the weekly Standard

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BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN

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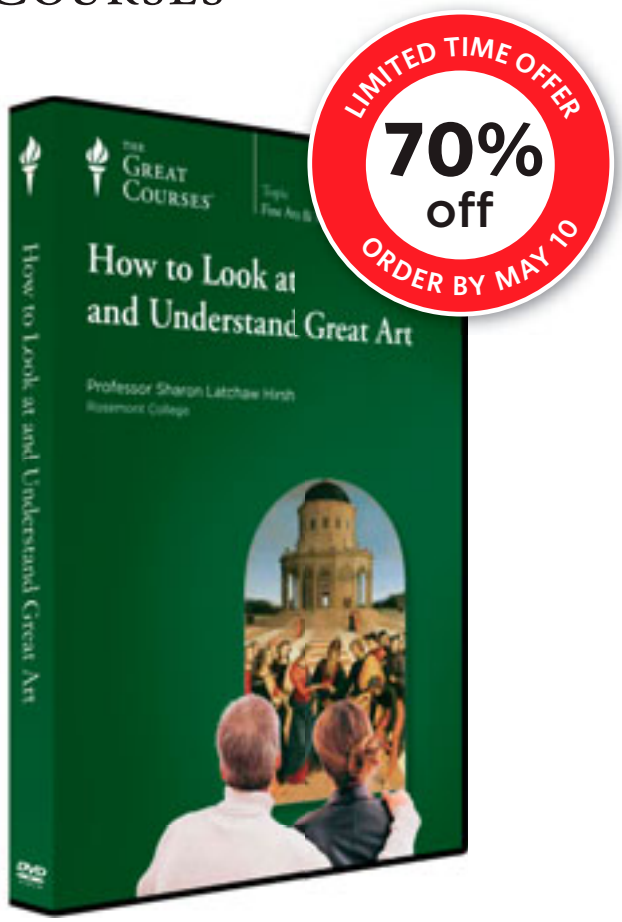

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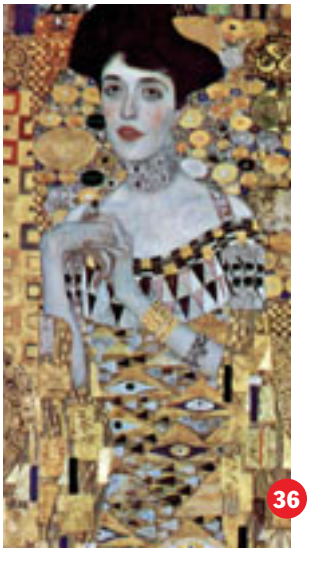


COVER BY GARY LOCKE

Pilgrim's Progress

Every now and then The Scrapbook is pleased to report on an outbreak of common sense in our increasingly diversified and multicultural society, and that is what we are doing here. We must warn readers, however, that the intervention of common sense (as often happens) occurs only in the wake of an appalling sequence of events.

Pilgrim High School mural: Prepare to be offended.

The scene is Warwick, Rhode Island, and the place is Pilgrim High School, where 17-year-old Liz Bierendy had been commissioned to paint a mural in one of the school's corridors. It was suggested to her that she depict the various stages in a boy's life, from early childhood to early adulthood, and she did. Her final scene depicted the boy as a young married man with intertwined wedding bands hanging in the air above the couple.

The Scrapbook, at this juncture, is constrained to point out that the married couple depicted in Miss Bierendy's mural comprises a man and a woman—and therein lies the problem. According to the *Providence Journal*, Pilgrim High School officials had the marriage portion of the mural "painted over because there was some concern that the traditional ending might offend some people with alternative lifestyles."

Allow The Scrapbook to repeat the details: A student's mural depicting a married man and woman was destroyed at the behest of school officials because "some people with alternative lifestyles" might walk by and take offense.

Of course, apart from the fact that school officials here seemed to be searching for a problem that didn't exist—and were swift to take action to meet a nonexistent standard—this does raise some intriguing questions. Are fully clothed museum visitors in Florence apt to take offense at the sight of Michelangelo's David? Do non-farm families feel excluded when they see Grant Wood's *American Gothic* on display at the Art Institute of Chicago? How about the feelings of Nixon voters when they land at Kennedy Airport? The idea that someone—anyone—might be offended by a high school student's innocent depiction of a married man and woman is so preposterous, so outrageous, so inconceivably stupid, that it could only have been conceived by veteran school administrators.

Which leads to our happy ending. Once word got around on local talk radio, Warwick school superintendent Peter Horoschak swiftly overruled the Pilgrim officials. He declared that Miss Bierendy's idea had been approved in advance, that the depiction of a married man and woman did not violate any school policies, and "we should respect that artist's vision. . . . If somebody has a different idea, then they have the right to express it." All of which seems self-evident to The Scrapbook; but these days, such commonsensical reactions are the exception, not the norm. Full marks to Mr. Horoschak.

We are pleased to report that Liz Bierendy is finishing her mural as she intended to finish it. And the one or two people who reportedly

What They Were Thinking

TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

A scene from the new production of 'The Three Stooges,' in which Teddy (Kirby Heyborne) and Lydia (Sofía Vergara) display impeccable literary taste.

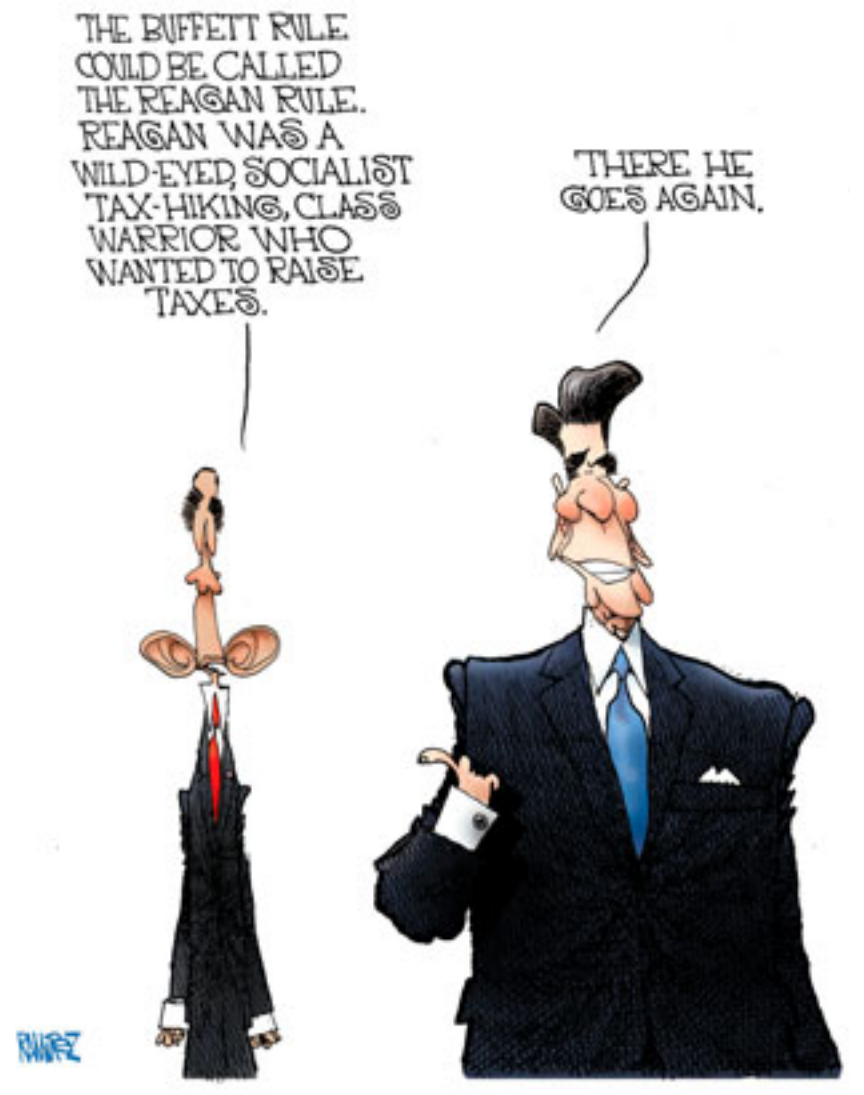
complained to school officials about her married couple are, in Horoschak's words, free to express their "different idea." Any suggestions? ♦

How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth . . .

So in addition to being a talented actor, it turns out Ryan Gosling is a real hero. A woman, who is by her own account "kind of an idiot," walked out into traffic in Manhattan without looking before the Canadian hunk yanked her back to safety. What's more, the gal he rescued happens to be a journalist, Laurie Penny, who writes for British lefty publications like the *New Statesman* and the *Independent*. Unfortunately, Penny felt compelled to write about what happened in just about the most obnoxious way possible:

> Americans are very strange. They can and do hyperventilate about the most everyday happenings as if they are the most important thing in the world, and then they act completely normal when public conversations are had about war on Iran and war on women's bodies and when Rick Santorum is considered a serious presidential candidate. The real heroes I've met in America are risking everything to make sure that the United States doesn't slide further into bigotry, inequality and violence whilst everyone is distracted by the everyday doings of celebrities.
>
> What's more, I really do object to being framed as the ditzy damsel in distress in this story. I do not mean any disrespect to Ryan Gosling, who is an excellent actor and, by all accounts, a personable and decent chap. I thought he was marvelous in *The Ides of March*, and will feel weird about objectifying him in future now that I have encountered him briefly as an actual human.
>
> But as a feminist, a writer, and a gentlewoman of fortune, I refuse to be cast in any sort of boring supporting female role, even though I have occasional trouble crossing the road, and even though I did swoon the teeniest tiniest bit when I realized it was him.

Is it really that hard to express humble gratitude to someone who may have saved your life? Further, how difficult is it to accept that when she found herself face-to-face with a guy famous for being handsome she reacted the way one might expect a young woman to react? Heaven forfend we pause long enough to thank a guy for acting in a rather dashing and selfless fashion, because that's not "important" at a time when Rick Santorum is waging a war on women's bodies. (We presume that the driver that nearly plowed over Laurie would have been comparatively respectful of her corporeal autonomy.)



But before this descends further into the realm of self-parody, The Scrapbook couldn't help but notice that in February Penny authored a blog post for the *New Statesman* headlined: "So, it turns out feminism is a CIA plot to undermine the left." In recent years we've despaired a bit about the competence of our intelligence apparatus, but if tone-deaf feminists such as Penny do turn out to be the product of a CIA conspiracy to discredit the left—in that case, we have to say, well done, Langley! ♦

Department of Insults, Well Delivered

'Mr. Wilson, by contrast, seems to recognize little unique about the German situation. Hitler,

'in his racial discrimination, was simply being normal,' the author suggests. 'The United States and the British Empire were both racist through and through.' This is a stupendously undergraduate generalization—even if it contains some measure of truth." (Carl Rollyson, reviewing *Hitler*, by A.N. Wilson, the *Wall Street Journal*, April 7, 2012.) ♦

Recommended Reading

The April/May edition of *Policy Review*, the Hoover Institution's incomparable six-times-yearly journal, has arrived in The Scrapbook's inbox, and we commend it to you unreservedly. Editor Tod Lindberg has assembled a symposium marking the tenth anniversary of Robert Kagan's famous essay on the United States and Europe, "Power and Weakness." Kagan's *Policy Review* essay, improbably for a profound work on international affairs, later became a bestselling book, *Of Paradise and Power*.

Equally improbably for a work of such trenchancy, Kagan managed to encapsulate his thesis in a one-liner that was both deep and witty: "Americans are from Mars and Europeans are from Venus." Comments from Lindberg and Kagan (both Weekly Standard contributing editors) bookend the contributions from the 10 *Policy Review* symposiasts.

A short sample from Kagan to give you a taste of the proceedings:

> The essay, and the book that followed, have been viewed as a part of the Bush era, a response to or justification of the transatlantic split that opened over Iraq, a defense or inspiration for Bush's supposed "unilateralism." In fact, however, the essay was really a product of the 1990s. The world I was reflecting on was not the world of Bush and de Villepin. It was the world of Clinton and Védrine.

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California Dreamin'

There I was, in a posh resort south of Los Angeles, addressing an audience of mostly lawyers. I had arrived a few days early to see some clients and, in the lingo of the aging hippies of nearby Laguna Beach, "chill out" by catching the NCAA semifinals and a Knicks game on Pacific Coast time.

This would hardly be worthy of note except that, to my complete surprise, I heard myself opening my talk with: "Thank you for inviting me. Before getting into the economic issues of the political campaign, I would like to say that a few days out of Washington leave me suddenly optimistic. Not only about the economy, but about the future of America."

Once the talk was finished, I tried to piece together what had prompted that unpremeditated statement about discovering cause for optimism outside the Beltway. It certainly wasn't the fabled California weather, mostly cold and rainy during our brief stay. Nor was it the availability of what I am told are great golf courses: I don't play, such facilities not having been available in my old neighborhood or accessible to the likes of me at restricted suburban country clubs. Nor was my newfound cheer due to the proximity of lovely beachfront paths: My wife Cita was hobbling with a cane after a fall in London en route to a concert at her beloved Wigmore Hall.

No, the reasons for my unexpected optimism were quite different from those of the usual vacationer or conventioneer.

For one thing, I had spent a few days talking to people who are in the business of creating wealth, rather than figuring out how to take the wealth others have created and give it to others still. I'd heard builders hard hit by the recession talk about putting to use the "land banks" they had acquired at low cost. Now they can build and sell houses at prices competitive with rentals. They are finding new markets: second-home buyers, Canadians fleeing harsh winters, foreign investors looking to buy properties to rent and then sell when the market strengthens. Not all the entrepreneurial ingenuity resides in the high-tech sectors of Silicon Valley and its offshoots scattered from Austin to New York City.

DAVID GOTHARD

Lawyers—another group who, having thought themselves immune, had seen fees drop and colleagues laid off—had talked about the revival of deals, mergers by clients pursuing strategic advantages and better ways to reach and satisfy consumers. They told how they had revised their business models to accommodate more fee-conscious clients, as the shift continues from traditional industries to those no one had ever heard of a few years ago. Even law school, with its dreary courses in contracts and the like, apparently cannot snuff out American entrepreneurial ingenuity.

Limo drivers turned out to be people who were pocketing a bit of cash so they could pursue their dreams—businesses they hope will put them in the back seat rather than the driver's seat someday.

Before giving my talk I had visited the shopping malls that surround the marble-clad resort and seen everyday America, something I try to do when I'm traveling to verify or contradict official statistics on the state of the economy. In a decidedly middle-priced eatery—The Cheesecake Factory—Cita and I sat opposite a table of eight coworkers taking lunch together. (No one in Los Angeles merely eats lunch with colleagues, clients, or friends. They "take" lunch.) Eight diners, eight ethnicities.

We did a bit of shopping. Salespeople hailed from everywhere: Japan, Iran, even culturally faraway New York. All vigorous, none obsequious, all seemingly proud of what they were selling, all civil. None of the sullen attitude we often experience in Washington, or the how-dare-you-interrupt-my-day-by-buying-something that is our common experience in London.

Then there were the corporate types we met. They offered none of the whining about taxes and regulation that is the steady plaint of their Washington representatives. Sure, they want lower taxes, not so much on their personal incomes as on the companies for which they work. And, yes, they find regulations more than annoying, especially those who work for or run companies in the health care and energy sectors. But the overall attitude seemed to be that they can play with any cards the government chooses to deal them so long as they can reasonably count on stable rules of the game.

My conclusion: Washington is not America. Not close. We'll be fine.

Irwin M. Stelzer

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What Reagan Actually Said

I'm not the first president to call for this idea that everybody has got to do their fair share. Some years ago, one of my predecessors traveled across the country pushing for the same concept. He gave a speech where he talked about a letter he had received from a wealthy executive who paid lower tax rates than his secretary, and wanted to come to Washington and tell Congress why that was wrong. So this president gave another speech where he said it was "crazy"—that's a quote—that certain tax loopholes make it possible for multimillionaires to pay nothing, while a bus driver was paying 10 percent of his salary. That wild-eyed, socialist, tax-hiking class warrior was Ronald Reagan.

He thought that, in America, the wealthiest should pay their fair share, and he said so. I know that position might disqualify him from the Republican primaries these days, but what Ronald Reagan was calling for then is the same thing that we're calling for now: a return to basic fairness and responsibility; everybody doing their part. And if it will help convince folks in Congress to make the right choice, we could call it the Reagan Rule instead of the Buffett Rule.

—President Obama, April 11, 2012

NEWSCOM

Barack Obama's appeal to Ronald Reagan is illuminating in a number of ways. It's illuminating that today's liberals need to appeal to the example of Reagan to sell their policies. That's a posthumous victory for Reagan, and an important contemporary victory for Reaganism. Even more, it's illuminating because it gives us reason to go back and read the Reagan speeches Obama cited and see how compelling they were and how thoroughly the president misrepresented them.

Did Reagan, as Obama claimed, "travel across the country pushing for the same concept" as Obama today? No. Reagan was pushing for comprehensive tax reform, at the center of which was an across-the-board tax rate reduction combined with elimination of tax shelters. The idea was to simplify the system, out of respect for citizens and for the health of the economy. Obama, by contrast, has never risked offering a serious big tax reform proposal. What he does want to do is raise marginal tax rates on many American families.

Obama cited two Reagan speeches from June 1985. Just before that, on May 28, 1985, Reagan had addressed the nation from the Oval Office, kicking off the effort that would produce the Tax Reform Act of 1986. The heart of his argument: "By lowering everyone's tax rates all the way up the income scale, each of us will have a greater incentive to climb higher, to excel, to help America grow."

Reagan followed up on June 6, speaking at Northside High School in Atlanta. He did note "the unproductive tax loopholes that have allowed some of the truly wealthy to avoid paying their fair share" and that "sometimes made it possible for millionaires to pay nothing, while a bus driver was paying 10 percent of his salary." He called them "crazy." That's the part of his predecessor's speech Obama chose to recall.

