the weekly Standard

HIGH ANXIETY IN THE HOLY LAND
ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THE MOST DANGEROUS MAN IN THE WORLD

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Ali Khamenei

BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

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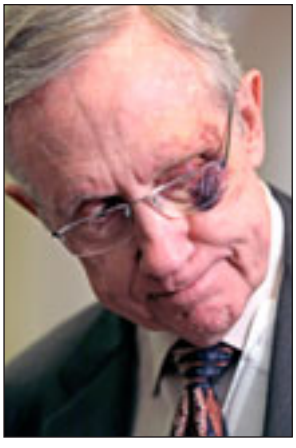
The Sudden Impact of Dirty Harry

The Scrapbook, as any reader can attest, stands foursquare behind civility. We like to think that we practice civility, and we value it in others. And while it's a myth that the nation's capital was a hotbed of civility until those terrible [Republicans/conservatives/Reaganites/right-wingers/Tea Partiers/etc.] came along, The Scrapbook certainly endorses civility in principle.

Which goes part of the way toward explaining our dilemma about Harry Reid. On the one hand, The Scrapbook would like to treat the 72-year-old Senate majority leader with the deference due his august position, and there is plentiful cause for complaint about him without descending to incivility. But Senator Reid makes it awfully difficult.



Last week, he took to the floor of the Senate—conveniently so, thereby insulating himself from charges of slander—to claim that Mitt Romney hasn't paid taxes for the past decade. This is, of course, a serious accusation, suggesting either a calculated dereliction of a citizen's duty or, at worst, a federal crime. But Senator Reid's only authority for this statement was decidedly suspicious: an unidentified "investor" in Bain Capital, Romney's old private equity firm, who wanted only to inform Harry Reid.

Did the anonymous investor offer Reid any proof? No comment. Did the anonymous investor explain how he would know anything about Mitt Romney's tax filings? No comment. "Do I know that's true?" declared Reid, back on the Senate floor. "Well, I'm not certain." But the burden of proof is on Mitt Romney, not Harry Reid: "Let him prove he has paid taxes because he has not."

Of course, in the good old days before the collapse of civility, there would have been an easy, convenient term for Reid's behavior: McCarthyism. On the floor of the Senate a reckless member has made an extraordinary accusation, without proof or attribution, against a distinguished citizen who is now required to prove that he is not a tax cheat.

So clumsy and transparent is Reid's gesture that The Scrapbook would be tempted to dismiss it as yet another "Chicago-style" tactic, all too characteristic of the Obama White House. And indeed, that is largely the way the press has played it: That old ex-boxer Harry Reid may look like a 98-pound weakling, the story goes, but he packs a wicked left hook—and it's left poor Mitt Romney reeling and sputtering. Maybe a little unfair, but hey! politics ain't beanbag.

Then again, there is another way of looking at it. In recent years the mild-mannered Harry Reid has acquired something of a reputation for indecorous language. Most politicians apply some modest sugarcoating to their pronouncements, but Reid is a conspicuous exception. When American troops were fighting and dying in Iraq, he pronounced the war "lost." He has publicly complained about the smell of tourists visiting the Capitol building. He denounced President George W. Bush as a "loser" and a "liar," and declared Justice Clarence Thomas to be "an embarrassment." Ex-Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan, said Senator Reid, is "a hack."

Well, The Scrapbook has a long memory, and recalls that Senator Reid suffered what was described as a mild stroke, a "transient ischemic attack," in 2005. Which now prompts us to speculate: How mild? If Reid's cerebral episode caused any permanent damage—and Reid, we regret to say, has never released his records—it might well manifest itself in reduced inhibitions, a looser tongue, a troubling inability to calibrate his language.

Now, The Scrapbook doesn't know for certain if this is true, and is only relaying the theory as a public service, at the prompting of an anonymous but civic-spirited neurologist. "Let him prove that he isn't losing his mind," says Dr. X, "because he is." ♦

Gross Taxation

Last week Americans for Tax Reform caused a big stir when they dug through the tax code and discovered that Americans who win medals at the Olympics get a big bill from the IRS.

It turns out this isn't the most repugnant tax in the code.

On February 19, 2011, Marine Lance Corporal Andrew Carpenter was shot and killed by a sniper in Afghanistan. He was married, and his wife was pregnant with a child he would never meet.

Three years earlier, Carpenter had taken out a student loan to pay for college. Upon his death, his family was stuck with that loan. Not knowing what to do, the Carpenter family reached out to their congressman, Tennessee's Scott DesJarlais, who happily assisted them in working out a deal in which Carpenter's loan was forgiven.

Except that the story didn't end there. The IRS decided that this

AP / J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE

loan forgiveness constituted taxable income. And they came after Carpenter's family with their hand out.

Now, Representative DesJarlais is trying to set things right. He introduced the Andrew P. Carpenter Tax Act, which would add a new exemption for gross taxable income for those killed while on active duty. The bill has 21 cosponsors, including 2 Democrats. It will be a good thing—a very good thing—if this bill is passed. ♦

Run, Lolo, Run

In the previous issue, The Scrapbook made note of the harsh treatment Olympic hurdler Lolo Jones received for revealing she was a virgin. Jones herself observed, "I've seen celebs get teased less for releasing a sex tape." Since then, the *New York Times* published a bizarre screed against the athlete by Jeré Longman. It seems Longman is offended by the fact that Lolo is very attractive and virginal, and she's not allowed to be both:

> So she has played into the persistent, demeaning notion that women are worthy as athletes only if they have sex appeal. And, too often, the news media have played right along with her.
>
> In 2009, Jones posed nude for ESPN the Magazine. This year, she appeared on the cover of Outside magazine seeming to wear a bathing suit made of nothing but strategically placed ribbon. At the same time, she has proclaimed herself to be a 30-year-old virgin and a Christian. And oh, by the way, a big fan of Tim Tebow.

One might declare there's some modicum of Christian hypocrisy in Jones's more revealing photo shoots, but The Scrapbook has examined the evidence and can assure you Jones hasn't stepped far down the slippery slope of titillation. After all, the typical track and field athlete's uniform is necessarily revealing to begin with. It's not as if the *Times* were genuinely concerned that Jones isn't adhering to some stringent theology of the body. Based on the gratuitous swipe at Tim Tebow, it seems more likely that Longman just doesn't like public expressions of faith very much.

Aside from attacking her for being attractive, Longman goes after Jones for publicly discussing her troubled childhood and makes an unconvincing case that her on-the-track performances are unworthy. (After taking the lead in a 2008 Olympic race, Jones hit a hurdle near the end and lost.) But the single most offensive thing about the article is how Longman twists Jones's words to make her look as if she were joking about mass murder:

> In recent days, Jones has been criticized for what many have called an insensitive Twitter remark in the wake of the mass shooting in a theater in Aurora, Colo. After the United States lost the gold medal to Italy in the team archery competition, Jones wrote, "When's da Gun shooting competition?"

Here's the full Twitter remark that Longman says "many" people called insensitive: "USA Men's Archery lost the gold medal to Italy, but that's ok, we are Americans… When's da gun shooting competition?" Did anyone—other than professional axe-grinder Jeré Longman—really deem

that tweet insensitive? But in addition to being sexy and virginal, perhaps we have to add patriotism to the list of Lolo Jones's crimes.

It would have been nice if Jones could have grabbed some measure of redemption by winning at the Olympics, but, alas, she came in fourth. She gave an interview the morning after the race during which she teared up when asked about the irrational criticism of her. But fourth-place finish aside, Jones remains one of the best athletes in the world. Her tormenters are the real losers. ♦

Open-mindedness for Thee . . .

Actress Kathleen Turner is bringing her new play to D.C., *Red Hot Patriot: The Kick-Ass Wit of Molly Ivins*. Turner happens to be well-cast for the role (though the fact that the former star of *Body Heat* is now a doppelgänger for the late liberal Texas columnist might be something to be alarmed about).

In any event, Turner is hoping that a play about Molly Ivins, a polarizing figure in real life, will prove to be a source of partisan détente. "One of these challenges may be getting a wide enough breadth of people to come, you know, because people are so closed-minded now, that if they think it doesn't represent their point of view, they're not interested," Turner told the *Washington Examiner*. "I'm afraid it will be like—if you're a Republican, don't go to the show—it's a real shame both artistically and as a reflection of our nation's mentality."

This is a rather bizarre observation for Turner to make: Shortly after decrying close-minded partisanship, she explains that she went out of her way to avoid meeting George W. Bush when he was president.

"I had to do some real dodging there once in a while, but I pretty much managed it," she told the *Examiner*, explaining how she evaded the former president. "I used to be on the Kennedy Center artistic, you know, selection board and those events are always held at the White House, and so then I had to bow out for a few years, didn't I?"

Of course, Turner tells the *Examiner*, she had no problem running into Molly Ivins. "She and Turner's paths crossed several times, ranging from attending the same People for the American Way event to riding in the same elevator at a New York City apartment building." Nothing quite like hobnobbing with liberal pundits on the Upper West Side and at political fundraisers to open your eyes to diversity of opinion. ♦

The Right Kind of Diversity

Members of the presidentially appointed board of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting lifted not a finger when National Public Radio fired Juan Williams for having the audacity to contribute to Fox News. But CPB is still hard at work in Washington funding leftist causes. Even the Associated Press had to take notice of CPB's latest squandering of taxpayers' money. Reports the AP,

> National Public Radio, criticized in recent years over diversity of its staff and coverage, is using a $1.5 million grant from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to put together a six-person team to report stories on race, ethnicity and culture.
>
> The national radio program producer and digital news provider was accepting a two-year grant Thursday at the UNITY 2012 Convention in Las Vegas, where hundreds of minority and gay and lesbian journalists gathered for the quadrennial convention assembled by UNITY Journalists Inc.
>
> NPR said in a news release that it is using the money to "launch a major storytelling initiative focused on the racial, ethnic, ideological and generational issues that define the increasingly diverse America." ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Music Man

Jon Lord began life—his public life, that is—as a rock god. He ended it as a composer of classical concertos. The time I met him, both strands of his work entwined with memories of mine.

It was his first career that dominated the obituaries when Lord died last month at 71. He was a founder of Deep Purple, once designated the world's loudest rock band by *The Guinness Book of Records*, and the songs he wrote in the 1960s and '70s inspired the genre of heavy metal. But even as he was writing those songs, he was also composing grander works for orchestra. A decade ago he finally left the band to concentrate on his classical career. He released albums on important classical labels; the London Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra performed his work.

It didn't matter: Almost every newspaper obituary identified Lord—usually in the headline or first sentence—as the cowriter of "Smoke on the Water." The song, released in 1972, chronicles a Frank Zappa concert that ended in disaster after a fan let off a flare into the rattan ceiling. The lyrics are less than elegant: *But some stupid with a flare gun / Burned the place to the ground*. It's said that this was once the second-best-known song in America—after "The Star-Spangled Banner." Its strange vitality is a testament to the sheer emotional freight a silly pop song can amass.

That isn't a judgment. Though I was born years after it was recorded—and spend more time listening to Dvořák than Deep Purple—"Smoke on the Water" means a lot to me. I'm glad I unexpectedly got the chance to tell Lord so.

It was three years ago. I happened to be in London when the Royal Court Theatre offered a tribute to the novelist John Mortimer, who'd died not long before. Jeremy Irons, Alan Rickman, and other talented thespians were slated to perform at the venue for which Mortimer had written many plays. A fan ever since I saw his adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*, I didn't just buy a ticket, I splurged on one that included a post-party with the stars.

NEWSCOM

Spotting and speaking to Rickman, Irons, Stephen Fry, Edward Fox, and other luminaries of the English stage and screen was thrilling enough. (I'd interviewed Rickman before, but only by telephone—though that voice is more than half the pleasure.) Then I saw Jon Lord, composer of some of the music we'd heard in the Mortimer tribute. While Rickman and Irons were surrounded by beautiful young women, Lord was practically alone. I went over.

Lord had seemed an odd choice to honor the creator of the immortal wigged barrister Rumpole. But I soon learned the two had a personal connection. He told me they'd been neighbors in Buckinghamshire and developed a deep friendship. Mortimer had helped revitalize Lord's classical career. Once, Mortimer asked Lord to write some incidental music for a show he was touring, "Mortimer's Miscellany." Lord had turned those short pieces into a flute concerto in honor of his friend, a version of which he'd presented that night.

Then it was my turn to tell Lord something personal. He listened patiently while I explained that "Smoke on the Water" can make me cry because it reminds me of my father, who died when I was 20.

I couldn't tell him exactly why. My dad was a consummate lover of music who passed on to me that passion, though not all his tastes. Deep Purple wasn't his favorite band. The lyrics of "Smoke on the Water," as I say, are neither beautiful nor profound. But maybe our connection to pop songs and music generally is as inexplicable as our ties to those we love, and no less powerful for that.

Looking back on Jon Lord's career, I—unlike the obituarists—remember his moving classical music. But I suspect he wouldn't have minded being best known for a frankly facetious pop song. I once read that he'd likened the riff in "Smoke," where his Hammond C3 organ sounds tougher than the guitar, to another work centered on a four-note motif: Beethoven's Fifth Symphony.

Maybe now I'm starting to see: Just as my father gave me an appreciation for music and an education in rock, I later introduced him to classical music, including that of Ludwig van. Long-dead musicians allowed me to offer my father something of what he'd given me. It won't be long before the artists he grew up listening to join them. But Beethoven, Lord, and all the rest—high and low, serious and ephemeral—live on in me, for a while at least. And through them, so does the man who taught me to hear.

Kelly Jane Torrance

the weekly Standard

Spineless on Syria

Civil war scene: the al-Qrabis neighborhood of Homs after fighting in July

NEWSCOM

Last week in Lebanon, two Shiite clerics challenged the region's growing sectarian divide by taking a stand against Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and siding with the Sunni-majority uprising next door. The two Shiite religious figures, risking reprisals from their co-religionists in Syria's Lebanese ally, Hezbollah, released a statement explaining that the future of the Middle East required a Syria "stable, free, and ruled by a democratic, pluralist, and modern state."

With the country embroiled in a civil war, that ideal Syria is likely some ways off. But momentum seems to be decisively turning against Assad and his allies in the axis of resistance. Iran, for instance, is finally getting a taste of its own medicine. The Free Syrian Army is holding 48 Iranian Revolutionary Guard members and several Hezbollah officials hostage. Having waged a proxy war against American forces in Iraq, Iran now is tied down in Syria. The Obama White House is in a position to reap benefits from this—but it is paralyzed, even though regional allies and potential allies are clamoring for American leadership.

While the White House continues to leak conflicting accounts of its role in Syria—the CIA is on the job coordinating arms shipments and intelligence gathering; the CIA doesn't know who makes up the opposition—news reports confirm that the Syrian rebels are frustrated by American inaction, and warn that it will damage U.S. interests. Without the administration's support, say some Free Syrian Army commanders, they'll be forced to turn to al Qaeda for weapons and money. No doubt some of the rebel complaints are a bargaining ploy—pay up or you'll regret it in the long run—but the fact is that the administration is passing up an attractive and inexpensive investment. We have a chance to help the rebels defeat their enemies, who are allies of our Iranian enemies, and we would get a head seat at the table when it is all over. And this doesn't require American troops on the ground. Instead, what's needed—and requested—are arms, training, and support from the air for a safe zone.

Assad has called in airstrikes on rebel positions in Aleppo. In March 2011, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton explained why Muammar Qaddafi's depredations compelled the White House to act in Libya, but Assad's had not in Syria. After all, she reasoned, "there's a difference between calling out aircraft and indiscriminately strafing and bombing your own cities [and] police actions which frankly have exceeded the use of force that any of us would want to see." If using fixed-wing aircraft on cities prompted the administration to move against Libya's bloody tyrant a year ago, why not in Syria today?

Some of Obama's most prominent supporters are asking the same question. Last week, the *New York Times*'s Nicholas Kristof wrote that a consensus is starting to emerge in the liberal foreign policy establishment—including Bill Clinton's secretary of defense William Perry and secretary of state Madeleine Albright, and former Obama official Anne-Marie Slaughter—that the White House needs to move aggressively against Assad. "I'm no hawk," writes Kristof. But he follows Senator John McCain in calling for the White House to "work with allies to supply weapons, training, and intelligence to rebels who pass our vetting."

