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OBAMACARE MELTDOWN
FRED BARNES • JAMES C. CAPRETTA
MATTHEW CONTINETTI • JAY COST

DOWN AND OUT IN VERMONT

Heroin in the hills

BY GEOFFREY NORMAN

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When the Old Party Was Still Grand

It would be a rare week in political journalism when there wasn't a story somewhere about a lifelong Republican who doesn't recognize his party nowadays.

These fascinating essays, textbook specimens of lazy reporting since the 1950s or so, always related more in sorrow than in anger, explain that the modern Republican party bears no resemblance whatsoever to the GOP of happy memory, and always feature characters direct from central casting: the grizzled New England farmer whose grandpa was a town selectman, the retired Midwest veteran whose first ballot was cast for Willkie, the great-nephew of some Republican president.

The latest example appeared on the op-ed page of the *New York Times* last week, entitled "The Cry of the True Republican," and was written by John G. Taft, a grandson of Sen. Robert A. Taft (1889-1953). After establishing his "genetic" Republican credentials, Taft explained that his late grandfather, known as "Mr. Republican" in his day, "wouldn't even recognize the modern Republican Party, which has repeatedly brought the United States of America to the edge of a fiscal cliff—seemingly with every intention of pushing us off the edge."

Mr. Taft, of course, is welcome to interpret events in Washington as he sees fit; and if the truth be told, The Scrapbook shares some of his reservations about the Tea Party wing of the GOP. But in comparing Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas to the late Sen. Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin—a favorite, if slightly deranged, Democratic tactic of the moment—he makes an odd assertion. Taft laments that McCarthy's "anti-Communist crusade was allowed by Republican elders to expand unchecked," but that the excesses of McCarthyism "caused it to burn out. And eventually party elders in the mold of my grandfather were able to realign the party."

Mr. Republican, right, with Sen. McCarthy

Sounds nice. The problem, of course, is that one of the "Republican elders" who encouraged Joseph McCarthy in his "anti-Communist crusade" was none other than Taft's grandfather, the aforementioned Senator Taft, who famously declared that "the pro-Communist policies of the State Department fully justified Joe McCarthy in his demand for an investigation," and that if one case didn't pan out, McCarthy should try another.

It is possible, of course, that Taft family mythology has prudently bowdlerized this episode in the career of Mr. Republican, and that young John G. Taft is unaware of the facts. On the other hand, he might be altogether too aware of the facts, which would explain his carefully worded assertion that "party elders in the mold of my grandfather"—translation: not including Robert Taft himself—restored the GOP to health after Joseph McCarthy's fall.

Either way, Taft's essay is a painful reminder that the deep personnel cuts at the troubled *New York Times*—and other newspapers of comparable stature—have eliminated editors on the news and editorial pages with basic knowledge of modern history. This probably explains as well why stories about the Republican party's right-wing drift are never accompanied by tales of the Democratic party's left-wing captivity, featuring grizzled New England farmers who abhorred the Soviet Union, or pro-life Midwest veterans who voted for Adlai Stevenson. ♦

Moneyballoney

By now, a good portion of America is familiar with *Moneyball*, either Michael Lewis's book or the movie, but here's an abridged explanation: A baseball obsessive and amateur statistician named Bill James began positing data-driven theories about what makes for a winning team. James's research upended a lot of conventional wisdom, e.g., a player's on-base percentage might be a better measure than his batting average in evaluating his contribution to winning games.

Eventually, an ambitious general manager, Billy Beane, applied James's theories at the professional level and turned the Oakland A's—a team that has long had one of the lowest payrolls in baseball—into a consistent winner.

In recent years, the term moneyball has come to be both overused and abused, such that any nonobvious observation paired with threadbare data is now hailed as a brilliant new in-

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

sight. The Internet is littered with articles about the "moneyball approach" to wealth management, urban planning, higher education reform, health care, business hiring, information technology, and on and on.

Frankly, The Scrapbook is surprised it's taken this long for someone to finally get around to applying the "moneyball approach" to the operations of the federal government itself. But of course it finally happened. On October 18, Peter Orszag and John Bridgeland published a *Politico* op-ed under the headline "A Moneyball approach to government."

Given the prominence of the authors—Orszag is a former head of the Office of Management and Budget under Obama and Bridgeland was director of the White House Domestic Policy Council under Bush—the article's bipartisan byline turned some heads. Here are the three key points: "First, government needs to figure out what works. . . . Second, once we know what works, government needs to shift dollars in that direction. . . . Finally, we need to stop funding what doesn't work."

Like The Scrapbook, you're no doubt stunned at the depth of the analysis. Why hasn't anyone in Washington advocated this revolutionary new paradigm in government spending until now?

Now, Orszag and Bridgeland are smart guys, so we assume they're aware that in the context of this particular argument the term moneyball is meaningless. Nonetheless, it's good to know that influential wonks on both sides of the aisle are worried the federal government is throwing trillions down ratholes. It's not so reassuring, however, that we've reached a point where the most basic common sense must be tricked up as counterintuitive in order to get people in Washington to take it seriously. ♦

Fever Swamp

The 50th anniversary of the assassination of President Kennedy is nearly upon us, and it feels as if Camelot has returned like Brigadoon. Many a navel is currently being gazed upon in the media in an attempt to wring some contemporary meaning out of JFK's tragic end. Some of this was inevitable—the shelves of The Weekly Standard's book section are straining under the weight of the latest conspiracy tomes—but an unsettling amount of the commentary has amounted to taking an American tragedy and using it as an excuse for partisan jeremiads.

On October 11, the *New Yorker*'s Adam Gopnik wrote an essay, "The John Birchers' Tea Party," dedicated to chronicling how Dallas in 1963 was "clotted . . . with right-wing types in the period before Kennedy's fatal visit." The not-so-subtle implication is that this played a role in JFK's death, and that these same right-wing crazies are alive and well in American politics today. A week later, Gopnik's *New Yorker* colleague George Packer did him one better by filing a dispatch from Dallas that advanced this thesis even more explicitly:

> Oswald was an avowed Marxist, which might seem to absolve the city's right wing of any responsibility. But [the book] "Dallas 1963" places the assassin in context as a malleable, unstable figure breathing the city's extraordinarily feverish air. . . .
>
> American politics today isn't

haunted by the same fear of sudden, shattering violence. But, as for nut country, it's migrated from the John Birch Society bookstores to the halls of Congress, where angry talk of socialism and impeachment is almost routine. Senator Ted Cruz and Representative Louie Gohmert are the spiritual descendants of [billionaire oilman H.L. Hunt and right-wing zealot General Edwin Walker]. Fifty years later, Dallas would like to move on from Dealey Plaza. This is normal and right. What's holding it back is the Republican Party.

Connecting a line between Ted Cruz and the assassination of a president that occurred before the 42-year-old senator was born is laughable at best, not to say a falsification of history. A recent George Will column noted that Jacqueline Kennedy didn't seem too confused about who her husband's killer was. "He didn't even have the satisfaction of being killed for civil rights. It's—it had to be some silly little Communist," she said shortly after her husband's death. Also telling is the fact that a spokesman for the Soviet Union, seeking to divert attention from Lee Harvey Oswald's defection and two-year sojourn in Minsk, rushed to lay blame on "Barry Goldwater and other extremists on the right."

Now The Scrapbook, along with most sane people, is happy to grant that Oswald's questionable mental state probably bears the bulk of the responsibility for the shooting. But it says something that contemporary liberals are so quick to shift the blame for violence to the opposite end of the political spectrum whenever communism might be the more relevant topic to examine. Of course, the left has never been that troubled by violence in the service of left-wing causes. After all, Columbia University recently gave Kathy Boudin, a member of the Weather Underground and convicted murderer, a teaching position. And Robert Redford just made a film about the plight of Boudin and her violent fellow travelers.

At the very least, we hope that Packer and Gopnik realize how passé their argument is. It was prevalent in 1963 and has been periodically revived ever since. In 2011, Frank Rich wrote a tortured essay for *New York* magazine lamely connecting the same dots. This pseudo-conspiracy has even received the imprimatur of the Kennedy family. Shortly after the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, as the media rushed en masse to slanderously pin it on the Tea Party, Robert F. Kennedy Jr. chimed in with the claim that "Uncle Jack's" death was a result of right-wing talk radio in Dallas and the suggestion that the "hate merchants at Fox News" might bear responsibility for Giffords's shooting. We'll give the left this: They are peerless finger-pointers.

So long as we're pondering the effects of "breathing extraordinarily feverish air," it might behoove Packer and his colleagues straining to pin the Kennedy assassination on the political right to check the ventilation systems in their own newsrooms. ♦

Required Reading

The Scrapbook is thrilled to note the publication this week of *Things That Matter: Three Decades of Passions, Pastimes and Politics*, a collection of essays by our friend and contributing editor Charles Krauthammer. Needless to say, this is a book that matters, by a thinker and commentator who matters. We would urge our readers to put down this magazine and buy the book—and while you're at it, order a few more copies for friends and family.

But maybe you've already done so. You know, after all, that Krauthammer is among the very best—and this is the best of the best, selected by him, with an engaging and fascinating introduction. The Scrapbook has, of course, read most of these gems before. But we found on rereading them that they're amazingly fresh, and full of thought-provoking formulations and arguments. We're sure you'll join us in thanking Charles for providing hours of reading to enjoy, to learn from, and to admire. ♦

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BPA WORLDWIDE

Gimme Mein Gummi

Herr Riegel's father vas a candy maker. *Was*, I mean. *Was* a candy maker. This morning, over the phone, a friend made some passing reference to German economic policy—speaking, unfortunately, in that exaggerated German accent that used to be a standard of American comedy. You remember? Sgt. Schultz on *Hogan's Heroes*, Arte Johnson on *Laugh-In*. And the trouble is that once that voice gets into your head, it hangs around for days.

Anyway, Hans Riegel's father was a candy maker in Bonn in the early years of the twentieth century, and like many confectioners at the time, he started experimenting with reduced-liquid pastilles. Sugar was expensive, and hard candy, from lollipops to candy canes, requires heating to at least the hard-crack stage, where sugar forms over 90 percent of the hot solution from which the candy is made. If you could get the candy to hold together at a lower temperature, you could make it cheaper—selling, in essence, sweetened water in place of pure sugar. Chewy sweetened water. Maddeningly addictive chewy sweetened water.

American gumdrops typically attempted the trick with pectin. Swedish Fish, meanwhile, used a disturbing combination of corn starch, mineral oil, and Carnauba wax. Und Herr Riegel yet another way to make the candy found. In 1918 he began using a thick slurry of gelatin. In 1922, he reduced the size of his candies, shaped them with animal molds, and started marketing Gummi Bears. Haribo, his company was called (an acronym formed from the first two letters of the words "Hans Riegel" and "Bonn"), and those little chewy bears—*die Gummibärchen*—marched across the country, surviving all the turmoil of the 1920s and 1930s to become Germany's most popular treat, sold at every kiosk for a pfennig a package.

What the company couldn't do as easily was survive the Second World War. And that's where the son comes into the story—Hans Riegel Jr., who died on October 15, the 90-year-old marketing genius who turned his father's bombed-out company into a worldwide phenomenon.

Well, maybe not such a genius. In

Hans Riegel, October 2009

Europe, Haribo sells an unpalatable mix of fried-egg and cola-bottle candies. A French version flavored with Orangina. "Hot Sticks" in Germany, mixing raspberry with jalapeños and orange with habaneros, to add that burn-your-tongue element so lacking in older forms. Milkshake flavors in England. Nonalcoholic wine flavors, for that matter. And in Turkey, gummies shaped like teeth. No wonder the American market has retained nothing except the traditional shape and the original five flavors: raspberry, orange, strawberry, pineapple, and lemon.

When introduced into the United States in the 1980s, Haribo offered what seemed a unique European product that had made gelatin-based candy into something actually edible. This was the world—remember?—of Jelly Babies, Jujubes, and oversugared gumdrops. "Wine Gums" in England (named by their teetotaling Methodist manufacturers as offering an alternative to drink). The horrifying movie theater experience of glue-your-teeth-together Dots.

Those times are gone. We live in the golden age of soft candies, and in recent years, offerings from other companies have eaten their way into Haribo's market. Gummy rings and gummy sours. Australian gummy frogs. Niche-marketed candies that use vegetarian gelatins. Gummy worms now outsell Haribo's proprietary Gummi Bears around the world.

Still, what Hans Riegel Jr. achieved deserves remembering. After spending much of the war as an Allied prisoner, he returned to join his brother Paul in rebuilding their father's company. By the 1960s, they had one of the most successful candy companies in the world, and their expansion into the United States prompted the soft-candy boom that ended the reign of the old mass-produced American candies, with their chemical-flavored pectin bases.

When we saw the news that Riegel had died, my wife responded by pulling down some packages of unflavored gelatin to make her own gummy candy, flavored with juice. The results were good—corn syrup in place of some of the sugar and a little corn starch proved to be the keys to keeping them from turning into pure rubber. Or Dots.

But my own response was to stop by the store and buy a few gummy candies to give away for Halloween. Some gum drops, some Swedish Fish knock-offs, some sour worms, and a package of Haribo Gummi Bears. And, of course, I tasted them all—to find that memory had been correct. They were horrible. Except for Herr Riegel's. Today, almost a century after his father invented them, the candies remain what they were: maddeningly addictive chewy little bears. That is not nothing, is it? *Die Gummibärchen* a good thing were, ja?

Joseph Bottum

NEWSCOM

the weekly Standard

Obamacare's Mugged by Reality Moment

As metaphors go, "train wreck" turned out to be pretty apt. That's how retiring Democratic senator Max Baucus described his expectations for the implementation of Obamacare at a hearing last April. If anything, he could be accused of soft pedaling the fiasco that has been on full display since the beginning of October.

The main entry point into Obamacare for citizens in 36 states is healthcare.gov, an online portal through which consumers are supposed to enter personal information and then shop for health insurance. But healthcare.gov is so poorly constructed that it is essentially useless as an enrollment system. This is a website the Obama administration had three years to build. It is absolutely essential to making Obamacare work, if it is going to work at all, because the program relies on broad enrollment, especially among young and healthy Americans, to keep premiums low for everyone else. Administration officials note that applicants can apply by phone and submit paper applications to get the process started, but that approach takes weeks to complete and eventually the information must still go through the same automated systems. Without a functioning healthcare.gov, Obamacare will never get off the ground.

JASON SEILER

The 14 states that chose to construct their own exchanges have been modestly more competent at building the front-end user interface than the federal government. But even these states must rely on federal systems to determine eligibility for subsidies financed by federal taxpayers. And those "back-end" federal systems are as badly mangled as the entry point for consumers into the federal portal.

The result is that Obamacare's launch has been far worse than a dud. For the moment, the program is at a standstill.

The administration is trying to convey momentum by pointing to unverifiable estimates of nearly 500,000 "applicants." But these numbers are meaningless. One of the main problems with healthcare.gov is that it requires any curious consumer to submit an "application" and establish an account before looking at the insurance options, including the premium amounts and cost-sharing requirements. How many of the 500,000 supposed applicants are people who have other insurance today but want to see what Obamacare has to offer? And how many of these applications are for people who will decline to enroll once they see the high premiums they must pay, or are households with incomes that will put them into Medicaid instead of the federally facilitated or state-run insurance exchanges?

A clearer picture of what is happening emerges from data provided by the participating insurers. After all, if someone actually enrolls in a health insurance plan, and by so doing agrees to pay a monthly premium for the coverage, the insurer selling the product surely knows this and has the consumer's relevant information. From numerous media reports, it is clear that insurers have so far received only a trickle of enrollees—maybe in the thousands, but far, far less than 500,000. The applications that have been received by insurers have made it through the entire process only because low volume has allowed the transactions to be completed through direct contact with the customers. The automated systems have been utterly unreliable and therefore are not trusted by the insurers.

There is no prospect that these enrollment systems will be fixed anytime soon. The surest sign of that came with the administration's announcement that it has recruited the IT industry's "best and brightest" to help repair the problems. The thought that outside, unpaid advisers could parachute into a multiyear IT project and untangle the mess in a matter of weeks could only come from people unfamiliar with the actual operational realities of the federal government. The truth is that fixing

the problems will almost certainly require another massive investment in software programming, and probably with the same contractors who wrote the first batch of bad code. Switching now to a whole new team of players would only delay any possible fix by months.

It remains possible that the administration could pull these systems together into a minimally functioning whole by late November or early December. Doing so would be a near-miraculous feat, given the complexity of what's involved. But it's possible.

But that wouldn't be the end of Obamacare's woes. The other reality now emerging is that millions of Americans are going to be pushed into these exchanges against their wishes, and they aren't going to like what they see.