Here's what else Reagan had to say: He ascribed the economic comeback of the previous few years, in which "hope has returned, and America's working again," to the fact that we "cut tax rates and trimmed federal spending."

Why didn't President Obama quote that? And what about Reagan's explanation for why his administration had cut rates?

"What's really important is what inspired us to do these things. What's really important is the philosophy that guided us. The whole thing could be boiled down to a few words—freedom, freedom, and more freedom. It's a philosophy that isn't limited to guiding government policy. It's a philosophy you can live by; in fact, I hope you do."

Somehow, Obama neglected to quote that.

Reagan went on to defend his tax plan: "We want the part of your check that shows federal withholding to have fewer digits on it. And we want the part that shows your salary to have more digits on it. We're trying to take less money from you and less from your parents." Reagan noted that some people would save the additional money, some would spend it, some would invest it—but all were fine. Because "whatever you do with it, you'll be the one who's doing the doing. You'll make the decisions. You'll have the autonomy. And that's what freedom is."

Obama didn't quote that either.

The second Reagan speech Obama referred to was given on June 28, 1985, in Chicago Heights, Illinois. There Reagan reiterated his call to "bring tax rates down for the vast major-

ity of Americans." Reagan emphasized that "America's long-suffering families will get dramatic tax relief." And he said,

> This is a tax plan for a growing, dynamic America. Lower, flatter tax rates will give Americans more confidence in the future. It'll mean if you work overtime or get a raise or a promotion or if you have a small business and are able to turn a profit, more of that extra income will end up where it belongs —in your wallets, not in Uncle Sam's pockets. With lower personal and corporate rates and another capital gains tax cut, small and entrepreneurial businesses will take off. Americans will have an open field to test their dreams and challenge their imaginations, and the next decade will become known as the age of opportunity.

Obama didn't quote that.

And Reagan summed up: "Our tax proposal is the opposite of trickle down; it's bubble up."

Obama didn't quote that.

Needless to say, reading the speeches reminds us of the huge gulf between the worldviews of our 40th and 44th presidents. The difference goes beyond an analytical disagreement about how big government should be, or what tax rates produce faster economic growth. For Reagan, America at its best is citizen-centered and "bubble up." For Obama, America is government-centered and top-down. This is in a way the core difference between these two presidents, and between our two political parties today.

Barack Obama has established the legitimacy and precedent of appealing to Ronald Reagan. What a gift to Mitt Romney! Now Romney just has to walk through the door Obama has opened, reclaim Reagan by elaborating on his vision and updating his policies, make the case against the nanny state and for freedom and a "bubble up" society —and win.

—William Kristol

The Great Divider

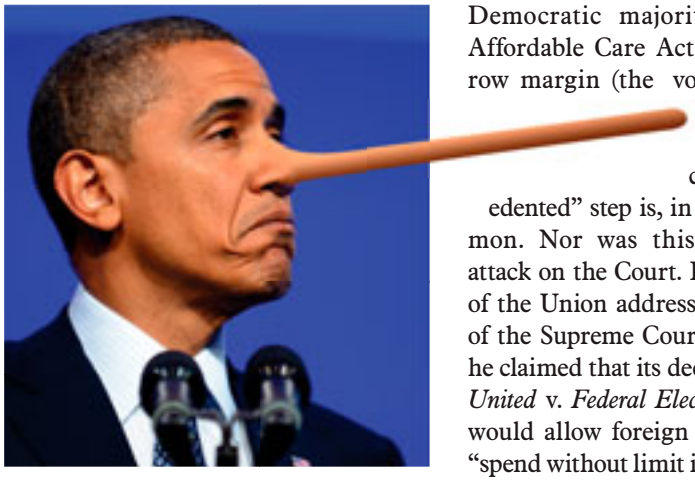
In 2008, Barack Obama promised he would put an end to the type of politics that "breeds division and conflict and cynicism" and he would help us "rediscover our bonds to each other and get out of this constant, petty bickering that's come to characterize our politics."

As president, Obama has not only discarded this core commitment; he has turned it on its head. Republicans

aren't simply people with whom he has philosophical disagreements; they are members of the "Flat Earth Society" and have embraced a budget that demonstrates their "Social Darwinism." The Republican philosophy is "simple: We are better off when everybody is left to fend for themselves and play by their own rules." The Republican vision is for elderly Americans unable to afford nursing home care, poor children, and children with autism and Down syndrome to "fend for themselves." The GOP favors "dirtier" air and water. And Republicans in Congress consistently "put party before country."

The president, then, has signaled that he is going to run a campaign built on crude caricatures and false claims, whether they are directed against Mitt Romney, Congress, or the Supreme Court. No individual or institution is beyond libel.

That this is damaging to our civic and political culture is undeniable and, for the president, wholly irrelevant. He is determined to win at all costs. His approach is summed up in the words of the late Oakland Raiders owner Al Davis: Just win, baby.



Facing an opponent like Obama requires quick, persistent fact-checking. But that will hardly be enough. The president's critics can spend all their time chasing Obama's rabbits down an endless number of holes. Nothing would delight the president more.

What is required when dealing with a man who habitually deconstructs truth is to destroy his public credibility. Voters need to be shown that Obama's words and claims are, quite literally, unbelievable, whether they have to do with the past or the future, himself or others.

That can be done in a manner that is tough-minded but not mean-spirited—by referring to the public record of Obama's counterfeit charges and broken promises, which are now sufficiently numerous that they could fill the Library of Congress. Among them:

■ During the 2008 campaign, Obama promised to put an end to earmark abuse. Yet in one of his earliest acts as president, he signed an omnibus spending bill that contained more than 8,500 earmarks.

■ Candidate Obama said lobbyists "will not work in my White House." But upon taking office, he allowed waivers for former lobbyists working in his White House.

■ Obama said he would put an end to "phony accounting." Yet early on, his administration identified "$2 trillion in savings"—of which $1.6 trillion was based on the ludicrous assumption that, were it not for Obama, the surge in Iraq would have continued for 10 more years. We also know that the president's false claim that the Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare) would cut the deficit was based on double counting.

■ During the 2010 midterm elections, the president declared that super-PACs were a "threat to democracy." He now embraces them. This flip-flop is similar to what Obama did during the 2008 campaign when he reversed his pledge to seek public financing in the general election.

■ Obama recently warned the Supreme Court that it will be taking an "unprecedented, extraordinary step" if it overturns the Affordable Care Act, because that law was passed by "a strong majority of a democratically elected Congress." Except that the House, despite a large Democratic majority, passed the Affordable Care Act by a very narrow margin (the vote was 219-212). In addition, what Obama calls an "unprecedented" step is, in fact, fairly common. Nor was this Obama's first attack on the Court. In his 2010 State of the Union address, with members of the Supreme Court in attendance, he claimed that its decision in *Citizens United* v. *Federal Election Commission* would allow foreign corporations to "spend without limit in our elections." That is false.

■ As president, Obama and his administration declared (a) he would cut the deficit in half by the end of his first term, (b) unemployment would not exceed 8 percent, (c) he would bend the health care cost curve down, (d) poverty would decrease, and (e) he would fix the housing crisis. In reality, Obama has submitted four budgets with trillion-dollar-plus deficits, March was the 38th consecutive month with unemployment above 8 percent, health care costs have risen, more than 46 million people are in poverty, the largest number in the 50-plus years for which poverty estimates have been published, and the housing crisis has worsened on Obama's watch.

In ads and speeches, during interviews and through the use of surrogates, Romney and his party need to prosecute their case relentlessly. They need to imprint into the mind of voters a basic proposition: Barack Obama's claims are worthless. They need to accomplish this with an avalanche of facts and by using Obama's own words against him.

The effect will be that Americans will appropriately devalue the president's words. They will, in increasing numbers, reject his claims because they do not trust the source of the claims. This approach relies on a truth as old as the Scriptures, which teach that fresh water and salt water cannot flow from the same spring.

The Romney campaign will have to play defense, but it cannot win the election in that posture. Romney's challenge is to turn Obama's compulsively misleading statements against him rather than simply cleaning up after them.

That means Romney has to shatter the illusion that

WEEKLY STANDARD PHOTO ILLUSTRATION; ORIGINAL IMAGE, NEWSCOM

Obama is believable, trustworthy, a man of public integrity. The sooner Romney begins, the better for him—and for the truth.

—Peter Wehner

Media Malpractice

Any hope that the media might fairly and responsibly cover the shooting death of black teenager Trayvon Martin was effectively doomed the moment Al Sharpton descended on Sanford, Florida, and started holding rallies with the victim's family. Recall that Sharpton once said of Clarence Thomas's tenure on the Supreme Court, "I remember growing up reading Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Now I get to see it." Unless they agree with his race-driven political agenda, Sharpton is not above accusing even African Americans of wanting to return to a day when the Fugitive Slave Act was still on the books.

Al Sharpton

Once upon a time, Sharpton was covered by the media only as a colorful race hustler who stirred up trouble. Now Sharpton *is* the media, host of the MSNBC show *Politics Nation*. Despite scant evidence that race was a factor in Martin's death—George Zimmerman, the man who shot Martin while on a neighborhood watch patrol, is Hispanic and claims the killing was self-defense—Sharpton came to Florida to tape on location, thundering that Martin was a victim of racial injustice. Not surprisingly, Sharpton promulgated at least one glaring untruth, claiming Martin was in the morgue for three days before his parents were informed he'd been killed. "How do you leave this kid in the room like he's a worthless piece of meat?" he railed. However, this is contradicted by the fact Martin's parents were discussing their son's killing on a local news broadcast the next day.

Asked about this less-than-responsible coverage of a criminal investigation, MSNBC issued a statement defending its host: "It's because of his work and his decades of activism that Rev. Sharpton brings such a unique perspective to our lineup." Unique perspective? Given his handling of the Freddie's Fashion Mart protest in Harlem in 1995, Sharpton is the only MSNBC host with a history of instigating fatal mob violence.

But if a major news corporation deems Sharpton fit to cover the Trayvon Martin killing, the more depressing sign of the times is that the rest of the media have been no better. A senior NBC producer was fired after it was revealed the *Today* show had edited Zimmerman's 911 phone call to make it sound like he had volunteered the information that Martin was black, as if that alone made the teenager suspect. It turns out the 911 dispatcher had specifically asked Zimmerman about Martin's race. CNN later ran a segment on the 911 call that went over the static-filled tape with Zapruder-like zeal, suggesting that Zimmerman had said the racial slur "f—ing coons," though the network later conceded it was more likely he said "f—ing punks" or "f—ing cold." When a 13-year-old witness to the incident appeared to corroborate Zimmerman's account, saying Martin was on top of Zimmerman during the struggle between the two, the media broke the normal protocol of protecting minors and revealed his name. The media also ran with grainy photos that purported to contradict Zimmerman's claim he had hurt his head in the scuffle with Martin. Other photos surfaced showing Zimmerman did appear to have abrasions on his head. And, bizarrely, the media fanned the racial flames by adopting the term "white Hispanic" in describing Zimmerman's ethnicity. (One can only imagine the denunciations if commentators started referring to the president as a "white African American.")

While the investigation into Martin's death was proceeding, the media still found time in recent weeks to badly mishandle the murder of Shaima Alawadi, an Iraqi woman in San Diego. Her head had been bashed in with a tire iron, and next to her body was a note calling her a terrorist and telling her to leave the country. Police were quick to urge caution as to the killer's motives—but the media reacted in predictable fashion: The *Daily Beast*, Reuters, and many others ran sensational headlines suggesting Alawadi's death was a hate crime.

Alawadi was in the midst of divorcing her husband, and her 17-year-old daughter was distraught about her own arranged marriage to a cousin. Police subsequently found the daughter had received a text message reading "The detective will find out tell them cnt talk." The investigation now centers on her family. (Even after all this emerged, *Time* refused to give up grinding the axe of identity politics: "Shaima Alawadi's Murder: A Hate Crime Against Women?")

As for the Martin case, last week George Zimmerman was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. The right thing to do is reserve judgment until the evidence emerges in a court of law. One hopes that the media haven't poisoned the well such that Zimmerman can't get a fair trial. Meanwhile, it's worth remembering America has a black president, and the country has seen undeniable racial progress. Given the political leanings and professional standards of America's newsrooms, it's increasingly implausible to say the media have.

—Mark Hemingway

NEWSCOM

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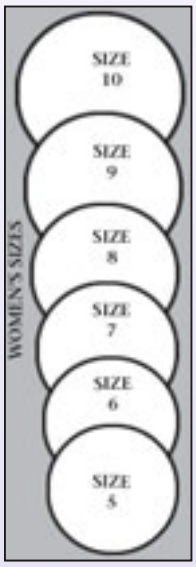

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Fantasies of Social Darwinism

Three generations of this imbecilic progressive talking point are enough.

BY JONAH GOLDBERG

DAVID CLARK

'Social Darwinism, a popular topic in the 19th and early 20th centuries," reported the Associated Press on April 5, "is making its way into modern American politics." The news peg for the story was President Obama's claim that the House Republican budget is nothing but "thinly veiled Social Darwinism." It is, he added, a "Trojan Horse," hiding within it "a radical vision" that is "antithetical to our entire history as a land of opportunity."

To the surprise of no one, the *New York Times* hailed the "thunderclap of a speech" in an editorial titled "Calling Radicalism by Its Name." But Social Darwinism has been thick in the air of late (according to LexisNexis, over 100 articles used the term in the 90 days prior to Obama's speech). Clinton labor secretary Robert Reich had days before already denounced the GOP budget as not merely Social Darwinism but "radical Social Darwinism."

This raises the real problem with the AP's analysis. It has the history exactly backwards. The topic was *not* popular in the 19th and early 20th centuries, but it is now. And it's not suddenly "making its way" into modern politics. Liberals have been irresponsibly flinging the term Social Darwinism rightward for decades. Mario Cuomo, in his famous 1984 Democratic Convention keynote speech—which "electrified," "galvanized," and "inspired" Democrats, who went on to lose 49 states in the general election—declared that "President Reagan told us from the very beginning that he believed in a kind of Social Darwinism." Walter Mondale, the Democratic nominee that year, insisted that Reagan preferred "Social Darwinism" over "social decency." Even Barack Obama's April 3 speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors was so much recycling. In 2005, then-senator Obama denounced the conservative idea of an "ownership society," charging that "in our past there has been another term for it—Social Darwinism—every man or woman for him or herself."

Meanwhile, the myth that Social Darwinism was a popular term in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was largely created by the liberal historian Richard Hofstadter, whose 1944 book *Social Darwinism in American Thought* didn't merely transform our understanding of the Gilded Age, it largely fabricated an alternative history of it.

But let us start with Herbert Spencer, the man who is always cast as the villain of the tale and the "founder" of the Social Darwinist "movement." A writer for one British paper insists Spencer was "a downright evil man . . . whose passion for eugenics and elimination made him the daydreamer of things to come." Edwin Black, in his history of eugenics, *War Against the Weak*, writes that Spencer "completely denounced charity and instead extolled the purifying elimination of the 'unfit.' The unfit,

Jonah Goldberg's latest book, The Tyranny of Clichés: How Liberals Cheat in the War of Ideas, *goes on sale May 1.*

he argued, were predestined by their nature to an existence of downwardly spiraling degradation." Hofstadter himself wrote that the (almost wholly progressive) eugenics movement in America "has proved to be the most enduring aspect" of Spencer's "tooth-and-claw version of natural selection."

The most creative assault on Spencer must be Richard L. Schoenwald's psychological autopsy in the 1968 summer issue of the esteemed journal *Victorian Studies*, in which the historian reveals that Spencer's twisted and deformed worldview stemmed from his fascination with feces.

Starting with Spencer's childhood in the 1820s, Schoenwald concluded that "Spencer's self-esteem had been undermined hopelessly in the oral and anal stages of his development; he could commit himself only to paper, not to a woman." As a baby, Spencer rejoiced in his ability to "create excrement." He never forgave his parents' efforts at toilet training, which revoked the "freedom in which he had gloried." This "fearful attack from behind" left permanent scars, which is why, for example, Spencer would one day oppose public sanitation regulation, because he "saw in sanitary reform an attack on his magical anal producing powers."

We'll just let that speak for itself.

The truth of the matter, as aggrieved libertarians have been saying for years, is that Spencer was a thoroughly benign classical liberal. Yes, he coined the phrase "survival of the fittest" (a term Darwin embraced), but contrary to generations of propaganda, he did not oppose charity (he celebrated it at great length), did not advocate the mastery of superior races over allegedly inferior ones, did not believe corporations should ride roughshod over the poor (he supported labor unions), and was in fact a great foe of imperialism and a champion of women's suffrage.

Oh, and he never called himself a Social Darwinist. He didn't call himself a Darwinist at all (he had a different theory of evolution).

But here's the interesting part: Almost no one else called himself a Social Darwinist either (including Spencer's alleged co-conspirator William Graham Sumner). Simply put, there was no remotely serious intellectual movement—at least not in America or Britain—called Social Darwinism, and the evil views attributed to so-called Social Darwinists were not held by its alleged founders. Geoffrey Hodgson conducted a survey of all of the leading English-language academic journals from the mid-1800s until 1937 and couldn't find any evidence that Spencer and Sumner were part of, never mind leaders of, an intellectual movement called "Social Darwinism." Even more amazing: In the entire body of Anglo-American scholarly publications spanning more than a century, there is only one article that actually advocates—rather than criticizes—something called "Social Darwinism." And it not only wasn't written by Spencer, it doesn't mention him either.

There never has existed any remotely serious intellectual movement—at least not in America or Britain—called Social Darwinism.