So why is Obama, as Kristof writes, AWOL on Syria? A clue can be found in the administration's relentless mantra about keeping Syrian state institutions, as Hillary Clinton put it this week, "intact." Those institutions, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta specified, include "the military, the police . . . along with the security forces." This is, of course, absurd. These "institutions" do not serve the state, but rather the regime, which is why they have been turned against the people. The purpose of the uprising is not only to topple the Syrian president, but to destroy these pillars, *regime* institutions, that have ensured Assad rule for more than 40 years.

But the Obama administration is not thinking seriously about reality in Syria. Rather, it is fretting over the specter of Iraq. Obama's version of Iraq is a legend he can't let go of even now. In Obama's telling, Bush's war in Iraq was a total fiasco, and he doesn't want to be hobbled with what he perceives to have been Bush's burden and blunders. The conventional liberal account of Iraq considers one of Bush's biggest blunders to have been disbanding the Iraqi Army and the de-Baathification campaign, requiring the United States to rebuild Iraq from the bottom up. History will judge whether Bush's choices were the correct ones, whether it would have been better to try to make do with the remnants of Saddam's vicious regime or not. But the Obama administration thinks it knows the answer, and reflexively warns about preserving Syrian state institutions, and about the unintended consequences of supporting the rebels. The idea is that Syria without Assad could be just as bad or worse.

Really? Iraq may not have entirely come to fruition as "stable, free, and ruled by a democratic, pluralist, and modern state." But it's no longer Saddam Hussein's republic of fear that terrorizes the international community, its neighbors, and its own citizens. Nor is it anymore an enemy of the United States. Syria is, and it is an ally of our most dangerous enemy in the region. The only way that a post-Assad Syria could turn out worse is if the United States plays no role at all in its formation. If we step forward with even minimal energy on behalf of our principles and interests, we will benefit from our efforts. Even the Obama administration should now be able to see this—and to act on it.

—Lee Smith

More Mediscare

The oddly convenient academic study has long been a weapon in the Democratic party's arsenal of election-season demagoguery. Do you need to say that conservative policies would sink the republic? Here's a paper by scholars from a respected university, published in a respected journal, and released just as your campaign was turning to the issue in question, which happens to say just what you had in mind. It might all fall apart on closer inspection, but in the heat of a campaign it's a perfect fit.

It was therefore not entirely surprising to see a paper by three Harvard researchers appear in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* on August 1 that sought to project the effects of a premium-support reform of Medicare based on the performance of the Medicare Advantage program.

Premium support is the idea championed by House Budget Committee chairman Paul Ryan and (Democratic) Senator Ron Wyden, among others, and included in the 2013 budget proposal passed by the Republican majority in the House this year. It aims to inject market-driven cost discipline into Medicare by allowing the program's beneficiaries to use their entitlement dollars to choose among competing insurance options (including private insurers and a federally run fee-for-service plan), rather than having the federal government centrally manage the entire system. It is the very antithesis of Obamacare's government-centric approach to health care financing.

Almost every congressional Republican has now voted for the sort of premium-support reform proposed by Ryan and Wyden, and Mitt Romney has endorsed it too. Since scaring seniors about changes to Medicare has been a central pillar of Democratic campaigns for decades, there is little doubt that the Obama campaign and congressional Democrats will direct a great deal of critical attention to premium support this fall.

At first glance, the Harvard *JAMA* study (which was funded by taxpayer dollars through the National Institutes of Health) would seem to provide just the veneer of academic respectability and authority that Democratic operatives crave for their attacks. The bottom line, the authors assert, is that if premium support had been operative in Medicare in 2009, the average beneficiary would have had to pay $64 more per month to stay in the traditional, government-administered Medicare fee-for-service program. No one should be shocked to see Democratic ads in the coming weeks and months attacking Romney and

Republican House and Senate candidates for wanting to impose "nearly $800" more in annual premiums on seniors living on fixed incomes. The Center for American Progress (where one of the study's authors, David Cutler, is a senior fellow) described the study in just those terms within hours of its publication. The 30-second spots with ominous background music can't be far behind.

But this particular study turns out to be something new in the genre of convenient pseudo-scholarship: It doesn't just distort the subject it takes up; it even distorts its own findings. When you examine the authors' actual facts and figures, the study turns out to offer one of the strongest cases yet published *in favor* of premium support.

The Harvard researchers looked at the (limited and constricted) private-plan option already operating in Medicare today—a program called Medicare Advantage, created in 2003, which allows seniors to have their benefits provided through private insurers—and found that, on average, the Medicare Advantage plans cost far, far less than federally run fee-for-service Medicare.

The case against Rep. Paul Ryan's reforms gets weaker by the day.

This is the opposite of what Democrats were saying a year ago. Then, they were touting a Congressional Budget Office study that estimated the private plans offered to Medicare beneficiaries in the system Ryan envisions would cost much *more* than traditional fee-for-service Medicare, and thus require higher premiums—$6,400 higher in 2022—to be paid by beneficiaries. This new study shows otherwise, and proves the very point that champions of premium support have been making for years.

The $64-per-month estimate is based on the study's finding that private plans can deliver the full Medicare package of benefits at a significantly lower cost—nearly 10 percent lower, on average—than the government-administered fee-for-service program. That's precisely the win-win proposition Paul Ryan has been touting: Beneficiaries could get their comprehensive Medicare benefits for no additional premium if they selected the less expensive private plans, and taxpayers would spend 10 percent less on the subsidies for the Medicare program.

The authors try to spin this finding into a criticism of premium support by suggesting that the lower cost of private options would somehow increase premiums for many seniors. But they leave out some very pertinent facts.

For starters, the Wyden-Ryan plan would apply only to entrants into the program after 2023. No current senior, and no one under 55 today, would be affected by it. So there is no way for the reform to increase the premiums of any current beneficiaries.

Moreover, even the Harvard scholars' own analysis shows that no senior would necessarily pay any more for Medicare coverage under the proposed reform. The point of premium support is to bring more efficiency into the program. If competition introduced new ways of providing and structuring coverage and care that significantly reduced costs, presumably the fee-for-service Medicare plan (which would remain an option under Ryan's proposal) would learn from some of these and reduce its own costs too. If it didn't, it would lose customers, and it would deserve to.

Finally, because the *JAMA* study is based on the existing Medicare Advantage program, which is dominated by a regulated payment system instead of true competition, it likely understates the potential savings. Under premium support, the competition (in terms of both price and quality) would be significantly more intense, which would drive costs down further. Thus, taxpayers and the program's beneficiaries would almost certainly save even more than the significant amount the *JAMA* study unwittingly implies.

The authors of the study simply ignore all that. They also fail to note that all the insurance plans in the system proposed by the Ryan budget would have to provide at least the same comprehensive coverage available now, and that the Medicare system we now have grows more expensive every year at a thoroughly unsustainable pace that threatens to destroy the program and bankrupt the government.

Their actual reasoning, believe it or not, is that because a premium-support system would provide cheaper coverage than fee-for-service Medicare, it would increase costs for those seniors who opt for more expensive coverage. That's not an argument against the idea—it is *the* argument for it.

It won't be easy to build another round of Mediscare politics on this new study's flimsy foundations, but we can surely expect President Obama and his party to do their best—treating savings as costs, and blithely advancing the opposite of the argument they made against the Ryan plan last year.

While it fails to support the argument its authors seem eager to make, this latest bit of convenient scholarship does prove one thing: that the case against reforming Medicare in order to save it (and to avert fiscal catastrophe) grows weaker every day.

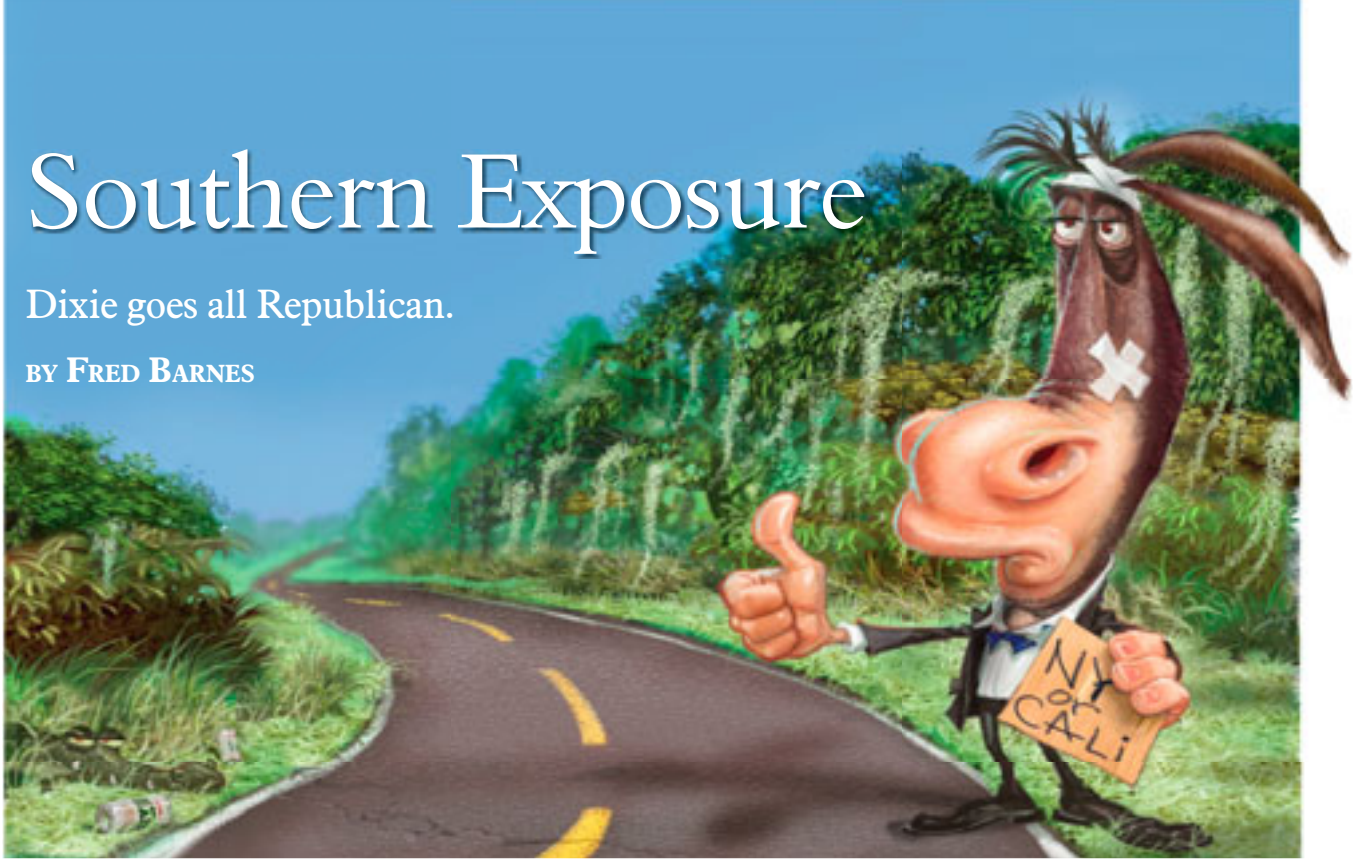
—James C. Capretta & Yuval Levin

NEWSCOM

Southern Exposure

Dixie goes all Republican.

BY FRED BARNES



In 2010, the Alabama legislature went Republican for the first time in 136 years. In 2011, Republicans won the Mississippi statehouse and Louisiana's legislature—for both, a first since Reconstruction. That leaves Arkansas as the Holdout State.

But Arkansas is wobbling. If its legislature falls to Republicans this year—the odds are 50-50 or better—all 11 states of the old Confederacy will be in GOP hands. And the political current that is transforming the South from a Democratic bastion into the bedrock of Republican strength nationally will be nearly complete.

In Arkansas, the ever-so-slow Republican trend accelerated in 2010. Republicans not only increased their state legislative seats by 50 percent, they also won two open U.S. House seats previously held by Democrats. This November, the one Democratic seat left (of the state's four) is all but certain to be captured by Republican Tom Cotton, an Iraq war veteran.

And in 2014, Democratic senator Mark Pryor is sure to face a stiff Republican challenge. Thus, it was no coincidence that Pryor was the lone Senate Democrat to vote with Republicans in July to extend all the Bush tax cuts. He also voted twice with Democrats to limit the tax cuts to individuals earning less than $200,000 annually.

Beyond Arkansas, there's more trouble for Democrats. Republicans, aided by adroit redistricting, are favored to oust the only white Democratic House member, John Barrow of Georgia, in the Deep South.

And in North Carolina, Democrats could lose as many as four House seats. Artful reapportionment by the newly elected Republican legislature (after 116 years of Democratic control) forced two Democratic House members to retire and left two others in Republican-tilting districts.

The rise of Republicans marks the end of white Democrats as the leading political force in the South. This is historic. For 125 years, white Democrats controlled statehouses across most of the region. In Washington, their role was pivotal because they chaired the most important Senate and House committees for decades. Nationally, since many of them were conservatives, they diluted the influence of the Democratic party's dominant liberal wing.

Republicans made significant gains in the 1980 and 1994 landslides. But 2010 was different. Two things happened: State elections were nationalized, and white moderates joined conservatives in overwhelmingly voting for Republican House candidates. Exit polls showed a mere 17 percent of Southern whites identified as Democrats, 33 percent as Republicans. Whites voted 3-1 for Republicans.

No longer could white Democrats, whether conservatives or moderates, win elections by disassociating themselves from the national party. "The image of the state party became the image of the national party," says Merle Black of Emory University. Black and his brother Earl are the leading historians of modern Southern politics.

"The Obama-Pelosi Democratic party just does not sell with many white Southerners," Black says. In the Deep South, "the Democratic party has been reduced to African Americans, plus white liberals. That's not close to a majority."

Four of the six most conservative Democrats in the House lost in 2010. They had voted against Obamacare and the cap and trade energy bill. That didn't save them.

GARY LOCKE

Fred Barnes is executive editor of The Weekly Standard.

In central Georgia, Democrat Jim Marshall, a four-term House member, was hawkish on defense. He was backed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. He outspent his Republican opponent, Austin Scott. But Scott won, 53 percent to 47 percent.

In Alabama, Bobby Bright, elected in 2008, had bucked his party's leadership more than any other House Democrat. He, too, outspent his Republican opponent, Martha Roby, a 34-year-old Montgomery city council member. Bright had been a popular mayor of Montgomery, but he lost, 51 percent to 49 percent.

That one-term Democrat Travis Childers lost to Alan Nunnelee in Republican-leaning northern Mississippi was not a surprise. But the defeat of Democrat Gene Taylor, a 21-year incumbent, was. His seat had been considered one of the safest in the country. He lost to Republican Steven Palazzo, 52 percent to 47 percent.

John Barrow, however, survived the Republican wave in 2010. He easily won reelection, 57 percent to 43 percent, even after statehouse Republicans had taken Athens, his hometown, out of the district, forcing him to move to Savannah.

Republicans took another bite out of Barrow's district, based on the 2010 census, by removing Savannah, forcing him to move again, to Augusta. In 2008, Barack Obama won 55 percent of the vote in the old district. In the new one, he would have gotten 45 percent. According to the Cook Political Report, the district changed from slightly Democratic ("D+1") to strongly Republican ("R+10").

Barrow is a shrewd candidate. In 2011, rather than vote for Nancy Pelosi as House minority leader, he voted for John Lewis, the African-American Democrat from Atlanta. (The district is one-third black.) But Republicans are determined to defeat him, and he's likely to be outspent.

Arkansas still has a Democratic governor, Mike Beebe, but he's term-limited (leaving in 2014) and unable to stem the Republican tide as Bill Clinton did. "As recently as three or four years ago, Arkansas wholly separated in-state politics from national politics," *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* columnist John Brummett wrote in July. "It found a way to reject national Democratic party liberalism while not assigning its local Democratic politicians any complicity."

