

**GORE VIDAL'S  
FAN CLUB  
ANDREW FERGUSON**

the weekly

# Standard

AUGUST 13, 2012 • \$4.95

## THE REAL ROMNEY TRIP

**FRED BARNES**  
with the Republican  
candidate abroad

In Jerusalem, at the Western Wall

WEEKLYSTANDARD.COM

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# Sympathy for the Sympathizer

THE SCRAPBOOK admits to a twinge of grudging sympathy for Joan Juliet Buck. Last week the fashion magazine writer published an apology in *Newsweek*, “Mrs. Assad Duped Me,” trying to explain why she wrote a fawning and shockingly stupid profile of the Syrian dictator’s wife for *Vogue* last year. Published only a few weeks before the Syrian uprising started, “Asma al-Assad: A Rose in the Desert” was roundly criticized in these pages and elsewhere for its obsequious posture toward a couple that had secured its *Vogue*-worthy privileged lifestyle by spilling the blood of others. Now Buck is wrestling with her conscience in public, which is to her credit.

“I landed in Damascus in the snow late on the night of Dec. 12, 2010,” she writes in *Newsweek*. “The next day a large woman pulled my toes and cracked my back with in-different dexterity in the Hammam Amounah, where the flagstones were worn soft by eight centuries of unbroke use. . . . [I]n the dark early-evening streets, I felt uneasy. Mustached men stood in our path, wearing shoes from the 1980s and curiously ill-fitting leather jackets over thick sweaters.”

A spa treatment, an exotic locale, and minute attention to clothing (does anyone else remember, or care, what men’s shoes from the ’80s look like?).

It appears that even the chastened Buck cannot help but see a bloody police state as the subject of a potential destination article. She claims now that “she didn’t know she was going to meet a murderer”—meaning Asma’s husband and Syrian strongman Bashar al-Assad—but that’s absurd. There was plenty of evidence of Assad’s bloodlust before Buck went off to Syria. But it has to be said that those facts were available to all the others, including big-name journalists and American officials, who sought an audience with the Assads, and Buck’s the only one who has come clean.

And that may be why Buck alone is under attack for cozying up to the Assads. The fact is, the others are as guilty, if not more so, than she is. Barbara Walters, Bob Simon, Brian Williams, and Scott Pelley are among the many journalists who flattered Assad for the sake of trying to secure an interview, even as the bloodbath in Syria was under way. But who is calling them to account? As speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi visited Assad in 2007. Yes, that’s well before the body count in Syria ballooned—upwards of 20,000 killed since March 2011—but American intelligence had already made public the fact that the regime in Damascus was facilitating the murder of U.S. troops in Iraq. Apparent-

ly, Pelosi’s enthusiasm for a man she, too, knew was a murderer is now just water under the bridge.

There are countless others who deserve to be censured along with Buck. Hacked emails from the Syrian regime show that former U.S. ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk was chummy enough with one of Assad’s advisers that he asked her to host a few of his friends from Washington. But that hardly tarnished the former Clinton administration official’s reputation. Just last week Indyk was invited to testify before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on the Obama administration’s policy toward—of all places!—Syria.

Chairing the committee is John Kerry, who for years plumped the Assad regime as a potential U.S. partner in the region, despite its depredations against its own citizens and its hand in killing Lebanese, Iraqis, Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans. Kerry, as gullible as the author of celebrity profiles for a fashion magazine, was rumored to have been mesmerized by the charming Asma. And unlike Joan Juliet Buck, the Massachusetts senator will probably pay no reputational price. Although THE SCRAPBOOK will do its best to remind people if Obama wins come November, and Kerry is poised to become America’s next secretary of state. ♦

## Wallowing in Watergate

THE SCRAPBOOK has a morsel of comforting advice for readers. If you want an idea of just how depressed and panicky the left is feeling these days, consider the following breathless item in the *Washington Post*’s Style section last week:

Yep, that’s actor Robert Redford and celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz in the *Washington Post* newsroom

Tuesday. The pair teamed up with Ben Bradlee, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein for a Watergate 40th anniversary *Vanity Fair* shoot and Discovery documentary executive produced by Redford. We tried to ask Redford and Leibovitz about the projects but . . . they weren’t talking to reporters.

If, like THE SCRAPBOOK, you have the feeling that there is something a little, well, 1970s about it all, you’re not alone. Isn’t celebrity photographer Annie Leibovitz now fight-

ing her creditors in court? And when was the last time actor Robert Redford acted in anything you can name? We’re delighted to learn that 90-year-old Ben Bradlee can still make the journey to the *Post* newsroom to be photographed by Leibovitz, and that Woodward and Bernstein will tolerate one another’s company long enough to talk for a Redford/Discovery documentary.

But how many times, over the past 40 years, have magazines such as

*Vanity Fair* chewed over the Watergate break-in and cover-up, or has television celebrated Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward? THE SCRAPBOOK would guess that the answers are in the thousands. And if there is anything new or instructive to be learned on the subject in a glossy text-and-photo spread in *Vanity Fair*, THE SCRAPBOOK would like to know about it. Innumerable forests have already been cleared this year to print the *Post*'s own serial celebrations of the Watergate anniversary.

Which, when you think about it, is good news for the rest of us. For if, at the end of Barack Obama's first term, people like Leibovitz and Redford and the editors of the *Washington Post* are obliged to reach back four decades to cheer themselves up, the present must seem awfully desolate by comparison. It is as if, during the Watergate era, the media had remained obsessed with the Teapot Dome scandal. Wallowing in Watergate (to use Richard Nixon's famous phrase) may now be taken as evidence that the left hasn't had much to celebrate in the decades since. ♦

## Gore Vidal Postscript

Stop here and do yourself the favor of reading Andrew Ferguson's essay a few pages hence on the late, unlamented Gore Vidal, to which this is a postscript of sorts.

As Ferguson notes, Vidal's status as a "literary icon" remains unquestioned in death. But there has been some confusion about his life. The *New York Times*, in particular, was moved to correct its Vidal obit more than once:

An obituary about the author Gore Vidal in some copies on Wednesday included several errors. Mr. Vidal called William F. Buckley Jr. a crypto-Nazi, not a crypto-fascist, in a television appearance during the 1968 Democratic National Convention. While Mr. Vidal frequently joked that Vice President Al Gore was his cousin, genealogists have been unable to confirm that they were related. And according to Mr. Vidal's memoir "Palimpsest," he and his longtime



live-in companion, Howard Austen, had sex the night they met, but did not sleep together after they began living together. It is not the case that they never had sex.

THE SCRAPBOOK is guessing, of course, but we'll bet that this piece of labored and earnest prose outlives most everything that seeped from Gore Vidal's "poison pen." ♦

## Lochte's Wingman

THE SCRAPBOOK was long ago disabused of the notion that athletes should be viewed as role models. That said, we always make an exception for

the Olympics—with the way things are headed, we take any chance we get to chant "USA! USA!" unironically.

So it is with a heavy heart that we report that Ryan Lochte, the swimmer who is one of the breakout stars of the 2012 games, is something of a cretin. We know this because his own mother said as much. "He goes out on one-night stands," she told NBC when asked about her son's romantic eligibility. "He's not able to give fully to a relationship because he's always on the go." A writer at *Salon* wonders, "Is this Mrs. Lochte's subtle way of discouraging some distracting, would-be girlfriends from her golden boy, or is this actually a wingman move?"

Unfortunately, our knowledge of Lochte's love life doesn't end there. "My last Olympics, I had a girlfriend—big mistake," Lochte told *ESPN* magazine, after regaling his interviewer with details of the Dionysiac goings-on in the Olympic Village. "Now I'm single, so London should be really good. I'm excited." Aside from his caddish attitude, Lochte has a fondness for gaudy fashion and the gem-encrusted mouthpieces favored by rappers known as "grills." He also recently told NBC's Ryan Seacrest that he relieves himself in the pools he swims in. It seems the 28-year-old swimmer is not a day over 13 mentally. Still, our grumbling won't take away from Lochte's achievements, and we're guessing that the warnings from his own mother won't put a dent in Lochte's London social calendar.

What's really illuminating about all this is the comparative treatment of Lochte and the athletes that actually do aspire to a higher moral standard. Earlier this year, Ashley-Madison.com—an online dating site that claims to be the "most recognized name in infidelity"—offered a \$1 million reward to anyone who could prove they had slept with devout Christian NFL star Tim Tebow. And then there was the furor over hurdler Lolo Jones, who revealed in the runup to the Olympics that she was a virgin. "I've seen celebs get teased less for releasing a sex tape," she said of the mocking coverage.

The final word on all of this belongs to Dr. Ruth Westheimer, whose career as an Israeli sniper turned psychosexual therapist seems to be a giant Freudian metaphor. Perhaps that gives her some credibility to sort out the Lochte family values: "In Jewish tradition making a match is a mitzvah, a blessing. Mom being wingman for 1 nite stands, not so much," she wrote on her Twitter feed. ♦

## Carnegie Spins in His Grave

That most venerable of American institutions, the public library, has a number of lofty aims:

safeguarding and transmitting culture, building an educated populace, providing access to knowledge to all citizens regardless of their material circumstances. The library is also, THE SCRAPBOOK is sad to note, where a disconcerting number of citizens go for a rather lower purpose: looking at Internet porn.

Indeed, in recent years, an increasing number of librarygoers nationwide have complained that they (and their children) have been exposed to people viewing obscene material on the computers in their local branches. But fear not—the San Francisco public library system has a solution!

No, no, nothing sensible; the library won't be blocking any websites or booting patrons who are caught looking at smut. (This is the Bay Area we're talking about, after all.) Instead, San Francisco's library system has installed "privacy screens" on 18 public computers in its main branch at Civic Center Plaza, so that patrons can view their porn in peace. This is a test run for what could soon become a citywide policy. (And you can just bet that Portland and other progressive locales won't be far behind.) San Francisco librarian Luis Herrera explains, "We're always looking for any kind of elegant solution that strikes a balance between the right to privacy and folks that want to use the library for any other intended purpose."

Well, *elegant* isn't the word THE SCRAPBOOK would have used, but then we're not a librarian. As others have noted, it's becoming less and less clear these days what the purpose of the public library is. Is it a storehouse of enlightenment, or a warehouse for the indigent? A beacon of cultivation and learning, or just another decaying institution, contributing to the pornification of public spaces? San Francisco has now made its position clear.

Inscribed at the entrance to the Library of Thebes was the simple yet powerful phrase, "Medicine for the soul." We suggest that the San Francisco libraries install a different inscription at their entrances: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." ♦

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## C'est Chick

Last week, at the beach with my family, I deliberately ignored all newspapers. Not for the reason most people do—because print is dead. But because whenever I'm surrounded by salt water, steamed crabs, and even mediocre fishing, I tend to hold that true happiness is having no idea what chronically bothered people are talking about.

It never lasts. Civil war has a way of puncturing happiness bubbles. No, not the atrocities in Syria. I'm talking much hairier than your run-of-the-mill massacre: I'm talking about the Chick-fil-Gay wars. Ever since Chick-fil-A president and COO Dan Cathy, who is against gay marriage, dared offer that he supports "the biblical definition of the family unit," the indignant have been manning their outrage stations.

There are boycotts and kiss-ins. D.C. mayor Vincent Gray, in a solemn Tweet, decried "hatechicken." Chicago mayor Rahm Emanuel said Chick-fil-A has no place in his city. (And Emanuel has no place at the family-friendly Chick-fil-A—not with his potty mouth.) Emanuel intoned that "Chick-fil-A's values are not Chicago values." This was a breaking-news twofer, as most people weren't aware that the graft-laden youth-homicide capital of the United States had any values.

My natural inclination is to encourage the boycott. Not because of my political views, but because I figure it will help me get through the drive-thru faster. Though it's a tough call. For the controversy centers around three things I hold sacred: marriage, all God's children (both straight and gay), and Chick-fil-A's rapturous spicy-chicken sandwich. Not necessarily in that order. Because when you make that last a combo platter, with waffle fries and coleslaw, it's no longer a contest.

For three decades now, Chick-fil-A has been my only appointment fast-food stop. I go there when hungry, and even when not. Always cleaner than the inside of a Clorox bottle, the restaurants are run with warmth and efficiency, and are ruthlessly dedicated to customer satisfaction—the best quick-service franchise in America. (Faltering Mayor Gray might want to spend less



time denouncing Chick-fil-A, more time taking managerial notes.) At most chains, you're just happy if they keep the rodent parts out of the condiments. But Chick-fil-A has gone so far as to use chipper seniors as greeters. Sunny septuagenarians now inquire if you need a free refill, or offer to retrieve napkins. They're so helpful that I've kidnapped a few, taking them home to do yard work and light grandparenting.

Personally, I would never gay marry—my wife would be incensed. But neither do I feel it is my duty, Christian or otherwise, to obstruct those who wish to. While I strongly object to court-ordering churches to marry anyone against their doctrine, and though I was raised Southern Baptist like Chick-fil-A's Cathy, I hold a laissez-faire attitude about

gay marriage generally, not unlike that of the Jewish philosopher Kinky Friedman, who can't see why gays shouldn't "have a right to be as miserable as the rest of us."

Still, while we're talking tolerance, the last time I checked the Bill of Rights (around 1987), free speech was afforded to everyone—even born-again fried-chicken magnates who publicly express unfashionable opinions. And besides, it's a personal opinion. No on-the-ground discrimination is alleged. If Adam and Steve walk into Chick-fil-A in their wedding tuxes, they're still getting served the same Chick-fil-A nuggets as Adam and Eve. (I recommend the 12-piece to either couple, as opposed to the less filling 8-piece. At Chick-fil-A, more is more.)

The chickens themselves, it should be noted, are categorically straight—a good thing for both sides, since slaughtering gay chickens for consumption would amount to a hate crime. Besides, without steady chicken reproduction we'd all be eating lunch at home or, more perilously, at Taco Bell. But that said, I've never been asked by a Chick-fil-A cashier whether I would be willing to have exclusionary, heteronormative, Bible-approved procreative sex. Though I probably would, if they'd throw in one of their hand-spun milkshakes for free.

As in any debate, I'm choosing sides by asking the most important question: Who's going to win? Polls suggest that acceptance of gay marriage is on the rise and is now a slight majority opinion. With that in mind, I'm joining my LGBT protester friends, though on my own terms. I am now boycotting Chick-fil-A—on Sundays only. Since Sunday is the Lord's Day, on which they're conveniently closed, maybe I'll even forbid myself from eating Saturday's leftovers.

Though it's Chick-fil-A we're talking about. So there's not a chance there'll be any.

MATT LABASH

# Go for the Gold, Mitt!

Mitt Romney will have many opportunities over the next three months to demonstrate to voters that they should choose him over Barack Obama: his acceptance speech at the Republican convention, the three presidential debates, major policy addresses, and more. But it may be that nothing will speak louder than his selection of a running mate.

Voters seem to care. In a recent CBS News/*New York Times* poll, 74 percent of registered voters said the selection of a running mate will matter—48 percent saying it matters “somewhat” and 26 percent saying it matters “a lot.” In a close election, as this one seems likely to be, Romney’s pick could help determine the outcome.