In fairness, Hofstadter didn't just focus on the intellectuals, he cited the views and actions of the so-called Robber Barons as proof that the conservative mind had adopted Darwinism on a massive scale. He writes:

> With its rapid expansion, its exploitative methods, its desperate competition, and its peremptory rejection of failure, post-bellum America was like a vast human caricature of the Darwinian struggle for existence and survival of the fittest. Successful business entrepreneurs apparently have accepted almost by instinct the Darwinian terminology which seemed to portray the conditions of their existence.

Others followed Hofstadter's lead. Merle Curti in *The Growth of American Thought* argued that Social Darwinism "admirably suited the needs of the great captains of industry, who were crushing the little fellows when these vainly tried to compete with them." Henry Steel Commager wrote in *The American Mind* that "Darwin and Spencer exercised such sovereignty over America as George III had never enjoyed." And of course Robert Reich has said that Social Darwinism "offered a perfect moral justification for America's Gilded Age, when robber barons controlled much of American industry, the gap between the rich and poor turned into a chasm, urban slums festered, and politicians were bought off by the wealthy. . . . The modern Conservative Movement has embraced Social Darwinism with no less fervor than it has condemned Darwinism."

The only problem: None of this is true either. Yes, Andrew Carnegie was a follower of Herbert Spencer and lots of people referenced "natural law" (though rarely as a reference to Darwinian evolution). But for the most part the captains of industry couldn't care less about this stuff. As Robert Bannister and Irwin Wylie (and more recently Princeton intellectual historian Thomas Leonard) have painstakingly documented, the captains of industry in the 19th century were not particularly influenced by, or even aware of, Darwin and Spencer. This shouldn't surprise anybody. "Gilded Age businessmen were not sufficiently bookish, or sufficiently well educated, to keep up with the changing world of ideas," writes Wylie. "As late as 1900, 84 percent of the businessmen listed in *Who's Who in America* had not been educated beyond high school."

Overwhelmingly, businessmen of the period were influenced by Christianity first, classical economics second, self-help inspirational nostrums a distant third, and egghead notions about biology almost not at all. Cornelius Vanderbilt read one book in his entire life. It was *Pilgrim's Progress*. And he didn't get to it until he was past the age of 70. "If I had learned education," Vanderbilt famously quipped, "I would not have had time to learn anything else."

Also, it's worth noting that the so-called red-in-tooth-and-claw Gilded Age was a time of massive, historic

economic growth. It was when America overtook Britain as the economic powerhouse of the globe. That's one reason the left has always hated it. When Europe was boldly embracing socialism, America was proving that capitalism was better at generating wealth and lifting people out of poverty. Moreover, as anybody who's been in a library, hospital, university, or concert hall bearing the name of Carnegie, Mellon, Rockefeller, et al, can attest, the "Robber Barons" didn't remotely believe in letting the little guy fend for himself or that wealth was a reflection of either moral superiority or evolutionary "fitness." Even the one real Spencerist in the bunch, Andrew Carnegie, believed that "the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money." He believed that the man who "dies rich dies disgraced" and himself died one of the most famously generous philanthropists in the world.

One reason the term "Social Darwinism" caught on with progressives was that it served to divert attention from the sins of "reform Darwinism"—i.e., the progressive passion for eugenics. The progressives advocated aggressive statist intervention to improve the genetic stock of the country, while the alleged Social Darwinists championed laissez-faire and private charity and—gasp—reproductive freedom. Moreover, the term Social Darwinism, which in Europe was used to justify nationalist and racist theories of the Hitlerian variety, was the perfect label for playing guilt-by-association in America. Ever since Hofstadter's book, liberals have used the term to accuse conservatives of desperately wanting to return to a past that never was.

On April 4, Mitt Romney had his turn in front of the newspapermen. "The president came here yesterday and railed against arguments no one is making—and criticized policies no one is proposing. It's one of his favorite strategies—setting up straw men to distract from his record."

One suspects that even Romney had no idea how right he was. ♦

No Susana

New Mexico's governor is a rising star, but won't enter the veepstakes. BY MICHAEL WARREN

Carlsbad, N.M.

As we walk through the Department of Energy's field office in remote Carlsbad, Susana Martinez is explaining the science of nuclear waste management. At the federally managed Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, about 25 miles east of here and more than 2,000 feet below the dusty, barren surface, the government deposits much of its radioactive waste. The repository, Martinez tells me, was built underneath a half-mile-thick salt formation. Carved out of the salt are small rooms ideal for holding the waste safely as it decays. She explains that the salt is nonporous, so none of the radioactive material can seep into the soil above.

Susana Martinez

"Isn't that interesting?" says the 52-year-old Martinez.

To be honest, it really isn't, but as the governor of New Mexico, America's ground zero (so to speak) for nuclear research and energy production, Martinez is more or less required to find such topics interesting. In conversation, she approaches policy issues, from nuclear waste to economic development to education, with earnest curiosity. A self-styled wonk, she's visibly less comfortable reading to preschoolers at a day-care center in Las Cruces than she is talking afterward with the adults and reporters about child abuse awareness. And she looks mortified when joining the preschoolers in the "Tootie Ta" dance, with lyrics imploring dancers to stick their "bottoms up."

Michael Warren is a reporter at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Martinez likes policy. She's already been tapped as the policy co-chair of the Republican Governors Association. "It's my training to follow the evidence," says the former prosecutor. And like a prosecutor on the offensive, she doesn't suffer legislative nonsense gladly. During a recent debate over education reform, Martinez caught flak from some Democrats in the statehouse who complained that a renewed focus on reading in elementary schools was an "unfunded mandate." She looks at me incredulously: "I just said, 'What does that mean? What do we pay [teachers] to do?'"

"She's just a professional, good person from southern New Mexico who wants to do something good for her state," says Tom Hutchison, a restaurant owner in Mesilla. Jerry Pacheco, a business leader and vice president of the Border Industrial Association in Santa Teresa, calls Martinez "methodical," "accessible," and a "good listener."

Perhaps these qualities help explain Martinez's cross-party appeal. According to an April 3 poll by Rasmussen Reports, 60 percent of New Mexicans approve of her performance, up 7 points from the 53 percent of the vote she won in 2010. And in New Mexico, nearly half of registered voters are Democrats and only 30 percent are Republicans. According to her campaign's internal numbers, Martinez won nearly a quarter of Democrats and over 40 percent of Hispanic voters. At a time when the GOP is accused of being antiwoman and anti-Hispanic, the conservative Martinez stands out as a living, breathing counterexample.

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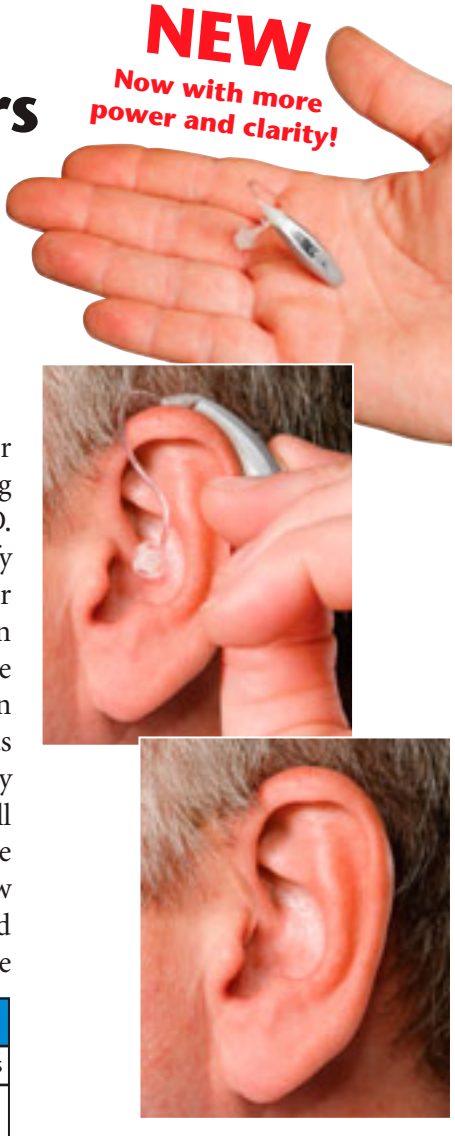

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So it isn't surprising that back in January, in an interview on Sean Hannity's radio show, Mitt Romney mentioned Martinez as someone he would consider for a running mate. Romney also threw in some better-known names (Chris Christie, Bobby Jindal), and reports suggest that these days he is leaning toward someone similar to himself in profile and temperament, like Senator Rob Portman of Ohio. Of course, there's also the looming Sarah Palin precedent. The risk-averse Romney campaign may look at Martinez, see a first-term governor of a small state with a low national profile, and recoil.

But the advantages of a Romney-Martinez ticket are evident. Martinez was born and raised in El Paso by the children of Mexican immigrants. (Her great-grandfather Toribio Ortega fired the first shot of the Mexican Revolution in 1910.) Working at her parents' small security business, she paid her way through the University of Texas-El Paso and the University of Oklahoma law school. She speaks Spanish fluently; before sitting down to dinner in Mesilla, she steps into the kitchen and converses with the staff, flowing effortlessly from English to Spanish as she glad-hands. Imagine the Spanish-language ads!

After law school, Martinez moved to Las Cruces, where her first husband lived. They had no children, but her current husband, Chuck Franco, has a 24-year-old son. Martinez worked as a prosecutor for 10 years in Las Cruces, focusing on child abuse cases. Registered Democrats both, Martinez and Franco reluctantly agreed to meet with two Republican party officials one day in 1996 as Martinez was considering a political future. The story, now familiar to observers of New Mexican politics, goes something like this: Martinez and Franco planned to listen politely, thank them for lunch, and leave. Instead, both left the meeting amazed to discover that their conservative views made them de facto Republicans. Later that year, Martinez won the first of four elections for district attorney in Democratic Doña Ana County—as a Republican.

"When my husband told his mother he changed parties, I mean, that was devastating to her," Martinez says. "Although, she's conservative!" Martinez says Hispanics are far from a lost cause for the GOP; the challenge is making a practical case that conservative policy can work for them.

"The first thing you have to do is have honest conversations with people," Martinez says. "'I'm not asking you to change your party. I'm asking you to consider voting for me.' Sometimes that bigger ask is more difficult because they're lifelong Democrats."

Martinez says the GOP would do well to seek out Hispanic candidates for local offices, in the same way she was recruited 16 years ago. "There needs to be good strong recruitment of good candidates," she says. "If you're filling in positions or slots just for the sake of filling them with people who don't have good leadership skills or aren't good, qualified folks, then you end up doing the reverse. 'See, we elected somebody who is Hispanic, and look what we ended up with: failure.' They have to be qualified people."

Martinez has a simple, one-word answer when I ask if she would consider accepting the vice presidential nomination: "No." Emphatically no? "Emphatically," she says. What will she say if Romney calls her in late July to ask her the same question? "I am going to say that I am very honored and very humbled but I must decline," she says.

She and Franco are the primary caretakers for her developmentally disabled sister, and Martinez recently told the *Albuquerque Journal* she "just couldn't" consider moving her sister to Washington. She's a little more than a year into her first term, and there's plenty left to do in Santa Fe: education reform, tax reform, bringing "the people to the process" (a populist trope she repeats often).

She's also no doubt haunted by how New Mexicans perceived the national ambitions of her predecessor, Democrat Bill Richardson, who ran unsuccessfully for president in 2008. W. Ken Martinez, the Democratic majority leader in the statehouse, says locals felt Richardson's run was a "distraction," and he believes the current governor is aware of this. "On the other hand, it would be great to have someone from New Mexico close to the White House," he admits. Former governor Garrey Carruthers, a Republican, when asked about Martinez's veep potential, shakes his head and sighs. "We'd hate to see her go."

But there's another reason Susana Martinez says a run in 2012 doesn't interest her. "I'm often introduced as the first Hispanic female governor in the country, and with that comes enormous responsibility that I get this done right," she says. "I'm paving a path where other little girls will look up and say, 'I can be this or I can be that.' And if I don't do it right, if I'm not successful in delivering the promises that I've already made, then I end up just being another politician."

At this, her eyes narrow. "And I don't want to be a politician," she adds. "I want to be a leader."

Martinez has maintained support in New Mexico by sticking to fiscal issues and her good government pledges, portraying herself as an outsider with the facts, figures, and arguments on her side and the people's best interests at heart. Soon after she was inaugurated, she famously sold the governor's jet and fired the two chefs employed at the governor's mansion—both favorites of Richardson. Now she travels by SUV and cooks for her family. "Ramen noodles!" she laughs.

Symbolic measures, to be sure, but when it came to the serious work of bridging a $450 million gap in the budget, Martinez faced a difficult choice between raising taxes and cutting spending. Except, she says, it wasn't that difficult. "Raising taxes is unnecessary," Martinez says. "One, because we are living within our means, and two, it is not something that needs to be done during a recovery period."

Ken Martinez, the Democrat, tells a different story. He says the legislature had "already done all the tough stuff" in cutting spending the two years prior to Susana Martinez's becoming governor, even levying a small tax to balance the budget. (New Mexico is constitutionally required to have a balanced

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budget.) The storm, he argues, was mostly weathered by the time she came into office.

"We scrubbed all the way to the bottom," the governor says, noting unnecessary fleets of government vehicles, fancy cell phones for government employees, and outlandish salaries for cabinet secretaries that had accrued during Richardson's two terms. Working with Democratic majorities, she found other waste to cut and plugged the budget hole, all the while increasing funding for Medicaid and education. The legislature, especially the senate, resisted the cuts initially but eventually passed balanced budgets two years in a row—without raising taxes.

Martinez has found other ways to shake things up in Sante Fe. The New Mexico legislature has no legal obligation to keep a public record, so she sends an intern with a video camera to tape floor debates and committee meetings. The governor's office uploads the videos to its website. At first, some legislators mocked this as a gimmick while mugging for the camera. But now, Martinez says, they're coming to terms with the new transparency.

"I was willing to make them angry for a little while, because at the end of the day, what were we getting?" she says. "Accountability on their votes on education reform. And people were watching that. And they see that. I think commonsense legislators on both sides of the aisle will say, 'All right, we had our three days of screaming at her. At the end of the day, we're still on camera. Are we going to be held accountable by the people back home if we don't start doing what's right?'"

Sincerity, Martinez says, is what people are looking for in their elected officials, and most haven't liked what they've seen in a while. Republicans, she says, have an opportunity. "You have to stay steady," Martinez says. "You either mean it or you don't. And you have to follow through when you say it. People have to start believing in their elected officials."

If Martinez is to be believed, then, her next campaign will be for reelection in 2014. After that? Well, that could be interesting. ♦

Clueless About Job Creation

Obama's invincible economic ignorance.

BY FRED BARNES

Does President Obama have the foggiest idea how jobs are created in America? There's not much evidence he does, beyond lip service to the helpfulness of the private sector.

When the president begins a speech these days with praise for free markets, look out! What comes next are proposals for more government intervention in the economy and higher taxes. That's the recipe, Obama says, to "encourage our long-term economic growth and stabilize our budget."

GARY LOCKE

He said so in his Republicans-are-Social-Darwinists speech in Washington two weeks ago to newspaper editors. Near the outset, Obama declared: "I know that the true engine of job creation in this country is the private sector, not Washington, which is why I've cut taxes for small-business owners 17 times over the last three years."

Those cuts have had minimal effect, and not surprisingly. They were tiny and temporary, and few small-business owners bothered to claim them, if indeed they were eligible to do so. Meanwhile, the president has persistently sought to raise their income taxes.

In Washington, Obama didn't suggest, much less propose, a single incentive or spur to private investment, yet he insisted "we continue to make investments in growth today." These consist solely of government-funded jobs, such as "putting some of our construction workers back to work" and "helping states to rehire teachers."

Obama yearns for a hefty increase in hiring by state and local governments. If hiring were "on par to past recoveries, the unemployment rate would probably be about a point lower than it is right now." Restoring "huge cuts in state and local government" is "part of the challenge we have in terms of growth."

The lesson here is that Obama has learned no lesson from what Edward Lazear of the Hoover Institution has called the "worst economic recovery in history"—that is, the Obama recovery. The economy has grown at a rate of 2.4 percent since the recession ended in June 2009, a full percentage point below average long-term growth. But the president is sticking with his plan for a government-led economic boom. This is Obamanomics: If it doesn't work, then double down.

Obama once told a group of investors that the private sector didn't need incentives to invest because his administration's massive subsidies of green technology would lead the way. Now the mention of "green jobs" has become a laugh line. The main news from the green sector is another company

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

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bankrolled by Obama going belly-up.

In *The Escape Artists: How Obama's Team Fumbled the Recovery*, Noam Scheiber describes the president's "obsession" with green jobs. Economic adviser Christina Romer "would march in with an estimate of the jobs all the investments in clean energy would produce; week after week, Obama would send her back to check the numbers. 'I don't get it,' he'd say. 'We make these large-scale investments in infrastructure. What do you mean there are no jobs?' But the numbers rarely budged."

Obama's latest fixation is the Buffett Rule, named after billionaire Warren Buffett. "We can't afford to keep spending more money on tax cuts for wealthy Americans," the president said last week. (Note: Under Obamanomics, untaxed earnings of private citizens are "spending.") The new rule would force those earning more than $1 million to pay at least 30 percent of their annual income, whether earnings (already taxed at a marginal rate of 35 percent) or capital gains (now taxed at 15 percent), in income tax. "This is not just about fairness," the president said. "This is also about growth." And thus about jobs, and more.

But not deficit reduction, according to Jason Furman, the deputy director of the White House National Economic Council. He said the 30 percent tax was "never our plan to bring the deficit down and get the debt under control." It would raise only $4 billion to $5 billion a year, a peewee bite out of Obama's $1.3 trillion deficit for fiscal year 2012.

Obama and Vice President Biden claim deficit reductions anyway. The new tax floor is "about we as a country being willing to pay for those [government] investments and closing our deficits," Obama said. "That's what this is about." Biden defended the tax hike with a question. "Do we pay down those deficits, cutting wherever we can, as we've been doing, while at the same time investing in things we know we must invest in, in order for the economy to grow and create good middle-class jobs?"