It was Obama, Brummett told me, "who tipped Arkansas to nationalized elections." How? "By beating Hillary and paying no attention to Arkansas and not mobilizing our black vote and seeming a remote liberal." Now there's no turning back.

For the 2012 election, Bill Clinton will address the Democratic National Convention next month. However, "Arkansas voters are perfectly capable of listening to Clinton extol Obama and then continuing to fear and despise Obama," Brummett says. And continuing to remake Arkansas as the last Southern state to turn Republican. ♦

Desert Warfare

Two Republican congressmen fight it out near Phoenix. BY MICHAEL WARREN

In separate interviews, Arizona congressmen David Schweikert and Ben Quayle shake their heads and shrug their shoulders at their political predicament. The freshmen members are running against each other in a Republican primary for the House in what local and national observers alike have labeled one of the nastiest primaries of the cycle. How nasty? Most recently, Quayle has called on Schweikert to apologize for a campaign mailer that claimed Quayle "goes both ways" on the issues, saying the phrase is sexually charged. The Schweikert campaign says Quayle should get his head "out of the gutter."

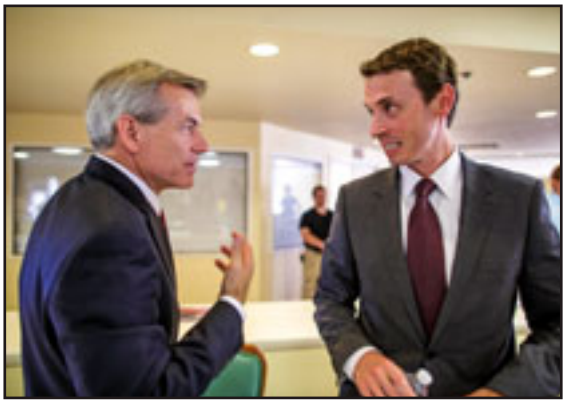
It wasn't supposed to be this way. After the 2010 census, the state of Arizona, fresh off a 10-year population boom, received an additional congressional seat. With a Republican-controlled legislature, the new lines might have benefited the GOP, but the state uses an independent reapportionment commission to draw the districts. Republicans argue the commission has a Democratic bias, and it's easy to see why. The new Ninth District, centered around Tempe, leans Democratic, leaving Phoenix's affluent eastern suburbs with two Republican congressmen but only one Republican district, the redrawn Sixth.

"It was an obvious Democratic ploy," says Arizona Republican senator Jon Kyl.

Perhaps, but even Democrats couldn't have plotted an intra-party conflict this bitter. At the time he decided to run against Schweikert, Quayle actually lived just barely inside the (Democratic) Ninth, a few hundred yards from the district line. Quayle has since moved into the Sixth. Schweikert has called Quayle a "carpetbagger."

"Some of us live in the district, some of us don't," Schweikert said during a televised debate in July. "I mean, my whole life and infrastructure is in the district." He gestured toward Quayle, sitting to his right. "His is not."

In May, the Quayle campaign even accused the Schweikert campaign of spying. As a Quayle spokesperson told the *Daily Caller*, a young woman came to the Quayle headquarters and asked to volunteer. A staffer tried to verify the young woman's contact information and found she had listed as her home address a local Islamic community center. The staffer later stopped by the Schweikert headquarters and claimed to have found the would-be volunteer sitting at the front desk, along with 18 "Quayle for Congress" yard signs.



Schweikert, left, with Quayle

On policy, Schweikert says Quayle isn't a purist when it comes to tax increases, and Quayle says Schweikert isn't committed to national security and defense. But it's worth noting that both the American Conservative Union and Heritage Action give Schweikert and Quayle high ratings. Both voted for the Ryan budget and support repealing Obamacare. The real distinction, both candidates say, is in the men themselves—a difference in "leadership styles," says Quayle, or a question of "character" and "trust," as Schweikert puts it.

At 50 years old, Schweikert has an upbeat, youthful personality. He's perpetually sporting a wide, toothy grin, whether he's pointing out a framed copy of a capital formation bill he crafted ("There's not a lot of freshmen who have one of those hanging on the wall!") or telling the story of meeting his birth mother three decades after he was given up for adoption. Maybe it's the four to five cups of coffee he says he drinks every day.

"Arizona has a coffee culture," says Schweikert, who keeps a fully stocked coffee bar in his congressional office. When I show up to our interview with my own cup of Starbucks, he jokingly points to the door and tells me to "get the hell out." He met his wife, Joyce, at a coffee shop. During our interview, in the middle of a sentence, Schweikert pokes his head out of his office door to ask his receptionist for a vanilla coffee. He segues back into his answer on the national debt, speaking a mile a minute while clutching his bottle of Dr Pepper.

In the House, Schweikert has a reputation for being "the smartest man in the room." He was on the majority whip team for a brief time in 2011—exiting with an "agreement to disagree," in Schweikert's words. Hill sources say he was asked to leave over internal disputes and that he wasn't a reliable member of the team. But those who work with Schweikert on the Financial Services Committee say he's intelligent, particularly in the area of financial markets. "I'm doing my very best to become a subject-matter expert," he says.

A real estate financier in Fountain Hills near Scottsdale, Schweikert has been in politics for more than 20 years. He served four years in the

NEWSCOM

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Arizona statehouse, including two as the majority whip, before running unsuccessfully for Congress in 1994. After spending a few years in local government, Schweikert was elected treasurer of Maricopa County in 2004. In 2008, he took on Democratic congressman Harry Mitchell. Schweikert lost that race, but came back in 2010, riding the Tea Party wave, and beat Mitchell in the rematch.

Quayle, too, has been surrounded by politics for more than two decades. Born just after his father, former vice president Dan Quayle, was elected to the House, the younger Quayle grew up in Washington, where his father served 12 years in Congress and 4 in the White House.

Quayle looks younger than his 35 years and suffers, unfairly or not, from an image of a fortunate son. To counter this, he has made an effort to look and sound like he's earned his standing. Recent campaign ads feature a serious-looking Quayle, in a suit and tie, looking straight at the camera and furrowing his brow. "Still no jobs," he says in one spot. "Spending and debt are crushing us. And President Obama's big solution? Spend more."

Another ad features his wife, Tiffany, and their infant daughter. "Meet Evie. She's our first child," Quayle says, with only a hint of a smile. "And born with more than fifty thousand dollars of debt," his wife adds firmly.

A lawyer and entrepreneur, Quayle insists he wasn't always interested in getting into the family business.

"If you had asked me four or five years ago, I would have said never," he says about running for public office. "I saw what the media did to my dad, and I didn't think I wanted to put my family through that." But he says he grew frustrated with how congressional Republicans in the George W. Bush era became complicit in big government spending, which went into overdrive after the Democratic victories of 2006 and 2008.

"I just decided that I have to be willing to put up with the arrows I know are going to be pointed at me in order to try to do something," Quayle says.

In 2010, Quayle won a contentious 10-way GOP primary and beat his Democratic opponent by 11 points. He says he's tried to keep a low profile in his first term, focusing on building relationships with his colleagues and reducing regulatory burdens. He's made a name for himself on the Judiciary Committee, firing off tough questions for Eric Holder during the Fast and Furious hearings.

Polling for the August 28 primary has been infrequent, although in late July one survey commissioned by a conservative group backing Schweikert had him 13 points ahead. Quayle says he feels confident running in a district where nearly two-thirds of the residents are already his constituents. It's no use asking Schweikert how he feels about the race so far—he's on his fifth cup of coffee and excited about everything. ♦

Mistreating Native American Children

Liberal social policy at work.

BY ETHAN EPSTEIN

In 1978, a little-known law called the Indian Child Welfare Act was signed with the intention of keeping families together. Today, it's being used to tear them apart.

Take the case of the Capobianco family of James Island, South Carolina. Matt Capobianco, who works at Boeing, and his wife Melanie, a psychologist, spent years trying to conceive a child, even going so far as to attempt in-vitro fertilization seven times. The couple ultimately decided to adopt, and found a pregnant mother in Oklahoma who was willing to give them her child. So taken with the Capobiancos was the birth mother that she even let Matt cut the umbilical cord when the little girl, whom the Capobiancos named Veronica, was born in September 2009. The child's birth father waived his parental rights, declaring that he "would not be responsible in any way for child support or anything else as far as the child's concerned," and Matt and Melanie took Veronica back to South Carolina, where they began to raise her as their own.

Four months later, Veronica's birth father, a soldier in the U.S. Army living in Oklahoma named Dusten Brown, changed his mind and initiated legal proceedings to gain custody of Veronica. Normally, this would have been an easy win for the Capobiancos; not only had Brown signed away his rights, he had also provided no support through the pregnancy. But there was a hitch.

The Indian Child Welfare Act ensures that in custody cases involving adoptions and foster care, preference is always given to keeping Indian children in Indian families. Using this law, Brown—who is reportedly 3 percent Cherokee, roughly in the Elizabeth Warren range—enlisted the Cherokee tribal council to help him sue for custody. Because Veronica has "a drop of Cherokee blood," she qualifies for tribal membership and thus is an "Indian child" under the Indian Child Welfare Act.

The Indian preference rule doomed the Capobiancos. After a two-year battle in family court, Veronica was removed from her home on December 31, 2011, and sent to Oklahoma to live with her biological father. "I'll always remember her crying when we had to walk out of that office and leave her there," Melanie told Charleston media. The family appealed the decision, but late last month, they lost in the South Carolina supreme court. The majority affirmed the family court's order under the Indian Child Welfare Act, though the justices noted that they did so "with a heavy heart."

To be sure, the Indian Child Welfare Act was ratified, as the law itself states, at a time when "an alarmingly high percentage of Indian families [were] broken up by the removal of their children"—some estimates say that up to 35 percent of Indian children were being removed from their families at the time, ostensibly for reasons of abuse or parental incompetence. But the idea that a nearly 3-year-old child's alleged ethnic heritage trumps her right to remain with loving parents in the only home she has ever known is reason for pause. And some of the arguments made in support of the law are positively bizarre.

Its advocates claim, for example, that "Indian children don't experience 'attachment' like non-Indian children do because they are more likely to attach to the tribe rather than the primary caretakers." Thus, the law elevates the supposed rights of the group over the best interests of individual children. As Maurice Portley, an appellate judge in Arizona who has studied the law, explains, "the act revolutionized the 'best interests of

Veronica Capobianco, left, trick-or-treating in October 2011; at right, Matt and Melanie Capobianco

LEFT, COURTESY OF THE CAPOBIANCO FAMILY; RIGHT, WCIV-TV CHARLESTON

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the children' concept for Indian children. Instead of merely looking at the Indian child's stability in a placement and bond with a psychological parent, the federal standard requires an examination of 'the rights of the Indian child as an Indian and the rights of the Indian community and tribe in retaining [its] children in its society."

The Capobiancos are hardly the only family to have been torn apart as a result of this law. While there is no definitive national tally (foster care and adoption proceedings are generally kept private), Lisa Morris of the Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare, an organization that advocates for children hurt by the law, says that families contact her group seeking assistance fighting it "all the time." Morris also says that the Cherokee Nation, in particular, has been aggressive about marshaling the act to snatch children from their adoptive parents. She says the Cherokees have more than 100 attorneys targeting 1,500 children nationwide for removal from their families. The Cherokee Nation may be facing some headwinds, though: Another nonprofit, the Coalition for the Protection of Indian Children and Families, is lobbying Congress to amend the law to shorten the window during which an Indian biological parent can revoke his or her consent to an adoption.

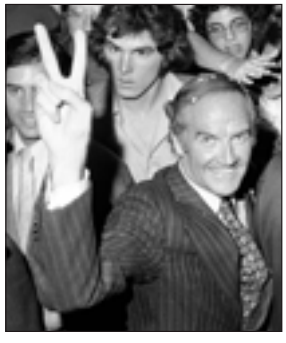
Advocate Lisa Morris says the Cherokees have more than 100 attorneys targeting 1,500 children nationwide for removal from their families.

The Capobiancos have argued that their case represents a "misuse" of the Indian Child Welfare Act. But they're wrong. Because Veronica does indeed have "a drop of Cherokee blood," it was perfectly legal for her to be ripped from her family. Only when this law is repealed will the welfare of children like her be protected. ♦

Barack Hussein McGovern

The specter of 1972 is haunting the Obama campaign. BY MARK STRICHERZ

Forty years ago this summer, in July 1972, social liberals made their political debut at the Democratic National Convention. Gloria Steinem- and Gore Vidal-style activists were not shy about their goals. The women's rights movement had secured two major victories that spring, Title IX funding and the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment in Congress, and cultural liberals hoped to secure two more at the convention in Miami Beach. "Ours is a pluralistic society, and I believe the Democratic party has an obligation no matter what the background of the individual candidates to include this issue as a fundamental right," Sissy Farenthold, a candidate for governor of Texas, said in support of a plank favoring unrestricted access to contraception and abortion. "The various and diverse gay liberation movements realize that achieving liberation will require a new morality and an expanded understanding of human nature," California delegate Jim Foster said in a plank urging the party to work to strike down anti-sodomy laws.



Hey, remember how many electoral delegations I carried?

Both planks were defeated on the floor. Even more important, many Democratic regulars reached a conclusion that was as applicable then as now: Cultural liberals forced the party's presidential nominee to run too far ahead of public opinion on gay rights and feminism. Representative James O'Hara of Michigan, the 46-year-old chairman of a reform commission on party rules, said after the election that McGovern's association with the counterculture doomed his presidential bid: "The American people made an association between McGovern and gay lib, and welfare rights, and pot-smoking, and black militants, and women's lib, and wise college kids, and everything else they saw as threatening their value system. I think it was all over right then and there."

How times have changed. Many national Democratic leaders have done more than tolerate cultural liberalism. Taking a page from the playbook of George W. Bush's 2004 campaign, they are pinning President Obama's reelection strategy on it. In an interview in May, senior campaign adviser David Plouffe described the strategy this way: "We're gonna say, 'Let's be clear what [Mitt Romney] would do as president,'" he told *New York* magazine. "Potentially abortion will be criminalized. Women will be denied contraceptive services. He's far right on immigration. He supports efforts to amend the Constitution to ban gay marriage." Plouffe's words have not fallen on deaf ears. Besides the administration's mandate of free contraception and sterilization services in health insurance policies and Obama's coming out in favor of marriage equality,

Mark Stricherz, Capitol Hill correspondent for the Colorado Observer, *is the author of* Why the Democrats Are Blue: Secular Liberalism and the Decline of the People's Party *(Encounter Books).*

the Obama campaign is running ads in swing states that accuse Romney of being an extremist on abortion.

Is running on social liberalism now the royal road to 270 electoral votes? Talk with political scientists and pollsters, and they say no, not really; this election will be decided on the state of the economy, or they say that Obama's positions on gay marriage and abortion are a wash politically. "I would say [Obama's gay-marriage stand] hurts him in empty-nest and service-worker communities," says political analyst and author Dante Chinni, "but it helps him in suburban areas such as boom towns and college towns."

Perhaps, but changes in demographics and attitudes may not have come as far as Obama campaign officials believe. According to an NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll in July, one in five voters said that the "decline of moral and religious values" is one of their biggest worries about America's future, which outstripped their worries about the "increasing role of government" and "lack of safety/terrorist threats." Millions of those voters are working-class and religious Democrats as well as independents.

Gay marriage is the issue most likely to hurt Obama. After his announcement on May 9 that he had changed his mind on the issue, Gallup concluded that "his new position is more of a net minus than a net plus for him." Although 11 percent of independents and 2 percent of Republicans told pollsters they were more likely to vote for him, 23 percent of independents and 10 percent of Democrats said they were less likely. Last month, Democratic pollster Stanley Greenberg reached a similar conclusion. While 29 percent of respondents said they had warm feelings about gay marriage, 40 percent had cold feelings.

The same trend was found in the swing state of Florida. According to a Quinnipiac University poll in late May, 23 percent of independents and 7 percent of Democrats said they were less likely to vote for Obama because of his support for gay marriage; only 9 percent of independents and 1 percent of Republicans said they were more likely to vote for him. Voters without a college degree were slightly more likely to say they were alienated by Obama's decision.