The problem will be most acute for the 19 million or so people who today purchase individual insurance. As industry expert Robert Laszewski has pointed out, today's individual market is essentially being replaced by the Obamacare exchanges. Some insurance plans can continue operating into 2014 outside of the exchanges if they are "grandfathered." But very few insurance plans qualify for grandfathered status under Obamacare because the rules strictly prohibit even the smallest changes in coverage or cost-sharing. Consequently, about 16 million Americans will shortly find out that they can't keep the plans they have.

If and when they are able to look at their options on healthcare.gov or the state-built websites, many of these consumers will quickly become unhappy. The Obama administration keeps arguing that the premiums in the exchanges are below what was expected, based on hypothetical estimates produced by the Congressional Budget Office four years ago. But that's not the relevant comparison. Consumers want to know how much more they are going to pay for insurance under Obamacare in 2014 than what the pre-Obamacare market offers them today.

The Heritage Foundation has carefully looked at this question, and the results are dismaying. The average family of four will see a premium increase in the exchanges of 10 to 30 percent. For young Americans, the premium hikes are much worse, in the range of 50 to 100 percent or more for 27-year-olds, including 71 percent in Nebraska and 170 percent in Georgia. And these premiums are for plans with, in most cases, very high deductibles, ranging from $2,000 to $2,500 for the so-called silver plans and $4,000 or more for bronze plans.

These realities of Obamacare are surfacing in the days following the GOP's failed effort to roll back, or at least delay, Obamacare as part of the government shutdown/debt ceiling fight. Ironically, the fallout from that failure is leading some conservatives to recommend pulling back from another Obamacare showdown during the next round of budget wrangling, at the end of this year or in early January 2014. They would like to broaden the focus to spending restraint and modest entitlement reforms, of which Obamacare changes might be one element.

An important subtext of this shift in emphasis is that Obamacare's woes are now so pronounced and intractable that perhaps the best tactic for the GOP is to stand back and let its flaws speak for themselves. There are many conservatives who fully expect the law to collapse under its own immense weight, and who anticipate that they will reap the political benefits of that collapse in 2014 no matter what they do now. So why engage in another politically risky showdown with the president?

Certainly the GOP shouldn't repeat the mistaken tactics of the last month. But there's every reason to continue making a delay of the individual mandate the GOP's top priority in the negotiations with the Obama administration and Senate Democrats over the coming months.

For one thing, there will never be a better time to press the case for a mandate delay. The rollout of Obamacare is a complete mess. The voters can see for themselves that enrollment in Obamacare is a completely unreasonable proposition at this stage, even with the administration's recent announcement that it will treat any enrollment commitments made before April 1 as satisfying the coverage requirement (previously, the cut-off to avoid the uninsured tax was thought to be mid-February, because the law allows for three months without coverage in a calendar year and it can take several weeks to go from an enrollment submission to initiation of insurance coverage). It should be obvious that the system for determining subsidy amounts for households has not been tested nearly enough to ensure it is reliable and will not waste billions in taxpayer dollars. It will be impossible for the administration to continue its defense of the individual mandate if these conditions remain substantially unchanged through the end of 2013.

The GOP can strengthen its hand further by moving legislation to protect people who are losing their individual plans. Many millions of these currently insured Americans have already received or will be receiving soon notices from their insurers advising them of the termination of their existing plans, effective January 1. Insurers are halting these plans because Obamacare's rules won't let them continue to offer coverage (even outside the exchanges) under today's rules, which generally allow lower premiums for younger and healthier consumers. But with healthcare.gov nearly impossible to navigate, individual market enrollees are losing their current plans without access to a viable alternative. And the clock is ticking. Those losing their coverage on January 1 will need to have a new plan in place by December 15 to ensure no lapse in coverage. And many would no doubt prefer to have a new plan picked sooner, to be on the safe side.

The GOP should come to their rescue with legislation allowing insurers to continue to offer the same plans they are offering today. Some insurers may choose not to

reopen plans they have already decided to close, but others will likely resurrect their closed plans. If healthcare.gov's problems persist into November, as they almost certainly will, legislation of this kind will have great resonance with an anxious electorate.

The GOP can have leverage in the next round of budget wrangling without resorting to absolutist threats. The president and Senate Democrats would like two things out of the budget process in coming months: greater certainty for 2014, and more spending on domestic programs. There's no reason for the GOP to give on either of these objectives without getting something very significant in return. So long as the GOP continues to support "clean," short-term appropriations bills to keep the government open, they can resist pressure from Democrats to provide higher, full-year funding amounts without significant concessions to GOP priorities.

Delaying the individual mandate would not be a small victory, either. The entire edifice of Obamacare is built on the premise that the individual mandate will create a stable insurance pool for the new program. That's a dubious assumption. But there's no doubt that some number of Americans will feel compelled to sign up with Obamacare just to avoid the uninsured tax. If the GOP were able to delay the mandate, and simultaneously to allow consumers to stay with their current individual market plans, it would dramatically change the trajectory of Obamacare and open up new possibilities for moving in a better direction in the future.

There are other important priorities on the GOP agenda, including spending restraint and entitlement reform. But by far the most important issue over the coming year will be Obamacare and its implementation. It is evident that the law is failing, that is true. But that's all the more reason to keep the pressure on and not abandon the fight.

—James C. Capretta

The Problem of Technology

Technology is a problem, not only for President Obama but also for Republicans and conservatives. In fact, technology is several problems, practical and theoretical, all relating to and interacting with one another. And none of them can be ignored.

The most immediate problem for the White House is obvious: Obamacare cannot succeed without mass

enrollment. The glitches, bugs, and malfunctions in the federal exchange prevent individuals from signing up. And without enrollees, especially young and healthy ones, the program could enter a death spiral. Obamacare wouldn't end in a bang. It would end in a whimper.

Here, finally, is a threat the Obama administration recognizes. Obama says he's ordered a "tech surge" of experts to correct the website's flaws. He's told Americans to use a pre-Internet technology, the telephone, to register for benefits. He's even called Verizon: Kathleen Sebelius will have to wait between the hours of 10 A.M. and 4 P.M. for the technician to arrive.

This practical problem is everywhere in the news. It's the subject of all the late-night jokes. But, in the final analysis, it's a repair job. The question is when, not whether, the glitches will be fixed.

What won't be resolved is the theoretical problem of scientific administration. The dilemma is this: President Obama called for universal health insurance because he believes in government's capacity to diminish the inequalities created by markets. But the disaster that is the rollout of Obamacare seriously undermines the argument for government competence and bureaucratic rationality. Government is good at writing checks. It's nowhere near as good at carrying out major projects of social engineering.

The failure of the website also raises the possibility that Obama's comparison of government to a business, and of Obamacare to a product, is seriously flawed. Businesses are not subject to political pressures when they develop new products and bring them to market. And government is not subject to market discipline. Google "Trabant" to see what we mean.

The mess at HHS is a symptom of a larger pathology: the widespread assumption that social phenomena can be easily manipulated and improved through the instrument of technical expertise as administered by bureaucracies. Indeed, this assumption is so widespread, so deeply held, that inevitably the remedy for government failure is said to be more government.

It is the modern liberal faith in scientific administration that has led to our paradoxical situation, in which confidence in government has fallen even as the reach of government expands. Normally, that would create an opportunity for the conservative party to make its case and present a choice to the people. But Republicans and conservatives seem to enjoy missing opportunities, partly because they have not addressed successfully the problems that technology presents to them.

Republicans and conservatives, like the Obama administration, face a practical problem in the form of the Obamacare exchange. The glitches create a false complacency among Republicans, and give rise to the daydream that the failures of Obamacare relieve the GOP of any responsibility to present a health care plan of its own. There is no health care equivalent of the Ryan budget around which to rally, no health care voice as influential and authoritative as Ryan's is on fiscal issues.

This practical problem is related to a theoretical one: Republicans and conservatives have not made up their minds regarding scientific administration and the welfare state. The party and movement are torn. On one side are those willing to adopt technical expertise and bureaucratic administration for conservative purposes. On the other are those seeking immediately to restore a limited government of enumerated powers—none of which is the power to require health insurance.

The tension between the two sides is unlikely to be resolved as long as the Republicans remain a congressional party. But there is no reason it cannot be a creative tension, a force that directs the party to some unlikely places.

One day, for example, the GOP may find itself in the position of adopting technological means for constitutional ends. Put another way, conservatives of all stripes may learn that only through a degree of bureaucracy and the welfare state can they create the conditions, and educate the people, for a return to limited government.

Such is the problem of technology that vexes the Republican party. And it's going to take more than the Verizon guy to solve it.

—Matthew Continetti

An Opportunity for the Court

Among the first cases heard by the Supreme Court in its new term is one from Michigan. The state stands accused of violating the Constitution's equal protection guarantee by requiring equal treatment in public-university admissions decisions. Michigan has committed no such violation. Yet to judge by the oral argument in *Schuette* v. *Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action*, the Court, surprisingly, is closely divided. A decision against Michigan would be a setback for equal protection.

To understand the case, you have to go back to 2003, when the Court decided the Michigan affirmative action cases, which are still the leading ones on the use of race in admissions in higher education. The Court reaffirmed that quotas may not be used to admit minorities. But, in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger*, it also refused to say the Constitution forbids any consideration of race, declining to strike down large admissions preferences administered by the University of Michigan Law School.

The ruling in *Grutter* was among the reasons that Michigan voters in 2006 approved Proposal 2, a ballot measure modeled on Proposition 209 in California, which had been passed by that state's voters in 1996. Proposal 2, which received 58 percent of the vote, amended the Michigan constitution to prohibit discrimination or preferential treatment based on race, sex, ethnicity, or national origin in public education, contracting, and public employment.

Proposal 2 thus requires that in those three areas persons may be neither favored nor disfavored on account of race, sex, ethnicity, or national origin. Necessarily, in the context of public-university admissions, it eliminates consideration of those grounds in deciding whom to enroll or not. In sum, Proposal 2 mandates the colorblind treatment of applicants and thus an end to race-based affirmative action.

Groups opposing colorblind admissions and favoring such affirmative action responded to Proposal 2 by suing to have declared unconstitutional the part that concerns higher education. And last year, by a vote of 8 to 7, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit struck it down. Because the Ninth Circuit some years ago rejected a similar challenge to Proposition 209, the Sixth Circuit's decision created a split in the circuits, one the Supreme Court feels necessary to resolve—correctly, we hope.

The Sixth Circuit held that Proposal 2 violates the federal equal protection clause by targeting a program of benefit to racial minorities—admissions policies that consider race—and reordering the political process in a way that places "special burdens" on a minority interest.

But the court did not define "racial minorities." Nor did it ask whether the interests of minority individuals and of different minority groups might conflict. In his dissent, Judge Jeffrey Sutton made the salient point that "a ban on racial preferences … may favor some racial groups today and others tomorrow."

Still, the important question here is whether preferences actually benefit the minorities getting them. And an accumulating literature is revealing serious doubt about that. In their recent book *Mismatch: How Affirmative Action Hurts Students It's Intended to Help and Why Universities Won't Admit It*, Richard Sander and Stuart Taylor report "a growing volume of very careful research, some of it completely unrebutted by dissenting work, [suggesting] that racial preferences in higher education often undermine minority achievement."

Fortunately, this research is not unknown inside the Court: During the oral argument, citing the work of "Taylor and Sander," Chief Justice John Roberts asked the counsel for the affirmative action coalition what might happen if the question of minority benefit were "more open to debate. . . . Do we have to assume . . . that these [programs] definitely are beneficial to particular minority groups?"

To the extent that such programs are not beneficial to minorities, their continued "interest" in having them is weakened. As is the force of the argument embraced by the Sixth Circuit about the impermissible restructuring of the political process, since it assumes that preferential affirmative action is indeed in the interest of minorities.

The restructuring argument boils down to this: that by including in the state constitution a policy against racial discrimination, Michigan is discriminating against racial minorities who might wish to revive preferential admissions policies. For before they can lobby the usual parties—admissions officers, deans, elected education officials—they have to get rid of the constitutional provision, meaning they have to put a measure on the ballot, as the advocates of Proposal 2 did, and move public opinion to their side. Meanwhile, other nonracial interest groups—fishermen, homebuilders, doctors, even alums seeking change in alumni admissions—can lobby for their causes through the ordinary avenues of change, not constrained in any way by the state constitution.

The problem with this argument is that Proposal 2 doesn't target racial minorities. It discriminates, to be sure, but what it discriminates against aren't people but racial discrimination, hostility to which is commanded by the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection guarantee.

Nor is "restructuring" an evil of some kind. Law reorders things. That's what it does. And as a result of the reordering effected by Proposal 2, racial preferences in admissions are no longer left to ordinary politics but "taken off the table," where, history counsels, they ought to stay.

Justice Elena Kagan is recused from *Schuette*, having worked on it as solicitor general, so eight justices will decide the case. Five will be needed to reverse the Sixth Circuit, which is working on a 20-case losing streak in the Supreme Court. The decision the Court renders could apply nationwide and affect similar measures that have been added to the constitutions of Arizona, Nebraska, and Oklahoma, as well as, of course, California.

Justice Anthony Kennedy's vote may prove decisive. Kennedy dissented in *Grutter*, yet he seems unwilling to go as far in eliminating consideration of race in admissions as Roberts probably is—which seems to be all the way. The critical point for the Court to take up is whether the Fourteenth Amendment indeed forbids the choice Michigan made in passing Proposal 2—the choice for colorblind law. Proposal 2 is actually in full agreement with *Grutter*'s understanding of fundamental principle, as stated by the majority in that case: "A core purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment was to do away with all governmentally imposed discrimination based on race."

The Court, perhaps with Kennedy writing, has the opportunity to further that purpose by reversing the Sixth Circuit and affirming the constitutionality of Proposal 2.

—Terry Eastland

Killing Obamacare

There's no time to waste.

BY JAY COST

The recent government shutdown illustrated a lot of political truths. For starters, people are unhappy when the government is shut down, and they naturally tend to blame the party of less government. The media instinctively help them conclude that the Republicans are at fault.

But the shutdown also illustrated just how unprepared the Republican party is to deal with the threat of Obamacare. Even though the law is unpopular, Republicans failed to convince the country of how great a threat it poses to the public good. Poll after poll shows that only a minority thinks the law will make them worse off, despite growing evidence that Obamacare's side effects are serious and far-reaching. "Shutdown theater" did nothing to alter that attitude, which reflects poorly on the Tea Party backbenchers who wanted this fight and the leaders who prosecuted it. And now it appears House Republicans intend to deemphasize Obamacare and focus again on cutting traditional spending. This is a mistake. The fight against Obamacare cannot be pushed to the sidelines. If the shutdown failed to notch any victory against it, then conservative leaders need to rethink their tactics and try something different. The easiest path to victory against the law, at first glance, is to win total control of the government in the 2016 elections. But a closer look at the law, especially in historical context, indicates grave risks associated with that approach: Obamacare may do much damage by that point, and it may be substantially more difficult to undo four years down the road.

Obamacare is, of course, a liberal law, as all agree. But its place within liberalism is a peculiar one, and worth investigating in some detail. When we think about the modern American left, we often think of the provision of benefits, suggested by Franklin Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms": freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, freedom from fear. It is that third freedom that American liberals have focused on for generations, giving us Social Security, Medicare, aid to education, and so on. Four Freedoms liberalism has been decidedly rights-based.

But there was an earlier brand of liberalism that did not emphasize the distribution of benefits to the same extent. Theodore Roosevelt and the Bull Moose progressives promoted some rights-based goals, like restrictions on child labor, but these were pieces of a grander puzzle: the management of the entire American economy by technocratic experts for the greater good. This is why the Bull Moosers did not want to outlaw all trusts: They saw the utility of some trusts, and believed that with governmental guidance trusts could be made to work in the public interest. Indeed, many progressives at the turn of the last century spoke of the concept of individual rights as an antiquated notion that unfortunately had been embedded in the Constitution.

As an academic, Woodrow Wilson believed that the Constitution wrongly immortalized principles

GARY LOCKE

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whose time had gone, and during the 1912 campaign, he nominally opposed TR's "New Nationalism." In practice, however, he advanced the Bull Moose vision as much as anybody could have hoped. The legislation creating the Federal Trade Commission, for instance, which was passed under his guidance, granted the new regulatory agency vast discretion. And World War I was a decidedly progressive affair, with the government taking a firm hand over the management of the economy for the war effort.

It was the success of the progressives in World War I that inspired Franklin Roosevelt—Wilson's assistant secretary of the Navy—to treat the Great Depression as a national emergency akin to the Great War. Accordingly, his administration took a heavy hand in managing both agriculture and industry. The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) restricted agricultural output in the hope of stabilizing farm prices, with remuneration to farmers who followed the rules. The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) offered big business a bargain: The government would suspend the Sherman Antitrust Act, allowing businesses to coordinate through trade associations, so long as they worked with the government to create and abide by socially responsible production goals. This was the pinnacle of Bull Moose progressivism. The government would convene and manage a coalition of economic stakeholders for the public good. If that meant the diminution of traditional rights, so be it.

