio Bembo's depiction of Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, and Gentile Bellini's iconic rendering of Pasquale Malipiero, Doge of Venice. This is no less true of the fair women who rise up in bejeweled profile in the works of the brothers Pollaiuolo, or of Botticelli's portrait of the poet Michele Marullo, or the three sculptural works by Adriano Fiorentino that depict Giovanni Pontano, the Neapolitan man of letters.

It requires a leap of the historical imagination to understand just how

Alberti's medallion

strange and startling these portraits must have seemed nearly six centuries ago, these faces, recognizable faces, that rise up in isolation against some neutral ground or meandering landscape and yet—miraculously—are infused with the breath of life. To have fashioned them in the first place must have seemed like a usurpation of the prerogative of God.

At the same time, one cannot overstate the rarity of these images in the general run of the 15th century. Influenced by what could be called an art historical view of the world—a view greatly abetted by photography's ability to disseminate images across the planet—we tend to see the 15th century as an age whose most essential manifestation was the courtly splendor of the Medici, Gonzagas, and Estes, with perhaps some lingering medievalism around the edges. In fact, these courts were oases of revolutionary initiative in a vast region, stretching from the Urals to the Hebrides, that would remain medieval in thought and appearance well into the next century. It is very likely that the man in the street would never have seen any of these portraits.

Before 1400, portraiture was almost unheard of: An eminent exception is Giotto's depiction of his friend Dante Alighieri in the Bargello, from the first quarter of the 14th century. Beyond that, for the next hundred years, you would be hard put to find a single work of art that faithfully registered the specific data of a given human face. Only in the second quarter of the Quattrocento did things begin to change. Whereas the sculptors of this period were guided in some measure by the ancient examples that were starting to be dug up from the earth, painters were forced to invent the entire genre of portraiture out of nothing more than their own imaginations and improvised skills—as well as a rumor or two that survived in the writings of the elder Pliny.

Compared with the portraits of a later age, those on view here at the Met tend to be fairly small and portable works on wood panel. For the first half of the period covered in this show, the sitter is depicted in profile, a choice that emphasizes line and so tends to abstract the sitter and stress status over personality. One of the earliest of these portraits, Pisanello's depiction of Leonello d'Este, is marked by fussy floral adornments that surround him as in a medieval tapestry. A similar composition, though in a far different key, informs Piero and Antonio del Pollaiuolo's depictions of fair women rising up in profile against a peerless blue sky. Not only are these images more naturalistic: They feel more open and rational and there is a physicality to them that is very new in Western art.

Toward the end of the century, Domenico Ghirlandaio endows his sitters, in profile, with an exquisite precision of detail that has never been surpassed. Surely he is a famous painter,

but this exhibition proves that he deserves to be more highly esteemed than he has been in recent years. An unsurpassed example of his skill is the deeply felt and deeply moving depiction of an old man and his grandson from the Louvre. While the child appears in profile, reaching his hand up to the old man, the latter is posed in three-quarter view to reveal a nose swollen and disfigured by rhinophyma.

There is a sense of human warmth in this painting that, it must be said, is at variance with the general ambitions of Ghirlandaio, elsewhere in his oeuvre, or with those of other great painters included in this exhibition, among them Andrea Mantegna, Cosmè Tura, and Jacopo Bellini, all of whom united some measure of verisimilitude with an almost abstracted love of visual effect for its own sake. Only toward the end of the century, in Ghirlandaio's portrait of the old man and his grandson, and in Raphael's fully frontal "Portrait of a Man" from about 1504, does the sitter's personality begin to assert itself over the claims of status or the demands of artifice.

In the 16th century, though the aristocracy continued to immortalize itself through portraits, the option of commissioning one of them had come within reach of the merchants and lesser magistrates who constituted the primordial middle class. As for the portraits of the humbler segments of society, with some notable exceptions by Rembrandt and Frans Hals, they would have to wait until the Impressionists of the 19th century and Alice Neel, within living memory. ♦

B&A

Polls Apart

Quantifying the conflict between the People and the Political Class. **BY MARK HEMINGWAY**

This may come as a shock to many pollsters and much of the press corps, but public opinion is a little more complicated than randomly calling 1,000 Americans, asking them a dubiously worded question about a complex political issue, and reporting the aggregate results.