It’s not the first time we’ve said it, but it could well be the last: Go bold, Mitt! Pick Paul Ryan, the Republican party’s intellectual leader, the man who’s laid out the core of the post-Obama policy agenda and gotten his colleagues in Congress to sign on to it. Or pick Marco Rubio, the GOP’s most gifted young politician, the man who embodies what is best about the Tea Party and a vision of a broad-based Republican governing majority of the future. Barack Obama was right about this (if only this): Modern democratic politics is about hope and change. Ryan and Rubio, more than anyone else, embody Republican hopes and conservative change.

But let’s descend from the Olympian heights of national aspiration to the bloody crossroads of practical politics. Here too the case for Rubio or Ryan is compelling.

On April 15, Romney attended a private fundraiser in the backyard of a large home in Palm Beach, Florida. His remarks, not intended for public consumption, were nonetheless overheard by reporters traveling with him. And they were blunt. “We have to get Hispanics to vote for our party,” he said. Romney pointed to polls showing him trailing badly among Hispanic voters and said that if those numbers don’t change, “it spells doom for us.”

Those numbers haven’t changed. An NBC/*Wall Street Journal*/Telemundo poll released in late July shows Obama with a 67-23 percent advantage over Romney among Hispanics. Last week, a Latino Decisions poll had Obama leading Romney 63-27 percent among Hispanics in five swing states

with significant Hispanic populations—Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, and Virginia.

That’s worrisome. But the core of the problem is Florida—a must-win state for Romney. According to Latino Decisions, Romney trails Obama among Latino Floridians 53-37. (Even more, among voters who say they’re “certain” to vote for their candidate, Obama leads 49-29.) This kind of margin might well doom Romney.

In 2010, by contrast, Marco Rubio won 55 percent of Florida Hispanics. Rick Scott, who was probably helped by having Rubio running with him, won 50 percent of the state’s Hispanic voters in his successful bid to become governor. Even in 2008, while losing Florida 51-48, John McCain won 42 percent of the Hispanic vote. In 2004, George W. Bush defeated John Kerry among Hispanics in Florida by 56-44 percent. (Those numbers were no doubt inflated because Bush’s brother Jeb was the popular governor at the time.)

The bottom line: Mitt Romney almost certainly will not win Florida if he wins just 37 percent of the Hispanic vote there. And Mitt Romney almost certainly will not be president if he doesn’t win Florida.

What to do? The Latino Decisions poll offers one possible answer: Pick Marco Rubio as your running mate. Some 31 percent of Florida Hispanics say they are more likely to vote for Romney if Rubio is on the ticket (47 percent say it would make no difference, and just 17 percent say it would make them less likely).

Rubio’s appeal goes well beyond Hispanics and well beyond Florida, of course. At a recent appearance in Nevada on behalf of Romney, Rubio drew nearly 1,000 voters to his former elementary school, with lines out the door. His autobiography, *An American Son*, spent several weeks near the top of the *New York Times* bestseller list. A recent survey of Illinois delegates to the Republican convention found that nearly half of them want Romney to pick Rubio.

The two main arguments against Rubio—he’s too inexperienced and he hasn’t been adequately vetted—strike us as weak. It’s true that Rubio has spent less than two years in the Senate. But he’s hardly green. Rubio served in the Florida House of Representatives for eight years, the final two as speaker. In his short time in the U.S. Senate, he has distin-



Paul Ryan



Marco Rubio

guished himself as a hard worker and a serious foreign policy thinker. He has participated in dozens of intelligence briefings—more than Barack Obama before he was nominated.

Moreover, Rubio has probably been subject to more intense critical scrutiny than anyone else Romney is considering. In his 2010 race, Rubio was the subject of massive opposition research conducted by his Republican opponent, the sitting governor of Florida, Charlie Crist; the National Republican Senatorial Committee (which supported Crist); his Democratic opponent, Representative Kendrick Meek; and the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. The campaign was covered extensively in the Florida press and nationally. Rubio sat for interviews or debates with David Gregory, Candy Crowley, Chris Wallace, Bob Schieffer, and many others. More recently, Rubio was the subject of a book by a *Washington Post* reporter who uncovered nothing that would disqualify him from higher office. Indeed, the book was on balance flattering. And though Rubio's name has been mentioned in connection with the case against former Florida GOP chairman Jim Greer, a nearly two-year investigation by the Florida Ethics Commission found that Rubio had done nothing wrong. Rubio would also have to expect questions about his troubled friend David Rivera. But the charge here is only one of too much loyalty to a friend, not of wrongdoing on Rubio's part.

The moment he's picked, Rubio will become by far the most prominent Hispanic politician in the country. And in a contest largely about competing visions of the American dream, against a president who has minimized the importance of hard work as a road to success, Rubio's personal story, of a father who worked as a bartender and a mother as a maid to provide opportunities for their children, would provide a powerful counterargument.

The case for Paul Ryan is equally compelling. Since 1999, Ryan has represented a swing district in southeastern Wisconsin—a seat held for two decades by Democrat Les Aspin. And even as he has undertaken a crusade to reform the entitlement programs thought for so long to be politically untouchable, Ryan has won reelection in his purple district with more than 60 percent of the vote six consecutive times. Milwaukee mayor Tom Barrett, who believes that Obama will win Wisconsin, nonetheless acknowledged last week that putting Ryan on the ticket would make “the southeastern part of the state probably more competitive.”

A recent PPP poll seems to confirm this. President Obama leads Mitt Romney in Wisconsin 50-44 percent and is, according to the accompanying analysis, “the clear favorite to win the state.” But, the analysis continues, “one thing that could make this state look like much more of a toss up is if Romney chooses Paul Ryan as his running mate.” In that scenario, Obama's lead shrinks to just 47-46 percent. “Ryan's presence has the effect of further unifying the GOP base around Romney and also helping to bring some independent voters into the fold.” Romney's internal polling, we are told,

shows a similar shift in Wisconsin with Ryan on the ticket.

Like Rubio, Ryan has appeal beyond his home state. As Rubio would help with a key demographic group, Hispanics, Ryan would help in key states in the Midwest. And he has national appeal. Earlier this spring, he traveled around the country with RNC chairman Reince Priebus raising some \$21 million for the RNC Presidential Trust. Ryan has raised \$4.2 million for his congressional race this year and \$4.3 million for his Prosperity PAC—with contributions coming from all 50 states. That's more money than some Republican presidential candidates raised.

And, of course, putting Ryan on the ticket would ensure that the presidential race is a contest of ideas, not just personalities. In a country where conservatives outnumber liberals two-to-one and where President Obama is thought to be more likable than Mitt Romney by huge margins (+30 according to *USA Today*/Gallup, +38 in the *Washington Post*/ABC poll), this strikes us as a good idea.

Of course Democrats will demagogue the entitlement reform proposals in Ryan's budget. But they're going to do that anyway. Romney and Republicans already own those reforms—97 percent of congressional Republicans voted for them, and Romney has embraced them without much qualification. “I think it'd be marvelous if the Senate were to pick up Paul Ryan's budget and adopt it and pass it along to the president,” he said in early April. In late March he declared: “I'm very supportive of the Ryan budget.”

If Ryan's budget is going to be a central part of the debate over the next three months, who better to explain and defend it than Paul Ryan?

It's become conventional wisdom that Ryan and Rubio would be “bold” picks, while other choices like Ohio senator Rob Portman and former Minnesota governor Tim Pawlenty are “safe.” Perhaps. But what looks safe can be risky. Portman, a good man and respected public servant, was George W. Bush's budget director. Pawlenty's presidential campaign was a disaster. The 2010 election was the best for Republicans in a long time. Ryan and Rubio embody the spirit of 2010. Pawlenty and Portman don't.

But beyond all of the calculations—beyond demography, geography, and the polls—is the most compelling reason for Romney to pick Ryan or Rubio: Doing so would signal that Romney understands the magnitude of the problems facing the country and would demonstrate that he has the will to solve them. It would suggest that Romney knows this is a big moment, and that he's willing to run a big campaign. And at a time when the country so desperately needs real leadership, Romney would make clear that he's ready to provide it by picking either Ryan or Rubio.

Which of the two should Romney choose? One of us slightly prefers Ryan, the other Rubio. But this we can say in unison and with conviction: Go for the gold, Mitt! Ryan or Rubio!

—William Kristol & Stephen F. Hayes

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# Unemploy Obama

The latest jobs report should persuade all those who worry about the president's economic policies but find him likable that enough is enough, and that policy trumps personality when it comes to deciding who should occupy the White House. Job creation remains anemic, the unemployment rate has ticked up to 8.3 percent, and the labor force participation rate continues to fall as more and more Americans choose the couch over tramping the streets looking for work. The Labor Department sums it up: Both the number of unemployed and the unemployment rate "have shown little movement thus far in 2012." It should be clear that it is time for a change.

The president has gambled the nation's ability to recover from this recession on policies that include high taxes, more regulation, attacks on businesses and "millionaires and billionaires," stimulus spending that ends up largely in the pockets of members of public service trade

unions and campaign contributors, and huge deficits—gambled and lost. Like other obsessive gamblers who cannot recognize failure until they are ruined, he wants to double down—make the same bet again in the hope that this time he will roll prosperity instead of more joblessness. Ideologues, like addicted gamblers, reject experience as a teacher. And when they are gambling with other people's money, they have little incentive to change, especially if they can count on a winning personality to persuade supporters to overlook the minor matter of oncoming penury.

To get our country back on a growth path we have to change course, which means that Mitt Romney has to win. Which means, in turn, that he will have to do more over the next three months than repeat what voters already know—that the Obama plan for America's economic future is leading us to European-style stagnation and a level of indebtedness that a no-growth economy will never be able to repay. Romney will have to say what he plans to do if the voters give him the opportunity to redirect national policy. His plans will have to meet two criteria: They must be consistent with the conservative principle that government policy should provide a framework for markets to work, and they must meet some rough standard of fairness, which is much on voters' minds in this day of increased inequality.

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## Free Enterprise: The Life and Legacy of Milton Friedman

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

The late economist Milton Friedman once said, "So that the record of history is absolutely crystal clear: There is no alternative way, so far discovered, of improving the lot of the ordinary people that can hold a candle to the productive activities that are unleashed by a free enterprise system."

Friedman—who would have turned 100 last week—was himself a product of the very system he championed through his life's work.

Like many great Americans, he came from humble beginnings—born to hardworking immigrants determined to see their children succeed. Friedman showed an early aptitude for learning and pursued studies in math, statistics, and economics. By applying himself and being an innovative thinker and a productive scholar, he was rewarded with academic and professional achievements—including a Nobel Prize.

Friedman did not just thrive in a free enterprise system—he dedicated his life and career to advancing it. Through scholarly work and public service, as well as volumes of books and articles, Friedman forever shifted the way the world thinks about economics and free markets.

One such way was drawing the critical link between economic freedom and political freedom. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, he argued that a government that doesn't wield centralized economic power is also less able to coerce or control its citizens. He said, "A major source of objection to a free economy is precisely that it ... gives people what they want instead of what a particular group thinks they ought to want. Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself."

Friedman didn't just talk about free enterprise in sweeping, scholarly arguments. He was also known for his ability to present economic principles to the public in simple, concrete terms. He

famously explained the power of a free market-based system with the illustration of a pencil. The creation of a pencil is a grand collaboration involving thousands of people, various tools, natural resources, and manufactured elements from across the world—and the free market system is what brought those elements together to efficiently produce an affordable product that people need.

Ultimately, Friedman was one of free enterprise's greatest storytellers and staunchest advocates. He was born just a few months after the founding of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in 1912. This year, as we commemorate our centennial and reaffirm our mission to stand up for free enterprise, we will also celebrate the life of a great thinker who lived the American Dream and made free enterprise his legacy.



100 Years Standing Up for American Enterprise  
**U.S. Chamber of Commerce**

Here are a dozen points Romney might consider making. They are not the Ten Commandments: Dropping some and watering-down others is permitted. So are changes to accommodate the fact that politics is the art of the possible. What is not permitted is a continuation of a campaign that combines a minimum of forward-looking specificity with a maximum of backward-looking attacks, leading to an overall failure to explain what the heck is going on in our economy and how Romney will fix it.

*Extend the Bush tax cuts for one year.* With partisanship off the boil after the election, and Bill Clinton as an ally, this can be done quickly—if accompanied with a pledge to use this grace year to enact broad tax reform that would root out of the tax code the provisions that benefit the wealthy while retaining their incentive to earn more and create jobs. No more deductions for mortgage interest on second homes; no more special allowances for the oil industry; no more favored tax treatment for venture capitalists and hedge-fund operators. There are more, but you get the idea: The tax code has to be simpler and fairer.

*Arrange for mortgage forgiveness* that will actually increase what banks will retrieve from the mortgage mess, recognize reality on bank books, increase consumer spending, avoid creating even more underwater properties, and give the housing market a boost. New studies show it can be done.

*Impose a moratorium on new regulations* not urgently needed to save lives. That will be the pause that refreshes, and give us a chance to review the tens of thousands of regulations now in effect, cull those that are unnecessarily imposing burdens on businesses and costs on consumers, and see if the remaining regulations need supplementing. That will give businesses some of the certainty that has been sorely lacking, causing companies to sit on huge cash piles rather than subject them to the tender mercies of the Obama regulatory machine.

*End crony capitalism.* If some industries and research are to be subsidized, the recipients of subsidies should not be selected by the politicians and bureaucrats who brought us Solyndra. Let applicants for available funds bid for them by putting skin in the game—their own money—and whoever bids the most, is willing to take the biggest risk, gets government help. Inequality that results from hard work, superior skill, and invention of a better mousetrap has never offended Americans; inequality that results from Solyndra-style crony capitalism—you fill my campaign coffers and I will channel taxpayer money to your corporate treasury—does.

*Break up the big banks.* If a bank is too big to fail, it is too big. If some wild-eyed trader wants to shoot for the card that is so high and wild he'll never need to deal another, don't let him put the financial system or depositors' money at risk. Let him trade and invest the way Paul Volcker wants him to—in situations where he and his counterparts can hurt only themselves, not the overall economy. Even Sandy Weill, who cobbled together Citigroup, now admits he made a mistake, and that it is

impossible to manage such a diversified behemoth.

*End the madness that lets bankers totter off with giant bonuses,* paid on profits that later turn out not to have existed. Claw back those bonuses. Require future bonuses to be paid in shares not marketable for five years—that won't end all of the ingenious ways the bankers and their lawyers can find to line their pockets, but it will at least reduce some of the heads-I-win, tails-you-lose decision-making by financial elites.

*Make wealth and success respectable again.* Reforming the banks should not be allowed to morph into the mindless attacks on business and success that have issued from the Obama administration for almost four years. With corporate governance reformed to make compensation more closely related to performance, there will be no need for successful businessmen to be ashamed of their incomes, or for a president to treat them as some sort of crooks.

*Treat small businesses as the valuable wealth and job creators that they are.* Exempt startups from all save the most basic health and safety regulations for two years. And from taxes.

*Get health care reform right.* No need for mandates that are both uneconomic and infringe on personal liberty. But “yes” to a requirement that insurers offer to cover preexisting conditions at premium rates reasonably related to the cost of such coverage. And “yes” to protecting those unable to cover their own costs of coverage, and to requiring those of sufficient means to finance more of their own health care. And “yes” to exemptions for employers and individuals who find provisions concerning abortions in violation of their religious beliefs.