This was an abject failure. By the time the Supreme Court invalidated the NIRA, the justices were doing the president a favor. Businesses were cheating on the codes left and right, to the extent that they participated in them at all. The effect of the AAA was more pernicious. It rested above all upon an economic fallacy, that limiting production would help the country recover from the Depression. Beyond that, it brought unprecedented government intrusion into previously private matters. In *Wickard* v. *Filburn* (1942), for instance, the government brought suit against Roscoe Filburn for growing wheat for private consumption, and the Supreme Court ruled with the feds. Worst of all, the AAA degenerated into gross payouts to the Southern plantation class, at that point one of the most important Democratic client groups. They used the cash to buy farm machinery and then fire the black sharecroppers who worked on their land. This, in turn, forced a generation-long migration into the cities, and facilitated the urban crisis of the 1960s.

The experience of this First New Deal helped prove a point that economic conservatives know instinctively: Government does a bad job of managing the economy. The experts

Why should we believe that the federal government is remotely capable of managing something as complicated as American health care? The complexities of the task make a mockery of the very notion of 'expertise.'

are not as knowledgeable as they think they are; it is impossible for them to anticipate all of the various ways their interference will affect society, for good and for ill. For instance, who in the Department of Agriculture could have predicted that the AAA would contribute to an urban crisis in Northern cities some 30 years later? Additionally, the idea that experts can be insulated from politics is illusory. When bureaucrats in the Agriculture Department complained about the inequity of AAA subsidies, they learned the hard way that they were not as removed from Democratic politics as they had liked to think. FDR needed the backing of the Southern Democrats who ran the congressional committees, and the price of admission was support for the wealthy plantation class at the expense of the poor. So he had agriculture secretary Henry Wallace sack the bureaucrats who made a stink.

It was the failure of the First New Deal that brought about the rights-oriented Second New Deal, and with it Social Security, the National Labor Relations Act guaranteeing labor unions the right to organize, and eventually the Fair Labor Standards Act providing for a federal minimum wage. Liberalism shifted from attempting to manage the economy directly toward supplying the downtrodden with tools to fight their own battles. This is why the left remembers the New Deal so fondly. It is not for the quasi-fascist "Blue Eagle" campaign of the NIRA or the AAA's requirement that millions of baby pigs be slaughtered. Those were failed policies that ultimately led to a change of tactics and the eventual triumph of Social Security, labor rights, and a minimum wage. When LBJ sought to complete FDR's work, he did not go house to house to make sure nobody was growing wheat in the backyard; instead, he created Medicare, federal aid to education, and public television.

On the surface, Obamacare appears to fit into this tradition. That is certainly how the president frames it, proudly trumpeting all of the people who now have access to health care thanks to federal efforts. But dig a little deeper, and it emerges that Obamacare has much in common with the failed efforts of the original New Dealers to organize vast segments of the economy.

For almost 80 years, the federal government has been in the rights-producing business, especially as regards health care. The elderly, the indigent, low-income children, and veterans have all been brought under the federal umbrella. The people still on the outside looking in are primarily those who refuse to buy insurance or those for whom the economics of insurance cannot account. Insurance is a bet between insured and insurer made amidst uncertainty about when and whether calamity will strike. People with preexisting conditions cannot qualify for insurance for the same reason that a person whose house is burning down cannot get homeowners' insurance: The calamity is not in doubt.

Rather than provide the uninsurable with separate access to health care—such as veterans enjoy, for instance—Obamacare seeks to fit this square peg into a round hole. People who cannot logically be incorporated into the economics of insurance are nevertheless forced into it. In requiring this, Obamacare behaves in effect much like the AAA or the NIRA. To make these people eligible for insurance, the federal government must manage the intimate details of the health insurance industry, and by extension all of American health care. Dollar for dollar, this has meant a heavier hand than ever envisioned by the New Dealers in the early 1930s.

The real danger of Obamacare is that it combines the micromanagement of the AAA and the NIRA with the rights-based approach of Social Security and Medicare. The former doesn't work in practice, while the latter is politically unassailable. Thus, Obamacare may turn out to be a policy that does enormous harm to the country but that simply cannot be eliminated.

Why should we believe that the federal government is remotely capable of managing something as complicated as American health care? The complexities of the task make a mockery of the very notion of "expertise." The disastrous rollout of the health insurance website indicates quite clearly the hubris of governmental experts who populate Washington, D.C., these days. Moreover, it is only a matter of time until perverse second-, third-, and fourth-tier effects of this law undermine its goals. Already, there is plenty of evidence that Obamacare, like the AAA and NIRA, invites political interference. Politically connected groups like unions and large businesses have received exemptions that average people simply cannot enjoy. And politics heavily influenced the implementation timeline, which was set to culminate almost at the midpoint between two national elections.

But the NIRA and AAA could be abandoned because at their core they did not extend individual rights, and thus did not create new political clients dependent upon government services. Obamacare does precisely that. It uses First New Deal methods to accomplish a Second New Deal goal. That will complicate efforts to repeal and replace the bill when (not if) it falters. A lot of people will receive federal benefits because of it, and the experience of Social Security, Medicare, and scores of other programs demonstrates that, once in place, they cannot be easily altered.

This is why conservatives—at the grassroots or inside the Beltway—cannot blithely assume they will be able to undo Obamacare. This is not simply a matter of individual freedom or efficiency in the provision of health services, as conservatives so often argue. This is a law that promises to do something the government has never successfully accomplished during peacetime. Even so, it will work for some people, and history shows that a motivated minority who receive direct benefits from Uncle Sam can prevent commonsensical changes to their precious programs, even to the detriment of the public good.

Obamacare, in other words, combines the worst bureaucratic innovations with the best political innovations of the last century. Conservative leaders have never faced a foe quite like this, and must rise to the occasion. So far, they have failed. There is nothing in the movement's political playbook that comes close to an adequate strategy for opposing this behemoth, and the recent shutdown only confirms that the Republican party's leadership is unprepared for the challenge they face. They must do better, for this law is more injurious than they know. ♦

The Point of No Return

President Obama is about to play defense, for three years. BY FRED BARNES

President Obama is facing the abyss. It's that moment when a president's plans are overwhelmed by his problems, and he's relegated to playing defense for the rest of his White House term. Obama's agenda already lingers near death. His poll numbers have slipped to new lows. His speeches are full of alibis and accusations.

Obama hasn't reached the point of no return, but he's close. His biggest problem is the collapse of Obamacare on its launching pad as the entire country watched. And there's worse trouble ahead. More likely than not, Obamacare will be the dominant issue in the final three-plus years of his presidency.

Fred Barnes is an executive editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

From that, there's no recovery.

Years on defense—impotent years—have beset even the strongest of presidents. After the Iran-contra scandal broke in November 1986, the Reagan presidency was essentially over. He served two more years and made a triumphant trip to the Soviet Union, but his power was gone. The low point was the overturning of his veto of a highway bill.

Jimmy Carter's presidency was hardly a powerhouse. Still, it had one shining moment, when the Camp David peace accord between Israel and Egypt was signed in September 1978. What clout Carter had vanished after the "malaise" speech in July 1979. It made him a target of ridicule.

Impeachment in 1998 forced President Clinton into retreat. His

popularity remained high, but he abandoned an agenda that included entitlement reform. Even an unexpected Democratic victory in the midterm elections in his second term couldn't revive his presidency.

In George W. Bush's case, problems in his second term quickly engulfed his administration. The Iraq war became a bloodbath, his plan for overhauling Social Security had few takers, and he was blamed, unfairly, for the incompetent response to Hurricane Katrina. A troop buildup and adoption of a counterinsurgency strategy saved Iraq from disaster, but otherwise Bush's second term was marked by futility.

Now, with his presidency in peril, Obama seems unprepared to avert paralysis. The failed startup of Obamacare, its website a "joke" in the view of 60 percent of America in a Fox News poll, caught the president by surprise. He refused to acknowledge the magnitude of the problem, conceding only that healthcare.gov wasn't working as "smoothly as it was supposed to." Neither is his presidency.

From all appearances, Obama sees the Obamacare mess as partly a political headache. A headline in *Politico* last week captured this: "White House works to flip Obamacare narrative." It's as if Obama and his advisers think they're dealing with a faux pas to be smoothed over with political spin. *Commentary*'s Peter Wehner calls this attitude "detachment from reality."

True, Obamacare will be a campaign issue in the 2014 midterm elections and no doubt a significant factor in the presidential election two years later. But that's not because Obamacare is merely a matter of politics. It's because Obamacare is now the official health care system for 310 million people and represents one-sixth of the American economy.

And it's a national embarrassment whose troubles are only beginning. Unpleasant shocks loom for a majority of Americans who tap into Obamacare exchanges. Those 40 years of age and younger will discover next year their insurance premiums are "a lot higher than they would pay in today's market," says health care expert James Capretta. That will create a furor.

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Obama with 11 Americans who may or may not have been able to log on to healthcare.gov

So, too, some lower-middle-income and middle-class Americans will find their access to doctors is limited. Why? Because many of the country's biggest and best hospitals and some doctors have not agreed to take on this category of patients. Also, patients will be forced to endure longer waits as a result of a doctor shortage. In 2015 and 2016, the popular Medicare Advantage program will shrink.

Low-income folks and those with preexisting conditions will prosper under Obamacare. But how will middle-income Americans feel when they learn they're paying considerably more for the same insurance? Not happy, I suspect. Or those under 30 who chose a "catastrophic-only" policy with high deductibles? They won't be thrilled when told they are ineligible for a subsidy, whatever their income.

The point is that as Obamacare is rolled out over the final years of this presidency, there will be numerous occasions when Obama's promises about the new health insurance scheme are exposed as untrue. If these incidents don't provoke a crisis, they'll at least keep Obamacare from fading as a prominent and fiercely debated issue.

And the president will pay a price. He'll be stuck on defense, unable to change the subject. His agenda won't help. A $9 minimum wage, universal preschool, immigration reform, global warming legislation, more infrastructure spending, higher taxes—there's nothing close to a national consensus in support of these liberal leftovers.

Despite all this, Obama could escape a lost presidency. He has a loyal base that's kept his approval rating in the low 40s. (Carter and Bush dipped into the 20s.) Democrats may be dreaming when they envision a 2014 election in which Republicans suffer badly from the shutdown. But it's not inconceivable Republicans could lose the House, and their prospects of capturing the Senate are no better than 50-50. Then and only then, Obama's presidency could be spared an early death and the nation's attention shifted from a dreadful health plan named after him. That's a nice scenario, but I'm not buying it. The humiliation of presiding over Obamacare's debut won't be soon forgotten.

But ponder this: Had Obamacare been created as a private enterprise with Obama as CEO, it wouldn't have lasted a week. Not only would the stumbling company have been put out of business, so would its incompetent CEO. And we'd all—well, most of us—be better off. ♦

Sit on the U.N. Security Council?

Saudi Arabia would prefer not to.

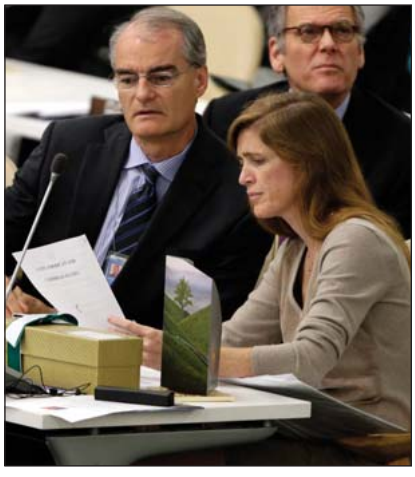
BY JOHN BOLTON

On October 17, Saudi Arabia was elected by the United Nations General Assembly to a nonpermanent seat on the Security Council. The next day, Riyadh made a stunning announcement: It was declining the seat, because of the council's longstanding "inability to perform its duties and responsibilities" due to "the manner, mechanisms of action and double standards existing in the council." As examples of Security Council failures, the Saudis cited Syria, weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East (probably a reference to both Iran and Israel), and, *de rigueur*, the Palestinian issue.

While these specifics are disputable, the broader diagnosis of the council's systemic failure is not. Saudi Arabia may yet change its mind, but even if it does, its initial repudiation alone will have told the truth about the Security Council: The emperor has no clothes.

The *New York Times* said "the sudden about-face came across as a slap to the United Nations and the United States." Russia professed "bewilderment," saying that criticizing the council on Syria was "particularly strange." Diplomats in New York said the move was "totally unexpected." This is apparently the first time a country has actually secured a nonpermanent seat (five of these are filled by election each year for staggered two-year terms) and then declined it, a breach of precedent sure to cause migraines at Turtle Bay. ("That's not the way things are done at the U.N.," a British diplomat said to me in my early days as U.N. ambassador, as if I would find that compelling.)

By custom (rather than formal rule), the 10 nonpermanent council seats are allocated among geographical regions. The respective regional groups typically decide by consensus which of their members will serve, thus essentially guaranteeing candidate countries an unopposed victory in the General Assembly. The real politicking is done well before the General Assembly actually votes. In large groups, like Asia, which includes the Saudis, council seats also rotate among subgroups, and a special protocol protects Arab states (spanning both the Asia and Africa groups), ensuring they are never shut out.



Getting dissed: U.S. ambassador to the U.N. Samantha Power during the voting

So the cost to Riyadh in the short term is diplomatic and bureaucratic. The Saudis look somewhat amateurish in the timing of their announcement; had they withdrawn at any point prior to election, the effect would still have been shattering, but the self-inflicted diplomatic wound would have been smaller. By elbowing everyone else aside and then backing out once elected, Riyadh has doubtless irritated many Asia-group countries and Arab colleagues. Now, another Arab state in Asia will have to step forward and quickly assemble the necessary resources and personnel before the term begins on January 1.

But for all the diplomatic angst, Saudi Arabia's decision also has a positive aspect in the short term. Although U.N. members strive mightily for seats on the council, almost all heave sighs of relief when their terms end. While service on the council may bring tangible benefits like increased foreign aid or even the occasional personal bribe, smaller U.N. members typically tire of the endless pressure on them to vote one way or the other. By contrast, the countries (like Germany and Japan) that feel they deserve permanent seats use their terms to burnish their credentials. Saudi Arabia would have fallen somewhere in between, but the main regrets will be those of Saudi diplomats now doomed to postings elsewhere than New York.

In reality, the influence of the 10 nonpermanent Security Council members is minor. Council decisions—good or bad, significant or meaningless—are made almost entirely by the 5 permanent members. This exclusion from real authority is what frustrates the rotating countries, which seldom can affect council decision-making, yet are lobbied mercilessly by the permanent members. While there are exceptions (Japan, for example, played a key role in 2006 when North Korea launched ballistic missiles on July 4 and subsequently tested its first nuclear weapon), they are rare.

Thus, on balance, Saudi Arabia's decision to decline a nonpermanent seat will have little effect during 2014-15, which would have been its term. Instead, the real significance is long range: Saudi Arabia has just fired a

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John Bolton, a senior fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations in 2005-06.

diplomatic cruise missile into the U.N.'s engine room.

The Saudis have been entirely candid: They think the Security Council is broken. For nearly three years Riyadh has watched Moscow and Beijing stymie every effort to have the Security Council weigh in against Syria's Assad regime, while U.S. diplomacy has been inconsistent and ineffective. Weak American policies toward Iran, moreover, combined with Russian and Chinese political cover for Tehran, have largely rendered the council a bystander to the Iranian nuclear problem. Now, with President Obama yearning for a negotiated "resolution" of Iran's nuclear weapons threat, the Saudis have snapped.

Make no mistake: For Saudi Arabia as well as Israel, an Iranian nuclear weapon constitutes an existential threat. The dangers are as great for Riyadh as for Jerusalem, and very similar in nature: a religious conflict that has existed almost since the birth of Islam, ancient ethnic disagreements, and the continuing inability to establish stable conditions for regional peace and security. That is why, if necessary, the Saudis (and most other Gulf Arab states) would privately welcome an Israeli military strike against Iran's nuclear weapons program. The Arab governments will not say so publicly and, if Israel did attack, would likely join the international chorus of disapproval. But I for one would dearly love to see the private message that Saudi Arabia's king would transmit to Bibi Netanyahu after a successful Israeli strike.