One response to the Buffett Rule has been to dismiss it as a campaign gimmick. Yes, it is that, but it's much more. Obama, Biden, and their allies believe raising taxes will boost the economy by paying for increased government spending. They believe the investor class of millionaires and billionaires will invest as robustly as ever, producing growth and jobs, even if subjected to higher income tax rates and a doubled rate on capital gains. They're wrong on both counts.

Obama has taken recently to quoting Ronald Reagan, while ignoring Reagan's formula for recovering from the deep recession in 1981 and 1982. It consisted of tax and spending cuts, the exact opposite of Obama's policy. By mid-1984, Reagan noted happily in a letter that job growth had exceeded 300,000 a month for more than a year. The Obama economy, which the president says is "gaining speed" and "getting strong," hasn't come close to that.

Obama has his excuses. State and local governments are supposedly at fault for not hiring more. And if the construction industry were functioning normally, that would shave another percentage point off the jobless rate, he claims. In March, the rate of unemployment was 8.2 percent. But by Obama's figuring, it should be 6.2 percent.

The president doesn't realize how lucky he is. There have been twice as many dropouts from the economy as jobs added since he became president. Were the dropouts counted as unemployed, the jobless rate would be well above 11 percent. And Obama would be hard put to come up with an excuse. ♦

Boondoggle U.

The University of California, Merced, in December 2004

AP / GARY KAZANJIAN

With taxpayers struggling to support the University of California, why did the state build a tenth campus in the middle of nowhere?

By Charlotte Allen

Merced, California

"The middle of nowhere." That's the phrase I heard from several Californians when I told them that I was writing an article about UC Merced, the newest and most geographically remote of the state's 10-campus chain of academically elite, research-focused public universities. Opening in 2005 at a construction cost of $500 million, embroiled in environmental controversies despite its desire to showcase itself as a "green" campus, and enrolling to date only 5,200 students out of the 25,000 projected to materialize by 2030, the University of California, Merced, located about 100 miles inland in the state's searing and economically depressed rural interior, is the most financially and politically precarious member of the UC system.

It is precarious at a precarious time. The broke (and some say bankrupt) state of California, bedeviled by a $13 billion deficit plus another $700 billion in unfunded pension liabilities for its 225,000 employees, cut funding for the entire UC system by $750 million this year (the system's overall annual budget is about $20 billion, not counting sponsored research and teaching hospitals). The brand new UC Merced, with a $100 million annual budget, got an exemption from the across-the-board cuts entailing layoffs, furloughs, and program eliminations at the other nine campuses, but that only seems to have exacerbated hard feelings within the UC system. Over the past couple of years, as California has spiraled downward into a 12 percent unemployment-generating recession, faculty and administrators at the more prestigious and prosperous campuses have either called openly for UC Merced's closure or hinted at withdrawing their own well-endowed campuses from the state system and going private.

Although applications for freshman slots at UC Merced have risen impressively over the past two years, and the campus is currently enrolled to the brim in terms of classroom space, it still ranks last among the 10 UC campuses as California high school seniors' academic destination of choice. UC Merced accepts nearly 80 percent of those who

Charlotte Allen is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's Minding the Campus website.

apply, and it is the only one of the 10 campuses to remain in the UC system's "referral pool." Under California law all high school seniors in the state who either rank in the top 9 percent of applicants as measured by grades and standardized-test scores, or in the top 9 percent of their own high school classes, are entitled to automatic admission to one of the UC campuses. Beyond that minimum threshold, the admissions process can be highly competitive, with the system's flagship campus, the 36,000-student UC Berkeley, and its most sought-after campus, the 40,000-student, Beverly Hills-adjacent UCLA, garnering the most applications and able to pick and choose among their would-be freshmen, accepting perhaps one out of four.

The applicants rejected by the UC campuses where they applied go into the referral pool, for admission to safety-net campuses with empty freshman slots. For several years UC Riverside, located in the heart of the Inland Empire smog belt 50 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, shared reserve-pool status with UC Merced at the bottom of the heap. Nowadays, UC Riverside has plenty of takers. It is reasonably close to L.A., and the recession makes its $12,000-a-year tuition (standard at all UC campuses) look like a bargain compared with that of private colleges in Southern California. That leaves UC Merced as "the Rodney Dangerfield of the system," as one professor whom I interviewed phrased it. Indeed, until UC Merced slightly altered its acceptance process last year to focus on students who expressed actual interest in attending, it was not unusual for high school seniors feeling depressed because they didn't get into Berkeley to find themselves surprised by "Congratulations!" letters from a campus of whose existence, much less location, they might not have been entirely aware.

And yet, after spending three days at UC Merced, talking to students, professors, and administrators, I found it difficult not to root for this beleaguered academic underdog that seemed determined to fight off the extinction for which many of its critics have dearly wished. Perhaps it was UC Merced's encouragingly aggressive choice of mascot: the bobcat, a feline predator with impressive killing skills. The next-youngest campuses in the UC system—the 26,000-student UC Irvine in Orange County and the 16,000-student UC Santa Cruz, on the redwoods coastline 60 miles south of San Francisco—both of which opened their doors in 1965, chose as their mascots the anteater and the banana slug respectively (the latter was an especially appropriate choice for Santa Cruz, with its enduring reputation as the hippie branch of UC). Most impressive was the devotion to their new alma mater of a range of UC Merced students across the ideological spectrum from College Republicans to Occupy, whose handful of tents and banner reading "We Are the 99 Percent" fronts a stand of bushes across from the campus library.

"I got a full ride at Berkeley, but I went to high school in Madera [about 35 miles south of Merced], so I decided to stay close to home," said Michael Fincher, a 2011 graduate and cofounder of the campus College Republicans chapter who is currently interning with a conservative think tank near Washington, D.C. (Fincher and another 2011 graduate, Oliver Darcy, became notorious on campus for producing a series of "Exposing Leftists" videos for YouTube that won them an appearance on Glenn Beck's Fox News program.) "It's a new campus, and there are a lot of leadership opportunities," said Fincher. "You can petition for new courses if you want them. All the professors there know me, so I can get personal recommendations. Most of the classes have about 15 to 25 students [in contrast to the lower-division class sizes at, say, Berkeley, which can top 700]. There are only five classrooms on [the UC Merced campus] that hold more than 100 students." About a third of UC Merced's students are Central Valley locals like Fincher; another third hail from the San Francisco Bay area, and the rest are mostly from Southern California.

Still, there is the middle-of-nowhere factor. The campus is only technically in Merced, population 80,000, one of the many farm towns strung along Highway 99, which, as readers of *The Grapes of Wrath* may recall, bisects the Central Valley, the 450-mile-long, 50-mile-wide, pancake-flat swath of ultra-fertile land running between California's two major mountain ranges. Merced County is almost smack-dab in the middle of the valley's long southern end, which has its own name, the San Joaquin Valley. As it was in the days of Steinbeck's Depression novel, the Central Valley is the most productive agricultural region in America, thanks to generous snow runoff from the Sierra Nevada and an ingenious manmade network of canals, pumps, ponds, and irrigation ditches that since the early 20th century has enabled Central Valley farmers to grow and export a dense and bewildering array of crops: nuts, figs, kiwis, olives, melons, stone fruits, grapes (mostly for raisins, since the blistering, 100-degree-plus summer temperatures of the Valley sugar the fruit so excessively that winemaking above jug grade is impossible), corn, rice, wheat, cotton, alfalfa, beans, sweet potatoes, beets, and vegetables. The bounteous and expertly farmed Central Valley supplies as much as one-quarter of America's produce.

Without irrigation-network water—and the arid, hilly country northeast of the city where the UC Merced campus is located falls into that category—the Central Valley would be useful mostly for low-density cattle-ranching, the primary occupation of the Spanish settlers during the 18th and early 19th centuries. UC Merced sits atop a hill that is surrounded by—not much, unless you count its 7,000 acres of rolling grassland bleached tan during most of the year and dotted here and there by the robust, steak-worthy ruminants

that have made California barbecue distinctive and famous. The acreage, still mostly working ranchland, came to UC Merced from a cattle-heiress trust, the Virginia Smith Trust, paid for mostly out of $12 million in grants from charitable foundations set up by the Silicon Valley computer mogul David Packard and his wife Lucille. The university promised to set aside 5,000 of the Virginia Smith acres as an environmental preserve, which undoubtedly benefits the environment but also ensured that UC Merced would remain forever isolated inside a vast cordon sanitaire of grass, grazing cattle, and jackrabbits, although with a view of Lake Yosemite, a Merced County-owned irrigation reservoir used for recreational boating, jet-skiing, and breaks from the blistering heat as well as for watering local farms. The nearly treeless landscape surrounding the campus is beautiful—in the parched, austere way that appeals to many Californians because it is the natural landscape of much of their state but that might be a hard sell to out-of-staters used to sylvan and verdant college settings.

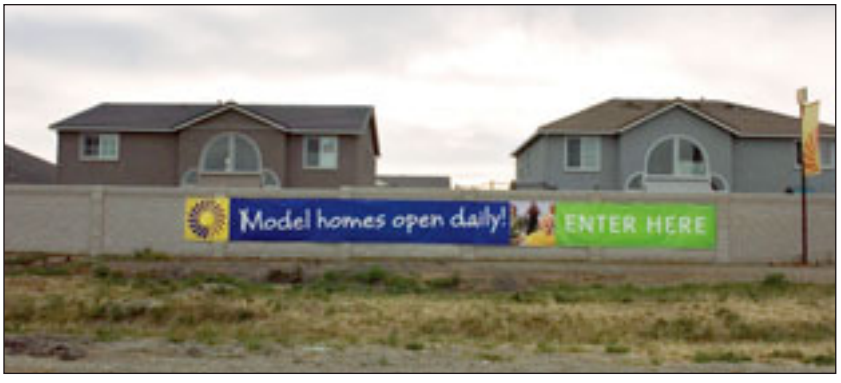
Huddled atop that hill on 910 of the trust acres, UC Merced's campus buildings, steel, concrete, and glass in construction, gray, ochre, and adobe in color, are beautiful, too, in the same stark fashion as the surrounding terrain. Their construction during the early 2000s under a master plan formulated by the San Francisco architectural firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill embodied a number of design concepts that were fashionable 10 years ago and remain just as fashionable today: "smart growth" (massive five-story classroom buildings clustered tightly in quasi-urban fashion), carbon-neutrality (or at least aspirations in that direction), and above all, "sustainability." Enormous solar panels top every structure, several of which have earned the "gold" and "silver" LEED certificates coveted by the environmentally sensitive. A two-million-gallon cylindrical water tank, sheathed in corrugated steel (recycled, of course) that is supposed to be a nod of architectural homage to the grain silos of rural California, dominates the campus's $27 million energy plant. The water, electrically cooled overnight, is pumped from the bottom of the tank into campus buildings, which in turn pump their used "graywater" to the top of the tank for storage and reuse. Nearly every structure features enormous windows so as to make maximum use of natural sunlight and heat—but also, since the 110-degree summer days produce rather too much sunlight and heat for human comfort, mesh louvers that function as shade-screens and have become the architectural signature of UC Merced.

The overall effect of the campus, shy on greenery and flower gardens (part of a conscious decision to remain water-efficient) and artistically dominated by a 40-foot-high burnished-steel sculpture by Aris Demetrios titled "Beginnings" and resembling the two halves of a giant pair of tweezers, is impressive but a bit sterile. "It's gonna need more trees," Gregg Herken, a former UC Merced history professor who was one of the pioneer faculty until his retirement in 2010, said in a telephone interview. "When the campus first opened, the students said it looked like a prison. There were no trees. Now, they've got a few trees, and it's a little more bucolic-looking."

And here you can see our louvers: a campus tour.

NEWSCOM

The six-mile drive from the campus to downtown Merced is a vivid lesson in exactly how remote from civilization the UC Merced campus feels. A road sign just outside the entrance points to "Restaurants, Shops, Cinema"—useful information because there is no indication as far as the eye can see that any of these amenities exist nearby. From there it is a two-mile, bullet-straight shot down Bellevue Road past fences, grazing cows, a farmhouse or two, and some sparse traffic that includes the straining, skeletal cyclists who pedal to every college campus these days to the nearest main drag, G Street, a rural extension of the alphabet-gridded streets of downtown Merced.



Home, sweet home: "The Bellevue" makes for unorthodox student housing.

At this crossroads is a residential subdivision seemingly the size of a cattle ranch itself. Indeed, it once was a cattle ranch, but now it is the mostly vacant remains of an ambitious planned-community subdivision that died overnight when the housing bubble burst in 2007 everywhere in America but especially in the Central Valley. The huge tract is part oversized luxury homes, many of them in or well past foreclosure, part weedy vacant lots on empty cul-de-sacs hastily abandoned when their developers realized that there would be no more buyers. UC Merced students call the failed tract "the Bellevue"—and it is housing for several thousand of them. The strapped state of California no longer pays to construct dormitories at UC Merced or elsewhere, so the campus can offer rooms to only about one-third of its students. Many of the foreclosed-on residences of the Bellevue, with their granite countertops and multiple bedrooms and bathrooms, are rented by the banks that now own them to groups of UC Merced undergrads who pay as little as $300 a month for their rooms. Campus kiosks sport room-for-rent printouts advertising such amenities as "master bedroom with fireplace," "patio with barbecue," and "Jacuzzi." Some professors also live in the Bellevue, the ones hired in 2005 and 2006, soon after the university opened, who considered the 3,500-square-foot homes' $375,000 or so asking prices a bargain compared with what they could buy back where they had come from during those boom years, and then got stuck when the market value of their new houses plunged below the Central Valley water table along with the rest of real estate values in the area. "I try to put a silver lining on it," said Thomas G. Hansford, a UC Merced political science professor who moved into the Bellevue with his family in 2006, at the peak of the boom. "It's only a three-mile drive to work, and the neighborhood is very safe, very safe."

Two more miles of driving south along G Street, and you finally reach supermarkets and suburban malls. Two miles after that, and you're in the heart of Merced itself. In 2011 *Forbes* dubbed Merced the third "most miserable" city in America, ranking just behind the number-one loser, Stockton, 65 miles north on Highway 99 and teetering toward official bankruptcy, and Miami, Florida, another foreclosure quicksand pit. (The Central Valley almost made a clean sweep: Sacramento and Modesto, which is more or less midway between Merced and Stockton, also made *Forbes*'s top five.) Merced's housing prices have dropped 64 percent since the mid-2000s, and the unemployment rate is 20 percent. Merced's per-capita rate of violent crimes—murders, rapes, aggravated assaults, and robberies—has been almost twice the national average for a decade (although overall crime has dipped a bit since 2004). Merced is 55 percent Hispanic, and Merced police try to track the doings of some 3,000 known gang members belonging to 30 different gangs. The UC Merced student paper, the *Prodigy*, lamenting the shooting deaths of two students who drove into downtown Merced looking for fast food after a late-night party in August 2011, reported that violence was "looming over Merced like a storm cloud."

A prosperous farm hub during the early 20th century, Merced looks battered. It boasts a handsome 1875 courthouse with a towering white-painted Victorian cupola—a rare structure for the Central Valley, most of whose towns tore down their vintage courthouses in a fit of 1950s modernization. The old courthouse is now a museum (the current courthouse, like those of many California cities, is a 1960s Brutalist monstrosity flanked by bail bond offices), but it fronts onto a tree-filled park that would be pretty if someone raked up the months-old autumn leaves and emptied the overflowing trashcans. A once-fine-looking Main Street is a bricolage of busy ethnic restaurants and vacant storefronts. The grandest structure, an Art Deco movie palace called the Mainzer Theater, has been empty since 2006. The residential neighborhoods adjacent to downtown

NEWSCOM

abound with stucco-coated classic California bungalows with square-pillared front porches. They would be ripe objects for gentrification somewhere else. But most of Merced's potentially gentrifying middle class long ago migrated to the city's northern outskirts, and many of the old neighborhoods left behind bear all the indicia of rural poverty: bedraggled yards, graffiti, multiple pickup trucks cramming driveways and front lawns (a sign of high per-room population density), and hastily built fortress-fences that signal gangs and theft nearby. Merced's claims to stature these days seem to rest on its billing itself as the "Gateway to Yosemite"—though the national park is a good 90 miles to the northeast—and the city's recently won honor as a station stop on California's controversial and yet-to-be-built high-speed rail line, whose anticipated $98 billion price tag suggests it may never come into being.

The nearest city of any size is Fresno, population 495,000, 54 miles south of Merced on Highway 99 and the largest urban center in the San Joaquin Valley. Fresno is in many ways Merced writ large: 40 percent Hispanic, plagued by gang violence, and with a deserted downtown pockmarked with parking lots where since-razed retail stores and office buildings once stood. (On my Monday morning visit to downtown Fresno the only visible sidewalk activity was a Service Employees International Union picket.) To get to a real city with urban glamour—and urban white-collar jobs—you have to drive two and a half hours and 130 miles across the Coast Range to San Francisco.

To see Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley environs from which so many UC Merced students hail, I'm chauffeured on an SUV tour by Victor Davis Hanson, the conservative polemicist and former classics professor at the 22,000-student California State University-Fresno (not part of the UC system and a notch down in prestige), and Hanson's friend and former classics colleague Bruce Thornton, still teaching at Fresno State. Both men are natives of the Valley's rural heartland: Thornton is the son of a West Fresno dairy farmer, and Hanson still lives on his family farm in Selma, 13 miles southeast of Fresno and self-advertised raisin capital of the world.

The flat, intensely cultivated Valley, stretching to a horizon that seems immeasurably distant, is beautiful in a uniquely Central Californian way: tidy rows upon rows of plum and almond trees and grapevines. It is also much degraded. Along the roadsides and among the fruit trees are overloaded plastic garbage sacks, styrofoam cups and clamshells, used baby diapers, and even tossed-out couches, stoves, and television sets. The Central Valley is one of California's fastest-growing regions, and also one of its poorest. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, a nonpartisan think tank, the Valley added one million new residents from 1995 to 2005. Its population now tops 6.5 million and is expected to exceed 12 million by 2040.