*Attack the deficit* by combining spending cuts, tax reform, and, if needed, revenue increases that do not stifle incentives to work hard and take risks. That might mean shifting the tax burden from earnings and profits to consumption, taking care not to make such a move regressive. Or taxing wealth instead of income. Do an FDR—gather unconventional thinkers along with your more conventional ones, give them all a real hearing, and then put their ideas through the filter of your long business experience.

*Move against trading “partners”* who live off sales to Americans but restrict access to their own markets. And those who steal our intellectual property. The message should be, “change your ways or find some other place to peddle your goods.” And if that troubles the World Trade Organization and free trade theorists, so be it. There is a difference between a lurch to protectionism and retaliation, the latter suggested by none other than Adam Smith as a way to bring unfair traders to heel.

*Save entitlements.* Make sure that everyone over a certain age keeps his and her entitlements, and reform the programs so that they will avoid the bankruptcy to which they are doomed under current Obama policies.

There you have it. Simple enough for government work. And a program that voters can understand.

—Irwin M. Stelzer

# The Tea Party Is Alive and Well

Ted Cruz joins Richard Mourdock and Deb Fischer as its latest victors.

BY MICHAEL WARREN



**O**n July 31, former Republican senator Bob Bennett made a bold pronouncement on the Fox Business Network. “I do feel that the Tea Party wave is receding,” he said, “and it’s not going to be nearly as big a factor in this election as it was in 2010.” There was a tone of hopefulness in Bennett’s prediction. In 2010,

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the three-term Utah senator had been one of the Tea Party’s top Republican targets, losing his renomination with a humiliating third place finish at the state GOP convention.

As it turned out, Bennett picked the wrong day to suggest the Tea Party was over. A few hours later, Ted Cruz of Texas, the latest populist conservative hero, was celebrating his win in the Republican primary runoff election for the U.S. Senate. “Tonight is a victory

for the grassroots,” the 41-year-old Cruz said. “It is a testament to Republican women, to Tea Party leaders, and to grassroots conservatives.”

Bennett’s assessment may be superficially correct; the Tea Party juggernaut of 2010 isn’t repeating itself en masse this time around. Cruz’s victory stands out because it’s one of relatively few Tea Party-fueled coups this cycle.

But the evidence shows that, in fact, the Tea Party is building on its 2010 victories, emerging as the new Republican establishment. The shift is already obvious in the House of Representatives, with a GOP leadership team that is decidedly more conservative than in past years and a sizable freshman class that pulls the conference closer toward policies of limited government and fiscal discipline.

Now the focus is on changing Congress’s upper house. Senator Pat Toomey of Pennsylvania, a beneficiary of the 2010 Tea Party wave, says the movement within the Senate is “stronger than ever.” While Senate Republican leadership works to take the majority by winning key races in swing states, the Tea Party is concentrating on red state primaries, like that in Texas, to add to its ranks and push the caucus further to the right.

The movement has learned a lot since 2010. That year, the Tea Party backed plenty of successful Senate candidates, including Toomey, Marco Rubio, Rand Paul, Mike Lee, and Ron Johnson. But there were also some duds in states where Republicans would have otherwise been competitive. In Nevada and Colorado, weakened incumbents Harry Reid and Michael Bennet slid by with even weaker challengers in Sharron Angle and Ken Buck. These Tea Party-supported candidates may have been ideologically pure, but they weren’t ready for prime time. Their defeats helped Democrats keep control of the Senate.

As Toomey puts it, “the Tea Party has gone through a maturation process.” Its current crop of candidates look more like those who succeeded in 2010 than those who failed.

In Indiana this May, six-term moderate Republican Dick Lugar fell to

GARY LOCKE

Tea Party-backed Richard Mourdock, a soft-spoken and intelligent conservative who's an experienced campaigner, having won two elections as state treasurer. Mourdock told me this spring that his turnaround moment came in an April debate. "My mission going in was to look confident, capable, and conservative," Mourdock said. "And that's what I did." Hoosiers look likely to vote Republican in November; despite some polling showing Mourdock even with Democratic rival Joe Donnelly, the seat should stay in GOP hands.

In Nebraska, rural state senator Deb Fischer mounted a come-from-behind primary win over her better-known Republican opponents for the chance to succeed retiring Democratic senator Ben Nelson. One of those opponents, state treasurer Don Stenberg, actually had support from some national Tea Party figures. But an eleventh-hour endorsement from Sarah Palin, an ad campaign that emphasized her outsider image, and backing from local Tea Party groups helped Fischer overcome Stenberg and attorney general Jon Bruning, the establishment favorite, in May. Fischer is on track to defeat former Democratic senator Bob Kerrey this November, perhaps by double digits.

Last week's primary in Texas followed a now-familiar pattern. Republican Kay Bailey Hutchison, a moderate by Lone Star State standards, announced her retirement last year. The GOP establishment, including Governor Rick Perry and 17 state senators, backed three-term lieutenant governor David Dewhurst to replace her. Dewhurst also had financial support from PACs funded by the state's real estate, oil and gas, agriculture, restaurant, and medical industries.

But Cruz, the brainy former state solicitor general, former Supreme Court clerk, and political novice, surprised observers by holding Dewhurst under 50 percent in the May primary and forcing the July runoff. Over those two months, the Cruz campaign and its conservative interest group allies, like the Club for Growth, FreedomWorks, and the Tea Party Express, continued

to push one message: In the Senate, Dewhurst would be a go-along-to-get-along moderate while Cruz would be a conservative fighter.

"There's not any question that Dewhurst would have worked with [Senate minority leader Mitch] McConnell," says Chris Chocola, the president of the Club for Growth. Cruz, on the other hand, would be on the side of the Tea Party caucus and its de facto Senate leader, Jim DeMint. The message worked: Cruz swung his margin by more than 20 points to trounce Dewhurst, 57 percent to 43 percent.

While the Tea Party has had these important victories this cycle, it's also learned to pick its fights wisely. In 2010, an open seat in Delaware that Republican Mike Castle was almost sure to win was squandered when primary voters nominated the problematic Christine O'Donnell instead. Delaware prefers moderate Republicans like Castle, and what should have been a pickup for the GOP turned into a national embarrassment. That served as a cautionary tale for grassroots conservatives, and it's clear the Tea Party is learning to cede some political battles, particularly in purple and blue states, to win the

larger war over control of the Senate.

In Virginia, for example, Richmond Tea Party leader Jamie Radtke was able to offer only a weak challenge to George Allen for the Republican nomination. For all Allen's flaws as a candidate, Radtke's were worse—she was disorganized, unserious, and uncompetitive outside of Virginia's deeply conservative regions. National conservative groups stayed on the sidelines. And while Utah's Orrin Hatch faced Tea Party opposition from former state senator Dan Liljenquist, Republican voters rewarded Hatch with a primary win after the veteran senator worked hard to gain the trust of grassroots organizations.

So, gone are the mass protests and lively town hall meetings that characterized the Tea Party's ascendance as a major political force. But just as the movement transformed our politics, politics have transformed the movement. As Chocola says, "I've been of the opinion all along that the Tea Party's just getting started." The Tea Party is more nimble, more shrewd, and more interested in building a governing majority than in simply making a statement. ♦

## Bibi— Son of Benzion

The Netanyahu legacy.

BY MEIR Y. SOLOVEICHIK

Much of the reporting about Mitt Romney's trip to Israel has focused on his statement that Israel's success is linked to its political and economic culture. Yet the most significant geopolitical

event during his journey was the statement by Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during a joint news conference with Romney, that the current American administration's policies have not swayed Iran's nuclear ambition "one iota." Adding to the significance of this event was the date on which it took place, and the importance of that date not only to the Jewish people in general, but to Netanyahu's family in particular.

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Mitt Romney's visit to Israel coincided with the observance by Jews worldwide of Tisha B'av, the annual Jewish day of mourning. The ninth day of the month of Av in the Jewish calendar is the date when, according to tradition, the first and second Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed by the enemies of the Jews. Over one thousand years later, the expulsion of Jews from Spain, another catastrophic event, took place on or around this date. According to Isaac Abravanel, one of the greatest biblical exegetes in Jewish history who served in the Spanish royal court until the expulsion, King Ferdinand had no idea that the chosen deadline for the Jews to leave fell on a day so rife with meaning to Jews. It was Providence, he suggests, that forever united the destruction of Jerusalem with the demise of one of the most intellectually illustrious communities of the Diaspora.

This is significant because Abravanel, the Jewish expulsion, and the persecution of Jews by the Spanish Inquisition were the particular expertise of Benzion Netanyahu, the prime minister's father, who died this year at the age of 102.

Benzion Netanyahu was a remarkable man. Long before Benjamin became prime minister, the Netanyahus were one of Israel's famous families, as a result of the heroic death of Benzion's eldest child, Yonatan, leading the otherwise triumphant Entebbe raid of 1976. But Benzion Netanyahu was already a major Zionist figure in his own right. Born in Warsaw and raised in Palestine under the British mandate, Benzion moved to New York to serve as the personal secretary to Ze'ev Jabotinsky, the intellectual forefather of Israel's Likud party. According to the historian Rafael Medoff, Netanyahu "cultivated relationships with former President Herbert Hoover and other leading GOP figures and urged them to include a pro-Zionist plank in the 1944 GOP platform." As Seth Lipsky noted in the *Wall Street Journal*, "Benjamin Netanyahu was standing on his father's shoulders when, in 1996 and 2011, he addressed joint meetings of

Congress and won roars of approval from both sides of the aisle."

Benzion Netanyahu remained in the United States for several years and pursued a doctorate in Jewish history, writing his dissertation on Isaac Abravanel. This was later published with the title *Don Isaac Abravanel: Statesman and Philosopher*. In his book on Abravanel, and in his later work *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, Benzion Netanyahu asks why the announcement of the expulsion edict came as such a shock

Netanyahu suggests that the Jews of Spain incorrectly assumed that the Inquisition was concerned solely with the religious beliefs of those who identified as Christians. But the way the Inquisition spoke about Jews should have alerted the Jewish community to the church's ultimate aims. The Inquisition spoke of the "polluting blood" of the Jews of Spain, and of the "sinister" Jewish character from which Spanish Christians must be protected. Yet the Jews chose to see the Inquisition as motivated only by



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the April 2012 funeral of his father

to Spain's Jews. After all, the Inquisition was already persecuting and torturing *conversos*, Jews who had converted to Christianity before the threatened expulsion, and who were accused by the church of covert Jewish observance. Yet the Jews, including the great Abravanel, "did not read the signs of the times." When the expulsion edict was eventually announced, it was, for Spanish Jewry, "like a thunderbolt out of the clear sky, tumbling, at last, the walls of illusions behind which the Jews of Spain had lived." Why, Netanyahu asks, did Jews not sense the vicious hatred that was festering, and why did they not take the Inquisition's anti-Semitic activity more seriously?

a crusading Christian fervor, and not by a deeper, almost racial, hatred of the Jewish people. The most peculiar aspect of the years leading up to the expulsion, writes Netanyahu, is the fact that "the Inquisition, instead of serving as a warning, contributed to a deceptive sense of peace."

For Benzion Netanyahu, Spanish Jewry's complacency, and their embrace of a convenient narrative, reveals "man's natural reluctance to draw radical conclusions which imply uprooting oneself from a comfortable spot." Just as German Jews "failed to foresee Hitler's rise to power at any time during the period preceding that rise, so the Jews of Spain failed to notice, even

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a few years before the expulsion, the mountainous wave which was approaching to overwhelm them.” The failure by one of the greatest communities in Jewish Diaspora history to sense this threat was “nothing short of proverbial.”

Now, the son of this scholar leads the Jewish state and must decide how seriously to take the anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic rhetoric of Iranian leaders, as they seek the ability to build a weapon of which the ancient and medieval enemies of Jerusalem and of the Jews could only have dreamed.

As it happens, Benjamin Netanyahu has written with reverence of his father’s scholarship, and of its underlying lesson. The Tisha B’av expulsion from Spain, as he sees it, is an eternal warning to Jews that one of the great threats to their wellbeing is their own complacency. Several months ago, he chose to close his eulogy at his father’s funeral by referring to the latter’s academic work:

Your books clearly show that you were not only endowed with an ability to see the shape of the future, but also to uncover the secrets of the past, and of course there is a connection between the two. Many times, you told me that he who cannot understand the past, cannot understand the future, and he who cannot understand the present, how can he discover what the future will hold?

You always told me that a necessary component for any living body—and a nation is a living body—is the ability to identify a danger in time, a quality that was lost to our people in exile; that is what you said. You taught me, Father, to look at reality head on, to understand what it holds and to come to the necessary conclusions.

It was this Tisha B’av, the first without his father, that Netanyahu stood with Mitt Romney and warned his nation, and the world, that after centuries of persecution Jews had learned to take anti-Semites at their word. How Netanyahu will choose to deal with the Iranian threat is unclear. Yet one thing is certain: He will have his father and his father’s lifework in mind as he makes his choice. ♦

# Europe, Bloody Europe

David Cameron’s EU problem.

BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD



*The United Kingdom Independence party has not faded away but grown.*

It’s always bloody Europe. It was Europe (specifically, Tory splits over Britain’s relationship with the EU) that finally did in Mrs. Thatcher, and it did in poor John Major too. Now it is beginning to look like David Cameron might eventually go the same way, felled by the issue he has tried to dodge since becoming party leader in 2005. To borrow his phrase from the following year, “banging on” about Brussels was over. Saving the planet was in.

But the elephant was still in the room, increasingly intrusive, increasingly destructive, and increasingly unwanted. Britons have never truly warmed to the EU, but a 2009 poll showing that more than half of them wanted out was just one more sign that resigned exasperation was at last giving way to something more determined. With the economic crisis

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drawing attention away from the Conservatives’ divisive past and onto the ruling Labour party’s dismal present, some carefully calibrated Brussels bashing would have been a smart way for Cameron both to score points against a notoriously europhile government and, no less important, to calm a restive (and euroskeptic) Conservative base dismayed by their leader’s often clumsy attempts to reboot the party’s image. It was an opportunity Cameron largely ignored, preferring to stay in his comfort zone and sing the old tunes that had worked so well. Carbon menace!

Many voters weren’t impressed. In the 2009 European Parliament elections, the euroskeptic—and distinctly maverick—UKIP (the United Kingdom Independence party) beat Labour into second place behind the Tories, grabbing 16.5 percent of the vote, up a sliver from the already remarkable 16.1 percent scooped up in 2004. It was a humiliation for Labour but a warning for the

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Conservatives. Less than 12 months before a crucial general election, the Tories who had flocked to UKIP's side had not come home. A commitment from Cameron to hold a referendum on the EU's pending Lisbon Treaty—if he was elected before it was in force—reassured few. Rightly so: The treaty came into effect ahead of the election. The Conservatives dropped their referendum.

It may be a coincidence that it was from roughly this point that the Tories struggled to retain a clear lead at the polls. What cannot be denied is that UKIP won enough votes in enough constituencies to deprive the Conservatives of an absolute majority in the 2010 general election. Rather than shoot for a minority government (the bolder, better course), Cameron opted for a coalition with the Liberal Democrats, the most europhile of all Britain's major parties. The irony was obvious. The self-inflicted wound has taken a little longer to become visible.