In another crucial swing state, Virginia, analysts say that Obama's support for gay marriage hurts his reelection bid. Forty-nine percent of voters said they disapprove of gay marriage while 42 percent said they approve of it, according to a June Quinnipiac poll. Steven J. Farnsworth, professor of political science at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, estimates that the president's stance will cost him one or two percentage points in the Old Dominion this fall. "On balance, his position on gay marriage is a negative, but it's not a big negative," he says.

In other swing states, pollsters have not examined voters' attitudes toward gay marriage in the depth that Quinnipiac did in Florida. Even so, most polls in these states have found the public cool to Obama's position. In Ohio, 50 percent of voters reject gay marriage and 37 percent support it, according to a Public Policy Polling study in July. In Iowa, 45 percent of voters disapprove of gay marriage and 44 approve, according to a May PPP poll. In Wisconsin, 47 percent of voters reject gay marriage and 43 percent back it, according to a PPP survey in July.

Perceptive analysts concede these numbers likely overstate the level of public support for gay marriage because of voters' tendency to tell pollsters the most socially acceptable answer on the phone and do the opposite at the ballot box. "You can't say for sure. Certainly in Maine, it looked like [an effort to repeal the state's gay marriage law] would go down to the wire, and gay marriage lost," says Todd Eberly, a professor of political science at St. Mary's College of Maryland.

In a couple of swing states—Colorado and New Hampshire—pollsters have found either majority support for gay marriage or opposition to repealing it. And Farnsworth believes that Virginia Republicans' efforts to regulate abortion more strictly will cost Romney one or two percentage points in the state this fall.

Yet pollsters and analysts also say Obama must finesse his support for cultural liberalism. "If you're not careful, you give the impression that you're catering to special interests, and that's a problem in Colorado. Colorado voters think of themselves as centrists," says Floyd Ciruli, an independent pollster and analyst based in Denver, noting that Obama's campaign is running an ad that accuses Romney of opposing abortion in the event of rape or incest.

Obama is running the same ad elsewhere, but unless he can seize on a Romney misstep on abortion or the Supreme Court decides suddenly to chuck *Roe* v. *Wade*, he is more likely to be hurt than helped by his pro-choice stance. Consider a Gallup survey from May 2008. In looking at voters' attitudes toward abortion in the five presidential elections from 1984 to 2000, Gallup concluded that "the issue netted the Republican party's candidate two to three points in [each] election."

Of course, Republican presidential candidates have also run ahead of ordinary voters; as a supporter of Paul Ryan's entitlement-busting budget blueprint, Romney runs this risk. Yet the Democrats' nominees have been consistently more likely to do so. As Eberly concluded in a report for Third Way earlier this year, "one reason Democrats lose is likely because the folks who set the agenda for the party are more out of step with most of party voters than are the folks who set the agenda for the Republican party." In fact, Eberly found that the ideological gap between Democratic activists and voters is more than twice that of their Republican counterparts since 1972.

Eberly expects the gap will continue this year. "It's statistically significant. It's real. These are very much the people you would think of as Reagan Democrats," he says. "These Democratic nonactivists really find themselves perched between conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats. They can go either way." And when Obama becomes the first presidential candidate to declare his support for gay marriage at one of the presidential debates this fall, he cannot expect these voters to go his way on November 6. ♦

The Most Dangerous Man in the World

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Ali Khamenei

By Reuel Marc Gerecht

One of the startling cultural disconnects in studying Iran is how unimpressive the officials of the Islamic Republic usually are. Reading Persian history inclines one to expect Iranians to be highly cultured and nuanced, delicately balanced between a conservative religious faith and a love of refinement and pleasure. Remember the Persian vizier to the Turkish Seljuk sultans, the eleventh-century Nizam al-Mulk, whose "mirror for princes" is a forerunner to Machiavelli's reflections on power. Or the sixteenth-century Shah Abbas the Great and his astonishing, often inebriated, court in Isfahan, which solidified Persian as the lingua franca among Muslim elites. Or even, in more mundane, modern times, Amir Asadollah Alam, a minister to both Pahlavi shahs, with his enormous capacity to marry tradition to modernity, a skill that his last boss sorely lacked. But the days of such accomplished men are long gone. Iran's ruling class today is incapable of attracting the country's best and brightest. In their place have risen corrupt and crude ideologues, who have made Iranian society, even for the devout, often unpleasant and embarrassing. And what happens internally works its way abroad.

Although the Islamic Republic is moving ever closer to obtaining a nuclear weapon, the ruling caste—Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in particular—has not been adroit in advancing the cause. Western indecision, timidity, and greed rather than Iranian diplomatic skill and strategic acumen have permitted the steady progress of the nuclear program. If the supreme leader had more Persian wiliness, Tehran would surely get its nuke with far less damage to the economy than it is suffering. The possibility of an American or Israeli preemptive strike would be far more remote. The odds that Khamenei's aggressive, small-minded faith would lead his country into a war with Israel and the United States would be much lower than they are.

The Islamic Republic's most powerful figures seem incapable of escaping their revolutionary religious identities and acknowledging their own rich culture, let alone the Western, mostly Marxist, ideas that have so profoundly shaped them. Read Ali Larijani, the speaker of Iran's parliament, on Western philosophy, a subject in which he reportedly got a Ph.D., and marvel at the contortion of his thinking, at the inferiority complex that makes a good mind seem stupid. A close confidant of the supreme leader, a former nuclear negotiator and commander in the Revolutionary Guard Corps, Larijani is incapable of playful conversation with non-Muslims—something that comes easily to your average Persian Muslim. Instrumental in crushing Iran's liberal intellectual efflorescence in the 1990s, Larijani is not unique: The revolutionary elite today has an enormously difficult time so much as saying "hello" to those who have not sprung from its world.

The Iranian regime really should have been able to outplay the West in the recent P5+1 nuclear meetings in Istanbul, Baghdad, and Moscow. Contrary to what is sometimes written on the American right, they manifestly did not. The Europeans and the Americans held firm, though they wanted to deal. Even more than President Barack Obama, the Europeans want to avoid an Israeli preemptive strike. In the White House and in Europe, there is little appetite for more impoverishing sanctions. All would prefer to stop, if the Iranians would only adhere—perhaps just pretend to adhere—to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which Iran signed and ratified in 1970 and which actually allows a lot of maneuvering room for a nuke-seeking deceitful state.

Truth be told, if Tehran had just confessed that it had, once upon a time, thought about making a nuclear weapon, had experimented with developing triggers and warheads, but had forsaken the idea on religious grounds, the West would have greeted this as a major

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The supreme leader and entourage visit a military college in Tehran, November 10, 2011.

NEWSCOM

breakthrough. Paris and Washington—the most important players on the Western side—would have been inclined to grant Tehran considerable leeway on uranium enrichment, probably even at the underground, bunker-bomb-challenging Fordow facility. The Iranians, who deny that their nuclear program has any military component, certainly could have proceeded, with at least the implicit approval of the West, enriching to 5 percent or higher. And as long as the 5 percent stockpile, which is about 70 percent of the way to making bomb-grade uranium, continues to grow, the regime will have a rapid breakout potential, provided it can improve the quality of its centrifuges. Better centrifuges allow for much smaller cascades and more rapidly produced highly enriched uranium, and are the key to escaping large, targetable facilities, like Natanz and Fordow. The Iranians have had a devilishly difficult time manufacturing improved versions of the A.Q. Khan-delivered, Pakistani-designed P1 model. But they have, slowly but surely, progressed. They need time, which a confession would have bought them.

The clerical regime *knows* that the Americans and Europeans years ago debriefed defecting Iranian scientists about the ultimate objective of the Islamic Republic's centrifuge program—a nuclear weapon. The defectors were explicit about what was clearly understood by all those setting up the Islamic Republic's centrifuge manufacturing and the clandestine, dual-use import network in the late 1980s. Iranian officials now have a good idea—largely because the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and European diplomats have told them—what else we know about their nuclear-weapons research. The path to the bomb would probably have been slower with an official confession, but it would have, at a minimum, divided the West, and inclined the United States and France to recognize unofficially Iran's "right" to uranium enrichment. No such "right" actually exists in the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which only grants to its signatories the right to nuclear energy provided participating countries obey all of the articles of the treaty, including allowing IAEA oversight. And the French, much more than State Department officials, have insisted that Western negotiations hold to the letter of U.N. resolutions: Iran has no sovereign "right" to enrichment.

Perhaps not even Ali Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani, the duplicitous former president and now-fallen clerical majordomo who launched the atomic-weapons program, or his clever nuclear sidekick, the Scottish-educated cleric Hassan Rowhani, if they'd still held sway in foreign policy, would have been capable of admitting to weapons research. They certainly would have resisted the full implementation of the Additional Protocol, which grants the IAEA unfettered freedom to examine any suspicious site in a signatory country. Iran's foreign minister from 1981 to 1997, Ali Velayati, who remains a close adviser to the supreme leader, reportedly once equated the Additional Protocol to the 1828 Treaty of Turkmenchay, in which Iran surrendered Armenia, much of Azerbaijan, and the Caucasus to Russia. For Iranians, that's the pits.

But European diplomats were almost begging Tehran to accept a watered-down version of the protocol, where the IAEA would inspect the Parchin military facility, which Western intelligence services have long suspected of housing weaponization research, and then applaud that progress but push aggressively no further. A cleverer helmsman than Khamenei would have played with the IAEA about giving some access to Parchin—or other facilities in lieu of Parchin if the weapons research there could not be sufficiently wiped clean. But Khamenei, who has encouraged his minions to parade his reported anti-nuke *fatwa*, or juridical opinion, refused to wiggle. Neither he, nor his MIT-educated nuclear technocrat-turned-foreign minister Ali Akbar Salehi, who'd been intimately involved in setting up Iran's dual-use import network, or his war-ravaged, one-legged, deeply devout ideologue-turned-nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, realized that they'd pushed the Americans and the Europeans into a corner.

Western Europeans and Americans are treaty-conscious: They try to abide by what they sign. They could not revise their understanding of the NPT to fit Khamenei's preferences or hang up the Israelis. Tehran, which hasn't met a treaty with Westerners it can't violate, appears to have thought the French would cave. President Nicolas Sarkozy, who'd pulled Obama into Libya, and who'd run to the right of Washington on Iran, lost his reelection bid on May 6, eight days after the first P5+1 meeting in Istanbul. But under President François Hollande, the French have refused to budge. Indeed, Hollande's people, just like his predecessor's, complain in private about Obama's diplomatic team sending mixed signals to the Europeans, the Russians, and the Iranians.

Khamenei has now forced the Americans and the Europeans to default to more sanctions, which will convulse ever-larger sections of Iran's energy industry. What was unthinkable in Europe 10 years ago, when the Islamic Republic's clandestine nuclear program at Natanz was revealed by an Iranian opposition group, has come to pass: It's now conceivable the Europeans will back non-U.N.-mandated sanctions against Iran that will rival the restrictions imposed on Iraq after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. Huge loopholes still exist in lots of European sanctions—especially measures against Iran's central bank. And the Europeans are hardly united. The antisanctions crowd, enthusiastically led by the Swedes, is still trying to stop the newly implemented European embargo of Iranian crude from spreading to other trade. The palpable, omnipresent sense in Europe that the continent could soon go over the fiscal cliff also besets all foreign-policy discussions.

But the EU3—the French, the British, and the Germans, who have handled the Iran question—know that their credibility in foreign affairs is on the line. The Europeans' desperate financial predicament appears to have actually made the French even more determined not to budge on uranium enrichment. Hollande, who intends to cut French defense spending further, sees little *gloire* for France overseas, and certainly has no desire to outflank President Obama over anything, is disinclined just to surrender and allow Khamenei a nuke. It's now entirely conceivable that the Europeans will follow the American lead in responding to any Israeli preemptive strike. Senior French officials regularly suggest that Paris could not stand idly by and watch Iran or the Iranian-backed Lebanese Hezbollah retaliate against Israel, where more than 100,000 French Jews are often in residence. For good reason, Jerusalem is no longer seriously concerned about an EU boycott after an Israeli strike.

That Tehran could have blown its advantages in Europe—lucrative trade deals, deep-rooted anti-Americanism, widespread *tiers-mondiste* sentiment among the intelligentsia, and a general, narcissistic, Europe-centric *nombrilisme* (navel-gazing) that enfeebles the Old World beyond its borders—is an astonishing self-inflicted defeat. Khamenei's profound hatred of the West, which so many European and American journalists and academics failed to notice during George W. Bush's presidency, has led him to trash the hard diplomatic work done by Rafsanjani in the 1990s. During Rafsanjani's presidency, Tehran regularly sent assassins to Europe, and sometimes roughly treated European diplomats and businessmen in Iran, but it also eagerly welcomed Germany and France's engagement policy. The Islamic Republic's dual-use import network, which allowed Tehran to develop the then-clandestine nuclear program, would have been impossible without Rafsanjani's determined efforts to balance nefarious actions with lucrative trade deals.

Once, Iran's revolutionary elite had a certain appeal, given the desiccated authoritarians elsewhere in the region. When Ali Larijani used to fly around the Middle East castigating American-supported oligarchs while touting Iran's more democratic system, his Cheshire smiles expanded on a truth: Theocratic Iran was married to a semi-democratic system that wasn't a total charade until the savage crackdown in the summer of 2009. Iranian democracy was stage-managed, but it could produce surprises. It inculcated in the people a desire to have the real thing, which roared forth in the fraudulent presidential elections three years ago. And it could occasionally nurture figures with a bit more gravitas than nearby Arab potentates and their cronies.

Arab lands, of course, have been in free fall for decades. Middle Eastern political and cultural elites were once rich in well-educated men. The region's rough, post-World War II politics always favored those hardened at home, but around them were cosmopolitan, highly Westernized men who were less prone to lose themselves in the conspiracy theories that have so defined and debased Middle Eastern culture and discourse. Yet as the region's autocracies coarsened and globalization gained speed, allowing the best and the brightest to flee their homelands, these Arab elites contracted in number and talent.

The inferiority complex among Iran's ruling elite—starting with Khamenei, who appears to loathe accomplished clerics and lay intellectuals with equal embittered fervor—cannot be overstated.

And the Islamic revival, which has been a powerful cultural force for the last 50 years, hasn't helped. Fundamentalists, be they Sunni or Shiite, are like autistic children: They are, more often than not, intelligent and focused, but unevenly and erratically developed. The bright ones usually get degrees in the nonspeculative hard sciences or engineering, since God's omnipotence is not seen to be challenged by a periodic table or stress tests for concrete. (See the new president of Egypt, Mohamed Morsi, who received a Ph.D. in engineering at the University of Southern California.)

But they freeze when unbridled "reason" is thrown at them. The best of them know well how the relentless use of inductive and deductive thought transformed Christians. They've seen it in on a much smaller scale among their own kind. Mohammad Khatami, the soft-spoken, politically inept former president, is obsessed by the evolution of the West and how Muslims might empower themselves without forfeiting their faith to the unceasing queries that helped sweep religion from the public square in Europe. The Islamic Republic's really interesting religious minds have almost all developed in opposition to theocracy: freethinking clerics, like Mohammad Mojtahed-Shabestari and Mohsen Kadivar, and the lay powerhouse, fallen Islamist ideologue-turned-moral philosopher Abdolkarim Soroush. Soroush unrelentingly tries to marry reason and the faith, to "modernize" Islam so that ethics are not so firmly tied to the Koran and the prophetic traditions. The hard Islam—the revivalist Islam that revolves around the Holy Law and little else—has had a difficult time attracting and keeping intellectually curious Muslims.

Iran's revolution was supposed to change that. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who had no use for intellectual brilliance and insisted there was "no fun in Islam," didn't see it that way, of course. A cleric who seamlessly knit virtue with power, he could not have cared less. But others did: The revolution was supposed to fuse Islam and the Iranian left, where most intellectuals of stature resided. Those who'd lost their faith, at least as a political identity, would somehow get it back. Clever men wouldn't have to flee abroad, as they had done under the shah. They could come home and be proud, productive Muslims.