Saudi Arabia is essentially saying, correctly, that the Security Council, even after the Cold War, is unable to resolve crucial Middle Eastern issues. But beyond these regional issues, Riyadh has exposed the council's larger problems—indeed, the paralysis that has crippled the U.N.'s political decision-making bodies from the outset and probably will forever. The Saudis have done us a favor with their unexpected frankness, and the Obama administration in particular would do well to remember their admonitions. ♦

Ankara Alienates Everyone

Forget chess, Turkey is failing at geopolitical checkers. BY LEE SMITH

Hakan Fidan at the time of his appointment, 2010

A recent spate of newspaper articles suggests a concerted media campaign targeting Turkey's foreign intelligence service, the MIT, its director, Hakan Fidan, and almost surely his boss as well, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. In a piece published by the *Wall Street Journal* and another by the *Washington Times*, Fidan is said to be supporting al Qaeda affiliates in Syria fighting against forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad. Then David Ignatius, in his column for the *Washington Post*, showed Fidan to be playing for the other side, passing sensitive information to Assad's ally Iran about 10 agents working for Israel inside Iran.

Who is behind the campaign remains unclear, though many suspect the White House or CIA. Also unclear is the purpose of the leaks. And staring at the details—trying to discern, for instance, whether Fidan backs al Qaeda or Iran—only makes the landscape hazier. From the big picture, two main points emerge: Though a NATO ally, Turkey under Erdogan is not to be trusted. And the Obama White House is incapable of managing its allies.

The Ignatius piece is resonating around the region. Ankara denies shopping Mossad assets to the Iranians, and pro-Erdogan media blame Israel for blackening Ankara's reputation. Israel has declined to confirm the story officially—"Israel doesn't want to have a public argument with Turkey," said Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Yigal Palmor. Nevertheless, ex-Mossad chief Danny Yatom, apparently convinced the story is true, said betraying Israeli spies to

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Iran "brings the Turkish intelligence organization to a position where I assume no one will ever trust it again."

Israel has good reason to be angry at a country with which, until recently, it enjoyed a strategic alliance. Political fissures became apparent in the wake of the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident, when Israeli commandos killed eight Turkish nationals aboard a flotilla trying to break Israel's maritime blockade of Gaza. The Turkish press reported last week that it was in response to the flotilla affair that Fidan exposed the 10 agents to the Iranians. Before that, says former Mossad combatant Michael Ross, the MIT and Mossad had a working relationship, "and no matter how sour it may get at the political level, intelligence services continue working together unless directed otherwise. What makes this case so execrable is that intelligence cooperation always transcends politics, and the Turks broke that unwritten rule."

Making matters worse, they sabotaged an operation countering Israel's top strategic threat. "Iranian recruitments would be considered extremely sensitive and very high-priority," says Ross. And it's not the first time Fidan is said to have acted in the interests of Tehran. According to Turkish press reports, it was the Turkish intelligence chief who counseled former Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi to make his first foreign trip a visit to Iran to cozy up with the Islamic Republic. More damning still, the MIT shared American intelligence with Tehran. Last year, the United States was set to ship 10 predator drones to Turkey when the deal was postponed out of concern that the MIT was giving Iran intelligence collected from U.S. predator drones. This suspicion was confirmed by Turkey's deputy prime minister in August 2012. Last week, Congress reportedly canceled the sale entirely.

The fact that Fidan's MIT plays such a large role in Turkey's political life, replacing the armed forces as the country's consummate national institution, is bad news, say some Turkish commentators. The problem is not just that Fidan may be close to Iran, but that in running much of its foreign policy through the clandestine service, the troubled Turkish democracy is starting to acquire the habits of an Arab regime. "It's time for people to take another look at what's going on in Turkey," says Eric Edelman, a former U.S. ambassador to Ankara and a frequent critic of Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development party (AKP). "I hope this is a wake-up call."

Edelman and another former American ambassador to Turkey, Morton Abramowitz, have just coauthored a paper for the Bipartisan Policy Center, "From Rhetoric to Reality: Reframing U.S. Turkey Policy," that points a way forward for the two NATO allies. One problem, as the paper makes clear, is that the incoherent policies of Erdogan's Turkey have dragged it into conflict with virtually everyone in the Middle East and beyond.

"It has called for the ouster of Syria's Assad," write Edelman and Abramowitz,

> refused to recognize the legitimacy of Egypt's new military government, cut off diplomatic ties with Israel, angered Iran with its acceptance of a NATO radar station and its support for Syrian rebels, quarreled with the Iraqi central government in Baghdad, angered key Gulf states over its support for Muslim Brotherhood movements throughout the region, and alienated Europe with unfounded accusations and conspiracy theories. In October it shocked its NATO allies by announcing that it would procure a missile-defense system from a Chinese company that is under U.S. sanctions for its dealings with Iran.

This, then, is the upshot of Turkey's "zero problems with neighbors" policy. In the Middle East, you are destined to have problems with your neighbors. What's more, the policy—the brainchild of an academic theoretician, now Erdogan's foreign minister, Ahmet Davutoglu—does not account for the power politics of the region or allow for normal pursuit of the national interest.

Imagine the Middle East as a large checkerboard where you sit on black. You will have problems with everyone surrounding you who sits on red, so you want to befriend all the other players on black. In effect, this was the rationale for Israel and Turkey's strategic alliance. Syria was a problem for them both, as was Iran. Erdogan traded the relationship with Israel for a fantasy—never imagining that even if he attempted friendship with everyone in the region except Israel, he'd still keep running into trouble.

It's one thing to annoy the Saudis and other Gulf states as well as the Egyptian military by going against them and continuing to support Mohamed Morsi even as he languishes in detention. A world leader

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
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Terry Eastland, Publisher

should know when to walk away from a lost cause; but Erdogan's personal loyalty to Morsi is unlikely to affect Turkey strategically. Syria is another matter. Erdogan's choices have put him at odds with everyone—including the Turkish public, which fears a growing refugee problem, further terrorist attacks from Syrian and Iranian agents, and the growing number of Islamist fighters transiting Turkey on their way to fight the Assad regime.

In supporting the Syrian rebels, including some radical units, Erdogan has also crossed the White House. Indeed, some Turkish sources are convinced that the leaks against Hakan Fidan are intended to get Erdogan to fall into line behind Obama. Erdogan and Fidan came to Washington this spring in the hope of getting Obama to support the Syrian rebels. But it is now clear the administration's paramount goal in the region is to strike a deal with Iran over its nuclear program, and it doesn't want to make the Iranians unhappy by helping topple their ally Assad. The United States is disengaging from Syria and expects the Turks to follow suit.

It is here that parallels can be seen between Erdogan's regional policy and Obama's. Both are academic constructs divorced from real-world experience and thus destined to get their proponents into trouble. If Obama wanted a deal with Iran he'd turn up the pressure in Syria until the Iranians begged for relief. To that end, Erdogan could play a constructive role, as could other American regional partners like Saudi Arabia, helping damage, even diminish, Iran's position in Syria. Instead, the White House has cut its allies loose. While Saudi Arabia, now openly critical of the administration, is more vigorously pursuing its own interests, Turkey is wobbling. Instead of letting a NATO ally float out into deep space, the White House ought to be guiding it back to base. That's not likely to happen on the watch of an American president who, like Erdogan, seems incapable of distinguishing the national interest from the stuff of dreams. ♦

Trailing from Behind

Ken Cuccinelli's up against a carpetbagging hack, and losing. BY MICHAEL WARREN

Cuccinelli addresses Virginia Tea Partiers, October 9.

Sterling, Va.

From the looks of it, Ken Cuccinelli II isn't enjoying his run for governor of Virginia. We're in a small white SUV, driving from his campaign office in Fairfax County outside Washington to a rally in neighboring Loudoun County. Cuccinelli, the 45-year-old Republican attorney general, sits in the front passenger's seat and steals glances at his speech notes or out the window. He seems a little annoyed by all the questions I'm lobbing at him from the back seat.

Unprompted, he sounds off against what he considers a hostile media. "They ask nothing but process questions," he says. "They report on nothing but process. They don't bother trying to talk much about policy differences or competency differences."

Michael Warren is a staff writer at The Weekly Standard.

I decide to ask him about substance. Which previous Virginia governor does he look to as a model for the way he'd want to govern? He doesn't name one offhand, though he says he thinks about the 1993 campaign of fellow Republican George Allen, who won despite starting the race 20 points behind.

"He campaigned on a few specific things and was clear about them, and when he got elected, he had a Democrat house and Democrat senate, and he got all three of them—abolition of parole, welfare reform, and education reform—I believe because he campaigned on them," Cuccinelli says.

What are Cuccinelli's own three specific things?

"The tax proposal to get job creation going," he says, slowly. "Our school proposals to reform our standards of learning test and open up opportunities for kids in the worst performing

NEWSCOM

schools. Those would probably be number one and number two."

He pauses, maybe to think of a third issue. Suddenly, we're cut off by an aggressive driver in a pickup, who zooms ahead of us just before he runs out of road. We hit the brakes hard.

"That was a confident shot, wasn't it?" Cuccinelli says, before returning to his answer.

"Those would probably be the top two," he says, finally.

Unlike Allen, Cuccinelli is trailing badly in his race for governor, and he knows it. The day after our interview, *Rasmussen Reports* released a poll showing him 17 points behind McAuliffe, the Clinton mega-fundraiser and former DNC chairman. That gap may be an outlier, but the truth is McAuliffe has been ahead in all but one poll since July. The *Real Clear Politics* average gives the Democrat a 10-point margin.

It wasn't supposed to be this way. Back in May, a *Washington Post* poll showed Cuccinelli ahead by 10 points. The last nine elected governors of the Commonwealth have come from the opposite party from the occupant of the White House. Barack Obama carried Virginia again in 2012, but he did slightly worse than in 2008, and there was little evidence the state had grown significantly more Democratic since 2009. As a Republican attorney general, Cuccinelli was in a good position to succeed to the governor's mansion—both Bob McDonnell and Jim Gilmore had been AG before they were elected governor.

And that wasn't even considering Cuccinelli's opponent. McAuliffe was a dream candidate for Republicans to run against: a New York-born carpetbagging party hack who had lost a three-way Democratic primary for governor in 2009. This time around, McAuliffe was selling himself as a businessman. In 2010, he launched an electric-car company called GreenTech Automotive, creating the impression he would build the plant in Virginia and bring new manufacturing jobs to the state. Instead, GreenTech's factory is located in Mississippi, and production on actual cars remains sluggish. Early in the race, GOP opposition researchers reminded reporters of some of McAuliffe's most cringe-inducing moments, like the time he stopped at a Democratic party fundraiser on the way home from the hospital with his wife and newborn son. "I felt bad for Dorothy, but it was a million bucks for the Democratic party," said McAuliffe in a soundbite-ready excerpt from the audio version of his memoir, *What a Party!*

Taped on the dashboard in front of Cuccinelli's seat is a piece of paper with another quotation from McAuliffe's book. "Now let me tell you, it's a lot easier to raise money for a governor," McAuliffe wrote on page 77. "They have all kinds of business to hand out, road contracts, construction jobs, you name it."

It hasn't helped that Cuccinelli is being outspent by McAuliffe and outside liberal groups. McAuliffe ads litter TV, radio, and the Internet in places like Northern Virginia.

Cuccinelli says he has the line there to remind him what kind of man he's running against—the type who sees government and politics as a way to "hand out" business and favors. He shakes his head at the idea.

"I think [it] begs the question of, what's he doing in the race?" Cuccinelli says. "Why is he here?" He stares out the window as we pass through the Northern Virginia suburbs.

What McAuliffe is doing in the race is winning, and Virginia Republicans are struggling to figure out why. Tom Davis, the former Republican congressman from Northern Virginia, supports Cuccinelli but says his campaign isn't offering anything to Davis's old constituents, who are more moderate than most Republicans. The bedroom communities of Washington are more like New Jersey, he says, and they make up the part of Virginia that's growing. Cuccinelli's campaign isn't trying to win votes here, though.

"They have a great model for southwest Virginia," Davis says, referring to the culturally conservative region Republicans have lately been sweeping.

John Hager, a former lieutenant governor and state GOP chairman, says a barrage of negative advertising from McAuliffe has "thrown the race off."

"Ken's had a hard time settling on a message that resonates," says Hager.

It hasn't helped that Cuccinelli is being outspent by McAuliffe and outside liberal groups. McAuliffe ads litter TV, radio, and the Internet in places like Northern Virginia, all pushing the message that the pro-life, anti-gay-marriage Cuccinelli is a political extremist. "Ken Cuccinelli," says one recent radio ad. "He's way too extreme for Virginia."

Cuccinelli counters the charge of social conservative extremism by responding quietly and hoping no one notices. Here's an example. In March, a federal court ruled that Virginia's anti-sodomy law was unconstitutional, and Cuccinelli appealed the decision. Prosecutors across the country use anti-sodomy laws not to police bedrooms but to get harsher sentences for child molesters, and the specific case that was overturned involved a 47-year-old man soliciting oral sex from a 17-year-old girl.

Nevertheless, the McAuliffe campaign pounced, citing it as an example of the attorney general's focus on a "divisive ideological agenda." Many mainstream and liberal media outlets wrote the story up as such. Cuccinelli shot back by issuing a press release affirming that he is "committed to protecting Virginia's children from predators" and directed reporters to a website with all the facts about anti-sodomy laws.

"That was a classic example of the media reporting their lies as fact," Cuccinelli tells me when I ask him about the episode. "Once they figured out what was going on, they said, 'Oh well,' and moved on."

The Cuccinelli team had moved on, too, and not soon enough as far as they were concerned. As one strategist advising the campaign put it, "There's only one candidate talking about social issues, and that's Terry McAuliffe." ♦

The Second American in Orbit

Scott Carpenter, 1925-2013

BY JOSHUA GELERNTER

On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union opened the space age by orbiting Sputnik, history's first artificial satellite. Four months later, the United States launched its own first satellite and began hiring astronauts in the hopes of beating the Soviets to a manned space flight. President Eisenhower wanted his astronauts to be test pilots, and 500 applied. Sixty-nine of them were invited to Washington for interviews, IQ and aptitude tests, and a notoriously thorough set of medical exams. In the end, seven extremely smart and able men were chosen as America's "Mercury astronauts." The Russians beat them into space—by a little less than a month—but the Mercury Seven laid the groundwork for the grand prize in 1969, when Apollo 11 landed on the moon.

Carpenter after landing, 1962

During the space race, all seven Mercury astronauts were national celebrities. Their fame waned over the years; these days, only two are well known: John Glenn, the first American in orbit (later a senator from Ohio), and Alan Shepard, the first American in space (and the only man to hit golf balls on the moon).

Even among the mostly unknown remaining five, Scott Carpenter is obscure. He was the fourth in space, the second to orbit, and, as of October 10, the second-to-last to die.

Malcolm Scott Carpenter was born on May 1, 1925. He joined the Navy in 1943, as a freshman in college; the war ended before he finished training, so he was released back to school. He rejoined in 1949, qualified as an aviator, and flew antisub patrols during Korea. In 1954, he became a test pilot, and in 1958, he received secret orders to report to Washington, D.C. When he showed up, the newly formed NASA suggested he volunteer to become an astronaut—and, of course, he did.

On May 24, 1962, Carpenter's Mercury spacecraft—which he'd named *Aurora 7*—zoomed into space atop an Atlas rocket. The flight should be known for establishing that astronauts could work without gravity; Carpenter performed several experiments to test orbital dynamics—and himself. Unfortunately, the legacy of the *Aurora 7* mission is a series of mistakes and miscalculations that started when Carpenter forgot to shut off an attitude control and ended with *Aurora* overshooting its mid-ocean landing site by 250 miles.

It's true that Carpenter should have noticed the attitude mistake, but in his defense, no one in mission control noticed it, either. He made his mistake, moreover, just after the environment system in the capsule broke and the temperature spiked to a toasty 160 degrees.

It took the recovery crew 45 minutes to find him; when they did, he was lying happily in his life raft, contemplating his trip through space. Carpenter thought the rescue team looked hungry, and—as an officer and a gentleman—offered everyone a snack from his survival kit.

It's a grave injustice that, as an astronaut, Carpenter is mainly remembered for the landing overshoot. He never got a chance to make a second flight. Soon after *Aurora*, he broke his arm in a motorcycle crash and never regained full use of it. The injury grounded him permanently.

Instead of resigning in well-earned bitterness, he stayed at NASA to help train new astronauts. For a time, he was loaned back to the Navy to work on the deep-sea habitat SEALAB, and spent 30 days living and working underwater as an "aquanaut." Afterwards, he returned to NASA and helped design the neutral-buoyancy underwater training that prepared his replacements for the gravity of the moon and the absence of gravity on the way there.

In 1969, Neil Armstrong took the first step on the moon, and Scott Carpenter retired. On his return to private life, Carpenter founded an ocean exploration company, wrote a couple novels, and had eight children. One of his last public actions was to join other ex-astronauts and NASA execs in signing an open letter to President Obama, in response to the cancellation of President Bush's return-to-deep-space Constellation program. The letter urged the president to "drop this misguided proposal that forces NASA out of human space operations for the foreseeable future." "Too many men and women have worked too hard and sacrificed too much to achieve America's preeminence in space only to see that effort needlessly thrown away," it concluded. "This is not the time to abandon the promise of the space frontier for a lack of will or an unwillingness to pay the price."