Fortunately, at least one prominent assayer of public opinion has taken a good look at this state of affairs and is screaming, "Pollster, heal thyself!" Scott Rasmussen looks at America's dire fiscal predicament through the lens of polling, and does so based on a simple, neglected insight: Polling voters about broad political sentiments is very different from polling them about specific policy solutions. Sure, voters say they're in favor of more spending on transportation infrastructure; but ask them whether taxpayers should continue, say, subsidizing Amtrak and a large majority is opposed.

The People's Money
How Voters Will Balance the Budget and Eliminate the Federal Debt
by Scott Rasmussen
Threshold Editions, 288 pp., $26

In *The People's Money*, Rasmussen takes a look at survey data on competing solutions to our fiscal crisis. With respect to Medicare, for example, he kicks the tires on various proposals: shoring up the trust fund, raising the payroll tax, allowing the purchase of health insurance across state lines. In the end, Rasmussen finds that, *contra* Obamacare, voters' preferred Medicare solutions have certain commonalities: They "embrace the idea of competition: competition among states and competition among insurance companies." And "the solution is to shift power away from politicians and bureaucrats so that individuals can have more control over their own lives."

Rasmussen repeats this exercise, addressing the full complement of problems Washington has thrust upon us, from the tax code to defense spending. And he handles the policy details in a way that can be clearly comprehended by citizens newly recruited to the budget wars while still leaving grizzled policy nerds plenty to chew on. While details may vary, Rasmussen finds that, regardless of the issue, voters pretty consistently come down on the side of less spending and less government.

While this approach is novel and informative, it does have its limitations. Obviously, there are reasons why a constitutional republic is preferable to assessing voter sentiment on every law that comes down from Capitol Hill. And Rasmussen generally does a good job of walking the fine line between explaining the bigger polling picture and relying on mobocracy for guidance. Still, at times, the approach feels a little misguided—especially in the chapter on the defense budget. Understanding that voters want fewer American soldiers deployed overseas is worth considering. But if the consequences aren't made clear, what does such a wish really amount to?

If *The People's Money* demonstrates that voters want to rein in spending and expand their personal freedom, why isn't that happening? Because the public doesn't always get its way. Indeed, a *National Journal* survey of political insiders indicates 59 percent believe the people don't "know enough about the issues facing Washington to form wise opinions about what should be done." And those insiders have clout.

Rasmussen doesn't remain neutral in the debate between the people and the political class: He flatly states that "voters are the solution, not the problem," and declares he's with the 73 percent of American voters "who trust the American people more than America's political leaders." He observes that the reason preferred small-government solutions aren't being

Mark Hemingway is online editor of The Weekly Standard.

enacted is that they cut the political class out of the lucrative loop they've created for themselves. "The willingness of voters to tackle the big issues means that the only thing standing in the way of solving the budget crisis is a Political Class committed to defending the status quo," writes Rasmussen. Will voters take on the political class? They're more likely to if they read this book. ♦

B&A

Boys and the Diner

A coming-of-age classic turns 30.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

Thirty years ago next month, a movie featuring five cute unknown post-teen actors was dumped by its studio into a few theaters in Southern cities with the hope that audiences would be fooled into thinking it was a ribald sex comedy on the order of *Porky's*. The trick didn't work, and the modestly budgeted film appeared to be headed for the scrapheap when word of mouth—helped along by a private screening for Pauline Kael of the *New Yorker*, then the most powerful movie critic in America—compelled MGM to change course.

The studio fired its PR chief and presented the film in prestige cinemas for what it was: a film inspired by *American Graffiti*, a study of American youth set two years earlier than George Lucas's film, in Baltimore rather than California, and not among graduating high schoolers on a warm summer night but among mostly Jewish college boys in the week between Christmas and New Year's.

At Oscar time, the movie was nominated for only a single prize, Original Screenplay, and didn't win; the script for the year's Best Picture, *Gandhi*, took it instead. Yet, 30 years later, there probably isn't a person alive who wouldn't rather watch *Diner*, the movie that almost disappeared. And I doubt you could find a sane person who wouldn't say *Diner* is a better movie in every way than *Gandhi*—and, for those of us who think in these terms, better than any other American film released in 1982. In fact, this semiautobiographical account of writer-director Barry Levinson's aimless preadulthood turned out to be the best American film of the 1980s, graced with one of the most memorable screenplays in the annals of cinema.