The revolution's tumult has certainly produced a varied cast of characters, but—with the exceptions of Khomeini, who was sui generis in his motionless, black-eyed charisma, his successor-turned-critic Ayatollah Hussein-Ali Montazeri, the most consequential Marxist-Islamist "red" cleric, Mahmoud Taleghani, who died in 1979, the brilliant and voraciously curious cleric Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, who died in 1981, and the enthusiastically corrupt former president Rafsanjani—they've mostly been people who overwhelmed neither friends nor foes with their personalities and erudition.

The Iranian revolution was a great upwelling of lower-middle- and lower-class Shiites who don't travel abroad, even within the Middle East. Iran's Westernized Islamic revolutionaries—and most of the ruling elite are vastly more Westernized than they can admit—are particularly unimpressive: They are often graduates of America's and Europe's third-rate universities or, increasingly, mediocre students at their own overstuffed red-brick schools. The Revolutionary Guards have set up both lay and clerical educational establishments to filter out the Western cultural pollution and antitheocratic ideas that flow through most of Iran's established universities and old religious institutions. The incidence of manufactured academic degrees among the revolutionary elite is pretty high. The

inferiority complex among these men—starting with Khamenei, who appears to loathe accomplished clerics and lay intellectuals with equal embittered fervor—cannot be overstated.

Iran's optimistic, secularized, pro-revolution reformers of the 1990s, whom Western academics, journalists, and the State Department latched onto with such hope, analyzed their own political culture almost perfectly backwards. Iran wasn't going to have a successful soft, second revolution, where the hardcore first generation gave way gradually and nonviolently to a more moderate, worldly, meritocratic elite. Rather, the hardcore was ready and willing to purge the evolving parts of the ruling class. A new generation of lesser men, culturally formed by the extreme, frontline fraternity of the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), rose up to challenge their betters, who'd never seen combat. These revolutionary "peasants"—and the elite of the first-generation revolutionaries can be merciless in describing the newcomers in class-based terms—have come overwhelmingly from the ambitious rank and file of the Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Tehran claims a range of over 1,200 miles for the Sejil-2 missile.

The reformist, pro-revolution intellectuals who were pretty confident in the early and mid-1990s that reform was around the corner didn't see these folks coming. The reformists had become too Westernized: They had a hard time taking the lumpenproletariat seriously. M. Hadi Semati, a reformist, pro-Khatami Iranian scholar who once was fairly influential in Washington from his perch at the Carnegie Endowment, was typical of this crowd. Semati was certain that Rafsanjani, who has long been one of Iran's most detested clerics, would win the 2005 presidential election. For Semati, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was just too embarrassing—too far removed from where postrevolutionary Iranians believed their countrymen were—to become president of the Islamic Republic. And the Holocaust-denying Ahmadinejad, who as mayor of Tehran was popular among the poor, is actually a fairly sophisticated example of the new-generation urbanized "peasants." Even men of the ruling elite who knew this milieu, because they, too, had once been close to or members of the Revolutionary Guards—for example, the hardcore Islamist-turned-Green Movement dissident Mir-Hossein Mousavi and the merciless revolutionary snob Larijani—probably didn't fully appreciate the social and religious power brewing beneath them. With an increasingly insecure and vindictive supreme leader driving the process, Iran's revolutionary elite was becoming a lot less elite.

This contracting, insular Iranian VIP world—made all the more surreal by the Islamic Republic's unjammable cultural and intellectual openness to the West courtesy of satellite dishes, the Internet, and relatively inexpensive foreign travel—has had a major impact on foreign policy. It's produced profound tension within Iranian society, between the rulers and ruled and within the ruling class. Khamenei is so implacable toward the West, especially the United States, because he sees how many Iranians, especially within the revolutionary upper crust, have fallen from the path. Their incessant talk of democracy and human rights, to his ears, has a made-in-America ring to it. Iran's internal crisis of legitimacy is thus in great part America's fault. Understood from the inside out, Iran's nuclear program is for Khamenei a means to counter internal rot by checkmating *the* foreign menace. This understanding is probably false—thousands of nuclear weapons didn't save the Soviet Union from internal collapse. But Khamenei isn't a historian.

The recently published biography of the supreme leader—written by Hedayatollah Behboodi and funded by the Iranian intelligence ministry, utilizing old SAVAK intelligence files and early interviews—shows a man obsessed with Islamic ethics, fearful of and tempted by Western culture, and filled with venom toward those who don't recognize his worth. In Behboodi's *Sharh-e Ism* (*Explanation of the Name*), which was quickly withdrawn from the market by order of Khamenei's office, probably because the book is a bit too revealing, we see a poor boy who made good through stubbornness and suffering, with a growing chip on his shoulder. We see an awkward, sexually uneasy young man developing into a modern, hardcore Islamist. The biography covers the years 1939 to 1979, before Khamenei had risen to prominence courtesy of the patronage of Rafsanjani. The clever Rafsanjani, once thought by many to be the white-turbaned hope for the restoration of more normal relations between Iran and the West, had been a fair-weather friend to too many. The superrich mullah, who'd regularly lent money

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to Khamenei as a poor student and aspiring revolutionary, actually wasn't difficult for the supreme leader to take down after Rafsanjani refused to back Ahmadinejad's rigged election in 2009.

Optimistic Americans and Europeans have hoped that Khamenei, who used to be reflexively referred to as a "pragmatist" in the Western press, would prove to be more Iranian than Islamic, that a supposed ingrained sense of caution and self-preservation melded with a love of nation would incline him to moderation. If the Americans could do the right thing and find a "grand bargain" that would satisfy all of Iran's competing interests, the cautious, non-ideological side of Khamenei would, according to this "realist" painting, produce a live-and-let-live dispensation toward the United States. The man who was at Rafsanjani's side in 1988 to explain to Ayatollah Khomeini that the war with Saddam Hussein's Iraq had to end or the Islamic Republic might crack apart would be the man to end the cold war with the United States.

But this Khamenei was a myth. He's nowhere to be seen in *Sharh-e Ism.* The young man who grew up in the puritan world of Mashhad's deeply conservative, really-no-fun-in-Islam religious schools, who'd once camouflaged himself to catch a glimpse of a Western movie in a theater and needed to use a public bath to wash off a wet dream, has become a nearly friendless Islamic paladin—in his own eyes, *the* vanguard of a new global Islamic order. Khamenei is obsessed with stopping the Western cultural invasion of his country, which he sees as a largely American-run plot. It's probably not an exaggeration to say that this obsession is his raison d'être.

President Obama obviously knew none of this when he came into office and made his personal overtures to the supreme leader. Not well versed in revolutionary Iran or contemporary Islamic thought, and a child of the soft *tiers-mondisme* dominant in America's better schools in the 1970s and 1980s, Obama thought that the differences between the United States and the Islamic Republic were largely the product of misunderstanding, American hubris, and George W. Bush. Ecumenically American to his core, Obama extended his hand. Seeing the devil, Khamenei recoiled. Given recent comments by the president's national security adviser Thomas Donilon describing the hoped-for fall of the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria as a blow to Iran, it appears that the president no longer sees the differences between Washington and Tehran as largely deriving from misapprehensions.

It's still not clear, however, whether the administration fully understands that its olive branch was guaranteed to produce an adverse reaction. In Khamenei's eyes, Barack Obama was an American version of Mohammad Khatami, who sincerely wanted to downgrade the Islamic Republic's posture toward the United States from virulent hostility to mere non-jihadist disgust. Khatami's enthusiastic followers—"the 23 May Front," named after the day Khatami won his unexpected landslide election in 1997—were crushed. The resurrection of the 23 May Front in the Green Movement of 2009-10, which coincided with Obama's attempt to engage the supreme leader, further confirmed for Khamenei how poisonous and dangerous the United States was under its new black president with the Muslim name.

Khamenei was shrinking his circle of trusted friends long before Obama came into office. But the practical effect of Obama's early outreach was to encourage the supreme leader to accelerate his purge of those who'd evolved too far. The biggest beneficiary: the Revolutionary Guards, who openly pledge their loyalty to Khamenei as "the shadow of God on earth." This narrowing of the Iranian elite, where clerics, Revolutionary Guards, and politicians formed per Khamenei's instructions have risen to the top, cannot be reversed as long as Khamenei lives. If he were to die, the regime might rip itself apart trying to replace him. The Guards and the revolutionary mullahs might hold it together with brute force, devising some religiously sanctified politburo to succeed Iran's one-man rule. The men with guns and the Holy Law behind them might even designate a new supreme leader from the clergy—but this time round there would be no Rafsanjani to bring the regime's component parts quickly together. Barring some kind of counterrevolution, Khamenei's death is likely the only internal event that could derail the nuclear-weapons program.

But as long as Khamenei rules, he's going to advance his kind and purge the rest. In foreign policy, this means there will be no nuclear compromise. The supreme leader will not buckle under sanctions. That would be a negation of his *mission civilisatrice*. And it would probably infuriate his most loyal, hardcore, and violent followers within the Revolutionary Guards, who are his praetorians. The collapse of the Iranian position in Syria, where the Islamic Republic's allied Shiite regime of Bashar al-Assad is slaughtering Sunni rebels and civilians, will probably destroy Tehran's position in the Arab world. Even Shiite Iraqi Arabs, who've always looked up to Iran as their (disliked) guardian of last resort, will likely distance themselves from the Islamic Republic if the butchery in Syria escalates.

Khamenei's longstanding desire to find radical Sunnis who mirror his preferences will certainly intensify, as he tries to rebuild ties to Muslims who can still tolerate him. This growing isolation will feed Khamenei's

ample appetite to strike out against domestic and foreign foes, who are, in his mind, intertwined. The men who could check Khamenei or cajole him to take a less confrontational course are all gone now—unless they are hiding somewhere in the Guard Corps. Rafsanjani, Rowhani, Khatami, Mehdi Karroubi, Abdullah Nouri, and so many more have all been humbled and pushed aside. The attempted assassination of the Saudi ambassador in Washington in October 2011, orchestrated by the Qods Force, the disciplined special operations branch of the Revolutionary Guards, should have been a wake-up call in the West. It's unlikely that Rafsanjani would have allowed that hit to go forward (even though Rafsanjani detests the Saudis and the United States). He would have found it rash to strike inside America—especially before having the bomb. But the head of the Qods Force, Qasem Soleimani, had become Khamenei's right-hand man. Soleimani bled the Americans in Iraq, and he authorized the operation in Washington. Lame as that operation may appear in hindsight, it was breathtakingly bold, made the more so by the character flaws of the Iranian American enlisted to strike at the restaurant.

President Obama didn't retaliate for the plot, any more than George W. Bush retaliated for the killing of Americans in Iraq with Iranian help. Both men kept their cool. But now the United States and Europe are engaged in economic warfare against Tehran. The supreme leader undoubtedly sees the present coercion as a prelude to regime change. Add Stuxnet and other computer-delivered malware aimed at gumming up the nuclear program, add the assassination of a few Iranian scientists, for which a senior Israeli intelligence official said Jerusalem deserved "partial credit," and we have a situation where Khamenei is guaranteed to unleash further terrorism against us. He's already started on the Israelis (with attempted hits on Israeli officials in India, Georgia, Thailand, and Kenya and the Hezbollah attack on Israeli tourists in Bulgaria). We were *always* going to reach this point: where the United States, Europe, and Israel would ratchet up pressure to stop the supreme leader and his guards from getting a nuke. The only way Tehran wasn't going to respond with violence was if Washington made clear that the U.S. military would punish Iranian misdeeds with ferocity.

Washington hasn't done that, and it's probably too late to do so. President Obama's quiet-but-firm recitation that "all options are on the table" against Iran has left the Israelis cold. An official close to Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu and Defense Minister Ehud Barak recently described Obama's threat as having "0 percent credibility." Khamenei, who is a master of Machtpolitik and has watched Obama leave Iraq, betray eagerness to do the same in Afghanistan, stay out of Syria, slash the defense budget, and "pivot" toward Asia, is even less impressed than Netanyahu, who at least *wanted* to believe in American resolve.

So we wait. Either Netanyahu will bomb Iran in the coming months or he won't—no doubt blaming Obama's lack of support for any decision to stand down. If Jerusalem does bomb, the Iranians will, in all probability, take their revenge through terrorism. Playing dead and railing against Israel in the court of world opinion will be the intelligent thing for Khamenei to do, and it's the course of action that the French fear most, since it would shatter the European consensus against Iran and behind the United States. But the supreme leader will burn to strike. So, too, probably the guards he has promoted. Little doses of terrorism probably won't be enough. A more muscular Iranian response would likely drag President Obama, if he is still in office, into a war he does not want. And if Netanyahu doesn't act, then Khamenei will loudly, and rightfully, claim he defeated the Jewish state—the first Muslim to do so.

Assuming Barack Obama does not bomb (and it would be a biting irony if this president led America into its third war—a second "war of choice"—in the greater Middle East since 9/11), then Khamenei will rejoice the more loudly. In his speech in March before the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the president pledged that he would not allow the Islamic Republic to acquire a bomb: "Iran's leaders should understand that I do not have a policy of containment," he solemnly threatened. If Tehran stockpiles enough 20 percent uranium to make several atomic bombs, which will happen next year, it will become extremely difficult, even for this president, to claim that Iran hasn't yet become a nuclear-weapons state. And just as in the case of Pakistan, the CIA will know that Iran has assembled a functioning nuke the day after. IAEA monitoring—as any U.N. nuclear inspector will privately confess—is not that good. This is why John Sawers, the current head of MI6, the British Secret Intelligence Service, flatly stated in July that we have two years left before the Iranian regime can build a weapon. MI6 chiefs have historically been very conservative with their predictions.

We don't know what would happen if a terrorist-supporting state whose leader loathes the United States more than Stalin, Mao, Tojo, and Hitler combined obtained nuclear arms. Khamenei would have defeated the United States—the West—in an epic struggle. Perhaps a sensible fear of the awesome power in his hands would take hold and Tehran would refrain from using or leveraging its new weapons. But it's doubtful the "shadow of God on earth" would be so well behaved. He's a man with a mission. If the supreme leader gets nuclear weapons, it will be a miracle if he does does not stupidly lead his country into war. ♦

High Anxiety

Israel's somber summer—as Syria crumbles, Iran goes nuclear, and the Muslim Brotherhood rides high in Egypt

By Elliott Abrams

August is supposed to be the time for vacations, but Israelis can't relax this summer. Their Mediterranean beaches may be as inviting as ever, but when they look north, south, and east their world appears increasingly dangerous.

Up north, Bashar al-Assad is going down. High officials defect successfully, sneaking their whole families out of the country—as sure a sign that the regime's counterintelligence is failing as the bomb that was sneaked into a conference room in July and blew up several top security officials. Israeli officials now applaud Assad's demise, though for years they sought to negotiate deals with him (and his father before him). At least since Bashar jumped into Iran's lap over the Iraq war (guiding jihadists into Iraq to help kill Americans) and tried with North Korean help to build a nuclear reactor, more and more Israeli officials have understood that he is no pillar of regional stability. He is instead an important ally of Hezbollah and Iran, and his departure will weaken them both—at just the right time. A Hezbollah that has no ally in Syria, to cover its back and help it rebuild after any conflict with Israel (as it did after the 2006 Lebanon war), is far less likely ever to attack Israel, even if its Iranian sponsors ask it to. Hezbollah's reliability as "Iran's second-strike capability" after an Israeli strike at the Iranian nuclear program is therefore much in doubt, giving Israel a freer hand when it considers bombing Iran. In that sense the news up north is good.

The next regime in Syria will be a mess, Israelis believe, but at least it will be a Sunni mess. The country is 75 percent Sunni, and Sunnis will take over the security forces. After Hezbollah's and Iran's support for Assad's bloody repression, now believed to have taken 20,000 Sunni lives, the Sunni inheritors will look to the Gulf states, Turkey, Egypt, and Jordan for cooperation and will break with Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran and Sheikh Nasrallah in Beirut.

But that's the end of the good news. Unfortunately, the Obama administration's refusal for 17 months to do much but wring its hands, or more precisely wring Kofi Annan's hands, about the slaughter in Syria suggests that the United States will have little clout in Damascus when the new crowd takes over. That is one Israeli worry. Israel's main concern, however, is that a Sunni regime would be dominated by the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood and would adopt a policy of active hostility toward Israel.