That letter is three years old. President Obama hasn't yet taken its advice. If he does, it will be good news for the country—and a fitting legacy for a fine and underappreciated man.

Scott Carpenter was 88. He is survived by his wife, six children, six grandchildren, and John Glenn. ♦

Joshua Gelernter is a writer in Connecticut.

Down and Out in Vermont

Heroin in the hills

By Geoffrey Norman

Rutland, Vt.

On his way into town, Dana Gray wondered about the number of cars and pickups parked at a local health care clinic. It was Saturday morning, and normally the clinic would be closed.

A little further down the road, he drove by the St. Johnsbury farmers' market where the local organic gardeners and farmers set up Saturday mornings and do a nice weekend trade in vegetables, eggs, and cheese. There were a few vehicles parked nearby. Fewer, though, than there had been back up the road, at the clinic.

At the office of the *Caledonian-Record*, St. Johnsbury's daily, where he is executive editor, Gray asked someone, "Hey, what's going on at the clinic this morning?"

"It's Saturday, remember?" a colleague said. "Free needle exchange day."

"Oh, yeah. I forgot."

As sociology, it is pretty crude, but you could certainly take that story as a parable of sorts. One that captures the town's future as a race between the organic farmers and the junkies. A race that the junkies may be winning.

Heroin began its current ascent in Vermont sometime around 2005, according to the people in the state who are trying to get their hands around the problem, which they now routinely describe as an "epidemic" or "plague."

The chief of police of Burlington, the state's only true city, recently estimated that some 15 to 20 organized dealer operations are working his part of the state. Most have ties to gangs in cities that include Detroit, Chicago, New York, and Philadelphia. They move enough of the drug to bring in almost a million and a half dollars every week. Not a lot by big-city standards but, then, the population of the entire state is barely more than 600,000 people.

And the problem, as Chief Michael Schirling said recently, is not confined to Burlington. It is, he said, "in every town, every hamlet, and every back road in Vermont."

So it is now routine to pick up the paper or turn on the news and learn of another "sweep" by the state police, with arrests in the dozens. A January raid in Bennington, in the southwestern corner of the state, rounded up some 60 people. In June, another in Springfield accounted for 33. Then, in September, St. Albans was the target. In October, Manchester. Scores of dealers were arrested. Most were addicts themselves, selling to support their own habits. A few were the big fish. "The guys with the guns," as one undercover officer put it. "Scary dudes, sent here by the gangs and with something to prove."

Vermont seems, in the abstract, all wrong for this sort of thing. Isn't heroin the drug of the urban underclass, project housing, and street gangs? Vermont is among the whitest states in the union, and not so many years ago it had more cows than people, more miles of dirt roads than paved. It is, in the general imagination, the home of Ben & Jerry's and a place where people don't cook cough syrup for meth, they boil maple sap for syrup. In Vermont, when you talk of "doing drugs," you mean smoking marijuana, which is so well tolerated that it might as well be legal.

And now heroin? It's everywhere. Right down to the towns of fewer than 10,000 souls, like St. Johnsbury, tucked up in the far corner of the state called the Northeast Kingdom, where the needle exchange is busier than the farmers' market. Where dealers, many of them on some form of probation or parole from a previous conviction, do business in the center of town, outside the Depot Square, once a gracious old hotel and now a warren of apartments that rent cheaply enough that what the state's housing subsidy doesn't cover, the money off the sale of a few bags of smack will.

It was not always like this, of course. St. Johnsbury was once a proud, vital, and busy little city of the kind that grew up in the Connecticut River Valley during the Industrial Revolution. It was the home of Fairbanks Industries, makers of industrial scales that, by the time of the Civil War, were, according to one history, "the best known American product in the world."

Geoffrey Norman, a writer in Vermont, is a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard.

But over the years, the company left for other parts of the country and the world, leaving behind a famous planetarium and a prestigious school, the St. Johnsbury Academy, where boarding students, many from Asia, pay $40,000 a year to attend. It's still a beautiful town, but hollowed out by the loss of work and purpose. The town's vitality, along with its population, declined. A sadly familiar story of unemployment, welfare, illegitimacy, and drugs.

But old Victorian homes remained on the leafy residential streets beyond and above the downtown core. Most are owned by teachers at the school, professionals, business owners, and those who have the means and who keep them painted and landscaped. Others, however, have been gutted and converted to multiple apartments where parolees from the prison outside of town live and both use and deal drugs. You can spot them easily by the indifferent landscaping and poor repair and the number of satellite dishes sprouting from the roof. Half a dozen or more dishes, one for each unit in the old house.

Police with an accused dealer in Bennington, January 2013

PETER CRABTREE

The tenants come here after they have served their sentences, figuring that this place looks as good as any. They have heard stories on the inside about where to live and score drugs after you are released, and many don't have any place better to go.

The drugs they deal and use come up the interstate, like the 540 bags that were seized by police in June in a depressingly routine arrest of a typical defendant whose lawyer asked that his client be spared jail for "humanitarian and legal reasons" (among them that incarceration would cost the woman her Social Security disability benefits and her rent-subsidized Depot Square apartment).

To the surprise of many, she remained in jail. Typically, drug arrests lead to a quick appearance before a judge and the formal filing of charges before the person who has been arrested is set free, pending trial. "Catch and release," frustrated citizens call it. And the frustration is not only in St. Johnsbury but all over the state, as the heroin epidemic spreads and the authorities, state and local, struggle to get their hands around what the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has certified as the country's highest rate of illicit drug use.

This is exceedingly difficult to square with any of the usual Vermont stereotypes. It does not fit, certainly, with the tough, self-reliant Vermont of Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys or with native son Calvin Coolidge, who called Vermonters "a race of pioneers who almost impoverished themselves for a love of others." Nor does it conform to Vermont's modern vision of itself as a progressive outpost of tolerance and initiative, where the values of the community and the environment precede those of the individual.

There is no political constituency for heroin. If the political right sees it as a problem of law and order and the left views it as a public health matter and takes a more therapeutic approach—well, Vermont is trying both. Trying nobly and very hard, and yet . . . if you live here, you read the stories in the papers and talk to your neighbors about the 19 burglaries in town and the 20 arrests in the next little town down the road, and you wonder if either approach—or, indeed, both—has a chance. You recall the haunting passage from Claude Brown's memoir, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, on how heroin came to Harlem:

> Heroin had just about taken over. . . . It seemed to be a kind of plague. Every time I went uptown, somebody else was hooked, somebody else was strung out. People talked about them as if they were dead. You'd ask about an old friend, and they'd say, "Oh, well, he's strung out." It wasn't just a comment or an answer to a question. It was a eulogy for someone. He was just dead, through.

"No question about it. We've got a real problem," says Jim Baker, chief of police in Rutland, the second-largest city in Vermont and the one that would most likely win any designation as "the worst" when it comes to heroin. "That might be true," Baker says. "But I'm not interested in the rankings."

While he may be in charge of a small force in a rural state, Baker is not Andy Griffith keeping order in Mayberry. He is a modern cop and a professional, a member of the board of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. "I've been a cop since I was 19," he says, talking with a writer—me—in his office.

Baker made it to the top and ran the Vermont State Police before retiring in 2009 and becoming a consultant. He ran one small Vermont town's department on an interim

basis before the mayor of Rutland approached him to take over a troubled and increasingly overwhelmed department.

He is cordial, even friendly, with the kind of size you see on men who were linemen, way back, when they played football.

"The problem here is mind-boggling," he says. "It's getting worse, and we can't arrest our way out of it."

But that does not mean, he goes on, that up-to-date, high-intensity police tactics can't do something to help the city get its hands around the problem. Shortly after taking the Rutland job, he arranged a meeting with Anthony Braga, a criminologist at Harvard. Baker and the mayor went down to Cambridge to learn about "hot spot policing," which you might think of as having evolved from the James Q. Wilson "broken windows" insight.

"It's Wilson on steroids," Baker says.

In the case of Rutland, the hot spot consists of a few square blocks less than half a mile from Baker's office. It is where he wants his officers to be.

"We don't need them in places where there isn't any crime. We want the people who are selling the drugs and committing the crimes to know we're there and that we know who they are and what they are up to and that we are going to bust them first chance we get."

Bennington police, January 2013

Baker, who plainly prefers action to talk, says, "You ought to go out with one of my officers and see for yourself."

So a couple of days later, I arrive at the station as Sgt. Matthew Prouty and another Rutland cop are bringing in two women they have just arrested for selling heroin. One of the women is a staff nurse at a local old age home. Prouty and the other officer are tagging evidence, including several disposable hypodermics.

"I usually see these after they've been used and thrown away," Prouty says. "I have to keep an eye out for them in the morning, when I'm running. They're everywhere."

Prouty was born and raised in Rutland and has been on the police force for 15 years. The only serious time he has spent anywhere else was a short hitch in the Army, where he was an MP. If you met him out of uniform, you would be unlikely to think "cop." More likely "coach." He's serious, yes; intense, even, but without the big city, street-cop sheen of brutality and cynicism.

"Better buckle up," he says when we are in his cruiser.

Prouty talks on the way to his town's hot spot. In this case, the "his" is literal. "That's my house, right there," he says as we pass a handsome two-story Victorian where he lives with his wife, his four children, an adult brother, and his parents. The house is probably a hundred years old, Prouty says, built when this was still a thriving little town with an economy based largely on marble quarried from the mountains around the town. Many of the stone cutters came from Italy, where the quarries were nearing exhaustion. Rutland was a community of large, Catholic families and big houses.

The spreading trees and the old houses on the street where Prouty lives might give the neighborhood a solid, permanent feel if there were not so many windows boarded up with plywood and lawns littered with trash and if you did not see the occasional hand-painted sign telling druggies to stay away. When Prouty parks the cruiser across from a house that looks derelict, a woman comes out of the door. She is fat, tattooed, and wearing a dirty T-shirt. She yells something about always coming around and harassing people.

"We get that all the time," Prouty says. "Means it's working. We want them to see us. That one is a dealer. We know it, and she knows we know it."

As we drive around the neighborhood, Prouty points out the drug houses, which would be easy enough to spot without his help.

"There was a drive-by the other night, right here," he says.

"Anybody hurt?"

"No. Not that time."

But then, he says, at the convenience store on the corner over there, a state trooper shot and killed a dealer from New York who was wanted in that state and by U.S. Marshals as well.

Drive-bys. Dealers dropped in the act of going for a gun. Lawn signs warning the druggies to stay away. It doesn't seem right—not on these leafy streets in this little city with its splendid views of the mountains a mile or two distant.

PETER CRABTREE

"Tell me about it," Prouty says.

On our way back to the station, we talk about what drugs have done to the town where he is raising his family. The town is hurting, he says. The quarries and the stone-cutting businesses are long since dead and gone. There are empty storefronts on every street in town. "Mainly, the businesses we see opening up are pawn shops. Four of them in the last year."

There have been some violent crimes—the killing of that dealer, and a hostage situation in a drug house where Prouty himself took on an armed suspect and finally got him to surrender. But the "lesser" crimes are the real sickness, a kind of malaise that makes everyone's life harder. "Property crimes," Prouty says, "are what we deal with all the time and they almost always come back to drugs. People stealing for the money to buy drugs. That's why we have the pawn shops. People breaking in houses and stealing jewelry.

"They steal anything they can sell. Copper. The catalytic converters out of cars. Electronics, of course. They'll walk into Walmart and pick up a flat-screen television and just walk out with it."

He and the rest of Baker's officers do what they can. They make their presence known. They make arrests. But the numbers are not on their side. The state can lock up only so many and keep them only so long.

There have been some violent crimes—the killing of that dealer, and a hostage situation in a drug house where Prouty himself took on an armed suspect and got him to surrender. But the 'lesser' crimes are the real sickness, a kind of malaise that makes everyone's life harder.

A suspect like the nurse he arrested earlier will go in front of a judge, be given a trial date, and released. "And what happens," Prouty asks, "between the arrest and the trial? She's still an addict and still needs her drugs."

On the way out of Rutland's little hot spot, on the way back to the station, Prouty points to three adjacent buildings. One is a public defender's office. The next is a drug house. The last is a rehab center.

"Pretty much says it all, doesn't it?" he says.

A few days later, the police were called about an overdose in the neighborhood. It was in the house directly across the street from Prouty's.

If Vermont cannot, as Chief Baker says, "arrest its way out of this problem," then what else can it do? Treatment and prevention are the obvious answers. So the state is energetically treating addicts and getting the word out, though it hardly seems necessary at this point to inform people that using heroin can lead to what are called, in the contemporary argot, "bad outcomes." There is, you sometimes think, nothing left to be learned about the downside of drugs. Even the youngest users "know." And in Vermont, that can be very young. Eighth graders, according to one teacher, are into heroin at her school. And perhaps a few younger than that.

While it is hard to believe that Vermont's heroin epidemic might have been prevented by more and better public service ads, increased "awareness" and better "messaging" cannot hurt.

As for treatment, the lessons of many years are not encouraging. It is expensive, and there are more relapses than cures. But Vermont is energetically working with the usual tools. The announcement of a November 2013 date for the opening of a local methadone clinic is a front page story in the *Rutland Herald*. The clinic, according to one official, would "initially serve about 50 patients who are presently making daily trips to New Hampshire to receive methadone."

Well, the reader thinks, 50 sounds manageable. But then the official goes on to say that he "expects the number to grow gradually during the course of the clinic's first year of operations. By the end of 2014, he said the facility, which will be open seven days a week, 365 days a year, is expected to serve 400 people."

Cheryl McKenzie, who is also on the treatment side of Vermont's fight against heroin, works with smaller numbers and has higher aspirations. She deals with addicts 10 at a time, all of them women and all of them in her program as an alternative to where they have just come from, which is jail.

McKenzie is as much a pro as Chief Jim Baker. She has been studying addiction and dealing with addicts "for 30 years. In eight different states." She does not harbor illusions, but she has not given in to the temptations of cynicism and weariness. She is excited about something called "Mandala House" and what she calls "Graduated Transitional Living."

The house is a little white clapboard structure not far from the state fairgrounds in Rutland. It is home to 10 women and, sometimes, as many as 2 infants or children. If they are not busted out of the program for failing to abide by its rules, the residents will stay at Mandala House for anywhere from 6 to 18 months. This, while they finish school, learn a trade, find work, learn how to live a life of routine, and, most of all, stay off drugs.

The rules are spelled out, clearly, in a notebook. The residents, some of them mothers, are reminded that:

* *Clothes, towels, shoes, etc. are to be hung up, or put away.*

and

* *Inappropriate music degrading women, talks of drugs or violence will not be allowed.*

and that they could be terminated for

* *MIA or lying about where you have been.*

This means going back to jail. And there is no honor system when it comes to drug use. The residents are subjected to frequent and random urinalysis—a "UA" in their parlance.

But Mandala House is not jail. It is clean, well lighted, and well staffed. At a regular staff meeting, which I am allowed to observe, McKenzie sits with eight other women to discuss the progress each resident is, or is not, making toward the day when she can leave with a good chance that she will not go back to doing drugs and more jail time.

"I'd consider a 60 percent success rate is a realistic target," McKenzie says. "That's what we are aiming for."

To the outsider, that seems both high and low. One hears, anecdotally, about the low odds for long-term success with drug programs. Which accounts for methadone clinics. They deliver "maintenance," not a cure. McKenzie is attempting to rebuild the women who pass through Mandala House. She calls them "ladies" and she has high expectations. She wants—no, demands—that they finish school, learn skills, get jobs, even start businesses.

"That can be an easier road for some of these ladies," McKenzie explains, "since most employers are reluctant to hire someone with a felony record. And a lot of our ladies have long sheets."

All very admirable, I think, as I sit at the table and listen as the staff discusses routine administrative stuff. How did this "lady" do on her GED? Did that one make it to her job interview? What about that argument two residents had over the washing machines? And so on.

But what about, you know, the cost of the thing? Ten addicts and two of their kids, housed and fed and under the care and supervision of almost as many staff people.

"The Department of Corrections tells us that it costs about $75,000 a year to incarcerate a woman in Vermont," McKenzie says. "Mandala House comes in at less than one-fourth of that."

One of the women at the table—sensing my skepticism, perhaps—says firmly, "You know what the real problem is?"

I expect that the answer is going to be people like me, who don't understand what they, McKenzie and the members of her staff, are up against here. People who have no compassion. Who think only in terms of what it costs. Who don't care about the kind of suffering that the residents of this house have experienced.

"Uh . . . no," I say.

"We are enabling these people."

"Really? How?"

"We make it too easy for them."