With the keys to 10 Downing Street so close, Cameron's choice can perhaps be forgiven. The same cannot be said of his reluctance to take a more aggressively euroskeptic tack in the years that have followed. The constraints of coalition have something to do with it, naturally, as do memories of earlier Tory disaster. Nevertheless, with the woes of the euro—a dangerous experiment lauded by many in the Labour party *and* by the Liberal Democrats—both unnerving the electorate and vindicating those squabbling Conservatives, it ought to be a time to make hay. But that's not what Cameron has done.

And the chances thrown away may not just be domestic. As things stand, the currency union's nervous breakdown offers the only remotely realistic prospect of a successful renegotiation of the U.K.'s position in the EU along lines that most Britons, including (he claims) Cameron, really want—to remain in the club, but less so. That's because any credible long-term fix for the eurozone is likely to involve amendments to the EU's governing treaty. That would need the approval of all member

states including the U.K. That in turn might give Cameron the leverage he would need to secure all the other member states' agreement to the treaty changes that would be required to accommodate the U.K.'s EU lite.

It's not going to happen. Holding the global financial system ransom (and that's how it would be portrayed) is a gamble too far, particularly for the prime minister of the country that hosts that hub of international finance, the City of London, and even more so when that same prime minister is unwilling to risk a breach with his Liberal Democrat partners.

It's possible—just—to see the current approach as one of accidentally

**Cameron may have respectable reasons for rejecting an EU referendum just now, but to argue that there was 'no popular support' for an immediate referendum at a time when half the voters were telling the pollsters they wanted just that was not only inaccurate but, politically speaking, nuts: He's lucky Labour is unenthusiastic about such a vote.**

masterful inactivity. If the 17 eurozone countries are permitted to merge into a politically united core within a broader "multi-speed" EU, that could leave Britain to its own devices in a more congenial outer-EU. But you'd have to be very naïve to believe in such an outcome. All 27 EU countries would still be trapped within a European project that is explicitly set up to grind relentlessly forward ("ever closer union"). The speeds might differ, the direction would not.

If that's to change, there will have to be treaty changes of the type that Cameron, pleading crisis and coalition, has not begun to attempt to

renegotiate or, for that matter, even design. To be fair, his government has passed legislation designed to subject any future significant transfer of powers to Brussels to a referendum, a step almost unthinkable a few years ago. It was a start (and one day it may trigger a necessary confrontation), but the suspicion with which the new law was greeted by euroskeptics (because of the loopholes lurking within it) was yet another sign of how estranged Cameron has become from those who should be his party's natural supporters.

That estrangement has been sharpened by a series of recent blunders. One of the biggest was an effort last October to browbeat Tory MPs into voting against a largely symbolic motion calling for a referendum on Britain's membership in the EU. The motion had no hope of passing, but Cameron's rather telling overreaction helped provoke a massive revolt within his parliamentary party, a revolt that goes some way to explaining the prime minister's decision to keep the U.K. out of the fiscal pact cooked up by Merkel and Sarkozy in December.

The goodwill generated by that faint flicker of the bulldog spirit has since been squandered with the carelessness characteristic of euroskeptic sensibilities. Cameron may have respectable, even euroskeptic, reasons for rejecting a referendum just now, but to argue (as his spokesman did in June) that there was "no popular support" for an immediate referendum at a time when half the voters were telling the pollsters they wanted just that (another third wanted one "in the next few years") was not only inaccurate but, politically speaking, nuts: Cameron is lucky that Labour remains unenthusiastic about such a vote.

Even nuttier, and much more damaging, was his subsequent observation that he would "never" campaign for the U.K. to quit the EU. Again, there can be good reasons for a "practical euroskeptic" (as Cameron styles himself) to oppose an in/out referendum, not least the danger that, faced with

a stark decision (made, doubtless, to seem even starker by big business), the electorate might well “keep ahold of nurse / For fear of finding something worse.” Read that way, opposition to such a vote is a question of tactics, not principle.

But by going further—and in such categorical terms—Cameron shredded the shreds of his euroskeptic credibility for no evident reward other than, perhaps, a smattering of the *bien-pensant* applause he treasures for reasons, sadly, other than cynical political calculation. How now was he supposed to be able to renegotiate a better deal with the EU? With the threat of a British withdrawal removed (quite a few EU countries still want the U.K. to stick around) and the idea of vetoing closer eurozone integration long off the table, it’s unclear what cards the prime minister would have left to play. “Practical” euroskepticism looks to be not so very practical after all.

The inescapable logic, for euroskeptics, points to an in/out referendum, followed, in the event of an “out” vote, by a total recasting of Britain’s relationship with Brussels, as the country begins the withdrawal process provided for under the EU treaty. That’s not what they will get. The best guess, amongst a bewildering range of scenarios, is that at the next general election (due in 2015) the Conservatives will guarantee a referendum on whatever feeble deal Cameron, reelected and freed from the chains of coalition, might (fingers crossed) manage to extract from the EU. Will that lure enough UKIP Tories back to the fold?

It’s unlikely, not least because there will probably be more of them than in 2010 (the 2014 elections to the European Parliament should add to UKIP’s momentum). The chances of a Conservative majority in 2015 thus appear (in the absence of an intervening economic miracle) slight. Instead the odds must be that Labour will be back in power, in which case there will be no renegotiations with Brussels, and that will be that.

What was that slogan about a roach motel? ♦

# Gore Vidal’s Fan Club

What, exactly, did they admire about the man?

BY ANDREW FERGUSON



Gore Vidal at the National Book Awards in 2009

The most puzzling thing about the career of Gore Vidal, who went toes-up last week at 86, was the reverence in which he was held by people who might have known better. He was famous for announcing the “death of the novel” as an art form, and as if to prove the point he kept writing them. No one who survived a reading of *Kalki* or *Myron* or *Creation* or *Duluth* will recall the experience with anything other than revulsion and self-loathing. It is true that, when sober, he could be good on television, and few talents nowadays are more highly prized. And it’s true that, as an essayist, he could sometimes impress the reader with a kind of goofball charm; I’ve just reread with pleasure half a dozen essays that I first enjoyed 30 years ago in the *New York Review of Books*. He single-handedly revived the reputation of the

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great novelist Dawn Powell, and he told funny stories in a winsome way about Hollywood old and new, and he was hell on the Kennedys. However you measure these achievements from a career spanning seven decades, they amount to no more than a handful, soon to turn to dust.

Yet in 2009, at a humid dinner filled with our culture’s leading personages, he was presented with the lifetime National Book Award for his Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. Was Danielle Steel busy that year? The Personages greeted him with a prolonged and affectionate standing ovation, a favor he returned by talking about himself, alternately cranky and befuddled, for nearly an hour. He figured no one would dare show signs of boredom as he lulled them inexorably into catalepsy, and he was right. The Personages had been programmed for reverence.

And they were endlessly forgiving.

AP / TINA FINEBERG

For decades Vidal had said that Franklin Roosevelt knew in advance of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and let the slaughter come anyway, and when 9/11 gave him the chance to make the same slander against another president, he went even further and speculated that George Bush had colluded with his vice president to encourage the terrorist attacks. At his death a critic at the *Washington Post* summarized the Vidalian view with an uncommon mildness: “He took an acerbic view of American leadership.”

The man must have felt bullet-proof. With implausible romances like *Lincoln* and *Burr* he filled more readers’ heads with more historical crap-ola than anyone since Parson Weems. (“So powerful as to compel awe,” said Harold Bloom of Vidal’s make-believe histories.) He thought the Bilderbergers and members of the Bohemian Grove controlled world finance. (“He is a treasure of state,” said R.W.B. Lewis.) He befriended Timothy McVeigh and spoke warmly of him. (“Vidal did not lightly suffer fools,” said the obit writer in the *New York Times*.) He dished out anti-Semitism in a dozen different venues with imperturbable serenity. (“Both by temperament and by birth he was an aristocrat,” said the *Times*.) He called William F. Buckley a crypto-Nazi. (“Vidal was known for his . . . scathing wit,” said Diane Sawyer on ABC.) He wanted to try Henry Kissinger for war crimes and suggested that John McCain had invented tales of his torture at the hands of the Vietnamese. (“A savvy analyst and glorious gadfly on the national conscience,” said the *L.A. Times*.) He was paid nearly a million dollars, adjusted for inflation, to collaborate with the pornographer Bob Guccione on *Caligula*, the most expensive stroke film ever made. (“An astonishingly versatile man of letters”—the *Post* again.)

It’s anybody’s guess how he got away with it all while maintaining a reputation as, at worst, “an acerbic gadfly,” and at the grandest, “one of the greatest essayists in the English language.” The Personages have their own reasons for choosing whom to revere. I

was interested in Diane Sawyer’s brief obituary on her ABC evening news show. It centered on the notorious confrontation (on ABC TV) between Vidal and Buckley in 1968, in which Buckley countered Vidal’s accusation of Nazism with the vigorous insight that Vidal was “queer”—not high on the list of Buckley’s scathing witticisms either. In recalling the event, Sawyer identified Vidal as the “celebrity novelist,” while taking special care to tag Buckley as the “arch-conservative.”

Why arch? The two tags make for a curious imbalance. For 50 years Buckley’s views were safely on the rightward edge of the American popular consensus; Vidal’s were shared by a tiny minority—cranks and ignoramuses in Hollywood, Manhattan, Northwest Washington, D.C., various college towns, and Ruby Ridge, Idaho. Yet it is Buckley who earns the ideological intensifier “arch.”

How could such an inversion take place? The Personages might be working for a world-girding conspiracy run by the Mossad, I don’t know, but there’s a simpler explanation, too.

Buckley was right, but in the wrong way; and Vidal was wrong, but in the right way. From the 1950s, before Ike had even left the White House, Vidal was announcing that the right-wingers had seized the Republican party from the sensible members of a generation before; a generation later, the right-wingers had seized the party from the sensible members of a generation before; and so on, for half a century. In his world “the generals” were always two ticks away from declaring war and imposing martial law; the theocracy would be arranged before the decade was out; he saw the dying embers of capitalism; and the dark curtain of fascism was falling even as you were reading his words.

Try keeping that up for 50 years! No wonder he was a hero to the Personages. For them too every day is Groundhog Day, bringing fresh news from the day before about what won’t happen tomorrow. His career must stand as a great reassurance. If you’re wrong in the right way, all will be forgiven, until everyone forgets that there was ever anything to forgive. ♦

## A Religious Freedom Election

A court case in Colorado shows what’s at stake this fall. **BY WESLEY J. SMITH**

A recent federal trial court ruling has warmed the hearts of social conservatives and civil libertarians alike. A judge in Colorado on July 27 protected a Catholic-owned small business against the “free birth control rule”—which requires companies subject to the Affordable Care

Act to offer their employees free contraception, sterilization, and other “preventive” services.

The free birth control rule does not yet apply to religious institutions. Houses of worship with faith objections are exempt permanently, and religious institutions operating in the general community do not have to comply until next year. But the regulation—which went into effect on August 1—allows no religious conscience exemptions for private businesses, meaning that all employers who come under the

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Affordable Care Act must comply or face federal penalties.

William Newland and his siblings, self-insuring owners of Hercules Industries, a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning manufacturing company, did not appreciate being ordered by the federal government to violate the precepts of their Catholic faith. With the help of the Alliance Defending Freedom, the family members and their business (an S corporation in Colorado) sued, claiming (in addition to constitutional arguments) that the free birth control rule violates their rights under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA).

RFRA was enacted in 1993 in response to a Supreme Court decision that allowed federal drug laws to supersede Native American religious ceremonies that include the use of peyote. Under RFRA, once the Newlands demonstrated that the birth control regulation forces them to violate their faith, which they did, the government had the burden of proving it has a compelling state interest in so doing.

That's usually a tough nut to crack. As a wild hypothetical to illustrate the concept, the federal government could demonstrate a compelling interest in preventing sincere neo-Aztecs from engaging in human sacrifice. But what is the compelling federal interest in forcing Catholic business owners to provide free birth control? District Court judge John L. Kane found none. Thus, in *Newland v. Sebelius*, he issued a preliminary injunction shielding the Newlands and their company from the rule's objectionable provisions pending the final disposition of the case. (Since the court did not apply general constitutional principles in issuing the injunction, the ruling only applies to the plaintiffs. Any other business seeking similar protection will have to file its own lawsuit.)

In the spare reporting about the injunction, few noted the Obama administration's audacious attempt

to emasculate RFRA by claiming that because *the family does business as a corporation*, RFRA does not apply. "This argument relies upon two key premises," Judge Kane noted:

First, the government asserts that the burden of providing insurance coverage is borne by Hercules [as distinguished from the Newland siblings as individuals]. Second, the government argues that as a for-profit, secular employer, Hercules cannot engage in an exercise of religion.

In other words, the Obama administration argued that upon entering commerce through a juridical entity



*The Newlands of Hercules Industries*

such as a corporation, individuals forgo the religious liberty RFRA was enacted to protect.

Because the question is one of "first impression," Judge Kane declined to decide at this early stage in the case whether a corporation has freedom of religion (as the Supreme Court has ruled it has freedom of political speech), finding instead that the Newlands were sufficiently impacted personally to justify a preliminary injunction.

But that doesn't settle the matter. And it raises an important question: How would a court determine a corporation's "religion" under RFRA?

Large, publicly held corporations such as Google or General Electric probably would not be found to have a particular religious belief, given that such companies are owned by millions

of individual and institutional shareholders. In contrast, closely held private companies like Hercules Industries will often be able to demonstrate that their owners share a common religious belief, which should then also be attributed to the corporate entity for RFRA purposes.

By attempting to strip the owners of Hercules of their statutory protections because they incorporated their business, the Obama administration showed once again its determination to shrivel the First Amendment's freedom to exercise one's religion into mere "freedom of worship." As Hercules's attorney Matthew S. Bowman

told me, "Apparently the only things a family business may legally pursue—according to the government—are profit and whatever else Washington bureaucrats decide to mandate, which in our case includes contraception, sterilization, and what many believe to be abortion-inducing drugs."

The Newland case makes clear that the elections this fall could not be more important for religious liberty. The contrasting viewpoints of the likely judicial nominees of each potential president are obvious. But in addition, a first-term Romney Justice Department would almost surely take a view of religious liberty diametrically opposite that of a second-term Obama DOJ. Romney—who has praised the Newland injunction—would surely scrap the Obama administration's pinched "freedom of worship" in favor of the Constitution's "free exercise" of religion.

But it isn't just the presidency. The makeup of Congress is also crucial. If a court ever rules that juridical entities are not covered by RFRA, Congress will have to amend the law to ensure that religious employers retain the freedom to conduct their businesses in conformity with their religious convictions. Under a Majority Leader Reid and a House speaker Pelosi, good luck with that! ♦

COURTESY OF ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

# The Real Romney Trip

*With the Republican candidate abroad*

BY FRED BARNES

*Jerusalem*

Regarding politicians, the press can keep only one idea in its mind at a time, a single defining characteristic. In Mitt Romney's case, the idea is he's gaffe-prone.

Romney doesn't understand this. On the second day of his foreign trip, Romney and his family were amused as they read aloud the witty headlines in the British papers zinging him over his critique of the country's preparations for the Olympics. Romney's son Josh teased him. They all laughed.

What Romney didn't know was that the British press had established the storyline for his six-day trip to England, Israel, and Poland. Day after day, the media reported his first overseas trip as the Republican presidential candidate as one dominated by stumbles, missteps, and diplomatic blunders.