That is bad enough, but if the Brothers come to power in Syria, the Brotherhood in Jordan is likely to feel more wind in its own sails. This the Israelis fear even more, for while Syria has formally been at war with them since 1948, Jordan has been at peace since 1994, and the relationship has been close. So Brotherhood governments in Amman and Cairo, both "reexamining" their peace treaties with Israel, and a Brotherhood government in Damascus threatening to shake up the quiet status quo on the Golan Heights, is one of the many Israeli nightmares. And there is another big Israeli concern: a period of chaos in Syria that can be utilized by the jihadists who have recently arrived there, and by local extremists, to launch attacks on the Golan. So the Israelis are happy to see Assad go, but contemplate the post-Assad period with anxiety.

Events down south in Egypt make them even more anxious. While the new president, Mohamed Morsi, has chosen a largely bland and technocratic cabinet, his intentions remain foggy: What will be the Morsi mix of pragmatism and Brotherhood ideology? How much control will Morsi exercise over a Brotherhood machine he never led and that put him forward for president only after Khairat el-Shater—the Brotherhood's real leader—was prevented from running? How will Egypt square the Brotherhood's anti-Israel ideology with the continuing ties between the Egyptian Army high command and the Israel Defense Force?

On Sunday, August 5, a terrorist attack in the Sinai tested all the Egyptian players. A jihadist group operating in Sinai—that is to say, not Brotherhood members but far more radical groups intent on creating a crisis—attempted to storm across the border into Israel and kill as many Israelis as possible. The group attacked an Egyptian border police base, killed 16 policemen, and stole an armored

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personnel carrier. Good intelligence had put the Israelis on alert, and they stopped the attack at the border and killed the jihadists. But how will Egypt's new rulers react?

Morsi himself said and did what was required in the first days. He immediately went to northern Sinai (something Hosni Mubarak hadn't done for years) in the company of Field Marshal Tantawi, the head of the army. Morsi called the killings "traitorous" and "cowardly" and vowed, "Those who carried out the attack will pay heavily." Egypt immediately closed the Rafah crossing into Gaza, and Hamas has itself clamped down on the smuggling tunnels linking Gaza and Sinai. So much for the plan, desperately desired by Hamas, to open the Sinai/Gaza border; Morsi had previously seemed sympathetic, but he slammed the doors shut after the attack. Morsi also fired the head of Egypt's intelligence agency, for Egypt had had access to the same intelligence as the Israelis—but did nothing to stop the attack.

The Egyptian armored personnel carrier stolen by jihadists on August 5, still smoking after it was destroyed by the Israeli Air Force

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More surprising than the initial jihadist strike, which after all was ultimately aimed at Israel, was the further action two days later: The jihadists attacked five security checkpoints in Sinai. This time the army struck back, firing missiles at the jihadists from helicopter gunships and jets—the first time since the 1973 war that the Egyptians had taken such action in the Sinai. Egyptian troops also attacked on the ground in northern Sinai, about 10 miles from Gaza, targeting what they called "insurgent activity" and claiming to kill 20 or so "terrorists" and destroy three armored cars. If this is accurate, it is a measure of the strength of the jihadist presence—not just men and guns, but armored cars that one must assume had previously been stolen from the Egyptian Army or border police (and that the Egyptian government had previously made no effort to recapture).

The Israeli praise for this action was immediate. Clearly the IDF was given prior notification and is happily sharing intelligence about jihadists in the Sinai with the Egyptian military. But that cooperation is secret, and whatever Morsi's reaction, the Brotherhood itself took a different line: The initial jihadist attack that killed 16 Egyptians "can be attributed to Mossad," the Brothers' webpage announced. The willingness of the Brotherhood to sustain the peace treaty with Israel must be doubted if this is the stance the group will take toward those actually threatening not just Israel but Egypt.

What's next? The jihadist attack and the Egyptian Army's response might be a turning point. Either Egypt's new president and its army will get serious about security in the Sinai for the first time in years, or they will recoil from a continuing confrontation with Bedouins, criminals, smugglers, jihadists, and Hamas. This latest jihadist attack is in a certain way a gift: What could better clarify the danger posed to Egypt by extremist Islamists than their murder of 16 Egyptians? What could better allow Morsi and the army to stand up to violent extremism? What could better allow the Brotherhood to separate itself from jihadists? The jihadists were never this bold before, never willing to kill so many Egyptian officers, and they have devised this test of the Brothers carefully, for they know that defeating their attacks requires Israeli-Egyptian cooperation. Will Morsi and the Brotherhood countenance such a thing? Will it be allowed even if it is secret and never mentioned? Will they defend the peace treaty with Israel as actually helping their country's security? Will they even allow themselves to think such a thought? Or will the Brotherhood keep on blaming the Mossad, adhere to its ingrained hatred of Israel, and choose purity of thought over the responsibilities of governing?

Pessimism is rife in Israel. One day of Egyptian Army attacks on jihadists will change nothing, and few believe a persistent campaign to retake control of Sinai is about to begin. And even the good news about army activity in Sinai can contain bad news for Israel. There is already a call from Cairo to lift or at least modify the restrictions in the Egypt-Israel peace treaty on how many soldiers and what kinds of armaments Egypt can place in Sinai. "Reopen the peace treaty with Israel" is an old Brotherhood demand, and it has been loudly repeated all week in Egypt. That demand takes on a clear logic now, with

Israel calling for Cairo to retake control of the peninsula and stop terrorism and applauding the attacks of last week. But with Cairo now in the hands of the Brotherhood, how relaxed can Israel feel about acceding to those requests? Is today's solution tomorrow's threat? When the Brothers say "reopen the peace treaty," they don't mean "let the army move more men to the east," they mean "gut the relationship with Israel."

As the week ended, Morsi's intentions were impossible to discern, and the Brothers were silent (except on reopening the treaty). The ludicrous claim that the Mossad was to blame had not been repeated by top Brotherhood officials, but ideology—and perhaps sheer hatred of Israel and of Jews—prevented them from acknowledging that Israel and Egypt have a common interest and must cooperate. To say that Israelis are fearful about developments in Egypt hardly begins to convey the depth of their concern.

If north and south aren't enough of a threat, the Israelis can always look east to Jordan and worry about the stability of the Hashemite kingdom. Visitors there this year have come away concerned: Criticism of the royal family has reached new heights, the budget deficit is enormous, and the game of tossing out prime ministers one after another in the name of "reform" is getting old. The fundamental issue that blocks real reform remains the fact that a political system without gerrymandering would enhance Palestinian political power at the expense of the Bedouin East Bank tribesmen upon whom the Hashemite rulers depend, just as a more open economy would help industrious and educated Palestinians more than the East Bankers. So the king kicks the can down the road, and the Israelis—who have an intimate security relationship with Jordan—cheer each kick and pray he continues to survive this game.

Further east is Iran, where as the summer ends so does even the pretense that diplomacy will solve the nuclear problem. The talks between EU and Iranian deputy negotiators on July 24 achieved so little that no date has been set for another effort—at the deputy level, higher, or even for lower "technical level" talks. The U.N. General Assembly meets on September 13, so one can predict some sort of P5+1 meeting there; the six governments will presumably refuse to announce that talks are over lest they seem to justify an Israeli strike. All the publicly available evidence (including leaks) suggests that Iran is accelerating its nuclear work, and the spinning centrifuges produce more enriched uranium every day. Despite the Obama administration's refusal to admit that Jerusalem is Israel's capital, an amazing parade of American officials made their way there this summer: Burns, Panetta, Brennan, Clinton, Donilon, and (rumor has it) others on unannounced visits. All presumably carried the same message: Don't do it! (Or at least: Don't do it before the election!)

Whether Israel's window for hitting the Iranian nuclear targets is really closing now or can safely be held open into next year is widely debated, especially by people who don't have the facts. But they can be forgiven, for this is less a factual question than a judgment call. Where Iran's program stands and how fast it can move forward, what Israel can expect to destroy and whether it can expect to destroy less 3 or 6 or 12 months from now, whether Israel's missile defenses are improving faster than Iran's missiles, and whether a President Romney or a reelected President Obama might actually destroy Iran's nuclear sites in 2013 or 2014—these are not mathematical calculations. Add to these some local color in the Israeli debate: questions like "Do you trust Bibi or [defense minister Ehud] Barak?" or "What does General Gantz [the IDF chief of staff] really think?"

Ehud Barak said a few months ago that 'only' 500 Israelis would die in an Iranian missile attack after Israel struck the Iranian nuclear sites; IDF officials were later quoted as saying the number could be 'as low as' 300.

The school year begins in Israel on August 26, though life will not really go back to normal until after the High Holidays, which this year run from September 16 to October 9. Then the Knesset returns for its winter session, when it is supposed to address a bevy of tough issues, like the national budget and "Tal Law" regulating whether ultra-Orthodox Jews must serve in the military. Between now and then the government of Bashar al-Assad may be gone and the bloodshed may be even greater, Israel may have bombed Iran and itself been hit by Iranian missiles or terrorism, and Egypt's new Brotherhood government may have decided that blaming Israel for everything is a lot easier than cleaning up Sinai. So "back to normal" after the religious holidays is a relative concept this year. Ehud Barak said a few months ago that "only" 500 Israelis would die in an Iranian missile attack after Israel struck the Iranian nuclear sites; IDF officials were later quoted as saying the number could be "as low as" 300. That kind of debate—just how many will be killed in the next few months if Israel needs to hit Iran's nuclear sites?—is a reminder of what "normal" sometimes means in the Jewish state. ♦

Becket Today

Not turbulent but consistent and coherent.

BY **J.J. SCARISBRICK**

Thomas Becket
Warrior, Priest, Rebel
by John Guy
Random House, 448 pp., $35

A 13th-century view of the murder of Thomas Becket in 1170

NEWSCOM

John Guy's biography of Thomas Becket is a very good book—it is the work of a scholar (hitherto best known as a Tudor historian) at the zenith of his skill and completely on top of his sources. And how voluminous those are: 12 contemporary or near-contemporary biographies, including one in Icelandic, several accounts of Becket's reported miracles, contemporary chronicles, hundreds of letters—not to mention a massive amount of secondary literature. Thomas Becket must have good claim to being the most written-about Englishman.

The celebrated medievalist David Knowles, himself no mean authority on Becket, declared that he found the martyr-archbishop of Canterbury ultimately a mystery, unfathomable, and explained that when we finally try to take hold of him he eludes us "like a wraith." Some of Becket's contemporaries, even some admirers, seemingly were of the same opinion. So was T.S. Eliot. All agreed that Becket was extraordinary, but there were many contradictions and unanswered questions—about the sincerity of his conversion from worldly chancellor to hair-shirted churchman, for instance, or whether his intransigence was sometimes (or often) more pigheaded than virtuous, or his martyrdom more self-provoked than selfless.

But John Guy has no such hesitations. He has found, and carefully portrays, a thoroughly consistent, coherent person. There is no hagiography here, no avoiding the difficult questions, mercifully little psychoanalysis and plenty of down-to-earth good sense. The portrait is convincing.

Of course, the younger Becket was outwardly worldly: addicted to wrestling, hawking, and hunting; flamboyant and loving the grand gesture. Guy tells us of the spectacular embassy to Paris in 1158 when Chancellor Becket traveled with 24 changes of clothes, hundreds of horses, men, and carriages, falcons, exotic birds, greyhounds, mastiffs, and monkeys, and stacks of precious jewels and plate to bestow on his host, the king of France, as well as gallons of beer for

J.J. Scarisbrick, professor emeritus of history at the University of Warwick, is the author of Henry VIII.

bystanders watching the huge cavalcade pass through villages and towns. But the dazzling six-footer who was the climax of this procession was chaste, said his prayers, and frequently scourged himself. Moreover, Guy is surely right to insist that Becket was always wary of his master, Henry II; he was never really a devotee of the king, and was never corrupted by him. So there was no sudden conversion from sycophantic courtier to God-fearing courtier. Much like a later chancellor named Thomas, Becket may have tried to be the king's good servant, but he was God's first.

And like Thomas More's king, Henry VIII, Becket's was a nasty person. Guy pulls no punches. Henry II was cunning, violent, possessed of a whirlwind temper (in his rages he threw things around and even chewed straw on the floor), a bully, frenetic, and unpredictable. He was also bent on restoring what he called "the ancient customs of the realm," that is, the crown's influence over the church, which he claimed his grandfather had enjoyed before a power shift due to the recent civil war. In truth, he was after the subjugation of churchmen, a royal supremacy—radical innovation rather than restoration.

Alas for him, the man he appointed in a typically rash moment as archbishop of Canterbury, and who immediately resigned the chancellorship, was a product of that profound reform movement often named after one of its prime movers, Hildebrand (later Pope Gregory VII), which sought to liberate the Western church from excessive lay, and especially lay rulers', influence. Becket grew up during a time of powerful popes, of burgeoning canon law and its high doctrine of papal authority and clerical immunity; that is, the rights of *sacerdotium*, the clerical estate, including its courts, over and against those of *regnum*, the secular state and its jurisdiction. Indeed, in some ways Becket was more Hildebrandine than Hildebrand.

Given all this, a titanic struggle between Henry II and Becket had the inevitability of Greek tragedy. As the conflict unfolded, Becket would come to believe that he was facing not just a monster bent on turning the two provinces of the church in England into a puppet state-church, but also a tyrant who was a menace to all his subjects. The immediate issue was whether "criminous clerks"—that is, clergy of any sort who were found guilty of grave crimes by church courts (which did not use the death penalty)—could be brought before royal courts (which did, of course, very freely use the death penalty). But deeper issues soon arose regarding the freedom of appeal to Rome, Rome's authority over English church life, the authority of the primatial see of Canterbury, and the independence of the English episcopate from royal influence.

Becket had initially yielded, or had been tricked into yielding, too much to the king, and quickly repented with typical vigor. A few months later, in October 1164, he faced what was essentially a rigged state trial at Northampton. Rightly sensing that his vengeful master was about to destroy him, he did what more than one previous archbishop of Canterbury had done: He fled the land—overnight, in his case—after grabbing a few possessions and racing to a channel port.

He spent some six years in austere exile, refusing to withdraw what he had said at Northampton or the excommunications of traitorous brother-bishops (especially the archenemy, the bishop of London, who loathed him), refusing to call off the threat of papal excommunication of the king or even of a papal interdict on the whole land, which would have closed churches and brought out the clergy on strike, refusing to agree to a "kiss of peace" if ever he and the king were somehow to meet again.

Eventually, in the summer of 1170, a reconciliation of sorts was brokered by the king of France. Henry had been forced into a tactical retreat. Probably knowing full well that the latter was not acting sincerely, and full of foreboding, an emaciated, pale Becket, long suffering from chronic colitis, returned to England and Canterbury to a hero's welcome. A few weeks later, he was hacked to death in his cathedral. After he had fallen, and a final stroke had taken off the top of his skull, his brains were scooped onto the floor with the point of one of the assassin's swords.

Henry had not uttered those famous words, "Who will rid me of this turbulent priest?" That story is apocryphal. Rather, he had shouted out at his barons something much more provocative—along the lines of, "Why are there so many cowardly, useless drones around me and not one willing to avenge the insults and contempt I have received from a low-born ingrate who has shamed my kin and realm?" That was enough for the four thuggish knights who promptly set out to commit murder.

Guy writes with sparkle and gusto—too much, perhaps, for some—and he certainly overdoes the end-of-chapter one-liner of the "little did he know that. . ." kind. But this is an exciting book. Would that some of the intricate diplomatic and genealogical detail, which sometimes clogs the narrative, been reduced. Guy would probably retort that it was a question of all or nothing. It was precisely because Becket's fate, especially during his exile, was caught up in endless power games between the Angevin Henry and his rivals, and the tortuous struggle between then-pope Alexander III and Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, that we have to hear the detail. Without it, we cannot fully understand Thomas's predicament: how he was, now, a useful pawn or even trump card in others' fast-moving struggles; now, irrelevant, or a liability. Yet there could still have been some pruning.