A secondary character in *Diner* goes around with a mad gleam in his eye doing nothing but reciting lines of dialogue from *Sweet Smell of Success*. There is an entire class of American males between the ages of 45 and 60 who can do the same, or nearly the same, with *Diner*'s script. There are dozens of quotable lines, and the sheer quantity and variety of them puts *Diner* in the league of *Casablanca*, *All About Eve*, and *The Godfather* in this respect. Even more impressive is the fact that none of the movie's famous lines is a quip, a crack, or a one-liner; they are specific and character-based. They are memorable because they capture as no other pop-culture document ever has the way in which young men make connections with each other through one-upmanship, trivia games, and references to common experiences.

Diner is set at a hinge moment in American history—the last days of 1959, among people with no clue that the world they take for granted is about to collapse under the steamroller of the 1960s. For the couple who marry in the final scene, that revolutionary change will be literal: They on New Year's Eve are slated to honeymoon in Havana, just in time for Castro's takeover. Levinson, who became a rather preachy, didactic artist later, makes no point of this; you either get it or you don't.

That is true as well for the coming sexual revolution. The young women in the movie are out of sorts, dissatisfied, and the five young men at the center of the film can't make sense out of them. They don't seem to expect too much from life, so why should the girls?

"You ever get the feeling there's something going on that we don't know about?" says Fenwick (Kevin Bacon), the most intelligent and troubled of the quintet, and the movie's rueful answer is that they really understand nothing—not what motivates them, not what the women in their lives might want, and not what it means to be an adult.

The married Shrevie (Daniel Stern) tells the soon-to-marry Eddie (Steve Guttenberg) that while the action of being boyfriend and girlfriend is finding a place where "you can do it," afterwards "you can get it whenever you want it." And as a result, "Beth and me, we got nothing to talk about."

There is a silence in the car, and then the clueless Eddie—who is making his fiancée pass a trivia test about the Baltimore Colts before he will go through with the wedding—says, "But it's good, right—it's nice." And Shrevie, understanding he has gone too far with his heartbreaking declaration, backs off and says that yes, it's nice.

"We've always got the diner," the two agree, because at the Fells Point Diner in Baltimore where they have hung out for years, the boys can sit around and eat and talk and while away the time in unchallenging and easy companionship in which the only tension has to do with whether someone is going to eat half of your sandwich.

But what makes *Diner* so powerful, and so great, is that Levinson knows the diner is a dead end—an Island of Lost Boys unburdened by the responsibilities of a cold and difficult world. In the final image of the film, the bridal bouquet lands on the table in front of the young men we've been watching—the sign that their time together is done. And they know it. Turns out they won't always have the diner. ♦

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

"Romney's Winter Games rescue role is questioned: Future candidate widely credited for '02 success—too much so, some say"
—Washington Post *headline, February 13, 2012*

ORK HERALD

ORNING, FEBRUARY 27, 1881

PROMINENCE OF LATE PRESIDENT LINCOLN IN UNION VICTORY

GENERAL GRANT ACKNOWLEDGES CONTRIBUTION OF GREAT EMANCIPATOR BUT QUESTIONS 'SENSE OF PROPORTION'

QUESTIONS PERTAIN TO PERCENTAGE OF CREDIT

'THE ASSASSINATION FACTOR'

New York — Speaking to reporters in an impromptu question-and-answer session in the lobby of his hotel here in the City, former President Ulysses S. Grant declared that one unresolved matter pertaining to assessments of the late War of Rebellion, to his mind, is the relative importance of the late President Abraham Lincoln in securing the Union victory.

"When I read accounts in the popular press about the War," he remarked to the assembled newspapermen, "I sometimes ask myself afterwards, 'Do you suppose Billy Sherman or I had anything to do with whipping the Rebels?'" Warming to the subject, the former President allowed that while Mr. Lincoln was due the gratitude of the Nation for his actions as commander-in-chief between Fort Sumter and Appomattox, "the War was not won in Washington."

One impertinent correspondent asked General Grant if he did not appreciate the late Mr. Lincoln's rhetoric as an inspiration to Soldier and Civilian alike during the conflict. General Grant removed his cheroot from his mouth and waved it in a circular motion: "I should say this," he replied. "And that is that words are but poor substitutes for bullets when the enemy is advancing upon your flanks. I give full credit to Mr. Lincoln for his readiness to judge generals on their merits," he continued, "but once the Army had gained his confidence, it was up to the Army to vanquish the Rebels."

In remarks which he asked not to be recorded verbatim, the former President said that this public misperception about the War might well be due to the tragic circumstances of Mr. Lincoln's death, which cast a great shadow over the events of that