The significant parts of the trip were overshadowed. Romney received an unprecedented welcome in Israel, where a literal red carpet was rolled out for him as if he were a head of state. His visit to Poland was a success. He delivered two excellent speeches. But all this was minimized in the media.

Romney bears at least some of the blame for the unfavorable coverage. He unnecessarily alienated the press traveling with him—mostly young reporters—who resented being ignored. His campaign scheduled a fundraiser in Jerusalem, figuring the money it brought in would more than offset the press criticism it was bound to receive. And he did commit a gaffe when he went public with doubts about whether the Brits had prepared sufficiently for the Olympics.

That gaffe, though fairly innocuous, was treated with

utter seriousness by the American press since it neatly fit the preconceived notion of Romney. British newspapers had already raised the same doubts about the games. The doubts were vindicated, once the Olympics began, by sparse crowds, ticket mix-ups, and persistent security concerns. But Romney got no credit for his prescience.

The press, meanwhile, made little of the extraordinary effort by President Obama and his campaign to malign the Romney trip, and at one point even to trump it with a White House signing ceremony at which the president released \$70 million in military aid to Israel. And while Romney honored the oft-violated tradition of not criticizing

a president while abroad, Obama broke new ground by attacking his presidential rival who was overseas.

Let's examine both the gaffes and the events that were downplayed, starting with the four supposed gaffes.

**GAFFE #1.** Other than interviews with Israeli newspapers, the Romney campaign decided to make the candidate available only to television correspondents with their large audiences: Brian Williams and Matt Lauer of NBC, Wolf Blitzer and Piers Morgan

of CNN, Jan Crawford of CBS, David Muir of ABC, and Greta Van Susteren and Carl Cameron of Fox.

Romney created trouble for himself in his first interview, with Williams. Here's the Q&A:

**WILLIAMS:** And in the short time you've been here in London, do [the Olympics] look ready to your experienced eye?

**ROMNEY:** You know, it's hard to know just how well it will turn out. There are a few things that were disconcerting, the stories about the private security firm not having enough people, the supposed strike of the immigration and customs officials, that obviously is not something which is encouraging. Because . . . there are three parts that make games successful.

Romney went on to explain that he was referring to



*Romney visits the Western Wall in Jerusalem, July 29.*

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athletes, volunteers, and “the people of the country.”

As it turned out, his comments about the Olympics didn't get on the air on the NBC Nightly News. But a transcript was obtained by the British press, which erupted with attacks on Romney under headlines such as “Mitt the Twit,” “Who invited party-poopier Romney?” and, applying an Olympics angle, “Mitt falls at the first hurdle.”

The British press loves this puerile sort of anti-Americanism. And columnists and London's goofy mayor, Boris Johnson, piled on. “There's a guy called Mitt Romney who wants to know if we're ready,” Johnson told a crowd of 60,000 at a concert. “Are we ready? Yes, we are!”

Prime Minister David Cameron also was quoted as taking a swipe at Romney. “We are holding an Olympic Games in one of the busiest, most active, bustling cities anywhere in the world,” he said. “Of course it's easier if you hold the Olympic Games in the middle of nowhere.” That comment, according to the *Guardian*, was “a none too subtle reference to the 2002 Salt Lake City games famously rescued by Romney.”

But it came in response to a question not about Romney, but about how well public transportation was holding up in London. Asked specifically about Romney, Cameron was gracious. “I think we'll show the whole world ... we are extremely good at welcoming people from across the world,” he said. “I will obviously make those points to Mitt Romney. I'm looking forward to our meeting.” Cameron later joked about Romney's comment.

Yet the American media insisted Romney had suffered a setback in London. He needs “a breakout moment ... to salvage his overseas tour, which got off to a rocky start,” the *Washington Post* said. “Rookie mistakes,” *The Week* concluded. “The British were offended,” the AP said.

GAFFE #2. It wasn't really a gaffe but a misunderstanding of what Romney adviser Dan Senor meant when he told reporters Romney would “respect” a decision by Israel to strike Iran's nuclear facilities. Without asking for clarification, the AP sent out an alert saying Romney would “back” a military strike by Israel, and others followed with similar stories.

Senor, while previewing Romney's speech in Jerusalem, was merely repeating Romney's long-held view that

Israel has a right to defend itself against Iran's nuclear threat. He was not suggesting Romney would announce a change in his position, much less a tougher attitude toward Iran. Nor was he trying to make news. That was Romney's job. Here's what Senor said:

“We in the West partnering with Israel should do everything we can from stopping Iran from developing that [nuclear] weapons capability. And if Israel has to take action on its own, in order to stop Iran from developing that capability, the governor would respect that decision.”

Asked about Senor's statement a few hours later by

CBS's Jan Crawford, Romney twice used the word “respect” and added: “Because I'm on foreign soil I don't want to be creating new foreign policy for my country.”

In his speech, Romney said, “We recognize Israel's right to defend itself, and it is right for America to stand with you.” A Romney aide called the notion that, at this point, he backs or supports an Israel raid “absurd.”

GAFFE #3. This, too, was a gaffe that wasn't—or at least wasn't Romney's fault. At the fundraiser at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, he delivered a riff he often includes in speeches, only this time he added a mention of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Given the location of his speech, this made sense, but it wound up



Red carpet treatment: President Peres greets Romney.

backfiring on Romney.

Romney noted the wide disparity in GDP per capita between Israel and the Palestinian territory. “You notice a dramatic, stark difference in economic vitality,” he said. “And that is also between other countries that are near or next to each other. Chile and Ecuador. Mexico and the United States.” Then, after citing a scholarly book he'd read, Romney said, “If you could learn anything from the economic history of the world it's this: Culture makes all the difference.”

He'd been making this point, in exactly those words, as far back as his 2008 speech at the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington. In his book *No Apology*, published in 2010, he wrote that despite a decline in educational standards, “we are fortunate that other factors, such as culture, also play a vital role” in America's success. And at the University of Chicago

IMAGES: UPI / DEBBIE HILL / NEWS.COM

in March, he again cited culture and listed the cultural traits he believes are most important. “Our work ethic,” he said. “Our appreciation for education. The willingness of Americans to take risk. Our commitment to honor contract oath, our family devotion. Our commitment to purposes greater than ourselves. Our patriotism.”

Romney didn’t repeat these attributes in his Jerusalem speech, but if he had, it probably wouldn’t have affected what happened next. Most of the press had left before the speech and, joined later by Romney and his entourage, were flying to Poland when the AP put out a story. “Mitt Romney told Jewish donors Monday that their culture is part of what has allowed them to be more economically successful than the nearby Palestinians,” it said in the first paragraph. Two other direct quotations followed.

A Romney adviser said the AP story had to have been written without the benefit of a transcript because the only recordings of the speech were on the plane to Poland.

Nonetheless, based on the AP story, Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat denounced Romney. “Oh my God, this man needs a lot of education,” he said in a telephone interview. “What he said about the culture is racism.” Erekat said Romney had ignored the effect of the “Israeli occupation” in blocking commerce in the West Bank and limiting economic growth.

In fact, Romney’s concept of culture has nothing to do with race. And Romney aides still on the ground in Jerusalem or at Romney headquarters in Boston were not asked for comment on Erekat’s charge before the AP story appeared. What steps might they have taken if they had been contacted before it was filed? “Those could have included reaching out to Erekat and asking him if he were aware of what Romney actually said,” a Romney aide said. “Was he aware that Romney compared Chile and Ecuador and Mexico and the United States in the same statement and in the same manner as the Palestinians and Israel? Was he aware that Romney had said the same about the United States and France?”

The day before his speech, Romney had met with Palestinian prime minister Salam Fayyad. It is Fayyad who has tried with some success to change the culture in the West Bank and improve the business climate along the lines

suggested by Romney. Erekat’s blast, however, became the story, and the Romney speech morphed into a gaffe.

**GAFFE #4.** This one was avoidable but understandable. As Romney was leaving the Polish Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Warsaw after a ceremony, reporters yelled questions at him about gaffes or the Palestinians. Romney press assistant Rick Gorka was incensed and loudly informed reporters they were being disrespectful of a Polish “holy site” and said they could “kiss my ass.” He soon apologized, but the harm was done.

**E**clipsed by the commotion over gaffes was the remarkable character of the Israeli government’s welcome of Romney. Given the fact that Israel will

have to work with President Obama for several more months—and possibly four more years—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had been expected to welcome Romney, but to be careful not to show excessive enthusiasm. Instead, he praised Romney extravagantly, hugged him, and gave every indication he wants Romney to defeat Obama in the election.

A month or so before the visit, Netanyahu decided to embrace Rom-

ney. When Romney showed up for his first meeting with Netanyahu, whose relationship with Obama is chilly, the prime minister greeted him effusively. He addressed Romney by his first name. “We’ve known each other for many decades, since you were a young man, but for some reason, you still look young,” he said. Romney laughed. “You’ve been a personal friend of mine and a strong friend of the state of Israel, and that’s why it’s a pleasure to see you.”

Netanyahu didn’t stop there. He praised Romney’s speech to the Veterans of Foreign Wars a week earlier in Reno—a speech notable for its strong attack on Obama’s policies. Without mentioning Obama by name, Netanyahu injected his own criticism. “We have to be honest and say that all the sanctions and diplomacy so far have not set back the Iranian [nuclear program] by one iota,” he said.

That Romney was being treated like a head of state rather than a candidate was confirmed when he arrived for talks with President Shimon Peres. Romney was told he should remain in his SUV as a red carpet was rolled



*At the University of Warsaw, July 31*

out. Then Peres walked slowly to the SUV to greet Romney. Unlike Netanyahu, Peres is thought to be sympathetic to Obama. Yet in its own way, his welcome of Romney was as upbeat as Netanyahu's.

What's more, Romney, his wife, and son were invited to a family dinner at Netanyahu's home. When Romney arrived, he received another exuberant welcome, more praise, and the hug. (It's hard to imagine Netanyahu hugging Obama.) The prime minister had summoned the Israeli press to witness the occasion outside his home. Netanyahu extolled the speech. He particularly appreciated Romney's insistence that Iran must be kept from gaining even the capability to produce a nuclear weapon. That, by itself, would create an imminent threat to Israel.

The Netanyahu-Romney talks were friendly but serious. Romney asked if the Iranian people would rally behind the ruling mullahs if Israel attacked the nuclear sites. To explain why he doesn't think so, Netanyahu told the story of his visit to Uganda in 2005. He'd been invited for the unveiling of a plaque honoring his brother Yonatan, killed in 1976 while leading a daring commando raid that freed 102 Israelis held hostage by terrorists who'd hijacked their plane and been given refuge in Entebbe, Uganda, by dictator Idi Amin.

Netanyahu asked Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni why Ugandans hadn't rushed to support Amin after Israel invaded their country. The raid, Museveni told him, was a turning point in the effort to oust Amin. It boosted Amin's opponents by revealing how vulnerable he was. Amin was overthrown in 1979. What Netanyahu was suggesting to Romney is that an attack on Iran's nuclear program might similarly help undermine the Tehran regime.

Obama's unprecedented efforts to undermine Romney's trip reflect the weakness of his bid for reelection. Has an incumbent president ever before mounted a political offensive by the White House and his campaign to take down a political rival traveling overseas? Never.

Obama pulled out all the stops. Romney's 36 hours in Israel were bracketed by visits to Israel by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Defense Secretary Leon

Panetta. The Clinton stopover was scheduled shortly after Romney's trip was announced and seemed to have no purpose besides waving the Obama flag. She followed, by two days, a working visit to Israel by National Security Adviser Tom Donilon.

Though Obama had little to do with passage of the United States-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act, he scheduled an Oval Office signing ceremony the day before Romney was to fly to Israel. The White House wanted Israeli ambassador Michael Oren to attend and was furious to discover he'd returned to Israel for the Romney trip. As a result, there was no Israeli on stage at the ceremony. The \$70 million in new funding is to increase production of the Iron Dome short-range rocket defense system. (Incidentally, at the signing ceremony, Obama said Israel would get \$70 billion—without correcting himself or being accused of a gaffe.) Not coincidentally, Defense Secretary Panetta appeared six days later in Israel with Defense Minister Ehud Barak for a photo-op at an Iron Dome site.

The Obama campaign unleashed attacks on Romney by political supporters before and after the trip. In between, Jen Psaki, whose title is "campaign traveling press secretary," joined an Obama trip on Air Force One to a New York fundraiser to trash Romney. He's "been fumbling the foreign policy football from country to country," she told reporters. "And there's a threshold question that he has to answer for the American people, and that's whether he is prepared to be commander in chief."

The Romney trip became an obsession at the White House, all the more so when Lech Walesa, the Solidarity leader who became Poland's president and won a Nobel Peace Prize, endorsed Romney for president. The next day, a Solidarity official said Walesa didn't speak for the union. As luck would have it, the official had just learned from "our friends in the American trade union central AFL-CIO" that Romney was anti-union.

When Romney returned home last week, campaign aides said they're eager to improve relations with the press. It won't be easy. As successful as Romney's trip was on substantive issues, it solidified the notion that he's a gaffe machine. It's unfair and, more often than not, untrue, and it won't keep him from beating Obama. But it sure won't help.



*Ann and Mitt Romney in Warsaw, July 31*

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# A One-Man Department of Justice

*Batman as the American hero*

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BY JONATHAN V. LAST

**B**atman is the hero for our age. The figures in popular culture who used to play the part of the hero—the detective, the soldier, the cowboy, the gentleman adventurer—have been replaced by superheroes, men with capes and masks who sprang from the pages of pulpy, dime-store comic books. These characters have now assumed the positions once occupied by Hercules and Ajax, Perseus, and Achilles.

When we want to tell stories about ourselves, stories about the biggest, most elemental parts of ourselves, we now tell them with superheroes. Mainstream novelists, writers such as Jodi Picoult, Brad Meltzer, Greg Rucka, and Orson Scott Card, frequently write superhero stories for comic books. Comic book characters have infiltrated television on shows such as *Heroes* and *Smallville*. Superheroes are now a mainstay of the modern cinema: Twelve of the top 100 grossing movies of the last 25 years have been based on superheroes.

In this constellation of comic book heroes, Batman is the North Star—the figure around whom the rest of the heavens are arrayed. He was not the first superhero. (That distinction goes to Superman.) But from comics to radio serials to TV shows to cartoons to novels, he has been with every generation of Americans since the Great Depression. He has been a presence on the big screen since 1943. Of the 201 highest-grossing movies of all time, 6 have featured him.

The reason Batman has endured is that he is the only pulp hero worth considering on a philosophical level. He has something to say about the human experience.

Many comic book heroes have philosophical *ambitions*. At various phases in his existence, for instance, Superman has been a vehicle for grappling with progressivism and the anxieties of the lower class; a meditation on Nietzscheanism and the problem of the *übermensch*; and, of course, a symbol of truth, justice, and the American way. The X-Men were created as a crude civil rights parable.

Wonder Woman was conceived as a vessel for proto-feminism.

Other heroes have been not so much philosophical as nakedly political. Captain America was drawn up as an act of nationalistic wish fulfillment: The cover of *Captain America* #1 showed the hero decking Hitler nearly a year before the United States entered World War II. The Falcon, created in 1969, was wish fulfillment, too, though of a different sort. He was the first African-American superhero, and when his alter ego, Sam Wilson, wasn't fighting crime he was a social worker in Harlem. In 1971, Marvel Comics paired these two characters in their own series, *Captain America and The Falcon*; the awkward result, which ran for seven years, reads as shorthand for the entire sociopolitical collision of the 1970s.