Heads nod, all around the table.

"There are so many programs. So much assistance. This is a good place to be an addict and a single mom."

The woman is not exactly angry and this is not the usual political rant against welfare mothers and paternalistic government. I'm the one who is supposed to be giving that familiar speech. This woman works for the paternalistic government, after all, and her clients are welfare mothers. Her words are spoken out of a deep frustration. And it is shared, around the table, as women nod and detail the various programs by their acronyms—WIC, EBT, etc.

"If you are a single mom in Vermont and you have a cell phone," one woman says, "then you just need to dial 211 and you will be talking to a real person who will tell you what the programs are and how you can get on them. You can be an addict and a mom and be taken care of."

This discussion went on for a while, and I suppose I was, if not shocked, then at the least, very surprised. So much so, that I merely listened, nodded, and took a few notes. What the woman told me was confirmed, a few days later, when I was talking with a prosecutor in Bennington about the big sweep there that had netted 60 dealer-users.

"I did some research," he said. "And it turned out that almost 50 of those people were on some kind of public assistance."

Later, of course, I came around to the obvious. *Of course* the staff at McKenzie's ambitious Mandala House program are frustrated even as they continue to soldier on. They are dealing with grown women who have to be told, like children, "Clothes, towels, shoes, etc. are to be hung up, or put away." And some of these women have children themselves. Who would not be frustrated at having to administer random urinalysis to these women to make sure they have not gone back to the needle, which got them into jail before they were given a chance to come here, and which will get them sent back if the UA comes up dirty?

The frustration of the ordinary citizen is nothing against theirs. A friend who owns a plant a few miles from where we are sitting has had trouble finding drug-free employees, and one of the addicts who slipped through the cracks stole several thousand feet of copper wire, which he sold at a local scrap yard.

Jim Baker's police had no trouble making the bust. The addict lost his job, making it that much harder for him to support his habit.

But the cycle, if it is that, is most poignantly and immediately apprehended, and the frustration most urgently felt, by people like Cheryl McKenzie who deal with addicts who are the children of addicts and who have children themselves.

One of them was newly in residence on the day I visited Mandala House, and McKenzie wanted me to talk to her.

She is 32, the woman tells me. Just out of jail. She has been an addict since she was 13. She grew up here, in Rutland, and her mother was an addict and a dealer. She has had four children herself. All by different fathers. One was born while she was in jail.

Her story, which she tells in tight, rich detail, is sad and familiar. Boring to listen to, fascinating for her to tell. Addicts, as we've all come to learn, find the stories of their own degradation compelling and tragic. What, after all, is addiction but a kind of sublime narcissism, chemically induced?

The woman goes on, about this arrest, that jail term, this baby, that deal.

"Have you," I interrupt, "ever tried rehab before this?"

"Yes," she says, "11 times."

"Why—"

But before I can complete the question, she interrupts.

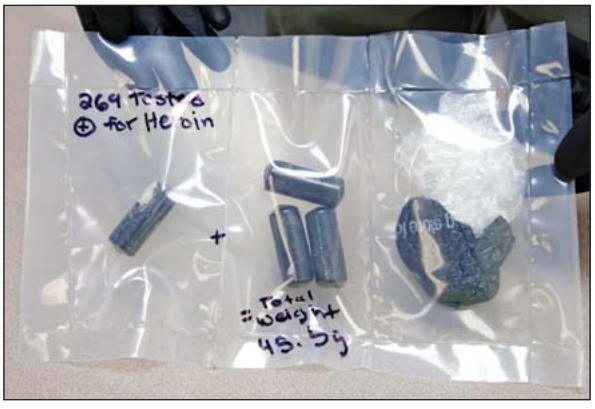
"No, 13."

And this time?

"You get older and you want a change. I really want to change my life. I've been working for Habitat for Humanity, the last few days. Pounding nails."

And ultimately?

"I want to be a hair stylist. Or do psychiatric work."



Heroin 'bullets' seized in Burlington

For now, she is a resident at Mandala House, where the published rules remind her to hang up her clothes. Her children are dispersed. One with a father. Two are with grandparents. One has been adopted.

The staff at Mandala House will do their best with her, and it is impossible not to wish them well or admire their dedication and tough-mindedness. If you live in the state, you feel a certain undeniable pride in the way that they, like Jim Baker and Matt Prouty, are taking on the problem. There is a measure of the old Vermont spirit of yeomanry about it, which is something that many who have adopted the state and its values (again, like me) find ineluctably seductive. The city of Rutland, after all, was built on an industry that amounted to blasting and transporting and cutting hard rock for sale to people who lived lives of considerably more comfort in other places. Many of the graves at Gettysburg are marked by headstones made of Vermont marble, and many of the men whose bodies lie in the ground beneath them were from Vermont, which had among the highest per capita losses of any Union state in that war.

This heroin invasion, though, is a different kind of fight. The enemy is an alternative sensibility, one that is exactly contrary to that older spirit. Heroin is the agent of total surrender. The drug of demoralization.

The vitality of Vermont—and places that are like Vermont—has been leached away over the years. This is no fresh insight, merely a lamentable fact. The quarries shut down, like the factories along the Connecticut River Valley, and like the little farms where everything that came out of the ground was watered with sweat, and people took their pride in "making do." One of the first of these Vermonters I got to know would tell me of how, when he was a kid, he and his brother were responsible for laying in the firewood necessary to warm the drafty old farmhouse that was home to a family of 10. They cut and split 60 cords of firewood every summer. With hand tools.

There was less and less for the generations that followed. And the familiar pathologies took root and spread: unemployment, dependency, illegitimacy, drugs. One generation, then two, and now three or four. The woman I met at Cheryl McKenzie's Mandala House had been raised (more or less) by a single mother. She has four illegitimate children of her own, none of whom was mothered or nurtured in any real sense. This is the pathology of the inner city, the advent of the much prophesied "white underclass." People have seen it coming for years, yet none of the big-think solutions seems to have worked or even gotten off the ground. So we have mothers who are addicted when they give birth to children who will never know their fathers. Among live births at the Rutland hospital, about one in seven is to an addicted mother. This led to the creation of another program. This one known as Babies and Mothers Beginning In-Sync. Or, BAMBI.

The trend is not unique to Vermont, as the example of places where methamphetamine abuse is rampant makes plain. Vermont, so far, has mostly been spared that vector of the plague. But not the idleness, dependency, and demoralization.

Still, the police are willing to stand up to the gangs, and the women at Mandala House are not afraid to tell an addicted mother to hang up her clothes.

So there is hope. ♦

MATTHEW THORSEN

The Reverend Ike (1935-2009) interviewed in his office, 1998

Heavenly Rewards

That business of God and Mammon. BY PATRICK ALLITT

Anyone who doubts that truth is stranger than fiction should reflect on the fact that one of America's leading "prosperity" preachers is named Creflo Dollar. The owner of two Rolls Royces, he shames and cajoles his congregation, most of whom are poor African Americans, into giving their money to his ministry, telling them that to do so will make them not poorer but richer. After all, God *wants* them to be rich; He wants money to rain down on the righteous as a sign of His blessing. How do we know? Because Jesus himself was rich and was used to receiving gifts like gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Blessed
A History of the American Prosperity Gospel
by Kate Bowler
Oxford, 352 pp., $34.95

"Prosperity attached itself to baby Jesus immediately," he says, "and that same gift to prosper has been given to us as heirs of Christ."

The paradox at the heart of *Blessed* is that this apparently materialistic creed, immensely popular in the megachurch world today, is actually highly idealistic. This is a world in which faith trumps any number of hard material realities. It can bring wealth to the poor and health to the sick, replace despair and depression with "victory." Christians in this frame of mind don't so much give their money away as they "sow" it like seeds, believing that it will lead to a great harvest and return to them in the form of material and spiritual blessings.

It is also a world that mixes flights of fancy with dogmatic literalism. Ecstatic ministers describe their visions of "angels, doves, dragons, and clouds of light." They create elaborate agricultural metaphors about sowing, reaping, threshing, and gleaning. At the same time, however, many believe

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Patrick Allitt, professor of history at Emory University, is the author, most recently, of The Conservatives: Ideas and Personalities Throughout American History.

that to speak exactly the right words is vital for seekers of health and wealth: Black magic, witchcraft, and the personal malice of Satan are real things that must be countered in definite and specific ways, such as literally vomiting them up. Some favor talismanic objects and rituals, like putting a dollar bill in your shoe if you want to be rich or laying a sanctified handkerchief on an injured limb.

Membership in such churches has its privileges, but it makes heavy demands on members' time as well as on their wallets. To attend church only on Sunday is regarded as the bare minimum, even though Sunday services can be three or four hours long. Members who also attend midweek prayer and healing sessions and do extensive volunteer work for the church come closer to the ideal. When Kate Bowler asked some harried members how they found time to devote 10 or 15 hours a week to the church, in addition to their work and family responsibilities, they gave her a puzzled look and told her she had it backwards: The real issue was how to make time for anything else.

Bowler, a professor of religion at Duke University, shows how this "prosperity" Christianity grew out of earlier trends in Protestant history, notably Mind Cure, positive thinking, and Pentecostalism, all of which equated faith with the achievement of worldly well-being. She describes it as a religious style well-adapted to American economic conditions: "The prosperity gospel's emphasis on the individual's responsibility for his or her own fate resonates strongly with the American tradition of rugged self-reliance."

The idea that God wants Christians to be rich picked up speed in the 1970s, along with the rise of mass-audience television ministries. Bowler makes a distinction between what she calls "hard" and "soft" prosperity preaching. Hard prosperity was all the rage in the 1970s and '80s, when televangelists enjoyed linking specific dollar amounts to the promise of percentage returns and eternal salvation. Jim Bakker was a case in point, weeping on TV in his mint-green suit when an appeal for funds fell short. So was Oral Roberts, who told viewers that if they did not send in $8 million, God would "call him home" to Heaven. Bakker and his wife Tammy Faye, whose fall from grace came as a blow to satirists everywhere, were exposed as frauds in 1987. They had been extorting credulous viewers' money to fund a lavish personal lifestyle rather than investing it in Heritage USA, their Christian theme park.

"Soft prosperity" preaching helped repair the damage in the ensuing years. Favoring a slightly calmer idiom, ministers like Joel Osteen and Kenneth Hagin looked more like corporate CEOs than nightclub emcees and were less specific about exactly how much money God wanted you to give. Before long, the prosperity gospel recovered its recruiting momentum. Many African-American ministers adapted to it, preaching godly wealth but also cautioning members about the need to manage their finances, pay their debts, and avoid reckless expenditure. The switch from a long Christian tradition of holy poverty to one of holy riches has not affected the other moral verities: Megachurch members are still expected to be sober, chaste, industrious, honest, uncomplaining, and courteous.

Oral Roberts, 1955

TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

The charismatic leaders of the megachurches have, in most cases, separated themselves from the old denominations. The separation has sometimes been a result of disagreement over prosperity theology, but it could also be the result of a specific minister's belief that God had singled him out with the blessing of wealth or a sudden recovery from ill health. These independents, while autonomous, actually have many things in common: bold entrepreneurship, massive capital investments, broadcasting and publishing empires, and success theology. They gather regularly at national conferences, where one or another of them can usually be found as keynote speaker.

Bowler, rather than keeping an academic distance from the object of her study, did much of her research as a participant-observer. In addition to visiting and researching dozens of megachurches, she attended faith-healing services at the Victorious Faith Center in Durham, North Carolina, and befriended some of its members. She tagged along with faith-healer Benny Hinn on an exhausting pilgrimage to Israel with 900 other Christian tourists. In the midst of her research, she began to suffer from a mysterious muscular paralysis, an experience that intensified her response to the highly emotional healing-oriented events.

After the trip, she seems to have struggled to find the right voice in which to report her findings. I enjoyed trying to catch sight of the real Kate, behind the façade of social-scientific objectivity. She doesn't let her guard down often, but occasional stray phrases give away her actual train of thought. Determined not to condemn the prosperity gospel out of hand (as most investigative journalists have done), she works hard to show readers how its adherents explain their way of life and how it offers an internally consistent worldview. She is equally determined not to endorse it, however, and makes no secret of the fact that it can be highly coercive.

Anyone coming to these churches from the outside is bound to ask: Does the faith-healing actually work, and does the giving of money actually bring back more money? Bowler sometimes met people who had been "healed," in the sense that they had become the object of the minister's tearful entreaties, and yet still they suffered. When Bowler asked after the welfare of "Ruth," one such sufferer, an informant told her, "She has been healed. She is just *claiming* her healing"—and then added, "I think

she's worried about negatively confessing." In other words, if Ruth was still confined to her wheelchair, it must be because her faith wasn't strong enough. She was now expected to "claim" her return to good health as though it were already complete. To ask for healing again would imply inadequate sincerity the first time around.

Bowler also cites the case of a cancer sufferer prevented by church leaders from returning to the altar for more "healing." Once should have been enough; now he was on his own. By the same logic, members who don't grow rich have only themselves to blame.

Readers of The Weekly Standard may know that human life ends in death and that to blame individuals for their own deaths is usually unreasonable. Prosperity preachers disagree: "Death meant failure, the failure of the believer to win the spiritual battle against illness," paraphrases Bowler. Gloria Copeland, one of the female stars of the movement, recently published *Live Long, Finish Strong* (2010), advocating "unlimited life." Even in a book dedicated to the proposition that death is unnecessary, however, she finally admits that at the age of about 120, Christians might want to "choose the time of their own home-going."

Bowler is relieved to discover among her friends at the Victorious Faith Center a subterranean current of resistance to official teachings. Sick members often help each other out without passing judgment. They comfort the bereaved, rather than berating the departed for lack of faith. They sometimes slip out of church early to accomplish practical tasks or to look after their children. But even while contradicting their church's teachings, they continue to invoke them as ideals for themselves and for one another.

Researching and writing *Blessed* could not have been easy, and the author, if anything, understates her own tribulations. Nevertheless, she has emerged with a historically and anthropologically convincing account of this central trend in contemporary American Christianity, in equal parts informative, amusing, and horrifying. ♦

B&A

Op-Ed Shakespeare

All the world's a stage, and the men and women merely politicians. **by Kate Havard**

Shakespeare wrote about kings. Not, as the tour guide at the Globe Theatre told me, because the nobility were the reality stars of their day and the masses wanted to know all their business, but because Shakespeare, like his near-contemporaries John Locke and Thomas Hobbes, was a serious political philosopher. Here, in five essays on five very different regimes portrayed by Shakespeare, Professor Timothy W. Burns of Skidmore College builds on this notion.

Rulers who do well, Burns writes, take special care to teach their subjects a respect for justice and an awe for the divine. But they cannot rely on either if they wish to survive. In *Julius Caesar*, for example, we begin with a tragedy of self-government: Rome is in crisis, oddly, because it has produced too many excellent men. Caesar, Antony, and Brutus all might make excellent kings, but they have no established way to share power. The threat of tyranny is real, and there is no way to prevent it, except, apparently, through murder. Where there is no structural outlet for ambition, the principle of "might makes right" prevails. Civil war breaks out, the strongest man wins, and a republic devolves into an empire.

In *Macbeth*, as in *Julius Caesar*, we see the origins of tyranny. But now we see it in the context of Christianity, where it becomes *wicked* tyranny. There are no villains in *Julius Caesar*; in *Macbeth*, however, Lord and Lady Macbeth have the knowledge of good and evil—and they choose evil. Christianity complicates the struggle. Duncan is a king by divine right, but he is not a great ruler: He tramples on his subjects and expects to be regarded (and, indeed, regards himself) as a kind of divine being. He is also bad at spotting traitors.

Macbeth, chafing under the royal yoke and sensing his own greatness, desires to be king. But unlike Locke, who argued that kings lose their divine authority if they rule tyrannically, Macbeth keeps on believing in Duncan's divine authority—and so must rebel against that, too. Macbeth then decides that no horror is off-limits: He kills his friends, he kills children, he cavorts with the Devil. Yes, that Devil. Burns points out that Macbeth acquires a mysterious servant (named "Seyton" in the text) who shows up at the very end, just before Lady Macbeth is carried off to Hell. When Macbeth cries, *Come,*

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Shakespeare's Political Wisdom
by Timothy W. Burns
Palgrave Macmillan, 248 pp., $90

Prospero and Miranda

MARY EVANS PICTURE LIBRARY / EVERETT COLLECTION

put mine armour on; give me my staff. / *Seyton send out*, Burns thinks he's talking to Satan himself.

This is one of many places in the text where Burns takes something minor and runs with it. But even if Shakespeare was just being suggestive with the naming of Seyton, the meaning fits: A tyrant is armed by evil and has no way of protecting himself except through bloody force. But it's not enough: Macbeth is undone, and peace and order return—only after a parade of avoidable horrors.