Most of the new residents are Hispanic, pushing the Valley's Hispanic population well over the 40 percent mark. And many of those newcomers are illegal immigrants from Mexico and their offspring. Entire San Joaquin Valley towns, built by the white farmers who migrated here after the Civil War, are now Hispanic. Selma, for example, is 78 percent Hispanic, and nearby Parlier is 98 percent Hispanic. Outside of the Sacramento area, one of every five Valley residents lives in poverty, according to the Public Policy Institute, in contrast to 13 percent of the rest of the state. The Valley's share of college graduates—14 percent—is half that of the rest of California.

The demographic/socioeconomic pattern seems to go like this: Illegal immigrants stream into the Valley from even worse poverty in Mexico, bringing with them a work ethic and a patience for such seasonal, labor-intensive jobs as pruning, tying vines, and fruit-picking that Valley employers need and for which they pay their employees fairly well. Yet in as little as one generation, sometimes less, the combination of American comforts and easily available welfare benefits takes its toll. (A 1994 California ballot initiative, Proposition 187, disqualifies illegal immigrants from using taxpayer-funded social services, but not their U.S.-born children.) Many of the offspring disdain farm work—an attitude that dismays the Valley's longtime Mexican-American population, for whom the skills of agricultural labor have traditionally been a ladder for lifting one's family into the middle class. Because agriculture is the leading supplier of jobs in the Valley, unemployment in Fresno County hovers at around 18 percent despite farmers' pleas for willing workers. On weekdays the sidewalks of Selma teem with able-bodied young men. "Look around, nobody's working," Hanson points out from the driver's seat. "Everyone's got an EBT card [the computerized version of food stamps]. Five people are working to support every one of those unemployed." High rates of drug use, out-of-wedlock childbirth, single-parent-headed families, and violent and property crimes have spread through the Valley along with its burgeoning population.

That a branch of the University of California would be planted in this fraying agricultural heartland is a tribute to the power of politics to trump a range of hostile realities. Historically, UC branches have been located in picturesque and/or affluent regions along the coastline: Berkeley on San Francisco Bay, UCLA a short drive from the beach, UC Santa Cruz amid towering redwoods overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The exceptions before UC Merced were UC Riverside, whose inland Southern California location is the major reason for its second-to-bottom position on the applications totem pole, and the 31,000-student UC Davis,

founded in 1909 as the agricultural arm of Berkeley, an hour northwest of the Bay area. The public institutions of higher learning that got built in the less glamorous parts of the state, far from the Pacific littoral and cursed with broiling summers, tended to be branches of the California State University system: a 23-campus network of workaday comprehensive universities such as Fresno State, which lack doctoral programs and elaborate research facilities and where admissions standards are considerably lower than they are for the University of California.

California has experienced nearly a fourfold population increase since the end of World War II: from 10 million inhabitants in 1950 to today's 37 million. The UC system's four youngest campuses before Merced were built to accommodate a postwar boom that was also accompanied by unprecedented prosperity: UC Riverside opened its doors in 1954, the 29,000-student UC San Diego in 1960, and UC Irvine and UC Santa Cruz in 1965. During the recession of the early 1990s and the deeper one of today, population growth and migration from other parts of the United States slowed considerably. Indeed, according to the Public Policy Institute, from 2000 to 2010 more people moved from California into other states than vice versa, reversing a trend that sluiced out-of-staters into California by the millions throughout the 20th century. Nonetheless, foreign immigration into California, nearly half of it from Mexico, continued unabated—and as Mexican immigration grew, so did the political clout of the Central Valley, where so many of the new immigrants settled.

By the late 1980s there was intense pressure from Hispanics in the state legislature to place a UC campus in the Valley. Relatively few Valley high school graduates enrolled in the UC system—or for that matter, in any other institution of higher learning—and the idea was that if a premier public university were placed there, they would flock to it. Never mind that such an institution already existed: UC Davis, just 23 miles from Sacramento. The legislature's Hispanic contingent, led by Cruz Bustamante, a career Democratic legislator who became speaker of the assembly in 1996 and lieutenant governor from 1999 to 2007, demanded a UC campus in the Central Valley's more populous southerly section. Bustamante maintained that such an institution would "fundamentally change the economy and political environment" there.

The UC Board of Regents—the system's trustees—were not keen on a Valley campus, but they reportedly feared legislative retaliation in the form of reduced state funding, and as the state population soared, so did overall UC enrollment. The more desirable campuses, all opened before there was any such thing as environmentalism, have found it difficult to expand. Every contemplated new structure these days at, say, UCLA or Berkeley must surmount a firewall of protests from neighbors and ecological activists. So in 1988, the regents approved a tenth campus, to be located in the San Joaquin Valley. Nonetheless, the downturn of the early 1990s slowed down efforts to select a site until 1995.

The site-selection process itself was a farrago of political jockeying. Bustamante reportedly wanted the new campus to be in or near his hometown, Fresno, where, unlike the hill country outside Merced, there were already water and sewer lines, plus easy freeway access. "Downtown Fresno would have been an ideal location," says Fresno State's Thornton. "It has all the infrastructure already in place, and it has nice-looking old buildings that could have been easily converted into classrooms and offices for a relatively low cost. If you wanted to create access to UC for kids from the Valley, Fresno would be the place to go." But intense lobbying by Merced (where the university is now one of the largest employers), coupled with the regents' desire to build something new and adventurous on picturesque empty land, led them to choose the more northerly and remote location.

"It's out in the boondocks," Thomas Holsinger, a Modesto lawyer who has closely followed UC Merced's construction history, said in a telephone interview. "It should be at least 20 miles farther south in the San Joaquin Valley just in terms of driving. They chose Merced because it would be closer to Yosemite, but people don't understand just how big this state is."

If 100-degree-plus temperatures are a summer problem in the Valley, Holsinger reminded me, there is a winter weather problem that is just as acute: "tule fog," named after the tule reed, a cattail omnipresent in the Valley's marshes. Because the Valley is a basin between two mountain ranges, it traps cold air during the humid months of the rainy season. The effect is a lingering ground fog so dense it can reduce visibility to zero, generating occasional massive and even fatal pileups on Highway 99 and Interstate 5, a north-south freeway running to the west of Highway 99. One of the worst, involving a tule fog on Highway 99 just south of Fresno in November 2007, resulted in a pileup of 108 cars and 18 large trucks. Two people died in the crashes, and there were 39 injuries.

"I thought that starting a new research university was a bad idea from the beginning," said Patrick Callan of the San Jose-based National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in a telephone interview. "I don't think there's much evidence that California or the nation needed any more research universities. The UC system already had nine campuses, and there are three major private research universities in California: Stanford, Caltech, and USC. There was no evidence of need for another UC campus. What we suggested was that a fourth [summer] quarter be added at Berkeley and UCLA and elsewhere, which would have allowed more students to attend

without building all that expensive infrastructure. UC Merced was really a pork barrel for the San Joaquin Valley. It was predicated on the idea that research universities are a tool for local economic development."

After UC finalized the purchase from the Virginia Smith Trust in 2002, a new round of troubles began. They were environmental troubles, ironic for a venture committed to a minimal footprint, green technology, and smart growth. It turned out that the 2,000 acres where the regents originally planned to place the campus, which would have afforded a spectacular view of Yosemite National Park, contained hundreds of "vernal pools"—mud puddles that linger in California grasslands after the rainy season and spawn a variety of unique fauna. The vernal pools are a major habitat of an officially endangered species, the half-inch-long fairy shrimp, one of several rare critters—the pupfish of the California deserts and the snail darter of East Tennessee among them—that have bollixed up construction plans and forced developers to go through lengthy permitting processes involving clearance by numerous federal and state agencies.

The construction-halting fairy shrimp

In order to speed up the groundbreaking—which was important because there was still political opposition to funding the new campus—and to forestall possible lawsuits by the Sierra Club and other environmental groups arguing that the area was the last remaining wilderness in the San Joaquin Valley, the regents moved the core campus infrastructure a mile and a half southwest to a defunct 200-acre golf course also on Virginia Smith land. Since the golf course was already developed and contained no problematic wetlands, the site would allow the campus to slither into existence and worry about expansion later. The golf course wasn't a bad choice: Its man-made pond called Little Lake, aswim with wild ducks and fringed by a stockade of tule reeds, is a welcome respite from the stark architecture. But it was also a risky choice. It took nearly eight years of legal wrangling, environmental handwringing, and a complicated acreage-protection tradeoff for UC Merced to win permission from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees wetlands under the federal Clean Water Act, to build the campus beyond the tight boundaries of the golf course.

Because of the fairy-shrimp fracas, UC Merced's first classes began in the fall of 2005, a year after the planned startup date, with only three academic buildings (a fourth opened in the fall of 2011, and a fifth is under construction). The new campus, a vast construction site with cranes, bulldozers, and piles of raw dirt everywhere, had trouble attracting students. There was hardly any housing and no intercollegiate athletics (UC Merced did not field its first sports teams until 2011). Despite all the vacant land, parking was—and remains—a serious problem for the majority of students forced to live off campus. The state of California no longer pays to construct UC parking lots, just as it no longer pays to construct UC dorms. The first freshman class contained 708 students; the second, in the fall of 2006, only about 500. By 2008-2009 the campus was 1,700 students short of its projected enrollment and had hired only 202 out of its projected 285 faculty members.

Most of that has changed, to the point that UC Merced cut the size of its entering freshman class for 2012 to 400, because it is now over-target in enrollments and out of classroom space. About 13,000 high school seniors have applied for those 400 slots. Still, the number is a small fraction of the 161,000 who have applied for freshman places in the UC system as a whole for the coming fall. And UC Merced's 80 percent acceptance rate is less than impressive when compared with those at Berkeley and UCLA: 26 percent and 25 percent respectively. UC Merced also has relatively low graduation rates: Only about 27 percent of its entering freshmen graduate within four years (compared with Berkeley's 66 percent), and only 58 percent within six years, a little above the national average of 54 percent but well below Berkeley's 90 percent. The large number of dropouts might have something to do with UC Merced's success in attracting students from the Central Valley, whose K-12 system is notorious for its low test scores, dearth of AP classes, and generally poor preparation for college work. Hispanics form the single largest group on the UC Merced campus: 36 percent for the 2011-2012 academic year (Asians are the second-largest group, at 28 percent), and 60 percent of entering freshmen are first-generation college students—that is, mostly from low-income families.

Still, "you've got some really motivated students, students who value an education, and that makes up for the fact that they're not as well prepared as other students I've had," says retired history professor Herken, who also taught at Oberlin, Yale, and Caltech. "One student I had wrote his senior thesis on an Indian revolt at the San Diego mission that he was interested in. He was the first in his family to attend college, but he did graduate-level research. I found that really impressive."

Because of clashing ideas from the very beginning about what sort of institution UC Merced was supposed to be, the campus is now a jarring combination of

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state-of-the-art scientific research labs and an almost entirely undergraduate-focused teaching facility. In order to build a major research university quickly, the regents decided to focus UC Merced on science and engineering, where outside grant money is plentiful (the humanities and social sciences are regarded on most campuses as drains on overhead). In that respect, UC Merced has been highly successful, attracting $113 million in federal, state, and private grants and yielding dozens of patents, although much of the funded research might strike an observer as green-trendy: solar energy, carbon capture, a climate change project that measures snow runoff in the Sierra Nevada. UC Merced seems to want to spin off a Silicon Valley of renewable-energy enterprises. But the campus is noticeably shy on the doctoral programs that are the mainstay of research universities elsewhere, with only 260 graduate students enrolled during the 2011-2012 academic year (a political science graduate program scheduled to open this fall will boost the number slightly). That's partly because state funding for UC campuses is based on the number of full-time undergraduates, and graduate students, who typically receive full-tuition scholarships and stipends, don't count under the funding scheme. A hoped-for UC Merced medical school, which was supposed to be in operation by the fall of 2012, so far consists of five grant-subsidized students who take all of their classes at UC Davis.

Cruz Bustamante and Nancy Pelosi

Nonetheless, there are distinct advantages to enrolling at UC Merced, even if most California high school seniors don't see them. For one, the science and engineering focus means that the male-female ratio among undergraduates is just about even—in contrast to the 57/43 female-to-male ratio that prevails elsewhere at U.S. universities. It also means that courses bearing titles such as "Critical Popular Music Studies," "Empire: the Postcolonial, and Representation: Reading East and West," and "Topics in the Literature of Difference" are few and far between. UC Merced's undergraduates seem to take their studies seriously, just as Herken said. Most college libraries are as empty as Al Capone's vault except at final-exam time, but early in the semester, students and their bulging backpacks and clicking laptops cram nearly every available table inside UC Merced's Kolligian Library. Furthermore, at the usually crowded Lantern, a café on the first floor of the library building that serves as the closest thing UC Merced has to a student union, it is rare to see fewer than two ethnic groups represented among the coteries of students eating lunch with the compostable utensils that are obligatory in the dining facilities. This is natural diversity, not the kind enforced by admissions quotas. "Since 2006, when I got here, there have been no serious ethnic conflicts at UC Merced," says Simon Weffer, a sociology professor. "At other UC campuses, there have been nooses and 'Compton cookouts' [a reference to a UC San Diego fraternity's spoof of Black History Month in 2010], but there hasn't been anything like that here." (African Americans make up about 7 percent of UC Merced's undergraduate population and whites 20 percent.)

UC Merced's campus culture is in many ways stereotypically academic-liberal. Students and professors protested the arrival of a Walmart distribution center in southeast Merced in 2008, secured first lady Michelle Obama as commencement speaker in 2009, and pushed through a controversial "Chicano/a studies minor" in 2010, whose curriculum includes "an in-depth examination of activism and its role in raising consciousness" and "political mobilization (both contentious and non-contentious behavior)." A writing instructor, Christopher Ramirez, gave his students credits for picketing Merced's closure of some homeless camps on city land in 2010, and the administration has given a free pass to the Occupy tent-dwellers in front of the library. "I was living downtown, but I moved up here," one of the Occupiers, sociology major Aaron De La Cerda, a Fresno native who describes himself as "homeless," told me. "I shower in the gym—I'm the first one in the shower every morning—and people give us donations of food. I love it here. It's really progressive."

Still, the Central Valley is known for its political conservatism, and even among Hispanic students only a minority belong to the campus chapter of MEChA, the radical Chicano-separatist student organization. This year's president of the College Republicans is Baltazar Cornejo, the son of a fieldworker in Modesto. "Yes, most of [UC Merced's Hispanic students] are liberals, but I read [Barry Goldwater's] *Conscience of a Conservative*, and I took a few classes here where the professors were preaching socialism," Cornejo, a political science major, said in an interview. "I don't believe that people can prosper off it. People do a lot better when they can keep their own money. My parents emigrated from Mexico, so I'm the

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first generation here. I was raised to be fiscally responsible, and that you shouldn't take money from other people."

UC Merced's small size and the perception that it is inferior in quality to the other UC campuses have led others in the UC system to grumble that it is a luxury that the system can no longer afford. From 2008 through 2011 the state of California cut its contribution to the UC budget from $3.2 billion to $2.3 billion even as the number of students steadily rose. Alarmed at the inevitable across-the-board spending cuts that would follow, 23 department chairmen at UC San Diego signed a letter to the regents in July 2009 arguing that it was unrealistic for California to support 10 flagship research universities when other states, such as Texas, Wisconsin, and Michigan, have at most one or two. The letter asked the regents to "acknowledge" that UC Merced, UC Riverside, and UC Santa Cruz were "in substantial measure teaching institutions" and to adjust their budgets downward or even to "shut one or more of these campuses down, in whole or in part." The letter continued: "Corporations faced with similar problems eliminate or sell off their least profitable, least promising divisions." Some UC professors were already angry that political pressures had led the regents and the legislature to approve an expensive new law school at UC Irvine in 2006 even though California's postsecondary education commission had recommended against the new school on the grounds that the state already had four public law schools and a growing glut of underemployed lawyers.

UC president Mark Yudof hastened to assure UC Merced that its future was not in jeopardy. At a regents' meeting this past January, however, Susan Desmond-Hellmann, the chancellor of UC San Francisco, a prestigious and grant-rich medical school and research facility that enrolls no undergraduates and receives little state funding, complained publicly about UCSF's $49 million mandatory assessment to help support other campuses in the system. Desmond-Hellmann called the assessment a "tax" and argued that UCSF ought to loosen its ties with the rest of UC and become autonomous. She also seemed irritated at having to attend regents' meetings that are marked by raucous student protests over the tuition hikes that have accompanied the funding cuts, since UCSF, with a nearly $4 billion annual budget, takes in so much outside money that it scarcely needs to charge tuition at all. Berkeley and UCLA have also hinted at breaking away from UC to some extent. Both campuses would like to set their own tuition rates—a change from the current system in which all UC students pay the same tuition no matter which campus they attend. Berkeley, UCLA, and UC San Diego, all of which enjoy international reputations, already boost their revenues by enrolling large numbers of out-of-state and foreign students who pay significantly higher tuition, and greater independence would allow the three campuses to do even more of the same. Struggling UC Merced, by contrast, enrolls almost no students from outside California.

On the encouraging side, UC Merced has a new chancellor, Dorothy Leland, hired by Yudof last year, who seems well aware that in order to survive, UC Merced needs to grow its prestige and find outside funding. The 63-year-old Leland, who grew up in the rural town of Fillmore in Southern California, had spent seven years as president of Georgia College, the Milledgeville-based liberal arts campus of the Georgia public system. There, she managed to turn a so-so institution of 6,700 students whose main asset was its pretty campus into a magnet for applicants from all over Georgia and out of state. She also raised enough money in private gifts to more than compensate for a 20 percent cut in state funding for the institution, mostly by cultivating local businesses and industries. Strategically placed outside the door of Leland's office is a vintage photograph of Berkeley taken soon after its establishment in 1868. The campus consisted of a single academic building and a handful of students, behind which loomed the then-unpopulated Berkeley hills that look to the viewer as barren and unpromising as those behind UC Merced do today. The photo is obviously a message to visitors that UC Merced can pull it off, too.