But Batman is different. He is not an avatar for a particular political argument or idea. Batman is about the liberal order itself—specifically about the durability of classical liberalism in the face of modernity.

**F**rom the beginning, Batman concerned himself with justice. Whereas Superman spent the 1930s and '40s fighting for the common man against powerful interests—corrupt industrialists, scheming munitions manufacturers, dirty bankers—Batman fought mobsters. If you look at the original Batman comics, he's forever chasing gangsters and colorful criminals, such as the Joker. Sometimes he'd arrest the evildoers; sometimes, if they were particularly repugnant, he'd kill them. In later years he evolved and swore never to take a life.

This narrow mission made sense for the character: "Batman" was born the night Thomas and Martha Wayne were gunned down by a petty thief in front of their boy, Bruce. As little Bruce emerged from his grief he became a single-minded champion of justice. So much so that in the proper understanding of the character, young Bruce Wayne becomes Batman as a child, years before he dons his cape and cowl.

In Frank Miller's seminal Batman comic, *The Dark Knight Returns* (1986), the Wayne family butler, Alfred Pennyworth, recounts a story from Bruce's childhood, a few years after the murder of his parents:

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Master Bruce was but nine years old, and restless, as he always was, at night. Still he sat, politely enough, on his bed, as Alfred read to him. “The Purloined Letter.” . . . He listened in silence as, finishing the tale, Alfred explained the importance of Mr. Poe’s contribution to detective fiction. Then, with a voice like steel, so frightfully formal, his dark eyes flashing, Master Bruce asked—no, demanded: “The killer was caught. And punished.”

Alfred assured him that the villain had met justice. Bruce slept. Like a boy.

But once Bruce Wayne grows up and formally becomes the Batman, he realizes that justice is about more than nabbing crooks. It’s about fighting corruption and perversion—the twin forces of illiberalism. This is why great chunks of the Batman mythology deal with his partnership with Commissioner Jim Gordon and their attempt to cleanse Gotham City’s corrupt police force. It’s why one of Batman’s most enduring storylines is his quest to cure “Two-Face” Harvey Dent—a noble district attorney who becomes criminally insane after half of his face is disfigured in a mob hit. Batman doesn’t just want to arrest Dent, he wants to rehabilitate him. He understands that the institutions of liberalism can be corrupted; but he believes that, in order for the entire project to endure, it must be possible to purify them.

The fact that these stories are set in Gotham City is not an accident. Batman is unthinkable as a rural hero—there could be no adventures of Batman in Smallville, Kansas (as there are for Superman)—and Gotham is the quintessential 20th-century American city. As such, it is both Western civilization’s highest achievement and a source of challenges to the liberal order. And Batman has a great deal to say about both.

The post-Cold War world has been defined by two events: the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the global financial collapse of 2008. It is not an accident that the best two attempts of popular fiction to grapple with these calamities have been Batman movies.

Christopher Nolan has written and directed three films about Batman. The first was a disposable piece of entertainment, but the second and third, 2008’s *The Dark Knight* and *The Dark Knight Rises*, which is in theaters now, are movies with big ideas.

Amazingly enough, *The Dark Knight* is the best exploration of 9/11 produced by our creative class. In it, the Joker arrives in Gotham City and his mission isn’t to steal money or gain power. He doesn’t even want to kill Batman. He simply wants to demonstrate how frail society’s mores are. “When the chips are down, these ‘civilized’ people will eat each other,” he tells

Batman conspiratorially. “You’ll see. I’ll show you.”

And with that, he embarks on a campaign of terrorism designed to stampede Gotham’s citizens into forsaking democracy, abandoning their social norms, and striking bargains with evil. The Joker is the kind of foreign, illiberal threat that al Qaeda presented to the West, and the movie’s 9/11 parallels are explicit: In one scene Batman stands in the wreckage of an exploded police station where the set is arranged precisely to resemble the ruins at the World Trade Center.

At a superficial political level, *The Dark Knight* is a deeply conservative movie. It sides with the Bush administration on questions of torture, as Batman is forced to beat information out of several villains in order to prevent further attacks. It even gives an alibi to the administration on warrantless wiretapping: Batman designs a secret method of eavesdropping on the city’s cell phone network, and the device is a crucial tool in Gotham’s salvation.

These heresies were not lost on the left. *The Dark Knight* was a critical and commercial smash, and practically the only people in America who quarreled with it were movie critics who saw it as an exoneration of President Bush. *New York* magazine’s David Edelstein, for instance, complained that Bruce Wayne had a “smirk” with “a trace of Dubya entitlement” and that Batman employed “FISA-like surveillance.”

But at a deeper level, the movie was even more conservative. The question *The Dark Knight* asks is, *Can liberalism defend itself from illiberal threats?* And the verdict it renders is, No. Throughout *The Dark Knight*, Gotham City’s institutions—the police, the courts, the mayoralty, the citizenry—prove incapable of answering the Joker’s assaults. And bit by bit, the city descends into Hobbesian anarchy. In the movie’s climax, the Joker has placed bombs on two ferries. One is filled with citizens trying to flee the city; the other is filled with criminals being transported from the city’s jail. Onboard each boat is a detonator which, the Joker claims, is wired to the other boat. The Joker informs his victims that if, in an hour, one of the ferries hasn’t been destroyed, he’ll blow up both of them.

On the prisoner boat, the warden keeps possession of the detonator but, as time ticks by, he begins to eye it nervously. A small group of convicts who have been praying approach him and, with just minutes left, the leader tells the warden, “Give it to me and I’ll do what you should have done 10 minutes ago.” The warden reluctantly hands over the detonator, and the religious convict—to everyone’s surprise—throws it overboard.

Meanwhile on the civilian boat, the people take a vote



as to whether or not they should use their detonator, thus killing the convicts and saving themselves. The result is a small majority in favor of blowing up the prisoners. But when the captain refuses to push the button himself, none of the other passengers is willing to commit the act either. With moments to go, Batman happily saves them.

What Nolan is saying in *The Dark Knight* is that our social order is far more fragile than it seems, and that even democracy is not sufficient to maintain it. Upholding the liberal order requires larger guiding forces—such as religion and natural law, as suggested by the ferry dilemma. And sometimes maintaining order requires illiberal actions, such as those undertaken by Batman.

“These people need you now,” the Joker lectures Batman. “But when they don’t . . . they’ll cast you out. Like a leper.” The Joker is right—by the end of *The Dark Knight*, Batman has become a public enemy, hunted by the police and disavowed by the authorities. Nevertheless, Batman accepts this burden precisely because he believes the city is worth saving. Even if the means of salvation are terrible.

Which brings us to Nolan’s final Batman movie, *The Dark Knight Rises*. It begins eight years after the Joker’s reign of terror. Gotham is now healed as a city. Order has been restored; crime has dwindled; prosperity has returned; and Batman has retired. Into this fat and happy city arrives another terrorist, named Bane. Unlike the Joker, Bane doesn’t want simply to destroy the liberal order. He wants a revolution. In rapid succession, Bane assembles a small army, infiltrates Gotham, destroys the bridges and tunnels, and uses a nuclear device to keep the federal government at bay. He liberates the city in the name of “the people” and announces open season on Gotham’s elites.

What follows is an ode to conservatism and the free market: Important charities close down without businesses to support them. A kangaroo court is established to try the wealthy—and any dissidents who don’t like the new regime—for crimes against society. Citizens loot with impunity, and the men and women who don’t stoop to informing on their neighbors simply lock their doors and cower in the dark. At one point, a pair of characters stumble into a penthouse apartment which has been ransacked and turned into a flop house. One of them picks up a broken picture of a family, and notes sadly, “This place used to belong to someone.” Her friend cheerfully replies, “Now it belongs to everyone!”

Yet despite appearances, *The Dark Knight Rises* is not an attack on the Occupy Wall Street movement (the script predates the Occupy movement by nearly a year). Nolan is out for bigger fish: Reacting to the 2008 financial crisis, he asks, *Can liberalism survive its own excesses?*

In interviews Nolan says that *The Dark Knight Rises* was shaped in large part by *A Tale of Two Cities*. It’s worth

remembering, however, that Dickens’s views on the French Revolution were complicated. He deplored the revolution, but held no brief for the *ancien régime*. As Orwell noted, “Dickens sees clearly enough that the French Revolution was bound to happen and that many of the people who were executed deserved what they got. If, he says, you behave as the French aristocracy had behaved, vengeance will follow.” Here is Dickens himself on the subject:

All the devouring and insatiate monsters imagined since imagination could record itself, are fused in the one realization, Guillotine. And yet there is not in France, with its rich variety of soil and climate, a blade, a leaf, a root, a spring, a peppercorn, which will grow to maturity under conditions more certain than those that have produced this horror. Crush humanity out of shape once more, under similar hammers, and it will twist itself into the same tortured forms.

This isn’t to say that Dickens thought the revolution was justified. He believed that the revolutionaries were savages and that the revolution itself was, as he says, a “monster.” He believed, as Orwell put it, “that the results are inevitable given the causes, but . . . that the causes might have been avoided.” Which seems to be Nolan’s view as well. At the beginning of *Dark Knight Rises*, we see Gotham’s overclass at a decadent party, hatching political schemes and behaving in a Bloombergian manner. Bruce Wayne notes that the city’s glitterati are constantly throwing “charity” events that serve no purpose other than feeding the vanity of the dilettantes who attend them. And so, when Bane comes to town the people of Gotham participate in his revolution with equal parts horror and glee.

But there is a catch: Unlike Madame Defarge, Bane has a hidden agenda, and the story of *The Dark Knight Rises* turns when it’s revealed that despite the revolution, Bane is going to detonate his bomb, wiping out the city.

What Nolan is driving at in *The Dark Knight Rises* are two deep truths. First, that however stable and pacified Gotham appears—and however good the fruits of the liberal order—we must realize that it is still part of the City of Man, imperfectible and subject to our inherent weaknesses. Liberalism is necessary, but not sufficient, for justice and peace. And left to run its course, it can create terrible chains of events. Nolan’s second argument is that the men who arise to command these events (Robespierre, Stalin, Bane) are not to be trusted. This is a deeply conservative reading of human affairs. And, not coincidentally, a perfect distillation of Batman’s philosophy.

All of which is why, if you believe that the Western project is the capstone of human experience, the apex to which our history has pointed—but that it is a structure which is neither inevitable nor immortal, and requires defense—then Batman is not just the hero for our age. He’s a hero for every age. ♦



Lyndon Johnson fights the War on Poverty in Imez, Kentucky, 1964

# Fair Enough

*Competing visions of economic justice.* BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

**W**hen CNBC's Rick Santelli took to the floor of the Chicago Board of Trade on February 19, 2009, to launch a tirade against a government plan to assist homeowners with troubled mortgages, few could foresee that the Tea Party would come into existence and exercise such influence on political debates. Likewise, after holding demonstrations last fall in hundreds of cities worldwide, the Occupy Wall Street movement returned this spring, leading many to wonder what impact it

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## Free Market Fairness

by John Tomasi  
Princeton, 368 pp., \$35

will have on our public discourse.

These two movements provide a helpful reminder of how economic issues are frequently debated, and the past three years have highlighted the importance of normative thinking about economic issues. Partisans on the right and on the left speak in morally charged language about the rights of private property and the right to universal health care, about the justice of keeping what one earns and the justice of providing for the basic needs of all our society's members. Sarah Palin's

Tea Party and Nancy Pelosi's Democrats are obviously at odds on these issues; but how one thinks about the bailouts, the Bush tax cuts, Obamacare, and "spreading the wealth" should be informed by deeper considerations of rights and justice.

To my mind, the rhetoric coming from both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street gets it about half right and half wrong. Neither side has a coherent, consistent, and plausible argument (which shouldn't be too surprising, given their nature as activist, political protest groups). But as I survey the academic literature on economic justice and rights, I find something similar: Of the leading right-leaning and left-leaning scholarly positions, each paints only part of the picture.

BETTMANN / CORBIS / AP IMAGES

John Tomasi, professor of political philosophy at Brown, sees the same limitations in our scholarly discussions. As he puts it in this new and, in many respects, brilliant book, political theorists are presenting too many false dichotomies:

Property rights *or* distributive justice.  
Limited government *or* deliberative democracy. Free markets *or* fairness.  
One side or the other, everyone must choose.

But Tomasi is drawn to ideals in both the libertarian tradition (he opens the book with a confession that “some of my best friends are libertarians”) and what he calls “contemporary high liberalism” (the creed of today’s academy). As Tomasi writes, “Most of my professional friends and colleagues, by far, are left liberals.”

From the libertarian right, Tomasi finds capitalistic freedoms that protect personal agency and conceptions of society as spontaneous order inspiring. And from the liberal left, he is drawn to the norms of political legitimacy that should be at the heart of political institutions, with social justice providing the ultimate standard. Tomasi develops a hybrid of the two, a theory he calls “market democracy.” This theory “combines ideas that have long seemed uncombinable: private economic liberty *and* social justice; spontaneous order *and* democratic self-governance; free markets *and* fairness. Market democracy makes room for them all.”

The heart of Tomasi’s book entails serious engagement with John Rawls and his liberal theory of justice as fairness. While many scholars have defended capitalism from leftist critics by pointing to the practical problems with social democracy and the welfare state—“great in theory but it doesn’t work in practice”—Tomasi challenges Rawls on the level of ideal theory. He covers why a government that is too involved in economic matters usually fails to achieve social justice or the common good (the problems of poverty traps and rent-seeking that public choice theorists have so well explained). But Tomasi casts his main argument on moral grounds, claiming

that Rawls and the other high liberals have the wrong conception of justice: “That choice is strictly *moral*: which conception of fairness, the social democratic one or the free market one, offers us the more inspiring ideal?” In other words, it neither works in practice nor is great in theory.

The problem is that while high liberals protect robust conceptions of noneconomic rights—free speech, freedom of association, religious liberty, voting rights, eligibility for office—they advocate only a thin conception of economic rights: protection for personal (but nonproductive) property and (limited) occupational choice. They couple this with strong demands for (re)distributive justice. Tomasi traces the historical origins of their view to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Karl Marx, and John Stuart Mill’s critiques of classical liberalism. While Mill is a great defender of liberty and individuality, Tomasi shows that he “did not see how activities in the economic sphere could contribute to individuality,” and thus, “none of these [economic] activities is constitutive of liberty.” The result is that “property, in Mill’s view, has no essential link to liberal freedom.” Tomasi continues this history to show how the Progressives, the New Deal Supreme Court, and the academy came to downplay economic freedom.

**Y**et economic freedoms have to be among the basic liberties, Tomasi argues, and whatever institutions and policies a polity selects to improve the lives of the poor have to be consistent with protection of all basic liberties. He claims that what we do in the economic realm is critically important to shaping ourselves and expressing our values. And the data support him. As countries become more wealthy, citizens report valuing their economic liberties more, not less, for they see them as critically important to shaping their lives, to being what Tomasi terms a “responsible self-author.”

He castigates his colleagues, trained as they are in analytic rigor, for refusing to see how important economic liberty is in the lives of average people. Tomasi argues that “to under-

stand the moral value of many experiences, a different kind of training is required. That training often consists of living a life in which experiences of the sort in question have a central place.” Rather than denouncing the moral values of their fellow citizens, professional philosophers might “have reason to go back and check their moral premises.” After all, “the opinions of the average good citizen may be just as reliable as those of the average professor of philosophy. Sometimes, the moral judgments of average citizens may be *more* reliable.”