Saints are neither sinless nor infallible. They are often very difficult to live with. But they are heroic in service to the Lord. That heroism is a "habit," i.e., it possesses them. Guy shows that Thomas Becket matches up to this, and that he was a martyr for essentially the same cause as was Thomas More (and other English men and women who gave their lives). So he was much more than a "rebel," to quote this book's subtitle. Furthermore, I am fairly sure that I now know him—in the round. ♦

B&A

To Boldly Go

A novel whose characters are re-creating 'Star Trek.'

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

Science fiction is idea fiction, you often hear—and it's true. In a way. But trying to describe how it's true proves surprisingly difficult, for the ideas in science fiction are much more often about the fiction than about the science. The rootstock isn't the technological flourishes; those are the pretty flowers that distract the eye from what the stories are actually doing—which is training up tropes and memes and metafictional references.

Lots of its authors, and a slew of its readers, like to think that science fiction sails on the ocean of science, but mostly it just paddles in the shallows of literature. Most genre fiction works this way, of course. Think of mystery stories: In her 1926 masterpiece *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, Agatha Christie started with the notion of having the book's narrator be the murderer her detective is trying to uncover. In his 1946 classic *The Big Clock*, Kenneth Fearing began with the spark of having the detective himself be the unknown subject the detective is ordered to pursue. Those aren't ideas of police procedure or detection; they're ideas about literary construction.

Unlike mystery stories, however, science fiction tends (in my experience, at least) to work better when the authors don't admit to their audiences, or even themselves, that they are manipulating literary conventions. I like my science fiction innocent.

And one thing you cannot say about John Scalzi is that he is innocent. His latest isn't a story so much as an extended comic account of what happens when, far in the future, a set of characters in a starship begin to realize that they are reenacting the lives of characters from an ancient television program. As a parody of *Star Trek*, *Redshirts* brings us into the territory of the very funny 1999 movie *Galaxy Quest*—in which, to their surprise, the washed-up actors from a television space opera discover that, *oh my God, it's all real!* As a violation of the fourth wall, in stepping out of the frame of narrative fiction, *Redshirts* basically treads the path that Eugène Ionesco's plays laid down in the 1950s—a path that, nowadays, has been paved into an eight-lane freeway roaring through the heart of Hollywood, from *Last Action Hero* (1993) to *The Truman Show* (1998) and *Stranger Than Fiction* (2006).

Redshirts
A Novel with Three Codas
by John Scalzi
Tor, 320 pp., $24.99

John Scalzi

John Scalzi is interesting as someone who has built a writing career in these strange days. He spent a few years writing movie reviews after college before landing, in 1996, a sweet gig at America Online as editor and in-house writer. Laid off in the meltdown of AOL, he took to writing guidebooks for the money and science fiction blog posts for the fame. Or, at least, the dribs of money and the drabs of fame. The blog, called "Whatever," proved enjoyable for readers—a few years ago, he issued in book form selections entitled *Your Hate Mail Will Be Graded*—and it successfully established him as a voice to be reckoned with in the field.

Consider, for a moment: Through the wonders of Internet writing, Scalzi was able to make himself mildly famous as a science-fiction writer before he'd actually written any science fiction. A contract with Tor Books followed, and, in 2005, Scalzi published *Old Man's War*—a pretty good, if a little self-conscious, story of the battle to preserve humanity's interstellar colonies, fought by galactic armies formed from the rejuvenated old people of Earth. He followed up his first entry with three sequels set in the fictional universe of *Old Man's War*: an old manuscript resurrected as the entirely enjoyable *Agent to the Stars*, an interesting commercial flop called *The Android's Dream*, and *Fuzzy Nation* (a TV-style rebooting of the universe of a 1962 science-fiction juvenile by H. Beam Piper). Along the way, he served as president of the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America, and maintained his blog.

Oh, and he wrote this latest novel. Maybe the effect of all this nonstop activity is starting to show. The joke of the title lies in its reference to the old *Star Trek* program, in which, in any given episode, Captain Kirk, Science Officer Spock, and Dr. McCoy would join a security team to beam down to an alien planet—the dangers of which would be revealed by the death of a red-shirted member of the crew before the first commercial break.

Like most fiction in which the

JEFF SLOSTAD / SLOSTAD.COM

Joseph Bottum is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard.

point is the narrative trick, *Redshirts* is almost impossible to review without giving away the entire turn of the novel. But if we try to keep from spoiling the surprise, the story looks like this: A young ensign named Andrew Dahl is delighted to receive a prestigious posting to the *Intrepid*, flagship of the intergalactic Universal Union in the 25th century. Curiously, as he makes friends, he discovers that the ship has a number of new members—and all the older members of the crew mutter darkly and hide whenever the captain, science officer, and first lieutenant are looking for people to accompany them down to a new planet. Before long, Dahl and his friends start hearing what happens to incidental crew members—redshirts—who go on missions: death by falling rock, death by toxic atmosphere, death by pulse-gun vaporization, death by shuttle-door malfunction, death by ice shark and Borgovian land worms.

Even as the young officers figure out that standing beside the senior officers of the *Intrepid* is the most dangerous job in the universe, they begin to catch on to the strangely scripted quality of behavior and dialogue at moments of crisis. So they pin down the historical moment at which their universe seems to have gone astray, and they arrange to follow the aphysical logic of the ship's previous adventures to travel back to that time and place—which proves to be our present-day Burbank, California, and the set of a science-fiction television show, which they have to get canceled if they want to live.

For the rest—well, if you want to find out what happens, read the novel, along with the three metafictional codas the author has added. Scalzi has a quick prose and an eye for the comic detail, and *Redshirts* isn't a bad book by any means. But it isn't a classic. In truth, it may reveal more than its author intends about what happens when someone is famous for being a novelist without having written a famous novel, or what happens when a pretty talented writer is determined to write something—and has absolutely no idea what to write. ♦

B&A

(Bleep) of Faith

An election-year manual for true believers.

BY LAUREN WEINER

What the (Bleep) Just Happened?
The Happy Warrior's Guide to the Great American Comeback
by Monica Crowley
Broadside, 400 pp., $27.99

Neither our presidents nor our pundits should try to be hip. I still have not recovered from the chief executive's slow-jamming the news with Jimmy Fallon. Now comes Monica Crowley's critique of the Obama administration, which is so hip it hurts.

The administration has spent way too much of the taxpayers' money, "resulting in costs mounting faster than Lindsay Lohan's jail sentences." The administration's penchant for regulating the private sector is illustrated with an apt quote from Cass Sunstein, President Obama's now former regulatory czar. But rather than leaving the guy to indict himself with his totalitarian-sounding words, Crowley adds: "Socialized medicine and free Ho-Hos for everyone! No wonder there's no Cass without 'ass.'"

There's doggerel, too. It's about Obamacare, and part of it goes like this: *Obama spoke not a word, which was unusual for him, / Ready to sign a bill that will make health care more grim.*

Crowley, a Fox News analyst with a nationally syndicated radio show, has done her homework. She offers lots of interesting facts here, but they come couched in the assumption that readers are already in her camp. So the facts aren't there to persuade, but to serve as setups for one-liners.

She'll be humming along with a policy-wonk sort of point and then, apparently worried about boring her audience, she'll throw in a *Dukes of Hazzard* reference. Or some dig about "the kooks," her ubiquitous term for people on the left. She's not too picky about where on the left they might belong—the "kooks" here include everyone from Bernardine Dohrn of the Weather Underground to former vice president Walter Mondale.

This may be canny in marketing terms: Conservatives preaching to the choir do sell books. The hyperbole sounds familiar—not in content, but in tone. It's as if she were trying to match the cocksureness of Michael Moore, Keith Olbermann, and those who write books about Rush Limbaugh being a "big fat idiot."

"Obama and the kooks have kept unemployment at painfully high levels," she writes. From the context, we are to understand that this is deliberate on their part. On foreign policy: "Obama was basically saying, 'My only goal is to destroy American power and buck up our enemies.'" As it isn't likely he was saying (or thinking) that, the meat of the discussion—that the Obama foreign policy has been chaotic and poorly defended—becomes something you're no longer sure you trust.

I agree with Crowley that President Obama and his supporters "paint devil's horns on the rich." What she paints on Obama and his supporters, in return, are various anatomical indignities that can't be printed in a family-friendly publication. So, few will pick up *What the (Bleep) Just Happened?* unless they share the author's views; which is surely one reason for all the overstated arguments. And niche-market considerations aside,

Lauren Weiner was a speechwriter for Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

the stridency also seems to be there to prove something: that chicks can be mean and gross.

Here is one of each: Speaker John Boehner needs to start "kicking some liberal ass." Elected Democrats, confronted with the Tea Party's revolt against Obamacare, were cowering in fear, "wearing soiled Pampers with pacifiers in their mouths."

Crowley finds the left's take on international affairs to be naïve, given that "the world is a brutal Darwinian jungle." No quarrels there—although applying this thought leads her to fault Obama's actions on the world stage even in cases where he took time out from being a wimp and used military force. She writes that the late Muammar Qaddafi was too useful to American interests to be justifiably removed from power, displaying her Nixonian-realist side.

Beyond our shores lie terrifying dangers. Governmental waste, fraud, and abuse fester here at home. There is a need to kick you-know-what. Yet there is also hope. After over 300 pages of cynical quips, Nixonian realism, and declarations that "the romanticism of the Left is over," Crowley switches to a soft focus. She concludes by taking a page from the liberal and progressive kooks, proclaiming herself a "happy warrior" who "believes in the inherent goodness of man."

Can someone tell me what the (bleep) happened there? ♦

B&A

Address Formal

How the rhythm of poetry made sense to the Victorians. BY MICAH MATTIX

The story goes something like this: From Chaucer to Wordsworth, English poetry was marked by formal innovation. Shakespeare's sonnets, Donne's epigrams, Milton's line, and Wordsworth's lyrics were indebted to classical Greek and Roman, Anglo-Saxon, and Italian forms, altered by the poets who were guided by excellent literary judgment alone. This formal innovation ceased with the Victorians. Concerned with protecting Protestant morals and establishing an English national identity requisite for a continuing imperialism, the Victorians prescribed certain meters and forms as inherently "Christian" or "natural." George Saintsbury's statement that the "iamb, trochee, and anapest" are the "English aristocracy of poetry" (with the iamb, of course, reigning supreme) epitomizes the period's prudery. It is from such arbitrary rules, and the lifeless poetry it created, that avant-garde poets broke free. As Ezra Pound puts it in his Canto 81, *to break the pentameter, that was the first heave*.

Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion
by Kirstie Blair
Oxford, 272 pp., $110

The Rise and Fall of Meter
Poetry and English National Culture, 1860–1930
by Meredith Martin
Princeton, 288 pp., $75

This, to use a bit of Anglo-Saxon, is a bunch of crock. While the Victorians did see a clear link between poetic form and religious practice, between meter and national identity, this view, as Kirstie Blair (in *Form and Faith in Victorian Poetry and Religion*) and Meredith Martin (in *The Rise and Fall of Meter*) show, encouraged rather than stifled formal experimentation. The Brownings' interest in "dynamic" form, Edwin Guest's and Walter William Skeat's theories of Anglo-Saxon accent, Gerard Manley Hopkins's "sprung" rhythm, and Robert Bridges's "Britannic foot" were all opposed, in one way or another, to Saintsbury's coining of iambic pentameter as "the English foot." In fact, it is highly unlikely that the free verse of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound would have developed in the way that it did had it not been for the ideas and innovations of the Victorians. Pound's characterization of formal poetry as lifeless and repressive allowed him to define his own work in opposition to it; but the story of English meter at the turn of the century is decidedly more complex than Pound, and many contemporary poets and critics, allowed.

Blair begins with the Tractarians. Evangelical and dissenting poets, such as John Kenyon and Robert and Elizabeth Browning, viewed a strict adherence to religious forms and, by analogy, poetic forms as "restrictive and unnatural, constraining and eventually killing the religious spirit and its hopes for saving grace." High church Tractarians, however, viewed them in exactly the opposite way. For poets like John Keble and Frederick Faber, religious and poetic forms provided the boundaries necessary for life and meaning, mirroring the forms of Christ's church and creation, effectively "channeling" our chaotic passions. In "To the Rothay," for example, Faber addresses the stream, asking it to teach him, by its example of controlled power, to master his own passions through the duty of religious service. This constriction, it turns out, is a blessing, providing both the poet and the poem with "rest": *And by duty narrowed now, / Straight unto that rest I flow*, writes Faber. The poem shows, Blair suggests, "that imposed discipline, in the shape of a channeled stream, may be destructive to the free play of poetic and religious emotion,

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but is more likely to lead to ultimate salvation through duty and obedience." This differs little in theory from William Carlos Williams's statement that "verse cannot be free in the sense of having no limitations or guiding principles." The question is: Which forms, which rules? And this question, it turns out, was just as open for the Victorians as it was for the moderns.

If Faber's poems were more restrictive than those of most modernists, this does not mean they exhibited no formal experimentation. In his sonnet "The Humiliation," Blair notes, Faber eschews both the Petrarchan and Shakespearean rhyme scheme for one that is impossible to classify, and the final line contains an extra foot. So experimental were "The Humiliation" and Faber's other sonnets that they were lamented by the *Christian Remembrancer* as showing no awareness "of any rule at all, save that of being hedged in by the limits for fourteen lines." And few poets were as experimental as the great Roman Catholic poet Gerard Manley Hopkins. Hopkins rejected Saintsbury's hybrid model of measuring meter by both syllables (such as in Latin) and accents (such as in Anglo-Saxon). Instead, he believed poets should use stress alone to determine a line of poetry. Relying on stress to structure a poem, Hopkins acknowledged in a letter to Coventry Patmore, would result in "looser" forms.

Yet, as Blair writes, Hopkins's "metrical experimentation was not a signifier of unorthodoxy, but rather . . . a signal of the greater freedom offered by the stricter orthodoxies of Roman Catholicism." Meredith Martin notes that Hopkins's interest in an accentual rather than syllabic meter was related to his idea of how poetry names the "inscape" of things, how it "fetches out" the being of the object named in the poem, as he put it in a piece on Duns Scotus. While Hopkins is often claimed as a proto-modernist, his "metrical experimentations," Martin remarks, "were not ahead of his time; on the contrary, they place him firmly amid the Victorian concerns about the standards and character of the English language." The difference between the Victorians and modernists (such as Pound and Williams) is the view of experimentation as an inherent aspect of orthodoxy and tradition, rather than a rejection of it.

Robert Bridges, one of the Victorian period's most active theorizers of poetic form, is now largely forgotten. But Bridges occupied a sort of third way between the accentual meter of Hopkins (and Skeat and Guest) and the hybrid model of Saintsbury. Bridges argued that either accents or syllables could govern the English

Frederick Faber, 1860

GETTY IMAGES

line, but not both at the same time. In Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he discovered an alternative to Saintsbury's iambic pentameter in Milton's hexameter, and instead of Saintsbury's "English foot," he proposed a "Britannic foot"—a trisyllabic, mid-stressed foot (exemplified in the name) that he claimed was the commonest example of "stressed verse" in English.

Martin points out that Pound's own ideas regarding English prosody are strikingly similar to those of Bridges. Pound's remark in "A Retrospect" that poets should "compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome" is suggested with much more nuance in Bridges's "A Letter to a Musician on English Prosody," which was published nearly a decade earlier. Furthermore, Pound's remark "that some poems may have form as a tree has form, some as water poured into a vase" is not unlike Bridges's distinction between accentual and quantitative meter. Martin writes:

> Pound's language supports the narrative of a violent break with the past . . . and yet his assumption that any and all metrical systems are hegemonic and rigid belies his ignorance of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century poetics.

As both Blair and Meredith show, the Victorians debated and experimented with poetic form because of its perceived importance both for religious belief and in nourishing a sense of nationhood. It is hard to imagine poetry occupying such a central place in religious and political debates today—marginalized, to put it bluntly, as it has been by a century of avant-garde and so-called post-avant poets who view poetry as a means of attacking, rather than nourishing, the reading public's sensibilities, and form as an oppressive constraint or a mere expression of the poet's personality. This is not to say that there have been no great poets after Pound or Eliot. Yet the simplistic rejection of poetic form after Pound has made it far easier for myriad untalented ideologues to publish work that makes all the right stylistic "moves" but is of little lasting value.