"We're a huge state, with significant population growth," Leland said in an interview in her office. "I know we can do it, but we have to be resourceful and inventive. We have to call on our friends and supporters and remind them of the significance of this university to the entire San Joaquin Valley. We have to refuse to be deterred. This is an ugly recession, but we need to jump those economic hurdles. I still think that we've got a lot of support within the University of California. I'm not into crystal ball-reading, but this isn't just wishful, hopeful thinking, either. Look at what we've done so far, from where we were just a few short years ago. I have nine fellow chancellors, and they have all been wonderfully supportive. That's because they all have something at stake in this, to make sure this campus has the quality to survive."

UC Merced may turn out to be the Little Campus That Could. Or it may be an unfortunate object lesson in the triumph of regional and ideological politics over realistic planning. "I feel badly for Merced," said Andrew Scull, the former chairman of UC San Diego's sociology department who wrote the text of the 2009 letter to the regents. "I thought it was put in the wrong place. It's been hard to attract faculty, and they essentially put commercial development in an area full of endangered species. It never really got vetted, and now it's a tax on the system. Its future looks very, very dark." What if Scull is right? Several thousand UC Merced students and faculty members—and I—hope he's wrong, but that's just hope, and I don't have a crystal ball, either. ♦

Civil Society Reconsidered

Little platoons are just the beginning

By Gertrude Himmelfarb

In the conclusion to *Coming Apart*, after describing a society that is in even greater disarray (literally, coming apart) than we had supposed, Charles Murray holds out one hope for the future: "a civic Great Awakening." Previous Great Awakenings in America had been religious. The new awakening would enlist the spirit of evangelicalism in the cause of civic revival, regenerating those aspects of life—family, vocation, community, and faith—essential to human happiness and to a healthy society. Murray has been hailed (in some circles berated) for making morality rather than economics responsible for the ominous divide in American society. Perhaps more important is the fact that he has put the idea of civil society ("civic life" or "civic culture," as he more often calls it) back into circulation, making it central to "the American project."

Civil society was once a staple of discourse, in the academy and without. Twenty or more years ago, sociologists and political scientists, politicians and "public intellectuals" of all persuasions invoked it almost as a mantra, a remedy for the ailments of our time. Civil society—families, communities, churches, workplaces, formal and informal associations—was to be the countervailing force to an overweening state on the one hand, and an unrestrained individualism on the other (the "unencumbered self," in Michael Sandel's apt phrase). It is there, we were told, that character is formed, children are civilized and socialized, individuals voluntarily assume their obligations, rights are complemented by duties, self-interest is reconciled with the general interest, and civility mutes the discord of opposing wills. And all of this would be accomplished without resorting to the state, which was itself subverting these natural virtues.

The appeal to civil society was altogether admirable. Yet the fact that it was endorsed by people of discordant views and dispositions was itself cause for suspicion. The disaffection with the state seemed to be confirmed, ironically, by no less an authority than President Clinton, who proclaimed in his State of the Union address in January 1996: "The era of big government is over." His address the following year used the word "community" 18 times, expanded at one point to "a community of all Americans"—thus belying the very idea of "community." One is reminded of Governor Mario Cuomo's keynote speech at the Democratic National Convention in 1984, which opened with his speaking on behalf of "the whole family of New York," and closed with our love for "the family of America"—hardly the "family" the proponents of civil society had in mind.

If the idea of civil society has fallen into disuse in recent years, it is not because the twin excesses, of individualism and *dirigisme*, have abated—on the contrary, they are more urgent today than ever—but because civil society itself has turned out to be a more complicated and ambiguous entity than might be supposed. Indeed, it is sometimes complicit in the problems it purports to solve. Nor can the state, however egregious today, be entirely absolved of the need to help solve them. In the light of recent experiences, it may be useful to revisit the idea of civil society.

Civil society has a venerable philosophical lineage, but it is social science that brought it to the forefront of attention in America. In 1979, Nathan Glazer, in an essay in the *Public Interest*, "On Subway Graffiti in New York," demonstrated the unfortunate effects of what seemed to be so trivial a matter as graffiti. While Norman Mailer was celebrating graffiti as a new art form, Glazer saw them as a persistent threat to urban society, assailing millions of New Yorkers every day with the sight of vandalized subway cars, and giving them a sense of willful predators capable of any kind of violence or criminality. As a subway rider himself, Glazer shared that experience, and as a sociologist inquiring into the problem, he examined the serious

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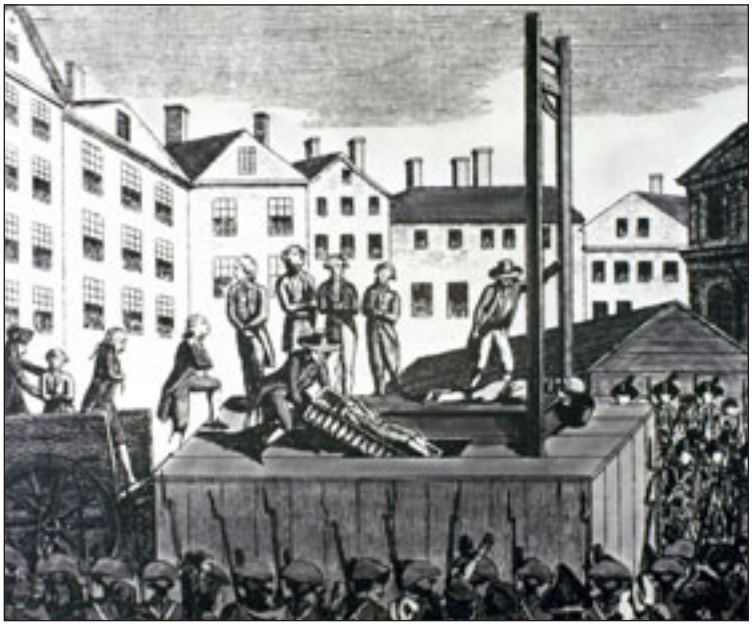
but ineffectual attempts of the police and other authorities to curb that problem.

Three years later, George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, described a similar situation in "Broken Windows." The article is based upon a study of broken windows in particular neighborhoods, but the phrase is a metaphor for disorders of a similar nature—vandalism, public drunkenness, obstreperous panhandling, and the like—minor infractions of the law which generate an atmosphere of lawlessness that is an invitation to crime, requiring the intervention of the police. More than a dozen years later, when "broken windows" had become a catch phrase, John DiIulio echoed it in "Broken Bottles," demonstrating that a multiplicity of alcohol stores in a neighborhood acted as a "multiplier of crime," resulting in regulations limiting the number of such stores.

The "broken windows" phenomenon is often cited as a prime example of civil society in operation (although the term itself does not always appear in these essays). In each case, however, the problem turns out to be within civil society itself—disorderly and criminal elements within the community, often among the young. And the solutions, or attempted solutions, come from without—not from families, neighbors, churches, or voluntary associations, but from the police and other public agencies; and not by invoking the manners and morals, habits and customs, of the community, but by the more rigorous enforcement of the law or the enactment of new laws and regulations. What the broken-windows syndrome demonstrates is that when civil society itself is in disrepair, public authorities (local ones, preferably) and legal (or quasi-legal) sanctions are called upon to help restore the fabric of society.

Another study, with an equally provocative title, raises still other questions for civil society. "Bowling Alone," by Robert Putnam, received the same acclaim in 1995 as "Broken Windows" earlier. Expanded five years later into a massive tome, it acquired a somewhat more optimistic subtitle: "America's Declining Social Capital" became "The Collapse and Revival of American Community." But the message is the same. More Americans than ever are bowling, but they are bowling alone rather than as members of leagues. And so with other activities: Individuals are increasingly removed from the traditional networks of "civic engagement"—family, friends, neighbors, professional organizations, and other associations. This erosion of civil society results in a decline of "social capital," which bodes ill for democracy at home and for democratization abroad.

Putnam's data have been disputed and his conclusions qualified, but at least one part of his thesis is more pertinent than ever. In the new technological as well as global world, the world of television and the Internet—of surfing, blogging, tweeting, texting, linking, and Facebooking—civil society is increasingly tenuous. People are not so much speaking to each other as speaking across each other, befriending each other in such quantities as to belie the very idea of friendship, violating the confidences of acquaintances and any presumption of privacy, using language that makes a mockery of what used to be called civic discourse. In this sense, people are bowling alone, so to speak, more than ever. A friendly commentator might look kindly upon this as liberalism at its best, giving free rein to the individual as against a conformist and oppressive society. A harsh critic would find it uncomfortably reminiscent of the "state of nature" that civil society was meant to supplant.



French revolutionaries: never molded into civil society

Compounding the problem is the fact that as the culture becomes more aggressively individualistic, so the state becomes more aggressively expansive. "Obamacare," perhaps the most ambitious enlargement of the welfare state since its inception, has provoked sufficient attention and concern, but the latest manifestation of it is conspicuous, if only because so unexpected. It is a long time since birth control was a subject of dispute; it is legal, available, not too costly (sometimes free), and widely used (even by those who have theological objections to it). What is new is the provision of Obamacare mandating that all institutions, including Catholic ones, provide it free (or under compulsory insurance policies)—legitimizing, in effect, a practice they regard as theologically sinful and morally abhorrent. The

ensuing controversy has focused on religious liberty and the separation of church and state. But another issue is at stake. If ever there was a subject belonging within the province of individuals, families, churches, and communities—in short, civil society—it is surely contraception. This latest episode reminds us why the idea of civil society was invented in the first place, and why it is still our main recourse against an increasingly intrusive state.

Civil society, then, yes, but a reformed civil society, not one that has been subverted by the very forces it is meant to resist. For some of the major institutions in civil society, the state has become a model and even a collaborator. Philanthropic societies, almost as large and bureaucratic as government agencies, are often little more than conduits of the state for the distribution of private funds, which they are obliged to distribute, moreover, in accord with government requirements. Financial institutions are subject to government regulations so rigorous as to make them quasi-governmental organs. Public schools assume functions once reserved to the family, displacing parents, for example, in the sex education of their children and in the inculcation of sexual mores—again, in accord with Department of Education regulations. So, too, trade unions, professional associations, universities, hospitals, and other ostensibly private institutions are subject to so many public controls as to make them more public than private.

Civil society has been described as an 'immune system against cultural disease.' But much of it has been infected by the same virus that produces the disease—a loss of moral integrity and purpose.

Religion is surely a valuable prop of civil society, creating and sustaining a variety of civic as well as religious institutions. But here too there has been significant erosion. Traditional denominational, neighborhood, family-centered churches are being threatened by two rivals: megachurches, consisting of thousands of people brought together by a single charismatic preacher, which do not survive the death of the preacher; and small, transient, nondenominational churches, some professing to be "spiritual" rather than religious, which are unstable in doctrine as in membership. The effect of both is to undermine the commitment of congregants and the effectiveness of the churches themselves, making religion a less effectual force in civil society.

Even more ominous is the condition of the family. The most fundamental component of civil society, it has also become the most vulnerable. Civil society is often identified (thanks largely to Tocqueville) with "voluntary associations." But the traditional family is not, or at least did not used to be, a voluntary association. Indeed, it is important precisely because it is not voluntary, performing the natural, elemental, even biological functions of bearing and rearing children. Today, as a result of divorce, remarriage, cohabitation, single-parent families, and single-sex parenting, the family has become, in a sense, voluntarized. We are sometimes assured that these "alternative lifestyles" are merely variations on the old, serving the same purposes as the "nuclear" or "bourgeois" family. In fact, these families—"broken families," like "broken windows"—are often literally "dysfunctional," incapable of performing the natural functions that define the family.

Civil society has been described as an "immune system against cultural disease." But much of it has been infected by the same virus that produces the disease—a loss of moral integrity and purpose. What is required, then, is not only the revitalization of civil society but its reform and remoralization—the reform of those institutions that parody government agencies, and the remoralization of those that have lost their moral focus.

This is a formidable challenge, inspiring us to recall those to whom we are indebted for the idea of civil society and whom we now cite in support of it. It is to Locke, of course, that we owe the distinctively modern concept of a civil society that mediates between the individual and the state. But it is not quite the individual and the state that figure in Locke's trinity. It is the "state of nature" and "political society" that are on either side of "civil society." This is not a trivial semantic point. The "state of nature," as Locke describes it, is more fearsome than the "individual," and "political society" less formidable than the "state." Moreover, in Locke's account, civil society has a close relationship to political society, almost overlapping with it, as opposed to the state of nature, which is always in sharp contrast to civil society: "Those who are united into one body and have a common established law and judicature to appeal to, with authority to decide controversies between them and punish offenders, are in civil society one with another; but those who have no such common appeal, I mean on earth, are still in the state of nature."

Similarly, Tocqueville's "voluntary associations," which we sometimes equate with civil society, are not as exclusively within the domain of civil society as we might suppose.

Tocqueville has the highest regard for these associations which are unique to America—but not unique to civil society. On the contrary, the genius of American democracy is the proliferation of "political associations" as well as "civil associations," and, more important, the intimate relationship between them, the civil being dependent upon the vitality of the political. "In all countries where political associations are forbidden, civil associations are rare. . . . Thus civil associations pave the way for political ones, but on the other hand, the art of political association singularly develops and improves this technique for civil purposes."

And then there is Burke, whose *Reflections on the Revolution in France* repeatedly invokes the idea, and the term, civil society, as in the rebuke to the revolutionaries for acting as if they had "never been molded into civil society, and had everything to begin anew." But it is his "little platoon" that has become the battle cry of civil-society enthusiasts. The first sentence of that passage is frequently quoted: "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections." Less often quoted is the following no less memorable sentence: "[The little platoon] is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind." Later in the book, the sentiment is reaffirmed:

> We begin our public affections in our families. . . . We pass on to our neighborhoods and our habitual provincial connections. These are inns and resting places. . . . Perhaps it is a sort of elemental training to those higher and more large regards, by which alone we come to be affected, as with their own concern, in the prosperity of a kingdom so extensive as that of France.

Today, in our anxiety about the excesses of individualism and statism, we may find ourselves looking upon civil society not merely as a corrective to those excesses but as a be-all and end-all, a sanctuary in itself, a sufficient habitat for the human spirit. What our forefathers impress upon us is a more elevated as well as a more dynamic view of civil society, one that exists in a continuum with "political society"—that is, government—just as "civil associations" do with "political associations," "private affections" with "public affections," and, most memorably, the "little platoon" with "a love to our country and to mankind." This is civil society properly understood (as Tocqueville would say), a civil society rooted in all that is most natural and admirable—family, community, religion—and that is also intimately related to those other natural and admirable aspects of life, country and humanity. ♦

Chinese line up to buy train tickets, Zhejiang Province, January 2012

Demography Is Destiny

The perils of population loss. BY JONATHAN V. LAST

The world is heading for demographic catastrophe. Fertility rates have been falling across the globe for 40 years, to the point where, today, Israel is the only First World country where women have enough babies to sustain their population. The developing world is heading in the same direction, fast. Only 3 percent of the world's population live in a country where the fertility rate is *not* dropping.

As fertility falls, populations shrink. As populations shrink, economies will sputter. Western countries will struggle to support too many retirees without enough workers, and the rest of the world (particularly places such as China and Russia) will be challenged just to maintain order as societies change in unprecedented ways: Most people will have neither brothers, sisters, aunts, nor uncles, and there will be no such thing as an extended family.

Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics
edited by Susan Yoshihara & Douglas A. Sylva
Potomac, 304 pp., $35

This forecast may sound apocalyptic, but it's nearly conventional wisdom among the demographers and economists who study such things. However, the conventional wisdom also sees a silver lining to the world's demographic decline: a "geriatric peace." As fertility rates decline, and babies become relatively scarce, the average age of societies increases. In many countries the median age is already over 40, with geezers outnumbering children. And once the entire world looks like Florida, the thinking goes, we'll all be more peaceable, because countries full of old men don't go to war.

Unfortunately, Susan Yoshihara and Douglas A. Sylva suggest that geriatric

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peace may be elusive, and in *Population Decline and the Remaking of Great Power Politics* they have collected essays from an all-star squad of demographers, historians, and military strategists—Phillip Longman, Nicholas Eberstadt, Toshi Yoshihara, and Murray Feshbach are among their Murderers' Row—who argue that a shrinking world may be more dangerous than we might expect.

In 1950, Japan was the fifth-most populous nation on earth, Germany was the seventh, and the United Kingdom the ninth. By 2050 these countries will rank twentieth, twenty-first, and twenty-second, respectively. Population is the wellspring of power, both economic and military, and the reordering of global power is, Yoshihara and Sylva argue, inherently destabilizing.

Consider Japan. Faced with some of the lowest fertility rates on earth, Japan's population has already begun aging and shrinking. The cresting wave of elderly Japanese is stressing the government's budget with their demands for health care and pensions. At the same time, the decreasing labor pool has made it difficult for Japan's Self-Defense Forces to recruit new soldiers. All of which would suggest that Japan should be retreating from international affairs. Yet precisely the opposite has happened: Japan has, instead, attempted to take on more global security responsibilities, in part as a response to growing Chinese assertiveness in the region.

Japan's strategy-resource mismatch creates the potential for all sorts of geostrategic problems. Without manpower the Japanese defense forces will necessarily rely on advanced technologies. But tech doesn't come cheap. And the very expense of high-tech military systems makes it more difficult to justify placing them in harm's way.