In a wonderful passage later in the book, Tomasi warns of what he calls *philosophilia*: “If philosophy is the love of wisdom, *philosophilia* is the love of philosophy, with or without wisdom.” But Tomasi also takes aim at libertarians, who he says suffer from “social justicitis.” Offering a quick history of the classical liberal and libertarian traditions, Tomasi shows their concern with protecting property rights and economic liberties, but he also highlights texts from John Locke, Adam Smith, and James Madison—as well as Ludwig von Mises, Ayn Rand, Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, Murray Rothbard, and Robert Nozick—that show a concern for how the poor would fare within a market regime. Though Hayek wrote *The Mirage of Social Justice*, and claimed that social justice “does not belong to the category of error but to that of nonsense, like the term ‘a moral stone,’” Tomasi shows how he and the others nevertheless had an incipient awareness that regimes could be legitimate only if the poor did well.

Tomasi wants those on the right to see that this implicit commitment to the welfare of the poor needs to be made explicit, and that it requires giving up the absolute claims that libertarians frequently make about self-ownership and property rights. Instead, they should speak of self-authorship, and understand economic freedoms as similar to other liberal freedoms: basic but not absolute. Drawing comparisons with freedom of speech and religion, Tomasi argues that rights protect important goods by creating spheres of liberty, but they

have to be compatible with each other and with a stable political regime.

The demands of social justice require that, while respecting basic liberties, institutions should be structured so that any resulting inequalities redound to the betterment of the least well-off. He concludes that market societies, particularly with constitutional guarantees of minimum income, basic education, and health care, have proven to generate the greatest personal wealth over time for all people, including the poor. Tomasi doesn't provide particular policies, but suggests that the principles animating market democracy strongly point in the direction of nonstatist means of securing the well-being of the poor: through direct cash payments, vouchers, tax incentives, and other similar designs.

*Free Market Fairness* is an ideal academic book, which means that it may prove too difficult a slog, especially with its technical jargon, for nonacademic readers. But for fellow academics, it is golden. Judicious and charitable in interpreting other scholars, Tomasi proposes his own ideas not as the last word on a subject but as merely the first. This humility is a breath of fresh air. In fact, Tomasi repeatedly encourages others to contribute to what he calls the "free market fairness research project." His proposed hybrid is merely the first on offer, he says, and he would like to see combinations of other conceptions of liberal justice with other defenses of economic liberty.

Incidentally, I wish he had included more voices, including pre-liberal ones, in his study. I would be interested to know what he thinks of conservative criticisms of market society and the corrupting influence it can have on culture. More important, I worry that many will find his defense of social justice to be unpersuasive and lacking in motivational force. Caring about the poor in order to justify our political institutions, as a criterion of political legitimacy, might be persuasive to some; but aren't there deeper moral obligations that have to do with human flourishing, and might these reasons provide some helpful nonliberal resources? If so, then social justice

is a virtue of individuals, first and foremost, and this has important ramifications for the way states should relate to citizens as they fulfill these duties.

Tomasi's liberal foundations might explain why his difference principle, and the heart of his account of social justice, is concerned with material wealth but says nothing about the cultural inequality that Charles Murray has brought to our attention. His account also provides very little to help us think about what social justice requires in response to the leading causes of poverty: family breakdown, nonmarital child-rearing, crime, drugs, and opting out of the workforce. Last, framing social justice solely in terms of the least well-off overlooks important questions about how the middle class is faring. These questions will have to be addressed in subsequent contributions to the project Tomasi has launched.

By the end of *Free Market Fairness*,

something becomes clear about what Tomasi's intentions have been all along. He writes that "from the high liberal perspective, as from the orthodox libertarian one, there is nothing exceptional, or particularly worth venerating, in the traditional moral and constitutional order of America"; both viewpoints see foundational flaws. But the average American recognizes something particularly praiseworthy in the way our polity has been able to protect important freedoms, offer opportunity to all, take care of those who fall through the cracks, and establish a regime that all can embrace. Tomasi suggests that "free market fairness gives philosophical structure to these inchoate but familiar ideas." If you don't like his technical name, however, he has an alternative that partisans in both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street need to embrace: "Social justice, American style." ♦

BCA

# The Tory Anarchist

*George Orwell deserves better than Jeffrey Meyers.*

BY JOHN P. ROSSI

*He loved the past, hated the present, and dreaded the future.*

—Malcolm Muggeridge on  
George Orwell

Jeffrey Meyers has never had an unpublished opinion. He is the author of over 40 books and is a specialist in literary biography, although he occasionally dabbles in popular culture, writing about the lives of such film celebrities as Gary Cooper and John Huston. Meyers also was the first American scholar to bring the writings of George Orwell to serious academic attention. Now, to cap his

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Orwell

*Life and Art*

by Jeffrey Meyers

University of Illinois, 272 pp., \$25

career as an Orwell specialist, Meyers has gathered together 21 of his essays and reviews that deal with the man rightly regarded as the most influential English writer of the 20th century.

*Orwell: Life and Art* has all the strengths and weaknesses of a collection of essays written over a 40-year span: Some are outdated, and, as a whole, they are often repetitious. The same quotations and the same stories are recycled endlessly throughout the volume. In fact, some phrases are repeated word for word. Each essay also has a brief introduction

in which Meyers explains its significance. These introductions are often more interesting than the essay that follows. For example, he explains that a piece he had written for *The World and I* (described as a “high-paying hodge-podge of a magazine”) which dealt with Henry Miller of *Tropic of Cancer* fame contained a photograph of the wrong Henry Miller. When Meyers protested, the editor told him not to worry, because “no one would know the difference.”

In the introduction to an essay he had written for *National Review* on Orwell as propagandist, Meyers (after carefully noting that he, himself, is not a conservative) writes that, though he had written 55 reviews for *NR* and had been praised by William F. Buckley Jr., Buckley had “spiked my criticism” of Evelyn Waugh, Buckley’s hero. Two points: Meyers doesn’t tell the reader what that criticism was or why it was spiked; and, second, editors have a right to publish what they want in their magazines. Meyers has been around long enough to know that.

Where the introductions cast Meyers in an unpleasant light, however, is in his discussion of other biographers of Orwell, all of whom are somehow inferior to him. Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, who wrote the first serious biography of the young Orwell, ruined his chances of being the first scholar to get access to the Orwell archive. Michael Shelden’s authorized biography is “decent, dutiful and dull.” Gordon Bowker’s highly praised life of Orwell is “careless,” while D.J. Taylor’s biography fails to “extract the maximum meaning from the events he describes.” However, it is Bernard Crick, author of the first biography to make use of the Orwell archive, who receives the heaviest blows from Meyers. Crick’s “style is flat and filled with clichés. . . . He plunders previous scholarship without acknowledgment . . . [and is] completely out of his depth as a literary critic.” What makes such criticism interesting is that in Meyers’s own biography, *Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation* (which is a solid piece of work), he cites Crick

approximately 40 times in his footnotes. Not bad for someone out of his depth in Orwell scholarship.

Meyers’s knowledge of Orwell’s life and work is unmatched, and many of his judgments and observations are penetrating. Orwell was a strange character. Bowker called him “one of the great misfits of his generation,” a mix of Tory anarchist, political radical, and cultural conservative. He struggled his entire life with a

tell how he knows this, by the way. I know of at least two others, and I’ll bet there are more.

After heaping encomiums on Davison, Meyers devotes two paragraphs to the flaws in the edition, prominent among which are, surprisingly, a failure to note Meyers’s many contributions to Orwell studies, such as his first essay on “Orwell as Film Critic,” or his discovery of “Humberto Possenti’s letter protesting Orwell’s libel



terrible sense of guilt which, Meyers argues, made him “instinctively masochistic.” These qualities, and Orwell’s desire to expiate his sense of guilt, gave his writings the peculiar flavor, a sense of forthright honesty, that made them fascinating.

One of the few Orwell scholars whom Meyers holds in awe, Peter Davison, is discussed in two essays. Davison edited the facsimile edition of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, an invaluable source for all Orwell scholars, and compiled the 20-volume edition of Orwell’s complete writings, which everyone researching Orwell draws upon. Meyers is lavish in his praise, calling Davison’s work “magisterial . . . definitive.” But then, in a typical Meyers touch, he notes that he “was probably the only one, of the very few reviewers, who read every word” of the 20 volumes. He doesn’t

of French kitchens.” The essay, which appears in *Orwell*, is insignificant, and Meyers is wrong about his second claim. Possenti’s letter was published in the *London Times* in 1933 and can be found in the first volume of Orwell’s nonfiction writings, which appeared in 1968.

Meyers divides his collection into two broad areas: Orwell’s life and what Meyers calls his “art,” a division that is largely artificial. The essays vary in quality. One on Orwell’s Burma is little more than a travel piece which tells us nothing important or significant about the five years Orwell spent there as an officer of the Imperial Police. (The piece originally appeared in *Condé Nast Traveler*, where it belonged.) On the other hand, Meyers’s analysis of the novel *Burmese Days*, which draws heavily on Orwell’s time in Burma, is

instructive, and clearly demonstrates how deeply Orwell's experiences there turned him into a bitter foe of the concept of empire. While Orwell came to believe that *Burmese Days* was not worth reprinting, it actually holds up quite well, and, like E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*, serves as an example of the guilt-ridden novel of empire.

Meyers is particularly good in his discussion of Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*, a memoir of his time in Spain. Meyers is right that this was the turning point in Orwell's life, when, as he told Cyril Connolly, he "at last really believed in Socialism." Meyers notes that Orwell's embrace of socialism was as idiosyncratic as the man himself. Orwell believed in a humane socialism with an emphasis on liberty and equality; he had little time for Marxism or Marxists, whom he regarded as little more than power worshippers.

Spain also turned Orwell into a bitter enemy of communism and its fellow-travelers, who he argued had betrayed the revolution in Spain. When Orwell tried to tell what he had seen in Spain, he found that this was politically unacceptable in England. The editor of the *New Statesman*, Kingsley Martin, rejected Orwell's articles and reviews on the Spanish Civil War on the grounds that they contradicted the party line. Orwell was outraged. Years later, he was having lunch with Malcolm Muggeridge when he asked to change seats. When Muggeridge asked why, Orwell said that Martin was sitting nearby and he couldn't abide looking at his corrupt face. Meyers is surely correct that the roots of *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* can be found in Orwell's experiences in Spain. Among other things, Spain taught him that the very concept of historical truth was disappearing, another concern that would find its way into his last two iconic novels, as well as into such essays as "Looking Back on the Spanish War" and "Politics and the English Language."

One of the most unusual essays is an attempt by Meyers to show that Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* influenced *Animal Farm*. It is certainly true that Orwell had a fond-

ness for animal stories he had read as a young boy—a particular favorite was *The Tale of Pigling Bland* by Beatrix Potter—but Meyers fails to demonstrate any connection between Grahame's charming tale of Mr. Toad and his collection of odd friends and *Animal Farm*. The essay is also an example of Meyers's rhetoric leading him into some strange areas. For example, he sees Toad's fascination with rearranging the furniture in his bedroom to resemble an automobile which he then pretends to drive as

an "unmistakable portrayal of masturbation and orgasm"—an example of what Dwight Macdonald called "unconscious parody."

Meyers's collection suffers the fate of all such gatherings of previously published material: It is dated, redundant, and unnecessary. If he had reworked the material in light of new discoveries or fresh interpretations of Orwell's work, it might have had some value. As it stands, *Orwell: Life and Art* adds little to our understanding of George Orwell and his remarkable literary output. ♦

BCA

## Marriage à la mode

*The conservative case for gay marriage is not made here.* BY HELEN RITTELMAYER

It may not be a foregone conclusion that gay marriage will one day be a legal fact in all 50 states, but an awful lot of people seem to think so. The Republicans in the "inevitability" camp—and there are plenty, especially in blue states—tend to tolerate their party's supposed backwardness on the issue on the assumption that politicians live by the old Chicago maxim, "Don't make no waves, don't back no losers." At the moment, endorsing gay marriage would make waves; that doesn't mean the real players in the GOP don't know which side of the argument will lose. That's what most college-educated Republicans believe, anyway.

This complacent self-assurance was given a jolt in May when Richard Grenell resigned from the Romney campaign after several socially conservative writers accused him of being a gay-rights fanatic (the word used in *National Review* was "unhinged"). Their case against him was shaky: Grenell is an openly gay man who has

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**A Fundamental Freedom**  
*Why Republicans, Conservatives, and Libertarians Should Support Gay Rights*  
by David Lampo  
Rowman & Littlefield, 216 pp., \$19.95

made pro-gay-marriage statements on Twitter, some of which were intemperate; but he is also a former member of John Bolton's United Nations staff and was hired by Romney not to do gay outreach, but as a foreign-policy spokesman. The campaign asked Grenell to stay on, but he stood by his resignation. Moderate Republicans drew the obvious conclusion: Anti-gay activists wield more power over the GOP than they thought. These disillusioned moderates—who had assumed that everyone in the Acela corridor, at least, was on the same page—were forced to ask themselves whether the impression they'd gotten from their schooling, their peers, and network television wasn't simply wrong.

It's quite wrong, actually, on both counts: Gay-marriage opponents are

not a weak fringe, and gay marriage is not an inevitability. In 40 years, when the issue has been thrashed out to a stable-enough conclusion, gay marriage might be the law of the land. Or it might just as easily be the law of only part of the land, with some states recognizing gay unions and others not, some companies extending benefits to gay partners and others not, and religious denominations sorted out along the spectrum between the Roman Catholic church and Wicca. This outcome would please no one, but it would do for a status quo.

All of this is a long way of saying that the Republican party's eventual position on gay marriage has not been predetermined by the forces of history. Circumstances may have already decreed that New York and Vermont will have gay marriage and, on the other hand, that Republican political operatives will judiciously hype the issue during campaigns as long as it gains them social-conservative votes. But when it comes to the question of how much actual support to give the anti-gay-marriage agenda, Republican lawmakers could, if they wanted, do whatever they think to be right.

That's the conversation that David Lampo wishes to join. The title of his book makes Lampo's position obvious, even to readers who don't know that he is a Log Cabin Republican who works for the Cato Institute. His place of employment gives a better clue to the contents than his sexual orientation; the text does carry a whiff of personal crusading, but the author's crusade is for libertarianism. This makes for some tendentious reading, much of it familiar to anyone who has read a libertarian manifesto: an over-long section on the Founders' religious skepticism, gratuitous swipes at "theocrats," and repeated assurances that the American people are flocking to libertarianism in droves. These tics are irritating but largely extraneous, and there is plenty of content left after the nonlibertarian reader has thrown out the soapbox sermons. An author with a dubious thesis to flog will often write a good book regardless, and the rule for reading such a book is simple:

Keep the data points, lose the trend line.

Alas, Lampo's data points are not very good, either. His history of conservatism seems to have been written by someone who reads newspapers but not books. The GOProud controversy at CPAC 2010 is neatly described, but everything before 1990 is treated in the most simplistic terms. He does not seem to realize that there were confirmed bachelors present at the creation of the conservative move-

children; and second, whether granting marriage to gay couples would really make their relationships more conservative in the family-values sense. Lampo shortchanges one question and ignores the other.