King Lear is a double-pronged tragedy. To Shakespeare, the mortality of kings is a fatal flaw that makes even the most successful monarchy an inferior form of government. Lear's kingdom *would* be secure forever, except for the fact that Lear is about to die and his realm will collapse without him. Lear learns the hard way that being good and noble in this world is insufficient for justice to prevail. This knowledge is so terrible that it breaks him.

In his final essay, Burns presents his political ideal in the form of Prospero, Shakespeare's philosopher-king from *The Tempest* who uses his powers (which come not from sorcery but from careful study of "the liberal arts") to teach his subjects, friendly and not-so-friendly, how to behave. Of course, Prospero's "students" believe that these lessons are coming from God and nature; they've all been hoodwinked by Prospero's tricks. But this doesn't mean that the lessons Prospero teaches are invalid. They may come from nature after years of study, or they may come from God, as revealed to Prospero. Either way, Burns suggests, most people require Prospero's "rough magic" to rule and to be ruled.

Of the plays discussed here, only *The Tempest* has a happy ending. And yet, since *The Tempest* teaches that a ruler yields justice only if he is magical and wise, our expectations for politics and government are lowered. And since most politicians cannot summon spirits from the vasty deep, Burns looks, in his central essay, to the cosmopolitan commercial republic of *The Merchant of Venice* for an example of the best possible regime. Portia is able to prevent tragedy because Venice is a city of laws, not a city of men. Rather than break the law to save Antonio, Portia uses it, thereby preserving the institutions that will protect her fragile marriage with Bassanio. (Portia also tempers the Venetians' desire for revenge, shaming them away from killing Shylock in favor of a conversion to Christianity.)

In *Julius Caesar*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *The Tempest*, relations among the public, the private, and the divine are either conflated, confused, or deficient. And it all ends badly: tyranny, civil war, witches, general viciousness. In *Merchant*, Shakespeare draws a strong line between those problems that can be solved in public and those that must be solved in private. This is also the only play Burns discusses that does not require magic to avoid tragedy.

Shakespeare's political wisdom deals largely with the limits of politics. The full flourishing of the soul must be sought offstage, and the greatest abuses of power happen when rulers overstep their boundaries. Seeing justice done isn't pretty, even in verse—and it is with a certain amount of force and fraud, as well as pious restraint, that just rule is possible in Shakespeare's universe. ♦

B&A

A Covert Story

It takes a certain intelligence to comprehend the CIA. BY REUEL MARC GERECHT

The Way of the Knife
The CIA, a Secret Army, and a War at the Ends of the Earth
by Mark Mazzetti
Penguin, 400 pp., $29.95

There is probably no harder beat in Washington than intelligence.

Journalists rarely have sources inside the Central Intelligence Agency who are not authorized, and when they do, odds are the source will be on the public, analytical side of the house. Unlike in the 1950s and '60s, when case officers could easily socialize with journalists (as well as occasionally recruit them), today, an adversarial culture, polygraph machines, and personal politics (case officers are no longer likely to be liberal Democrats) get in the way. And even the most senior CIA analysts, unless they have worked with operatives in the field, usually have a limited grasp of what Langley does abroad.

The heart and soul of the agency has always been the operations directorate, since the global reach of the case-officer cadre—its capacity to run both foreign-intelligence collection and covert action—is what makes the CIA special.

If an intelligence-beat reporter loses his official access, where senior officers or spokesmen go on background, he's crippled. Senators, congressmen, and their staffers with axes to grind can only do so much. Sensational "whistleblower" cases are few and far between and don't give an accurate picture of the traditional relationship between reporters and the intelligence establishment, which usually resembles that between pilot fish and sharks. And journalists, like historians who have not served in intelligence, have little frame of reference to judge the primary material that they may occasionally get their hands on. Journalists don't usually

Reuel Marc Gerecht, a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is a senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.*

spend much time perusing officially released CIA information, mostly comprising ancient covert-action and defector files.

Journalists are, as a class, particularly subject to parroting the accepted wisdom of retired senior officers—or of the liberal zeitgeist if the intelligence issue has a political edge. And covert action—union organizing; book, magazine, and newspaper publishing; *samizdat* literature; radio and TV broadcasts; subventions to foreign journalists and politicians; running dual-use trucking, shipping, and air-services companies; aiding foreign paramilitary and guerrilla forces; coup-plotting; and now, perhaps most famously, killer drones—always has a political edge.

Following in the footsteps of Timothy Weiner, the *New York Times* reporter who wrote *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA* (2007), Mark Mazzetti, also a Pulitzer Prize-winning *Times* correspondent who has covered the Taliban resurgence, al Qaeda, and drones, reinforces the despairing narrative of the baleful effects of covert action upon clandestine human-intelligence collection. Here he tells us that Langley is "no longer a traditional espionage service devoted to stealing the secrets of foreign governments." Rather, it "has become a killing machine, an organization consumed with man hunting."

According to Mazzetti, the post-9/11 focus on killing terrorists, and the White House's "insatiable appetite for information about any threats," has transformed the agency. The war against al Qaeda and its allies has had a "distorting effect on the analysis that the CIA was producing—making it narrower, more tactical." And this telescopic intensity has even been counterproductive for the war on terror.

> Hundreds of CIA analysts were now working on terrorism. . . . It became immediately obvious to the analysts that the path to career advancement at the CIA was to start working on terrorism, with the goal of producing something that might be read to the president early one morning inside the Oval Office. And what the White House was most interested in were leads about the whereabouts of specific al Qaeda operators, not broader subjects like the level of support al Qaeda had in the Muslim world or the impact that American military and intelligence operations might have on radicalizing a new generation of militants.

This debilitating new disposition touched on liaison work as well, Mazzetti tells us, making the CIA more dependent on foreign intelligence and security services. Since the CIA's

> new mission put a premium on getting detailed intelligence about specific individuals, and it mattered little how that information was collected . . . the CIA immediately became more reliant on the foreign spy services that had spent years building dossiers on terror organizations. Desperate for information to stop the next attack . . . the CIA's relationship with spy services with unsavory histories of brutality—Egypt's Mukhabarat, Jordan's General Intelligence Directorate, even the intelligence service of Muammar Gaddafi's Libyan pariah state—grew much closer.

Mazzetti is surely correct that 9/11 made Washington more disposed to cooperation with Middle Eastern internal-security and intelligence services. Of course, one might quibble with the degree that he suggests: The Clinton administration, which really developed the practice of rendition, was using well-established liaison relationships to extract information from and imprison (or otherwise dispose of) suspected terrorists. The CIA has been close to Jordan's General Intelligence Department (GID) for decades; lesser, but meaningful relationships with the Egyptian intelligence service and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) existed long before 9/11.

Still, it's an open question whether the agency became more prone to accept intelligence from foreign services after 9/11. Whether information is extracted through a convivial chat or wall-slamming or the torturous methods that most Middle Eastern and Central Asian regimes deploy, the preeminent concern for Langley has usually been verification. If the CIA really trusted foreign services, it would not have felt compelled to use sleep deprivation and waterboarding to extract information from certain holy warriors.

The CIA is certainly capable of impressive credulity in how it handles intelligence, whether derived from internal or foreign sources. Gross mistakes have happened in the war on terror: The case of the Jordanian doctor Humam Khalil Abu Mulal al-Balawi, a would-be penetration of al Qaeda who was sent to the CIA by GID and who blew himself up, killing also his Jordanian handler and seven CIA employees inside an Afghan base, is the most shocking. But it's doubtful that any of these mistakes were worse in methodology, lethality, or ramifications for national security than the gross mishaps during the Cold War against the Soviets, East Germans, Cubans, and, later, the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mazzetti's themes often get lost in the journalism: *The Way of the Knife* reads as if it is composed of newspaper stories and unused reporter's notes glued together. It's sometimes interesting, but never elegant. Hyperbole isn't a writer's friend, and Mazzetti's narrative, and the book's title, would have been improved by restraint.

Historically, the *opposite* of Mazzetti's and Weiner's charge appears true: Covert action is more likely to improve human-intelligence collection. Getting to know the nuts and bolts of any country—and targeting drones is a microscopic affair—can help case officers *and* analysts grasp larger dynamics. Before 9/11, the CIA was usually pathetic at collecting and analyzing intelligence on Pakistan, in part because the CIA and State Department's primary concern was maintaining a good working relationship with their Pakistani counterparts.

But the war in Afghanistan changed that, and drone targeting was part of the evolution. Washington now sees much more clearly Pakistani mendacity and complicity in anti-American terrorism. And as the details became crystal clear, so did the larger picture: Washington may still be uncertain

about what to do with Islamabad, but that indecision has relatively little to do with inadequate intelligence. Indeed, Mazzetti's good discussion of Pakistan actually contradicts his book's central argument.

Increasing CIA covert action—especially through the Phoenix program—also probably improved our understanding of Vietnam, and may even have helped the Pentagon to adopt a counterinsurgency strategy, which more or less eliminated the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese threat within South Vietnam by the early 1970s. In Europe, where the most intense and varied CIA covert action took place, human-intelligence collection was probably the most bountiful (although not necessarily the most accurate) when covert action was the most aggressive.

There are overlapping problems when human intelligence crosses covert action. Can covert-action requirements distort human-intelligence reporting? Mazzetti is right to underscore these concerns. But such tensions don't necessarily debase foreign-intelligence collection. Other factors that affect good intelligence—competent, honest officers in the field, for example—are much more likely to have a telling effect. As a case officer, I read through a substantial amount of both foreign-intelligence and covert-action reporting on European and Middle Eastern subjects. Not once did I have the impression that covert-action requirements constrained human-intelligence collection.

Covert action could sometimes be used by case officers to gin up the number of their agent recruitments. (Operatives are constantly hunting to raise their head count for promotion boards.) And these recruitments could sometimes be repackaged as foreign-intelligence recruitments, from whom mediocre intelligence often abundantly flowed.

Mazzetti writes that "top agency officials ordered all trainees except those fluent in a language not spoken in the Muslim world to be funneled toward assignments in the Middle East or Central Asia." Based on conversations with active-duty case officers, I think this sucking sound was less acute than Mazzetti suggests, and far less powerful than what happened with Southeast Asia in the 1960s and '70s.

Moreover, Mazzetti asserts that the intelligence requirements of the war on terror diminished America's global intelligence capacity. That's possible, but unlikely. Stations and bases all over the world have been sending intelligence to Langley since 9/11. If you were to do a head count, the vast majority of all case officers have worked on non-Islamic-terrorist/non-Iraqi/non-Afghan targets since 9/11. And given how short CIA tours have been in Iraq and Afghanistan, serving "at the ends of the Earth" would hardly disqualify an officer from becoming competent in all things Russian, Chinese, or Venezuelan.

For most case officers—and even for analysts, who often work a subject longer than operatives and are more responsive to Washington's moods—the war on terror might best be described as an interlude.

Mazzetti and many case officers certainly don't like the increased prominence of the paramilitary folks within Langley. Operatives and other CIA officials understandably don't like the critical attention and abuse that's been directed toward them since 9/11. But the worst grievances hurled at Langley don't necessarily have any effect on its foreign-intelligence mission. The CIA's intelligence collection and analysis may be below par, but the causes are complex and deep-rooted. We shouldn't blame drones—or the mujahedeen, the contras, Cuban exiles, Air America, the Phoenix program, or the intellectuals, journalists, and labor unionists that the CIA once arrayed against communism. ♦

B&A

Witness to History

A golden life in the Gilded Age.

BY RYAN L. COLE

All the Great Prizes
The Life of John Hay, from Lincoln to Roosevelt
by John Taliaferro
Simon & Schuster, 688 pp., $35

When John Hay's name is mentioned today, it is often as a footnote attached to the names of the two giants he worked for, Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. But he was much more than an associate of great men. Hay was a creature now mostly extinct on our national stage: a genuine man of letters; a poet disguised as a political operative; an accomplished diplomat and grandee of the Republican party; and an acute social critic with a roster of friends and admirers that included presidents, artists, and fellow authors.

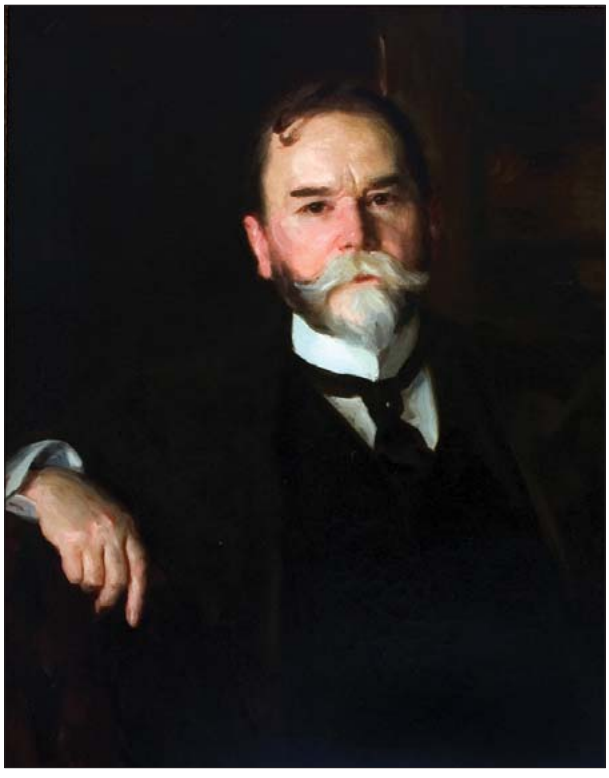
His life may sound like a fairy tale, but John Taliaferro's superb biography proves this was not the case. As the first life of the subject to appear since 1934, it is a welcome arrival—not only because Hay has gone too long without a worthy biography, but because Taliaferro's stylish narration is so well-suited to his subject.

Born in Indiana and raised in Illinois, Hay, like his mentor Lincoln, was a man of the West. But his studies at Brown transformed the intellectually gifted youth into (in Taliaferro's telling) a "precociously world-wise and prematurely world-weary" snob.

Ryan L. Cole, a former adviser to Governor Mitch Daniels, writes from Bloomington, Indiana.

"There is, as yet, no room in the West for a genius," Hay pouted after returning home from Providence. As it turned out, he was wrong. While disinterestedly studying law in Springfield, Hay found himself drawn into Abraham Lincoln's long-shot presidential quest in 1860, at first flacking as propagandist and then managing the campaign's voluminous correspondence. When the president-elect's train left Springfield's Great Western Railroad station in February 1861, winding its way towards Washington, Hay, along with campaign secretary John Nicolay, was on it.

The four years that followed constituted John Hay's true education. Sharing a room with Nicolay in the White House, he was on hand for the heights and depths of Lincoln's presidency. His observations of the 16th president—rushing to his secretaries' chamber clad only in a nightgown, "his short shirt hanging about his long legs," to share an anecdote, and reading Shakespeare at the Soldiers' Home, to name just two—are compelling. This is by no means Lincoln's book, but he makes a fascinating flesh-and-blood cameo.



John Hay by John Singer Sargent

Hay was not only an observer in the White House, but also a trusted assistant. He was the president's press man, occasional ghostwriter (Hay likely wrote the famous letter of condolence to Lydia Bixby), and emissary, venturing outside of the capital city on sensitive assignments dealing with the defiant General John C. Fremont and, later, a chimerical peace gesture from Confederate agents in Canada.

This experience inadvertently turned Hay into a diplomat. After Lincoln's death, he was dispatched to France. Assignments to Austria and Spain followed. By the time he was 30, Hay had an understanding of international politics that was unparalleled.

Once his mission in Spain concluded, Hay returned to the United States—"dressed by London tailors, conversant in the finest opera and art, and polished in the etiquette of the haut monde"—to write for Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune*. So commenced the second phase of his career: From his time in New York forward, Hay turned his attention to literary pursuits, editorializing for the *Tribune*, and then writing a series of popular poems employing the vernacular of a certain breed of Illini. (These were eventually compiled, in 1871, as *Pike County Ballads and Other Pieces*. An impression of his time in Spain, *Castilian Days*, soon followed.)

Marriage to Clara Stone, daughter of an Ohio railroad magnate, brought family, financial stability, and relocation to Cleveland's opulent Euclid Avenue. In 1884, Hay, though distracted by what would become a recurring mix of ailments, anonymously produced his chef-d'oeuvre, *The Bread-winners*, an inquiry into the class system of the Middle-American town of Bluffland, a stand-in for Cleveland. A long-time-in-the-making 10-volume biography of Lincoln, cowritten with Nicolay, appeared in 1890. The election of Rutherford B. Hayes to the presidency in 1876 brought Hay back to Washington, this time as assistant secretary of state. It also fortified a relationship with Henry Adams, whose intellect and elitism matched Hay's own. Many assumed that *The Bread-winners* and Adams's Washington novel *Democracy* (1880), also written anonymously, had come from the same pen. It was as if the two, who would build adjoining homes off Lafayette Square, across from the White House, "had been friends forever," writes Taliaferro.