In a sense, Japan could fall into the same trap that Western Europe already faces: the inability to formulate proportional military responses. Developed countries in demographic decline may have nuclear weapons, but for the most part, they lack basic military manpower. So when faced with a security threat or provocation, they have only two options: passivity and overreaction. Neither is conducive to peace.

There are other, tertiary effects of fertility collapse that contribute to instability. For instance, in some parts of the Third World, fertility decline has been so rapid that age structures are being scrambled by generational "echo booms." In a chapter on the geopolitical implications of aging, Phillip Longman notes that in Iran between 2005 and 2020, the number of people aged 15-24 will shrink by 34 percent. That's a startling shift. But then, because of echo effects, the 15-24 cohort will *grow* by 34 percent between 2020 and 2035.

In many countries the median age is already over 40, with geezers outnumbering children. And once the entire world looks like Florida, the thinking goes, we'll all be more peaceable, because countries full of old men don't go to war.

Even a stable, well-ordered society would have trouble coping with such wild demographic dislocations.

Yet for all the forward-looking concerns, the most bracing essay here is James R. Holmes's examination of the demographic crises in classical Greece. In 464 B.C., a terrible earthquake shook Sparta. Much of the city was destroyed, along with some 20,000 Spartan warriors. The devastation was particularly bad from a demographic point of view because the gymnasium where young Spartiates were trained collapsed, wiping out an entire rising generation of warriors—and their potential progeny.

As a result of this cataclysm, Sparta's leaders decided to retrench and abandon their traditional role as the principal counterweight to Athenian might. They became so docile that, when faced with a slave rebellion, the city begged Athens for help. (After some deliberation, Athens sent 4,000 hoplites to their aid.) Forty years later, Athens and Sparta were antagonists again, but Sparta was still chastened by its demographic decline: In 425 B.C. the Athenian Army captured 292 Spartan warriors—and the mighty Spartans sued for peace rather than lose the precious manpower. This frailty prompted the nearby subjugated region of Messenia to challenge Spartan rule. Demographic weakness, too, is a provocation.

Athens' demographic troubles came not from a single shock but from a long-running plague that began in 431 B.C. and lasted five full years. The sickness killed between a quarter and a third of all Athenians, moving like a scythe through the city-state. Slaves and warriors alike were claimed—even Pericles, the First Citizen, succumbed. But unlike Sparta, which responded to demographic decline by turning dangerously cautious, the Athenians became reckless and impetuous. They made the rash decision to invade Sicily—a disaster that cost them nearly the whole of their navy. Terrified of losing allies (because they were so short of manpower themselves), the Athenians resorted to brutality. When the island state of Melos suggested it might leave the Athenian sphere of influence, Athens put to death the entire male population of the island and enslaved its women and children. Such brutality marked the beginning of the end of Athens' empire.

The divergent reactions of Athens and Sparta show the strategic uncertainty inherent in demographic change. Over the next 40 years we will witness the most drastic demographic upheaval the world has seen since (at least) the Black Death. And one way, or another, the world will be remade. As Yoshihara and Sylva make clear, you may not be interested in demography, but demography is interested in you. ♦

B&A

Gold Standard

The journey of a masterpiece through the twentieth century. **BY AMY HENDERSON**

"Our Mona Lisa," is how Ronald S. Lauder described the portrait he had just paid a record $135 million for in 2006. The shimmering Gustav Klimt painting, destined to become the centerpiece of Lauder's Neue Galerie in New York, depicts Adele Bloch-Bauer, the wife of a wealthy Viennese sugar industrialist and a prize social peacock in years when that city was the cultural capital of Central Europe. Klimt's work shows Adele's head floating in a luxurious sea of gold and silver leaf, surrounded by cascading mosaics of Egyptian and Mycenaean symbols. It is a glittering statement of Vienna's opulent *belle époque*.

The Lady in Gold
The Extraordinary Tale of Gustav Klimt's Masterpiece, 'Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer'
by Anne-Marie O'Connor
Knopf, 368 pp., $30

Turn-of-the-century Vienna was energized by the new: an arena for modernism in music (Gustav Mahler, Richard Strauss, Arnold Schönberg), science (Sigmund Freud), letters (Arthur Schnitzler), and art (Klimt, Oskar Kokoschka, Egon Schiele). Gustav Klimt (1862-1918) was part of Vienna's Secessionist Movement that embraced the notion "To every age its art." Beginning in the late 1890s, his portraits of well-heeled women earned him enormous popularity, fueled both by his sensuous depictions and also by his deserved reputation as a rake. His portrait of Adele, with whom he pursued at least a platonic affair, presented her as the quintessential *femme fatale*. The painting was completed in 1907, shortly after the scandalous premiere of Strauss's opera about another seductress, *Salome*.

At first, the idea of *The Lady in Gold* resembles that of Deborah Davis's *Strapless*, the 2003 chronicle of John Singer Sargent's remarkable oops-my-strap-slipped painting of Madame X that shocked the 1884 Paris Salon. But instead, *The Lady in Gold* gets dragged into a decades-long battle over ownership: After Adele died of meningitis at the age of 43 in 1925, the portrait fell under the stewardship of her husband; in 1938, when Germany annexed Austria, he fled to Switzerland and left the portrait behind.

The Bloch-Bauers were Jewish, but when Klimt's portrait of Adele was confiscated by the Nazis it underwent an interesting metamorphosis that erased her Jewish identity. The painting was reinvented as the *Lady in Gold* and put on display at the Belvedere Palace—a highly unusual move in years when Jewish art collections were uniformly confiscated and either passed around to various museums or burned as degenerate. But *Lady in Gold* lived on, and was even the centerpiece of a Klimt exhibition organized by the Vienna Reichsgau in 1943. The painting survived bombs and devastation; after the war, the Austrian government's claim of ownership set off a long and fierce restitution battle by the family.

Anne-Marie O'Connor, who is a journalist, has clearly been swept up in the story of this painting's century-long journey from Klimt's Viennese studio to the Neue Galerie. Her research is dogged, and the early sections of the story are lively and

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intriguing. But there is little sense of balance as the journey continues and the author becomes entwined first in the horrors of the Holocaust and then in the family's postwar battle for restitution. The second half is burdened by extraneous side stories that clutter the search for provenance. O'Connor increasingly inserts her own feelings into her description of the family's crusade, and uses a distracting heavy hand to relate their arguments for righteous restitution.

The fight climaxed in 2004 when no less than the United States Supreme Court ruled that the surviving descendant, a Los Angeles resident, could sue Austria in the United States. An arbitration tribunal in Austria then decided in favor of the heirs, who put the portrait up for auction. Enter Ronald Lauder, onetime U.S. ambassador to Austria, heir to the Lauder cosmetics fortune, and founder of an art museum devoted to Austrian and German fine and decorative art. One hundred-and-thirty-five-million dollars later, the portrait was enshrined at the Neue Galerie on 86th Street and Fifth Avenue. *The Lady in Gold* appears in conjunction with the celebration of Klimt's 150th birthday. Vienna has declared 2012 Klimt Year, and the city's major museums will be staging exhibitions to honor him as a pioneer of modernism.

A close look at the *Lady in Gold* portrait may reveal the wisp of a smile; Adele would grin. ♦

B&A

Nixon's Women

A champion of gender equality gets some credit.

BY ARAM BAKSHIAN JR.

While he couldn't resist exaggerating a little for effect, the longshoreman-philosopher Eric Hoffer had a point when he observed that, all too often, great movements "start as a cause, evolve into a business, and end up a racket." Consider three of the major social crusades that reshaped modern America: trade unionism, the civil rights movement, and women's rights. Each shares a common trajectory, beginning as a visionary but clear-cut moral striving for simple justice, then overcoming enormous odds to achieve most or all of its original, commendable goals—only to morph into something very different from the high ideals of its pioneers.

A Matter of Simple Justice
The Untold Story of Barbara Hackman Franklin and a Few Good Women
by Lee Stout
Penn State, 200 pp., $24.95

A Matter of Simple Justice is a story drawn from the early, heroic phase of the drive for women's rights, and one that has been shamefully neglected by those latter-day feminist leaders who (like many of today's union and civil rights activists) are more interested in pursuing a far-left political agenda than in serving the interests of the people they claim to represent. Much of the action takes place in the Nixon White House, which may also explain why this particular story hasn't become part of politically correct feminist lore. As a Washington writer and later a member of the Nixon White House staff, I witnessed a lot of it firsthand and had the pleasure of counting several of the key players as friends as well as colleagues.

The story begins on February 6, 1969, at Richard Nixon's second presidential news conference, when correspondent Vera Glaser, who would become a close friend of mine, asked, "Mr. President, in staffing your administration, you have so far made about 200 high-level cabinet and other policy position appointments, and of these only 3 have gone to women. Can you tell us, sir, whether we can expect a more equitable recognition of women's abilities, or are we going to remain a lost sex?"

After reportedly rolling his eyes "in a kind of sighing chagrin," Nixon engaged in a bit of characteristically heavy-handed banter ("Would you be interested in coming into the government?"), paused for a moment, and then added, "Very seriously, I had not known that only three had gone to women, and I shall see that we correct that imbalance very promptly." And he really did, in a way none of his predecessors, Republican or Democratic, ever had.

Although Franklin Roosevelt had appointed the first woman cabinet member, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, in 1933, his successor Harry Truman was quoted as saying that women's rights were "a lot of hooey" and never followed up on FDR's example. Dwight Eisenhower named a woman, Oveta Culp Hobby, secretary of the newly formed Department of Health, Education, and Welfare in 1953, and appointed more women to senior posts requiring Senate confirmation than his predecessor, Truman, or his successor, John Kennedy. But that was about it.

As for Kennedy, while Washington natives like myself were long aware of his informal efforts to recruit female talent while in the White House, most of them were confined to invitations to late-night, impromptu parties held when first lady Jacqueline Kennedy was out of town. JFK did establish the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women; ironically, it is best remembered for "proclaiming motherhood to be the major role of America's women." Lyndon Johnson—obsessed with Vietnam and his egomaniacal desire to fashion a Great Society in his

Aram Bakshian Jr. served as an aide to Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Reagan.

own image—had little time or interest to expend on women's issues.

So it could be said that journalist Vera Glaser, more than any political operative, jumpstarted the first major breakthrough for across-the-board, senior-level female participation in government at that early Nixon press conference. In the weeks and months that followed, the predictable behind-the-scenes tussles took place among administration power players, some hostile to, some friendly to, and many if not most previously unfocused on the issue. Some of the latter, notably presidential counselors Arthur Burns, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and Bryce Harlow, and senior aide Peter Flanigan, were won over after being presented with the facts by Glaser, Rep. Florence Dwyer (R-N.J.), and others. Even first lady Pat Nixon weighed in, asking Glaser for a list of prominent woman attorneys and jurists for possible consideration on the Supreme Court.

Richard Nixon and Consumer Affairs Adviser Virginia Knauer, 1969

The result: At a July 9 cabinet meeting, "President Nixon requested those present to place qualified women in high-level positions in the administration as a first step to correcting the imbalance." On October 1, the President's Task Force on Women's Rights and Responsibilities was announced, and one of its private sector members was the "little lady who had started it all," Vera Glaser. She would play a key role in writing its report, which went to the president in December. Many of its recommendations were ignored or pigeonholed, but some of them eventually bore fruit.

Meanwhile, a gradually growing roster of female talent was being recruited for the Nixon White House and throughout the executive branch. A major turning point was reached in April 1971 when a 31-year-old New York bank officer named Barbara Hackman Franklin was appointed staff assistant to the president for executive manpower with a specific focus on recruiting qualified women. Backed by presidential directives and White House heavy hitters like Fred Malek, Franklin performed heroically, bringing over 100 more women into executive government positions.

If that number sounds puny by today's standards, it was almost four times more than in any previous administration.

A Matter of Simple Justice traces the struggle, first with a narrative history by Penn State librarian emeritus Lee Stout, who launched the oral history project that, thanks to the tireless fieldwork of another pioneer careerwoman, Jean Rainey, generated in-depth interviews of more than 50 principal participants. The history section is followed by a collection of thoroughly annotated excerpts from the interviews themselves. The result is a primary source that will prove invaluable to future historians and, more immediately, a corrective to the standard leftist-feminist line prevalent in academia and the popular culture. Just in the nick of time, too; many of the interviewees, including "founding mother" Vera Glaser, consumer advocate Virginia Knauer, and Ambassador Anne Armstrong, died before publication.

Another of those interviewed who is no longer with us was the first woman appointed to a regular White House staff position as a presidential speechwriter. Her name was Vera Hirschberg and, as it happened, she and I both started work at the White House on the same June day in 1972, meeting Nixon for the first time together and taking up office space next to each other. She and her late husband, Peter, became lifelong friends, for which you might say I have Barbara Franklin's female executive outreach program to thank. Others, like Franklin herself, Ann McLaughlin Korologos, and Elizabeth Dole, went on to high office in later years as cabinet members and senators, and to occupy other posts of distinction. And they did it through merit and without losing the womanly qualities that brought a fresh and much-needed feminine sensibility to the traditionally male-dominated field of government.

In short, they were women—and Americans—of whom we could all be proud. All of us, that is, except for a certain kind of radical feminist whose goal was once summed up by that terrible old Marxist termagant, the late New York Democratic congresswoman Bella Abzug: "Our struggle today," she once brazenly declared, "is not to have a female Einstein get appointed as an assistant professor. It is for a woman *schlemiel* to get as quickly promoted as a male *schlemiel*."

What a far cry from the brave, brilliant, and unashamedly female pioneers commemorated in this useful

BETTMANN / CORBIS

volume. As Julie Nixon Eisenhower says of one of them (Republican National Committee co-chairman, and later ambassador, Anne Armstrong), Richard Nixon thought she "was the best kind of representative for the party because she was always a lady and always so charming, but she was smart and articulate and this is exactly what we need today for women." Julie added, "I don't think you need to sacrifice being the lady who can bring all those wonderful graces into a job as well as the brains and the drive."

Bella Abzug, wherever you are, eat your heart out. ♦

B&A

Camp as Metaphor

What humans will learn at the edge of civilization.

BY EVE TUSHNET

Summer camp! The phrase calls up images of freedom and play: diversions and discoveries, secrets whispered in humid tents, children roaming the woods without getting lost for too long. For the young adults who answered an emergency call for new counselors at a Missouri summer camp in *The Inverted Forest*, summer camp promised a break from their constricting hometown lives. The counselors, too, were seeking freedom and self-discovery. They found something much sadder.

The Inverted Forest
by John Dalton
Scribner, 336 pp., $26

The Inverted Forest is a novel about, among other things, the limits of human authority. John Dalton portrays a world in which humiliation is inevitable, responsibility is burdensome, and most of life is about obeying orders or going too far beyond them. The phrase "did as she was told" and its cousins are used again and again throughout the novel. And while the novel turns, in part, on the question of who can stand as a responsible adult, it should be noted that there's only one child at this camp. Kindermann Forest Summer Camp begins the season with a two-week session of adult campers from the state hospital system: adults with severe developmental disorders such as mental retardation, along with a host of other ailments.

Before they arrive, the summer of 1996 starts with a jolt when camp owner Schuller Kindermann hears a noise in the woods and ventures out to find almost all of his counselors frolicking naked in the pool. Kindermann, a repressive Christian who can't really understand any form of passion, goes against the wishes of his staff and fires everyone who was involved in the incident—with one exception. The nurse, Harriet, is allowed to remain, along with her young son. Everyone else is replaced by a new crop of secondhand counselors, people who were rejected the first time around or were found by a hasty and ramshackle search.

The first chapter, which details the pool party and its immediate aftermath, reads like a perfect short story. The elderly, authoritarian Kindermann confronts young counselors who seem callow and fairly self-involved, unable to understand why anyone might object to crude sexual games and mixed-sex skinny-dipping. Both sides come away from this confrontation feeling thwarted and defeated, unable to understand one another, or even themselves.

However, it's the later consequences of the mass firing which set off the events of the novel. Among the new counselors is Wyatt Huddy, a man with a genetic condition causing facial distortion, which makes many people assume that he is retarded himself. While he must explain to the other "normal" adults that he's a counselor, and not a camper, the campers themselves never mistake him for one of their own. He, like Harriet, is a marginal, in-between figure—and it's through their eyes that we see the campers and the counselors, the adults who are supposed to follow the rules and the adults who are supposed to enforce them.

Sometimes the story is told from the point of view of Kindermann, the adult who makes the rules, which helps make him more than a caricatured tyrant, although he is too sour to evoke deep sympathy. He thinks of himself as having "a benign absence" of passion, but what he lacks is really *need* or longing, and that lack is not actually benign. It makes him simultaneously too strict and too hands-off, uninvolved in the daily crises of the camp and therefore unable to foresee or ward off the major catastrophe which occurs at the very end of the state hospital session.

There are some lovely moments in the writing: "a cold and molted gray morning," "the bloated sunlight in the cottage windows." And there are many quick, conversational sentences highlighting the submissive, sometimes abject, obedience of many of the characters. One camper has "the least imposing gaze Harriet had ever seen." Another looks "like a man accustomed to disappointment, a refugee turned away at every border." Wyatt himself gets this telling moment, a mix of self-assertion and submission: "'I'm a counselor,' he explained meekly."

Responsibility weighs heavily on Harriet, who finds herself physically incapable of being constantly "on duty" as both sole nurse and single mother. She finds herself in those

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exhausted 3 A.M. moments in which one's life feels less like a vocation, still less like a choice, and more like a trap in which you just woke up. She reflects, "What a peculiar occupation, nursing, the way it veered back and forth between the honorable and the ridiculous." Both she and Wyatt wonder if they have been given more responsibility—more *control* over others, and more duty to exercise that control gently and well—than they can bear.