Thankfully, a renewed interest in form is gaining momentum. The *New Criterion*'s poetry prize, the *Contemporary Poetry Review*, two new writing programs that emphasize the craft of form, and an increasing number of talented "formal" poets all point to this growing interest in poetic form. Here, however, the myth of stable English verse-forms, rejected by dissipated bohemians and now in need of recovery, is an equally tempting but false narrative. No doubt a closer attention to patterned language, to sound, to the freedom of control, is in need of recovery. This recovery, however, should continue, not merely replicate, the formal successes of the past. ♦

B&A

Venus Observed

The global race to measure Earth's distance from the sun. **BY JOSHUA GELERNTER**

In 1677, the British astronomer-royal Edmond Halley used a very large telescope to watch Mercury eclipse a small disc of the sun. Mercury "transiting" the sun is an unusual event, and very hard to see. Halley only spotted the little planet because he was the finest astronomer of his generation. And, being the finest astronomer of his generation, he got an idea from Mercury's transit: If Mercury were closer and larger, its passing in front of the sun could be used to work out the distance between the sun and the Earth. Fortunately, a closer, larger Mercury exists: the planet Venus.

Mercury transits happen about once every 10 years; Venus transits happen twice a century, in pairs 8 years apart. Halley calculated that Venus would next pass directly between the Earth and sun the year he turned 105, but, despite his best efforts, he died in his eighties.

Mark Anderson here describes the largest science experiment ever undertaken: In 1761, every astronomer in the world rushed to find a good spot to watch the Venus transit that Halley had predicted. By comparing observation records from two spots on the Earth, as far away from each other as possible, Europe's scientists knew they could triangulate the distance from Earth to Venus and Venus to the sun. Since thousands of years of observation had determined the relative distances between the sun and the planets, knowing the Earth-to-sun distance would enable the drawing of an accurate map of the entire solar system.

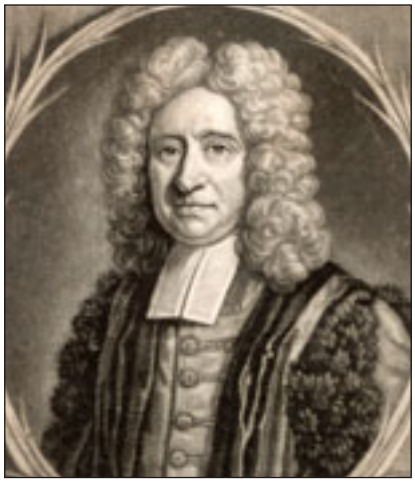
This prospect so excited Europe's big thinkers that Britain, France, Russia, and Austria happily collaborated on the project despite the fact that they were, at the time, fighting each other in the Seven Years' War. The French and Austrians sent their best astronomers to Siberia for one of the two sets of observations required; the English went to South Africa for the other. The Siberian trip was a triumph, but both of the African observations were thwarted by clouds.

Europe's scientists buckled down: They'd get one more chance, eight years later, to see Venus transit the sun. After that, it would be a hundred-year wait before it happened again. Elaborate preparation was made and Europe's belligerent powers pulled together. With Denmark's help, Austria sent astronomer-priest Maximilian Hell to Vardo, at the northern tip of Norway. Spain helped France send Jean-Baptiste Chappe d'Auteroche to California. The English sent Captain James Cook with a hundred-man entourage to the just-discovered island of Tahiti.

The Frenchman Chappe was then the greatest living astronomer, but he also found time during his trip to correspond with Benjamin Franklin on fossils and theology, and to lay the groundwork for Europe's first telegraph network. Father Hell and his assistant, Joannes Sajnovics, made breakthroughs in variable gravitation and bioluminescence during their expedition, and discovered that the Finns and Hungarians share a language. Captain Cook's trip cured scurvy, invented seltzer, and almost killed the entire crew when they crashed into then-undiscovered Australia. And the Venus data they all brought back allowed the 95-million-mile distance to the sun to be measured to 99.8 percent accuracy. It was the best year for science since Isaac Newton got plunked by an apple.

The Day the World Discovered the Sun is part science, part adventure—and when Anderson isn't getting bogged down with flowery prose, his writing is clear and tells a fast-moving story. His superior summary of the most important and least discussed decade of Enlightenment science is made even better by its timing: In 1769, the French astronomer-royal César-François Cassini de Thury was in charge of using Jean-Baptiste Chappe's, Captain Cook's, and Father Hell's data in order to work out the distance to the sun. This was the final step, and he understood the weightiness of his job: In gathering the Venus data, vast sums of money had been spent and hundreds of lives (including the lives of some of our main characters) had been lost. He knew that another transit wouldn't happen for another century—and that, even then, it wouldn't be as easily observed. "The transit of Venus [won't] be nearly as advantageous as it was in 1769," Cassini wrote, "until 2012." That transit—the last of this century—was visible in North America on the evening of June 5; thousands watched and were thrilled. I climbed to the roof of my apartment building about five minutes before it started, but the sky was cloudy, and stayed cloudy. I hope the weather's nicer next time around, in 2117. ♦

The Day the World Discovered the Sun
An Extraordinary Story of Scientific Adventure and the Race to Track the Transit of Venus
by Mark Anderson
Da Capo, 304 pp., $26



Sir Edmund Halley

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Joshua Gelernter is a writer in Connecticut.

B&A

Britain's Mayor

This portrait of London gives a picture of its author.

BY MICHAEL F. BISHOP

Boris Johnson on a zip wire, August 1, 2012

REBECCA DENTON / REUTERS / NEWSCOM

At the start of the Summer Olympics last month, the eyes of the world were upon London, and millions caught their first glimpse of the unruly blond thatch that is the trademark of Boris Johnson, the city's recently reelected mayor. A portly, rumpled presence, he stood in sharp contrast to the glittering royals and sleekly groomed cabinet members surrounding him. And whether he is mocking Mitt Romney before an audience of 60,000 in Hyde Park or dangling from a zip wire with a Union Jack in each hand, the mayor is a master of politics as entertainment—the epitome of the conservative populist. But the artfully tousled hair and shambolic demeanor conceal a formidable intellect and ferocious ambition, both of which are amply displayed in this sparkling book.

Johnson's Life of London
The People Who Made the City that Made the World
by Boris Johnson
Riverhead, 336 pp., $27.95

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson, or plain "Boris" to fans and detractors alike, came to prominence as the euroskeptic Brussels correspondent for the *Daily Telegraph*, and later as the editor of the *Spectator*. Televised appearances on the satirical *Have I Got News for You* burnished his fame, and, while still editor of the *Spectator*, he won a safe Tory seat and embarked on a rocky, colorful parliamentary career. He boosted his literary credentials with a stream of books: collections of articles, a campaign memoir, a meditation on the Roman Empire, and a goofy yet compelling thriller about the American president being held hostage by Islamic terrorists in Westminster Hall. Missteps and scandals that would have derailed a lesser politician hardly slowed his rise; to the consternation of many of his colleagues, he ran in 2008 for mayor of London against the incumbent, "Red Ken" Livingstone. And Boris, famed for his absentmindedness and comic eccentricities, unseated the old leftist after a focused, disciplined campaign. In May of this year, after a blazing rematch, he beat Ken once again.

The most popular politician in Britain, Boris Johnson has achieved the feat of leading a Labour-leaning city while making the Tory faithful purr with pleasure. His weekly *Telegraph* column is a feast of eurobashing, the surest path to the hearts of middle England. Prime Minister David Cameron, shackled by the constraints of coalition government and his own cautious nature, seems a wan figure by comparison. The thought of Boris in Downing Street long evoked incredulous laughter among insiders, but few are laughing now. The process by which parliamentary candidates are selected makes finding a safe seat a simple matter, especially for a celebrity; and a return to Westminster by Boris would no doubt lead swiftly to a leadership contest.

Johnson's Life of London contains 17 incisive sketches of Londoners past and present, but the dominant personality in the book is the author's own. And it is an eclectic company of worthies he chooses to celebrate: from Emperor Hadrian to William Shakespeare, J.M.W. Turner to John Wilkes. Artists, politicians, and businessmen are commemorated in prose that has you laughing one minute and reaching for a dictionary the next. In an era of dumbed-down politics, Boris flourishes his Oxford education, sprinkling his

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writing and speeches with polysyllabic terms and classical allusions.

Boris is a booster, of course, and, as a mayor running (at the time) for reelection, doesn't skimp on the flattery of his constituents: "London is just about the most culturally, technologically, politically, and linguistically influential city of the last five hundred years," he writes. But then, as he acknowledges, "You would expect me to say this." This is vintage Boris: forceful and opinionated on the one hand, witty and self-deprecating on the other. As Ronald Reagan showed, that is a devastatingly effective combination, and, as other politicians make depressingly clear, it is rare in politics. In his books and journalism, Boris disarms his critics by making them laugh, and wins votes from legions that would otherwise be indifferent or even hostile to his old-fashioned Toryism.

When asked as a child what he wished to be when he grew up, Boris replied, "World king," and this ambition has carried him to fame, fortune, and the largest personal mandate in British politics. In his essay on Winston Churchill, Boris's powerful drive is apparent, and he writes that during a tour of the Cabinet War Rooms, the prime minister's subterranean redoubt, he settled eagerly and presumptuously in Churchill's chair, to the evident discomfort of his guide. His analysis of Churchill's leadership, though admiring, is balanced. Most politicians offer only bland, anodyne tributes to distinguished leaders, but Boris, in a fit of self-recognition, scores him for his opportunism and occasional bad judgment. Yet, in the end, he admits, "We still love him—I love him; and we all know instinctively that the popguns of revisionism have left not a scratch on the supercolossal Mount Rushmore of his reputation."

Boris has an eye for more than politics. Few American politicians would write books containing such close observations of the female form; the women he encounters tend to be "impossibly tall, thin, and yet somehow curvaceous." (More chaste is his portrait of Florence Nightingale, "the little lace-capped angel.") One detects a trace of envy in his account of Keith Richards's amorous adventures. Risky stuff, especially for one whose own appetites are, well, Olympian and well chronicled in the tabloids. One can hardly imagine a contemporary American politician carrying on so, but then, they don't even write their own books.

Moreover, Johnson is more admiring of greatness than of virtue. To him, London is "a cyclotron of talent: drawing bright people together and then bouncing them off each other in a chain reaction of energy and emulation until—pow!—there is an explosion of genius." This full-throated embrace of elitism and achievement is bracing, and surprisingly appealing: Boris is a toff with the common touch. His celebration of urban life, "the cross-pollination that is more likely to take place with a whole superswarm of bees rather than a few isolated hives," and all its professional, economic, and romantic possibilities, is infectious and persuasive.

Johnson also shows that London has long been a crossroads of the world, a seething cauldron of humanity. And, with the mass immigration of recent decades, even more diverse and cosmopolitan (and fractious and divided) than ever. As a prominent Tory columnist of my acquaintance puts it, "London is a multicultural republic with a mayor as its president. It has nothing to do with the rest of England." The city hall of such a metropolis might seem an unlikely perch for an outspoken conservative, but Tories ideologically starved by their national government are gorging on the red meat dished out by the mayor. ♦

B&A

Satire It Isn't

'The Campaign' is a near-total loss.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

The new comedy called *The Campaign* is supposed to be an up-to-the-minute satire of contemporary politics—a story about a mudslinging race for Congress in North Carolina between a blow-dried Democratic incumbent caught in a sex scandal and a wide-eyed naïf Republican recruited to challenge him by two nefarious billionaires (Dan Aykroyd and John Lithgow).

The Campaign
Directed by Jay Roach

The outline of the movie makes it seem promising. With two months to go before the election, the unopposed Cam Brady (Will Ferrell) leaves a salacious phone message for his mistress on the answering machine of a deeply religious family. His favorability ratings plunge. The billionaires decide he's a liability—they are trying to get a plant with Chinese-level wages built in his district—and look around for someone to put up against him.

They settle on Marty Huggins (Zach Galifianakis), the loser son of a prominent Republican. He doesn't have a chance until the hard-bitten billionaire-supplied campaign manager (Dylan McDermott) gives him a makeover. Marty wins the first debate and, in a tussle in the hallway afterward, Cam throws a punch. Marty ducks, and Cam's fist collides with the face of a baby. From there, things get wilder and crazier.

As liberal Hollywood portrayals of American political contests go, this one

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

Zach Galifianakis, Will Ferrell

PATTI PERRET / WARNER BROS.

is pretty benign unless you happen to be one of the Koch brothers, in which case you have every right to be outraged. But I don't actually think the Kochs—here called the "Motches"—have much to fear for their reputations from this film. *The Campaign* is so painfully, horribly, dreadfully unfunny it's like being trapped around the holiday table listening to your annoying uncle tell a bad dirty joke that goes on for an hour and a half. I wouldn't say it's one of the worst movies I've ever seen, but it may be the worst movie I've seen this year.

It's chiefly interesting as a study of the contempt Hollywood feels for the mass audience it desperately tries to court. *The Campaign*'s producers, writers, and director clearly think the very people they want to come see the movie are morons who wouldn't be able to understand, follow, or enjoy a comic exposé of the workings of cynical and desperate political campaigns. So, to keep them interested, screenwriters Chris Henchy and Shawn Harwell and director Jay Roach slow the jokes down, make them as obvious and overstated as possible, pump the mugging up, and film with shiny bright colors. What they've ended up with is satire that would, but for its potty mouth, fit right in on the Disney Channel.

If there's one thing Americans have seen and will be seeing more of, it's blatantly dishonest and crude political commercials. Instead of taking reality and tweaking it a little, which is what satire does at its best, *The Campaign*'s filmmakers offer up commercial parodies that even the most witless person on earth would recognize as ridiculously over the top. There's one featuring Ferrell's character in a clandestinely taped sex act that we're told is a campaign commercial. After it airs, director Roach pulls the now-tiresome bit of having MSNBC and CNN hosts comment on it—with Mika Brzezinski claiming the ad has improved Cam's numbers.

At another moment, a candidate proclaiming his own honesty confesses to a self-pleasuring technique and receives cheers and plaudits for it. (*The Campaign* is bizarrely obsessed with masturbation, with at least four characters pausing to discourse on the subject.) Jokes like these suggest a panicked fear of the subject matter *The Campaign* has chosen to present, and an unwillingness to accept that even teenage boys might find depictions of adult misbehavior and rotten conduct amusing without recourse to sniggering witlessness.

There is so much material to be gleaned from the past couple of years—Democrats intervening in Republican primaries to help arrange the victories of the candidates they think would be easiest to beat, House members physically attacking media folk who have the audacity to film them—that *The Campaign*'s failure to exploit any of it makes the film not only a massive dud but a colossal missed opportunity. ♦

C-SPAN
www.c-span.org

C-SPAN TRANSCRIPT:
Presidential Debate, University of Denver, Denver, Colo.
October 3, 2012

(cont'd)

not an [expletive], Mitt. You're just trying so hard to be.

LEHRER: Um, Mr. Romney, you have said that America is in crisis—

OBAMA: You think!?

ROMNEY: I'm sorry, I thought it was my turn—

OBAMA: Your turn? Your turn? Your turn?! No. No, no, no. No, no, NOOO!!! Not for nothing, but you've had your turn; your whole life's been your turn! Your turn to go to Harvard. Your turn to run the Olympics. Your turn to fire your hard-working countrymen, buy the factory they USED TO work in, and turn it into your ping-pong room, you Ken Doll-Gordon Gekko-weird-underwear-wearing MOTHER [expletive]!!!

Melodramatic music begins.

ROMNEY: Where'd that music come from?

OBAMA: Don't get cute with me, you robot-murder-vacuum cleaner!

ROMNEY: What does that even mean?

OBAMA: Hey! America! Take a minute to stop stuffing your bulbous, barely literate faces with chicken-fried bacon nuggets, and LISTEN TO SOMEONE WHO IS SMARTER THAN YOU FOR ONCE!!! Do I have your attention? Who cares? I've moved on to other things in my head. Vote for me, don't vote for me. It's entirely up to you. But know this: It's going to get worse before it gets better. That's the truth. The truth? You want the truth? YOU CAN'T HANDLE THE

(cont'd)