A sizable portion of this book is dedicated to this partnership and to the fascinating men and women who intersected it: Adams's acerbic wife Clover; Clarence King, the acclaimed geologist who lived a scandalous double life; Lizzie Cameron and Nanny Lodge, the alluring wives of senators Donald Cameron and Henry Cabot Lodge. We will never know if Hay and Adams had affairs with Cameron and Lodge, but their relationships were inappropriately intimate—and the author spends perhaps a bit too much time scrutinizing the subject.

Still, Hay's relationships inside and outside of the Five of Hearts (the self-adopted sobriquet for Hay, Adams, their wives, and King) amaze. Hay compared notes with Henry James and Mark Twain; he was a patron of Augustus Saint-Gaudens and Albert Bierstadt. He traded advice with Andrew Carnegie and Robert Lincoln. Hay's personal and literary lives form two parts of this story. The third, of course, is his public life—and that is where his greatest, and longest-lasting, accomplishments lie.

Shortly after William McKinley won the presidency in 1896, Hay slyly positioned himself to be ambassador to London; once installed, he obtained the admiration of the aged Queen Victoria, who specifically rearranged

her seating charts to be next to him at dinners. Hay's rapport with the British laid the groundwork for an Anglo-American alliance otherwise known as the Special Relationship. Hay became secretary of state in 1898.

As secretary, he persuaded Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and Russia to honor China's territorial integrity and to keep its ports open for international commerce. Hay, who had grown close to McKinley ("He is awfully like Lincoln in many respects"), continued to guide the ship of state for Theodore Roosevelt after McKinley's assassination in 1901. In a considerable display of diplomatic prowess, Hay fought for and won a series of treaties granting the United States rights to build a canal across the isthmus of Panama.

Of import equal to his achievements was Hay's comportment in their pursuit: Always influenced by Lincoln's pragmatism, he cultivated a dignified, patient, and polished image as a statesman-diplomat for the United States. His tenure as secretary of state, however, drove him to the grave. The accumulation of the demands of work, personal grief at the accidental death of his son, and years of poor health finally claimed Hay in 1905, at age 66.

In the middle of *All the Great Prizes* stands a man who, rather than being driven by blinding ambition, seems almost to have ambled through it all. Hay was "not so much a striver as he was an inquirer," writes the author. But for a man directed, at least in part, by whimsy, Hay enjoyed a remarkably full existence, and John Taliaferro has done an admirable job of bringing to life one of the most interesting Americans of his, or any, age. ♦

B&A

Global Glamour

What I learned at London Fashion Week.

BY SAMANTHA SAULT

London

It's tough to determine the origin of the It Shoe for next spring. After all, the turquoise-and-golden-yellow Manolo Blahnik pump with black ankle ties is made of fabric from Africa, was stitched together in Italy, and debuted at London Fashion Week last month. Presented a few blocks from Oxford Street in the Covent Garden Hotel, Manolo Blahnik's spring collection featured prominently in a short film starring Rupert Everett—whose character recalls his ex-wife dancing the tango with another man in turn-of-the-20th-century Spain.

GETTY IMAGES

The brand has been headquartered in London since Blahnik opened his first eponymous shop in Chelsea in 1973, but Manolos aren't just for well-heeled Britons. Next year, the shoes will travel the world to Manolo Blahnik boutiques in Saudi Arabia, South Korea, and, of course, the United States, where the brand is now a household name thanks to *Sex and the City*. So it's fitting that the United States and the European Union just launched the second round of negotiations in Brussels for a comprehensive free trade agreement, the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership, after the world's four fashion capitals (New York, London, Milan, Paris) showcased an industry with increasingly globalized supply chains and influences.

If past negotiations are a guide, we're unlikely to see an agreement go into effect for at least a few years. But the parties should be eager to eliminate tariffs and harmonize regulations. According to the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE), the elimination of tariffs could lead to economic gains of as much as $95 billion in the EU and $181 billion in the United States, while, according to the German Marshall Fund, the reduction of nontariff barriers by 50 percent could lead to economic gains of $168 billion in the EU and $53 billion in the United States.

An ambitious transatlantic agreement would also lead to job growth on both sides of the pond, as companies would have easier access to new markets: A study just released by the Bertelsmann Foundation and the Atlantic Council estimates that the United States alone would see net employment gains of almost 750,000 jobs.

Such an agreement, moreover, would be especially important to the fashion industry, which is taxed at a comparatively high rate: The average tariff is under 3 percent in both the United States and the EU, but the average tariff on apparel is 15 percent in the United States and 12 percent in the EU. As London mayor Boris Johnson said, Fashion Week is "a big moneyspinner, bringing in orders from around the globe and generating billions for our economy." Indeed, with buyers and press from over 52 countries in attendance, London Fashion Week has gained significant international attention in recent years.

Trade policy, then, should embrace the idea of an open global marketplace because, as London's catwalks and boutiques have shown, the fashion industry is already producing globally inspired collections with universal appeal at all price points. The English

Samantha Sault, formerly an assistant editor at The Weekly Standard*, is director of communications at the U.S. Association of Importers of Textiles and Apparel.*

designer Henry Holland's collections are perfect for London's edgy street style; but he has international fans thanks to collaborations with the iconic American denim brand Levi Strauss and the Australian eyewear company Le Specs. His latest catwalk collection featured punchy, youthful looks inspired by Mexico and Venice Beach—they would work in either locale (or in London or, really, any hip metropolis).

Representing The Weekly Standard, I got a coveted invitation to join Anna Wintour and Kate Moss at Topshop Unique—probably because the fast-fashion giant will soon be selling its clothes in Washington following a rapid growth that has led to stores opening everywhere from Las Vegas to Hong Kong. Next spring, Topshops all over the world will sell mosaic-print slip dresses suitable for Mediterranean vacations, alongside slouchy shirtdresses and ponchos suitable for breezy London weekends.

As the industry continues to globalize, it's critical that designers develop a brand that transcends location.

"Shoppers want to buy into an identity," jewelry designer Vicki Sarge explained at the launch of her flagship VICKISARGE store in Belgravia. "We get customers coming from all over the world for special, one-off, bespoke pieces." Originally from Detroit, Sarge cofounded Erickson Beamon, the high-end costume jewelry brand based in New York, and, in the 1980s, moved to London to expand it internationally. She is now focusing on her own brand, along with business partner Brooke Metcalfe, a New York It-Girl-turned-branding-expert who designed the shop to look like a museum in order to showcase the pieces "as if they were Darwin's finds from Patagonia." Sarge's pieces range from art deco jewels to ebony and beaded baubles carved by craftsmen in Kenya to neon pompoms and ribbons made by artists in Peru for a collaboration with photographer Mario Testino.

"Everything has to come from a real place," she said. "That's what makes our brand special." ♦

B&A

Moving Parts

This story is not quite equal to the setting.

by John Podhoretz

I saw *Gravity* several weeks ago, so it's interesting to reflect on what kind of staying power this box office sensation actually has. Once you're out of the theater and away from director Alfonso Cuarón's mind-boggling success in convincing you that you're actually watching astronauts struggling to survive in outer space, does its spell persist?

The answer is no. If Cuarón, who directed the movie and wrote the script with his son Jonás, had managed to create a rich plot and populate it with interesting characters to go along with the astounding visuals, *Gravity* would have been among the cinema's historic high points. But he didn't, and it isn't.

It is a lot to ask of an actress to carry an entire movie, and it was canny of Alfonso Cuarón to cast the immensely likable Sandra Bullock, who performs without grandiosity or actorly showiness.

Even so, *Gravity* deserves every 100 million dollars it's earning. It is, without question, one of the greatest technical achievements in the history of popular culture; and, as the audiences flocking to it demonstrate, its immense visual splendor is more than enough for any one film.

Gravity
Directed by Alfonso Cuarón

Describing what makes *Gravity* remarkable is pretty tedious work, as evidenced by the thousands upon thousands of extremely boring words reviewers before me have used. Basically, it comes down to this: Everything is in motion in this movie, as (I gather) it would be if you were in zero gravity. You could probably see *Gravity* four or five times just to focus on different spots on the screen to watch what's going on in them. Cuarón says it took him four years to develop the techniques that would make it possible to execute this hyperrealistic depiction of objects and people in orbit. Those were four years well spent.

On the basis of this movie and his previous near-masterpiece *Children of Men* (2006), Cuarón is the key visionary working in cinema today, with an unparalleled sense of how to depict movement on screen. Oh, how I wish he'd make a musical. *Children of Men* features the two greatest chase sequences in the history of the talkies. (For my money, the greatest chase sequence ever involves Buster Keaton, 100 women in wedding dresses, and an endless number of boulders in a 1925 silent called *Seven Chances*.) In some sense, the entirety of *Gravity* is a silent chase scene, as all the elements on screen are, in effect, boulders chasing Sandra Bullock in the soundlessness of space.

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

Sandra Bullock in space

WARNER BROS. / NEWSCOM

She plays Ryan Stone, a scientist on her first shuttle flight. She is not an astronaut but, rather, an astrophysicist who has figured out how to repair something broken on the Hubble telescope. She is accompanied by a veteran flyboy played by George Clooney, who quips away while she fusses with the telescope and tries to restrain her motion sickness.

But movies have enduring power due to story, not atmosphere; to character, not setting.

Here, story and character merge into one: A catastrophe occurs, and Ryan Stone is stranded alone with only an hour and a half to figure out how to get back to Earth. It is a lot to ask of an actress to carry an entire movie, and it was canny of Cuarón to cast the immensely likable Bullock, who performs without grandiosity or actorly showiness. She is the audience's stand-in and must represent us in depicting what it would be like to face the unspeakable terror of death in a fathomless void.

But while Sandra Bullock may be "relatable," to use the obnoxious neologism Hollywood loves, Ryan Stone isn't at all. As conceived by Cuarón and played by Bullock, she is a depressing mope with a backstory that does not make her seem like us; rather, she seems more like one of those people we barely know on Facebook whose life is marked by senseless tragedy. Ryan is reserved and glum, unable to banter with the cheerful Clooney because sometime in the past she had a 4-year-old daughter who hit her head on the playground and died.

We are, therefore, to understand that Ryan is dead inside, simply going through the motions. This is a silly notion. First, a woman as depressed as Ryan wouldn't have the wherewithal to get into a spacesuit and be sent into orbit by NASA. And it's highly doubtful that NASA would clear such a depressive for that kind of mission. Second, if she doesn't have anything to live for, why wouldn't she see the calamity visited upon her as the answer to her existential problems and simply let herself go?

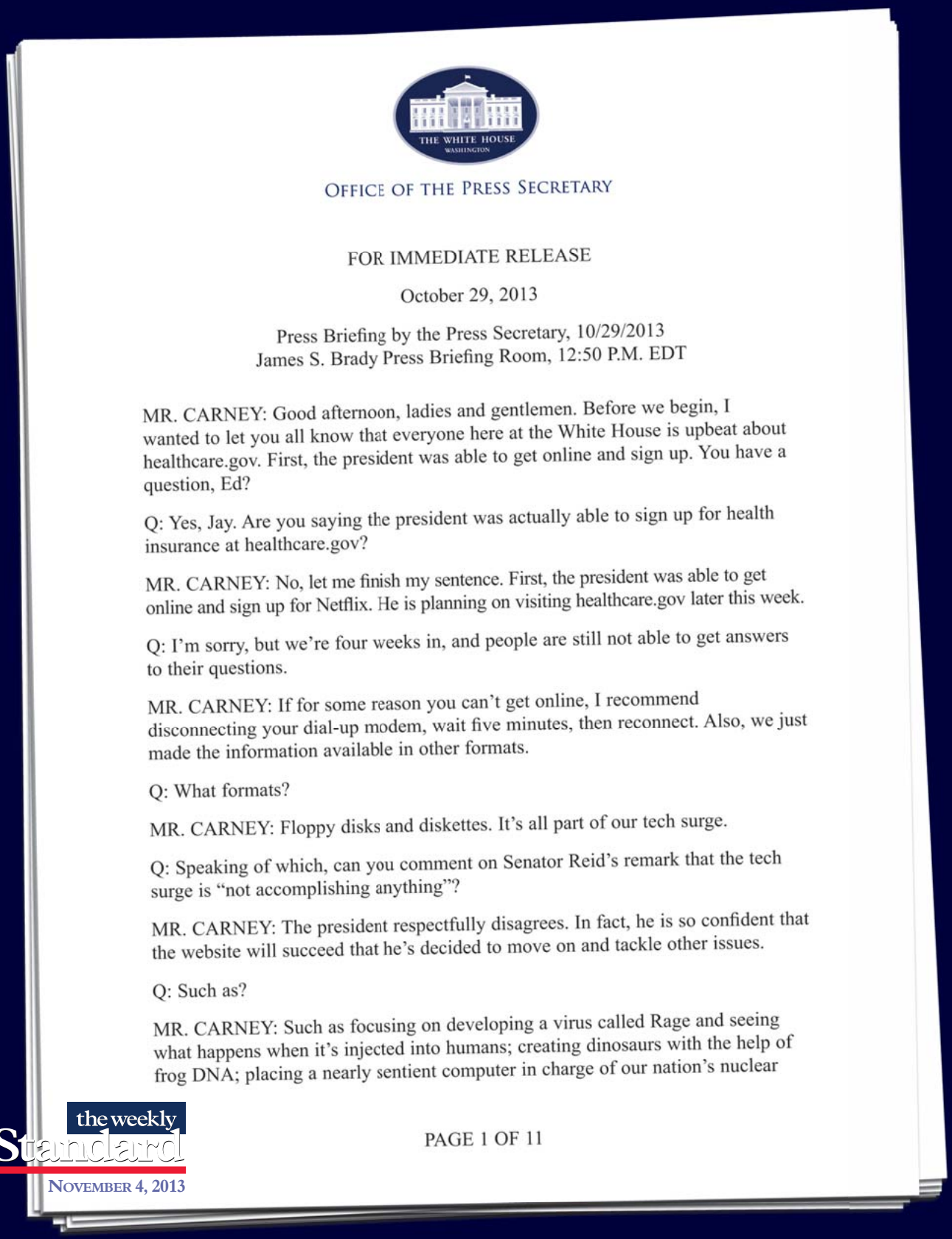
Those are more plausible character arcs for Ryan Stone than the one Cuarón chooses for her. He wants the experience to bring her back to life. Indeed, he depicts this almost literally: At one point, she enters a space capsule, removes her suit, curls into a fetal position, and seems to go to sleep—as though she is in utero, waiting to be reborn.

It's a beautiful shot, but it's really pretentious, and it's unearned. I came close to giggling, as I did at the very end, when faced with another beautiful shot that is even more pretentious. The thing is, Ryan Stone is on a voyage in which the stakes could literally not be higher. Turning that amazingly visceral journey into some kind of metaphorical "voyage of self-discovery" reduces the grandeur of *Gravity* to the level of a New Age self-help tract.

So no, *Gravity* isn't a great film. But it's a great something. And that's not nothing. ♦

"After a speech in which President Obama failed to discuss how he was going to fix Obamacare, save for providing a 1-800 number to call, which was not working during and immediately after his speech, White House press secretary Jay Carney went on to have a pretty rough press briefing."

—National Review, *October 21, 2013*



THE WHITE HOUSE
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OFFICE OF THE PRESS SECRETARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 29, 2013

Press Briefing by the Press Secretary, 10/29/2013
James S. Brady Press Briefing Room, 12:50 P.M. EDT

MR. CARNEY: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. Before we begin, I wanted to let you all know that everyone here at the White House is upbeat about healthcare.gov. First, the president was able to get online and sign up. You have a question, Ed?

Q: Yes, Jay. Are you saying the president was actually able to sign up for health insurance at healthcare.gov?

MR. CARNEY: No, let me finish my sentence. First, the president was able to get online and sign up for Netflix. He is planning on visiting healthcare.gov later this week.

Q: I'm sorry, but we're four weeks in, and people are still not able to get answers to their questions.

MR. CARNEY: If for some reason you can't get online, I recommend disconnecting your dial-up modem, wait five minutes, then reconnect. Also, we just made the information available in other formats.

Q: What formats?

MR. CARNEY: Floppy disks and diskettes. It's all part of our tech surge.

Q: Speaking of which, can you comment on Senator Reid's remark that the tech surge is "not accomplishing anything"?

MR. CARNEY: The president respectfully disagrees. In fact, he is so confident that the website will succeed that he's decided to move on and tackle other issues.

Q: Such as?

MR. CARNEY: Such as focusing on developing a virus called Rage and seeing what happens when it's injected into humans; creating dinosaurs with the help of frog DNA; placing a nearly sentient computer in charge of our nation's nuclear

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