Others among the staff don't ask themselves those questions. Some of the counselors are just trying to get by, doing the grueling day-to-day work of dealing with the campers. (The work is humiliating: One counselor is constantly insulted by a camper, an old man who calls him "a stinking puddle of piss." This phrase is picked up as a joke by all the other counselors, even though it causes him genuine distress. The counselors have to provide "the sort of help that left you stinking, scratched, and shaken.") Some of them may be even worse. There's a cajoling, weaseling side of youth, and some of the staffers begin to suspect that one of the counselors may be angling to abuse his position.

The final disaster occurs in a tangle of compliance and disobedience: the counselor who breaks the rules, the camper who does as she's told, Harriet's instructions to Wyatt as she tries to prevent a tragedy, and his overreaching response to those instructions. *The Inverted Forest* portrays a world in which authority is both necessary and absent. There is no sure source of guidance. The young counselors lack the experience needed for moral judgment while Kindermann lacks both the generosity and the insight into human motivations which he desperately needs to exercise leadership responsibly.

Harriet and Wyatt—and the campers, helpless, doing as they're told—are caught in the middle. They try to take on just enough responsibility and evade the worst of the burden. But by the end they, like everyone in a summer-camp novel, have been forced to grow up. ♦

B&A

The Paranoid State

Suspicion and betrayal and the Soviet way of life.

BY JAMES C. BANKS

Soviet history has crystallized in Western memory as a conflict between apparatchiks and heroes. The apparatchiks were ideologically rigid autocrats and pandering toadies, while the heroes—such as Solzhenitsyn, Havel, and Sharansky—were the voices of humanity, reverberating until they eventually penetrated the Iron Curtain. Both sides, however, existed among a vast multitude of average human beings who had the opportunity to become saints and chose to remain sinners. Soviet history is replete with anecdotes of betrayal; many gave up close associates for as little as material gain and as much as self-preservation. The result was a society of moral as well as physical death.

Inventing the Enemy
Denunciation and Terror in Stalin's Russia
by Wendy Z. Goldman
Cambridge, 332 pp., $29.99

Creating a detailed narrative of Soviet crimes is a tortuous endeavor and becoming more difficult as the Russian government—controlled by a former KGB agent—is reluctant to revisit a history from which its people and neighbors have never recovered. Nonetheless, devoted researchers continue to produce histories that shed light on new dimensions of the commissars' atrocities, and, to the extent that the Soviet archives have been opened to these researchers, they have uncovered more than enough to develop a narrative which is as detailed as it is horrifying.

As an account of the Great Terror from the perspective of people on the factory floor, *Inventing the Enemy* is an important contribution to this research. Wendy Z. Goldman, who teaches at Carnegie Mellon and has written comprehensive accounts of the Soviet workforce in the early years of Stalinism, sets out to answer why people more concerned with making a living than fighting a revolution cooperated with authorities and betrayed coworkers, friends, and family. In answering this question, she invites the reader into a microcosm of Russian factories in which everyone is a prisoner faced with the same dilemma: to denounce or be denounced.

Like World War I exactly 20 years before, the Great Terror began in response to a disruptive event: Late in 1934, the head of Leningrad's Communist party, Sergei M. Kirov, was killed by an assassin. The trials that followed were short and the executions almost immediate. But the fear of terrorism not only refused to die with the assassins; it grew and infected all levels of the system. The state began actively hunting victims. Workers did not resist the commissars or shield their supervisors. Instead, many took advantage of the party's zealotry. Denunciations (or *zaiavleniia*) became the means by which workers would "redress safety hazards, challenge bosses, and pursue personal vendettas." The smallest technical error or production shortage became evidence of treason:

> Once the workers had been given this virtual carte blanche, the factories erupted into a cacophony of accusations and counteraccusations. Rational technical explanations proved a poor counterweight to allegations of wrecking, which soon offered a handy excuse for any breakdown, shortage, accident, or failure.

Nonideological individuals soon supported the state's witch hunt as actively

James C. Banks is a contributor to the American Interest.

as the system's true believers. Once the state accepted that its enemies were everywhere, they set a standard for loyalty that could be used to incriminate anyone: "Party members were warned that the enemy might appear in the guise of a better, more responsible version of themselves." Ideology incentivized workers to betray their comrades. Even so, inconspicuous shopworkers proved more than willing to oblige the Communist inquisitors, especially when the Terror grew worse in 1937 after the Dinamo, an electrical equipment factory in Moscow, was damaged by a fire. In an atmosphere of paranoia, this event had no chance of being attributed to happenstance. Factory newspapers called for aggressive prosecution and workers began accusing their managers at the first sign of suspicion. Production and efficiency slowed as prosecutors cleared the factory of its management, a fact which was interpreted only as further evidence of malfeasance:

> The prosecution . . . deprived the factory of its technical director, its deputy director, and three shop heads. Shock waves would reverberate through the factory for months. Not only did the arrests leave important posts vacant, but they also goaded party members into zealously going after one another in an effort to expose anyone who had worked with or defended the arrested men.

The paranoia spread deeper and broke stronger bonds than those between managers and workers. Family ties, friendships, and romantic relations were all severed. The court records allow Goldman to give detailed case studies of interrogations and trials: S. Mironov denounces his friend and supervisor after the shop head is tied, perhaps falsely, to "rightists"; Gringauz, a party member, is expelled for helping his accused brother-in-law find work (but only after attempting to save himself by endorsing the party's view that his brother-in-law was a spy); Aleksandr Somov, head of a steel plant's party committee, loses his membership for allegedly having an affair with a Polish woman who had been arrested as a "spy."

The concluding chapter—"A History without Heroes"—is aptly titled:

> The party meetings of 1937 and 1938 are long over. Only ghosts now roam the shuttered shops and halls where hundreds of people once gathered to judge their comrades. Party members put central directives into action and thereby created a process driven by its own self-generating dynamic, which devoured victims and perpetrators indiscriminately.

Not until Stalin's death did the party admit any culpability for encouraging a culture of suspicion.

The onetime Eastern Bloc still has a long way to go to develop the sustainable institutions of democracy, but the Soviet Union is more than dead: It is beyond resurrection. Vladimir Putin may lament the loss of empire, but few believe that the Soviet Union was a model of statecraft. The totalitarian mind is still a force to be reckoned with, but its ideologies tend to be primitive and inchoate: Sayyid Qutb was no Marx, and Osama bin Laden was no Lenin.

But this is an important book because it reminds readers that many of totalitarianism's enablers are not ideologues. Instead, the men and women Wendy Goldman depicts call to mind the psychological profiles outlined in Czeslaw Milosz's *Captive Mind*. Writing just after being granted asylum in the West in 1951, Milosz described the people of the Eastern Bloc as a company of perpetual actors:

> one does not perform on the theater stage but in the street, office, factory, meeting hall, or even the room one lives in. Such acting . . . places a premium upon mental alertness. Before it leaves the lips, every word must be evaluated as to its consequences. A smile that appears at the wrong moment, a glance that is not all it should be can occasion dangerous suspicions and accusations. ♦

B&A

Holmes's Creator

Millions of words and one indelible character.

BY DIANE SCHARPER

Michael Dirda, a longtime Sir Arthur Conan Doyle fan, ascribes his critical abilities to Sherlock Holmes. He still remembers the spell cast on him when, during the 1950s in elementary school, he discovered *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), with its cover "depicting a shadowy Something with fiery eyes crouching on a moonlit crag." *On Conan Doyle* pays tribute to the late Victorian author whom he credits with teaching him to observe details. But despite its subtitle, the book says little about the art of telling stories: It focuses more on the incongruities inherent in Arthur Conan Doyle's personal and professional life.

On Conan Doyle
Or, the Whole Art of Storytelling
by Michael Dirda
Princeton, 224 pp., $19.95

Part of Princeton's Writers on Writers Series, this mixes Dirda's many memories of reading Conan Doyle with a biography of the noveliste, as well as commentary on his life and writing, including a paper Dirda wrote for the Baker Street Irregulars, of which he is a member. There's also a chapter about Sherlockian societies as well as an appendix listing works by and about Conan Doyle.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930) was, in his time, considered a major

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writer; today he holds a minor place in the literary pantheon, where he's known primarily as the creator of Sherlock Holmes. His other writings are dismissed as period pieces. Dirda believes he deserves better.

Conan Doyle's oeuvre is extensive: He published 150 short stories, several plays, 3 volumes of poetry, and 21 novels. These include historical fiction, romance, adventure, science fiction, stories of war, sports, horror, and the supernatural. He also published a great deal of nonfiction promoting various deserving causes. Since his Sherlock Holmes stories promote no causes, deserving or otherwise, Conan Doyle considered them mere entertainments, and "a cheap way of rousing the interest of the reader." He believed that literature should inspire people "to become . . . brave, courteous, heroic, trustworthy, stoic, self-controlled, [and] sportsmanlike."

Dirda acknowledges that people today are leery of these old-fashioned ideals, but says little about the deadening effect of using art to promote them. For better or worse, contemporary readers dislike didacticism in the literary arts. This is, perhaps, the reason why Conan Doyle's other works are relatively unknown while the Holmes stories are highly regarded. That's also why Sherlock Holmes has grown to iconic proportions while other Conan Doyle protagonists tend to be ignored.

Born of Irish Catholic parents in Edinburgh, Arthur Conan Doyle came from a family of prominent artists. A first son and favorite child, he was a mama's boy. His father was an alcoholic, and his mother was the mainstay of the family. A gifted storyteller, "The Ma'am" (as he called his mother) inspired Conan Doyle's interest in writing. He attended a Jesuit school but later rejected Roman Catholicism. Yet he built his stories around the golden rule, especially as seen in the Jesuit ideal of being a man for others.

Conan Doyle studied medicine and became an ophthalmologist; but instead of treating diseases of the eye, he wrote stories. As Dirda notes, he was a fast writer: He wrote the first set of four Sherlock Holmes stories, running about 8,000 words each, in less than a month. He wrote with little revision, steadily producing sentences from morning until

Arthur Conan Doyle, 1930

night. If he were sustained by a "burning indignation," as he mentions in an essay, he could produce 40,000 words in a week. (By way of helpful comparison, Dirda says that his book contains about 45,000 words and took much longer than a week to write!)

Conan Doyle's first story, "The Mystery Of Sasassa Valley" (1879), shows an interest in the supernatural, which stayed with him. After his son died, he attempted to communicate with the deceased and became heavily involved with Spiritualism. Indeed, so taken was Conan Doyle with Spiritualism, especially during his final years, that he willingly sacrificed his literary reputation to promote it.

And yet, of course, today Sherlock Holmes is very much alive, stories about him are immensely popular worldwide, and numerous fan clubs have grown up around the great detective who inspires adaptations in print and film. Michael Dirda, "even in [his] mature smugness," as he calls it, thinks that *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is one of the world's greatest books and possesses books, tapes, records, CDs, and DVDs of nearly everything that Conan Doyle wrote, as well as a substantial collection of material written *about* Conan Doyle.

But that's nothing, Dirda adds; his is merely an enthusiastic reader's library. His friends in the Baker Street Irregulars have truly eye-popping collections, with one possessing a Conan Doyle desk blotter, someone else having a chip of wood from one of his bookshelves, and another owning Christmas ornaments fashioned for every story in the Holmes canon.

Is this silly? No, Dirda answers, it's love—and judging from this brief but immensely entertaining book, it's a love that many readers can understand. ♦

B&A

Hotel Heartbreak

When cable is good, it's very, very good, but when it's bad, it's . . . **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

Magic City, a lavish new series on the cable channel Starz, throws *Mad Men*, *The Sopranos*, and *Boardwalk Empire* into a blender. The resulting mish-mosh has all the attention to costumes and wallpaper and hairstyles you find on *Mad Men*, all the bad casting of *Boardwalk Empire*, and all the excessive nudity from the first couple of seasons of *The Sopranos*.

I can't tell you how disappointing I found the first three episodes of *Magic City*, given its rich setting—an over-the-top populuxe Miami Beach hotel in the

NEWSCOM

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

late 1950s—and its relatively novel focus on shady Jewish businessmen and Jewish gangsters. But everything is off here, either just a little bit or by a mile. For example, there are maybe six guests staying in the giant hotel over New Year's Eve where Frank Sinatra is performing; presumably the mammoth lobby set was underpopulated by extras to save some production dollars, but as a result, it looks like a set and not a lobby.

Perhaps even more telling, most of the Jews on display—the hotel owner, his twentysomething sons, the psychopathic gangster, the union lawyer who wants to shut the hotel down—don't seem even remotely Jewish (an occupational hazard when you cast Gentiles with names like Leland Orser and Jeffrey Dean Morgan in the parts). The dialogue is sprinkled with Yiddishisms and discussions of "bas mitzvahs," all of which sound as though the cast learned the phrases phonetically.

This is a problem, because melodramas only work when they feel authentic, when they get the details right; those details anchor what we're watching in a recognizable reality, which is necessary for plots that get lurid and overstuffed the way gangster dramas do.

The failure of *Magic City*, like the creative failure of *Boardwalk Empire* before it, only serves to show what a miracle *The Sopranos* really was—and a reminder of how that one series unexpectedly altered the direction of popular culture in the United States following its debut in 1999. *The Sopranos* premiered after a brief shining moment in the 1990s when broadcast television truly faced the threat posed by the decline in its audience numbers and suddenly got really, really good (with *NYPD Blue* and *Homicide* and *ER* and *Party of Five* and *The X-Files* all debuting in a two-year period)—only to fall back into its usual mediocrity a few years later.

In fact, *The Sopranos* was conceived during that very short golden age, and only because the networks passed on it did its creator, David Chase, grudgingly take it to the mildly disreputable HBO, which insisted on injecting wholesale nudity. At the time, showing naked girls and unvarnished violence on TV were what cable executives believed was their industry's primary competitive advantage over broadcast. (*Magic City*'s startlingly gratuitous nudity suggests that idea is still present, although not as central.)

So what HBO thought it had was a violent gangster show with a lot of exposed breasts. What it ended up with, fortuitously, was something rich and complicated and tangled and unforgettable. It was like nothing anyone had ever seen before, a years-long epic in which it was impossible to get a fix on the nearly bottomless complexity of its central characters. David Chase had some luck as well. He almost cast Steve Van Zandt, best known as a Bruce Springsteen sidekick, as Tony Soprano (he ended up playing Tony's sidekick Silvio). The show would have failed with him in the lead; it needed the astonishing combination of pent-up rage and emotional sensitivity brought to the part by the unknown sensation James Gandolfini.

Jeffrey Dean Morgan, Olga Kurylenko

STARZ ENTERTAINMENT

But Chase's greatest stroke of luck was a sad one: the death after the conclusion of the first season of Nancy Marchand, who played Tony's devious mother Livia. Chase's schematic plan for the show involved a literal war to the death between Tony and his mother that would go hand in hand with Tony's psychoanalysis; the first season ended with her putting out a hit on him.

That would have gotten old and false and almost cutesy. Marchand's death liberated *The Sopranos* from Chase's admitted obsession with his own problematic Italian-American mother and let him explore the themes of status anxiety, power relations, and the psychic and spiritual costs of living a truly immoral life.

No series in the history of television has ever been as important to the medium as *The Sopranos*. It showed cable television that its future wasn't in airing movies first, but in winning audiences by making better programs. And so cable has. A year after *The Sopranos* debuted, *Survivor* premiered on CBS—luring broadcast television down the path to its own creative doom through the agency of low-cost and popular reality programming and progressively leaving an eager new audience of high-quality-TV addicts to the pay channels.

Magic City demonstrates the difficulty of duplicating the kind of conditions that made *The Sopranos* possible. The disastrous casting of the dull Jeffrey Dean Morgan in the central role gives us an inadvertent sense of what *The Sopranos* might have been like with Van Zandt in the lead. And there is just something more interesting about the anxiety attacks of a Mafia boss than there is about the dilemmas of a guy who owns a hotel. Who cares if he can't get liquor to the guests?

But who knows? Maybe Mitch Glazer, *Magic City*'s David Chase, will catch a sad break the way Chase did and find the true meaning of his show unexpectedly. Alas, that's probably the only way it's going to happen. ♦

which is why I think a mandate might be good for some people but not so good for other people. Our Canadian neighbors seem to like their health care system, but we've got some great hospitals in my home state of Indiana as well.

CHARLIE ROSE: You were chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee during the Reagan and Bush II administrations.

RICHARD LUGAR: That's right! We had some wonderful Democrats and Republicans on the committee when I was chairman. Fine people in both parties. We worked together on a lot of important issues.

CHARLIE ROSE: You were chairman during the first Reagan-Gorbachev summit.

RICHARD LUGAR: Indeed I was! They were both great leaders of their respective countries, and good friends of mine. I'm still very close to Nancy Reagan and, of course, with General Secretary Gorbachev. You know, in retrospect, Charlie, I've concluded that there were a lot of good things to be said for both sides during that Cold War. And while our side prevailed in the end, thank God, I don't think it was because of any real fault on the part of the Soviet leadership. They did the best they could with what they had, and we were able to achieve some real breakthroughs in arms control and mutual understanding.

CHARLIE ROSE: Ronald Reagan was really a kind of centrist, wasn't he?

RICHARD LUGAR: Oh, absolutely! I think he would have been horrified by the Tea Party and talk radio and all the extremism you see—in both parties, of course.

CHARLIE ROSE: But you're a lifelong Republican, so it must be hard for you to watch what's happened to your party in the past few years.

RICHARD LUGAR: Oh gosh, Charlie, it's very disheartening. What's that auto commercial? "This is not your father's Republican party." I'm just glad that some of my good friends in the Senate like Barry Goldwater and Jesse Helms aren't around to see what's become of their party.

CHARLIE ROSE: Jesse Helms liked Madeleine Albright, didn't he?

RICHARD LUGAR: Loved her! And Barry Goldwater was probably Jack Kennedy's closest friend in Washington. He and Jack were going to have a series of Lincoln-Douglas-style debates around the country in the 1964 election—

CHARLIE ROSE: But then came Dallas. I guess you could say that Lee Harvey Oswald was the first Tea Partier.