"There is no evidence that gay parents are any less effective or loving than heterosexual ones," Lampo argues—or repeats, anyway. The only kind of argument he makes on this point is from authority, which is a problem because



Rosie O'Donnell (right) and then-spouse Kelli O'Donnell, 2006

ment, or that Florence King exists. He also chides socially conservative organizations for being "obsessed" with homosexuality while ignoring heterosexual threats to family values. That may well be how it seems to him, but the Christian right has hardly neglected problems like divorce and single motherhood. Focus on the Family, for example, does plenty of anti-divorce ministry; its marriage-counseling hotline is open 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. every weekday.

For a book that claims to be addressed to conservatives as well as to libertarians, *A Fundamental Freedom* contains very few arguments that traditionalists would find interesting. Many open-minded conservatives are willing to consider embracing gay marriage, but have two main questions they would need to see answered: First, whether gay parents are bad for

there are many reasons to doubt the American Psychological Association line on this. Studies of gay parents often draw their research samples from sperm-donor clinic lists, which are biased toward lesbians (obviously) who are white and upper- or upper-middle-class and who, moreover, tend to define emotional well-being in the same way academics do—all of which results in their favor, sometimes in amusing ways. (One parenting study downgraded straight households for reinforcing gender roles, e.g., by saying that boys shouldn't wear nail polish—this was considered a hardship for the children.)

It is also possible that the quantifiable measurements favored by social science are not sensitive enough to detect the problems that children of gay parents face. Children conceived through sperm donation by single mothers, for example, may not fail eighth grade or knock

over convenience stores, but they do experience confusion, resentment, and other emotional problems (as explained in *My Daddy's Name Is Donor*). It's odd that Lampo is not more skeptical: He repeats, uncritically, the very recent consensus that children of single mothers are disadvantaged by their fatherlessness, while seeming utterly confident that the same disciplines that flubbed that issue for so many decades (and for similar politically motivated reasons) have got it right this time.

As for the argument that marriage would impose values like fidelity, stability, and commitment on gay couples, Lampo doesn't bring it up. Somewhere around half of long-term gay couples admit to having a mutually agreed-upon arrangement for circumventing monogamy, so there's some reason to doubt the optimists. Is the gay community's tendency to non-exclusivity just a hangover from the dark days of closets and cruising, or is it an intrinsic side effect of sex that is largely consequence-free? (The lesbian comedienne Lynn Lavner once joked, "The Bible contains six admonishments to homosexuals and 362 to heterosexuals. That doesn't mean that God doesn't love heterosexuals. It's just that they need more supervision.") It's true, and pregnancy has a lot to do with it.) Social conservatives suspect promiscuity is a permanent feature. If Lampo disagrees with them—and maybe he doesn't; he could regard nonexclusivity as a salutary innovation—he should explain why.

Lampo has obviously put a lot of thought and effort into this book, and it is helpful to have such an up-to-date picture of gay rights laws and poll numbers. (Pop quiz: How many states permit gays and lesbians to petition for legal adoption of their partner's children from a previous marriage? Answer: 28.) But like many libertarians, he is far too simplistic in his view of politics. He seems to think that by labeling gay marriage a type of "freedom," he can end the argument. A truly conservative case for gay marriage will have to address more factors than that—and it will have to wait for another book. ♦

BCA

# Two Good Men

*A pair of names to remember when thinking about Congress.* BY CLAUDE R. MARX



*Slade Gorton at a public hearing of the 9/11 Commission, 2003*

Sam Rayburn famously divided lawmakers into two categories: workhorses and show horses. In an era when the most dangerous place to be is often between a lawmaker and a television camera, it is refreshing to read about two members of Congress who have made considerable achievements outside of the spotlight.

Former senator Slade Gorton (R-Wash.) and Representative Frank Wolf (R-Va.) both have good hearts and the political skills needed to translate their noble intentions into concrete results. And while neither lawmaker is a household name, their political careers are worth knowing about.

Slade Gorton's career is chronicled in considerable detail in John Hughes's biography, and, though the author points out Gorton's flaws (such as his aloofness and discomfort in

**Slade Gorton**  
*A Half Century In Politics*  
by John C. Hughes  
Washington State, 440 pp., \$35

**Prisoner of Conscience**  
*One Man's Crusade for Global Human and Religious Rights*  
by Frank Wolf with Anne Morse  
Zondervan, 288 pp., \$22.99

crowds), the book generally shows its subject in the most favorable light.

Frank Wolf's memoir, on the other hand, describes his efforts to fight for the freedom of citizens of some of the world's most oppressive regimes.

While Gorton and Wolf specialized in different issues, they share common traits: Both are moderate-conservative Republicans, both made their careers in places that

*Claude R. Marx is a writer in Washington.*

ROLL CALL / GETTY IMAGES

they moved to as adults, and both are respected by their colleagues.

Gorton grew up in the Midwest, venturing east for college and law school. He wound up in Washington state on something of a whim, became active in local Republican politics, and was one of a group of young moderates who sought to modernize the state party.

As a state legislator and a popular and effective attorney general, he worked on a range of consumer and environmental issues and sought to strike a balance between serving business interests and protecting consumers and the environment. In 1980, he entered what some perceived to be a long-shot senatorial race against veteran Democrat Warren Magnuson. Gorton successfully depicted Magnuson as old and out-of-touch, which, combined with Ronald Reagan's coattails, brought him to Capitol Hill.

As part of the new GOP majority, Gorton had considerable input in shaping the budgets that passed Congress. He teamed up with Washington's other senator, the legendary Democrat Henry Jackson, to push for support of his states's major employers, thus forming both an alliance and a friendship. Gorton was well-respected by colleagues and wasn't afraid to take on his party's more conservative members. He angered environmentalists by strongly defending the timber industry during the dispute over protection of the spotted owl—an experience which, Hughes contends, radicalized the usually mild-mannered moderate. Hughes also argues that Gorton's greatest contribution was his post-Senate work on the 9/11 Commission. Gorton brokered differences between factions—the executive director later said that Gorton “raised the level of everyone's game”—and labored to strike a balance in a “free society with a short attention span . . . [one that] demands to be safe but bristles at full-body scanners and wants its boys back home.”

While Slade Gorton was a first-rate legislator and strategist, Frank Wolf has taken a different approach to getting things done. Wolf, who has represented a Northern Virginia district for

31 years, has made his mark as a moral advocate and prodder, a modern-day William Wilberforce.

Wolf grew up in Philadelphia and came to the nation's capital for law school, making it to Congress on his third try. He developed a strong interest in human rights and scored an early victory when he led the effort to persuade the Reagan administration to lift Communist Romania's “most favored nation” trade status because of its egregious human rights violations. Ronald Reagan “stuck to his guns over the objections of the business community and members of his own administration,” Wolf writes. “He believed until the end of his days that tyranny would one day be conquered across the globe.” A supporter of the

Iraq war, Wolf worked to ensure that government and private aid groups helped those ordinary Iraqis who were often collateral damage during the fighting.

Wolf was one of the loudest voices in Congress to persuade the Bush administration to do more to resolve the Sudanese civil war and genocide, and, while the situation in Sudan is still volatile, those efforts did result in some progress. Wolf also criticizes Barack Obama for not providing residents of Christian-dominated South Sudan with an air defense system that would protect them from attacks by Sudan's Muslim-dominated government. “The question,” he writes, “is how vigorously will we respond—assuming we care enough to respond at all?” ♦



# Downward Slide

*Cultural ‘snapshots’ of America in crisis.*

BY KATE HAVARD

If you are at all plugged in to the happenings of Hollywood, or have stood in line at the grocery store, or glanced at a newsstand, you know that the Tom Cruise/Katie Holmes divorce has been almost omnipresent since the news broke two months ago. Everybody knows that the tabloid media are, at best, fun trash; but when I recently caught a few minutes of an *E! News Update* and saw the coverage for myself, it managed to surprise me. A few weeks after the Cruise/Holmes story broke, the *E! News* anchors hosted a segment on which young movie stars Tom Cruise and Katie Holmes ought to date, now that they are “the hottest singles in Hollywood.”

Really? The ink is barely dry on the legal documents and it's time for them to get back out there and spice

*Kate Havard is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.*

## The Transformational Decade

*Snapshots of a Decade from 9/11 to the Obama Presidency*

by Herbert I. London

University Press of America, 178 pp., \$40

things up? I was intrigued and—repulsed. Yes, I know, as far as tabloid yuckiness goes, this is Sunday-school stuff. But even so, this particular bit of callousness made me wonder: Is this the culture I inhabit?

If you've been feeling similarly unsettled, you're not alone. If you have a sneaking suspicion that something may be rotten in the United States of America, and that the cultural swamp we're mired in is not entirely disconnected from the troubling political climate we face, then Herbert London has news for you: You're right. This series of essays on post-9/11 America is what London calls a collection of

“snapshots” of a country in crisis—and the pictures are not pretty.

*The Transformational Decade* asserts that the cultural crisis started from the ground up, first in the collapse of morals in our ever-more-public private lives, and then to the realm of entertainment, a hypersexualized “cultural wasteland.” London suggests that the entertainment we watch bleeds over into the news we absorb, resulting in a newer, baser kind of politics. These essays are replete with contemporary examples, and by the end of some of the more exhaustively researched sections, you might feel ready to throw in the towel and kiss American culture goodnight.

Well, it’s not all bleak, even if it is pretty dark. And although *The Transformational Decade* focuses on the past 10 years, London (who has written a series of “decades” books) knows that our problems did not appear overnight, but are the result of a long, slow, downhill march. He also makes the case that the problems our nation faces cannot be cured by electing different politicians or making a few policy changes. His question is, “How can our cultural traditions be restored?”

Herbert London is uniquely placed to comment about the intersection between politics and culture. Until recently, he was president of the Hudson Institute and the John M. Olin Professor of Humanities at New York University, where, in 1972, he created NYU’s Gallatin School and served as its first dean. The Gallatin School itself might be a kind of paradigm: According to London’s own account, it was “organized to promote the study of ‘great books’ and classic texts”—a bulwark against the trends of narrowing specialization and an agent to combat cultural vulgarization.

Under new leadership, however, Gallatin has wandered away from its original mission toward the opposite of a core-curriculum-based classical education, working with students to design a unique program of study that suits their individual interests and career aspirations. While this program may be ideal for students who know exactly what they want out of their education,

it is not likely to steer undergraduates toward those lost cultural traditions London champions. How can any kind of cultural tradition be nurtured, much less restored, when students do not share a common education? When the modern university ceases to educate its students about virtue, and instead caters to the whims of a fragmented student body, the decay London talks about becomes inevitable.

Written in an accessible, conversational style, and laden with information and facts, *The Transformational Decade* is a sobering account of a culture in crisis. London says he agrees with Charles Krauthammer’s thesis that “decline is a choice.” But the mountain of evidence he presents here suggests the contrary—unless something drastic, something, well, transformational takes place. ♦

BCA

# The Dreamgirl

*A writer’s creation comes to life—and then some.*

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

**R**uby Sparks takes an age-old high-concept romantic comedy idea—writer falls in love with the character he’s creating, who then springs to life—and works a series of fascinating, unexpected, and haunting variations on it. Zoe Kazan, who wrote the screenplay, also plays the title character. Ruby emerges full-blown from the manuscript of Calvin Weir-Fields (Paul Dano), who published a prodigiously successful first novel when he was 20 and, with the exception of a few short stories, has been stymied ever since.

Working with directors Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris (a married couple who made *Little Miss Sunshine* together), Kazan and Dano triumph in a beautifully understated portrayal of the horrendously isolated condition of the blocked writer—the person who never does anything because he really should be writing, and has nothing to write about because he never does anything.

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, is THE WEEKLY STANDARD’s movie critic.

Calvin performs his useless labors on an Olympia electric typewriter and lives alone in the Hollywood Hills in a sterile modernist house his early success bought him. His social life is limited to his shrink (a charming Elliott Gould, now, my God, 73 years old) and his high-energy brother Harry (the delightful Chris Messina), who can’t understand his refusal to sleep with the starstruck young women who come up to him at lectures and book readings.

One night, after just such a lecture, Calvin has a dream in which he talks to a redheaded artist whose face is hidden from him by dappled sunlight. He wakes up in a state of high-pitched excitement and begins writing with passion for the first time in ages. After he has accumulated dozens of pages detailing the life and history of this dream woman, he shows the manuscript to his brother, who scoffs at the idealized portrait of womanhood Calvin has drawn in Ruby Sparks.

Harry is wrong, though, because when Ruby simply emerges from Calvin’s kitchen and offers to walk the dog, she is fully realized—lively and





Zoe Kazan, Paul Dano

funny and interesting, with all kinds of jagged edges. And she is no dream. Calvin may have created her, but Ruby is a living, breathing person. And though she might have been designed to be his girlfriend, after a blissful first few weeks it becomes clear that being his girlfriend is not enough for her—just as it would not be enough for anyone real.

For Calvin, the arrival of the perfect woman turns out to be just another reason for him to express dissatisfaction and neediness in equal measure. Dano's uncompromising work as the silent brother in *Little Miss Sunshine* and the manipulative young evangelist in *There Will Be Blood* displayed genuine fearlessness. And he shows it again here, as the sadness we feel at Calvin's isolation and the pleasure we share at his discovery of Ruby begin to give way to something deeper and darker.

What makes this movie so remarkable is its shifts in tone and spirit, from comedy to character study to melodrama. That kind of tonal complexity would have been impermissible

had *Ruby Sparks* been a big-budget Hollywood production with Katherine Heigl and Zac Efron—something

*Directors Dayton and Ferris have a defiantly small-scale and intimate sensibility, and a visual style that is deliberately unpolished.*

distressingly easy to imagine, given the juiciness of its premise.

And that, in turn, says something about the careers of the directors, Dayton and Ferris. They hit critical and box-office gold with *Little Miss Sunshine* six years ago, but haven't made anything since—precisely because they did not want to make romantic comedies with Katherine Heigl and Zac Efron. They have a defiantly small-scale and intimate sensibility, and a visual style that is deliberately unpolished. The lack of gloss may

keep *Ruby Sparks* from winning a large audience, but as is the case with *Bernie*—the other exceptional American movie this year—it will come as a thrilling surprise to those who do seek it out and surrender to it.

Zoe Kazan has played a few waify types in movies and oddball roles in theater before, and has had a play produced in New York. Her acting and writing here represent the second annunciation of a major American talent this year, after Lena Dunham's spectacular work in and on HBO's series *Girls*. Like Dunham, she is painfully young (28 to Dunham's 26) and has something of the same mature and unsentimental perspective on the behavior of her own generation.

Kazan's father, Nicholas, wrote and directed a terrific post-*Fatal Attraction* thriller in 1993 called *Dream Lover* (interesting title in light of *Ruby Sparks*). Her grandfather, Elia, was the most famous American theater and film director of the 1950s, and later the author of the staggering *A Life*, perhaps the best American show-business memoir of the 20th century. She has done the family name proud. ♦



August 6, 2012

Bubbeleh,

Oy gevalt! What a campaign it's been! We just wanted to let you know that we appreciate all your donations and hard work on behalf of Mitt Romney over the last year; it's been a schlep! And as we near the end of the campaign, we wanted to take the time to say thank you. Donate \$25 now and you could win the chance to:

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